

BOOK REVIEWS

American Indian Life. Edited by ELSIE CLEWS PARSONS. (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1922. Pp. 419. \$10.)

For a long time anthropologists have felt the need for a popular yet thoroughly reliable account of American Indian life. The intelligent layman is no longer satisfied with Cooper and the followers of that tradition, yet he cannot be asked to study his way through the scientific monograph, the only alternative. *American Indian Life* was planned to fill this gap.

With the exception of the stories based on the archaeological material of prehistoric peoples each tale grew out of personal contact with the tribe it describes. The authors have tried as far as possible to enter into the spirit of the culture of their Indian tribes. In choosing the material they were guided not only by a knowledge of what would appeal to their reader but also by a feeling for the type of incident, the phase of life, that their Indians would choose as significant and important in their own form of society. This endeavor to present the psychology of Indian life makes the book a new departure in anthropological literature and a most important one. It gives the ethnologist a new field to exploit and at the same time follows the general tendency of the science to-day. Anthropologists are no longer satisfied with speculative work of the Morgan and Spencer school, nor does the mere collecting of specimens hold their attention. Formerly the only literary opportunity for the ethnologist was the collecting and editing of folk tales, which was on a par with specimen hunting. Since the science of anthropology has turned to a study of the psychology of primitive peoples, both of the individual and the group, it is only natural that such a book should appear.

The various forms of presentation add very much to the interest of the book. Some authors chose the short story, others gave a biography of a member of his tribe. Another sketched a typical day in the life of his people while the description of a single ceremony gives a vivid impression of the importance of ritual in that particular society.

The Pacific Northwest is dealt with by men who know the

country and its people thoroughly. Sapir tells the recollections of a Nootka, old blind Tom, a successful trader of former days. The atmosphere of the old potlatch and its tremendous importance in the social life of all the coast Indians is well brought out. "All is Trouble along the Klamath" is a well done story, showing clearly the rigidity of social conventions among these people. The tale relates the origin of a family feud and is told by a woman of one of the families involved. Skipping from the Klamath to Alaska we have Mr. Reed's story of his own people, the Ten'a at Anvik. He tells very simply the life history of a member of his tribe.

In editing the book, Dr. Parsons has grouped the stories of tribes whose culture is somewhat related. For the reader who becomes interested in any tribe and wishes to follow up this introduction to their mode of life, there are bibliographical notes at the end of the volume. The whole work is admirably unified by Dr. Kroeber's introduction where beside explaining further the purpose of the volume, he gives a brief sketch of the place of aboriginal American culture in the history of civilization. And finally, perhaps at first sight the most striking feature of the book, its illustrations. Mr. LaFarge studied most carefully the specimens of each tribe available in the museums. Although he uses exclusively designs and objects actually used by the various tribes, he makes no effort to reproduce their art in his composition or in the spirit of his pictures.

But one cannot leave the book without mentioning how it originally came into being. Money for scientific publication is always scarce and the situation has been especially acute in the last few years. So a small group of anthropologists, all members of the American Ethnological Society, tried to devise some way of earning money to publish their memoirs. Finally they decided to write this set of stories and they found in Mr. Huebsch a most generous publisher, for all receipts from the sale of the book over and above his expense of publishing and selling are turned over to the publication fund of the society. The editor, the authors, the illustrator and the publisher are all to be congratulated on producing such an excellent volume, which aside from its literary merit has an unusual and noble purpose.

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