

THE "MATACHINA" DANCE.

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The "matachina" is a peculiar religious ceremonial dance of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico. It is a religious rite performed in celebration of the birth of Christ. This dance was acted out at the annual feast of the patron saint, Guadalupe, at Canyon de los Jemez, New Mexico, November 12, 1901.

After mass was given at the holy church of Saint Guadalupe, the dancers, some thirty in number, lined up in two rows with the chief of ceremonies at the front and between the rows. All were masked. The chief of ceremonies wore a mask that resembled the head of a donkey very much; and each of the dancers wore a cloth mask. Each of them also wore a circular cap from which there floated to the breeze variously colored ribbons.

When all the performers were in their proper places, the chief of ceremonies began to writhe and to wriggle his body in a laborious manner. This performance was to indicate that with the birth of Christ a furious battle was waged against sin. As soon as the chief began to perform, the gaudily-attired dancers commenced to move their limbs in a lively manner to the strains of an accordeon. They pranced about much in the same way that a baboon trips about in a cage. This spectacular and, at times, grotesque acting was kept up till the sun set. Then the simple-hearted Indians set out for their homes feeling that they had done their duty, that they had been forgiven for their transgressions and that they would begin a new year with unsullied records.