KWAKIUTL TEXTS

RECORDED BY GEORGE HUNT.

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REVISED AND EDITED BY FRANZ BOAS.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following series of texts were recorded by Mr. George Hunt of Fort Rupert, B. C., between the years 1895 and 1900. Mr. Hunt speaks Kwakiutl as his mother tongue, and is intimately acquainted with all the customs and traditions of the people. In 1893 he began to record material in the Kwakiutl language according to the system of spelling adopted by me. On repeated visits to British Columbia I had an opportunity to critically discuss with him the material he had written, which resulted in constant improvement in his method of writing and in my knowledge of the phonetics of the language. I believe that the system of sounds adopted in the present volume represents the complete series of sounds that occur in the Kwakiutl language.

The records made by Mr. Hunt were transmitted to me from time to time. After I had made a study of the texts, I revised them critically, with the assistance of Mr. Hunt, in regard to both phonetics and grammar. This work was done during my visits to British Columbia in 1897 and 1900. Furthermore, the texts were critically gone over by me with the assistance of Mr. William Brotchie of Alert Bay, a half-blood Nimkish (one of the tribes of the Kwakiutl), who made the translation of the Gospels for the Rev. Alfred J. Hall. Wherever there was a discrepancy of opinion in regard to construction between Mr. Brotchie and Mr. Hunt, I have taken pains to investigate the doubtful points.

At the present time the phonetics of Kwakiutl are very uncertain. This is particularly true of the pronunciation of ē, which is pronounced by Mr. Brotchie and many young men like ē, while Mr. Hunt and many of the older people pronounce this sound almost like êi. The same uncertainty prevails in regard to terminal letters. Many of the Indians modify terminal sounds according to the initial letters of the following word; while others, particularly when speaking slowly, do not admit such influence. It is possible that the slowness of reading and writing these texts has eliminated a considerable number of cases in which the terminal letter of a word ought to be modified by the initial letter of the