

V.—*The Huron-Iroquois of Canada, a Typical Race of American Aborigines.*

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In a previous communication to the Royal Society of Canada I submitted some general considerations of the ethnical characteristics, and of the condition and relative status, of the aborigines of North America. In that, I aimed at a brief summary of their general aspect as the indigenous American stock upon whom, during the last three and a half centuries the same Aryan race has intruded, which in older and prehistoric centuries displaced indigenous races of Europe not without some analogous results. I now propose to glance at one of the most characteristic types of the American aborigines, which appears, according to their own traditions, to be of Canadian origin; and which, as one important branch of the common stock, claims our special consideration as preeminently the historical native race of Canada.

I have already submitted the reasonings by which I have been led to the conclusion that, throughout the whole North American continent, from the Arctic circle to the Mexican Gulf, no trace has been recovered of the previous existence of anything that properly admits of the term "native civilization." The rude arts of Europe's stone age belong to a period lying far behind its remotest traditions: unless we appeal to the mythic allusions of Hesiod, or to such poetic imaginings as the "Prometheus" of Æschylus. But all available evidence thus far serves to show that the condition of the native tribes throughout the whole area of this northern continent has never advanced beyond the stage which finds its apt illustration in the rude arts of their stone period, including the rudimentary efforts at turning to account their ample resources of native copper without and use of fire.

But this uniformity in the condition and acquirements of the native tribes, and the consequent resemblance in their arts, habits, and mode of life, have been the fruitful source of misleading assumptions. Everywhere the early European explorers met only rude hunting and warring tribes, exhibiting such slight variations in all that first attracts the eye of the most observant traveller, that an exaggerated idea of their ethnical uniformity was the not unnatural result. So soon as the systematizings of the ethnologist led to the differentiation of races, the American type was placed apart as at once uniform and distinctive; and, strange as it may now seem, this idea found nowhere such ready favour as among those who had the fullest access to the evidence by which its truth could be tested. It was the most important and comprehensive induction of the author of "Crania Americana," as the fruit of his conscientious researches in American craniology. The authors of "Indigenous Races of the Earth" and "Types of Mankind," no less unhesitatingly affirmed that "identical characters pervade all the American races, ancient and modern, over