

The Indians with whom we shall have most to do in this history, belonged to only three or four of the distinct nations which have been mentioned. They were spread through the valleys and forests, and along the margins of the streams and lakes situated between the North Atlantic coast and the western shores of lake Michigan, and towards the great river Mississippi.

Not counting the inhabitants of the islands near the Gulf of Mexico, and those of Mexico itself, the whole native population of North America has been reckoned at less than 200,000 souls when the new world was discovered. Those of New-France, including Canada, were, of course, less numerous.* The Europeans considered the members of the Indian tribes so like each other that it came to be said of them "to see one is to see all." This was said in regard to their outward appearance, weapons, clothing, complexion, high cheek bones, narrow foreheads, bright eyes and long coarse hair. Often the hair of their heads was cut off, except a tuft allowed to remain on the crown. Their senses of sight and hearing were very keen. They could move about with great speed in the forest, and paddle their bark canoes on the waters, with great skill and rapidity.

Although there were cowards amongst them, they were generally courageous. They shewed a wonderful ability to endure fatigue, hunger and the various forms of human suffering. They considered revenge a virtue, and, towards their enemies, practised every species of deceit and cunning.

Their weapons were, bows and arrows, tomahawks, short clubs, knives, and, sometimes, spears and shields. Their clothing, light or heavy according to the climate and the season of the year, consisted, chiefly, of the skins of wild animals; afterwards, when they traded with the Europeans, other materials for clothing were added, such as pieces of cloth, linen, flannel, blankets, &c.

* For present numbers of Indians belonging to the Dominion of Canada, see note at the end of this introductory chapter.