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THE CON-COW INDIANS.

THIS is the story of our race, as brought forward and told to us in the stillness of the nights, around the camp-fires, by the old men, the scholars and the priests of our tribe.

In the beginning Wahno-no-pem, the Great Spirit, made all things. Before he came, everything on the earth and in the skies was hidden in darkness and in gloom, but where he appeared he was the light. From his essence, out of his breath, he made the sun, the moon, and the countless stars, and pinned them in the blue vault of the heavens. And his Spirit came down upon the earth, and there was day; he departed, and the darkness of night closed again upon the places where he had stood; he returned, and the light shone upon the Con-Cows and all the other living creatures upon the earth, in the waters, and in all the skies; the wild flowers bloomed in the valleys and on the mountain sides; the song of the birds was heard among the leaves of the madrone and on the boughs of the pines, and the hours of the day and of the night were permanently established.

As the days and nights interchanged in the countless moons of the past, the Con-Cows and all the other people on the face of the earth became very wicked and bad, until, one day, the spirit of Wahno-no-pem, borne upon the beams of the rising sun, came through the pines and appeared unto some very wise old men, and said unto them: "The Con-Cows, my children, whom I have made out of my breath, shall not bow down and worship the mountains, the waters, the rocks, or the trees, or anything which I have made upon the earth, or in the waters, or in all the skies; but go you unto all my people and say they shall bow down to me, and me alone; and all who shall not believe in and worship me shall be devoured by the wild beasts and the demon birds of the forests, or destroyed by the great fire, *Sahm*."

Thus said the Great Spirit unto the teach-

ers of our tribe, and then he passed away into Hepe-ning-ko, the blue land of the stars. But the command was not heeded, and wickedness increased and went wild and rampant about the whole land, and Wahno-no-pem caused Yane-ka-num-ka-la, the White Spirit, to appear in the flesh unto the people, that he might enlighten and turn them from their evil ways; and this good man began his teachings at Wel-lu-da, where the white face has since built his home, and which he calls Chico.

For many years he lived among our people, teaching the young men and the maidens many lessons of love and wisdom, many songs and games and gentle pastimes; and in all these years they loved him more and more. But he died, and the lessons were forgotten; the songs died away in the forests, and in their stead came the war-whoop, the shrieks of struggling women, and the groans of the wounded and the dying; and the name of Yane-ka-num-ka-la became a jibe and a mockery all over the land.

And as time went on, the Great Spirit sent two more good men, white spirits from the Yu-dic-na, the unreachable frozen regions at the end of the earth, to explain once more the teachings of wisdom and of love, and the worship of Wahno-no-pem; and to show unto our people that they came from the Great Spirit, they made the streams issue forth from the solid rocks, the mountains dissolve into lakes, and into the waters of the sea; they healed the sick, and gave back the spirit of life to the dead, who, as they quickened into life again, bowed down for a time before the Great Spirit and worshiped him. But these good men accomplished no lasting good; wickedness went about roaring as fiercely as before; and they passed away, carried by the wind to their homes in the frozen seas, amid the floating ice mountains, and the golden auroras of the far-off Yu-dic-na.

And Wahno-no-pem, after the good men

had departed, became wrathful against his children, and sent a great drought upon the land; the gentle rain fell no more upon the earth, and it baked and cracked and yielded no more food. The sweet summer grasses and the white clover shrank away and became as wisps; the pine tree bore no more its nutty cone; the brown balls of the buckeye and the red grape of the manzanita were no where to be found; and the flesh of the roebuck, the black bear, and the wild game in the woods was as frothy poison. And the people worked hard digging for the *so-com-me*, the sweet roots of the swamps, which had become as rocks, and when found they were moulded away or wasted into strings. Suffering and hunger were all over the land, and the old men, the young men, the women, and the maidens cried in their anguish for the black spirit of death to come to their relief.

Then all those who had heard and remembered the teachings of the good men became conscience-stricken, and built the *kaka-ne-comes*, the sweat-houses, and bowing down therein invoked the Great Spirit, praying for the mercy of Wahno-no-pem, and that the fruit of the evergreen and everbearing tree in the land of the stars, near the Great Spirit, may be showered down to them. But Wahno-no-pem had veiled his face in his anger and would not hear. He had said that he would send the great *Sahm* to destroy his bad children, and his word was the great law upon the earth, in the waters, and in all the skies.

The good men had told the Con-Cows that the *kaka-ne-comes* were sacred, and that no women or children were to go down into them—only the men who were feeding the holy fire were to bow down before it, with the wickedness in them purified by the fire. But one day when all the people were out on the plain, wringing their hands in their anguish and despair, and praying for relief in their suffering, two little boys went down into the *kaka-ne-comes* and threw some pitch-pine sticks upon the fire; and the flames flew up to the roof and from there spread everywhere, licking and destroying everything in

their way—over fields and in the valleys, across the dry streams and the mountains, scorching the dry and parched earth, burning the trees and melting the rocks, with the people flying in terror before them; but the flames were faster, and everything that was alive—the game and the wild beasts and even the birds in the forest and all the Con-Cows but two—were destroyed. Pe-uch-ano, so named from his great sufferings, was a kindly, pious man, and he and Um-wa-na-ta, his mate, had always thanked the Great Spirit for his kindness to them, and he remembered them even in the great *Sahm*. The flames came roaring toward them like wild beasts, but they rolled away on every side as if pressed back by an invisible hand—the hand of Wahno-no-pem, the Great Spirit.

And these two good people ran and wandered for many moons, crying and nearly starving, until one day they halted near Ani-ka-to, which the white man calls Trinity River. Wahno-no-pem had sent down the rain, the fire had died out, the grasses were springing green again all over the land, the birds were singing everywhere, and the Ani-ka-to was full with the fish shining and swimming in its limpid waters. In a sheltered nook upon its banks they made a little home, but they built a *kaka-ne-comes* first. As the moons waned and came again, little children grew around them as plentiful as the grains of sand near the great waters; and one day, long, long after, Pe-uch-ano and Um-wa-na-ta having grown very old, gathered their children and grandchildren around them, and told them that the black spirit of death was coming for them fast, but that before they went with him they wanted to sleep in their old Wel-lu-da, where they had first seen the wild flowers blooming and heard the glad song of the birds singing among the pines.

And the women, the young maidens, and the little children waded into Ani-ka-to, and made themselves pure by ablutions and knelt upon the banks; while the old men and the young men went down into the *kaka-ne-comes* and purified themselves with the holy fire, and they all prayed that Wahno-no-pem, the

Great Spirit, might lead them on their way to far off Wel-lu-da.

With the next sun they started; the young men first to clear the way and frighten the wild beasts, and the women, the young maidens, and the little children, with Pe-uch-ano and Um-wa-na-ta in their midst, in the middle of a long line, with the old men bringing up the rear. For many days they journeyed thus over mountains and across streams, always making the *kaka-ne-comes* first before they slept at night—until, one evening, they saw away off in the distance a green valley, with the setting sun shining upon it. They halted, and Pe-uch-ano and Um-wa-na-ta were brought to the front. Shading their old eyes with their feeble hands, anxious and silent, they gazed long and tremblingly upon it, until one by one the tears chased each other down their old wrinkled faces, and falling upon their knees they looked upward, and with clasped hands and sobbing voices, cried, "Wel-lu-da, Wel-lu-da, once more!" And the young men took up the glad cry, stronger and stronger, as it went: Wel-lu-da, Wel-lu-da, our home!" and above it all, rising sweet and solemn above the grand old pines, the song of praise of the young maidens to Wahno-no-pem, the Great Spirit, who had brought them safely through so many dangers to Wel-lu-da, the old home of their sires.

And in the long, long years—as many as the stars above us—around the campfires of the tribe at night the story was told by the old to the young; and I tell it to thee, white chief, as it came down to me.

No, my brother, we did not believe that the coyote or the grizzly made us, before we heard of the great book of thy people; its best lessons were already known to us. Thy white brothers have driven us from the old home of our tribe—Wel-lu-da—where the bones of my fathers and of my children are bleaching: do not let them take from us the traditions and the faith of our race; write my words as I have said them unto thee, and tell them that we believe alike in Wahno-no-pem, the Great Spirit, who made the red man as well as the white, and who looks

down upon us to-night from Hepe-ning-ko, the blue land of the stars.

Thus spoke to me, one clear night upon the old Nome-Cult, with one hand on my shoulder and the other pointing upward, Tome-ya-nem, the last chief of his tribe. The fire at our feet had died out, leaving only a few glowing embers, and the moon shone clear and cold upon the white and the red as they communed together in the stillness of the night. Long and silently I pondered upon his words, and long and silently he waited for an answer.

"Brother, the years that have passed over my head since I left my Wel-lu-da beyond the great waters are beginning to leave the gray threads in my hair, and like thine my heart has known many sorrows, for I, too, have seen the home of my fathers in the hands of the strangers, while I stood powerless to save—but my pen is still young and weak, and may faint on the way. Go tell the story of thy race and the legends of thy tribe to some wiser man, and let him speak of thy dead, of thy past, and of thy future." Sadly the head of the chief was bowed upon his breast—sadder still his mournful answer:

"My past is dead; the present is passing; and I have no future."

The first blush of morning was beginning to tint the eastern sky, and clear and sharp upon the pure morning air came the notes of the bugle, sounding the reveille, as our hands met for the last time in a farewell grasp.

"Brother, the day has chased away the night—the sun will shine for the sky is clear, and the clouds have passed away; the red chief has told me the story of his race; the white chief will write the legend of his tribe."

* * * * *

Our old home was in the Con-cow valley, in what is now called by the white man Butte county, across the mountains and away to Ko-mo, the East. For long and happy years the Con-cows had lived therein in peace and in plenty, for they were good Indians; they never went to war with the

other tribes, and never killed unless they were forced to do so, for they had never forgotten the lessons of Pe-uch-ano in the old, old times, and they were beloved by Wahno-no-pem, the Great Spirit.

Ever since I was as small as the little *koh-la* playing at thy feet, I remember the "Ad-sals," the white men, for they were already among our people in the valley where I was born. The young men and the young maidens of my father were as thick as the leaves in the *sha-pome* above our heads, and they all loved the old chief very much. By and by the Ad-sals told him that they wanted him to leave his dear old home; that the red and the white could not live together, and that he and his tribe must go and look for another home in another land. And the heart of my father became very sad, and he did not know what to do; but he told his people to be very good to the whites, and that perhaps the Ad-sals would learn to like them too, and go down in the *kaka-ne-comes* and trust in Wahno-no-pem. But by and by again the whites—some were very good and some were very bad—began to say that the Con-cows were killing the *shu-mim*, the stock, and that we should have to leave our dear old valley or the Ad-sals would kill us.

No, White Chief, no! We did not kill the *shu-mim*, but if the hawk or the fox stole the chickens at night, or if an ox or a cow strayed away in the mountains and never came again, it was always the Con-Cows that did it, and the days became very dark for my father's children. One day, many white braves—volunteers they were called—came to our valley and gathered all our people together, and for many days and nights we traveled over the mountains until we came to a place on the shores of the Heli-mo-mox, the great waters, called Mendocino, where the Ad-sals had made a corral for us which was called a Reservation, and we were told to stay there. And the times became very hard, for often we were very hungry, and did not know where to get enough to eat, and the Con-Cows began to die very fast.

We had been there one year, and the little sapling had grown into a young tree, when

the chief, my father, having grown very old, sent for me and said: "My son, my old eyes have grown dim, and the rush of the great river is in my ears; my days in the land are numbered, and I will never look upon dear Wel-lu-da again. But the sap in thy veins is flowing strong and fast, and the green leaves will remain upon thy head for many moons to come—take thou the name of thy father, and be the leader of my children, while I rest my old limbs until the black spirit calls for me to go." And from that day I was called Tome-ya-nem, the *Yeh-po-na* of the *Lauk-ome*, or the chief of the tribe.

One day soon after I went to the headman on the Reservation, and told him that my people were hungry; that we had not ground enough to raise the corn, the potatoes, and the watermelons, and that I wanted to go to some other place where there was more room; and he wrote to Washington, and by and by he told me we could go to Round Valley and live on that Reservation. So I gathered my tribe together, and we started without any white braves with us, only ourselves, and we journeyed toward our new home as Pe-uch-ano did in the old, old times, always making the *kaka-ne-comes* first before we slept at night.

But when we came to Round Valley we were as badly off as before; there was even less to eat, and my people had to work very hard. But the Ad-sals knew that the Con-Cows were good Indians, and they liked Tome-ya-nem very much, and every once in a while they helped us a little, but not much.

One day after we had been there about a year one of the Ad-sals came home and said that the bad Wylackies were killing all the *shu-mim*, and he asked me to come with my braves and help to kill the Wylackies. But I shook my head and said No—that I knew that they were bad Indians, but that they had done no harm either to me or mine. But he said that if they were not punished soon, they would come one day and kill all the Con-Cows as well as the Whites; so I became very anxious and disturbed, and I went to the headman on the Reservation, and asked him what to do. He was a good man

and he did not know what to do either; but the other Ad-sals came to him, and he was prevailed upon, and he asked me to go too. I did not like it, though I said Yes.

So I took many of my warriors and some of the Yukas and Pitt-Rivers, and we started on the war-path with nine of the Ad-sals; we camped that night in an open place where the Wylackies had killed the *shu-mim*, and a great many horse-heads were lying upon the ground all around us smelling very badly. The white men recognized them as having belonged to their stock, and they became very angry. The next morning we came to a creek at a place the Ad-sals now call Horse-Cañon, and the Wylackies were there as thick as leaves, some singing, others dancing, while the *ma-hi-nas* were making the acorn soup, with the little children jumping about and rolling over each other in glee. The trees were full of meat hanging in the sun to dry, and there were so many Indians that the Ad-sals became very anxious and frightened, and did not know whether to go back or fight; and finally, they asked me to be chief during the battle. I said that I would do so, but they must do as I told them, and they promised to mind me. I told my braves to be sure and not to kill the *ma-hi-nas* or the *koh-las*, the women and the little children, and I gave the war-whoop and we charged upon the Wylackies.

Very soon the water in the creek became red, and the Con-Cows and the Pitt-Rivers wild and drunken with blood, and their tomahawks crushed through the brain of the old and the young alike; and none of them remembered that they had had mothers, or that they had been little children once. One of the Ad-sals and myself gathered a great many women and children together, and I told him that we would save them and take them to the Reservation, and he said, "Yes," but just then one of the Yukas came and cried that one of the Ad-sals had been wounded or killed; then the one with me turned around, and pointing to the *ma-hi-nas* and *koh-las* commanded to kill them all and they were killed; but we hid a great many little *koh-las* among the rocks, and

perhaps they did not die. I remember one, White Chief, a beautiful brown little girl with eyes as bright and as large as two stars; she was running away and trying to escape with a brave after her; her foot tripped, and as she fell the tomahawk cleft her little head in two.

The dead Wylackies were strewn over the ground like the dead leaves in the fall, and for many days the sky was black with the ravens fattening on the dead; even now, in the summer days, the white bones are bleaching underneath the wild flowers. And Wah-no-no-pem must have frowned upon his bad children, for we became, after that, even more unhappy than before. The Ad-sals were afraid that their Great Father in Washington would keep all the valley for the Indians, and that the whites would have to go to some other home, and they hated us for it very much; often at night, in the spring-time, some of the Ad-sals would steal around our fences and throw them down, and drive their *shu-mim* into the fields, and the young corn and everything green would disappear in one night.

One year there was nothing for us to eat, and I became very anxious for my *Lauk-ome*, for the rains were coming fast with the cold winds from the *Yu-dic-na*, and we would be shut in by the swollen streams, with starvation before and the Ad-sals behind. So I told my people to pull down their lodges and make ready to move; and the *ma-hi-nas* brought all their nice, water-tight baskets and everything that we could not carry, and we piled them up high and we burned them all down. I went to the head man on the Reservation and shook hands with him, and told him that I must go, that I could not remain, that my people were starving and would have to kill the *shu-mim* in the winter to keep from dying of hunger, and that the Ad-sals would kill them if they did. And in a long line, five hundred strong, we turned our faces toward the *Ko-mo*, the East, and travelled onward to *Wel-lu-da*, our home.

But when we got across the mountains into the valley of the Sacramento, the Ad-sals who lived there came towards us and asked Tome-ya-nem whither he was bound, and I

told him to Wel-lu-da, my old home near Chico. And they sent the lightning to Hanson, the Chief of the Reservation, and told him that I had left the old Nome-Cult; and he sent the lightning back for them to say to me to go to Nome-Lackee; but I knew it and had gone on, for I wanted to see my old home again.

But one day, long before I got there, the white braves came down from Red Bluff, a great many of them, with rifles and big guns, and they came up with us near a great river that we were trying to cross, and we halted. Then Hanson came in a carriage and asked me why I had left Nome-Cult, and I told him. He wanted me to turn back to Nome-Lackee; but I said that we wanted to see Wel-lu-da again for only one year. And he said that as we were good Indians we might do so, and that he would see that we had plenty of meat to eat.

So I went on with my people and camped in a meadow some five miles from Chico, and my braves and my *ma-hi-nas* went out and worked for the Ad-sals for a whole year. But many of them became very sick with chills and fever, and when the time came for us to go back to Nome-Cult they were so weak that they could scarcely walk, and many, many died on the trail, lying down sick and dying all the way from Chico to this place. And when we got here there was nothing for us to eat, and my people began to fall as thick and as fast as the acorns in the fall of the year. The head man on the Reservation had gone to the big city near the great waters, and there was no one here to do anything for us—only the White Chief Douglas at Camp Wright, who sent his medicine-man to take care of my sick, and Ad-sals and mules all the way to Chico to bring my people left dying on the trail—and here we have remained ever since.

Are we happy now? No, my brother, no. We have not been happy since we left our home; ever since I was as big as that little *koh-la* rolling down in that ditch I have never known aught but sorrow and pain. Of all the Con-Cows, once as thick as the greasewood leaves on the side of that moun-

tain yonder, only seventy braves remain, with the *ma-hi-nas* and the *koh-las* seven times twenty in all. But we are more contented and better satisfied now than we have ever been since we were taken from our home in dear old Wel-lu-da. The good Ad-sal, Burchar, does everything for our good and gives us all we want; the songs of my people as they go to their daily tasks are sad and often solemn, but, brother, they are songs all the same. Not many moons will pass, and the songs will be hushed forever, and the name of the Con-cows will be forgotten in the land of their birth. But Wahno-no-pem will be good to his poor red children when they gather together again at his feet to sing the praises of the Great Spirit up there, White Chief, in the blue land of the stars, where you and I will perhaps meet again.

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There were at the time these facts were gathered, on the Reservation and numbered among the Con-Cows, some twenty-five Che-es-sees Indians, who came from Yankee Hill, in Butte County, about twelve or fourteen miles east of Con-Cow Valley. The Che-es-sees resemble the Con-Cows very much in size, manners, and general appearance, and they are, in reality, a branch or off-shoot of the Con-Cow family. When these last were taken to the Mendocino Reservation, the Che-es-sees remained in their native home for some years afterwards among the whites, by whom they were known as the Yankee Hill Indians.

In the summer of 1863 a white woman was wounded or killed by some of the Mill Creek Indians in that vicinity, and the occurrence created a strong excitement among the white inhabitants of the surrounding country. It appears that they labored under the impression that the Che-es-sees had done the deed, and, as the excitement increased and the news spread, the whites assembled some five or six hundred in number, with the avowed intention of annihilating the entire tribe, which, at that time, numbered fully four hundred.

The postmaster of Yankee Hill in those days was one Michael Welsh, who was very

much respected and liked among and by the Indians, and he must have been a worthy man, for even now, twelve years afterward, the Che-es-sees remember and speak of him with the greatest affection. Welsh was positive that none of these Indians had committed the deed or connived at it; and he told them to gather near his house, and that when the whites came he would try and convince them that they were after the wrong Indians. The Che-es-sees had so much faith in his words that they did as he wished, instead of scattering and remaining in hiding in the woods as they intended doing at first.

The next day the settlers came in a body fully armed. Upon arriving near the little post-office they were met by Welsh, who expostulated with them, and earnestly asked them not to kill, not only innocent men and women, but also little children. It is probable, from the Indian account of the matter, that had it not been for him the Indians would have been killed at once, and the matter investigated afterward, as was unfortunately too often the case in those days in matters of that kind between the whites and Indians. His entreaties and prayers had a great effect, despite the animosity of some of the whites—especially, as the Indians say, that of a man named Jones, who was the most persistent in his endeavors to excite the rest of the whites, and to make them believe that the Indians had committed the deed, and that they should be all killed at once. Welsh was not only eloquent in his remarks in the behalf of humanity, but he was fully as much in earnest in his actions; at one time he bared his breast and told the whites that he was so fully convinced of the innocence of the Indians that they might kill him first, for they were no more guilty in the case than he was. Finally, he turned to Uh-le-ma, the chief of the tribe, and told him to form his people in a long single line, each to bear the careful scrutiny of the whites; adding that he was so positive of their innocence, that if any of them, men or women, should quail or evince the least sign of guilt, he was willing that they should all die and he with them.

The inspection, examination, or whatever it may be called, lasted more than two hours, and the feelings of the poor Indians in this terrific suspense between life and death may perhaps be imagined; yet their intensity can hardly be realized, except by a reprieved criminal who has had the halter around his neck, and has already tasted all the bitterness of death. At last, however, some of the whites insisted—with how much truth we are unable to ascertain—that they recognized four Indians among the tribe who had been seen in the vicinity at about the time the deed was done. These four were led back some hundred yards, and with their hands tied securely were told to stand up for execution, while the whites retreated some thirty or forty yards, the better to fire on them. At the first volley, two of the Indians fell forward on their faces dead. The other two, their strength more than doubled by despair, broke by a powerful effort the ropes with which their hands were tied, and ran toward the whites, instead of away from them, rushed in among them, and by doubling here and there upon their tracks, confused them so much that they refrained from firing for fear of shooting one another; and incredible as it may appear, the two Indians escaped from among at least five hundred infuriated whites. One of these Indians, a Con-Cow, died some years afterward on the Bidwell ranch near Chico, and the other is still living on the reservation, with a bullet hole in his shoulder just below the neck and a mutilated foot, as the tokens of his narrow, and in fact, almost miraculous escape.

Very soon after this—some months as nearly as we can approximate—some of these same Mill Creek Indians, who had been guilty of the murder of the white woman, stole a little white boy who had wandered a short distance away from home, and the exasperated settlers determined that, this time, no entreaties on the part of any one should prevent them from putting a stop to crimes of that nature by killing all the Indians they came across. Word having been sent in the night to Michael Welsh, he sent for the chief of the Che-es-sees at once, and told

him that, fully convinced as he was that the stealing had been done by some of the other Indians, it would be best for his tribe to leave Yankee Hill immediately, and go and join the Con-Cows on the Bidwell ranch for safety ; and that, in the meantime, Superintendent Hanson would be advised of the state of affairs, and that he would protect them if he could.

So the tribe gathered together that night and started for Chico, and for a long time remained hidden away along the Sacramento river, until the excitement died away with

time. When the Con-Cows came to the Nome-Cult Reservation in Round Valley, in that long summer march during which so many died of disease and of want, the Che-es-sees came with them, and have remained ever since thereon as part of the last remaining Con-Cows.

I cannot vouch for the truth of all the particulars of this episode, but it was told me by Uh-le-ma, the chief of the tribe ; and his earnest and truthful manner, together with his good reputation, impressed me so much that I believe every word of his narrative.

A. G. Fassin.
