

PREFACE.

HIDDEN in the memories of the Red Men of Canada, there lie weird legends and strange stories of bygone years. Pictures and poems wrought by the fancy of the native historians and medicine men, bring home to us the primitive civilization which still lingers at our doors. The customs of our savage folk and the wealth of their languages and literature are interesting to us, as belonging to a people who were the pioneers of our land, and they open up a new world of myth, religion and native culture. Close contact with our native tribes shows us the mistake we have been making in deciding that ignorance, superstition and cruelty belong to these people, and that there is no wisdom, truth or beauty in their belief and manner of life. A faithful study of the languages and customs compels us to acknowledge that there are deeper truths than facts, and under the blanket and coat of skin there beats a human heart, as there is beauty, sweetness and wisdom in their traditions and courage, liberty and devotion in their lives. We have been looking at the red men from our own point of view, and the Canadian Indian judges the white man and his customs from the standpoint of life and training in the camp. Put yourself in his place and the verdict will be different. This work is an attempt to reach the meaning of the life of our savage folk. It was not possible to bring within the compass of a single volume all the native tribes of Canada, or to review all the languages or customs, which would take a series of volumes, and a selection had therefore to be made. Even the treatment of the subject is not exhaustive, as I have not written for the specialist, but for the general public, still, I hope that each will find a suitable portion worthy of study.

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