

V.—*The Indians of British Columbia.*

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For a long time the remarkable culture of the Indians of Northwest America has attracted the attention of ethnologists; but, so far, no progress has been made in solving the difficult problem of the origin of this culture. Attention has been called to the favorable circumstances under which these people live, the abundance of food, and the mildness of climate which favor a steady progress of civilization; but anthropogeographical considerations cannot be considered a sufficient basis for these studies, as their influence is only secondary in determining, to a certain extent, the direction in which the culture develops. A study of the origin of any culture must begin with that of the people, with the study of its ethnological and physical character.

The fact which impresses itself most strongly upon our minds is the great diversity of peoples inhabiting the north-west coast of our continent. Their general distribution is admirably shown on the Ethnological Map of British Columbia by Drs. Tolmie and Dawson. We notice the following divisions on the latter: the Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Bilqula, Kwakiutl,¹ Nutka, Cowitchin, Niskwalli, Salish, Sahaptin, and Tinné. Among these the Bilqula, Cowitchin, Niskwalli, and Salish belong to one linguistic stock—the Salish. The Nutka are probably an independent stock, while the Tlingit and Haida are related to one another.

Among these stocks the Salish are by far the most important, occupying as they do an enormous territory. The observer of the tribes of this race will be struck by the diversity of dialects of their language. These dialects, according to their affinities, may be grouped as follows. First, there are the dialects of the interior, of which the Salish proper may serve as a specimen. In British Columbia two dialects of this group are spoken: the Okanagan and the Ntlak'apamuq or Sušshwapmuq. The second group is that of the Coast Salish, which is spoken on the coasts of Puget Sound and the Strait of Georgia. I studied the division of the latter into dialects in the winter of 1886-87, and found that, in British Columbia alone, not less than six or seven dialects exist, each spoken by a few tribes. The southern of these dialects have almost throughout the same radicals; but the meaning of each word undergoes material changes in the various dialects. Besides this, words occurring in one language in a very simple form, are in the others reduplicated or even triplicated; transpositions of consonants, elimination of vowels, and transformations of consonants, making it sometimes hardly recognizable.

¹ [The same word is written by Dr. G. M. Dawson *Kwakiool*, Trans. Roy. Soc. Can., V. ii. 6, and by Rev. Alfred Hall *Kwagiull*, Trans. Roy. Soc. Can. VI. ii. 6.—ED. NOTE.]