

Besides the curious interest which always pertains to information concerning the lower grades of our species, accurate information of this kind has now come to have a deep philosophical interest. It is part of the grand research into the career of humanity upon earth—into the origin, nature, and course of civilization. Is there a definite and assured law of progress in human affairs—a slow and gradual ascent from the lower to the higher? and was that low condition of humanity, of which we have the prehistoric traces, and which is illustrated by the present condition of savage races, the starting-point of this ascent? or was primeval man a developed and superior being, who has retrograded and degenerated into the savage state? These are grave questions now impending in the world of thought, and which are of high practical interest; for, to know the fundamental law of movement in humanity, is the prerequisite of all wise and successful measures of social amelioration.

It is from this point of view that the present work has its highest significance. In giving us a detailed and trustworthy statement of the mental and social condition of the lowest tribes, it contributes indispensable data for conclusions respecting the nature and destiny of man upon earth. In methodizing these data, and sifting the multifarious evidence, so as to throw the clearest light upon the art, religion, morals, language, laws, and social habits of the savage races, the author has made a valuable contribution toward the scientific treatment of the subject, and has earned the thanks of all students in this important department of research.

NEW YORK, *October*, 1870.