

THE CANADIAN MAGAZINE.

VOL. II.

FEBRUARY, 1894.

No. 4.

THE AMERICAN INDIAN ; WHAT AND WHENCE.

BY JOHN CAMPBELL, LL.D., F.R.S.C.

SINCE the discovery of this continent, the American Indian has been a subject of ethnological study. Military adventurers, and the chroniclers of their deeds, wrote descriptions of him. Missionaries committed to paper and to the printing press, grammars and vocabularies of his various tongues. And enthusiasts, from the time of Father Duran, in the end of the sixteenth century, derived him from Israel's Ten Tribes, or such other ancient stock as pleased their fancy. A volume would not suffice to set forth all their theories and the arguments by which they sought to justify them. The Spanish colonists of Mexico, and notably the ecclesiastics among them, were the first to gain an extensive acquaintance with the many types presented by the Red Man, in physical appearance, religion, culture and speech. Jedidiah Morse, A.M., whose famous *History of America*, or *Geography of the United States*, was given to the world in 1789, contended that the Americans were descended from many different nations, inasmuch as in Mexico alone thirty-five different languages had been discovered. Travelers and missionaries,—Spanish and Portuguese in Central and Southern America, French and English in the North,—yearly added valuable fragments of information concerning the

aborigines. In 1782, Court de Gebelin finished his *Monde Primitif*, in which he instituted a comparison between the languages of the New World and the Old, without any satisfactory result. This was followed in 1797 by B. Smith Barton's *New Views of the Origin of the Tribes and Nations of America*, published in Philadelphia. Early in the present century appeared two important works, Dr. Prichard's *Physical History of Mankind*, and Adelung's *Mithridates*. The first of these is the foundation of modern books on physical ethnology in the English language. The second, which derives its name from Mithridates VI., King of Pontus, who is reported to have spoken twenty-two languages, gives a view of all the known languages of the world, and among them of those of North and South America. Vater, of Berlin, and Balbi, of Paris, followed up the *Mithridates* with similar works. Then the scientific study of our aborigines fairly began. While the artist Catlin was travelling among the Indians of the United States, painting their portraits and collecting their traditions, and while Samuel Drake was amassing the materials for his *Biography and History of the Indians of North America*, five eminent workers in the field of American ethnology appeared,—Duponceau and