

were only obliged to sell it, notwithstanding their mild and reasonable protest. There is something pathetic in the story of Mr Sproat's interview with the chiefs of the Seshahs, when he went to announce the inevitable arrival of the King-Georgemen (for these unlearned people hold 'King-George' a synonym for all English royalty), and the old man answered his greeting thus: "Our families are well, our people have plenty of food; but how long this will last we know not. We see your ships, and hear things which make our hearts grow faint. They say that more King-George-men will soon be here; and will take our land, our firewood, our fishing-ground; that we shall be placed on a little spot, and shall have to do everything according to the fancies of the King-Georgemen." I answered: "It is true that more King-Georgemen are coming—they will soon be here; but your land will be bought at a fair price." "We don't wish to sell the land, or the water; let your friends stay in their own country." To which I rejoined: "My great chief, the high chief of the King-Georgemen, seeing that you do not want your land, orders that you shall sell it. It is of no use to you. The trees you do not need; you will fish and hunt as you do now, and collect firewood, planks for your houses, and cedar for your canoes. The white men will give you work, and buy your fish and oil." "Ah, but we don't care to do as the white men wish." "Whether or not," said I, "the white men will come. All your people know that they are your superiors; they make the things which you value. You cannot make muskets, blankets, or bread. The white men will teach your children to read printing, and to be like themselves." "We do not want the white man. He steals what we have. We wish to live as we are."

Complaint and remonstrance were vain. The King-Georgemen came, and a civilised settlement was formed in the midst of the Seshahs almost immediately; the poor natives looking on, helpless and unadmiring, at buildings, wharfs, steam-engines, ploughs, oxen, horses, and pigs, all equally unknown to them. The scene of the new settlement, from which the Indians quietly moved away, but to only a short distance, abounds in natural beauties. The localities inhabited by the Aht tribes are the three large sounds on the west coast of Vancouver's Island, whose names are Nitinaht, Klah-oh-quaht, and Nootka. Nitinaht includes the Alberni settlement. The sounds throw out arms in various directions inland; and into these arms, coming from mountain-lakes known to a few Indians only, shallow rivers flow, which are diversified by falls and rapids, and deepen here and there when pent up between mountains which approach each other closely. Mr Sproat thus describes the scenery, with which the natives harmonise as little, perhaps, as the African savages with their beautiful tropical land, though they are decidedly not degraded, considered as savages: "The broad surface of the sounds is studded with rocky islets of various sizes, covered with hemlock, cedar, and pine trees, which also, the pine predominating, clothe the rugged sides of the hills, that rise from the shore into peaks or serrated ridges. . . . I found the best time to linger in a canoe on these wide bays was just about the twilight, when the harsh, sharp lines of the surrounding scenery were softened, and the shadows of islet and mountain lengthened over the singularly clear water. Among the islands, and on the shore of the sounds, there

is an endless number and variety of passages, creeks, bays, and harbours, of all shapes and sizes, which can be discovered only on a near approach. Many of these marine nooks are deep enough to float the largest ship, and far down through the pellucid water, never moved by storms, gardens of zoophytes are visible at the bottom."

The ocean-coast outside has different features, and the large waves of the North Pacific break upon it, even in calm weather, with a fierce grandeur, and roar sullenly among the caverns. The coast is not considered dangerous, but in the winter, storms are prevalent. "The line of the raging surf on the beach extends for miles to some rocky cape, over which the waves foam, the spray being borne upwards, and flung through the air. Wild black clouds approach the earth, and are hurried along by the blast. There is nowhere any sign of life now; the Indians crowd together in their houses, and the birds huddle behind the sheltering rocks." The interior of the Aht country is pine-forest, dense, boundless, undulating, diversified by lakes, which are in fact 'tarns,' wonderfully fine, gloomy, and impressive, such forests and such lakes as naturally associate themselves with our most romantic notions of the wild Indian life. The intensity of the solitude of these hidden places—solitude so unendurable to the civilised man, so dear to the savage, sullenly tracking his prey—is deeply impressive. All is silence, but for the melancholy cry of the loon, or the breaking of a decayed branch in the woods. In the night, the traveller, resting under a cedar-tree, sees the lightning-flash illumine the shaggy mountain before him, and when the blazing glare comes again, marks the long line through the trees made by the avalanche in rolling down for thousands of feet into the lake. He watches the draperies of mist moving upwards from the gloomy falls, and that cataract, just seen hanging like a silver thread to the cap of clouds on the far summit, which strikes the eye again, expanded into a torrent, a thousand feet lower at the exposed turn of some ravine, and then is heard rushing into the narrow lake. Among these forests, so dense that not one tree in fifty struggles successfully for its share of sunshine, live the strange people, who, in a space of time brief, when measured by the lapses of history, will in all probability have ceased to exist, will have disappeared, almost unchronicled, leaving no monuments, not even ruins, to testify to their having existed. The Ahts are a better-looking race than savages generally, and the men have well-formed limbs. Corpulence is unknown amongst them, and any physical deformity is very rare. They are wonderfully dexterous and indefatigable oarsmen; and their powers of endurance, in any work to which they are accustomed, are very great. Mr Sproat has had men with him from sunrise to sunset, whilst exploring new districts, where the walking tried his powers to the utmost, and they scarcely seemed to feel the exertion; and could also bear the want of food for a long time without becoming exhausted.

The moral deformities imputed to them by the Abbé Domenech are as fabulous as the physical, and their defects are rather negative than positive. The notion of the coast Indians being deficient in muscular power in their legs, arose, Mr Sproat believes, from their legs being always seen uncovered—a severe ordeal for any people. "If the men wore blankets," he asks, "how many presentable