BOOK REVIEWS

Symbolism of the Huichol Indians. By CARL LUMHOLTZ. (Memoirs of the American Museum of Natural History, Volume III. Anthropology II.) New York : May, 1900. 4°, 228 pp.

This latest work of the distinguished explorer and ethnologist, Dr Carl Lumholtz, is one of the splendid series of *Memoirs* in course of publication by the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and embodies a portion of the results of extended studies, beginning in 1895, among the Huichol Indians, an agricultural Nahuatlán tribe, numbering now about 4000 souls, residing in the heart of the Sierra Madre, in the state of Jalisco, southern Mexico. If "mountaineers are always free," so also are they conservative, and to the forbidding and inaccessible nature of their country is due the fortunate fact that, while so many other native civilizations have long since been wiped out by the conqueror, the Huichol have been able to preserve their system intact until it could be studied and presented to the world by so competent an authority as Dr Lumholtz.

Notwithstanding its attractiveness, the subject of symbolism is always a dangerous one to handle, by reason of the constant temptation to theorize on hidden meanings and to interpret simple facts from the occult standpoint. Of such speculation run wild, Adair's celebrated work on the southern tribes is a conspicuous example. It is pleasant to find that the Doctor's scientific training and experience have enabled him to avoid this error, and from his remarks on page 211 concerning "a strong tendency to see analogies," it is evident that he has learned, what some investigators fail to remember, that mysticism feeds upon itself, and that much that is set down as symbolism has its origin in the mental vagary of the individual informant and is no part of any recognized system.

After an introductory sketch of the Huichol tribe and territory the author treats successively of Gods and Their Paraphernalia, Ceremonial Arrows, Front Shields, Back Shields, "Eyes," Votive Bowls, The Ark of the Deluge Legend, The Shaman's Plumes, etc., Facial Paintings, and Miscellaneous Symbolic Objects, followed by a summary of conclusions, indexes to the prayers, symbols, objects, and ideas.

The gods have fixed relationships ; thus we have Father Sun, Grandfather Fire, and Great-grandfather Deertail. Their images are kept, not in the temples consecrated to them, but in remote secret places, usually caves in the mountains. In their symbolic presentation the gods are seen most commonly as serpents, frequently also as eagles or hawks, or as the sacred *hikuli* (peyote) plant. These symbolic forms are in large measure interchangeable and thus practically narrowed down to the one great symbol of the serpent, whose image the Huichol sees in every phenomenon of nature—the rain, the fire, the clouds, the wind, the ripples on the water, and the waving tree-tops.

The temples, of which there are nineteen in the Huichol country, are large circular houses of stone, with doorways facing to the east, and thatched roofs which are removed every five years, five being the sacred number in the tribe. Although no sacred images are kept in these temples, to which the people constantly resort for prayer and sacrifice, yet the gods are always present invisibly, and stools and chairs are kept there for their convenience, each seat being decorated in accordance with the taste and office of the deity for whose use it is designed. Diminutive votive offerings are also attached to them by the suppliants as reminders of the particular blessings desired.

Ceremonial arrows, in a great variety of forms, are inseparably connected with the religious life of the Huichol, one or more being sacrificed for each individual at least once a year. "The arrow, as an expression of prayer, answers to all the wants of the Indian from the cradle to the grave. There is no symbolic object in more common use, either by the private individual and the family or by the community, as represented by the officers of the temple. No feast can be imagined without the presence of arrows. Whenever an Indian wants to pray, his first impulse is to make an arrow. 'The sacrifice of one or more arrows expresses his desires in a language intelligible to him and to the gods.'" These sacrifice arrows are placed upright in the ground, stuck into the seats of the sacred chairs in the temples or into the thatch of the roofs ; are deposited in sacred caves, at sacred springs, and other places ; in lonely spots in the mountains, or even thrown into the sea—"in short, everywhere where some god lives whom the imaginative Huichol may implore and appease, for the arrow stands for him personally, or for the tribe, praying its silent prayers." In all this we see a close parallel to the prayer-feather of the Hopi.

The front and back shields are respectively symbolic types of the ancient war shield or buckler, and of the woven mat carried on the warrior's back, to serve both as a body armor and a bed. The front

shields are generally round, while the back shields are rectangular, both being elaborately designed and decorated according to the various purposes for which they are intended. As an illustration it is noted that in order to prevent the rain going from their country to that of a neighboring tribe, the Huichol placed in the middle of the trails leading out of their territory a number of back shields upon which fierce animals were pictured, the idea being that the (living) rain would thus be frightened and compelled to turn back. To counteract the spell their neighbors made it a business to destroy these shields wherever they found them. Detailed description is given of the make-up and use of a large number of shields of both kinds.

The "eye" (*stkuli*) may briefly be described as a small mat set diagonally in the center of a small cross upon which it is woven, the details varying according to the god and the purpose. In a special manner it symbolizes the understanding of unknown things. Such "eyes" are sacrificed in large numbers to insure the health of young children. Votive bowls are ordinary drinking gourds specially ornamented with symbolic beaded designs to serve as sacrifices to the gods. They are smeared with blood and deposited in the temples.

The Huichol have a deluge myth in which one man is preserved in a peculiar box or ark, together with a black she-dog, who afterward becomes a woman, by which means the world is repopled. Representations of this ark are sometimes made and deposited in certain places as sacrifices to obtain help in great emergencies. Such an ark was once fished out from a lake far to the south of the Huichol country, having been left there by some of the tribe "as one of the extreme means of getting rain," in accord with an Indian idea that what has once been connected with an effect has the power of reproducing that effect; hence, that the ark could bring rain.

Plumed wands are in constant use in ceremonies and conjurations. Sacred cakes of meal, in various fanciful shapes, are also sacrificed to the gods, and are sometimes tied in festoons about the temple until after the conclusion of the ceremony, when they are eaten by the priests or distributed to the people. Of curious interest are the talismanic rock crystals, which are regarded as "astral bodies" of dead or even living persons. Says Lumholtz: "In the collection I have a father and a mother, a grandfather and a grandmother, of the Indian who sold them to me." The stones are carefully laid away and fed at intervals with the blood of game, like the *Ulûñsúti* of the Cherokee.

Much symbolism attaches also to certain drums, sandals, scepters, bannerets, sea-shells, and flowers, and to certain stuffed animal skins,

notably that of the gray squirrel, which in the primeval time was the protector of the Child Sun. Around the neck of the sacred squirrel-skin are sometimes tied the cocoons of a species of moth found in the eastern country. "These cocoons, which are those of a night animal,—their beds, in which they sleep before coming to life again,—are supposed to be the dreams of the gray squirrel, by which he is guided."

Considerable space is devoted to facial paintings and miscellaneous symbolic objects, while the concluding chapter is a valuable summary of the whole subject, as deduced from the objects and the explanations given by the Indians themselves. Of special value are the appendices, index of prayers, index of symbols, and index of objects and ideas. Throughout the volume are numerous references to the great *hikuli* or peyote cult, which dominates the religious thought of all the tribes of the plains and central plateau from the Arkansas river to the City of Mexico.

The author calls attention to close analogies with beliefs and customs in other tribes, particularly in Mexico and among the more northern Pueblos, and says: "Such phenomena should not cause surprise, as researches tend more and more to convince us of the similarity of Indian thought, under similar conditions." He might have gone farther and predicted that the final result will show a regular and unbroken connection in native cult and culture from the arctic regions to the tropics, of which the ancient systems of Mexico and Yucatan are but the highest development.

From cover to cover the volume is filled with curious information, brought together with painstaking and discriminating care, upon an intricate subject concerning which little that is authentic has hitherto been published.

On page 110 the Doctor says: "To the Indian the Sun, of course, is a man." He probably means a *person*, as with many tribes the Sun is a woman, as it was with the ancient Germans (*die Sonne*).

The illustrations from drawings by Mr Rudolf Weber, with the maps and splendid colored plates, are in keeping with the general excellence of all the publications sent out from the American Museum.

JAMES MOONEY.

The Political Economy of Humanism. By HENRY WOOD. Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1901. 12°, 319 pp.

This book is not a formal treatise in which the principles of political economy are systematically presented, but may be regarded rather as a series of essays on economic questions of current interest, the