

SOME ASPECTS OF LIFE AND WORK IN COLD REGIONS.

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HAVING in two previous articles referred as extensively as our space would permit to the physical features and climate of the countries under consideration, it now becomes necessary to give some account of the various peoples who inhabit them (we refer of course to the aboriginies), together with a brief description of their mode of life, religion, customs, &c., and this we propose to do in two articles, of which the present is the former.

We will begin with that most interesting people, the aboriginal inhabitants of Newfoundland, then, proceeding north, speak of those of Labrador and the North-West, and finally of the various tribes who inhabit the Arctic regions, consisting as they do, of Eskimo, Samoyedes, Lapps and other closely allied races.

A very melancholy interest attaches to the aboriginal inhabitants of the island of Newfoundland, of whom, though once a numerous and powerful people, not a single individual remains to tell the tale of departed glory, and of how his progenitors passed over into the happy hunting grounds. It is known that they called themselves Beoths; but, from their habit of painting themselves with red ochre, they were called Red Indians by the early settlers of the country.

For a long time ethnologists were very much in the dark as to their probable origin, and many theories were afloat. They were supposed by some to have been related to the Mic-mac, and by others to the Eskimo Indians, but from certain Beothic relics which have been unearthed of recent years in Newfoundland, it has been almost conclusively proved that they were a portion of the great family of North American Indians, and supposed by Latham, a most eminent ethnological authority, to be a branch of the Algonkin tribe.

That these noble, though rude men, no longer hunt the timid cariboo on the broad savannahs of the interior, nor the skilful beaver in his river haunts, that they no longer fill their creels with the silvery salmon, nor the more sombre hued cod, that their graceful canoes no longer glide fairy-like across the placid surface of the sun lit lake, nor flit like phantoms over the silvery moonbeams which play upon it at night, that the barrens and vales no longer re-echo with the chastened sound of their voices when "calling" the lordly bull moose in the autumn twilight, is due to the combined cruelty and treachery of the much dreaded pale face and the Mic-mac, the record of which has too often blurred the pages of the early history of the settling of Newfoundland by the foreigners.

There still lingers a tradition amongst the inhabitants of northern Newfoundland, that the last of the Beothics, who had dwindled away to a mere handful, passed over the Strait of Belle Isle in two

canoes to the opposite coast of Labrador, after which, but little, if anything, was heard of them. This tradition seems to derive some colourable support, from the testimony of the late Dr. Mullock, of St. John's, Newfoundland, who says, in speaking on the present subject: "I have slight reason to think that a remnant of these people remains in the interior of Labrador. A person told me there some time ago, that a party of Mountaineer (Montagnais) Indians saw at some distance (about fifty miles from the sea coast) a party of strange Indians, clothed in long robes or cassocks of skins, who fled from them; they lost sight of them in a little time, but on coming up to their tracks, they were surprised to see the length of their strides, which showed them to be of a large race, and neither Mic-mac, Mountaineer or Eskimo." He then concludes: "I believe that these were the remains of the Beothic nation; and as they never saw either a white or red man, but as enemies, it is not to be wondered at that they fled. Such is the only trace I can find of the Beoths."

Mention is made of them by Cabot, the discoverer of Newfoundland, and also by Jacques Cartier, in the fifteenth century, and by a Florentine writer in the sixteenth century. They tell us that the Beoths wore the skins of wild beasts for clothing, and that the women went straighter or closer in their garments than the men, with their waists girded; that they tied their hair on the top of their head, like a wreath of hay, and put a wooden pin, or any other thing instead of a nail, and with them they bound bird's feathers. A much further account, however, is given of them by Captain Richard Whitbourne, who visited the Island of Newfoundland in the seventeenth century. He says: "The natural inhabitants of the country, as they were but few in number, so are they something of a rude and savage people, having neither knowledge of God, nor living under any kind of civil government. In their habits, customs and manners, they resemble the Canadian Indians, as they constructed canoes with the bark of birch trees, which they sew very artificially (artistically?) and close together, and overlay every seam with turpentine. They sew the rinds of spruce trees, round and deep in proportion, like a brass kettle, to boil their meat in."

Like other Indian tribes, the Beothic seems to have spent all their time in hunting and fishing, and we may well believe that from the quantity of game which is found even at the present day in the interior, and fish in its numerous rivers and seas, Newfoundland must have been a veritable paradise to the rude red man.

Early in the present century, but a short time before their extinction, several individuals of the Beothic tribe were captured by explorers in the interior, and by them taken to the capital of the island; but after spending a brief time there, they either returned to their tribe or succumbed to the ravages of consumption. At that time, too, but