

THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA INDIANS*

No. VI. [The Pomo and Cahto]

Under the name Pomo are included a great number of tribes, or little bands--sometimes one in a valley, sometimes three or four--clustered in the region where the headwaters of Eel and Russian rivers interlace, along the estuaries of the coast, and around Clear Lake. Really, the Indians all along Russian River to its mouth are branches of this great family, but below Calpello they no longer call themselves Pomos. And, indeed, let a Pomo from Potter Valley--which may be considered the nucleus of the family--descend the river to Cloverdale, and he will have the greatest difficulty in making himself understood. Let him go ten miles further, and he can not recognize over a third of the words spoken, if so many; and at Healdsburg fewer still--so rapidly does the language shade away from valley to valley, from dialect to dialect. Yet I have taken down enough words all along Russian River to be certain that all these dialects are as much descended from the Pomo as English and Italian are from Sanskrit; and, in fact, any Indian living on that river can learn any dialect spoken on its banks much sooner than an American can learn Italian. Following are some of the extreme dialectic variations in this large family of languages: ca, aca, cahto, for "water;" cha, chak, chaboona, ataboonya, "man;" seloo, shunee, "bread;" calleh, callay, "above;" mahsoo, moosoo, "log."

30

In disposition, the Pomos are greatly different from the Yukas or mountain-tribes east of them, who were their hereditary tormentors; being simple, friendly, peaceable, and quite communicative for California Indians. They are less cunning and imitative of the Whites than the Klamath tribes, and decidedly lower in mental gifts, as is attested by their fables, if by nothing else. In physique they are the same as the Sacramento races, and it is not necessary to describe this to California readers.

As usual, they have a certain conception of a Supreme Being; but the attributes of this being are quite negative, and his participation in the creation and government of the world wholly nugatory. Among the Pome Pomos he is named Chacallay, "The Man Above," or "The Strong One Above" (the radical meaning of cha being "strong"); among the Gallinomos, Calletopte, "The Chief Above," or simply Calleh, "Heaven," like the Chinese Shang. But the coyote is all in all. It is singular how great is the regard of the California Indians for this tricky and dishonest beast; he was not only the progenitor, but he has been the constant benefactor, of mankind. And, indeed, he would be a most expressive totem for the whole race, who ought to be called The Coyotes. All their acts of worship, especially of those tribes living on the lower waters of the river, are in honor of birds or animals; or rather--for worship it should not be called--all that they can be said to possess of religion consists of certain propitiatory acts addressed to beasts and birds which they fear as devils. Hence there is one tribe of the family

*Overland Monthly, Vol. 9, pp. 498-507, 1872.

whose name signifies "Snakes," though most of the tribal designations are purely locative. All the up-river branches believe their coyote ancestors were molded, or molded themselves, or somehow got molded, directly from the soil; hence the family name, though it now signifies "people," originally, I think, meant "earth," being manifestly related to the Winton pum or paum, which denotes "earth."

As the Pomos are less warlike, less cunning, and more simple-hearted than the northern tribes, so they are more devoted to amusement. All the tribes hitherto described in these papers engage with frenzied eagerness in gambling, and have numerous varieties of dancing; but the Pomos add to these a kind of tennis, and the down-river tribes also have a curious sort of pantomime or rude theatrical performance, besides Devil Dances, which are very hellish and terrific.

The broadest and most obvious division of this large family is, into Eel River Pomos and Russian River Pomos. There are two tribes on Eel River, between it and South Fork, who call themselves by the name of this family (Castel Pomos and Ki Pomos), though I can scarcely see why, since they have little in common with their Russian River neighbors. They not only speak the language of the Wi Lackees, which is closely related to the Hoopa, but they are fierce and warlike, and in ancient times were involved in almost incessant contention, whereas the right Pomos are notably peaceable.

Of the Castel Pomos I know very little, for in the ferocious and destructive wars which their audacity badgered the Americans into waging upon them, both they and many of the old pioneers went down together. Men now living on South Fork could impart to me little save bald stories of butchery and bloody reprisal. Their range was between the forks of the river, extending as far south as Big Chamise and Blue Rock. They tattooed the face and nose very much in the fashion of the Yukas and Wi Lackees, whom they resembled more than they did the right Pomos. Mr. Burleigh related to me a curious instance which he once saw of tattooing by a brave, which is exceedingly rare, except among the Mattoles; and which was the second case I ever heard of, where any attempt was made to imitate an animal or any natural object. An old warrior whom he once found upon the battle-field at South Fork was tattooed all over his breast and arms, and on the under side of one arm was a very correct and well-executed picture of a sea-otter, with its bushy tail. The second instance was a woman I saw in the Normoc tribe, who had a bird's-wing very neatly pricked on each cheek. Their lodges, implements, etc., require no special description. They formerly burned their dead, which is a true Pomo trait; but what of them now remain have generally adopted the civilized custom, except when one dies at such a distance that the body can not be conveyed home, when they reduce it to ashes for convenience in transportation.

The Ki Pomos dwell on the extreme headwaters of South Fork, ranging eastward to Eel River, westward to the ocean, and northward to the Castel Pomos. With the latter they were ever jangling, and from the manner in which Indian trails are constructed, their battles generally raged on the hill-tops. On the vast, wind-swept, and almost naked hogback between the two forks of Eel River, some thirty miles or more north of Cahto, looming largely up from the broad, grassy back of the mountain,

is the majestic, rugged, isolated boulder called Blue Rock. A few miles still further north there is an enormous section of this mountain-chain, almost entirely covered with evergreen bushes, whence its name, Big Chamise. Between these two points, and more especially about the base of the savage old monster, Blue Rock--a most grim, lonesome, and desolate summit, cloud-haunted as with ghosts-- is one of the most famous ancient battle-grounds of California, where Indian-blood has been poured out like water, and where the ground is yet strewn with flint arrowheads and spearpoints. But the bones of the warriors who perished on this fatal field are no longer visible, having been doubtless consumed on the funeral pyre, and sacredly carried home for interment.

One fact is notable among the Eel River Indians--I observed it more especially of the Ki Pomos--and that is the youthfulness at which they attain the age of puberty. In the warm and sheltered valley of South Fork (however bleak the naked mountain-tops may be in winter), it was a thing not at all uncommon, in the days of the Indians' ancient prosperity, to see a woman become a mother at twelve or fourteen. An instance was related to me where a girl had borne her first-born at ten, as nearly as her years could be ascertained, her husband, a White Man, being then sixty-odd. For this reason or some other, the half-breeds on Eel River are generally sickly, puny, short-lived, and slightly esteemed by the fathers, who not unfrequently bestow them as presents on any one willing to burden himself with their nurture.

Another phenomenon I have observed among California half-breeds, which, when mentioned to others, they have seldom failed to corroborate, and that is, the females generally predominate. Often I have seen whole families of half-breed girls, but never one composed entirely of boys, and seldom one wherein they were most numerous. Probably the phenomenon can be accounted for on the same principle which explains the fact that these lean, old ramrods from Pike, of the genus emigrantes, species remigrantes, who have not enough energy to establish a house and home, are generally blessed with families of daughters. In any event, the fact indicates a certain amount of vitality in the California Indians, notwithstanding they have perished so miserably in the transition from barbarism to culture.

I wish to call attention here to what may be called the peculiar stratification of the tribes in this vicinity. On the northern rivers, which debouch into the ocean very nearly at right angles, each tribe occupies a certain length of the stream on both sides; but on Eel River, South Fork, and Van Dusen's Fork, which flow almost parallel with the coast, every tribe possesses only one bank of a river, unless it chances to dwell between two waters. It would seem that the influence of the ocean has distributed the Indians in certain parallel climatic belts--those living nearest the coast being darker, more obese, more squat in stature, and more fetishistic; while, as you go toward the interior, both the physique and the intelligence gradually improve. This kind of stratification does not prevail on Russian River, for there is no stream parallel; but the tribes living directly east of the valley, in the Coast Range, are conspicuously superior in all manly qualities.

We now commence with the true Pomos. The Cahto Pomos (Lake People) were so called from a little lake which formerly existed in the valley now called by their name. They do not speak Pomo entirely pure, but employ a mixture of that and Wi Lackee. Like the Ki Pomos, their northern neighbors, they forbid their squaws from studying languages--which is about the only accomplishment possible to them, except dancing--principally, it is believed, in order to prevent them from gadding about and forming acquaintances in neighboring valleys, for there is small virtue among the unmarried of either sex. But the men pay considerable attention to linguistic study, and there is seldom one who can not speak most of the Pomo dialects within a day's journey of his ancestral valley. The chiefs especially devote no little care to the training of their sons as polyglot diplomats; and Robert White affirms that they frequently send them to reside several months with the chiefs of contiguous valleys, to acquire the dialects there in vogue.

They construct lodges in the usual manner, and do not differentiate their costumes or utensils to any important extent. In appetite they are not at all epicurean, and in the range of their comestibles they are quite cosmopolitan, not objecting even to horse-steak, which they accept without instituting any squeamish inquiries as to the manner in which it departed this life. They consume tar-weed seed, wild-oats, California chestnuts, acorns, various kinds of roots, ground-squirrels and moles, rabbits, buck-eyes, kelp, yellow-pine bark (at a pinch), clams, salmon, different sorts of berries, etc. Buckeyes are poisonous; they extract the toxical principle by steaming them two or three days underground. They first excavate a large hole, pack it water-tight around the sides, burn a fire therein for some space of time, then put in the buckeyes, together with water and heated stones, and cover the whole with a layer of earth. When they migrate to the ocean in the season of clams, they collect quantities of kelp and chew the same. It is tough as whit-leather, and a young fellow with good teeth will masticate a piece of it a whole day. Kelp tastes a little like a spoiled pickle, and the Indians relish it for its salty quality, and probably also extract some small nutriment of juice therefrom.

33 There is a game of tennis played by the Pomos of which I heard nothing among the northern tribes. A ball is rounded out of an oak-knot, about as large as those generally used by school-boys, and it is propelled by a racket, which is constructed of a long, slender stick, bent double and bound together, leaving a circular hoop at the extremity, across which is woven a coarse mesh-work of strings. Such an instrument is not strong enough for batting the ball, neither do they bat it, but simply shove or thrust it along on the ground.

A game is played in the following manner: They first separate themselves into two equal parties, and each party contributes an equal amount to a stake to be played for, as they seldom consider it worth while to play without betting. Then they select an open space of ground, and establish two parallel base-lines a certain number of paces apart, with a starting-line between, equidistant from both. Two champions, one for each party, stand on opposite sides of the starting-point with their rackets; a squaw tosses the ball into the air, and as it descends the two champions strike at it, and one or the other gets the advantage, hurling it toward his antagonists' baseline. Then there ensues a universal hurly-burly, higgledy-piggledy; men and squaws crushing and bumping--for

squaws participate equally with the sterner sex--each party striving to propel the ball across the enemy's base-line. They enjoy this sport immensely, laugh and vociferate until they are out of all whooping; some tumble down and get their heads batted, and much diversion is created, for they are exceedingly good-natured and free from jangling in their amusements. One party must drive the ball a certain number of times over the other's base-line before the game is concluded, and this not unfrequently occupies them a half-day or more, during which they expend more strenuous endeavor than they would in ten sleeps of honest labor in a squash-field. Let those who accuse the California Indians of being a stupidly sluggish race, remember their exceeding fondness for this game and for open-air dances, which they sometimes protract for two weeks, and retract the charge.

Schoolcraft says, in his "Oneota," that the chiefs and graver men of the Algonquin tribes, however much they encourage the young men in the athletic game of ball-playing, do not lend their countenance to games of hazard. This is not true of the California Indians, however, for here old and young engage with infatuation and recklessness in all games where betting is involved, though, of course, the decrepit can not personally participate in the rude bustle of ball-playing. The aged and middle-aged, squaws, men, and half-grown children, stake on this, as well as on true games of hazard, all they possess--clothing, beads, baskets, fancy bows and arrows, etc. Of the latter articles they frequently have a number made only for gambling purposes--not for use in hunting.

Among the up-country tribes, especially on the Klamath, many women are honored as medicines and prophetesses; but here none at all are admitted to the sacred professions. It is only the masculine sex who receive a call; there is none but braves whom "the spirit moves"--for it is thus that the elect are assured of their divine mission to undertake the healing of men. The methods of practice vary with the varying hour, every physician being governed in his therapeutics by the inspiration of the spirit of the moment; and if he fails in effecting a cure, therefore, the obloquy of the failure recurs upon his familiar. For instance, a medicine will stretch his patient out by a fire, and walk patiently all the livelong day around the fire, chanting to exorcise the demon that is in him. Thus, the modi operandi are as numerous as are the whims of this mysterious medical spirit. Besides these, they have in their pharmacopoeia divers roots, poultices, and decoctions, and frequently scarify their breasts. When the patient goes near to die, he is generally carried forth and cast into the forest, to die alone and unattended; but the mere removal from the abominable smudge and stench of the lodge, and the exposure to the clean, sweet air of heaven, sometimes bring him round, and he returns smiling to his friends, who are nowise pleased. Formerly all the dead were burned, but under the influence of the Americans, a mixed custom prevails. An intelligent Indian told me, that, in case of burial, the corpse was always placed with the head pointing southward. Most of the Indians hitherto described believe the 'Happy Land is in the west or southwest, but evidently their notions are confused. A young man who was born and reared among the Pomos, informed me that they at present burn only those killed or hanged by Americans, and bury the others. I know not if there be any special significance in this discrimination. Robert

White says he has frequently seen an aged Indian (or woman), living in hourly expectation of his demise, go dig his own burial-place, and then repair thither for months together, and eat his poor repast sitting at the mouth of his grave. The same strange, morbid idiosyncrasy prevails among the Wintoons, in the Sacramento Valley. Probably the reason of it is, that the poor old wretches perceive they are a burden and an eyesore to their children. Before the irruption of the Americans had reduced the Cahto Pomos to their present abject misery, they treated their parents with a certain consideration--that is, they would divide with them the last morsel of dried salmon, with genuine savage thriftlessness; but as for any active, nurturing tenderness, it did not exist, or only very seldom. They were only too glad to shuffle off their shoulders the weight of their maintenance. On the other hand, they gave their children unlimited free play. Men who have lived familiarly amidst them for years tell me they never yet have seen an Indian parent chastise his offspring, or correct them any otherwise than with berating words in a frenzy of passion, which also is extremely seldom.

They use an absurd custom of hospitality, which reminds one of the Bedouin Arabs. Let a perfect stranger enter a wigwam, and offer the lodge-father a string of beads for any object that takes his fancy--merely pointing to it, and uttering never a word--and the owner holds himself bound as an Indian gentleman to make the exchange, no matter how insignificant may be the value of the beads. Ten minutes later he may thrust him through with his javelin, or crush in his temple with a pebble from his sling, and the by-standers will account it nothing more than the rectification of a bad bargain.

It is wonderful how these Indians have the forest and plain mapped out on the tablet of their memories. There is scarcely a boulder, gulch, prominent tree, spring, knoll, glade, clump of bushes, cave, or bit of prairie within a radius of ten miles, but nears its distinctive name. Let a hunter penetrate the wood six, eight, ten miles in any direction, knock over a fat-ribbed buck, hang the same in the branches of a tree above the lickerish fangs of the coyote, and return home; and he will gruffly mutter to his squaw (or more probably to his aged father), "Ten paces from the Owl's-head," or "Three bowshots up the Red Water, forty paces toward the Setting Sun;" when, without a word more, she repairs straight to the place, and brings the venison on her shoulders.

Most Indians are christened after animals, birds, fishes, snakes, etc., in accordance with some whimsy, or fancied resemblance in the child's actions or babyish pipings --as Checockaway or Chacacka (quail, an onomatopoeic word), Mesalla (snake), etc.

The Cahto Pomos believe in a terrible and fearful ogre, called Shillaba Shilltoats. He is described as being of gigantic stature, wearing a high-sugar loaf head-dress, clothed in hideous tatters, striding over a mountain or a valley at a single step, and, like the Scandinavian Trolls, a cannibal, having a keen appetite for small boys. He is particularly useful to the hen-pecked Indian, in the regulation and administration of his household affairs, and especially in the "taming of the shrew." When the squaw gets so vixenish that he can not subdue her in any other way, he has only to

shout into the wigwam--with his eyes judiciously dilated and his hair somewhat tousled--and to vociferate, "Shillaba Shilltoats! Shillaba Shilltoats!" when his squaw will scream with terror, fall flat upon the ground, cover her face with her hands--for that squaw dies who is ever so unfortunate as to look upon this dreadful ogre--and remains very tractable for several days thereafter. The children will also be profoundly impressed.

This and the other branches of the Pomo family living nearest the coast believe in a kind of Hedonic heaven for the virtuous; which is eminently characteristic of the race. They hold, that, in some far, sunny island of the Pacific--an island of fadeless verdure; of cool and shining trees, looped with tropic vines; of bubbling fountains; of flowery and fragrant savannas, rimmed with lilac shadows; where the purple and wine-stained waves shiver in a spume of gold across the reefs, shot through and through by the level sunbeams of the morning--they will dwell forever in an atmosphere like that around the Castle of Indolence; for the deer and antelope will joyously come and offer themselves for food, and the red-fleshed salmon will affectionately rub their sides against them, and softly wriggle into their reluctant hands; while bebies of the most ravishingly fat and beautiful maidens will ever attend upon them, and minister to their pleasure. It is not by any means a place like the Happy Hunting Grounds of the lordly and eagle-eyed Dakotahs, where they are "drinking delight of battle" with their peers, or running in the noble frenzy of the chase; but a soft and forgetting land--a sweet, oblivious sleep, awaking only to feast and to carnal pleasure, and then to sleep again. No Indians in California conceive of the future state as one of activity and "bold empires."

As for the bad Indians, they will be obliged to content themselves with a pallingogenesis in the bodies of grizzly bears, cougars, snakes, etc.

Among other noted ceremonials, the Cahto Pomos observe an autumnal Acorn Dance, in which the performers wear the mantles and head-dresses of buzzards' or eagles' tail-feathers customary in this region, and which appears to be like the Thanksgiving Dance of the Humboldt Bay tribes, being accompanied like that by the Oration of Plenty. It is not strictly an anniversary dance, but rather a "movable festival" in the Indian Fasti Dies, celebrated when the crop of acorns has proved generous, but otherwise omitted.

Besides the tribes above described, there are many others--as the Choam Chadela Pomos (Pitch Pine People), in Redwood Valley; the Matomey Ki Pomos (Wooden Valley People), about Little Lake; the Usals, or Camamel Pomos (Coast People), on Usal Creek; the Shebalne Pomos (Neighbor People), in Sherwood Valley; the Pome Pomos (Earth People), in Potter Valley, etc. I have above ventured the suggestion that the word "Pomo" originally signified "earth," and the name of the last tribe strongly corroborates the supposition, since it is definitely known that pome has that meaning; and this tribe believe, as did the ancient Greeks respecting the fabled autochthones, that they, or their coyote ancestors, sprang directly from the bosom of Mother Earth--whence their appellation. Near the head of Potter Valley there is a certain knoll of bright-red earth, curiously different from the circumjacent soil; and they believe that their progeneitors issued forth from this identical knoll. To this day they scrupulously

34 mingle this red earth with their acorn bread--I have seen them doing this--as an act of religion, to purify and preserve their bodies. Besides the Pome Pomos, there are two or three other little rancherias in Potter Valley, each with a different name; and the whole body of them are called Ballo Ki Pomos (Oat Valley People), from the great abundance of wild oats growing here; but the Pome Pomos may stand for all. Many people in California, I believe, hold that wild oats are an acclimated product, having spread from early scatterings left by the Spaniards; but the Indians of this valley have a tradition, or rather they declare, that they have been growing in California so long that they know nothing of their origin. Indeed, the simple fact that this valley bears the name of this cereal indicates for the latter an existence therein coeval with the Indian occupation. Then the question presents itself, How long have the Indians themselves been in the valley? We have the means of making at least a conjecture. This mound of earth above-mentioned is resorted to by them not only for yeast, but also for paint; and the holes which they have excavated in digging for these purposes are very large. Not being accustomed to estimate cubic measurements by the eye, I quote the language of the honest farmer on whose land the mound is, and who guided me thither. He thinks they have quarried out "hundreds of tons." At any rate, one would think they had been occupied in the process a thousand or twelve hundred years. Now, it is probable that they would name the valley upon their first entrance into it, and not change the appellation afterward; from all of which premises it should appear that wild oats were found in the valley when the Indians arrived therein.

In regard of government, the Pomos are less ochlocratic than many up-country tribes. The chiefship is hereditary and dual--which is to say, there are two chiefs, who might be compared, as to their functions, to the Japanese Tycoon and Mikado, in that one administers more particularly the secular affairs, and the other the spiritual. The Indians designate them as the war-chief and the peace-chief (arrow-man), the war-chief becoming the peace-chief when too decrepit to conduct them to battle. The peace-chief is a kind of censor morum --adjusts disputes, delivers moral homilies on certain anniversary occasions, performs the marriage ceremonies (so far as they extend), and watches over the conduct of his people--more especially over the wanton young squaws. Even the war-chief is obedient to him at home; and, in fact, that functionary is of secondary importance, since the Pomos are eminently a peaceable people.

Up to the time when they enter matrimony, most of the young women are a kind of femmes incomprises--the common property of the young men; and after they have taken on them the marriage vow, simple as it is, they are guarded with a Turkish jealousy--for even the married women are not such conjugal models as Mrs. Ford. Indeed, the wantonness of the women is the one great eyesore of the Pomos; and it seems to be almost the sole object of government to keep them in proper subjection and obedience. The one great burden of the harangues delivered by the venerable peace-chief on solemn occasions is the beauty and the excellence of female virute; all the terrors of superstitious sanction and the direst threats of the great prophet are leveled at unchastity; and all the most dreadful calamities and pains of a future state are hung suspended over the heads of those who are persistently lascivious. All the devices the savage cunning can invent--all the mysterious and masquerading horrors

of devil-raising, all the secret and dark sorceries, the frightful apparitions and bugbears--that can be supposed effectual in terrifying the young squaws into virtue, are resorted to by the Pomos.

William Potter, a high authority on Indian matters and master of several dialects, described to me, as far as he was able, a secret society which exists among the Pome Pomos, for the simple purpose, he conjectures, of conjuring up terrors and rendering each other assistance in keeping their women in subordination and chastity, and keeping down smock-treason. Their meetings are held in a special wigwam, constructed of peeled pine-poles, thatched and covered with earth, and painted on the inside red, black, and white (wood-color), in spiral stripes, reaching all the way from the apex to the ground. When they are assembled herein, there is a vigilant door-keeper at the entrance, who suffers no one to enter on any pretext unless he is a regular member, sworn to secrecy. Even Mr. Potter, though held in that entire respect cherished by savages toward a man who has never feared and never deceived them, was not allowed to enter, albeit they offered to initiate him into this freemasonic, misogynist guild, if he so desired. As nearly as can be ascertained, their object is simply to "raise the devil," as they express it, with whom they pretend to hold communications; and to hold other demoniacal doings therein, accompanied by frightful noises of whooping and yelling, to work upon the imaginations of the erring squaws--no whit more guilty than themselves.

Once in seven years the Pome Pomos hold a Dance of Plenty--a great fete-champetre, though without feasting--in which the dancers are costumed in the usual coronals and mantles of long buzzard feathers. This, also, is seized upon as a specially solemn and auspicious occasion for the exhortation of the women to virtue. A rattlesnake is captured in the forest some days beforehand, its fangs are plucked out, and it is handled, fed, and tamed, so that it can be displayed without peril on the great day approaching. The usual dancing and chanting of these occasions are kept up for a certain number of days, and then the people assemble to listen to the oration. The venerable white-haired peace-chief takes his station before the multitude, in front of his wigwam, or perhaps under the branches of some great, overshadowing white oak, with the rattlesnake before him as the visible incarnation of the devil (Yukukoola). Slowly and sonorously he begins, speaking to them of morality, industry, and obedience. Then, warming with his subject, and brandishing the horrid reptile in his hand, full in the faces and over the heads of his shuddering auditors, with solemn and awful voice he warns them to beware, and threatens them with the direst wrath of the dreadful Yukukoola, if they do not live lives of chastity, decency, and sobriety, until some of the terrified squaws shriek aloud, and fall in a swoon upon the ground.

Having such an intolerable deal of pother as they do with own women, to keep them in a proper mood of humbleness, these Pomos make it a special point to slaughter those of their enemies, when the chances of battle give them an opportunity. They do this because, as they urge, with the greatest sincerity, one woman destroyed is tantamount to five men killed. They argue that to exterminate their enemies, the most effectual way is to begin at the source.

In another direction, however, the women exercise large authority. When an Indian becomes too infirm to serve any longer as a warrior or hunter, he is thenceforth condemned to life of a menial and a scullion. He is compelled to assist the squaws in all their labors: in picking acorns and berries, in thrashing out seeds and wild oats, making bread, drying salmon, etc. As the women have entire control of these matters, without interference from their lords, these superannuated warriors come entirely under their authority, as much as children, and are obliged to obey their commands implicitly. We may well imagine that the squaws, in revenge for the ignoble and terrorizing surveillance to which they are subjected by the braves, not unfrequently domineer over these poor old nonagenarians with hardness, and make them feel their humility keenly. Cronise, in his "Natural Wealth of California," makes mention of an ancient tradition, to the effect that when the Spaniards first arrived in California, they found a tribe, in what is now Mendocino County, in which the squaws were Amazons, and exercised a gynocracy. I am inclined to think the fable was not without foundation. When we consider the infinite trouble which the Pomo find it necessary to give themselves in order to keep the women in subjection, and also that the latter actually bear despotic rule over childhood and senility--the beginning and the ending of human life--we can easily perceive that these Pomo wives are stronger than the common run of Indian women. At least, by diligent inquiry, I never found any other trace of such a race of Amazons.

The Pome Pomo believe that lightning is the origin of fire; that the primordial bolt which fell from heaven deposited the spark in the wood, so that it now comes forth when two pieces are rubbed together. As to the lightning itself, they believe it be hurled by the Great Man above, as it was by Jupiter Tonans.

Their Happy Land is in the heavens above us, to which, like the Buddhists, they think they will ascend by a ladder. The souls of the wicked will fall off in the ascent, and descend to some negative and nondescript limbo, where they will be neither happy nor tormented, but rove vacantly and idly about forevermore; while others, in punishment for their greater wickedness, will transmigrate into grizzly bears, or into rattlesnakes condemned to crawl over burning sand, or into other animals which are obliged to suffer hunger and thirst. (To a California Indian, a place where he is hungry is Hades). They hold and believe that every grizzly bear is some old savage Indian, thus returned to this world to be punished for his wickedness.

LEGEND OF THE COYOTE.

Once upon a time there lived a man among the Yukas, of the Black Chief's tribe, fierce and terrible, with two sons like himself--bloody-minded and evil men. For their great wickedness, he and his two sons were turned into coyotes. They they started from Rice's Fork and journeyed southward, biting and slaying all the beasts they came upon. As they passed over the defile to come into Potter Valley, one of the coyote sons drank so much water from the spring near the summit that he died, and his father buried him, and heaped over him a cairn of stones, and wept for his son. Then they journeyed on through Potter Valley, and went down to Clear Lake; and there the

other son drank so much water that he died also, and his father buried him and wept sore. Then the father turned back and went on alone to a place called White Buttes, and came unto it, and discovered there much red alabaster, of which the Pomos make beads to this day, which are to the common shell-beads as gold to silver. And when he had discovered the red alabaster at White Buttes, his hair and his tail dropped off his body, he stood up on his hind legs, and became a man again.

The interpretation of this legend is difficult, and its meaning mysterious. The Tahtos have the same fable in a slightly different form, which circumstance throws some little light on its signification. From both taken together we gather darkly that there was once a memorable and terrible drought in this region, during which Eel River totally disappeared, and there was no water anywhere, except in Clear Lake, and a little in the spring at the head of Potter Valley, near the cairn in the pass. Both tribes account for the heap of stones in the same manner; and the simple fact that they resort to a legend to explain its existence, when it was so manifestly made to mark the boundary-line, indicates that it must have been heaped up hundreds of years ago. Mystery, like moss, always gathers upon anything that is ancient; and these fables, originated in explanation of so patent a matter, argue the high antiquity of the Indians. The Tahtos, living at the head of Potter Valley, also have traditions of two monstrous reptiles, one of which was a hundred feet long and had a horn on its forehead, and the other long enough to reach around a mountain, where it died, leaving a circle of bones which it was death for any Indian to cross over. It is held that the Indians of Virginia had a fable of the mammoth, which is related by Jefferson; so it would seem that the Tahtos may have arrived in the country at a time contemporaneous with the last of a species of saurians now extinct. These things go to confirm the theory of a great antiquity, which I ventured to found on the above legend.