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# INTRODUCTION

IN this volume are treated the more representative tribes of the Canadian province of Alberta.

The northern portion of sub-arctic western Canada is sparsely inhabited by various wandering Athapascans, of whom the Chipewyan have been chosen as a type. Their extremely simple material culture was due largely to their pursuit of the caribou, which in countless herds migrated southward in autumn and returned to the Arctic tundra for the brief summer. It was with a kindred band that Samuel Hearne in 1771-1772 wandered over the barrens from Hudson bay to the Arctic, living their life and recording many of their customs. The extracts from his invaluable narrative depict phases of life of these people at a time, long since past, when they were untrammeled by civilization.

The southerly neighbors and inveterate enemies of the Chipewyan were the Cree, a group of Algonquian tribes closely related to the Chippewa. Cree bands are found from the province of Ontario to the foothills of the Rocky mountains, but the Cree chapter in this volume must be understood as applying solely to the western Woods Cree of Alberta. Intimate contact with fur-traders, who because of the allegedly superior charms of the Cree women commonly chose their wives among them, apparently had no beneficial effect on the tribal descendants, for the modern Cree of Alberta are decidedly inferior both in physique and in observance of the laws of hygiene.

At various times in the distant past Athapascan groups wandered far from the chill northland, so that today representatives of the stock are found in western Washington and Oregon, in northern California, and in Arizona and New Mexico. Another tribe, the Sarsi, apparently began a similar movement just before the opening of the historic epoch, at which time they were found separated from their congeners by the intrusive Cree and in close association with the Algonquian Blackfoot confederacy, whose culture they had largely adopted. Here we find ourselves once more concerned with a true tribe, in contradistinction to a group of bands loosely, if at all, associated, but speaking a common language. The Sarsi, who also are described in the present volume, were reputedly among the bravest warriors of the northern plains, as well as good friends of the traders.

The prairies of southern Alberta were dominated by three allied

Algonquian tribes - Blackfeet, Bloods, and Piegan, composing a part of what is commonly designated the Blackfoot confederacy. The southern branch of the Piegan, resident in Montana, is described in Volume VI of this series, and additional data on the Piegan and the Blackfeet are presented in the Appendix of the present volume, where also notes on the northern Assiniboin will be found in amplification of the Assiniboin chapter in Volume III.

In the field research covering many years, including that of which the present volume is the result, I have had the valued assistance of Mr. W.E. Myers, and it is my misfortune that he has been compelled to withdraw from the work, owing to other demands, after so long a period of harmonious relations and with the single purpose of making these volumes worthy of the subject and of their patrons. He joined me in the field in 1906, while research among the Navaho was in progress, and thereafter we spent practically every season in camp together until the close Of 1925. His service during that time has been able, faithful, and self-sacrificing, often in the face of adverse conditions, hardship, and discouragement. It is with deep regret to both of us that he has found it impracticable to continue the collaboration to the end.

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