

THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAINS

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The people of the plains by Amelia M. Paget & Duncan Campbell Scott

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AMELIA M. PAGET & DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT

THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAINS



From a painting by Edmund Morris.
CHIEF MOONIAS, OJIBWAY.

THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAINS

BY
AMELIA M. PAGET



Edited with Introduction by
DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT

TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1909

TO
The Right Honourable Earl Grey, G.C.M.G., G.C.H.Q.,

GOVERNOR-GENERAL

AND

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE
DOMINION OF CANADA

This volume

IS

BY GRACIOUS PERMISSION OF HIS EXCELLENCY

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

INTRODUCTION

THERE are at the present time several old Indians who believe that their forefathers, many years ago, came to this from some other continent; that they crossed a large body of water, landing at several different islands on their voyage; that they travelled towards the rising sun, and were stopped in their journey by unfriendly tribes. These hostile Indians forced them to settle upon the prairies, where they have dwelt for hundreds of years. A different language was spoken by their forefathers, and the country they came from was warmer than this part of the world.

They insist that the Great Spirit had guided them to this land, and had given it to them, with all its vast expanses teeming with game, from which they derived their sustenance. While they were the sole in-

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habitants of these territories they were wealthy; they had everything they could desire for their happiness, and they were proud of being what they were—the children of Kichie Manitou. When the white men came misfortunes came with them.

These ideas are mere shadows of dreams, the remnants of legends referring to migrations which are recent compared with the incalculable age of the race. The earliest explorers found established languages, tribes firmly fixed in their traditional territories, formalized manners and habits. But ages upon ages had passed in which the form of the continent had changed, and again changed, before these peoples had become differentiated. Where was the cradle of the race; drifting from what plateau or valley came the progenitors of the tribes who were in possession when the Northmen and Columbus first touched the shore? The answer to the question takes the form of conjecture and suggestion, but investigation of this interesting ethnological problem has proceeded so far that all the unscientific theories of the last hundred

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years have been abandoned and a working hypothesis established which may be varied, modified or strengthened, but which, a hundred years from this, may have been firmly established by evidence which is not now available. The theory that they were the descendants of the "ten lost tribes" of Israel has had its day, and that which traces their coming to an easterly migration by way of Behring Straits or the Aleutian Islands is slowly passing.

As these preliminary words are only intended to serve the purpose of connecting the Indian of to-day with some past, even the indefinite and speculative, instead of leaving him without any affiliation with the general human stock, it will not be advisable to give any extended argument cogent to the theory of such affiliation, but simply to state the theory itself.

The explanation which gains force from geological and other scientific evidence is that the inhabitants of this continent came from Europe by a westerly migration across a huge land bridge which gave continuous communication in an equable climate by

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way of Iceland and Greenland. The subsidence of this plateau, which now forms the shallow bottom of the North Atlantic, cut off the people of our continent from other portions of the world, and left them to develop amid the circumstances and environment which evolved during the succeeding ages.

Anyone more than superficially interested in this fascinating subject may begin his reading with the last chapter of Frederick S. Dellenbaugh's "The North Americans of Yesterday." He may then be tempted to read Dr. David G. Brinton's "The American Race," where he will find a condensed but exhaustive treatment of the matter.

There is no doubt that the native inhabitants of North America are of one race, with strongly marked characteristics, but with many linguistic variations and other less important tribal distinctions arising from environment. Chief among the linguistic stocks is the Algonquin, which extends over a larger area than any other. From as far north as the Peace River and the Churchill River to North Carolina, and