

CHAP. IV.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS OF UPPER CALIFORNIA.—THEIR MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

UPPER California when first visited by the Spaniards was, as we have already seen, inhabited by the same race of men as the Lower Province; the natives of Upper California, however, varied somewhat both in their physical characters and customs from those of their southern brethren, but hardly more than they differed from one another in different districts. They were acknowledged by all to be a timid and feeble race, compared with the hardy red men of the north-eastern parts of North America; but remarkable variations as to their physical character, in regard to size more especially, prevails among them. Hence, although the general testimony of observers gives them the above character, such striking exceptions are noticed that some have been led to give to the whole population a different character. Thus Venegas in speaking of the

natives of the southern province, says: "Of all the natives hitherto discovered, the Californians are at least equal to any in the make of their bodies." Capt. Beechey says, "The stature of the Indians which we saw in the missions was by no means diminutive. The Alchones are of good height, and the Tularaios were thought to be, generally, above the standard of Englishmen." On the contrary, La Pérouse describes them as in general small and weak. M. Rollin, his surgeon, although he says, they are taller than the Chilian Indians, yet gives the average height as five feet two and half inches. Langsdorff says, none of the men seen by him were above five feet. They are of a considerably darker colour than the natives of the provinces more to the south, and what with their filthy habits and constant exposure to the sun, they approach the hue of the negro. They resemble the negro also in their large projecting lips and broad and flat noses. Their hair, however, is very different from that of the negro, being long and straight, not crisp; if left to grow it hangs down to the hips; but they commonly cut it to the length of four or five inches, which makes it stick out like quills. The hair grows very far down towards the eyes, which makes their naturally low forehead look extremely low; the eyebrows are in general small, though in some bushy; the beard is also in general very scanty, although

occasionally a full flowing beard is observed; the causes of the difference not being well known.

Our earliest authority, Father Palou, notices the difference of colour between the tribes on the two sides of the bay of San Francisco, and also the contrast between the Upper and Lower Californians in the mode of wearing their hair. He also considers this custom, as also that of sprinkling ashes on the body, as partly dependant on causes of temporary occurrence. "All the natives of Upper California (he says) both men and women, cut their hair very short, particularly when any of their relations or friends die. In these cases they also put ashes on their heads, faces, and other parts of their bodies. This practice of throwing ashes on their persons was general among all the nations which had been reduced under the dominion of the Spaniards; but those in the south never cut their hair. On the contrary they seem to have great pride in its abundance and stick beads and other ornaments into wreaths of it bound round their heads. They are also in the habit of painting themselves in party coloured stripes of red and black; and this is also an emblem of mourning for their friends for whom they seem to entertain strong affections."

La Pérouse doubts whether the scantiness of beard so generally seen is natural or the effect of art; we believe that it is partly natural but chiefly

the effect of art; and they apply the same depilatory process to other parts of the body. These people also tatoo their bodies but in a much less degree than the Indians of the islands; and the practice is chiefly confined to the women. They turn their toes inwards in walking; and their timid carriage at first sight announces their pusillanimous character. Both sexes in their native state go nearly naked, having only a wrapper of greater or less extent around the waist. In the winter, however, they use a sort of outer garment of deer-skin or otter-skin, or of the feathers of water fowl. These latter are chiefly worn by the women and are rather ingeniously constructed. The feathers are twisted and tied together into a sort of ropes and these are then tied close together so as to have a feathery surface on both sides. They twist strips of otter skins in the same manner so as to have the fur on both sides.

Like all savages they are fond of ornaments for their persons. These consist of bits of carved wood worn as ear-rings; bandeaus of feathers around the head; shells rounded and strung as beads, &c. &c. Their feather-bandeaus are sometimes very beautiful; and the acquisition of the materials of some of them must be a work of great labour. Langsdorff counted in one 450 tail feathers of the golden-winged woodpecker; and as there is only two of these in each bird, that are used, half the number

of birds must have been killed to make up the wreath.

The moral qualities of these people are certainly not beyond the range of their physical, although in judging of these we must neither take the estimate from the early reports of the Spaniards, nor from the reports of travellers who have seen them only in their domesticated state. The Spaniards have always been anxious to establish a low estimate of their mental powers, as a reason and excuse for their manner of treating them. Still it must be admitted that the Californians are, as formerly stated, a feeble hearted and feeble minded race. "It is not easy (says Father Venegas) for Europeans who were never out of their own country, to conceive an adequate idea of these people. For even in the least frequented corners of the globe, there is not a nation so stupid, of such contracted ideas, and weak, both in body and mind, as the unhappy Californians. Their characteristics are stupidity and insensibility; want of knowledge and reflection; inconstancy, impetuosity and blindness of appetite; an excessive sloth and abhorrence of all fatigue; an incessant love of pleasure, and amusement of every kind, however trifling or brutal; in fine, a most wretched want of everything which constitutes the real man, and renders him rational, inventive, tractable, and useful to himself and society."

In accordance with this view of the character of

the natives, the Spaniards in the missions are in the habit of applying the degrading epithet of *beasts* (*bestias*) to the wild or unconverted natives, while they assume to themselves, and even to their convertites, the term which has generally been supposed to belong to the whole human family—viz. *rational creatures* (*gente de razon*). Certain it is, that they at least have none of that boldness and independence of character, and very little of that activity, industry and perseverance, which distinguish the Indians nearer the pole. Even the tribes only a few degrees to the north, are much more ingenious and enterprising; indeed in every way more civilized.

The whole of the Indians at present inhabiting the vast plains of the Tulares as well as those on the Rio Colorado and to the north-east, are of the same race as those which formerly inhabited the coast, and whose children are now the subjects or slaves of the missionaries. They seem to have made no advances towards civilization since the first discovery of their country. Although they possess so favoured a portion of the earth, they almost entirely neglect tillage, and live by the chace and spontaneous productions of the fields and forest. A trifling exception must, indeed, be made in favour of those who live in the immediate vicinity of the Spanish settlements, as they now possess some cattle and horses. The wild

Indians are divided into small tribes, which wage frequent wars with each other, chiefly, it is believed, on account of disputes respecting the boundaries of the districts wherein they respectively claim the exclusive right of hunting and gathering fruits and other means of subsistence. Their numbers, in proportion to the extent of the country they inhabit, are, like those of all tribes in such a stage of civilization, or rather uncivilization, very small.

Their habitations are small round huts of rushes, of a temporary character, erected where they halt for a season and burnt when they change their station. These huts are well described by Captain Beechey, as well as the wretched condition of the inmates. "They were about thirty-five feet in circumference, constructed with pliable poles fixed in the ground and drawn together at the top, to the height of twelve or fifteen feet. They are then interwoven with small twigs and covered with bulrushes, having an aperture at the side to admit the inhabitants and another at the top to let out the smoke. The exterior appearance of these wretched wigwams greatly resembles a bee-hive. In each dwelling are nine or ten Indians of both sexes and of all ages, nearly in a state of nudity, huddled round a fire kindled in the centre of the apartment, a prey to vermin, and presenting a picture of misery and wretchedness seldom beheld in even the

most savage state of society." Although this picture is taken from a tribe of Indians that had left wild life and voluntarily come in to one of the missions, Captain Beechey or his companions were given to understand that this was the state in which they live when free. It is to be believed, however, that these people, thus coming voluntarily to join the mission, had been previously *sophisticated* from their native wild habits by the vicinity of the strangers.

"It is true (says old Venegas) that they stand in no need of large rooms for depositing their furniture, and the various articles of their wardrobe, by which the greatest part of our houses is taken up. In removing they take all their furniture on their shoulders: for they consist only of a chest, a dish, a bowl made in the shape of a high-crowned hat, a bone which serves them for an awl in making it, a little piece of touch-wood for kindling a fire, a small net in which they put their fruit and seeds, another in the shape of a purse or bag fastened to a kind of prong across their shoulders, in which they carry their children, and lastly their bow and arrows,—to which some, who affect elegance, add a shell for drinking. Those who live near the coasts have also nets for fishing. This furniture the women carry when they remove from one place to another; the men have only the bow and arrows

with their appurtenances, as flints and feathers for the arrows, and sinews for the bows. But, to secure them, and at the same time not to incommode them in their march, they make holes in their ears, where they hang a large case which holds the things they need." (I. 78.)

The following account of the mode of subsistence and of some of the habits of the natives of Upper California is particularly worthy of attention, not only as being drawn up by a resident, but as the first notice of these matters that can, in any way, be depended on. It is taken from Father Palou's work, to which we are already so largely indebted.

"The natives of this part of the country maintain themselves by the seeds and herbs of the field, to collect which, when in season, is the duty of the women. The seeds they grind, and of the flour make gruel; and sometimes a kind of pudding or dough, which they form into balls of the size of an orange. Some of this flour has an agreeable flavor and is very nutritive; that produced from a black seed has the taste of toasted almonds. To this diet they add fish which they catch on the shores of the bay, and which are exceedingly good; they have also shell-fish in abundance. In addition they have the produce of the chase and wild fowl; such as deer, rabbits, geese, ducks, quails, &c. It also sometimes happens that a whale is driven on shore,

an event which they celebrate with great rejoicings, as they value its flesh and blubber above all things. They roast the flesh of this animal in holes made in the earth; and when their first voracity is appeased, they hang up the remainder on the trees, and cut pieces off as they do with the seal, which they esteem next to the whale. In the woods they also find acorns which they grind in like manner and make gruel and balls of. There are likewise nuts of the same quality as in Spain; and on the high ground and sand-hills, strawberries of excellent flavour, and much larger than those of Europe; which ripen in the months of May and June. There is likewise a blackberry which is found in great abundance. In the highlands there is an edible root which they call 'Amole' about the size of an onion, and which after being roasted in their ovens, has an agreeable sweetish taste.

Another variety of this amole serves all the purposes of soap; but of this the natives have no great need as their clothing is very scanty. This indeed is exclusively confined to the females; the men going without any except what nature gave them.

The other sex, however, even the young girls have always some covering which is made of the tulé or bulrush, and which consists of one piece before and one behind, in the manner of a petticoat: they have also a piece thrown over their shoulders. The