

## THE INDIANS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

BY FREDERICK G. WRIGHT.

The native tribes of British Columbia may be divided into two classes, viz: the Coast, or Fish-eating Indians, and those of the interior. The former, or Coast tribes, inhabitants of Vancouver Island, will form the subject of this sketch.

Commencing at Victoria, on the extreme south of the island, we find the remains of the Songish tribe, and about forty miles up the east coast, we come to the headquarters of the Cowichans. Nanaimo, still further north, has a considerable tribe of the same name. The natives from this tribe to Queen Charlotte Sound, do not appear to belong to the Fish-eaters.

Turning our attention to the westward, we find the Nitinah (or Barclay), Clay-oh-quot, and Nootka Indians, from whom the three sounds take their names. These tribes are again divided into many smaller classes, which it will be unnecessary to mention. Of all the above, the most debased are probably the Songish. Close contact with civilization appears to act almost invariably to the detriment of the savage. This is evident to the most superficial observer.

The Cowichans are a much finer race, but the Nanaimo tribes, although once equal, if not superior to their neighbors, have become debased since the settling down of their country by the whites.

The natives of the west coast are considered somewhat superior to those on the east. The fish caught by the Coast tribes are salmon, halibut, cod, herrings, smelt, eulachon, clams, etc., while their animal food consists of deer, beaver, bear, badger, sea-otter, etc. They also eat various roots, and oils extracted from the whale, seal, porpoise, etc. The sea-encumber, (the "Beche-de-Mer" of more southern latitudes) the lichen found on pine trees, and the various berries which grow so abundantly all over the island, are great staples of food.

As regards physiognomy, a difference may be noticed in every small tribe or subdivision of one. Instances are not seldom met with of a strong Caucasian resemblance, while faces of the Spanish and even Chinese type, are at times noticed. The general size of

these natives is rather under the average, and neither among the men or women is a handsome face, as a general rule, to be found. What the appearance in former times was, when they roamed in their native wilds, undisturbed by the white man and clad in their home-made robes, it is difficult to say, but certainly when we meet them to-day habited in the extremely unclean trade-blanket, we have some difficulty in recognizing the "noble savage" as depicted in the *Hiawatha* and *Muinihaha* of Longfellow. A constant use of the paddle gives the Coast tribes great strength in their fingers, but their cramped-up position in the canoe renders their legs small and weak.

The settler fresh from Europe, with perhaps rather romantic ideas about the red man, will be sadly disappointed when he encounters the reality on this coast. Instead of the proud stride in his walk, he sees the awkward shuffle and crouching gait, and for the generosity of which he has read so much, he meets with greediness and lazy cunning, combined with consummate craft, the sole aim of the poor native appearing to be how best to while away his existence with the least possible exertion to himself. This, it will of course be remembered, only applies to the Coast tribes; indeed the tribes of the interior, and those of the more northern latitudes, would seem very different in many respects. As regards their subjection to government, they are quiet, friendly, and law-abiding, and this for several reasons.

In the first place they have always been well treated by the British government, all agreements with them have been kept to the letter, and they know full well that the same laws exist to be appealed to with certainty of redress by the red man as well as by the white. This righteous observance of treaties, and firm but impartial administration of justice, have brought their own reward, as the settler may traverse the length and breadth of a wild country about the size of England and France together, and (provided only he lets the Indian and his belongings alone) he will travel as safely as in his native land.

It should not be forgotten, also, that the manly, upright conduct of the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company

throughout British America in early days, has done much to render the "King-George-man" respected as well as feared. But while the Indian, according to a mysterious, apparently invariable decree, is gradually disappearing before the march of civilization, much is being done to point him to the white man's "Better Land" above.

The English Church, the Roman Catholic, as well as Presbyterians and Methodists, have established missions, and in several instances with great success. Self-denying men are now spending their lives in the endeavor to teach the heathen those truths which they so highly value themselves.

To the reflective mind it is a curious thought, that the time is surely approaching when the curious name of some settlement, some quaintly-carved effigy or crest on a deserted Indian ranch, or some other relic of the aborigines, shall be all that is left to remind men of the once powerful Coast tribes of British Columbia.

## IDAHO.

Besides her numerous mountain ranges, Idaho has many fertile valleys and extensive grazing districts. The Utah and Northern has already brought into notoriety the famous valleys of Eastern Idaho, and the branch roads soon to be built through the Boise country and eventually on out to the North Pacific coast, will bring the great stock and agricultural regions, as well as the rich mineral belts, within easy communication of the outside world. Idaho's future never appeared so bright as at present. Rich mineral belts, forests of pine, vast stock ranges and fine agricultural districts are nowhere more numerous than in this territory, and from the present time on her population and wealth will rapidly increase. She has all the resources necessary to make a populous and prosperous state. No western country to-day has a more promising outlook than Idaho.

On the road leading to Vancouver the following "Notis" is posted very conspicuously: "If any man's or woman's cows or oxen gets in these here otes, his or her tale will be cut off, as the case may be. I am a Christian and pay mi taxes, but darn a man or woman who lets their criters run luse, say I."

THERE is one thing about babies, they never change. We have girls of the period, men of the world, but the baby is the same self-possessed, fearless, laughing, voracious little heathen in all ages and in all countries.