THE CALIFORNIA INDIANS*

No. VII. The Meewocs

(36)

By far the largest nation, or group, in California, both in population and in extent of territory, is the Meewocs, whose ancient dominion extended from the snow-line of the Sierra to the San Joaquin River, and from the Cosumnes to the Fresno. When we reflect that the mountain valleys were thickly peopled east as far as the uppermost end of Yosemite (in summer, much further up), and consider the extent of the San Jaoquin plains--which to-day produce a thousand bushels of wheat for every white inhabitant, old and young, in some sections--then add to this the long and fish-thronged streams, the Mokelumne, the Stanislaus, the Tuolumne, the Merced, the Chowchilla, and the San Joaquin encircling all--along whose banks the Indians anciently dwelt in great numbers--we see what an area there was for a dense population. Even Feather Island, in the San Joaquin, contains the ruins of a village, constructed in their peculiar military style, consisting of many scores of dwellings. The fertile bottom-lands along the lower Stanislaus, Tuolumne, and Merced, especially, are said to have been most thickly studded with villages; averaging each over twenty-five, between the San Joaquin and the foot-hills.

And yet, broadly extended as it was, and feeble or wholly dormant as was the national life, or consciousness of unity, this people possess a language more homogeneous than many another not half so widely ramified. An Indian may start from the extreme upper end of Yosemite, and travel with the sun 150 miles to the San Joaquin--a long distance to travel in California without encountering a new tongue--and still make himself understood, with little difficulty. Another may journey from the Cosumnes to the Fresno, crossing three rivers, which the timid race had no means of ferrying over save casual logs, and still he will hear the familiar numerals, with scarcely the change of a syllable, and he can squat down with a new-found acquaintance, and impart to him hour-long communications, with only about the usual supplement and bridging of gesture. There are, as always, many and rapid dialectic departures, but the root remains, and is quickly caught by the Indian of another dialect; while there are not so often whole cohorts of words swinging loose from the language, and passing into oblivion, as one journeys along. In the Neeshenam territory it is like the march of a regiment through a hostile country--every ten miles you go, there is a clean breach of a whole battalion of words, which are replaced by others totally different; but in the Meewoc, they keep their places better, though they change their uniforms often. For instance, north of the Stanislaus they call themselves Meewoc (Indians); south of it, to the Merced, Meewa; south of that, to the Fresno, Meewie. On the upper Merced, "river" is wakalla; on the upper Tuolumne, wakalumy; on the Stanislaus and Mokelumne, wakalumytoh--being undoubtedly the origin of the word "Mokelumne," as cossoom, or cossoomy (salmon), is of "Cosumnes." For the words "grizzly bear" there exist, in different dialects, all

---

* Overland Monthly, Vol. 10, pp. 322-333, 1873.

the following forms: oozoomite, osoamite, uhzoomite, uhzoomituh.

Their language is not lacking in words and phrases of greeting, which are full of Indian character. When one meets a stranger, he generally salutes him "Wooneh?" " whence do you come?" Sometimes it is "Weoh ucooh?" about equivalent to "how do you do?" How like the savage! With the infinite inquisitiveness and suspicion of the race, touching a stranger, he desires to know from what quarter he hails, whither he is bound, on what business etc., etc. After the stranger has answered the third or fourth question, he frequently volunteers the remark, "Haykangma," "I am hungry;" which seldom fails to procure as substantial a response as the larder will allow. Perhaps he will acknowledge it with "Coonee," "thank you;" more probably not. When the guest is ready to take his departure he never fails to say, "Wooksemussy," "I am going." To this the host replies. "Cotoellay," "you go ahead"--a complimentary expression which arose from the custom of walking single file.

Some of the idioms are curiously characteristic of that point-no-point style which savages have in common with children. Thus, hyem is "near;" and hyetkem is also "near," but not quite so near; and cotun is "away off." Yet, the latter may not be so very distant, after all; for tolleh is the bank of a river, and cotun tolleh is the opposite bank, though you could fling a stone across. Chuto is "good;" chutosekay is "very good."

While this is undoubtedly the largest, it is, also, probably the lowest nation in California; and it presents one of the most hopeless and saddening spectacles of heathen races. According to their own confession, to-day, in former times both sexes, and all ages, went absolutely naked. All of them, north of the Stanislaus at least, and probably many south also, not only married cousins, but herded together so indiscriminately in their wigwams, that not a few Americans believe and assert, to this day, the monstrous proposition, that sisters were frequently taken for wives. But this is mainly false. The Indians all deny it, emphatically; and not one of their accusers could produce an instance, having been deceived into the belief by the general circumstance above-mentioned. They eat all creatures that swim in the waters, all that fly through the air, and all that creep, crawl, or walk upon the earth, with, perhaps, a dozen exceptions. They have the most degraded and superstituous beliefs in wood-spirits, who produce those disastrous conflagrations to which California is subject; in water-spirits, who inhabit the rivers, consume the fish, and work all manner of evil and malignity upon men; and in fetichistic spirits, who assume the forms of owls and other birds, to render their existence a torment and a terror, from the baby-basket to the grave. In occasional specimens of noble physical stature they were not lacking, especially in Yosemite and other elevated valleys; but the utter weakness, puerility, and imbecility of their conceptions, and the unspeakable obscenity of some of their legends, almost surpass human belief. But the saddest and gloomiest thing connected with the Meewocs is the fact, that many of them--probably a majority of all who entertain any well-defined notions whatever on the subject, believe in the annihilation of the soul after death, escpecailly in the case of the wicked. When an Indian's friend departs the earth, he mourns him with that great and bitter sorrow of one who is without hope. He will live no more forever. All that he possessed is burned with him upon the funeral-pyre,

in order that nothing may remain to remind them afterward of one who is gone into black oblivion. So awful to them is the thought of one who is gone down to eternal nothingness, that his name is never afterward even whispered; if one of his friends is so unfortunate as to possess the same name, he changes it for another; and if, at any time, they are compelled to mention the departed, with bated breath and mournful softness they murmur simply "Itteh," "him." Himself, his identity, is gone; his name is lost; he is blotted out; itteh represents merely the being that once was. Like all the other tribes of sunny California, they are gay and jovial through their lives; but, while most of the others have a mitigation of the final terrors in the assured belief of an immortality in the "Happy Western Land," the Meewocs go down, with a grim and stolid sullenness, to the death of a dog, that will live no more. It is necessary to say, however, that not all entertain this belief; but it seems to prevail more especially south of the Merced, and among the more grave and thoughtful of these. Throughout the whole Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys one will occasionally meet an Indian who believes in annilhilation; but nowhere so many as among the Meewocs.

As to tribal distribution, the Meewocs north of the Stanislaus, like the Neeshenams, designate principally by the points of the compass. These are toomun, choomuch, hayzooit, and olowit (north, south, east, and west), from which are formed various tribal names--as Toomuns, Toomedocs, and Tamolecas; Choomuch, Choomwits, Choomedocs or Chimedocs, and Choomteyas; Olowits, Olowedocs, Oloweeyas, etc. Olowedocs is the name applied to all Indians living on the plains, as far west as Stockton.

But there are several names which are employed absolutely, and without any reference to direction. On the south bank of the Cosumnes are the Cawnees; on Sutter Creek, the Yulonees; on the Stanislaus and Tuolumne, the extensive tribe of Wallies; in Yosemite, the Awanees; on the south fork of the Merced, the Nootchoos; on the middle Merced, the Choomteyas; on the upper Chowchlla, the Hethtoyas; on the middle Chowchilla, the tribe that named the stream; and on the north bank of the Fresno, the Pohoneeche es. There were probably others besides these, especially on the plains; but they have been so long extinct, that their names are forgotten. Dr. Bunnell mentions the "Potoencies," but no Indian had ever heard of such a tribe; also, the "Honachees," which is probably a mistake for Monachees--a name applied, on King's River, to the Piutes.

The name "Wallie" has been the subject of no little discussion. Some assert that it is a word applied by the pioneers to the Indians, without any particular meaning; others, that it is an aboriginal word, denoting "friend." The latter theory probably had its origin from the fact that these Indians, on meeting each other, frequently cry out"Wallie! wallie!" As a matter of fact, it is derived from the word wallim, which means simply "down below;" and it appears to have been originated by the Yosemite Indians, and applied to the lower tribes with a slight feeling of contempt, for which there was some ground. The Indians on the Stanislaus and the Tuolumne use the term freely in conversing among themselves; but on the Merced it is not heard, except among the Americans. The Yosemite Indians despised the Wallies because they could not make bows (having no suitable timber), and had no pluck; the Wallies, in turn, affected to despise those north of the Stanislaus and down on the plains, because they married cousins.

Perhaps the only special features to be noted in their physiognomy, are the smallness of their heads, and the flatness of some of them on the sinciput, caused by their lying on the hard baby-basket when infants. I felt the heads of a village near Chinese Camp, and was surprised at the diminutive balls which lurked within their masses of hair, though perhaps others in the State would reveal the same feature. The Chief, Captain John, was at least seventy years old, yet his head was still perceptibly flattened on the back, and I could almost encircle it with my hands.

All the dwellers on the plains, and as far up on the mountains as the cedar-line, bought all their bows and most of their arrows from the upper mountaineers. An Indian is about ten days in making a bow, and it costs $3, $4, or $5, according to workmanship; an arrow, 12½ cents. Three kinds of money were employed in this traffic. White shell-beads, or rather buttons, pierced in the centre and strung together, were rated at $5 a yard; periwinkles, at $1 a yard; fancy marine shells, at various prices, from $3 to $10, or $15, according to their beauty.

The chief or headman of a village is little more than a master of ceremonies. When he decides to hold a dance in his village, he dispatches messengers to the neighboring rancherias, each bearing a string whereon is tied a certain number of knots. Every morning thereafter the invited chief unties one of the knots, and when the last but one is reached, they joyfully set forth for the dance--men, women, and children--all, without any exception.

Occasionally there arises a great orator or prophet, who wields a wide influence, and exerts it to introduce such reforms as seem to him desirable. Old Sam, of Jackson, was such a one. Sometimes he would set out on a speaking or lecturing tour, traveling (37) many miles in all directions, and speaking with great fervor and eloquence nearly all night, according to accounts. Shortly before I passed through that region, he had introduced two reforms (whether permanently or not, can not be here stated), at which the reader will probably smile, but which were certainly in the right direction. One was, that the Indians no longer tarred their heads in token of mourning, but painted their faces--paint being so much easier to scrape off. The other was, that, instead of holding an annual "cry," or Dance of Weeping, in memory of the dead, they should dance and chant dirges. In one of his speeches to his people, he is reported to have counseled them to live at peace with the Americans, to treat them kindly, and avoid quarrels whenever possible, for they were weak, and it was worse than useless to contend against their conquerors. He then diverged into remarks on household economy: "Do not waste cooked victuals. You never have too much, anyhow. The Americans do not waste their food. They work for it, and take care of it. They keep it in their houses, out of the rain. You let the squirrels get into your acorns. When you eat a piece of pie, you eat it up as far as the apple goes, then throw the crust into the fire. When you have a pancake left, you throw it to the dogs. Every family should keep only one dog. It is wasteful.

Typocksie, Chief of the Chimteyas, was a notable Indian in his generation, holding undisputed sovereignty in the valley of the Merced, from South Fork to the plains. Early every morning, as soon as the families had had time decently to prepare breakfast, he would step out before his wigwam and lift up his sonorous voice like a

Stentor, summoning the whole village to work in the gold-diggings; and himself went forth to share the labor of the humblest. Men, women, and children went out together, taking their dinners along, and the village was totally deserted until about three o'clock, (38) when they ended their labor for the day. Every one worked hard, inspired by the example of their great chieftain, the men making dives into the Merced of a minute or more, and bringing up the fat gravel, while the women and children washed it on shore. They got abundance of gold and lived in civilized luxury as long as Typocksie was alive. He is described by one who knew him well as a magnificent specimen of a savage, standing full six feet high, straight and sinewy, shiny-black as an Ethiopian, with eyes like an eagle's, a high forehead, and nostrils strongly walled, each of them showing a clean, bold ellipse. He died in 1857, and was buried in Rum Hollow with unparalledled pomp and splendor. Over 1,200 Indians were present at his funeral. After this grand old barbarian was gone, his tribe speedily went to the bad; their industry disappeared; their gold was gambled away; their fine clothes followed hard after it; dissension, disease, and death scattered them to the four winds.

Among the Meewocs, when a maiden is married, it is not her father who receives the presents made by the bridegroom, but her mother. Sometimes the bride is carried to the lodge of her husband on the shoulders of a stalwart brave, amid a joyous throng, singing songs, dancing, leaping, and whooping. In partial return for the presents given by the groom to his mother-in-law, his father-in-law gives the young couple various substantial articles, such as are needed in the scullery, to set them up in housekeeping. In fact, here, as generally throughout the State, it is a kind of established usage that the parents are to do everything for their children, and the latter nothing, until they marry. The children run wild and learn nothing useful but what they please. More than that, the Meewoc father often continues these presents of flesh and acorns to the young couple for several years after their marriage. And what is his reward? When he waxes old, he is treated little better than a slave, and has to shift pretty much for himself. This is too much the case among all peoples, civil or savage.

(39) In case of the birth of twins, one of them is invariably destroyed, though there seems to be no other form of infanticide. It is the universal sentiment that two babes are an excessive burden to the mother, and their ingenuity has never compassed the imprating of nutriment from a bottle. Mention is made of a squaw named Haoocheah, living near Murphy's, who, in 1858, gave birth to twins and destroyed one, with the approval of all her kindred.

Part of their physicians are men, and part women. Scarification and prolonged suction with the mouth are their staple methods. In case of colds and rheumatism, they apply California balm of Gilead, externally and internally, with good results. Stomachic affections and severe travail are treated with a plaster of hot ashes and moist earth spread on the stomach. They believe that their male physicians, who are more properly sorcerers, can sit on a mountain-top fifty miles distant from a man they wish to destroy, and compass his death by flipping poison toward him from their fingerends. The physician's prerogative is, that he must always be paid in advance; hence, a man seeking his services, brings his offering along--a fresh-slain deer, or so many yards

of shells, or something--and flings it down before him without a word, thus intimating that he desires the worth of that in medicine and treatment. The patient's prerogative is, that, if he dies, his friends may kill the doctor.

In the Acorn Dance, in autumn, the whole company join hands and dance in a circle, men and women alternating--a position of equality not often accorded to the gentle sex. They generally have to dance by themselves, or at least in the outer circle, behind their partners! Besides this anniversary or fixed dance, there are others, ordinary fandangos (calteh), for feasting and amusement. They resemble a civilized ball somewhat, inasmuch as the young men of the village giving the entertainment contribute to a purse wherewith to purchase a large quantity of rabbits, wild fowl, acorns, sweet roots, and other delicacies (nowadays, generally a bullock, sheep, flour, fruit, etc.). Then they select an open, sunny glade, far within some sequestered forest, where they will not be disturbed by intruders, and plant green branches of trees in the ground, forming a large circle. Grass and pine-straw are scattered within, to form at once a dancing-floor and a divan. Runners are then dispatched to all the villages in the vicinity to invite the people, and here they collect and spend several days--sometimes a week--gambling, feasting, and sleeping in the breezy shade by day; and by night dancing to lively tunes, with execrable and most industrious music, and wild, dithyrambic crooning of chants, and indescribable dances, now sweeping around in a ring beneath the overhanging pine-boughs, and now stationary in a kind of piton-rod dance, with rustling plumes and jingling beadery--at this day replaced by the rags they have got of civilization.

Every autumn brings around the Annual Mourning (nootyu); and occasionally, in case of a high personage, there is a special mourning, fixed by appointment a few months after his death. Both are alike. A whole village or several villages assemble together, generally in the evening, seat themselves on the ground in a circle, and engage in loud and demonstrative wailing, beating themselves and tearing their hair. The squaws wander off into the forest, wringing their arms piteously, beating the air, weeping with upturned eyes, and adjuring the departed ones of the year, whom they tenderly call "dear child," or "cousin," to return. Sometimes, during a sort of trance or frenzy of sorrow, a squaw will dance three or four hours in the same place without cessation, crooning a dismal noise. Others, with arms interlocked, walk to and fro in a beaten path for fours, chanting weird death-songs, with eldritch, inarticulate wailings--sad voicings of savage sorrow. On the Merced, the women do not apply pitch over the whole head, but only a small blotch under the ears, while the younger squaws singe their hair short. When some near relative chances to be absent at the time of the funeral, some article belonging to the deceased (frequently a hat, nowadays) is preserved from the general sacrifice of his effects, and retained until this person returns, that the sight of it may kindle his sorrow, and awaken in his bosom fresh and percing recollections of that being whom he will never more behold. On the lower Tuolumne, after dancing a frightful death-dance around the grave into which they have just lowered the body, they go out of mourning, by removing the pitch, until the Annual Mourning comes round, when they renew it. On the latter occasion, they fashion out of clothing and blankets a rude effigy to represent the deceased person or

persons, and carry it around the graves with doleful laments. Perchance the soul of the departed may have lost its way to the Happy Western Land, and be wandering sad and houseless on earth; but it will now joyfully enter the effigy, and, by the swift, bright flames, be started on its road afresh.

As soon as the Annual Mourning is over, they heat water and scour off the pitch; then all the relatives are at full liberty to engage in their ordinary pursuits, attend dances, etc., which before were interdicted. That solemn occasion itself too frequently winds up with a debauch of sensuality.

The oldest brother is entitled to his brother's widow, and he may even convey her to his wigwam on the way home from the funeral, if he is so disposed, though it would be accounted hardly less unseemly than among civilized people.

Though incremation very generally prevails among the Meewocs, the time never was when it was universal. Captain John states, that, long before they had ever seen any Europeans, the Indians high up in the mountains buried their dead, though his people, living about Chinese Camp, always burned, as low down on the Stanislaus as Robinson's Ferry, the action of the river has revealed long ranks of skeletons--three or four feet beneath the surface, doubled up, and covered with stones--of which none of the bones showed any charring.

In respect of legends, they relate one which is very remarkable. First, it is necessary to state that there is a lake, or an expansion of the river, some four miles long and from a half-mile to a mile wide, on the upper Tuolumne, directly north of Hatchatchie Valley. I know no name for it except the aboriginal one, Owyanuh (clearly a dialectic variation of awya, which denotes "lake"). Nat Screech, a veteran mountaineer and hunter, relates that he visited this region in 1850, and at that time there was a valley along the river, having the same dimensions that this lake now has. Again, in 1855, he happened to pass that way, and discovered that the lake had been formed as it now exists. He was totally at a loss to account for its origin; but subsequently he learned the Meewoc language, of the dialect spoken at Little Gap, and, while listening to the Indians one day, he overheard them casually refer to the formation of this lake in an (40) extraordinary manner. Upon being questioned, they stated that there had been a tremendous cataclysm in that valley, the bottom of it having fallen out apparently, whereby the entire valley was submerged in the waters of the Tuolumne. As nearly as he could ascertain from their imperfect methods of reckoning time, this occurred in 1851; and, in that year, while in the town of Sonora, Screech and many others remembered to have heard a huge explosion in that direction, which they then supposed was caused by a local earthquake.

On Drew's Ranch, Middle Fork of the Tuolumne, still lives an aged squaw, called Dischee, who was present when this remarkable event occurred. According to her account, the earth dropped in beneath their feet, and the waters of the river leaped up and came rushing upon them in a vast, roaring flood, almost perpendicular, like a wall of rock. The Indians were stricken dumb and motionless with terror by the

awful noise, but when they saw the waters coming, they escaped for life, though thirty or forty were overtaken and drowned. Another squaw, named Isabel, relates that the stubs of trees, which are still plainly visible deep down in the pellucid waters, are considered by the older and more superstitious Indians to be evil spirits, reaching up their arms to grasp them, and that they fear them greatly. The story of the origin of this Tuolumne lake, if true, is valuable, as going to corroborate Professor Whitney's theory of the formation of Yosemite Valley.

An Indian of Garrote narrated to me a legend of the creation of man and woman by the coyote, which contained a large amount of aboriginal dirt. Yet this story, with all its unclean particulars, was related by him with the most straightforward and profound gravity, though surrounded by his whole family. Most of their fables are pure, and some are rather pretty, but when they do verge into impurity, they become the most monstrous and revolting excrescences that ever grew out of the mind of man. Following is a fable told at Little Gap:

CREATION OF MAN.

After the coyote had finished all the work of the world and the inferior animals, he called a council of them to deliberate on the creation of man. They sat down in an open space in the forest, all in a circle, with the lion at the head. On his right sat the grizzly bear, next the brown bear, and so on around, according to rank, ending with the little mouse, which sat at the lion's left.

The lion was the first to speak; and he declared he should like to see a man created with a mighty voice, like himself, wherewith he could frighten all animals. For the rest, he would have him well covered with hair, terrible fangs in his jaws, strong talons, etc.

The grizzly bear said it was ridiculous to have such a voice as his neighbor, for he was always roaring with it, and scared away the very prey he wished to catch. He thought the man ought to have prodigious strength, and move about silently, but very swiftly when necessary, and be able to grip his meat without making any noise.

The buck said the man would look very foolish, in his way of thinking, unless he had a magnificent pair of horns on his head with which to fight. He also thought it was very absurd to roar so loudly, and he would pay less attention to the man's throat than he would to his ears and his eyes, for he would make the one like a spider's web, and the other like fire.

The mountain sheep protested he never could see what sense there was in such horns, spreading every way, only to get caught in the branches. If the man had horns neatly rolled up, they would be like a stone on each side of his head, giving weight, so that he could butt a great deal harder.

When it came the coyote's turn to speak, he declared all these were the stupidest speeches he ever listened to, and that he could hardly keep awake while such noodles and

nincompoops were talking. Every one of them wanted to make the man just like himself. They might as well take one of their own cubs and call it a man. As for himself, he very well knew that he was not the best animal that could be made, and he could make one a great deal better than himself. Of course, he would be like himself in having four legs, five fingers on each, etc. It was well enough to have a voice like the lion's, but it should also be as small as that of the little mouse sometimes. The grizzly bear also had some good points, one of which was the shape of his feet, by which he could stand up if he wished, and he was in favor of making the man's feet nearly the same. The grizzly was also happy in having no tail, for he had learned from his own experience that that organ served principally as a harbor for fleas. The buck's eyes and ears were pretty good, also--perhaps better than his own. Then there was the fish, which was naked, and which he envied, because hair was a burden most of the year; so he favored a man without hair. His claws ought to be as long as the eagle's, so that he could hold things in them. But, with all their separate gifts, they must acknowledge that there was no animal besides himself that had wit enough to supply the man; and he felt obliged, therefore, to make him like himself in that respect--cunning and crafty.

After the coyote had made an end, the beaver said that he had never heard such arrant twaddle in his life. No tail, indeed! He would make a man with a broad, flat tail, so that he could haul mud and sand on it.

The owl declared all the animals seemed to have lost their senses; none of them proposed to give man wings. For himself, he could not see of what use anything on earth would be to him without wings.

The mole said it was perfect folly to talk about wings, for with wings the poor man would be certain to fly up and crack his noddle against the sky. Besides, if he had eyes, he would be certain to get them singed against the sun; but without eyes, he could burrow in the cool, soft earth, and be happy.

Last of all, the little mouse squeaked out that he would make a man with eyes, of course, so he could see what he was eating; and as for burrowing in the ground, that was a humbug.

So they all disagreed, and the council broke up in a row. The coyote flew at the beaver, and nipped a piece out of his cheek; the owl jumped on the coyote's head, and commenced lifting his scalp; and so they all got to fighting. But finally they stopped, and taking each a lump of clay, they commenced molding a man according to their ideas; but the coyote began to make one like that he described. It was so late when they fell to work, that nightfall had come on before any one had finished his model, and they laid down and fell dead asleep. But the cunning coyote remained awake, and worked hard on his model all night. When all the other animals were fast asleep, he went slyly around and threw water on their models, and so spoiled them. In the morning, early, he finished his, and gave it life before the others could make new models; and so it was that man was created by the coyote.

YOSEMITE.

There is good reason for believing that, if the Indians could know how much more we have extracted from their words and legends than they ever put into them, they would be very much amused. All California Indian names which possess any significance whatever, are to be interpreted on the plainest, most obvious, and even the most prosaic principles; whereas, the grim walls of Yosemite have been made by White men to blossom with aboriginal poetry, like a page of "Lala Rookh." From the "Great Chief of the Valley," and "Goddess of the Valley," down to the "Cataract of Diamonds," the sumptuous imaginations of various discoverers have trailed through that wonderful gorge blazons of mythological heraldry and pageantry of demigods of more than oriental gorgeousness. It would be a thousand pities, truly, if the aborigines could not have succeeded in interpreting more poetically the meanings of the place than our countrymen have in such misearably bald appellations as "Nevada Fall," "Vernal Fall," and similar names; and whether they did or did not, they were not such maunderers as to perpetrate the melodramatic and dime-novel shams that have been fathered upon them.

In the first place, they never knew of any such locality on earth as Yosemite Valley. Second, there is not now, and never has been, anything in that valley which the Indians called Yosemite. Third, they never called Old Ephraim himself Yosemite. Lastly, there is no such word in the Meewoc language as Yosemite.

The valley has been known to the Indians from time immemorial as Awanee. True, this is only the name of one of the ancient villages which it contained; but this village was the metropolis of the valley, and gave its name by pre-eminence to the whole ot it; and, in accordance with the Indian custom, to the inhabitants of the same. In all the dialects north of the Stanislaus, the word for "grizzly bear" is oozoomite; at Little Gap, osoamite; in Yosemite, oozoomite; on the South Fork of the Merced, uhzoomituh. How this was ever corrupted into its present form, and applied to the whole valley, when there is only one rock known by this name to the Indians, is curious. Mr. J. M. Hutchings, in his "Guide Book," states that the pronunciation on the South Fork is "Yohamite;" and some years ago there was an acrid controversy between the partisans of that word and those of "Yosemite." Now, there is occasionally an Indian among the Meewocs who might be called a cockney, as he never can get the "haitches" right. Different ones will pronounce the word for "wood" susueh and huhueh; also, the word for "eye" hunta and shunta. But no one of at least a score that I asked ever gave other than one of the three pronunciations above set down.

Elsewhere in California, the aboriginal names have effected such slight lodgment in the atlases, that it is seldom worth while to spend any considerable time in seeking to set them right. Here it is different. Professor Whitney and Mr. Hutchings, in their works on the valley, both state that they derived their information concerning names, etc., from White men only. The Indians certainly have a right to be consulted in this department of knowledge; and if they differ from the interpreters, every right-thinking man will accept the statement of an intelligent savage as against a half-dozen White men. As for any connected, lucid account of his customs, he can not give it;

but if he does not know the single words of his own language, pray who does? Acting on this belief, I employed Choko (a dog), generally known as "Old Jim," and accounted the wisest native head in the valley, to go with me around it, and name in detail all the places. He is, or claims to be, one of the very few original Awanees now living; for a California Indian, he is exceptionally frank and communicative; and he is as full of talk and as truthful as he is shiftless--a kind of aboriginal Sam Lawson. He was even pig-headed in his persistency about certain little embellishments which White men had added to the valley legend, which he considered spurious, and which he would have none of. "White man too much lie," said he, when I tried, by way of experiment, to induce him to lend his countenance and authority to some of these extra-official touches. He little knew how miserably he was hacking down the gorgeous stories related by the guide-books; but I strongly suspect he is far better authority than they, and that the simple and even bald narrations he gave are nearer the truth than those of others. A magazine (41) article is no place for a dry list of names, neither is there space to give more than one of the legends.

The extreme narrowness of range of the California Indians' knowledge is aptly shown in their frequent lack of specific names. Thus, the Merced is Wakalla, which is simply "the river;" Yosemite Fall is Choloc, which is "the fall;" and Mirror Lake is Awya, which is "the lake." They knew so little of the great world that it was not necessary for them to designate which river or which lake.

The name Tutochanula is a permutative substantive, formed from the verb tultakana, which means "to creep like a measuring-worm;" and means also the worm itself. Hence this name may be interpreted "Measuring-worm Stone," or "Rock of Degrees;" and the story from which it originated is as follows:

LEGEND OF TUTOCHANULA.

There were once two little boys living in the valley, who went down to the river to swim. After paddling and splashing about to their hearts' content, they went on shore, and crept up on a huge bowlder that stood beside the water, on which they laid down in the warm sunshine to dry themselves. They soon fell asleep, and they slept so soundly that they never wakened more. Through sleeps, moons, and snows, winter and summer, they slumbered on. Meanwhile, the great rock whereon they slept was treacherously rising, day and night, little by little, until it soon bore them up beyond the sight of their friends, who sought them everywhere, weeping. Thus they were borne up, at last, beyond all human help or reach of human voice--lifted up, inch by inch, into the blue heavens--far up, far up, until their faces scraped the moon; and still they slumbered and slept, year after year, year after year. Then at length, upon a time, all the animals assembled together to bring down the little boys from the top of the mighty rock. Every animal made a spring up the face of the wall as far as he could leap. The little mouse could only jump up a hand-breadth; the rat, two hand-breadth; the raccoon, a little higher; and so on: the grizzly bear making a prodigious leap far up the wall, but falling back, in vain, like all the others. Last of all, the lion tried, and he jumped up higher than any other animal had; but he fell down flat on his back. Then came along an insignificant measuring-worm, which even the mouse could have crushed

by treading on it, and began to creep up the rock. Step by step, step by step, a little at a time, he measured his way up, until presently he was above the lion's jump; then, pretty soon, out of sight. So he crawled up, and up, and up, through many long sleeps, for about one whole snow, and at last he reached the top. Then he took the little boys, and came down the same way he went up, and brought them safe down to the ground. And so the rock was called after the measuring-worm (tultakana), Tutochanula.

This is not only a true Indian story, but it has a pretty meaning, being a kind of parallel to AEsop's fable of the hare and tortoise that ran a race. What all the great animals of the forest could not do, the despised measuring-worm accomplished, simply by patience and perseverance. It also has its value, as showing the Indian idea of the formation of Yosemite, and that they must have arrived in the valley after it had assumed its present from.

The extreme simplicity of the aboriginal names, in contrast with such pompous flummeries as "The Three Brothers" and "Royal Arches," is shown in a couple of instances. Next east of Cathedral Rock is a tall, sharp needle, unnamed by us, which the Indians call Pooseena Chukka, which means, "The squirrel and the acorn-cache." A single glance at it will show how easily the simple and wondering savages, on their first entrance into the great valley, as they were pointing out to one another the various objects, imagined here a squirrel nibbling at the bottom of an acorn-cache. The other instance is the Royal Arches, which they call Chockonee--that is, "a baby-basket." Literally, chokonee means a "dog-place," or "dog-house." There is a vast deal more resemblance to a baby-basket than there is to a royal arch, whatever that may be.

Ozoomite Lawatuh ("grizzly-bear skin") is their name for Glacier Rock, given on account of its grayish, grizzled appearance; and it is the only name in the valley from which its present appellation could have been formed by corruption.

There were nine villages in Yosemite, within the recollection of Choko, all of which he located with the greatest minuteness. Their names were as follow: Wahaka (foot of The Three Brothers), Saccaya, Hocoewedoc (site of Hutchings' Hotel), Coominee, Awanee (foot of Yosemite Fall), Machayto, Notomidoola, Laysamite, and Wisculla. There were formerly others, extending as far down as Bridal Veil Fall, which were destroyed in wars that occurred before the Americans came. At a low estimate, these nine villages must have contained 450 inhabitants. Dr. Bunnell indirectly states, that the valley was not occupied during the winter, and was used only as a summer resort, and as a stronghold or refuge in case of defeat elsewhere; but the three surviving Awanees agree in saying it was occupied every winter. This is quite possible; for Mr. Hutchings and others dwell there throughout the year, without inconvenience. Moreover, the assertion of the Indians is borne out by the locations of the villages themselves. With the exception of two on the south bank, they were all built as close to the north wall as the avalanches of snow and ice would permit, in order to get the benefit of the sunshine--just as Mr. Hutchings' winter cottage is, to-day. If they had been intended only for summer occupation, they would have been placed, according to Indian custom, near the river.