

A LITTLE KNOWN CIVILIZATION.*

BY JAMES DEANS.

By "civilization" I mean the advance which any people has made from a primitive low estate to one of considerable refinement and intelligence. The subject of this paper is not the civilization of the lost Atlantis, nor that of the Mayas, the Incas, the Toltecs, the Aztecs, nor of any nation of Central or South America; nor that of the Mound-builders and others of North America. Neither is it on those civilizations in other parts of the world, the theme of many an ancient story. Mine is not a treatise on the conquests of Alexander, of Philip, of Cæsar, the Saracens, nor of others of by-gone or modern times, nor do I mean the kingdoms of whom a poet has said:

"Sometimes a little kingdom stretches out,
And elbows all the kingdoms round about;
Crushed by its own unwieldy weight
It rushes onward to its fate.
Thus, headlong down the stream of time it goes,
And sinks in moments, what in ages rose."

It is on a civilization at our own doors; in this province and in Southern Alaska—the civilization of the Haidas, or as they pronounce their name Hidery, the signification of the name being People. This civilization in various forms spread over the greater part of British Columbia and part of the adjoining State of Washington, and all Southern Alaska. Its greatest development, in one form, was amongst the Quackuts on this island and on the mainland adjoining. In another and more extensive form it was found along the Rivers Naas and Skeena, amongst the Simskeans and numerous other tribes on the mainland and isles adjoining; on the Queen Charlotte group and on the southern isles of Alaska. Although some writers classify all of these tribes as Haida, I shall treat only of the various tribes who call themselves by the name of Haida, or rather Hidery, because among them this civilization was best developed. Having spent many years amongst these people (that is the Queen Charlotte Hidery), I know them best, and shall to the best of my ability explain the unique hieroglyphics on their *gargings*, that is their totem poles and houses.

While giving readings of such difficult matter as are these ancient picture writings, I do not say they are perfect. A description of their clans and crests is but a history of these people and their civilization. There are, as part of their social

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