

northern continent of America presents a striking contrast to this. An isosceles triangle with its base within the Arctic circle; it tapers to a narrow isthmus towards the equator. Its great mountain chain runs from north to south, and in near proximity to the Pacific coast; and its chief navigable river, rising within our own Canadian Dominion, and receiving as its tributaries other rivers draining vast regions on either hand, traverses twenty degrees of latitude before it reaches the Gulf of Mexico. Another range of highlands rises towards the Atlantic sea-board, and forms the eastern boundary of the great interior plain. But the Alleghanies or Appalachian system of mountains, though they may be said to extend from the St. Lawrence to the Mexican Gulf, rise only at a few points, as in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, to any great elevation. They form rather a long plateau, intersected by wide valleys; and so diversify the landscape, without constituting strongly defined barriers or lines of demarkation. As a whole, the continent of North America, eastward from the Rocky Mountains, may be described as a level area, so slightly modified by any elevated regions throughout its whole extent, from the Arctic circle to the Gulf of Mexico; as to present no impediment to the wanderings of nomadic tribes. It is interlaced with rivers, and diversified everywhere with lakes, alike available for navigation and for fishing; and, until the intrusion of European immigrants, its forests and prairies abounded with game far in excess of the wants of its population. Everything thus tended to perpetuate the condition of nomadic hunter tribes. This stage of native American history inevitably drew to a close under the influence of European institutions and civilization; but it is interesting to note, that the same absence of any well defined geographical limitations of area, which tended to perpetuate the nomadic habits of the savage, has aided in consolidating the great confederacy of the United States, and maintaining an ethnical and political conformity throughout the North American continent in striking contrast to the diversities in race and political institutions in Europe.

History and native traditions alike confirm the idea that the valley of the St. Lawrence was the habitat of the Huron-Iroquois stock as far back as evidence can be appealed to. The Huron traditions tell of a time when the Province of Quebec was the home of the race eastward to the sea; while those of three at least of the members of the Iroquois confederacy in legendary fashion claimed their birth from the soil south of the great river. When the French explorers, under the leadership of Jacques Cartier, first entered the St. Lawrence, in 1535, they found at Stadaconé and Hochelaga—the old native civic sites now occupied by the cities of Quebec and Montreal,—a population apparently of the Huron-Iroquois stock; and, insofar as reliance may be placed on their traditions, Canada was then populous throughout the whole valley of the St. Lawrence with industrious native tribes, the representatives of a race that had occupied the same region for unnumbered centuries. "Some fanciful tales of a supernatural origin from the heart of a mountain; of a migration to the eastern sea-board; and of a subsequent return to the country of the lakes and rivers, where they finally settled, comprise," says Brownell,<sup>1</sup> "most that is noticeable in the native traditions of the Six Nations prior to the grand confederation." But the value of such traditionary transmission of national history among unlettered tribes has received repeated confirmation; and the incidents of their own famous league, perpe-

<sup>1</sup> The Indian Races of North and South America, p. 286.