

ANCIENT ART AND CUSTOM.

COL. JAMES JACKSON, U. S. A.

Pottery making and basket weaving are as old as the human race. As far back as there are any relics of humanity are found the traces of these industries, supplying no doubt a very positive human need. From the graves of the mound builders, from Etruscan tombs—far beyond the dawn of Roman power—from the ruins of Cyclopean construction, Chaldean antiquities and from Egyptian catacombs come the evidences of this manufacture.

Aboriginal occupation of the American continents seems to be as old, if not older, than that of either Europe or Asia, and when we look upon the baskets and pottery gathered here we behold the results of an industry that originated in the very dawn of human existence and has been continued with but little change down to the present time. Our word basket has itself changed but little from its original, the Welsh "basgawd" meaning literally a weaving, or putting together, of splinters. The ancient Welsh, or Britons, were expert basket makers, and Roman annals tell us that the halls of wealthy Roman citizens were decorated with the beautiful and costly product of their handiwork. Made from whatever substances were most appropriate or convenient, they have been shaped by the needs and decorated by the fancy or superstitions of barbaric or semi-civilized peoples, and have served all purposes from plates to dwelling houses.

In all countries and amongst all peoples they have had much the same shape and uses; their similarity seems to have been the result of a common evolution of the human mind to supply a common need, like causes and like needs producing similar results and similar construction. In a country where the grasses are tough and pliable, like the sea-island grasses of the Aleutian archipelago, baskets have mostly been constructed from such fibre and are soft and