THE CALIFORNIA INDIANS*

No. IX. The Yocuts

In the language of this nation, yocut is a collectuve word signifying "people" in the aggregate, while myee or nono denotes "man." As in the several other instances, it is necessary to adopt the former as a nucleus of classification, since these Indians have no distinctive national name.

In general terms, the Yocut dominion includes the Kern and Tulare basins, and the middle San Joaquin; stretching from the Fresno to Kern River Falls. More definitely, they occupy the San Joaquin from Whisky Creek down to the mouth of the Fresno; King's River from Pine Flat and Mill Creek to the mouth; all the minor streams which make into Tulare Lake, together with the shores of that lake; and the Kern River up as far as the falls. Americans have told me that they had traveled from the Fresno to Fort Tejon, and understood the Indians all the way; but at the fort they must have chanced to hear Indians brought from above to the reservation, for the language there indigenous is totally different from the Yocut.

㊽ In the Yocut nation there appears to be more political solidarity, more capacity in the petty tribes of being grouped into great and coherent masses, than in any other family of the true California Indians, except perhaps the Hoopas. This is particularly true of those living down on the plains, who display in their encampments a military precision and regularity which are remarkable. Every village consists of a single row of wigwams--conical or wedge-shaped, made of tule, and with just enough earth scooped out at the bottom to allow the Indian to sleep with his feet lower than his head--all in perfect alignment, and with a continuous brushwood awning stretching along the front. In one end-wigwam lives the village captain; in the other, the medicine-man, or sicero (Spanish, sortero?). In the mountains there is occasionally some approach to this military array, but on the plains it is universal.

But it is more especially in their actual organization, and in the instances of great leaders who have arisen, that this quality is manifested. Every large natural division of territory, possessing a certain homogeneity, constitutes the domain of one tribe and acknowledges one chief--for instance, a river-valley from the snow-line down to the plains, or from the foot-hills to the lake; though nowadays this system has been disturbed by the Americans. In this domain every village has a captain, who stands to the central chief (the latter being distinguished by his long hair) in the same relation that a Governor of a State does to the President of the United States. At certain annual meetings and special councils, each captain reports to his chief the general condition of his village, as to morals, as to quarrels, as to the acorn-crop, etc. In return, the chief delivers a lengthy homily of advice and counsel; warns, instructs, and admonishes his subordinates; and, if necessary, berates soundly any delinquent. Both the chiefship and the captaincy are hereditary, unless the son is a fool; but the chief may designate any of his sons, or any other person, to succeed him. For instance, Santiago, the aged captain of the Tachees (at Kingston), had appointed his second son, Kootomats, over the head of his first-born, Cateh, because, as the latter naively acknowledged, "he was the smartest." Instances of this hierarchy exist yet: in Cheweenee, who is chief of all the villages in Squaw Valley; in Watooga, chief of the three upper villages on King's River; and in Sloaknitch, chief of all the Chookchancie villages.

---

* Overland Monthly, Vol. 11, pp. 105-116, 1873.

The captain has no substantial authority, not even to appoint the time for a fandango or a special mourning; he can only request the chief to do it in his behalf. Nowadays, however, there are many villages which have broken away, and are entirely independent; their captains exercising such limited power as they can, without reference to any superior. But the chief sometimes wields a very considerable authority, as will be evinced in the following instances.

Some ten or fifteen years ago, Pascual consolidated all the Yocut villages on King's River, excepting only the one at the mouth, into a robust little kingdom, and he made his name feared and dreaded for many a score of miles around. He apprenticed out his subjects at will, adults as well as children, to the American ranchmen, on life-long indentures, which the former accounted as binding as the decrees of heaven.

(49) Nyackaway was a famous prophet of the Chookchancies, who died in 1854. It is said that his power was acknowledged from King's River as far north as Columbia, but this seems doubtful. Nyackaway had a lofty ambition, and he meditated great and beneficent designs for his people, but he was doomed to disappointment. He sought to mollify all those miserable janglings and that clannishness which have been so fatal to the California Indians; to reconcile the warring captains of villages and chiefs of tribes, and thereby harmonize them into one powerful nation, peaceful and happy at home, and feared by all their neighbors. But the question of a food-supply was one which this savage statesman, able and far-sighted as he was, could not master. In former times they had immense herds of elk and deer, and, sweeping across the plains on their swift mustangs, they could shoot down a fat bronco, bogged by the lake, and procure an abundant supply of meat. But now all these were gone. They had to scatter into families, and miserably grub for roots; the accursed feuds of the petty captains were eternally breaking out afresh. Nyackaway beheld one hope after another, one humane design after another, pass away. He exclaimed, in his melancholy, "I wish to live no longer," and died broken-hearted.

(50) Another notable characteristic of the Yocuts is the potent influence and the long peregrinations of their wizards, or rain-makers (tace). Caya, who lives at Woodville, is one instance; but the most remarkable is Hopoadno. Though living at Fort Tejon, and therefore not strictly a Yocut, he has, by his personal presence, by his eloquence, and by his cunning jugglery, made his authority recognized for two hundred miles northward. In 1870, the first of two successive years of drought, he made a pilgrimage from the fort as far up as King's River. At every centrally located village he made a pause, and dispatched runners to fetch in the Indians of all

the neighboring villages to listen to him. In long and elaborate harangues he would promise to bring rain on the dried-up earth and terminate the drought, if they would contribute liberally of their substance. But they were then incredulous, for he was as yet a man talking de bene esse, and they mostly laughed him to scorn; whereupon he would stalk out of the village in high dudgeon, denouncing woe upon their sinful heads, and threatening them with a second year of drought, worse than ever before. Sure enough, the enraged Hopoadno brought drought yet another year, and the Indians were smitten with remorse and terror, believing him endowed with superhuman power. When, next year, he made a second journey through the land, offerings were showered upon him, and the savages listened with trembling. He compelled them to pay him fifty cents apiece, and many gladly gave him more. Some waggish Americans, being relieved by the drought from the necessity of working their ranches, attended one of his harangues, and contributed a half-dollar each, telling him if he did not manufacture some rain they would kill him. And, sure enough, Hopoadno was right a second time; for in autumn the windows of heaven were opened, and the land had abundant rain. All the old generation of Indians were now confirmed in believing him a genuine wizard, and even the younger ones, imbued with American ideas, were troubled in their minds concerning him.

As to the implements and weapons of the Yocuts, there are some interesting particulars to be noted. The Indians on the plains, as everywhere in the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys, make no bows, but purchase them all from the mountaineers. This is because they have no cedar. This wood is extremely brittle when dry, and is then the poorest possible material for bows; but by anointing it every day with deer's marrow while it is drying, the Indian overcomes this quality, and renders it the best. The bow is taken from the white or sap-wood, the outside of the tree being also the outside of the bow. It is scraped and polished down with wonderful painstaking, so that it may bend evenly, and the ends are generally carved so as to point back slightly. Then the Indian takes a quantity of deer's sinew, splits it up with flint into small fibres, and glues them on the flat outside of the bow until it becomes hemispherical. These strips of sinew, being lapped around the end of the bow and doubled back a little, impart to it an amazing strength and elasticity. The glue is made by boiling deer and elk-bones, and combining the product with pitch. I saw a bow, thus carefully made, in the hands of a white-haired chief, and it was truly a magnificent weapon. It was about five feet long, smooth and shining--for whenever it becomes a little soiled the fastidious savage scrapes it slightly with flint, then anoints it afresh with marrow--and of such great strength that it would require a giant to bend it properly. For lack of skins, the owner carried it in a calico case. The string, composed of strands of sinew, was probably equal in strength to a half-inch rope of sea-grass. When not in use, the bow was unstrung, and the string tied around the left segment. To prevent the slightest lesion of its polished surface, the old hunter had slipped on the bow, where the string was tied around it, a short section of fur from a mountain-cat's tail.

Of arrows, the Indians living on the plains make a few for themselves, from button-willow, straight twigs of buckeye, and reeds; but the most durable come from the mountains. There are two sorts--war-arrows and game-arrows; the former furnished with flint heads, the latter not. The shaft of the war-arrow generally consists of a single piece, but that of the game-arrow frequently contains two or three pieces, furnished with sockets so as to fit into each other. When the hunter, lurking behind the covert, beholds the quarry approaching, he quickly measures with his eye the probable length of the shot he will have to make, and if a long one, he couches the arrow with three pieces; but if a short one, with extraordinary dispatch he twitches it apart, takes out the middle section, clasps together the two end sections, and shoots. An arrow made of what we should account the frailest material, the tender shoot of a buckeye, and pointed with flint, has carried death to many a savage in battle. I have seen an Indian couch a game-arrow, which was pointed simply with a piece of arrow-wood, and drive it a half-inch into the body of an oak! An old hunter says he has seen a California Indian stand a full hundred paces from a hare, raise his long and polished bow, shoot a quick glance along the arrow, then send it whizzing through both the enormous ears of the animal, pinning him fast to a tree.

These Indians--at least those who choose to make them--like most California tribes, have always worn moccasins of a very rude construction, more properly called sandals. Their method of tanning was by means of brain-water. They dried the brain of a deer or an elk, reduced it to powder, put the powder into water, and in this decoction soaked the skins--a process which answered tolerably well. The graining was done with flints.

Their money consists of the usual shell-buttons, and a string of them reaching from the point of the middle finger to the elbow is valued at twenty-five cents. A section of bone, very white and polished, about 2½ inches long, is sometimes strung on the string, and rates at a bit. They alwyas undervalue articles which they procure from Americans. For instance, goods which cost them at the store $5 they sell among themselves for $3.

They say that, in former times, they rubbed their acorns to flour on a stone like the Mexican metate--a suggestion of the mouse; but now they pound them up in mortars--a suggestion of the wiser coyote. In Coarse Gold Gulch, on one great bowlder, I counted eighty-six of these mortar-holes, an evidence of a former great density of population. For snaring quails, rabbits, and other small animals, they employ cords made of a kind of wild flax growing on the Sierra Nevada.

Manzanita-cider is manufactured by the Yocuts, of a quality greatly superior to the wretched stuff made by the Wintoons. After reducing the berries to flour by pounding, they carefully separate out all the seeds and skins, then soak the flour in water for a considerable space of time. A squaw then heaps it up in a little mound, with a crater in the centre, into which she pours a minute stream of water, allowing it to percolate through. In this manner she manufactures about a gallon an hour of a really delicious beverage--clear, cool, of a pale claret color, and richer than most apple-cider made in California.

In the mountain streams which discharge into Tulare Lake, the Yocuts catch lake-trout, chubs, and suckers. Sometimes they construct a weir across the river, with a narrow chute and a trap set in it; then go above and stretch a line of brushwood from bank to bank, which they drag down-stream, driving the fish into the trap. A curious method is employed on Tule River and King's River. An Indian takes a funnel-shaped trap in his teeth and hands, buoys himself on a little log, then floats silently downs the rapids, holding the net open to receive the fish that happen to be shooting up. On Tulare Lake the savages construct very rude punts, mere troughs, of tule, in which they cruise timidly about the shores. There is a margin where the bottom is almost level and the waves run light; but the middle of the lake is said to be of a prodigious depth, and there the billows thrash themselves into an oceanic vastness.

About the lake a family will occasionally be found using a portable stone mortar. The Indians always admit that they did not manufacture these implements, but chanced upon them in digging or on the surface, and that they belonged to a race older and other than their own. But they sometimes have the ingenuity to improve upon them, by fastening a basket hopper around the top, to prevent the acorns from flying out. Around the lake and on King's River these mortars are remarkably numerous.

On Tule River I saw the process of basket-weaving. Instead of willow twigs for the framework or warp, the squaw takes the long stalks of rye-grass; and for the threads or woof, various barks and roots, split fine--pine-root for white, willow-bark for brown, and some unknown bark for black. She simply bends the stalk round and round, renewing it when necessary, and passes the thread over it and under the one beneath. For an awl she employs the sharpened thighbone of a hawk.

All the tribes of California have a method of gambling with pieces of bone wrapped in pellets of grass, but the Yocuts have another way, employed only by the women. It is a kind of dice-throwing, and is called oochous. For a dice, they take half of a large acorn or nut-shell, fill it level with pitch and pulverized charcoal, and inlay it with bits of bright-colored shells. For a dice-table they weave a very large, fine basket, almost flat, and ornamented with various devices woven in colors. Four squaws sit around it on mats to play, and a fifth keeps tally with sticks. There are eight dice, which the players scoop up in their hands and dash into the basket, counting the number which remain with the flat side uppermost. How many scores make a game, or how the parties are constituted, I could not discover, for they played right on and on without cessation, and with the utmost infatuation; neither could I by any means discern when one had forfeited her right to throw, and another gained it. The rapidity with which, at a single glance, they added up all the numbers was wonderful. After each throw the player would exclaim "yetne" (equivalent to "one-ne"), or "weatac," or "co-mi-eh," which words are simply a kind of sing-song or chanting. One old squaw, with scarcely a tooth in her head, one eye gone, her face all withered, but with a lower jaw as of iron, and features denoting a most resolute will--a reckless old gambler, and evidently a teacher to the others--after every throw would grab into the basket and whisk her hand across it, as if by the motion of the air to turn the dice over on the flat surfaces, and ejaculate "weatac!" It was amusing to see the savage energy with which this fierce, old, battered hag carried on the game.

The range of food consumed by the Yocuts is quite extensive. Around the lake they cut and dry the seed-stalks of a kind of flag, which has a head something like a teasel, then thrash out the seed and make it into panada; also the wild-rye and sunflower. They eat grassnuts and the seeds of the same--a plant with a file-shaped stalk. In the mountains they used to fire the forests, and thereby catch great quantities of grasshoppers and caterpillars, already roasted, which they consumed with relish. But since about 1862, for some reason or other, the yield of grasshopper has been very limited. They are fond of a huge succulent worm, resembling the tobacco-worm, which is also roasted. Dogs are reared largely for the flesh they supply, which is accounted by them a special dainty, and which serves, like the farmer's chickens, as a kind of reserved supply when other meat is lacking.

Among the animals that are sacred to them is the rattlesnake (*tayel*), which they never destroy. A story is related of an Indian who captured one on the plains and tenderly carried it into the mountains, where he released it, that it might be less liable to the assaults of White men; and of another, who, seeing an American about to destroy one, scared it into a crevice of rock for safety. The coyote also moves among them with perfect impunity, for he is revered as the creator of the universe. Before the ruthless American came, these animals swarmed thick about every mountain *rancheria*, and they often would pursue the dogs right into the village. It is a singular fact that in several of the northern languages *hiyu* deonotes "dog," while in the Yocut, '*kiyu* (Qy. ? Chinese *kiuen*) is "coyote." Indeed, to judge from his appearance to this day, the Indian dog is an animal in whose genealogy the coyote appears to have largely assisted. In the Wintoon language the word for "coyote" signifies "hill-dog."

As among all savages, the wizard or rain-maker is a person of mighty consequence, though he can be put to death for cause by a majority of the council. The wizard sometimes chews the seeds of the "jimson," which have the same effect upon him as opium, and he raves, maunders, and gives forth oracular sayings, which the savages regard as the utterances of one inspired. The Indians relate a story of one wizard who chewed too much "jimson," and yielded up the ghost.

It is the custom of these jugglers to hold every spring the Rattlesnake Dance (51) (*tatulowis*), which is a source of great revenue to the cunning rogues. They plant green boughs in a circle, inclosing a space fifty or sixty yards in diameter, wherein these performances are held, as well as most other Yocut dances. The great audience is congregated in the middle, while the wizards dance around the circle, next to the arboreal wall. Besmeared with numerous fantastical streaks of paint, and gorgeously topped with feathers, four of them caper around like circus-clowns, chasing each other, chanting, brandishing rattlesnakes, twining them about their arms, and suffering them to bite their hands. It is supposed that the jugglers have either plucked out the fangs of the snakes, or have allowed the reptiles to drink no water for a number of days beforehand, which is said to render them harmless. But the credulous savages believe the jugglers invulnerable, and eagerly crowd forward with their offerings, in return for which the wizards give them complete immunity and absolution from all rattlesnake bites for the space of one year. The younger Indians, somewhat indoctrinated in American ideas, have become skeptical concerning these dances, which they contemptuously term "skunk-meetings", to the great grief and scandal of their pious elders.

An old Indian, named Chuchuka, relates that many years ago there was a terrible plague, which raged on both sides of the Fresno, destroying thousands of people. According to his account, it was a black-tongue disease. Abundant evidences of his truthfulness have been discovered in those localities, in the shape of human bones. A man, named Holt, was digging a ditch on Ray's ranch, near Sand Creek, and found such an immense quantity of bones, about eighteen inches beneath the surface, that, after digging three hundred yards, he was forced to abandon the undertaking. On Hildreth's ranch, near the Pool of Water, a large boxful of bones was collected in making a garden.

Nowadays, from $20 to $30 in gold is paid for a wife, but this only for a virgin. For a widow, or a maiden suspected of being unchaste, no man will pay anything or make any presents. And it is due to the Yocuts to state, that a pioneer who has lived among them twenty-one years affirms that, before the arrival of the Americans, they were comparatively virtuous. Dr. E. B. Bateman, physician to the Tule River Reservation, gives me the information that both females and males, though bathing entirely separate, never enter the water without wearing at least cinctures about their waists; and this is corroborated by an old resident on King's River. Charles Maltby, agent of the above reservation, and well acquainted with aboriginal habits throughout the State, also affirms that the Yocuts are purer than their northern brethren; and that the Indians of southern California are less addicted to the infamous practice of selling the virtue of their women to Americans than those of the north. Though the language has a word for "prostitute," it has what is generally accounted a favorable indication, separate words for "woman" (mokella) and "wife" (mokee), also for "man" (nono) and "husband" (loweet).

Many years ago, the Indians dwelling on the lake about the mouth of King's River were carried away captives by the Spaniards, and taken to San Luis Obispo. After a long residence there, upon the breaking up of the missions, they returned to their native land; but meantime a new generation had grown up, to whom the old mission was their home. They yearned to return, and to this day they make an annual pilgrimage to San Luis Obispo, where they remain a month. They would by preference live there all their remaining days, only their children, born on the shores of Tulare Lake, will not consent. Some persons may jump at this as a convincing proof of the affection of the Indians for the old Jesuit padres; but it is a non sequitur, because the pilgrimage is easily enough accounted for by the California Indian's proverbial love for his birthplace, even as the children of Israel lusted for the flesh-pots of that Egypt which had scourged them.

ORIGIN OF THE MOUNTAINS.

Once there was a time when there was nothing in the wide world but water. About the place where Tulare Lake now is, there was a pole standing far up out of the water, and on it perched a hawk and a crow. First, one of them would sit on it awhile, then the other would knock him off, and sit on it himself. Thus they sat on top of the pole above the waters for many generations. At length they wearied of the lonesomeness, and they created the birds which prey on fish, such as the kingfisher, the duck , the eagle, the pelican, etc. Among them was a very small duck, which dived down to the bottom, picked up its beak full of mud, arose to the surface, died, and laid floating on the water. The hawk and the crow then fell to and gathered all the mud out of the duck's beak, and with it commenced the creation of the mountains.

They began at the place now called Tehatchaypah Pass, and the hawk made the eastern range, while the crow made the western. Little by little, as they dropped in bit after bit of the earth, these mighty mountains grew and heaved themselves athwart the waters, gradually stretching northward. It was a labor of many snows; but finally the workers met at Mount Shasta, and the task was finished. But behold! when they compared their mountains, it was found that the western portion was a great deal larger than the other. Then the hawk said to the crow, "How did this happen, you rascal? I warrant you stole some of the earth out of my bill, and that is why your mountain is the largest." It was a fact, and the crow laughed in his claws. Then the hawk went and got some Indian tobacco, and chewed it, which made him exceedingly wise. So he took hold of the mountains and slipped them round in a circle, putting the range he had made in place of the other; and that is the reason the Sierra Nevada is now larger than the Coast Range.

(52) This legend is of value, as showing the aboriginal notions of geography. To illustrate his meaning, the Indian who narrated the story drew in the sand a long ellipse, representing quite accurately the shape of the two great ranges. He was an Indian of ordinary intelligence, and had never traveled; so his information must have been shared by his tribe.

While I was in Coarse Gold Gulch, it was my good fortune to witness the great Dance for the Dead, or Dance of Weeping (Kotewachil), which was one of the most extraordinary human spectacles I ever beheld. It was not the regular annual mourning, but a special one, held in behalf of Colomusnim, a sub-chief of the Chookchancies, who had recently lost a sister; but it was in all respects as strange, as awful, and as imposing an exhibition of barbaric superstition and barbaric affection as is afforded by the formal anniversary. Not to my dying hour will the memory of that frightful midnight pageant be effaced.

It will be well to explain that, among the Yocuts, this Dance of Weeping is protracted nearly or quite a week. The first two or three nights--while they are waiting for the arrival of all the delegations and the late comers--are occupied only in speech-making, story-telling, jokes, etc., until a late hour; but during the last three nights they dance throughout the night until morning, and on the third night about daybreak they burn the offerings consecrated to the dead. This happened to be the first of the three last nights, hence no burning occurred; but in every other respect it was complete, and all the exercises were conducted with more energy and by fuller choruses than they would have been after the Indians had become exhausted.

When the Indian interpreter, Tueh, and myself entered the camp it was already an hour after nightfall; but there were yet no indications of a beginning of the dark orgies that were to be enacted. We found about three hundred Indians assembled, at a place remote from any American habitations, in a gloomy ravine, and encamped in open booths of brushwood running around three sides of a spacious quadrangle. This quadrangle had been swept and beaten hard for a dancing-floor, and near one of the inside corners there was a small circular embankment of earth like a circus-ring, with the sacred fire brightly burning in the centre. Colomusnim and his relatives, the chief mourners, occupied the corner-booths near this ring, and near by was Sloaknitch, the head-chief of the Chookchancies, by whose authority this assembly had been convened. Here and there a fire burned with a staggering, sleepy blaze just outside the quadrangle, faintly gleaming through the booth; at intervals an Indian moved stealthily across the half-illuminated space within; while every now and then the atmosphere was made discordant and hideous, as indeed the whole night was, during the most solemn periods, by the yelping, snarling, and fighting of the accursed hordes of dogs.

For fully a half-hour we slowly sauntered and loitered about the quadrangle, conversing in undertones, but still nothing occurred to break the sombre silence, save the continually repeated scurries of yelps and howls from the abominable dogs. Now and then an Indian slowly passed across and sat down on the embankment, while others in silence occasionally fed the fire. But at last, from Colomusnim's quarter, there came up out of the darkness a long, wild, haunting wail, floating out through the silent night with an inexpressible mournfulness. After a few minutes, it was repeated. Soon another joined in, then another, and another--slowly, very slowly--until the whole quarter was united in a dirge-like, eldritch, dismal chorus. After about half an hour, the wailing ceased as slowly as it began, and there was profound, death-like silence, broken only by the often-renewed janglings of the dogs.

Some time elapsed before any further development occurred, and then Sloaknitch, a little old man, but erect as an arrow, with a keen face and basilisk eyes, stepped forth into the quadrangle, and began to walk slowly to and fro around three sides, making the opening proclamation. He spoke in extremely short, jerky sentences, with much repetition, substantially as follows:

"Make ready for the mourning. Let all make ready. Everybody make ready. Prepare your offerings. Your offerings to the dead. Have them all ready. Show them to the mourners. Let them see your sympathy. The mourning comes on. It hastens. Everybody make ready," etc.

He continued thus about twenty minutes; then closed, and re-entered his booth, after which he took no further part in the proceedings except as a private person. By this time, the Indians had collected in considerable numbers, sitting on the embankment. They kept slowly coming forward until the circle was completed, and the fire was only visible shooting above their heads. A low hum of conversation began to buzz around it, as of gradually awaking activity. The slow piston-rod of aboriginal dignity was beginning to ply, the clatter of the machinery was slowly swelling up. Indians, like Germans, must take their time. No woman had yet appeared on the scene. It was now quite ten o'clock, and we were getting impatient.

Presently, the herald--a short, stout Indian with a most voluble tongue--came out into the quadrangle with a very long staff, and paced slowly up and down the line of booths, proclaiming: "Prepare for the dance. Let all make ready. We are all friends. We are all one people. We were a great tribe once. Now we are small. All our hearts are as one. We have one heart. Make ready your offerings. The women have the most money. They have the most offerings. They give the most. Get ready the tobacco. Let us chew the tobacco," etc. This man spoke with an extraordinary amount of repetition. For instance, he would say: "The women--the women--the women--have the most--have the most--the most money--have the most money--the women--the women--have the most offerings--the most offerings--give the most--give the most--the women--the women--give the most." He spoke about as long as the headchief had; and while he was speaking, the savages were preparing a decoction of Indian tobacco by the sacred fire. When he ceased speaking, he took his place in the circle, and all began to sip and taste the tobacco, which seemed to be intended as a kind of mortification of the flesh. Sitting along on the embankment, while the nauseous mess was passing around in a basket, and others were tasting the boiled leaves, they sought to mitigate the bitter dose with jokes and laughter. For instance, one said: "Did you ever see the women gather tobacco for themselves?" This was intended as a jest, for no woman ever touches the weed, but nobody laughed at it. As the powerful emetic began to work out its inevitable effect, one after another arose from the circle, and passed slowly and silently into the outer darkness, whence there presently came up to our ears certain doleful and portentous sounds, painfully familiar to those who have journeyed much on the ocean. After all the Indians in the circle, except a few with strong stomachs, had gone forth and returned to their places, the hour going eleven o'clock, the herald passed around as before, making the third proclamation:

"Let all mourn and weep. O, weep for the dead. Think of the dead body lying in the grave. We sahll all die soon--all die. We were a great people once. We are weak and little now. Soon we shall all be gone. Be sorrowful in your hearts. O, let sorrow melt your hearts. Let your tears flow fast. We are one people. We are all friends. All our hearts are one heart."

For the last hour or so, the mourners and their friends and sympathizers, mostly women, had been collecting in Colomusnim's quarter, preparing their offerings. Occasionally, a long, solitary wail came up, trembling on the night-air.

At the close of the third proclamation, the death-dance and the mourning began--the Indians being crowded promiscuously in a great open booth. As they danced, they held aloft in their hands or on their heads the articles they intended to give in memory of the dead. It was a splendid exhibition of barbaric gewgaws. Glittering necklaces of rare marine shells; bits of American tapestry; baskets of the most intricate workmanship--on which they had toiled long months, perhaps years--circled and furred with hundreds of little quail-plumes, bespangled with beads, scalloped, festooned, and embroidered with beadery until there was scarcely place for the handling; plumes, furs, shawls, etc. Colomusnim had a pretty plume of metallic-glistening raven's feathers in his hand. But the most remarkable article was a great plume, nearly six feet long, shaped like a parasol slightly opened, mostly of raven's feathers, but containing rare and brilliant spoils from all the birds of the forest, topped with a smaller plume or kind of coronet, and lavishly bedecked through all its length with bulbs, shell-clusters, circlets of feathers, dangling festoons--a magnificent bauble, towering far above all; its glittering spangles and nodding plume on plume, contrasted strangely with the tattered, howling savagery over which it gorgeously swayed and flaunted. Another woman had an image, very rudely constructed of shawls and clothing, to represent the dead sister.

The beholding of all these things--some of which had belonged to the dead woman--and the strong contagon of human sorrow, wrought the Indians into a frenzy. Widly they leaped and wailed; some flung themselves on the earth, and beat their breasts. There were continual exhortations to grief. Sloaknitch, sitting on the ground, poured forth burning and piercing words: "We have all one heart. All our hearts bleed with yours. Our eyes weep tears like a living spring. O, think of the poor dead woman in the grave." Colomusnim--a savage of a majestic presence, bating his garb--though a hesitating orator, was so broken with grief that his few sobbing words moved the listeners like a funeral knell. Beholding now and then an especial friend in the circle of sitters, he would run and fall upon his knees before him, bow his head to the earth, and give way to uncontrollable sorrow. Other mourners would do the same, presenting to the friend's gaze some object which had belonged to the lamented woman. The friend, if a man, would pour forth long condolences; if a woman, she would receive the mourner's head in her lap, tenderly stroke down the hair and unite in lamentation. Many eyes, both of men and women, of mourners and strangers, glistened in the flickering firelight with copious and genuine tears.

But amid all this heart-felt mourning, there were occasional manifestations of purely mechanical grief which were very laughable. The venerable Sloaknitch, although a gifted and thrilling orator, a savage Nestor, preserved a dry eye; but once in awhile he would arise in his place and lift his voice on high like a sand-hill crane, then presently sit down and calmly light a cigarette. After smoking awhile, he would stand up again and join in the mourning. Cigarettes were constantly being smoked. An Indian would take one out of his mouth, give a prolonged and most dolorous blast, and then take two or three whiffs again. Yet even these comical manifestations were so entirely in earnest, that nobody thought of laughing at the time; and, though one's sense of humor could not but make silent note of them the while, they were greatly overborne by the preponderance of real sorrow, by the spontaneous and unmistakable outpouring of grief. So far, even, from smiling at them, one might, without accusation of sentimental weakness, have dropped a tear at the spectacle of these poor creatures, weeping not more perhaps for the loved and lost than over their own miserable destiny of extermination.

These demonstrations continued for a very long time, and I began again to be impatient, believing that the principal occasion had passed. It appeared afterward that the Indians are required by their creed and custom to prolong the proceedings until daybreak; hence this extreme deliberation. But at last, about one o'clock in the morning, upon some preconcerted signal,there was a sudden and tumultuous rushing from all quarters of the encampment, amid which the interpreter and myself were almost borne down. For the first time during the night the women appeared conspicuously upon the scene, thronged into the sacred circle, and quickly formed a ring around the fire--a single circle of maidens facing inward. The whole multitude of the populous camp crowded about, surging and jostling. A choir of male singers took their stations hard by, and commenced the death-song, though they were inaudible except to the nearest listeners. At the same instant the young women began their frightful dance, which consisted of two leaps on each foot alternately, causing the body to rock to and fro, and either hand was thrust out with the swaying, as if the offering it held were about to be consigned to the flames; while the breath was forced out with violence, in regular cadence, with a harsh and griding sound of "Heh!" The blaze of the sacred fire flamed redly out between the bodies of the dancers swaying in accord; while the disheveled locks of the leaping hags wildly snapping in the nightwind, the blood-curdling rasp of their breath in concert, and the frightful ululations and writhing of the mourners, conspired to produce a terrible effect. At the sight of this weird, awful, and lurid spectacle, which was swung into motion so suddenly, I felt all the blood creep and tingle in my veins. We were beholding now at last the great Dance for the Dead.

All the long remainder of that frenzied night--from one o'clock to five--those women leaped in the maddening dance, through smoke, choking dust, darkness, glaring light, cold, and burning heat, amid the unceasing wail of the multitude, not knowing or heeding aught of anything else on earth. Once in five or ten minutes, when the choir finished a chorus, there was a pause of a few seconds, but no dancer moved from her place for a moment. What wonder that only the strongest young maidens were chosen for the duty! What wonder that the men avoided this terrible ordeal!

About four o'clock in the morning, wearied with the din, and benumbed with the cold of the mountains, I crept away to a friendly blanket, and essayed to sleep. But it was in vain; for still through the night-air were borne to my ears the far-off crooning, the ululations, and that slow-pulsing, horrid "Heh!" of the leaping witches, with all the distant voices, each more distinct than ever before, of the mourning camp. The morning-star drew itself far up into the blue reaches of heaven, blinking in the cold, dry California air, and still all the mournful riot of that Walpurgis-night went on. Finally the rising sun made ruddy the eastern sky, but still there was no abatement.

Then slowly a soft curtain of oblivion was drawn over everything; the distant voices died away, and were still; the wailing was ended; the dancers ceased because they were weary. For half an hour, perhaps, I slept. Then awaking suddenly, I stood up in my blanket and looked down upon the camp, now broadly flooded by the level sun. It was as silent as the grave. Even the unresting dogs slept at last, and the Indian ponies ceased from browsing and stood still between the manzanita-bushes, to let the first sunshine warm and mellow their hides, on which the hair stood out straight. All that wonderful night seemed like the phantasmagoria of a fevered dream.

Before the sun was three-quarters of an hour high, that tireless herald was out again, going the rounds, shouting loudly to waken the heavy sleepers. In a few minutes the whole camp was in motion; not one Indian remained, although many eyelids moved like lead. The choir of singers took their places promptly, and a great company of men and women, bearing their offerings aloft as before, joined in a tumultuous rushround, yet all leaping in cadence, and with the same demoniacal "Heh!" of the breath in perfect unison. Every five minutes, upon the ceasing of the singers, all faced suddenly to the west, and ran forward a few paces with great clamor of lamentation. Those in the front ranks prostrated themselves, and bowed down their faces to the earth, while others stretched out their arms to the west, waving their offerings with imploring cries, as if vainly beckoning the departed spirits to return, or bidding them a last farewell. This is in accordance with their belief in a Happy Western Land. Upon the singers resuming, they would all rise and join again in the disorderly rush-round, raising a great cloud of dust. This lasted about an hour; then all was ended for the day, and the weary mourners betook themselves to their booths and to sleep.