

of their history, and important for purposes of comparison; but in most cases they are of types already familiar to Ethnography and do not raise any far reaching issues.

It has therefore seemed advisable, as far as they are concerned, not to bring Owls to Athens, but to devote ones attention more particularly to a field from which the harvest has been less abundant.

The Changes which have taken place in California during the last century have been so revolutionary, the new order of things has so completely superseded the old, that objects from this part of the world with an authentic origin dating from a hundred years back have an especial significance. This is peculiarly the case with such things as are of a perishable nature and ill adapted to survive those Dark Ages of Ethnography when cellars and attics were the normal resting-places of treasures which can never now be replaced. It is therefore all the more fortunate that Mr. Hewett should have had a predilection for things of a comparatively fragile nature, not burdening himself for instance with many stone implements or things which will "keep" for an indefinite time. When we consider how limited the facilities for storage must have been for a man in a comparatively subordinate position on what would now be considered a very small ship, we may well be astonished that the collection should ever have arrived home in safety. Almost equally astonishing is its survival in a private house between the time of Mr. Hewett's death and the year when it was acquired by the British Museum.

It is difficult to form an accurate idea of the condition and character of the Californian tribes before the modern period began. The light shed on the matter by the early voyagers does not enable the investigator to make out very much, because it flickers so. We find a curious medley of conflicting judgments in which virtues and vices are indiscriminately assigned, according to what may be styled the professional bias of the writer, or the psychological influences of the moment. Unanimity only seems to occur in a common admiration for the native's skill in stealing, a skill which led to the comparison of an individual thief with Barabbas and of the Californians as a body with the gipsies<sup>1)</sup>.

It has been remarked that the civilisation of the Californian tribes is lower than a comparatively favourable environment would lead one to expect. But not only were they more than usually isolated through the absence on most parts of their coast of sea-going canoes, but most of them were also supplied with a sufficiency of food without continual effort or very great privation. In Central California men lived in the acorn-age, and their life may have in many respects resembled that of the earliest inhabitants of Italy and other parts of Europe, when, according to common Roman tradition acorns formed the staple diet of man. PLINY<sup>2)</sup> in a passage of his Natural History speaks of acorn-bearing trees as "nutrices inopis ac ferae sortis", and further mentions the more modern use of acorn bread, especially in Spain<sup>3)</sup>. This bread may have had some resemblance to that produced by the Californian tribes though it was probably not so coarse.

But though the Californians may have had much in common with the ancient inhab-

<sup>1)</sup> TORQUEMADA: *Monarquia Indiana*. I. 782. Madrid. 1615.

<sup>2)</sup> Book XVI. c. 1. The passage is: Proximum erat narrare glandiferas quoque, quae primo victum mortalium aluerunt, nutrices inopis ac ferae sortis.

<sup>3)</sup> Book XVI. c. 5. Glandes opes esse nunc quoque multarum gentium, etiam pace gaudentium, constat: necnon et inopia frugum arefactis molitur farina, spissaturque in panis usum: quia et hodieque per Hispanias secundis mensis glans inferitur: dulcior eadem in cinere tosta.