

CALIFORNIAN INDIAN CHARACTERISTICS.*

There are several ideas which the reader who is acquainted only with the Atlantic tribes must divest his mind of, in taking up the study of the Californian Indians. Among them is the idea of the "Great Spirit" for these people are realistic, and seek to personify every thing; also, that of the "Happy Hunting Grounds," for the indolent Californian, reared in his balmy clime, knows nothing of the fierce joy of the Dacotah hunter, but believes in a heaven of Hedonic ease and luxury. The reader must also lay aside the copper color, the haughty aquiline features, and the gorgeous barbaric ornamentation of the person. Our warrior doomed to death shows, indeed, the same stern immobility of feature as the Iroquois or Pawnee, but he has often the physiognomy of the born humorist, with eyes absolutely dancing and sparkling with mischief. The reader must lay aside the gory scalp-lock (for the most part), the torture of the captive at the stake, the red war-paint of terrible import (the Californians used black), the tomahawk, the totem, and the calumet.

It is a humble and lowly race which we approach, one of the lowest on earth; but I am greatly mistaken if the history of their lives does not teach a more wholesome and salutary lesson -- a lesson of ways of barbaric plenty and providence, of simple pleasure, and of the capacities of unprogressive savagery to fill out the measure of human happiness, and to mass dense populations -- than may be learned from the more romantic story of the Algonquins. Perhaps it is too much to ask anyone to believe that there are regions of California which supported more Indians than they ever will White men. But if those who peruse this paper shall lay it aside, with the conviction that the cause of our savage's extinction does not "lie within the savage himself," and that the White man does not come to "take the place which the aborigines have practically vacated," I shall be content. Civilization is a great deal better than savagry; but in order to demonstrate that fact it is not necessary to assert, Wood does in his great work, Uncivilized Races of Men, that savagery was accommodately destroying itself while yet the White man was afar off. Ranker heresy never was uttered, at least so far as the Californian Indians are concerned. It is not well to seek to shift upon the shoulders of the Almighty (through the savages whom He made) the burden of the responsibility which attaches to our own race. Let it not be thought that this article will attempt to gloze or to conceal anything in the character or conduct of the aborigines. While they had fewer vices than our own race, they committed more frequently the blackest of crimes. Revenge, treacher, cruelty, assassination -- these are the dark side of their life; but in this category there was nothing ever perpetrated by the Californian Indians which has not been matched by acts of individual frontiersmen. This I can substantiate by the voluntary and even exulting admissions of dozens of the latter themselves. As above remarked, the torture of captives was not one of their customs. Infanticide was probably more frequent than among us, being almost always

* Overland Monthly, Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 297-309, 1875.

practiced in the case of twins, and often in the case of a very young infant being left motherless; but we must judge them leniently for this, as they knew nothing of any artificial means of nourishment. Their occasional parricide, done in cold blood, but often at the instance of the decrepit parents themselves, stands perhaps without a parallel with us.

There are seven distinct styles of wigwams found in California, made by different tribes, according as one kind of material or another is more abundant in a given locality. Wood, earth, and different sorts of thatch are the materials employed. In wooded regions, poles, puncheons, and the great slabs of bark furnished by certain trees are used, and the structure (except on the Klamath River and Clear Lake) bears a general resemblance to the traditional Indian wigwam; but on the vast treeless plains they use only enough timber to make a rude frame-work, and this is covered with a heavy layer of earth, dome-shaped. In a house of this kind a mere handful of twigs or grass will heat the atmosphere comfortably all day. The tribes that live in thatch - huts generally burn them every year to destroy the vermin. As soon as the dry season sets in most Indians quit their warmer habitations, having to fear from rain, and live in wickiups, which are brush-wood booths -- often nothing but a flat roof without sides. These are situated upon little knolls close beside the few living streams; and here they live a delightful, free-and-easy, joyous, indolent life through the long, cloudless summer, roving along the creek in the deep shade of the willows, gathering roots and berries, or spearing salmon, or lying prone in the shade of some great live-oak and drowsing their idle lives away. Although the Californian Indians probably lived as peaceably together as any tribes on the continent, they were careful to place their camps or villages as to prevent surprise. In the mountains they generally selected a sheltered open cove, where an enemy could not easily approach within bow-shot without being discovered, and where there was a knoll in the cove to afford good drainage in the drenching rains of winter. The Piutes of Nevada made their camps on hill-tops, compelling the squaws to bring up water in willow jugs; and Kit Carson used to say that the reason so many emigrants were killed in early days was because they would camp by the water, where the savages could pounce down upon them. But the Californians were either more considerate for their squaws, or less fearful of their enemies.

A few words will suffice to describe one of these knoll-built hamlets in the foot-hills. In front is the stream, whose bed is a dense jungle of willows and aquatic weeds; while back of the village the low rounded hills spread away in the arid sweltering air, tawny-colored and crisped in the pitiless drought, with here and there a wisp of faded poison-oak, or a clump of evergreen chaparral, or a low, leaden-green, thin-haired silver-pine, scarcely able to cast a shadow in the blinding glare of a Californian summer. Crowning the knoll the dome-shaped dance-house swells broadly up -- a barbaric temple and hot air bath in one -- in the middle of the hamlet, and an Indian is occasionally seen crawling on all-fours into or out of the low arched entrance; hard by which stands a solitary white-oak that swings its circling shadow

over the village. Half-a-dozen conical smoke-blackened lodges are scattered over the knoll, each with its open side on the north to protect the inmates from the sunshine; and rude wickiups stretch raggedly from one to another, or are thrown out as wings on either side. One or more acorn-granaries of wicker-work stand round each lodge, much like hogsheads in shape and size, either on the ground or mounted on posts as high as one's head -- full of acorns and capped with thatch.

Drowse, drowse, mope, is the order of the hour. All through the long hot days there is not a sound in the hamlet, unless it is the eternal thump, thump, of some squaw pounding acorns. Within the heavily earthed dance-house it is cool and dark, and here the men lie on the earth-floor, with their heads pillowed on the low bank round the sides; but the women do not enter, for it is forbidden to them to go in except on festival days. They and the children find the coolest places they can outside. While the belles of the camp are sleeping off the effects of the last dance, the old crones are condemned to that one unceasing toil of the Californian squaw, pounding of acorns; and they may be seen in the hottest weather sitting bareheaded on top of some great rock, lifting the heavy stone pestle in both hands hour after hour. When night comes on -- cool, clear, and delicious -- likely as not the whole camp will dance all night, for they are as nocturnal in their activities as Negroes.

In physique, as above remarked, they differ materially from the traditional Algonquin type. The figure is a trifle shorter and stouter, especially in youth; the color is not coppery, but varies from yellow and hazel to dark brown and even jet black. The nose lacks the bold aquiline curve, but is depressed, and issues from the face almost on a line with the pupils of the eyes, so that if an Indian should wear spectacles the glasses would have to be connected by a straight bar.

Physically the Californian Indians are superior to the Chinese. There is no better proof of this than the wages they receive, for in a free and open market like ours a thing will always eventually fetch what it is worth. Chinamen on the railway receive \$1, and their board -- the whole equal to \$1.25 or \$1.50. But on the northern ranches the Indian has \$1.50 or \$2 a day and his board, or \$1 a day when employed by the year. Farmers trust Indians with valuable teams and complicated agricultural machinery far more than they do the Chinese; they often admit them to their own table, but never a Chinaman. And the Indians endures the hot and heavy work of the ranch better than even the Canton Chinaman, who comes from a hot climate, but wants an umbrella over his head. In a square stand-up fight the Indian will thrash the Mongol's head off. In short, he has a better body every way you take him. The valley Indians are more willing to labor and are more moral than the mountain Indians, because the latter have better opportunities to hunt game, and can pick up small change and old clothes about the mining camps.

There is a common belief among the prejudiced and ignorant that the Indians are such enormous eaters as to overbalance their superior value as laborers over the

their superior value as laborers over the Chinese. This is untrue. It is the almost universal testimony of those who have employed them and observed their habits to any purpose, that when they first come in from the rancheria, with their stomachs distended from eating the innutritious aboriginal food, for a day or two they eat voraciously until they become sated on our richer diet; and after that they consume no more than an American performing the same labor.

I am inclined to attribute something of the mental weakness of the Californian aborigines to the excessive amount of fish which they consumed in their native state. It is generally accounted that fish is rich in brain-food, but it is an indisputable fact that the grossest superstitions and lowest intellects in the race are found along the sea-coast.

Another erroneous impression generally prevails among Americans as to their physique, because they have seen only the wretched remnants of the race, the inferior lowlanders, whereas the nobler and more valorous mountaineers were early cut off. I have seen many hundreds of them, and I should estimate the average weight of the adult male at 145 pounds, and the height at five feet six inches. Old pioneers, especially on the upper waters of the Trinity and the higher foot-hills of the Sierra, have fequently spoken with enthusiasm of giants whom they had seen in early days, weighing 180, 200, even 250 pounds; tall, fine fellows, not gross, but sinewy; magnificent specimens of free and fighting men. On the other hand, the desiccation of body in old age, especially in the women, is something phenomenal. In a wigwam near Temecula I have seen an aged man who certainly would not have weighed over fifty pounds, so extraordinarily was he wasted and shrunken. Many others have nearly equaled him. This fact accounts for the repulsively wrinkled appearance of the aged -- that which has made them odious in the eyes of superficial writers and fastidious tourists. There is probably no other race so excessively fat in youth, and so wasted in old age.

Although they are filthy in their personal habits, yet of the many hundreds I have seen there was not one who still observed the aboriginal mode of life that had not beautiful white teeth and a sweet breath. This is doubtless due to the fact that, before they became civilized, they ate their food cold. When they learn to drink hot coffee and eat hot bread, they are liable to toothache and offensive breath, like ourselves. There is another singular and apparently paradoxical fact about their habits of body. Though so generally uncleanly about their lodges and clothing, there is no people, unless it was the ancient Romans, who bathe oftener than they. Their hot-air bath is the same thing as the Turkish bath; only the one is luxury of savages and the other of Sybarites. They were almost amphibious, and rival the Kankas yet in their capacity to endure prolonged submergence. They had no clothing to put off and on, and they were always splashing in the water. They never neglected the cold morning bath, and many do not to this day, although pestered with clothing. And never, since the fatal hour when Adam and Eve tied about them the fig-leaves in Eden, has clothing been a

symbol so freighted with evil import as to these people. On excessively hot days they would lay off the miserable rags which hampered and galled their limbs; and then would come colds, coughs, croups, and quick consumption, which swept them off by thousands.

It has been said that the two cardinal tests of national greatness are war and women -- prowess in one, and progress in the other. Tested by this standard, the Californian Indians seem to fall short. They certainly were not a martial race, as is shown by the total absence of the shield, and the extreme paucity of their warlike weapons, which consisted only of bows and arrows, very rude spears, and stones and clubs picked up on the battle-field. It is unjust to them to compare their war-record with that of the Algonquins. Let it not be forgotten that these latter tribes gained their reputation for valor, such as it is, through two long and bloody centuries, wherein they contended, almost always in superior force, with weak border settlements, hampered with families and enfeebled by the malarial fevers which always beset new openings in the forest. Let it be remembered, on the other hand, after the republic had matured its vast strength and developed its magnificent resources, it poured out higher a hundred thousand of the picked young men of the nation, unencumbered with women and children, armed with the deadliest weapons of modern invention, and animated with that fierce energy which the boundless lust for gold inspired in the Americans; pitting them against a race reared in an indolent climate, and in a land where there was scarcely even wood for weapons. They were, one might almost say, blown into the air by the suddenness and the fierceness of the explosion. Never before in history has a people been swept away with such terrible swiftness, or so appalled into utter and unwhispering silence forever and forever, as were the Californian Indians by those hundred thousand of the best blood of the nation. They were struck dumb; they fled from all the streams, and camped in the inaccessible hills, where the miners would have no temptation to follow them; they crouched in terror under the walls of the garrisoned forts, or gathered round the old pioneers, who had lived among them and now shielded them from the miners as well as they could. If they remained in their villages, and a party of miners came up, they prostrated themselves on the ground and allowed them to trample on their bodies, to show how absolute was their submission. And well they might. If they complained audibly that the miners muddied the streams so that they could not see to spear salmon, or stole a pack-mule, in less than twenty days there might not be a soul of the tribe living.

It is not to this record that we should go, but rather back to those manuscript histories of the old Spaniards, every whit as brave and as adventurous as ourselves, who for two generations battled often and gallantly with, and were frequently disastrously beaten by, "los bravos Indios," as the devout chroniclers of the Missions were forced against their will to call them. The pioneer Spaniards relate that at the first sight of horsemen they would flee and conceal themselves in great terror; but this was an unaccustomed spectacle, which might have appalled stouter hearts than theirs; and this fact is not to be taken as a criterion of their courage. It is true also that their

battles among themselves, more especially among the lowlanders of the interior -- battles generally fought by appointment on the open plain -- were characterized by a good deal of puerile kind of thumping, hustling, and beating, or shooting at long range, accompanied with much voluble Homeric cursing; but the brave mountaineers of the Coast Range inflicted on the Spaniards many a terrible beating. It is only necessary to mention the names of Marin, Sonoma, Quintin, Solano, Colorado, Calpello, Captain Jack, and the stubborn fights of the Big Plains, around Blue Rock, at Bloody Rock, on Eel River, and on the middle Trinity, to recall to memory some heroic episodes. And it is much to the credit of the Californian Indians, and not at all to be set down to the account of cowardice, that they did not indulge in that fiendish cruelty of torture which the Algonquin races practiced on prisoners of war. They did not generally make slaves of female captives, but destroyed them at once.

But if on the first count they must be allowed to rank rather inferior, on the second I think they were superior to the Algonquin races, as also to the Oregon Indians. For the very reason that they were not a martial race, but rather peaceable, domestic, fond of social dances, and well provisioned (for savages), they did not make such abject slaves of the women, were far less addicted to polygamy (the Klamaths were monogamists), and consequently shared the work of squaws more than did the Atlantic Indians. The husband always builds the lodge; catches the fish and game, and brings it home; assists liberally in gathering acorns and berries, and brings in a considerable portion of the fuel. He good-naturedly tends the baby for hours together, and in fact "helps about the house" just about as much as the average Western farmer, and if the squaws only had mills for grinding acorn -- their one incessant labor -- their lot would be no harder than that of the American frontiersman's wife, except when moving camp. The young boy is never taught to pierce his mother's flesh with an arrow, to show him his superiority over her, as among the Apaches and Iroquois; though he afterward slays his wife or mother-in-law, especially the latter, if angry, with very little compunction. There is one fact more significant than any other, and that is the almost universal prevalence, under various forms, of a kind of secret league among men, and the practice of diabolical orgies, for the purpose of terrorizing the women into obedience. It shows how they were continually struggling up toward equality, and what desperate expedients their lords were compelled to resort to, to keep them in due subjection.

The total absence of barbarous and bloody initiations of young men into secret societies, was a good feature of their life. They show sufficient capacity to endure prolonged and even severe self-imposed penances or ordeals, but these seldom take any other form than fasting, and that principally among the northern tribes. In their liability to intense religious frenzy, or rather, perhaps, a mere nervous exaltation resulting from their passionate devotion to the dance, they equal the African races. The same religious bent of mind reveals itself in the strange crooning chants which they intone while gambling.

As they were not a race of warriors, so they were not a race of hunters.

They have extremely few weapons of the chase, but develop extraordinary ingenuity in making a multitude of snares, traps, etc. At least four-fifths of their diet was derived from the vegetable kingdom.

If there is one great and fatal weakness in the Californian Indians, it is their lack of breadth and strength of character; hence their incapacity to organize wide-reaching, powerful, federative governments. They are infinitely cunning, shrewd, selfish, intriguing; but they are quite lacking in grasp, in vigor, and boldness. Since they have mingled with Americans they have developed a Chinese imitateness; and they take rapidly to the small uses of civilization; but they have no large force, no inventiveness. On the reservations the children learn so quickly to sing Sunday-school songs and to print or write letters, that one wonders they had no system of hieroglyphics. Their history is deficient in mighty captains and great orators. But I venture the assertion that no Indians on the continent have learned to copy after civilization in so short a time. I shall give a few instances. Shasta Frank, a Wintoon, born and bred a savage, was a perfect gentleman in the neatness and elegance of his dress; in his manner, and in his speech. For instance, having inadvertently said "setting," he instantly corrected himself with "sitting." He gave me a brief account of his language, which delighted me by its accuracy, clearness, and philosophic insight. I was told of another Wintoon who had become a book-keeper, and was getting a good salary as such. Matilda, a Modoc woman, living in the wildest regions of the frontier, showed me a portfolio of sketches, made by herself with a common pencil on letter envelopes and such casual scraps of paper, which were really remarkable for their correctness. She would strike off at first sight an American, an Englishman, a German, a Chinaman, or any odd or eccentric face she chanced to see, with a fidelity and expressiveness that were quite amusing. On the Tule River Reservation the squaws learned to make lace and embroidery, and once when the Government annuity goods were brought, they turned from them with contempt and disgust. The pioneers acknowledge that they speedily acquire a subtleness in cheating at cards which outwits themselves, and would have done honor to Ah Sin.

There is a curious feature of aboriginal character which is manifested more particularly in their games. An Indian seems to be very little chagrined by defeat. I have often watched young men and boys, both in native and American games, and have never failed to remark that singularly careless good-nature with which everything is carried forward. American boys will contend strenuously and even fight for nice points in the game, down to a finger's breadth in the position of a marble; but Indian youths are gaily indifferent, jolly, easy, and never quarrel. They appear to be just as well pleased and they laugh just as heartily when beaten as when victorious. Everything goes on with a limp and jelly-like hilarity which makes it extremely stupid to an American to watch their contests very long. When engaged in an athletic game, it is true they exert themselves to their utmost and accomplish truly wonderful feats of and bottom; but they do all this purely for the physical enjoyment, not for the joy of conquest at all, as far as anybody can perceive. They never brag, never exult. An

Indian will gamble twenty hours at a sitting, losing piece after piece of his property, to his last shirt, and emerge naked as he was born; yet he exhibits no concern; he passed through it all and comes out with the same easy stoicism. There is not a tremor in his voice, not a muscle quivers, his face never blanches; when he takes off the shirt his laugh is just as vacuously cheerful and untainted with bitterness as it was when he began. He borrows another, throws himself on his face, and in five minutes he sleeps the untroubled, dreamless sleep of an infant. It is difficult for a White man to comprehend how one can be so absorbed in the process and so indifferent to the result.

They have another notable defect in their character -- a lack of poetry, of romance. Though a very joyous and blithe-hearted race, they are patient, plodding, and prosaic to a degree. This is shown in their names, personal and geographical, the great majority of which mean nothing at all, and when they do have a signification it is of the plainest kind. The burden of their whole traditional literature consists of petty fables about animals, though some of these display a quaint humor and an aptness that would not do discredit to AEsop. And it must always be borne in mind that they are forbidden by their religious ideas to speak of the dead, which fact may partly account for the almost total lack of human interest in their legends.

There are not wanting instances which show that they have a sense of humor which the grave taciturn Algonquin did not possess. The Neeshenams, of Bear River, have several cant or slang names for the Americans, which they use among themselves with great glee. One is the word boh, "road" -- hence perhaps derivatively, "road-maker," or "roadster" -- which they apply to us in a humorous sense because we make so many roads, which to the light-footed Indian seems very absurd, indeed. Perhaps as common an appellation as any is choopup, "red" or "red-faced." Here we have a reversal of the traditional "pale-face" of the Eastern dime-novel. But the name they give us that amuses them most is wohah, which is formed from the "whoa-haw" which they heard the early immigrants use so much in driving their oxen. Let an Indian see an American coming up the road and cry out to his fellows, "There comes a wohah," at the same time swinging his arm as if driving oxen, and it will produce convulsive laughter. A Chinaman they call choly-ee, which means "shaved head." I have seen women laugh until the tears rolled down their cheeks at an American trying to speak their language.

Felicitously characteristic of one feature of Indian life, as well as humorous in itself, was the remark of an observing old man: "Injun make a little fire and set close to him; White man make a big fire and set 'way off."

Frequently their humor is of the kind that may be called unconscious, and is not the less pleasing on that account. At a "big cry," or annual mourning for the dead, I have seen them stand and lift up their voices like sand-hill cranes with great lamentation, then calmly sit down with dry eyes and smoke a cigarette, after finishing which they began again da capo.

They are great thieves, whenever it is safe to be so. Like ill-mannered White people -- to use the mildest phrasing -- they are fond of borrowing small articles -- knives, pipes, pencils, and the like -- which they will presently insert into their pockets, hoping the owner may forget to ask for them. One means of protection which old pioneers advised me to take, was, in journeying anywhither, always to keep at my tongue's-end the names of several prominent citizens of the vicinity, to impress the savages with the belief that I was well acquainted there, had plenty of friends, and ample means of redress if they did me any wrong. They are strongly attached to their homes, and they have learned by tough experience, that if they commit any thievery it will be the worse for them, and that it will go hard but the Whites will burn their rancherias and requite the stealing double. Hence they are proverbially honest in their own neighborhood; but a stranger in the gates who seems to be without friends may lose the very blankets off him in the night. They resemble the fox, which never steals near its nest.

The northern tribes, resembling rather the Oregon Indians, are much the most miserly, and given to hoarding up treasures -- shell-money, white deer-skins, and the like -- which, when not burned with their bodies, they bequeath by nuncupative will to their children; and they never do the smallest service for an American without expecting payment. I have known them even refuse to give the numerals and other words in their language unless paid for it. The southern Californian tribes never drive such petty bargains as this.

The government which originally prevailed among them may be called the rule of the gift-givers. Except among the tribes north of Mount Shasta, prowess counts for little, while wealth and family influence are towers of strength. The origin of government is something like this: We shall suppose there is a secession, and a village springs into independent existence. A large round dance-house is built, and the prominent men entertain their friends in it in a succession of feasts, which are very bald affairs so far as the viands are concerned. They make presents to their followers according to their wealth -- shell-money, bows and arrows, etc. Always at these gatherings there is a great deal of petty bickering and quarreling. The more earnest and grave old men of the tribe notice these matters; they observe the aspirant whose personal influence is most successful in keeping order among the young fellows. He is finally pitched on as the leader, and on a certain day he is informally proclaimed in the dance-house, and makes a talk to them, wearing or displaying all his beadery. If he has not enough to enable him to make a suitable appearance, his friends lend him a few strings, and they are returned to them after the proclamation. But his powers are extremely limited, for these Indians are quite democratic. He can proclaim, with the old Roman pretor, do dico, but he can not add addico; he can state the law or the custom and give his opinion, but he can seldom, if ever, pronounce judgement. There is much clannishness among them, especially in the northern part of the State, resulting in fierce and wasting family or tribal feuds; in the south there are not so many bloody vendettas, but a great deal of a less fatal kind of quarreling.

Though not by any means a warlike people, and therefore generally laying very little stress on the taking of scalps or the torture of captives, they have the usual treachery, revengefulness, and capacity for rancorous hate of all savages. I know of an instance where a girl lost her mother, brother, aunt, and cousin, all murdered at various times by members of her own tribe, and that before they became acquainted with Americans, and while they were living in "primitive innocence." There are individual Indians who have so refined upon the art of retaliation as to hold that the terriblest of all revenges is, not to slay the one himself, but rather his dearest relation or friend. But there is some mitigation to these savage horrors in the fact that many tribes have a kind of statute of limitations, which forbids the avenging of blood after the lapse of a year.

Notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary by false friends and weak maundering philanthropists, the Californian Indians are a grossly licentious race; none more so, perhaps. There is no word in all the languages I have examined that has the meaning of "mercenary prostitute," because such a creature was unknown to them; but among the unmarried of both sexes there is very little or no restraint. And this freedom is so much a matter of course that there is no reproach attaching to it, so that their young women are notable for their modest and child-like demeanor. If a married woman, however, is seen even walking in the forest with another man than her husband, she is chastised by him; a repetition of the offense is generally visited with speedy death. Brothers and sisters scrupulously avoid living alone together. A mother-in-law is not allowed to live alone with her son-in-law, etc. To the Indian's mind the opportunity of evil implies the commission of evil; he can not comprehend the case of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, or else he is totally incredulous. Many tribes discountenance the intermarriage of cousins, which they say is "poison."

But while they thus carefully avoid the appearance of evil, the daily conversation of most of them, even in the presence of their wives and children, is as foul as that of the lowest White men when alone together. It is a marvel that their children grow up with any virtue whatever. Yet they far less often make shipwreck of body and soul than do the children of the civilized, because when the great mystery of maturity confronts them, they know what it means and how to meet it. Marriage frequently takes place at the age of twelve or fourteen. Parents desire to marry their children young to remove them from temptation, and they willingly provide them with food for a year or two, sometimes even longer, so that they have a more real honeymoon than most civilized couples. Since the advent of the Americans the husband often traffics in his wife's honor for gain, and even forces her to infamy when she is unwilling, though in the early days he would have slain her, without pity and without remorse, for the same offense.

In making the following assertion, I do so aware that it may be stoutly challenged. With the exception, perhaps, of a few tribes in the northern part of the State, I am thoroughly convinced that a great majority of the Californian Indians had

no conception whatever of a Supreme Being. True, nearly all of them now speak of a Great Man, the Old Man Above, the Great One Above, and the like; but they have the word, and nothing more. This is manifestly a modern graft upon their ideas, because this being takes no part or lot in their affairs, is never mentioned in the real and genuine aboriginal mythology or cosmogony, creates nothing, upholds nothing. They all believe in a future state, but there is no conception of a God involved in their Happy Western Land. They have heard of the White man's God, and some have taken enough trouble in the matter to translate His name into their own language, as Pokoh, Loosh, Sha, Comoose, Kemmysalto, etc., but with that their interest ceases. It is an ideal not assimilated, and to become assimilated the whole of their ancient system of legends would have to be overthrown. By long acquaintance one may become so familiar with even a Californian Indian as to be able to penetrate his most secret ideas; yet when you ask him to give some account of this being, he can tell nothing, because he knows nothing. "He is the Big Man Above" -- that is the extent of his knowledge. But ask him to tell you about the creation of the world, of man, of fire, and of the animals, and his interest is aroused; instantly this fabulous being disappears, and the coyote comes forward. The coyote did everything. That is what his father told him, and his father's father told him. If this Great Man had any existence in early days, why does He not appear sometimes in the real aboriginal legends? Not once does he appear. It is no argument against this theory that these names of the Supreme Being above given are pure Indian words. There are pure Indian words in many languages for such terms as "wheat," "rye," "iron," "gun," "ox," "horse," and twenty other things which they never heard of until they saw Europeans. They are very quick to invent names for new objects. Therefore, I affirm, without hesitation, that there is no Indian equivalent for God, not even an idol. There are numerous spirits, chiefly bad, some in human form, some dwelling in beasts and birds, having names which they generally refuse to reveal to mortals, and haunting chiefly the hills and forests, sometimes remaining in the Happy Western Land. Some of these spirits are those of wicked Indians returned to earth; others appear to be self-existent. There are great and potent spirits, bearing rule over many of their kind; and there are inferiors. There is a Great Spirit (haylin kakeeny, in the Neeshenam language), but he is no such being as the Great Spirit of the Algonquins; he is simple a king over the imps. All these spirits are to be propitiated, and their wrath averted. There is not one in a thousand from whom the Indians expect any active assistance; if they can only secure their non-interference, all will go well. To the Californian Indian, great Nature is kindly in her moods, and workings, but these malign spirits constantly thwart her beneficent designs, and bring trouble upon her children. Nature was the Indian's god, the only god he knew; and the coyote was his minister. This cunning beast made the world and all that therein is.

Most, though not all, tribes of the Californians practice cremation, and they believe that the liberated spirit ascends in the smoke of the funeral pyre to dwell forever in the Happy Western Land. They have a rooted aversion to burial, because they hold that the soul can not be freed from its earthly tabernacle except by fire; hence the greatest insult they can offer to a dead person or his friends is to "hole" him. Sometimes the scenes which occur at these burnings are hideous, awful, and appalling

beyond description; as when, dancing with demoniac ululations round the fire, they pierce the seething, blistering corpse with poles to facilitate the egress of the spirit. Many tribes have an annual mourning in honor of the dead, during which they burn various articles -- clothing, food, baskets, etc. -- which they think are wafted to their departed friends in the ascending smoke.

In his admirable work, Uncivilized Races of Men, Mr. J.G. Wood says: "I have already shown that we can introduce no vice in which the savage is not profoundly versed, and feel sure that the cause of extinction lies within the savage himself, and ought not to be attributed to the White man, who comes to take the place which the savage has practically vacated." Of other savages I am not prepared to speak, but of the Californians this is untrue. They smoked tobacco only to a very limited extent, never chewed it, and were never drunk, because they had no artificial beverage except Manzanita cider, and that in extremely limited quantities, unfermented, for a brief season of the year. They had the vice of gambling much more than we, but as shown above, it had no injurious effect on their health. Great and violent paroxysms of anger were almost unknown; they made no such senseless use as we do of ice-water, and of hot, heavy, and strongly seasoned food. They had not even the vice of gluttony, except after an enforced fast, which was seldom, because their plain and simple food was easily procured and kept in stores. Licentiousness was universal, but mercenary prostitution was absolutely unknown; hence there were none of those appalling maladies which destroyed so many thousands on their first acquaintance with Americans.

Next, as to the second part of his remark, that the White man "comes to take the place which the savage has practically vacated." Let us see to what extent the Indians had "vacated" California before the Americans came. Government statistics show that there were sixty-seven and a half Indians to the square mile for forty miles along the lower Klamath in 1870. Before the Whites came doubtless there were 100, but we shall take the former figure. Let us suppose there were 6,000 miles of streams in the State yielding salmon; that would give a population of 405,000. In all oak forests acorns yielded at least four-seventh of their subsistence, fish perhaps two-sevenths; on the treeless plains the proportion of fish was considerably larger, and various seeds supplied the place of acorns. There are far more acorns in the Sierra and Coast Range than on the Klamath, and all the interior rivers formerly yielded salmon nearly as abundantly as that river. I think 300,000 might be added to the above figure, in consideration of the greater fertility of central and southern California; this would give 705,000 Indians in the entire State.

Let us take certain limited areas. The pioneers estimate the aboriginal population of Round Valley, when they first visited it, all the way from 5,000 (Kelsey) to 20,000 (Potter). One thousand White people in it would be considered a very fair population, if indeed it did not crowd it; there are not above 450 in it yet. Mr. Christy estimates that there were from 300 to 500 Indians in Coyote Valley, near Ukiah; now there are eight White families there, and they think they have none too much elbow-room.

General Bidwell stated to me that in 1849 there were at least 1,000 souls in the village of the Corusies (Colusa). Mr. Robinson pointed out to me the site of a village on Van Dusen's Fork, which he thought contained 1,000 people in 1850. Several other instances might be adduced, if necessary. I saw enough in California to convince me that there is many a valley which once contained more Indians than it will of Whites for the next century at least. The aborigines drew their supplies from wide areas of mast-bearing forest and the wonderful abundance of the streams; the Whites depend chiefly on the valley itself; hence, on the wide unwatered plains, now yielding vast quantities of cereals under cultivation, the mass of the civilized population will be, whereas the natives found their choicest spots in the forest-locked valleys.

The very prevalence of the aboriginal crime of infanticide points to an over-fruitfulness and an overpopulation.

That they were equal to Europeans in steady, bread-winning strength, nobody claims, for they lived largely on vegetable food, and that of a quality inferior to bread and beans. But as athletes they were superior, and they were emphatically a healthy, long-lived race; at least, there were and are many who attain a great age. In trials of skill they used to shoot arrows a quarter of a mile, or drive them a half-inch into a green oak. I knew a herald on the upper Sacramento to run about fifty miles between ten or eleven o'clock and sunrise in September; another in Long Valley, near Clear Lake, ran about twelve miles in a little over an hour. The strength of their lungs is shown by the fact that they will remain under water twice as long as a White man in diving for mussels, or for gravel in the gold-bearing rivers. The extraordinary treatment their women undergo in childbirth at the hands of the midwives shows remarkable endurance. No White person can dance, as they do, all night for days together, sometimes for weeks. Their uniformly sweet breath and beautiful white teeth (so long as they continue to live in the aboriginal way) are evidences of good health. Smoked fish and jerked venison are eaten without further preparation, and there is a considerable amount of green stuff consumed raw in the spring; but four-fifths of their food is cooked and then eaten cold. An Indian is as irregular in his times of eating as a horse or an ox, which may have an injurious effect on his health, or it may not. If an Indian can keep free from disease he lasts a long time; but when disease gets hold of him he goes off pretty easy, for their medicines amount to nothing. True, they were subject at times to frightful pestilences, as that of 1833, which destroyed a great portion of the inhabitants of the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys; but they rapidly repopulated the waste ground, for, twenty years later, General Fremont and Captain Sutter found tens of thousands there to fight or to feed.

But, after all, let no romantic reader be deceived, and long to escape from the hollow mockeries and the vain pomps and ambitions of civilization, and mingle in the free wild life of the savage. It is one of the greatest delusions that ever existed. Of all vacuous, droning, dreary lives that ever the mind of man conceived, this is the chief. To spend days, weeks, and months in doing nothing -- absolutely nothing! To

pass long hours in silence, so saturated with sleep that one can sleep no more, sitting and brushing off the flies! Kindly Nature, what beneficence thou hast displayed in endowing the savage with the illimitable power of doing nothing, and of being happy in doing it! Savages are not more sociable and talkative than civilized people, but less so; they talk very fast when some matter excites them, but for the most part they are lethargic and silent. I lived nearly two years in sufficient proximity to them, and I give it as the result of my deliberate and extended observations that they sleep -- day and night together -- from fourteen to sixteen hours out of the twenty-four. Their necessities are as great now as in ancient times, if not greater; hence it is fair to presume that they are following out their aboriginal habits.

My romantic friends, let us go to bed.