

NOTES.

We are too much disposed to overlook the fact that there are degrees of advancement in savage life, both with regard to comparative time and to peoples, even neighboring ones, that exist contemporaneously.

It is seldom that in the writings of those who profess to describe the "manners and customs" of the uncivilized we are permitted to get a glimpse of the true, inner social aspect of life. Much is related regarding the predaceous, warlike and religious practices of this or that savage nation—something perhaps about its marriage and burial usages, its costumes, its domiciles and its most striking or peculiar characteristics of any other kind, but as a rule the greater part of such descriptions is superficial, and too often "things are not what they seem." Unseen, because far deeper, lie the originating instincts, the motives and the habits of thought that find only partial expression in what catches the eye or ear of the alien and casual onlooker.

By means of what we now call "folk-lore" something is being done in various parts of the world to put us in touch with the inner life of the simple past and its lingering representative in our own time. The scope of our knowledge has thus been extended in a direction once thought to be too narrow and barren for research, and the results have aided in the solution of not a few ethnological problems. On this continent efforts have been successfully made to collect myths and legends of the Indian race, and the work is still going on, although of course, owing to lapse of time, much has been irrecoverably lost.

The more we learn about the aborigines of this portion of America the more are we brought face to face with the fact that their savagery fell but little short of civilization. Perhaps barbarism would be the best term to employ when speaking about the condition of such people as the Iroquois, and in many respects the Hurons were little, if at all, inferior.

That they were revengeful and blood-thirsty is undeniable, but among the nations they were not alone in this respect. Their manifestation of these qualities was simply less refined than that of others who probably regarded themselves as civilized beings. In social and political virtue they were unsurpassed, and in point of mechanical ability their capabilities and attainments were marvellous. It is extremely doubtful whether any other people in the world, similarly circumstanced, could be compared with them in the latter respect. The variety, tastefulness and workmanship of their relics are amazing.

"Patience and perseverance" are stamped upon most of their productions, for it appears probable that many specimens of their handicraft must have occupied them at intervals during years, or even a lifetime. To take a rough lump of granite or other equally hard material, and fashion it by persistent pecking and rubbing into a symmetrical plain or grooved axe, or to form a bit of huronite into animal semblance for some mysterious use, required a continuity of purpose and a skill in execution no less remarkable than if one of ourselves should undertake to produce a bust with the aid of no tool but a pocket-knife, or a piece of machinery with only a hammer, a saw and a file.

In the art of making coarse pottery they excelled, and the further south we go until we reach Peru, the more do design and workmanship improve. Nothing that was very elaborate seems to have been attempted in this line by the aborigines who inhabited our part of the continent. Here they seem to have contented themselves with plain, serviceable vessels, yet not wholly devoid of ornamentation. This consisted mainly of lines and dots impressed upon the clay when soft, with an occasional variation in the outline of the vessel, such as narrowing to form the neck, flaring of the lip, and the addition of projections of various kind round the mouth. Although immense numbers of earthenware fragments are found scattered all over this Province, entire vessels are very seldom discovered. Farther south this does not hold good to the same extent, but whether this is owing to a difference in the quality of the materials employed in the manufacture, or to the climate and the character of the soil it is not easy to say.

Whilst no doubt among the Indians, much more than with ourselves, there were individuals who preferred articles of their own manufacture, it seems abundantly evident