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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To obtain even a cursory knowledge of the native races of the North American continent a general idea of the country in which this branch of mankind is autochthonous is wholly essential.

Under the general term Indian, many who are not students of anthropology or allied sciences are apt to confuse not only the inhabitants of North, Central and South America, but also the northern tribes of the Canadian arctic region, as well as those of Mexico. To a great extent this definition is correct, yet the differences are in many instances so great, for example, between the short, heavy set Eskimo of the north and the tall, slender men of the Timucuan or Karankawan families of the Gulf of Mexico, that it may seem at times difficult to reconcile many facts as we understand them.

It is well therefore, in approaching the subject, tc define briefly the general characteristics of the countries now designated as the

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United States and the Dominion of Canada and to outline briefly not only the reason for the apparent diversity of races on the continent but also the method by which the study of the original inhabitants is now being pursued, as well as the causes or reasons that have led to this form of procedure.

Considering that portion of the North American continent lying from 29° N. to the Arctic Circle, we find included the whole of Canada and the greater portion of the United States. This space, therefore, is ample for the purpose of studying climatic environment and it will be readily appreciated that such an area can produce marked racial groupings. Thus the physiographic features of the country are of interest and especially do these assist in deducing many facts which have to do with migrations, while again they suggest various reasons for the preference of Indian tribes for certain localities, as the desirability of mountain, plain or woodland according to choice.

The matter of the coastal formation of a country is of prime importance. It means much to an invader and but little less to the colonist, hence it is indirectly a matter of close affiliation in the study of the Indian. The American

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coasts, both Atlantic and Pacific, are uneven, often, in the case of the former, rugged in the extreme; good harbours with accompanying peninsulas are frequent, and according to excellent authorities, the discovery as well as rapid growth of the early colonies such as Virginia (originally including the whole of New England) and the other Atlantic seaboard sections preceded similar action on the western ocean.

From the great bodies of water that surround a continent, it is natural to consider the drainage system, and in this feature America is in no way deficient. The larger part of the great interior basin, known as the Mississippi Valley, is given outlet largely through the river of that name or by its numerous tributaries, the Arkansas, Red, Missouri and Ohio, or through the Great Lakes and the St Lawrence. This valley extends from the Gulf of Mexico far into the arctic region, in which latter section it is drained by the Mackenzie river into the Arctic Ocean and, principally, by the Nelson river into Hudson Bay. Along the east coast numerous smaller streams, as the Connecticut, Hudson, Delaware, Potomac, etc., act in a similar manner and with the Yadkin, Catawba and Savannah, extend nearly to the extreme south; the south-eastern low country

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being drained into the Gulf of Mexico by the Apalachicola and minor streams which join the Mississippi in its lower course.

The far west has its own so-called watershed running without regular course through the Rocky Mountain chain, to the west of which all drainage is to the Pacific with few exceptions. The foremost streams of this section are the Yukon flowing into the Behring Sea, the Fraser and Columbia into the Pacific, and the Colorado river of the west which empties into the Gulf of California.

These systems of waterways exerted a considerable influence on the habitat of the American Indian and next, indeed if not of equal importance, for varying reasons, are the highlands or mountain ranges. As means of modifying conditions of climate or acting as impedimenta to the advance or spread of peoples the great mountain ranges should be carefully considered. Three systems are in North America and may be thought of in the order here noted. First, the Cordilleras, an extraordinary chain extending along the whole western section of the country from Alaska to Central America. These in fact comprise a vast plateau with an average breadth of nearly one thousand miles in

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parts of the United States and with an elevation of from 5000 to 10,000 feet, from the base of which rise numerous mountain ranges extending in a direction generally north and south and variously designated as the Rocky Mountains, the Sierra Nevada, and the Cascade Range of Oregon, Washington and the Canadian Northwest. Among these is to be found the highest peak on the continent, Mt McKinley, rising to an altitude of 20,464 feet. Second, the Coast Range is to the extreme west.

Toward the Atlantic and across the great central basin, is the eastern or Appalachian System, attaining no great height at any point yet filled with tradition as having borne a most important part in the country's history. Extending from eastern Canada south-westerly along the Atlantic coast to Georgia, it in no way presents a continuous range, though usually so regarded. There are divisions of various groups such as the Black, Green, White, Catskills, etc., not to forget the historically important Blue Ridge which forms the eastern boundary of a comparatively narrow plateau of from 25 to 200 miles in width, the central portion of which is relatively low land broken occasionally by intersecting lines of hills and extending

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roughly from the borders of Pennsylvania and New Jersey to the Gulf States. This area early became designated as "The Valley" or "The Valley of Virginia."

If it be possible to form in the mind's eye a relief map of the continent, it is readily seen that the predominance of high altitude is almost wholly in the extreme west. Thus beginning with the Coast Range, the slope of which practically reaches the Pacific, there may be mentioned in their proper order the Cascade and Sierra Nevada Mountains, a continuous range from upper Canada through Mexico; from Canada again the Bitter Root Mountains, continuing southerly as the Rockies, the latter made up of numerous smaller ranges, as the Big Horn, Wasatch, Black Hills, Uintah, etc.; a range (the Laurentian), attaining no great height, arises in north-central Labrador and runs south by west until it diminishes at a point between Hudson Bay and the Great Lakes, and finally the Appalachians, beginning in Nova Scotia, terminate in Alabama. Thus by keeping in view these physiographic features a clearer idea of the country originally occupied by the Indian races of the greater part of North America can be attained.

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Another striking peculiarity and one of great importance is that most remarkable chain of lakes in both the British and American possessions. These marvellous fresh water seas cover a vast area of middle eastern America and are supplemented in the Canadian North-west by the Great Bear, Great Slave and Athabasca Lakes, acting as a northern continuation of the first group almost to the Arctic Ocean, as well as Lakes Manitoba, Winnipeg and Lake of the Woods, emptying into Hudson Bay. In Utah, also, is the Great Salt Lake with no discernible outlet.

The region of the Prairies or Plains extends roughly from the Rocky Mountains due east, and well into the State of Ohio, though seen at its best in the mid-western States of Illinois, Indiana and Iowa. These prairies are not, as many erroneously conceive, a vast expanse of unbroken or level country, but are often rolling, even hilly, and in parts intersected by streams large and small which break the monotony of almost limitless unwooded tracts.

The great desert region of the United States occupies a section situate for the most part between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada Range, including therefore the greater part of the State of Nevada, portions of Utah

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and Arizona and of southern California, and through this arid country the Colorado, the only important river draining the section, flows into the Gulf of California. Lying between the mountain systems of the Pacific coast are numerous valleys, distinctive among which are the lowlands surrounding Puget Sound in Washington and the Willamette country in Oregon.

The preceding gives a somewhat hasty *résumé* of the general features of the North American continent north of the Mexican border. It will in part help in what may follow, by assisting somewhat toward an understanding of racial distribution as well as a clearer idea of cultural characteristics. A great deal may be gleaned from the geologist and mineralogist, and indeed from the archaeologist, though in reality the geological record is a simple one. It is generally conceded that the oldest part of America is the Laurentian plateau in eastern Canada and from this point progress was made toward the west. The Cordilleras are believed to be comparatively recent, showing evidences of late volcanic eruption. Mexican volcanoes still exist and even in Alaska they are not wholly extinct. Geology proves the existence of a great glacial sheet of comparatively recent occurrence covering a part

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of the United States and nearly the whole of Canada, as its area is readily marked by the various lakes and watercourses throughout the divided region. After it receded came the great drift of rich soil known as the prairies at a later period. Its action therefore became of the utmost importance.

It will be readily seen that the land as finally inhabited by the Americans of a prehistoric era was one rich in variety of natural advantages and that its adaptability was merely a matter of time and opportunity. How it became peopled and by whom is still, even to our foremost ethnologists, a matter of more or less conjecture and the origin of the Indian will be discussed in as sane and impartial a manner as possible in the following chapter.

The theory that man originated in America has long been abandoned. The absence from the continent of anthropoid apes proves such an idea untenable; hence the population must have come from the Old World. In his new home in America environment unquestionably brought about change in habit and custom. Extremes of climate to be had between the Arctic Circle and the Tropic of Cancer naturally led to various conditions of life, social, economic and industrial, yet ethnologists agree as to a similarity

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of type. Furthermore the Indian races of North America, while differing largely in habitat, and influenced by conditions of life and place, as well as climate, are distinctly one race throughout.

The Indian of the mountains differed slightly in his manner of living from his brethren of the plains, as did the woodland Indian of Canada for instance from those of the Pueblos of Arizona. These last in turn had not such familiarity with the lakes and rivers as had the inhabitants of the country to the north-west; hence an understanding of the physical features as a help toward historical sequence.

It is usually difficult to formulate a scheme for practical study of the native races of America. The present-day anthropologist sets about this by distinguishing groups through one of four sets of characteristics; geographical, physical, general culture and linguistic. It is by the linguistic method that such work will continue, as it is in this way that the best results have generally been attained. While there is no scheme of classification accepted by all students, unity is always recognised through the linguistic diversity, and it is a most remarkable feature of American ethnology to-day that authorities admit either fifty-six or fifty-eight distinct linguistic families

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