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INTRODUCTION

THE people and the region treated in this volume are unusual material for the ethnologist and the artist. Ethnologically the natives of North America are usually placed in broad, and somewhat loose, cultural groups, one of which comprises the seafaring tribes of the North Pacific coast from the Columbia river to Eskimoan territory in Alaska. The inhabitants of this thousand-mile coast belonged to several linguistic stocks and spoke a very large number of dialects; and while their culture is broadly of a type, there are in details such great differences as to set each linguistic group in clear relief before the student. Many tribes were squalid hovel-dwellers, as poor in tradition and ceremony as in material wealth; others were comparatively rich in property, powerful and aggressive in warfare, and possessed of an abundant mythology and an intricate ceremonial system.

Of all these coast-dwellers the Kwakiutl tribes were one of the most important groups, and at the present time theirs are the only villages where primitive life can still be observed. Their ceremonies are developed to a point which fully justifies the term dramatic. They are rich in mythology and tradition. Their sea-going canoes possess the most beautiful lines, and few tribes have built canoes approaching theirs in size. Their houses are large, and skilfully constructed. Their heraldic columns evidence considerable skill in carving, though not equalling those of the Haida and Tsimshian, from whom this phase of their art probably was borrowed. In their development of ceremonial masks and costumes they are far in advance of any other group of North American Indians.

An unusual amount of time has been devoted to the collection of material for this volume, a portion of each field season from 1910 to 1914, having been spent among the Kwakiutl tribes; and so much of the data is of exceptional interest that it has been found necessary to increase materially the number of pages. To meet this need, and yet keep the volume of uniform thickness with its predecessors, a somewhat thinner paper has been used.

Not the least value of this collection of data lies in the exceptionally intimate glimpses into certain phases of primitive life and thought which usually are concealed by Indian informants and interpreters. This value is due largely to the assistance of George Hunt, the interpreter, and in many subjects the informant, in the greater part of the

work. The son of a Scotch employé of the Hudson's Bay Company and a Tsimshian woman, George Hunt was born and has lived his sixty years among the Kwakiutl, particularly at Fort Rupert. Inherently curious and acquisitive, and possessed of an excellent memory, he has so thoroughly learned the intricate ceremonial and shamanistic practices of these people, as well as their mythologic and economic lore, that today our best authority on the Kwakiutl Indians is this man, who, without a single day's schooling, minutely records Indian customs in the native language and translates it word by word into intelligible English. The research for this volume was greatly simplified and made more effective by the very complete work of Dr. Franz Boas on "The Social Organization of the Kwakiutl Indians."

Indian words in the text, not specifically excepted, are in the dialect of the Qágyuhl (the Fort Rupert Kwakiutl). Translations are given on the sometimes uncertain authority of interpreters. Not every statement made in the text can be applied to all the Kwakiutl tribes, but unless its application is definitely localized, it can be regarded as characteristic of the group. The primitive garments shown in the illustrations were prepared by Kwakiutl men and women for the author, and are correct in all respects. Such costumes, of course, are not now used.

Mr. W.E. Myers, who has been so long identified with *The North American Indian,* has done his best work here, and to his valuable collaboration much of the success of this volume is due.

Thanks are due Professor Theodore C. Frye, of the University of Washington, for the identification of botanical specimens.

Death has again entered the ranks of those who have labored on this publication. This time the call came to Mr. A.F. Muhr, who for so many years gave his excellent services in the photographic laboratory.

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