

### The Diggers' Fandango.

On Tuesday last we witnessed the largest gathering of the Mountain Diggers that has occurred in this vicinity for a number of years. The occasion was that of their great annual festival and fandango, celebrating the return of green fields and pleasant weather without rain.

The locality selected is about four miles from Placerville, and one that even nature's uncultivated child could not mistake as a beautiful spot. A smooth hill side with an easy slope, terminating at bottom upon a level lawn of green grass, the whole deeply shaded by wide-spreading oaks and giant pines, a clear cool spring issues from the hill side, where, (said an old and gray-haired Digger,) the great spirit once came and drank.

Upon the green level, a corral or inclosure had been made by setting upright posts, eight feet high, in a circle eighty feet in diameter; poles were then laid from post to post, completing the circle. On the outside green boughs of oak and pine were set close together and completely interwoven, and on the outside, about twelve feet from this palisade of boughs, was another similar in every respect, and the interval between the two, thickly covered with green boughs, made the grand parlor and sleeping apartment of the entire people. And here they were, between six and seven hundred, of all ages and both sexes, some in full, others in half dress and a few entirely naked.

It was 3 o'clock P. M. when we reached the spot, the greater number were then reposing in groups, or cooking their food in shady places outside the corral, while the little boys had arranged themselves in opposing parties, and at a short distance from camp, with each a sling in hand, were hurling stones at each other, protecting themselves behind the intervening trees.

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About thirty of their warriors were engaged in a dance on the hill side, which they kept up at intervals for two hours, then passing down and into the corral, they went through with a single dance more, which closed the performance till evening.

We now, through Col. J. C. Johnson, our interpreter, obtained an interview with Big Chief John, who introduced us to the Grand Chief, known as Capt. Moore or the Auburn Chief, the great head of the tribe. He had noticed us while taking notes upon paper, and on our introduction, immediately handed from his belt a number of written documents, all going to show that he was *Chief*, and friendly disposed towards the whites. He invited us to be present at night and witness their grand fandango.

We then left for Smith's Ranch, a mile or more distant, for supper, and returned just as their outside dance commenced. This dance concluded, which was in about half an hour, all, with the exception of their own sentinels, passed within the inclosure, the Indians first, then the white men, by paying each a dollar and receiving a ticket, consisting of a pine stick five or six inches long and one-fourth of an inch square. Within this corral, which from out side to out side, including the grand parlor, is about one hundred feet in diameter, were mixed up in strange confusion about six hundred and fifty Indians and about thirty or forty whites.

Of the open space within, about ten feet of the outside all around was occupied by small bright fires, ten or fifteen feet apart, around which were seated the little child, the youth, the middle-aged and aged sires, with beard and hair as white as age could make it, with here and there a woman so old, haggard and withered, that the deep furrows in their time-worn brows, were hardly leveled up by the passage of their bony fingers through them.

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Near the center of the arena was the great fire, around which were collected the braves and principal men of the tribe, about sixty in number, and dressed in every variety of costume that their varied tastes might suggest or their means procure. Their head dress being for the greater part composed of a broad turban of hawks and eagles' feathers, with tinsel ornaments innumerable. A few were almost naked and nearly all hideously painted, every man carrying his bow and quiver of arrows. Their musical instrument is a very primitive whistle, some double and some single, and held in the mouth by one end and without the aid of the fingers; they are about the size and length of a common pipe, and with but two or three holes, and only about two notes can be sounded on them, this we know from trial. The music, if such it can be called, sounds like the creaking of an ungreased wheel, emitting two sounds, and only two, in rapid succession, with an interval of no sound at every revolution. The time is just about that of an ordinary waltz; the movement called dancing, on the part of the women, is more like the constant repetition of an awkward courtesy than any thing else, the feet being scarcely raised from the ground for an hour together; there is no change of position. The movement of the men differs but little from that of the women, their feet being sometimes raised from the ground and put down a foot or more distant, but at the next movement are brought back again to their first position, and so long, regular and unceasing is the movement, that considerable cavities are worn in the ground from the action of their feet. At intervals of three or five minutes the dancing and music ceased abruptly, followed by a loud shout from all. A kind of low chanting is kept up by one or two old men in the midst, accompanied by a dull rattle, made by inclosing a few pebbles in a bit of raw-hide or parchment, about the size and shape of a hen's egg and fastened to the end of a small stick twenty inches long. This instrument seemed to govern the time, while the two principal

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The space between the dancers and the outer circle of men, women and children being occupied by spectators. All are expected to be seated, though there is much moving about. We accordingly lowered away our lengthy proportions and took a seat upon the ground. Soon the little space on either

side of us was occupied by nothing less than a tolerable good looking squaw, curious to see us use our pencil and paper. And here we kept our seat till nearly twelve o'clock, amid the smoke from the surrounding fires and dust from the feet of the dancers; this, with the occasional simultaneous yell of hundreds of Indians, the rattling of their ornaments, the constant creaking of their strange wild music, the stare of savage faces, made more hideous by the glare of the fire light upon them, with the constant howling of Indian dogs without, altogether, seemed more like an assemblage of fiends incarnate, than human beings, and which to be fully realized must be seen.

No intoxicating drink is permitted upon the ground, even by the Indians themselves, and the grand chief requested our interpreter to use his influence in preventing any white man from bringing any. So much for the Digger Indian and his annual festival.