

Piegan (or Kena and Piekane) tribes. Father Lacombe has been many years a missionary in the Canadian North-west, and has a very extensive knowledge of the tribes of that region. His elaborate work, the 'Grammar and Dictionary of the Cree Language,' ranks among the best contributions to American philology. Mr. McLean has been engaged in his missionary duties for five years, has prepared a grammar of the Blackfoot language, and is at present occupied in translating the Scriptures into that tongue; he has been most considerate in furnishing the information which was requested on behalf of the Committee, and is now making special researches for this object.

The unfortunate troubles of the past season have for a time interrupted the correspondence, and have left the investigations necessarily incomplete. The principal portion of the report on these Indians will therefore have to be deferred for another year. It has seemed advisable, however, to submit a summary of the knowledge now obtained by way of introduction to the fuller account which the Committee may be able to render hereafter. With this view some other sources of information have been examined, particularly the valuable official reports and maps of the Canadian and United States Indian Departments, which have been obligingly furnished by those Departments for this purpose.

Fifty years ago the Blackfoot Confederacy held among the western tribes much the same position of superiority which was held two centuries ago by the Iroquois Confederacy (then known as the 'Five Nations') among the Indians east of the Mississippi. The tribes of the former confederacy were also, when first known, five in number. The nucleus, or main body, was—as it still is—composed of three tribes, speaking the proper Blackfoot language. These are the Siksika, or Blackfeet proper, the Kena, or Blood Indians, and the Piekane, or Piegans (pronounced Peegans), a name sometimes corrupted to 'Pagan' Indians. To these are to be added two other tribes, who joined the original confederacy, or, perhaps more properly speaking, came under its protection. These were the Sarcees from the north, and the Atsinas from the south. The Sarcees are an offshoot of the great Athabaskan stock, which is spread over the north of British America, in contact with the Eskimo, and extends in scattered bands—the Umpquas, Apaches, and others—through Oregon and California into Northern Mexico. The Atsinas, who have been variously known from the reports of Indian traders as Fall Indians, Rapid Indians, and Gros Ventres, speak a dialect similar to that of the Arapohoes, who now reside in the 'Indian Territory' of the United States. It is a peculiarly harsh and difficult language, and is said to be spoken only by those two tribes. None of the Atsinas are now found on Canadian territory, and no recent information has been obtained concerning them, except from the map which accompanies the United States Indian Report for 1884, and on which their name appears on the American Blackfoot Reservation.

The five tribes were reckoned fifty years ago to comprise not less than thirty thousand souls. Their numbers, union, and warlike spirit made them the terror of all the western Indians on both sides of the Rocky Mountains. It was not uncommon for thirty or forty war parties to be out at once against the Salish (or Flatheads) of Oregon, the Upsarokas (or Crows) of the Missouri plains, the Shoshonees of the far south, and the Crees of the north and east. The country which the Blackfoot tribes claimed properly as their own comprised the valleys and plains

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