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XXV.—*The (West Coast Indians in Vancouver Island.* By  
GILBERT MALCOLM SPROAT, Esq.

[Read July 10th, 1866.]

THE Aborigines of Vancouver Island may be divided into three nations; one including the tribes which speak the Quoquoulth or Fort Rupert language, another including the tribes which speak the Kowitchan or Thongeith, and the third those which speak the Aht language.

The Quoquoulth language prevails in the north, and north-east of the island, the Kowitchan in the east, and south, and the Aht language in the west coast, between Pacheenah and Nespod (Woody Point). The Kowitchan and Aht languages, or dialects of them, are also spoken on the southern, or American, side of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and I believe that the Aht language can be traced through all the tribes on the ocean coast as far south as the mouth of the Columbia river. These three supposed aboriginal nations in Vancouver Island are made up of many independent neighbouring tribes, and are almost as distinct as the different nations in Europe: They do not understand one another's language, and their national customs and institutions are in many respects very different. I select for description one set of tribes which inhabit the greater part of the outside coast of the island between Pacheenah and Nespod, and which are called by me the Aht Indians, from the circumstance of all the tribal names ending in that affix. Those people have not been separately described by any former writer, nor does it appear to be known that the different tribes are nationally connected; and, of all published accounts of a great portion of them, those of Cook's and Jewitt's appear to me the best. A general name for this set of tribes was not easily found; the only native term (Mahtmahs) for the entire population, signifying "the peoples," did not specially designate the tribes in question.

Having been placed in a favourable position during the last five years as a magistrate, and a proprietor of the settlement at Alberni in Nitinaht Sound, for observing these almost unknown savages, who, until lately, had no general intercourse with civilised foreigners, I desire to record some portion of the information which I possess respecting them, before the Aht tribes become further changed, or are removed altogether by contact with a superior race.

I would also further state, that I had peculiar opportunities

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