

#### WILD TRIBES IN VANCOUVER.

THE general belief prevalent among travellers, scientific men, and the pioneers of civilisation everywhere is, that savage races are gradually disappearing, not only under the influence of the vices and diseases introduced among them by white men, and, in shamefully frequent instances, the cruelty perpetrated upon them in the interests of civilisation and commerce, but by a natural law, inexplicable indeed, but indisputably evident in its action. The study of their condition acquires, from this fact, an additional interest, and is invested with a poetical charm for the imagination, which exceeds the practical attraction of learning their condition with a view to improving it, and assimilating their notions of life and the best means of its enjoyment with those of the civilised intruders on their territory. People who do not know or care anything about the matter pronounce, in an off-hand manner, all savages to be alike; but those who read the various experiences of travellers and explorers, know that an infinite variety in national characteristics, in habits, in intellectual potentialities, in belief, in barbarism, and in physical features, may be found within the two extremes of savage life, as depicted by Cooper and Sir Samuel Baker—between the Delaware and the Gytch tribes, and will readily believe that the celebrated novelist, who elevated the former into a noble race, was not much more, though more humanely prejudiced in favour of the savage, than the distinguished traveller, who denies to the latter the privileges of humanity, and proclaims his inferiority to the brute.

Of one species of this great variety, Mr Sproat,\* who, in 1860, took possession, in the name of her Majesty, of Alberni, on the western coast of Vancouver's Island, gives a curious and interesting account. This is the Aht race, hitherto almost as little known as the Andaman islanders, and possessing certain striking traits of character and national history curious to contemplate, considering the utter isolation of their lives. It is pleasant to know that these simple, harmless, intelligent people were not cruelly treated by the English settlers. Their land was not forcibly taken from them; they

\* *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life.* By Gilbert Malcolm Sproat. London: Smith, Elder, & Co.