

JUNE 7TH, 1886.

CONFERENCE ON THE NATIVE RACES OF AMERICA
(WEST INDIES.)

FRANCIS GALTON, Esq., F.R.S., *President, in the Chair.*

The PRESIDENT made some observations on opening the Conference.

Mr. G. H. HAWTAYNE read a paper by Mr. E. F. IM THURN on the Natives of the West Indies; and afterwards spoke on the same subject. Sir RAWSON RAWSON also contributed some remarks.

Dr. J. RAE gave a brief account of the Natives of British North America, especially the Eskimo, and Professor FLOWER joined in the discussion.

An adjournment took place to the West Indies and British Guiana Courts, where Mr. HAWTAYNE described some of the exhibits.

OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT.

THE phrase of "Native Races in the British Possessions of America" is primarily associated in most of our minds with the Red Indians in the Dominion of Canada. This is justly the case, because out of the nine millions of square miles which the whole British Empire contains, considerably more than a third part lies within the Dominion of Canada, and all except a small fraction of this was, until quite recent times, the home of the red man. Moreover, their race has played a notable part in the history of North America, it has been, and still is, the subject of a large amount of anthropological inquiry, it has furnished themes to many well-known popular writers. On these grounds, I think I may be permitted to say that few sections of the Exhibition would have been more attractive, not only to the anthropologist, but also to the general public, than one which effectually represented the domestic life, the arts and the usages of the Red Indian. But this view does not seem to have been taken by the Canadian authorities, whose wide courts, though filled with most interesting products, refer almost entirely to the industries of the white man. The whole of the Red Indian exhibits occupy no more horizontal space than would be afforded by a moderately-sized dinner table with a corresponding amount of vertical wall space.

Since there are not sufficient exhibits to serve as a text for discussions about the Red Indians, our hour must be assigned to other races, who fall under the same title of Native Races in the British Possessions of America, and who are well represented in this Exhibition. But before beginning upon these I shall be happy to give a very few minutes to any gentleman who may be disposed to make brief remarks about these temporarily overlooked red Canadian natives. The objects on the table come from British Columbia; they are taken from the exhibits under the charge of Dr. Selwyn, who, unless I am mistaken, regrets the inadequacy of the exhibits relating to Red Indians as much as I do. He is unfortunately unable to be present.

On the RACES of the WEST INDIES.

By E. F. IM THURN, Esq.

THE information at present available as to the red races of the West Indian Islands and of the immediately adjoining mainland is but fragmentary. Certain points have been somewhat minutely investigated, many others have as yet hardly been examined. In trying to piece together from such unsatisfactory data as these an outline of the probable facts concerning the history of these races, I seem to feel myself somewhat in the position of one who lays down a map of a country of which only certain isolated spots are known, of which vast tracts have never been visited. Just as this map-maker, after he has placed on his paper the known points has to draw from conjecture the surrounding country, so I must, on this occasion, suggest the probable connection of the few ascertained facts which I have to tell. Probable and possible are words that I am forced to use frequently but with carefully considered significance.

At the time of their discovery the West Indian Islands were found to be inhabited by red-skinned people of altogether peculiar character. They were the first examples seen by Europeans of the remarkable race of men which is peculiar to the Western Hemisphere. The accounts of the first interviews of Columbus and his immediate followers with these new people in this newly discovered world, are of the very greatest historical—or to use a wider word, anthropological—interest. They raise, surely, in the imagination of any reader, a wonderful picture—a picture of the first meeting of the man of white skin, the product of the social development which had been in rapid progress for long ages in the eastern world, with the man of red skin, the product of the social development which during those same ages,