

British Association for the Advancement of Science.

Fifth Report of the Committee, consisting of Dr. E. B. TYLOR, Dr. G. M. DAWSON, General Sir J. H. LEFROY, Dr. DANIEL WILSON, Mr. R. G. HALIBURTON, and Mr. GEORGE W. BLOXAM (Secretary), appointed for the purpose of investigating and publishing reports on the physical characters, languages, and industrial and social condition of the North-Western Tribes of the Dominion of Canada.

[PLATES I.—VI.]

Remarks on North American Ethnology: Introductory to the Report on the Indians of British Columbia. By HORATIO HALE.

THE Province of British Columbia offers probably the best field of ethnological research now to be found in North America. This distinction is due to two circumstances, each of much importance. The one is the fact that the tribes of this Province have thus far suffered less displacement and change from foreign influences than those of any other region. They still for the most part occupy their original seats, and they retain to a large extent their primitive customs and beliefs. The other circumstance, and one of special scientific interest, is the great number of linguistic stocks, or families of languages, which are found in the Province. There are, as will appear from the report and map, no less than eight of these stocks, being twice as many as now exist in the whole of Europe.

The importance of this fact will be appreciated if we bear in mind that in America the linguistic stock is the universally accepted unit of ethnological classification. It is not that the physical distinctions which have elsewhere been proposed as the basis of classifications are lacking on this continent. On the contrary, they are markedly apparent. In colour the difference is great between the fair-skinned Haidas and Tsimshians of the northern coasts and islands, and the swarthy, almost black, natives of Southern California. Even more notable is the difference between the short, squat, broad-faced, and coarse-featured members of the coast tribes of Oregon and British Columbia, and the tall, slender, oval-visaged Indians of the interior. The striking differences of cranial measurement are shown in Sir Daniel Wilson's work on 'Prehistoric Man.' Hair varying from coarse, straight, and black to fine, brown, and curly; eyes with horizontal and eyes with oblique openings; noses in some tribes aquiline, and in others depressed, show varieties as great as those of colour, stature, and cranial outlines. These and other physical distinctions, however, have not been accepted by any scientific inquirer in America of late years as grounds of classification of the native tribes, for the simple
Section H.