

provement which existed among them. Sometimes the Indians were found gathered in large numbers along the banks of rivers or lakes, or in the dense forest, their hunting-grounds; and not unfrequently also, scattered in little collections over the extended face of the country. As they were often engaged in wars with each other, a powerful tribe would occasionally subject to its sway numerous other lesser ones, whom it held as its vassals.

No accurate account can be given of their numbers. Some have estimated the whole amount in North and South America at the time of the discovery of the continent, even as high as one hundred or one hundred and fifty millions. This estimate is unquestionably much too large. A more probable one would be from fifteen or twenty to twenty-five millions. But they have greatly diminished, and of all the ancient race not more than nine or ten millions, if so many, now remain. Pestilence, wars, hardships, and sufferings of various kinds have been their lot for nearly four hundred years; and they have melted away at the approach of the white man; so that even a lone Indian is now scarcely found beside the grave of his fathers, where once the war-whoop might have called a thousand or more valiant men to go forth to engage in the deadly fray. With them have perished, in many instances, their ancient traditions; and as they had no other means of handing down the records of their deeds, their history is lost, except here and there a fragment, which has been treasured up by some white man more curious than his fellows, in studying their present or former fates. Monuments, indeed,