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INTRODUCTION

THE Nez Percés, one of the two important tribal groups treated in this volume, are among the best known of our Indians. Intellectually, culturally, and physically they were the leaders among the aborigines of the Columbia river basin, and made a marked impression on explorers, traders, missionaries, and army officers. From the day they were first seen by Lewis and Clark in 1805 to the close of the Nez Percé war in 1877, those who were brought in contact with them remarked them as exceptional people.

Linguistically the Nez Percés are of Shahaptian stock, like their neighbors to the south and west; but notwithstanding this affinity they were a much more vigorous people than their congeners. As with many tribes which have been under the influence of missionary teaching during a long period, the Nez Percés have become separated into two elements. The members of one branch of the tribe proved themselves more susceptible to religious instruction than perhaps any other group of Indians in the Northwest; but those forming the conservative element have steadfastly adhered to their primitive ways-hence the "Christian" and the "heathen" factions. The Nez Percé war involved the conservatives, who still clung to the earth-mother belief and for religious reasons were opposed to parting with the land on which their creator had placed them.

To the Nez Percé war of 1877 more attention has been given here than is usually devoted in these volumes to historical matters; but this appears advisable owing to the extraordinary nature of the campaign following the outbreak, and for the reason that certain fallacies regarding it should be dispelled. The voluminous writings on this subject have been based largely on false premises. Perhaps the Indians' side of the story will tend to prevent future historical students from likewise going astray.

The Wallawalla, a small group of this region, closely akin to the Nez Percés in language, culture, and association, and the Umatilla, another minor Shahaptian tribe, speaking a dialect but slightly different from that of the Yakima bands, receive no extended treatment, but rather are embraced in the description of the culture and activities of the other Shahaptian groups.

The Cayuse, of Waiilatpuan stock, though linguistically unrelated

to them, were from the earliest historical times closely affiliated with the Umatilla and the Wallawalla. Very small in number, they long ago merged with their neighbors, so that their language has been lost, and the few who still claim Cayuse blood are living as one with the Umatilla. From almost the last of the Molala, the only other tribe known to have spoken the Waiilatpuan tongue, a partial vocabulary was obtained. It is printed in the Appendix as the only available illustration of the Cayuse language.

In the portion of this volume devoted to the Wishham the reader who has followed the previous volumes will be refreshed by a change to a life radically different from that of any tribe hitherto treated. These people are an inland extension of the Chinookan stock of the Pacific coast and the lower Columbia river - they are sedentary dwellers by the swift waters of the Columbia. In place of the horse, their means of travel was the picturesque high-prowed canoe common to the Pacific waters from the Columbia river to Yakutat bay in Alaska. They were a slave-holding community, possessing much pride of caste, and imbued with beliefs of magic to an unusual degree. Their myths possess a delightful wealth of imagination, and are all-embracing in their personification of the animal and the inanimate. The catalogue of the village sites along the Columbia below the Dalles should prove of interest to the serious student. Considerable labor was involved in this research, as it required a detailed study of the entire stretch of river and the interviewing of every aged Indian to be found on its shores; but it is hoped that the results achieved will prove to have warranted the task. In collecting and preparing the material for this volume I have had the same able assistance of Mr. W.E. Myers as in former volumes. Mr. A.F. Muhr's services have continued in the photographic laboratory.

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