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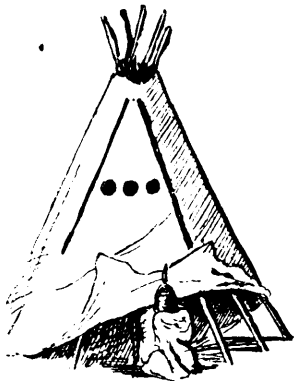
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Indian Tribes—Paper No. 8.

THE NAVAJO INDIANS.

By Rev. E. F. Wilson.



WANDERING nomadic tribe, possessors of immense flocks of sheep and goats, artificers in silver work, clever weavers, an intelligent but untamed people—such are the Navajo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona.

The name Navajo (pronounced Nāvahoe) was evidently given to them

by the Spaniards. By their neighbors, the Apaches, they are called "Yūtahkah;" and they call themselves "Tinneh."

They belong to the great Tinneh or Athabaskan stock, the chief tribes of which are to be found in the great Canadian North-West between the Rocky Mountains on the West and Hudson Bay to the East, and extending as far northward as the regions occupied by the Eskimos. It seems strange that a people living so far South as New Mexico should be allied to a people in the far North, especially when we take into account that numerous tribes of entirely distinct stocks intervene between their countries and that of the Northerners; but the fact remains undisputed; their name is the same, their language is evidently of the same stock, and they themselves have a tradition that they came originally from the North, following the course of the Rocky Mountains southward. They are aware also that they still have relatives up in the North country.

The other tribes belonging to the Tinneh stock, to which the Navajo Indians are related, are in the South, the Apaches and Arivaipas, and in the North—quite 1200 miles apart—the Chipewyans, Beavers, Sarcees, Tukudhs, Tacullies, Thikenies and Slavés. The Navajo Indians, according to last Government Reports, now number 18,000 souls, and they occupy an immense territory, lying in New Mexico, Arizona and Utah, 120

miles north and south, and 180 miles east and west, the greater portion being broken by high mountain ranges. Their live stock consists of a quarter of a million of horses, 3500 cattle, 800,000 sheep, 300,000 goats, 500 burros (donkeys), and 300 mules. Their horses are a source of very little income or usefulness, but are regarded by them as their basis of wealth, the Indian who owns the greatest number of horses being considered the wealthiest. They rarely sell or dispose of them except from actual necessity, or by way of trade for beads, arms and ammunition. They also purchase their wives with them, and have done so from time immemorial. The Navajoes do very little at present in the way of farming; they cultivate a little Indian corn and wheat and raise a few melons and pumpkins. In cultivating corn they select a sandy soil that will require no breaking, and with a hoe make a deep hole in rows about two feet apart, dropping 12 to 15 grains in each hill. As the corn grows they never cultivate it except to hoe out the weeds between the rows. Their wheat they sow in drills made with a sharp-pointed stick, and they harvest it with a knife. The majority of the people depend on their cattle and sheep for their living. In the course of a year they will sell from 800,000 to 1,000,000 pounds of wool, besides weaving a large quantity into blankets.

The Navajoes have the reputation of being great thieves, and delight in making raids on the cattle of their white neighbors. They are of a wild, roaming disposition, and it is seldom that more than two-thirds of their number can be persuaded to remain on their Reservation. Among themselves they are a good natured, jovial set. Hardly an hour passes but an universal laugh or a rousing chorus is indulged in. Very few Navajo children go to school, but those who do evince great aptitude in learning. Their quick perception is remarkable. A person totally unfamiliar with a single word of their language can readily carry on a conversation with them, no matter how awkward may be the system of pantomime he employs to convey his thoughts, while the Indian's graceful responses cannot be easily misunderstood. The members of this tribe evince at all ages an insatiable thirst for the English language. They will at all times cease their