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II.—*Aboriginal American Poetry.**By* JOHN READE.

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The true history of the earth was till within the memory of living men a sealed book. It is not strange, therefore, that some chapters of it which concern the infancy of our race should still remain obscure. Recent research has, it is true, lifted a corner of the veil that shrouds the prehistoric past. Archæology has carried the light of the present into the dwelling-place of savage man, and revealed him as he struggled for existence amid scenes that have long ceased to know him. The earth has been made to give up its dead, and conferred a new lease of life on races that antedated the dawn of Chinese or Egyptian culture. The diligent hand of science has saved from the dust of oblivion the implements and utensils of those long undreamed-of forerunners of the earliest civilisations. We know how they fished and hunted, what animals they prized or dreaded, what weapons they used in the chase or in war, of what materials they were made, and how prepared. We know with what kind of needle they sewed their coats of skins, what jewellery they most affected, what dainty morsels were sweetest to their palates. We have learned something about their industries and their trade, their agriculture, their mode of grinding corn, their pottery and their weaving. Some of them aspired to be not artisans only, but artists, and carvings of bears, of reindeers, of mammoths, even—carvings which, Dr. Boyd Dawkins thinks, would not disgrace the chisel of some modern sculptors—have come down to us from the cave-men of ancient Europe. Nor were those remote ancestors of the present generation without their code of ethics and their notions of divinity, as we gather from inferential evidence. They had, it appears, some sense of duty, a hope of the world to come, and some of their remains disclose a cranial development that would not be out of harmony with a fairly advanced stage of intellectual cultivation.

Such, in rapid outlines, was the man of the Stone Age—man before metals—as the research of the last half century has restored him to the living world. It is a picture with which we, on this continent, are not entirely unacquainted, and it is needless to say that between the stage of advancement which it indicates and the earliest civilisation with which history brings us in contact, there must have been a long and eventful interval. Nor, if we accept the principle of continuity, can we have much difficulty in imagining that when the foremost nation on which history dawns was at the stage above portrayed, the tribes which had lagged hindmost in the race of progress were of an extremely low type, some such type, perhaps, as that which the Neanderthal skull would represent. As yet, we are almost utterly in the dark as to the process by which the great gulf of difference that divides the higher from the lower was passed. Of the savage of the Stone Age we may understand the capability for improvement, having some experience