

II.—*Aboriginal American Poetry.*

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The true history of the earth was till within the memory of living men a sealed book. It is not strange, therefore, that some chapters of it which concern the infancy of our race should still remain obscure. Recent research has, it is true, lifted a corner of the veil that shrouds the prehistoric past. Archæology has carried the light of the present into the dwelling-place of savage man, and revealed him as he struggled for existence amid scenes that have long ceased to know him. The earth has been made to give up its dead, and conferred a new lease of life on races that antedated the dawn of Chinese or Egyptian culture. The diligent hand of science has saved from the dust of oblivion the implements and utensils of those long undreamed-of forerunners of the earliest civilisations. We know how they fished and hunted, what animals they prized or dreaded, what weapons they used in the chase or in war, of what materials they were made, and how prepared. We know with what kind of needle they sewed their coats of skins, what jewellery they most affected, what dainty morsels were sweetest to their palates. We have learned something about their industries and their trade, their agriculture, their mode of grinding corn, their pottery and their weaving. Some of them aspired to be not artisans only, but artists, and carvings of bears, of reindeers, of mammoths, even—carvings which, Dr. Boyd Dawkins thinks, would not disgrace the chisel of some modern sculptors—have come down to us from the cave-men of ancient Europe. Nor were those remote ancestors of the present generation without their code of ethics and their notions of divinity, as we gather from inferential evidence. They had, it appears, some sense of duty, a hope of the world to come, and some of their remains disclose a cranial development that would not be out of harmony with a fairly advanced stage of intellectual cultivation.

Such, in rapid outlines, was the man of the Stone Age—man before metals—as the research of the last half century has restored him to the living world. It is a picture with which we, on this continent, are not entirely unacquainted, and it is needless to say that between the stage of advancement which it indicates and the earliest civilisation with which history brings us in contact, there must have been a long and eventful interval. Nor, if we accept the principle of continuity, can we have much difficulty in imagining that when the foremost nation on which history dawns was at the stage above portrayed, the tribes which had lagged hindmost in the race of progress were of an extremely low type, some such type, perhaps, as that which the Neanderthal skull would represent. As yet, we are almost utterly in the dark as to the process by which the great gulf of difference that divides the higher from the lower was passed. Of the savage of the Stone Age we may understand the capability for improvement, having some experience

of his modern representative, but how he became a progressive being we have no data to denote. We have to take what Mr. Herbert Spencer terms "the developing man" very largely on trust. That great philosopher has, however, shown how, by a careful and logical use of the scientific imagination, we may arrive at a probable solution of the problem. "There remains," he writes, in discussing the factors of social phenomena, "in the group of derived factors, one more, the potency of which can scarcely be over-estimated. I mean that accumulation of super-organic products which we commonly distinguish as artificial, but which, philosophically considered, are no less natural than all others resulting from evolution. There are several orders of these. First come the material appliances which, beginning with roughly chipped flints, end in the complete automatic tools of an engine-factory driven by steam; which, from boomerangs, rise to thirty-five ton guns; which, from huts of branches and grass, grow to cities with their palaces and cathedrals. Then we have language, able at first only to eke out gestures in communicating simple ideas, but eventually becoming capable of expressing highly-complex conceptions with precision. While from that stage in which it conveys thoughts only by sounds to one or two other persons, we pass through picture-writing up to steam-printing, multiplying indefinitely the numbers communicated with, and making accessible in voluminous literatures the ideas and feelings of innumerable men in various places and times. Concomitantly there goes on the development of knowledge, ending in science. Counting on the fingers grows into far-reaching mathematics; observation of the moon's changes leads at length to a theory of the solar system; and, at successive stages, there arise sciences of which not even the germs can at first be detected. Meanwhile, the once few and simple customs, becoming more numerous, definite and fixed, end in systems of laws. From a few rude superstitions there grow up elaborate mythologies, theologies, cosmogonies. Opinion getting embodied in creeds, gets embodied, too, in accepted codes of propriety, good conduct, ceremony, and in established social sentiments. And then there gradually evolve also the products we call æsthetic, which of themselves form a highly complex group. From necklaces of fishbones we advance to dresses elaborate, gorgeous, infinitely varied; out of discordant war-chants, came symphonies and operas; cairns develop into magnificent temples; in place of caves with rude markings, there arise at length galleries of paintings; and the recital of a chief's deeds, with mimetic accompaniment, gives origin to epics, dramas, lyrics, and the vast mass of poetry, fiction, biography, and history."<sup>1</sup>

I have quoted this passage, so charged with meaning and suggestion as to the whole vast field of mankind's development, as well for its inferential bearing on the earliest stirrings of human aspiration as (and more especially) for the light that it sheds on the first promptings of the poetic spirit. Although it is not the express aim of this paper to trace the progress of poetry from its rude beginnings to the beauty and majesty of its maturity, it is impossible to avoid noticing the many and manifold illustrations of such progress that one meets with in a study of this kind.

Signor Tito Vignoli who, though a disciple of Mr. Spencer, differs from him as to the sequence of certain stages in man's spiritual development, has also attempted to solve the problem of his first intellectual movements on purely evolutionary grounds. According to Signor Vignoli, the unseen wind, the moving cloud, the lightning flash, the thunder

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<sup>1</sup>The Data of Sociology, part i. chap. ii. § 12.

peal are, when perceived, endowed by primitive men, as well as by animals, with subjective life, and the power of acting with deliberate purpose. This, which he considers the first form of myth, is suggested only by phenomena actually present. The next form of myth, which is the first stage of fetish, and confined to man, is, when those objects retain their influence over the mind even when they are absent, as beings that inspire hope or fear and to which worship may be paid. It is, in fact, "the universal and primitive sense of myth in nature which man alone is capable of applying permanently to some given phenomenon, such as wind, rain and the like, or lakes, volcanoes and rocks, and these remain fixed in the mind, as powers of good or evil." The second stage of fetichism, which is the third form in which myth develops itself is, according to the same author, "the veneration of objects, animals, plants and the like, in which an extrinsic power is supposed to be incarnated." Signor Vignoli maintains that "many ages elapsed before man attained to the second stage of fetichism, since it was necessarily preceded by a further and reflex elaboration of myth, namely, the genesis of a belief in spirits." Next comes the polytheistic form, to which two classes of people attain—those who classify and ultimately reduce fetiches into a more general conception, and those whose conception takes an anthropomorphic form. When the latter stage has been reached, a new field is opened, through which there is a gradual transition to the monotheistic idea. The methodical process by which that goal is attained—a process characteristic of human thought—is sometimes discerned in an inchoate and imperfect form among the wilder tribes of mankind, such as the Indians of North and Central America and several Asiatic nations. In such cases, the old and debased myths still maintained their ground, and there are examples of such persistence even in Europe itself; "for, while in one direction a capacity for classification leads to a purer monotheistic conception, and even to rational science, the great majority of the common people, and even of those of higher culture, still hold many ideas which are polytheistic and anthropomorphic, and some which really belong to the debased stage of fetichism and vulgar superstition." Finally, "science is the *de-personification* of myth, arriving at a rational idea of that which was originally a fantastic type, by divesting it of its wrappings and symbols." But in this case, too, the process is gradual, science also having its myth; for when natural force and phenomena are transformed from anthropomorphic beings into laws or general principles, these latter virtually become "entities endowed with eternal and independent existence." But though "science still nourishes myths within its pale," it is "unconsciously, and in their most rational form."

I have dwelt thus long on Signor Vignoli's theory because it has, by implication, an obvious bearing on the origin of poetry among rude tribes of men as well as on its cultivation by more advanced races. The subject is, indeed, treated by him at some length when he deals with special myths, such as that of Prometheus, and with a hymn in the Rig-Veda, which he quotes, as having a tendency at once mythical and scientific. In the chapter on "Dreams and Illusions," he especially discusses the disposition among barbarous races to make dance and pantomime and song their aids in the expression of intense feeling. "The arts also," he writes, "like other human products, follow the general evolution of myth in their historic course. . . . The arts of singing and of instrumental

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<sup>1</sup> Myth and Science, ch. vii.

music have the same origin and evolution as the others." Primitive language required gesture and pantomime to supplement and reinforce it whenever strong emotion had to be expressed. "Thus speech, gesture, and song, in the larger sense of the word had their origin together."<sup>1</sup> In turn, vocal modulation and rhythmic movement were used to stimulate emotion. Song, in its comprehensive sense, was, moreover, in unison with a tendency that pervades all nature. The music of the spheres is not a mere fancy, but the statement of that cosmic law of regular succession and rhythmic motion which constitute the harmony of the universe. Granted that tendency, how or when did singing become differentiated from ordinary speech? No savage race, of which there is any record, has been destitute of some kind of chant or chorus, of some kind of instrument, wind, stringed, or of percussion. Something like Pan's pipes has been found in the caves of the Pyrenees, and whistles have been repeatedly met with among the remains of Neolithic man. The "kist o' whistles" of religious prejudice is a recognition of the course of development. The twang of the tense bowstring suggested possibly the earliest form of the class of stringed instruments. As for those of percussion, the sound of the foot in the dance would prompt their simplest form.

It would appear, then, that if we look for the rude beginning of poetry, we must search for the very earliest infancy of human speech. Dr. Tylor has shown, by examples from savage tribes, that simple prose and measured verse and chanted song, distinct though they may seem and be to the educated, civilised man, are found, on careful examination, to shade off into each other, the mode of utterance marking the temper of the speaker and making all the difference. The dignity and music that emotion sometimes imparts to words, which if uttered calmly would have no special force, is well-known. Earnestness and passion, with voice and gesture corresponding, will make the merest commonplace eloquent; while in choruses, even meaningless syllables may be effectively used. Nor is this usage confined to untutored savages; on the contrary, it finds equal favour in the heart of civilisation. We are thus constantly reminded of the humble origin of that art of poetry which we still call divine, and which is no less admirable for the rudeness of its cradle. Rather, indeed, it should excite our wonder that what Dr. Tylor calls the "arts of pleasure" should have any place, however scanty, in the hard lot of those primitive men. Emile Souvestre, in his pleasant "*Causeries historiques et littéraires*," smiles at those philosophers who imagine for mankind a career in accordance with economic maxims. First, they say, community of wants having drawn together the scattered nomads of the ancient world, they would practice agriculture, and provide for themselves settled habitations. Then, in due course, would follow the various industries, the growth of cities, navigation, commerce, and, finally, having laid the foundation of material prosperity, those prudent people would turn their attention to the subject of poetry and the other fine arts. But human nature chose a different course. Instead of supplying the material wants first and then turning its thoughts to æsthetic superfluities, primitive mankind often gave the latter precedence. The savage might do without shoes, but he could not do without ornaments; he might have neither house nor funds, but he must have his dances and his songs. So true was it from the first that man could not live by bread alone. The law of nature, not only in its legal acceptance, but in its larger scientific sense, proved to be something quite different from that which long venerated authority had decreed.

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<sup>1</sup> *Myth and Science*, ch. viii.

Taking up the subject of early song nearly at the point where Signor Vignoli leaves it, Professor Posnet traces all literature back to choral songs of war and peace. "In this primitive song," he adds, "the words, the dance, the music (such as it is), and the gesticulations, contribute to make a unity, nameless in the languages of peoples far removed from the beginning of social life. These curious combinations of mimicry and music, dancing and words, vary in their purposes. Sometimes they are magic incantations, sometimes they are war-songs, sometimes they are songs of marriage, sometimes they are dirges of death. In some the gestures predominate, in others the rude music, in others the refrain of a few simple words. But the main points to be borne in mind are that these elements are confused together, and that the mere preservation of the words alone cannot enable us to imagine the true nature of primitive song. Hence the impossibility of applying our highly-developed modern ideas of prose or verse to such performances. For not only have dance and gesticulations among us ceased to convey any sacred meaning, not only have we long distinguished these from the mimetic action of the regular drama, but we have also separated words from any accompaniment of music or dance, poetry from recitation, as well as from these accompaniments, and prose from metrical forms, which, far from being joined to dance and melody, or sustaining the memory in an age when writing was unknown, simply appeal to the writer's sense of harmony through the medium of printed letters. Accustomed to artistic ideas, based upon distinctions impossible in early social life, it is not strange that we neither possess the words, nor, in many cases, the imaginative power, needful to carry us out of our own literary conditions into the primitive homes of literary development.<sup>1</sup>" Dr. Posnet then goes on to show how, in the course of time, acting, dancing and music, became separated from the words of the song; how a greater change (including the study of metres) was introduced by the invention of writing, and how, subsequently, prose was differentiated from verse, and, ultimately, science from literature.

The survey of the aboriginal poetry of America will only carry us a part of the way thus indicated. The passage quoted is not only an accurate description of its general features, but also implies the difficulty of subjecting it to such criticism as would be suitable in the estimate of ordinary literary productions. The interest which it has for us is, indeed, rather scientific than literary, its value chiefly consisting in the analogies which it offers to the early intellectual expansion of the civilised nations of the Old World. Unhappily, however, it furnishes but scanty opportunity for the observation of communities undergoing development. The indigenous progress of the half-civilised nations of Central and South America was arrested by the Spanish conquerors. How they attained the status in which they were found by the European adventurers—whether from an inner impulse, or aided in some way from without—we can only conjecture from the meagre data at our disposal. As for the lower types of aborigines, they have not, on the whole, improved through intercourse with the foreigner. South of the Gulf of Mexico, where the natives have, to a great extent, intermarried with the new-comers, the honour for whatever advance has been made in the arts of life is, of course, divided, but in what proportion, it would not be easy to decide. To do so fairly would call for a great deal of information which we do not possess and cannot reasonably expect to obtain. In the first

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<sup>1</sup> Comparative Literature, pp. 127, 128.

place, it would be necessary to have thoroughly accurate statistics regarding the aborigines at the time of the conquest, their number, material resources, moral and intellectual condition. In the second place, we should require statistics equally trustworthy respecting the first *conquistadores* and those who succeeded them, and there, too, (owing to the absence of any regular census system) we should be left largely in doubt. Finally, we should have to inquire how far any comparison of the mixed American States with the motherlands, to which they owed their European blood, was in favour of the former. It is true that Central and South Americans of mixed blood, some of them more Indian than European, have attained distinction in politics, in art and in literature. The list of such names is better known in Neo-Latin Europe than it is in North America, and in that roll of honour, the aborigines of this continent have certainly a considerable share. Obvious reasons, however, preclude such instances from being used to illustrate the course of purely American development, which virtually came to an end on the arrival of the conquerors or colonists.

The problem presented to the student of human progress by the nations and tribes that occupied America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is a most perplexing one. In Central America, Mexico and Peru, there existed types of civilisation which, whatever parallel they might have in the semi-barbarous empires of the ancient world, admit of no comparison with the nomad tribes of hunters and warriors which peopled the rest of the continent. They lack, unfortunately, that *sine quâ non* of genuine intellectual life, the art of writing, and what of their past their pictographs or *quipus* had saved from oblivion was sacrificed by the ignorant jealousy of the Spaniards, whenever it fell into their hands. A recent visitor to Mexico professes indignation at Zumarraga's destruction of picture-writings,<sup>1</sup> which he qualifies, with humorous exaggeration, as "surely the unpardonable sin, and one that looks black even by the side of human sacrifice." When, however, the comparatively small success which has attended the efforts of scholars to interpret such documents as have been preserved, is taken into consideration, one may be permitted to doubt whether, after all, the loss sustained was so grievous as it is generally represented to be. Nearly all that is most trustworthy and valuable in works relating to prehistoric America is the result of independent and laborious research into the ethnology, languages and mythologies of the aborigines. Many statements of the early historians, especially of such interested authors as Ixtlilxochitl and Garcilaso de la Vega, which were long received without question by translators and compilers, have failed to stand the test of rigid cross-examination. If, in this process of sifting, the story loses some of the flavour of romance, the gain in real knowledge is more than sufficient compensation.

As to the object with which I am now concerned, there is happily, a consensus of both ancient and modern authorities on one important point, the universal prevalence of dance and song among the American Indians. From Cape Horn to Point Barrow, there is no tribe, with which European inquirers have come in contact, that has not attained some

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<sup>1</sup> Pictorial records were not confined to the partially civilised nations of Mexico and Central America. Copway, an Ojibway, compiled a "Traditional History" of his people from a collection of their symbolic writings. Dr. Brinton wrote "The Lenape and their Legends" from the "Walam Olam," or Picture Record, discovered by Raffinesque. The Sioux warrior Sitting Bull, Joseph the Nez Percé chief, and Running Antelope the Uncpapa leader, have all composed pictograph autobiographies.

stage of poetic development.<sup>1</sup> When it is considered that, notwithstanding some general features of resemblance, the inhabitants of the double continent comprised from 1,300 to 1,500 distinct tribes or families, each with its own language, it will be readily understood that nothing like a complete aboriginal anthology has as yet been compiled. Dr. Brinton has, however, undertaken the task of preparing such a work, and has been diligently engaged on it for some years past. It is to be hoped that ere long (before the present year has ended, perhaps,) he will be able to present the fruit of his labours to the world.

For convenience' sake, I may, for the purpose of this paper, adopt Keane's classification of all the American races into eighteen great groups. Of these groups there is not one which does not offer some marked example of the choral chant, while a few of them had already, before the arrival of the Europeans, attained a stage of poetic evolution considerably beyond that primitive type. Four such groups covered South America. The most southern division includes the Patagonians and Fuegians—the former noted for their great stature and their horsemanship, the latter for their generally dwarfish size, and (in part) for their skill in canoeing and fishing. These Indians are fully described in the "Narrative of the Voyage of the *Beagle*," some of the conclusions in which, however, especially as to the wretched character of some Fuegian tribes, have been disputed by subsequent writers. That some of them were not incapable of improvement was shown by the change effected in a party of them that had visited England and donned the garb of civilisation. The experience of the Jesuits with the Indians of Paraguay is one of the most interesting episodes in the story of European intercourse with the aborigines. It is noteworthy, especially for the attention paid to the artistic training of such Indians as displayed any taste for drawing or sculpture. Raynal has given the Paraguay mission a prominent place in his history, and Chateaubriand accords it high praise in "Le Génie du Christianisme." The Araucanians are a fine race, but have not proved so amenable to missionary effort as those just mentioned. They have, however, some confused beliefs of their own, as well as some interesting traditions, and are devoted to poetry and eloquence.<sup>2</sup> The Brazilian races constitute mainly a geographical group. It includes the Tupi-Guarani linguistic family, which, in extent, is said to rival that of the Tinné or Algonquins. The non-Guarani element, which comprises a large variety of scattered tribes, is known to the Tupis under the common and significant name of "strangers" or "enemies." The Tupi-Guarani is said to be admirably fitted for poetical expression, and it may be recalled that it was the refrain of a Tupi song which won the admiration of the illustrious Montaigne, as he mentions himself, in his famous Essays (liv. I. ch. 40). The Lingoa Geral, which is the modern and corrupt form of that language, is spoken, according to a recent writer, from Guiana to Patagonia. The same author gives the following testimony regarding the pantomimic dances:—"All the sufferings of human life, all the great deeds of their ancestors, forced marches, struggles, persecutions, captivity and the anguish of defeat are reproduced in these mimic dances, which are, in fact, dramas of the most thrilling character."

<sup>1</sup> "Within crude poetic imagery are enrolled their religious beliefs, are laid the foundations of their systems of worship, are portrayed their thoughts concerning causations and the destinies of mankind." H. H. Bancroft's *Native Races of the Pacific States*, iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> "The Araucanians believe that warriors who die on the field of battle ascend into the heavens, where they become as gods. As for other souls, those of the good are taken to regions where they enjoy all imaginable delights and endless repose, while the wicked are hurled into the abodes of darkness and pain." Dabry de Thiersant's *De l'origine des Indiens du Nouveau Monde et de leur civilisation*, p. 160.

Father Petitot writes in almost similar terms of the expressive ceremonies by which the Dené Dindjies celebrate the festival of the vernal equinox. Dr. Tylor, in his "Anthropology," says that in the infancy of civilisation, "dancing was full of passionate and solemn meaning. Savages and barbarians danced their joy and sorrow, their love and rage, even their magic and religion." And nowhere, perhaps, is this more true than among those children of the sun, who live in the equatorial and inter-tropical regions of our continent. Raymi, the great feast of the winter solstice among the Peruvians, was so called from a word signifying a solemn dance. It was a national thanksgiving for national blessings, and began at sunrise with songs of triumph and clamorous music. "On the day of the equinox," writes Von Tschudi, "the Inca waited, accompanied by all the priests and chief lords of the court, at the entrance of the chief temple, for the rising of the sun, and by means of a metallic mirror, called *Inca-rirpu*, concentrated its first rays, setting fire, with them, to a piece of sacred cotton, picked and prepared for the purpose. The substance was carried, while burning, to the temple, where the sacrifice and offerings to the sun were made, and afterwards it furnished fire to all the houses. The Inca was also accustomed to distribute to all the assistants bread and sacred *chicha*, [a sort of beer.] Finally, the feast was concluded with dancing, music and general rejoicing." There were four solemn feasts in the year, the first coming in December, the second, just described, in spring, the third, in June, and the fourth, in October. There were also minor feasts in the other months, and they were all observed with music, dance and song.

But, at the time of the Conquest, Peru had already attained the higher stage of development indicated by dramatic representation. An example of their talent in that direction is the Ollanta drama, so-called from the name of the leading personage. Ollanta is a warrior, who, being enamored of the Inca's daughter, has his suit rejected by the haughty monarch. In his indignation, he gathers his troops and makes war on the king. But meanwhile, Cusi-Coyllur, the lady of his love, is cast into prison, and her child and Ollanta's is taken from her. The Inca dies, and his rebel son-in-law seems to have won the day. But the new monarch crushes the revolt and Ollanta is taken captive. All ends well, nevertheless. Mindful of his former services, his sovereign pardons him, and once more he clasps Cusi-Coyllur to his breast. Among the minor characters there is a sort of clown, who is always joking, and a priest of the sun, who opposes the marriage. The following passage will give some notion of the style of the play. It is a monologue of Ollanta, just after he has been robbed of Cusi-Coyllur:—

"Huay Ollantay! Ollantay! O hapless Ollantay! What will become of thee now? Thou seest the base ingratitude of the man for whom thou didst conquer so many peoples, and whom thou hast served so faithfully and so long!

"And thou, Cusi-Coyllur, the wife of my heart, what will become of thee now that I, thine husband, have been the cause of thy desolation?

"The darkness of nothingness is coming upon my soul, O my princess, my dove!

"O Cuzco, the beautiful city, henceforth I shall be the implacable enemy of thy king. Tearing out his heart, I will give it for food to the vultures.

"That cruel monarch will see thousands of Antis, arming under my command; and having reached Saesayhuaman, they will threaten him like a cloud of maledictions. Then, when he lies upon a bed of blood, that proud tyrant will know if my vassals are few in number.

“When I smite off his head, shall his lifeless lips scornfully tell me that I am unworthy of his daughter, and that I shall never possess her ?

“Then shall I no longer supplicate him on low-bent knees, for I, not he, shall be sovereign, and my will, not his, all-powerful.”

According to Messrs. Rivero and Tschudi, the Peruvian actors reached great perfection in the representation of comedies. They were encouraged not only by the hearty applause of an audience that delighted in the drama, but also by rich rewards from those in authority. The same authors inform us that, with the exception of the dramatic, all the compositions of the Peruvians were destined to be sung. Some of the ancient tunes of their *yaravis* or love-poems are said to be sweet and melodious. The music of three of them (one in *sol minor*, one in *la minor* and one in *re minor*) is given in “Peruvian Antiquities.” But such music was the exception rather than the rule. Like most rude populations, the populace of the empire preferred the din of noisy instruments. In a paper on Ancient Music, by M. Oscar Comettant, included in the “Compte Rendu” of the Congrès des Americanistes for 1875, I find an example of a *yaravis*, of which the following is a translation :—

## I.

“When the poor turtle-dove has lost the object of its affections, in its wild grief it flutters its wings and flies restlessly to and fro.

## II.

Everywhere it seeks for the missing one, flying far over the broad fields, and searching with the inquiring eye of love, every tree and every plant.

## III.

But, alas ! it has sought in vain, and now, hopeless, with throbbing heart, it weeps unceasingly— weeps fountains, rivers, gulfs, oceans of tears.

## IV.

Such, alas ! is my case ! So have I been in my sorrow ever since that sad day when I was so ill-fated as to lose thee, my sweet charmer, my divine enchanter.

## V.

I weep, though I know it is in vain. For my sorrow is so great that I breathe only tears, terrors, anguish and cries of lamentation.

## VI.

The whole universe is moved by my sorrow, for I am the most faithful of lovers. Lo ! all creation weeps for my lot—men, beasts, fishes and birds.

## VII.

As long as my life lasts, I will follow thy wandering shade: yea, though water, fire, earth and air should attempt to stand in my way!"

Many of these *yuravis* have been collected by Signor Zegarra, Mr. Clements R. Markham and others. But it was not in elegiac poetry only that the Peruvian bards are said to have excelled. Prescott writes that they "selected the most brilliant incidents for their songs and ballads, which were chanted at the royal festivals, and at the table of the Inca. In this manner, a body of traditionary minstrelsy grew up, like the British and Spanish ballad poetry, by means of which the name of many a rude chieftain, that might have perished for want of a chronicler, has been borne down the tide of rustic melody to later generations." That the preservation of such productions without the medium of writing was not impossible, is fully borne out by what is known of the Hindoos, the Arabs and the Celts.

North-east of the region occupied by the Quichuas, in the great valley of Cundinamarca, there lived at the epoch of the Conquest a people known as the Chibchas, or Muyscas. It formed a link in the chain of half-civilised races that extended along the western highlands from Chili to New Mexico. Its tradition seemed to indicate a mixed ethnology. The Chibchas had the artistic faculty largely developed, and their poetic sense is revealed by their mythology. One of their myths has reference to a bearded white man who taught them the arts of civilisation. (Bancroft's *Native Races of the Pacific States*, III. 269.) The only other important linguistic group was the Salivi, which comprised the Atures, whose learned parrot still spoke the language of his teachers, when all the race had perished, and none could interpret the remembered words.<sup>1</sup> Besides those mentioned, the isolated tribes and tongues of South America were, and are, virtually countless. Those at which I have glanced are, however, the most conspicuous of Mr. Keane's four great groups. First of these is that which comprises the austral races, consisting of the Fuegians, the Patagonians, the Puelche, or Pampas Indians, and the Araucanians. Secondly, there are the Brazilian races—a mainly geographical grouping—of which the most distinctive feature is the far-reaching Tupi-Guarani ethnical and linguistic family. Thirdly, there are the Peruvian and Bolivian races, with two respective central tongues, the Quichua, and the Aymara, and which also include the Antisian federation, the "Antis" of the Ollanta drama. Lastly, which brings us to the border of Central America, there are the races of New Guiana and New Granada, including the Chibcha, or Muysca, the Salivi, the Arawack, the Carib, and a host of other languages and tribes of uncertain affinities. All these families of mankind had reached at least the starting-point of human progress; for even the wretched Teekenika of Tierra del Fuego has shown himself susceptible of improvement under missionary teaching. Some of them had advanced some way along the path that leads to civilisation.

In Central America, at the time of the conquest, the proportion of civilised or half-civilised communities to the bulk of the population was greatly in excess of what it was either in South or North America. It is there, indeed, that we find the best products of

<sup>1</sup> Humboldt's *Views of Nature*, pp. 172, 188, 189.

American intellectual development. There is, however, no clearly marked line of partition between the culture of the central region and that which lay to the north and to the south of it.<sup>1</sup> The names of the prevailing forms of cultivated speech, the Maya-Quiché and the Nahuatl, seem to point respectively to Peru and to Mexico. Passing through the many scattered tribes of the Isthmus and Costa Rica, we reach, near Lake Nicaragua, the first sign of Central American culture among men of Nahuatl speech. Father Vasquez derives Nicaragua itself from the words *nican* and *anahuacos*, as though it were the abode of men of Mexican descent. The Nicaraguans showed their relationship to the Aztecs by identity of language, mythology, religious rites, calendars, manners and customs. The Mangués, of Nicaragua, whose name is preserved in Lake Managua, were there when the Nahuas arrived. They are related to the Chapanecs or people of Chiapas, one of the actual States of Mexico, but are not akin either to the Nahuas or the Mayas. To-day hardly any unmixed descendants of either race remain in Nicaragua. Benzoni records that in the middle of the sixteenth century, four languages were spoken in Nicaragua, of which the Mexican or Nahuatl was the most extended and the easiest to learn. At an early date, however, a mixed dialect came into use, "composed of a broken-down Nahuatl and a corrupt Spanish." The comedy-ballet of Güegüence, which forms the third volume of Dr. Brinton's "Library of Aboriginal Literature," is an illustration, not only of that mongrel dialect—the greater part of which, however, is easily intelligible Spanish—but also of the dances, songs, music, traditions, social manners and humour of the Central American half-breeds. Confining his attention to Nicaragua, Dr. Brinton says in his introduction, that the *bailes* (as these song-dances are called) are divided into five classes—simple dances, dances with songs, dances with prose recitations, *logas* or scenic recitations with music by a single actor, and complete dramas with music, ballets, dialogues and costumes. The *loga* or *loa* is peculiar to the Mangués. It is a rhymed monologue, recited with music and in costume and, though generally of a religious character, it is, like the medieval mystery plays, more like a burlesque than a serious composition. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that some of the usages associated with part, if not all, of these classes of dances, are more Spanish than aboriginal. Some of them may, however, be as much Indian as Spanish, as for instance, the vow to dance masked before the image of a saint.<sup>2</sup> It is quite possible that some religious customs of the Spaniards themselves may be survivals from heathendom, at least, as much as they are Catholic or Christian. The point of interest in connection with the subject of the paper is that, whether Nahuatl or Mangués in their origin, these dances can be traced back to pre-European times. In vain the invaders laid the foundations of their cities with the broken images of the Indian deities. The spirit of the old religion refused to die, and it is still clearly discernible all over Spanish and Portuguese America. The instruments used in the *bailes* and other entertain-

<sup>1</sup> Writing of the wild tribes of Central America, with special reference to the Indians of Guatemala, Mr. Hubert Howe Bancroft says: "Original lyric poetry seems to flourish among them, and is not wanting in grace, although the rendering of it may not be exactly operatic. The subject generally refers to victorious encounters with monsters, but contains also sarcasms on government and society." *Native Races of the Pacific States*, i. 701. Again he writes: "The song language of the Mosquitos differs greatly from that employed in conversation, a quaint old-time style being apparently preserved in their lyrics. *Ibid.*, p. 727.

<sup>2</sup> In an article, "From the Atlantic to the Andes", in *Scribner's Monthly* for December, 1877, p. 190, there is an account of a singular combination of heathen with Christian usage in the celebration of the festival of the Exaltation of the Cross.

ments are nearly all aboriginal, though allowance must be made for Spanish and even Negro influence. They do not differ greatly from primitive instruments everywhere.

Between the Nahua colony of Nicaragua and the body of the race in Mexico, there intervenes an area covered by various tribes, but of which those of Maya and Quiché speech are by far the most important. "Maya was the patrial name of the natives of Yucatan," writes Dr. Brinton. It was heard of as early as the year 1503-4, during Columbus's fourth voyage. The late Dr. Berendt enumerated no less than sixteen affiliated tribes, including the Chantals of Tabasco, the Tzendals to the south of them, the Chols on the Upper Usumacinta, the Kichés and the Cakchiquels in or close to Guatemala, and the Huastecs on the Panuco in Mexico. These languages are said to differ from each other, and from the central Maya, no more than the Neo-Latin tongues do from Latin and from each other. One legend of the Mayas, pointing to their arrival from the east under the leadership of a hero-god, Itzamna, Dr. Brinton explains as a solar myth. Another, which indicates an immigration from Mexico, under a hero named Cuculcan, he deems worthy of attention, as it is mentioned in the native chronicles, and was maintained by intelligent aborigines at the time of the Conquest. The connecting point is found in the Huastec branch, north of Vera Cruz, which, it is suggested, may have been the rearguard of a great Maya migration from the north southward. There are also traditions common to both Mayas and Nahuas or Aztecs. The Mayas were, in some respects, the superior race. They were a literary people, making use of tablets, and employing hieroglyphics which, however, are still a puzzle to the learned. Dr. Valentini's view of the Landa alphabet is now generally held by scholars and, indeed, the bishop did not claim for it the character which has been so frequently attributed to it.<sup>1</sup>

"The Maya Chronicles," edited by Dr. Daniel G. Brinton, forms the first volume of Brinton's "Library of Aboriginal American Literature." The first of the records which gives it its title was published as an appendix to the second volume of John L. Stephens's "Incidents of Travel in Yucatan," a work which began a new era in American archaeological research. The others were not previously published. The "Chronicles" are entirely apart from the Maya hieroglyphic rolls, the fourth of which was recently published in Paris, under the editorial supervision of M. de Rosny. They were composed after the Conquest, by natives who had been taught the language of the conquerors, and who availed themselves of the alphabet to write the Maya language. Gathering whatever knowledge of the past remained in the memories of old men, or could be deciphered from the ancient codices, they committed them to the custody of the *litera scripta*. Some of the histories thus compiled in Maya date as far back as 1542, by which time some of the natives had become adepts in the use of the pen. They all, wherever prepared, bore the name of "Books of Chilan Balam," which was the designation of a class of priests. They are generally anonymous. It was from them that Señor Pio Perez, who first made the revelation to the world, derived his knowledge of the Maya system of computing time. Dr. Carl Hermann Berendt made a large collection of such manuscripts which, after his death, came into the hands of Dr. Brinton. Some of these, with the document already mentioned as appearing in the work of Stephens, are comprised in "The Maya Chronicles." The Maya text is accompanied by a translation and copious notes, historical and ethnological.

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<sup>1</sup> The Landa Alphabet a Spanish fabrication, by Philipp J. J. Valentini, Proc. Am. Ant. Soc., 1880.

Their record covers a period of from 1,420 to 1,704 years before the Spanish settlement, according as the *katun* or cycle is estimated at twenty or twenty-five years. Interesting as they are from some standpoints, these succinct annals add little to our information. They suggest "obstinate questionings" rather than supply satisfying answers. One thing, however, they clearly show, that the Mayas were rich in myths. They had two famous culture heroes, Itzamna and Cuculcan, the former, whose name is enshrined in Itzamal, being associated with a migration from the east, and the latter, with a movement from the north. Hernandez, sent by Las Casas to Yucatan in 1545, fancied that he detected traces of Christian doctrine in the legends told him by the Maya priests. Mr. John T. Short would reject the story altogether, but Dr. Brinton thinks that if the correct forms be restored to the names, what is fanciful will disappear, and what is real will remain. It is not the first time that zealous missionaries have found the doctrine of the Trinity in heathen mythology. It is sufficient for the purpose of this paper to be assured from manifold evidence, early and recent, that the Mayas had the imagination and the constructiveness of a poetic race. The Votan of the Tzendals, a kindred tribe, is one of the most extraordinary of American culture heroes. It would seem, however, that his character and exploits are, at least, as much the creation of Iberian fancy as they are the development of Tzendal tradition. He "is" writes Mr. Short, "a mystery, and to arrive at his true character or office is simply an impossibility." Votan is said to have crossed the sea from the east, from Valum Chivim, by way of Valum Votan, to apportion the land of a new continent to seven families that he brought with him. The date assigned for his journey is the year B. C. 1000. The city which he founded is identified with Palenque. The legend in which his acts are recorded, is said to have been written by one of his descendants of the ninth generation. The book having long been jealously guarded by the people of Tacoaloya, in Soconusco, was at last discovered by Francesco Nunez de la Vega, Bishop of Chiapas, who destroyed it. Another copy was, nevertheless, in possession of Don Ramon de Ordonez y Aguiar, of Ciudad Real, in Chiapas, and from him Dr. Paul Felix Cabrera obtained some account of it, which he supplemented from his own imagination. The story has given rise to the wildest speculations, even sage and cautious men allowing themselves to be misled into all kinds of false affinities of language and mythology. Some have recognised Odin, others Gautama in the Tzendal culture-hero. Dr. Brinton derives the name from a pure Maya word, signifying "heart"—the "Heart of his people." That such an expression is not without precedent in the aboriginal language of reverence or supplication, he shows by citing the occurrence of a similar term in the sacred legend of Quichés, the Popol Vuh. It is found in the following prayer to their deity, which may also serve as a fair illustration of the style of the work :—

"Hail, Creator and Maker!

    Regard us, attend us:

    Heart of Heaven, Heart of the Earth,

    Do not forsake us, do not leave us.

    God of Heaven and Earth, Heart of Heaven,

    Heart of Earth, consider our prosperity always;

    Accord us repose, a glorious repose,

    Peace and prosperity, justice, life and our being.

Grant us this, O Huracan, enlightened and fruitful,  
Thou who comprehendest all things, great and small."<sup>1</sup>

"The strange wild poetry of the Quichés," says Mr. Short, "can only be fully enjoyed by pursuing the unabridged account." The story of the creation is narrated in language of inspired passion :—

"This is how the heaven exists, how the Heart of Heaven exists: he, the God, whose name is Qabauil.

"His word came in the darkness to the Lord, to Gucumatz, and it spoke with the Lord, with Gucumatz.

"They spoke together; they consulted and planned; they understood, they united in words and plans.

"As they consulted, the day appeared; the white light came forth, mankind was produced. While thus they held counsel about the growth of trees and vines, about life and mankind, in the darkness, in the night, the creation was brought about, by the heart of Heaven, whose name is Huracan. . . ."

"Gucumatz was filled with joy and cried aloud: Blessed be thy coming, O Heart of Heaven, O Huracan!"<sup>2</sup>

We are reminded of the Spirit moving over the waters, of herb and tree, of fishes and fowls, of beasts and men starting to life, at the vivifying touch, and of that day when "God saw everything that he had made and behold, it was very good!"

The Quichés, besides their wonderful National Book, have given to the world one of the rare aboriginal dramas of America, which have been saved from destruction. The play in question, Rabinal Achi, is a ballet, and is clearly a development from those imitative dances in which so many of the American races excelled.

The following passage from a sort of prophetic chant in one of the books of "Chilan Balam" is reproduced in the notes to the Maya Chronicles :—

"Eat, eat, thou hast bread;  
Drink, drink, thou hast water;  
On that day, dust possesses the earth,  
On that day a light is on the face of the earth,  
On that day, a cloud rises,  
On that day, a mountain rises,  
On that day, a strong man seizes the land,  
On that day, things fall to ruin,

<sup>1</sup> As to the Quiché and Aztec origin-myths and the prayers to Huracan and Tezcatlipoca, Mr. H. H. Bancroft's Native Races of the Pacific States (vol. iii. chaps. ii and vi) may be consulted with advantage. Of the Popol Vuh, which was written by a Quiché in his own tongue not long after the Conquest, and translated into Spanish by Father Ximenes, Mr. Bancroft says that one consequence of the former fact would seem to be that "a tinge of biblical expression, consciously or unconsciously to the Quiché who wrote it, influenced the form of the narrative." At the same time, as the work also contains striking resemblances to expressions in the Edda and even the Veda, he concedes that the coincidence may be accidental. So also as to the prayers handed down by Sahagun, while he admits that "a certain amount of sophistication and adaptation to Christian ideas has crept into them," he deems it "just as evident, on the other hand, that they contain a great deal that is original, indigenous and characteristic in regard to the Mexican religion."

<sup>2</sup> American Hero Myths, pp. 210, 211, and Short's North Americans of Antiquity, pp. 212, 213.

On that day, the tender leaf is destroyed,  
 On that day, the dying eyes are closed,  
 On that day, three signs are on the tree,  
 On that day, three generations hang there,  
 On that day, the battle-flag is raised,  
 And they are scattered far in the forests."

Another of such prophecies is entitled "The Word of the Lord Pech, the Priest"—this is said to be the same name that is met with in Kin-Pech, or Campeachy—and, like other predictions, is not very intelligible. It runs thus:—

"At that time it will be well to know the tidings of the Lord, the ruler of the world."

"After four katuns,

"Then will occur the bringing of the truth. At that time, one who is a god by his name, I deliver to you as a lord.

"Be your eyes on the road for your guest, men of Itza,

"When the lord of the earth shall come.

"The word of the first lord Pech, the priest, at the time of the fourth katun, at the end of the katun."

These prophecies, Dr. Brinton thinks, are the originals, or echoes of the mystic songs of the priests of Cuculcan and Itzamna, deities who are supposed to inspire their devotees with the power of foretelling the future.

The Quiché "Gucumatz" of the Popol Vuh, has the same meaning as the Aztec culture hero, "Quetzalcoatl," the "Feathered Serpent." However we interpret it, the story of Quetzalcoatl is one of the strangest and most interesting connected with prehistoric America. He stands, like a mysterious figure, placed on an eminence, and seen from all directions, pointing backward to the dim past, and forward to the unknown future. Deity or man, or mere allegory, the Plumed Serpent is associated with a great change in the fortunes of the land of Anahuac. To some commentators, indeed, his adventures, trials and triumphs constitute nothing more nor less than a solar myth. To others he is the head of an expedition from the distant east, the place of his origin being a point of manifold conjecture. The Toltecs, who preceded the Aztecs, were themselves preceded by a number of nations, such as the Quinames, the Miztecs, the Zapotecs, and the Olmecs. It was during the rule of these last that Quetzalcoatl is said to have made his appearance. The traditions with which he is associated have undoubtedly been affected by the modifications of Christian writers, and it would be no easy task to separate what is purely aboriginal from the mass of intrusive fabrication with which it is interfused. Besides, any such attempt would pertain rather to the province of historical research than to the more humble but, I hope, not unimportant inquiry on which I am engaged. It is not alien to that inquiry that, as we learn from Prescott, "the traditions of the country were embodied in the songs and hymns which . . . were carefully taught in the public schools. These were various, embracing the mythic legends of an heroic age, the warlike achievements of their own, or the softer tales of love and pleasure. Many of them were composed by scholars and persons of rank, and are cited as affording the most authentic record of events. The Mexican dialect was rich and expressive, though inferior to the Tezcucan, the most

polished of the idioms of Anahuac. None of the Aztec compositions have survived; but we can form some estimate of the general state of poetic culture from the odes which have come down to us from the royal house of Tezcuco."<sup>1</sup>

The historian to whom we are indebted for the account of Tezcuco in its golden age, as well of general prosperity as of literary culture, was himself a descendant of the royal line whose glories he has immortalised. The story of Nezahualcoyotl reads more like romance than history. Orphaned and exiled at the early age of fifteen, after many reverses and trials, he was at last firmly seated on the throne of his fathers, and set himself to repair the damages of the interval of disorder and misrule. Besides his political reforms—some of which would ill suit the spirit of the age in which we live—he set himself to provide for the encouragement of science, literature and the arts. He founded an academy, which was to take cognisance of, and pass judgment upon, all works of a literary or scientific character. Under its censorship, Tezcuco became the Athens of the western world. Nezahualcoyotl was himself one of its most accomplished and productive members. He was a poet and the author of no less than seventy odes. Ixtlilxochitl has left, in Castilian, a translation of one of them, and several others are said to be hidden away in the dusty repositories of Spain or Mexico. The following is Prescott's prose version of part of the poem of the Western Solomon on "The Vanities of Human Life":—

"Banish care; if there are bounds to pleasure, the saddest life must also have an end. Then weave the chaplet of flowers, and sing thy songs in praise of the all-powerful God; for the glory of this world soon fadeth away. Rejoice in the green freshness of thy spring, for the day shall come when thou shalt sigh for those joys in vain; when the sceptre shall pass from thy hands, thy servants shall wander desolate in thy courts; thy sons and the sons of thy nobles shall drink the dregs of distress, and all the pomp of thy victories and triumphs shall live only in their recollection. Yet the remembrance of the just shall not pass away from the nations, and the good thou hast done shall ever be held in honour. The goods of this life, its glories and its riches are but lent to us, its substance is but an illusory shadow, and the things of to-day shall change on the coming of the morrow. Then gather the fairest flowers from thy gardens to bind round thy brow, and seize the joys of the present ere they perish."

In the appendix to his history Prescott gives translations of the poem in Spanish and English verse. Mr. H. H. Bancroft, in his "Native Races" (Vol. II. pp. 494-96), gives a fine metrical version of the same ode, and a prose translation of the ode on the tyrant, Tezozomoc. Here is a passage from the latter:—

"Who could have thought, having seen the palaces and the court, the glory and the power of the old King Tezozomoc, that these things could have an end? Yet have they withered and perished. Verily, life giveth nought but disappointment and vexation; all that is weareth out and passeth away."

Of the races which, in historical times, have lived or still live entirely within the limits of the United States, may be mentioned the Pueblos of New Mexico, the Yuma group, the Shoshonees and Pawnees, the Appalachian family and the races of California. Some of these groupings are ethnic or linguistic; some of them, simply geographical. In the

<sup>1</sup> Conquest of Mexico, chap. iv.

classification, entirely linguistic, adopted by Major Powell, of Washington, the name of every group terminates in the syllable *an*. Thus we have the Shoshonian, the Coahuiltecan, the Yuman, the Atticapan, and so on. The races or groups common to Canada and the United States are the Algonquin or Algonquian, the Huron-Iroquois, Wyandot-Iroquois or Iroquoian, the Dakotan or Siouan, the Tinné or Athabascan, the Hyperborean, and the Columbian. In fact, there is not a single great family or group pertaining exclusively to Canada,—the Hyperborean and Athabascan, which might be deemed entirely ours, crossing the border at several points, while some of the Columbian races extend into Washington and Oregon.

Of the great families found only in the United States, the poetic capabilities have been fairly investigated, especially during the last half century. Some of them offer features of great interest, such as the Zunis, of the Pueblo group; the Indians of the Gila and Colorado Rivers, of the Yuma stock; the Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws, and others of the Appalachian race; and the Klamaths, Modocs, Shastas, and other tribes of the Californian family.<sup>1</sup>

The traditions, beliefs, dances, and songs of the Zunis, a typical tribe of New Mexican Pueblos, have been carefully collected by Mr. Frank H. Cushing, the story of whose experience in that oasis of semi-civilisation, I had the pleasure of hearing from his own lips in Montreal. His description of his initiation into the Priesthood of the Bow, the most perfectly organised of thirteen Zuni orders, reads like a romance. Song and dance form a prominent feature in all the ceremonies. Even their ordinary language, under the influence of strong emotion, has a perceptible tinge of the poetic, and some of their terms and phrases are quick with startling imagery. For instance, when Mr. Cushing was explaining to them that the earth moved round the sun, one of his hearers exclaimed: "Listen! the Medicine Flower is right. If you gallop past Thunder Mountain, Thunder Mountain moves and you stand still, and besides I have noticed that in summer the great Hanging Snow-bank (the Milky Way) drifts from the left of the Land of Daylight (N.E.) to the right of the World of Waters (S.W.) and in winter from the left of the World of Waters to the right of the Land of Daylight."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Cushing gives as an almost literal translation from a Zuni folklore tale of winter, the following lines:—

"The rattled-tailed serpents  
Have gone into council;  
For the god of the ice-caves,  
From his home where the white down  
Of wind in the Northland  
Lies spread out for ever,

<sup>1</sup> For the ethnology, physical characteristics, social usages, religion and traditions of the Hyperborean, Columbian, Californian, and New Mexican groups, and of the wild tribes of Mexico, Central America and the Isthmus of Panama, see H. H. Bancroft's *Native Races of the Pacific States*, vol. i, *passim*. Under the designation of New Mexicans he comprises the nations of New Mexico, Arizona, Lower California, Sonora, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Durango, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Northern Zacatecas and Western Texas. See also J. R. Bartlett's *Personal Narrative of Exploration and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora and Chihuahua*. Mr. Stephen Powers has industriously collected many of the myths, traditions and songs of the California Indians. Some of them are given in the *Native Races*, vol. iii.

<sup>2</sup> "Now this is the very way in which early barbaric man, not for poetic affectation, but simply to find the plainest words to convey his thoughts, would talk in metaphors taken from nature." Tylor's *Anthropology*, p. 290.

Breathes over our country,  
And breaks down the pine boughs." <sup>1</sup>

But while the common speech of some of the tribes seems thus to pass naturally into poetic expression, there are aboriginal chants which sound poorly or even absurdly in a translation. Apart from their natural surroundings they seem to have lost all meaning. Indeed, it sometimes happens, in civilised as in savage life, that, while compositions expressly put forward as poetical, are devoid of meaning, grace or melody, words uttered in joy or grief, or just indignation, glow with the live heat of poetic passion.

This is shown very clearly in the contrast between the "Dakota Mother's Lament," written by Mrs. Riggs, after listening to the wail of a poor, bereaved tenant of the tepee—a production which her learned husband pronounced to the life—and some of the songs of the Dakota people, gathered by Mr. Riggs himself. All these specimens are included in that admirable storehouse of information on the Dakotas, or Sioux, entitled the "Tahkoo-Wahkan, or the Bible among the Dakotas," a work practically out of print, but kindly lent me by Mr. Horatio Hale, a philologist and ethnologist, whom Canada is proud to number among her citizens.

The Indian Mother's Lament consists of five unrhymed stanzas, of which I give a part of the first and the last :—

"Me-choonk-she! Me-choonk-she! My Daughter! My Daughter! Alas! alas! my comfort has departed and my heart is very sad. My joy is turned into sorrow and my song into wailing. Shall I never behold thy sunny smile? The Great Spirit has entered my tepee in anger and taken from me my first, my only child. . . . Me-choonk-she! Me-choonk-she!

"My Daughter, I come, I come! I bring the parched corn. Oh! how long wilt thou sleep? . . . I will lie down by thy side, . . . and together we will sleep that long sleep from which I cannot awake thee. . . . Me-choonk-she! Me-choonk-she!"

Now, if we compare the foregoing with any translation of the actual songs of the chase, of war, of love or friendship, we cannot but mark the inferiority of the latter.

"Cling fast to me and you'll ever have a plenty,

(bis)

Cling fast to me."

"Whenever we choose,  
Together we'll dwell:  
Mother so says.  
This finger-ring  
Put on and wear."

These are Dakota love-songs. Here is a Dakota war-song :—

"Terrifying all I journey,

(bis)

By the Toonk-kan at the North,  
Terrifying all I journey."

<sup>1</sup> What is of most interest to the ethnologist regarding the Zuni people, is contained in the admirably illustrated account contributed by Mr. Cushing to the Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology. His articles in the Century (Dec., 1882, and Feb. and May, 1883) may also be consulted with advantage.

Now, for the pleasure of reading or hearing, any person of taste would prefer Mrs. Riggs's imitation to these last chants. But that touching lament, whose delicate pathos reveals the hand and heart of the cultivated Christian lady, cannot compare, in ethnological importance, with those ruder original songs of love, war, magic and mystery which Mr. Riggs has been at such pains and patience to collect.

The two little love-songs are intelligible enough. The Indian brave, trusting to his manly strength and his well-tried weapon, promises his lady-love a comfortable home and abundance of food. Then, speaking in the name of the maiden, he says the words that he would like to hear from her lips. The war-song is not so clear, but there we must imagine what has preceded. The warrior has duly performed all the ceremonies required before beginning a campaign, and the revelation from the spiritual world—from the great stone god of the North, whose priest he has consulted—has been favorable. This makes him formidable and fearless beyond the strength of unaided humanity, and he is ready to strike terror into his foes. "The North American hunter," says Dr. Tylor, "has chants which will bring him on the bear's track next morning, or give him victory over an enemy."<sup>1</sup> Here is an example of such chant or song-dance in the version of Schoolcraft:—

"Hear my voice, ye warlike birds!  
I prepare a feast for ye to fatten on;  
I see you cross the enemy's lines,  
Like you I shall go.  
I wish the swiftness of your wings;  
I wish the vengeance of your claws;  
I muster my friends;  
I follow your flight.  
Ho! ye young men that are warriors,  
Look with wrath on the battle-field."<sup>2</sup>

The late Rev. Peter Jones, a converted Ojibway chief, gives his people credit for great capacity for improvement, of which he was himself, indeed, a fair example, and in his life-sketch reproduces an English poem of considerable merit, written by Wm. Wilson, an Indian youth and, like himself, a Christian.

Of native compositions by the same tribe or nation, we have a short love-poem reproduced in an English translation in Dr. Brinton's "Aboriginal American Authors":—

"I will walk into somebody's dwelling.  
Into somebody's dwelling I will walk.  
To thy dwelling, my dearly beloved,  
Some night will I walk, will I walk.  
Some night in the winter, my beloved,  
To thy dwelling will I walk, will I walk;  
This very night, my beloved,  
To thy dwelling will I walk, will I walk."

This iteration—a characteristic already observable in the Dakota songs—puzzled and wearied Father LeJeune in the songs of the Montagnais. The good priest, who would

<sup>1</sup> Anthropology, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. Ind. Tribes in U. S. part ii, p. 60.

greatly have preferred to hear his rude hosts chanting the psalms of the Church, had to listen to an endless repetition of strange cries which neither he nor they understood.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, it was among the Eastern Algonquin tribes that patient research was ultimately to discover the richest treasure of song and legend, and tradition which the North American Indian has as yet given to the world. It was among the Passamaquoddies and Penobscots of Maine, and the Micmacs of New Brunswick, that Mr. Charles G. Leland, with the willing and fruitful help of Mrs. Wallace Brown, of the Rev. Silas Rand and Mr. E. Jack, was able to work the rich mine of myths and tales—all originally in poetic form—which he has given us in his “Algonquin Legends.”

Mr. Leland maintains that “in the red Indian mythology of New England, and of Canada and New Brunswick, we have a collection of vigorous, icy, powerful legends, like those of a strong northern race, while those of the middle continent, or Chippewa, are far feebler and gentler. Hiawatha-Manobozho is to Glooskap as a flute to a war trumpet.”<sup>2</sup> The mythopœic faculty of the Eastern Algonquins is marked by a strong faith in magic. The greatest cause of this, Mr. Leland says, “is one which the white man talks about without feeling, and which the Indian feels without talking about it. I mean the poetry of nature, with all its quaint and beautiful superstitions. To every Algonquin a rotten log by the road, covered with moss, suggests the wild legend of the log-demon; the Indian corn and sweet flag in the swamp are the descendants of beautiful spirits who still live in them; Meeko, the squirrel, has the power of becoming a giant monster; flowers, beasts, trees, have all loved and talked and sung, and can even now do so, should the magician only come to speak the spell.”<sup>3</sup> Among the offspring of the aboriginal muse, most worthy to be classed with the higher flights of European song, may be included “The Song of the Stars,” appended to the “Algonquin Legends” :—

“ We are the stars which sing,  
We sing with our light;  
We are the birds of fire,  
We fly over the sky.  
Our light is a voice;  
We make a road for spirits,  
For the spirits to pass over.  
Among us are three hunters  
Who chase a bear;  
There never was a time  
When they were not hunting.  
We look down on the mountains.  
This is the Song of the Stars.”

Writing of that early and grand mythology of the aborigines, the existence of which is occasionally revealed by transmuted shreds and patches, Mr. Leland says: “By great exertions we might recover it, but the old Indians who retain its fragments are passing away rapidly, and no subject attracts so little interest among our *litterati*. A few hundred dollars, expended annually in each State, would result in the collection of all that is extant

<sup>1</sup> Rel. des Jésuites, 1634, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Algonquin Legends, p. 338.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 338, 339.

of this folk-lore; and a hundred years hence some few will, perhaps, regret that it was not done." ("Algonquin Legends," p. 308.) Need it be said that the suggestion and the reproach are as applicable to Canada as to the United States? They are much more so indeed.

The "Myths of the Iroquois" have been collected by the late Mrs. Erminnie A. Smith, and are printed in the second volume of the Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, Washington. Some of them contain songs; some of them are virtually poems. In "The Charmed Suit," we have a song which runs thus:—

" Ha-hum-weh,  
Ha-hum-weh,  
Wa-he-dum-næ  
    Sru-gua he.  
Ha hum weh  
Ha hum web."

This ditty, sung by a woman's sweet voice, is the very intimation that the thoughtful father wished his boy to hear:—

" I belong to the wolf clan.  
    *(bis.)*  
I am going to marry him."  
    *(bis.)*

Another song occurs in the tale of the wild cat and white rabbit, which begins: "He gah yah neh," and means, "When you are frightened, sweet rabbit, you run in a circle." The story is an allegorical representation of the inevitable power of destiny.

The story of "The Hunter and his Dead Wife" is one of the most touching of these Iroquois myths. It is a story of a man who dearly loved his wife, and who, after her death, made a wooden image, which he dressed in her clothes, and set up near his fire-place. After a year, he began to notice, when he returned from hunting, that the wigwam had been swept, and wood brought in, and meat cooked in the kettle. He sought his kind benefactress in vain for some time, but, finally, after carefully watching, he saw a woman entering the house with wood on her shoulders. He followed her, and to his surprise saw his wife where the wooden image had been. She warned him not to come near her or touch her, lest he should lose her for ever. But "the desire of the man to once more clasp his wife in his arms was too great, and he went up to her and put out his hands." In vain she motioned him off. He still approached; he embraced her, and, lo! it was not his wife, but a wooden doll that he held in his arms.

A work of the utmost importance in the study of the origin, traditions, poetry, ceremonies, and history of the Iroquois, is "The Iroquois Book of Rites," by Mr. Horatio

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<sup>1</sup> "Rabbits have, especially when wounded, an inexplicable habit of running in a circuit of a few hundred feet diameter. I once followed one seventeen times round the periphery of two acres of brushy land before I finally secured him, and often in hunting with the long bow and arrow, I found it a good plan, when a rabbit has been wounded and has made one turn, to stand and await his reappearance at any point of the circle, while another follows on his track." Harper's New Monthly, July, 1877, p. 253, "Hunting with the Long Bow."

Hale. There we find what the author designates "the National Hymn" of the Confederacy. "In every important council of the Iroquois, a song or chant is considered a proper and almost essential part of the proceedings. Such official songs are mentioned in many reports of treaty councils held with them by the French and English authorities. In the greatest of all councils, the song must, of course, have a distinguished place." The *Kareenna*, or hymn in question, which follows immediately upon the address of greeting and condolence, runs as follows :—

"I come again to greet and thank the League ;  
I come again to greet and thank the kindred ;  
I come again to greet and thank the warriors ;  
I come again to greet and thank the women.  
My forefathers—what they established—  
My forefathers—hearken to them !"

Or, in the metre of Longfellow's "Hiawatha," as given by Mr. Hale, in the "Notes on the Canienga Book" :—

"To the great Peace bring we greeting !  
To the dead chief's kindred, greeting !  
To the warriors round him, greeting !  
To the mourning women, greeting !  
These our grandsires words repeating,  
Graciously, O grandsires, hear us."

The following dirge-like composition, though it forms one of the prose sections of "The Ancient Rites of the Condoling Council," is not without reason considered by Mr. Hale as the commencement of a great historical chant, which he compares to the 78th Psalm or to some of the inspired outbursts of the Hebrew prophets :—

"Woe! Woe!  
Hearken ye!  
We are diminished!  
Woe! Woe!  
The cleared land has become a thicket!  
Woe! Woe!  
The clear places are deserted,  
Woe!  
They are in their graves,  
They who established it,  
The great League.  
Yet they declared  
It should endure,  
The great League.  
Woe!  
Their work has grown old!  
Woe!  
Thus are we become miserable!"

Of the three great groups of American aborigines, which, according to Mr. A. H. Keane's classification, belong almost exclusively to Canada—the Tinné, Dené-Dindjie, Athabaskan, or Chipewyan, the Esquimaux, or Innuït, and the Columbian races—a good deal of valuable information has been collected by Dr. Scouler, Mr. H. Hale, Father Petitot, Dr. Franz Boas, Dr. G. M. Dawson, Dr. Boyd Dawkins, Mr. Dall, and other recent writers. Dr. Boas divides the Vancouver and mainland coast tribes into four chief groups: the West Vancouver, the Tsimpshian, the Selish and the Kwakiootl.<sup>1</sup> On this last important division of the Columbian family, Dr. Dawson has contributed a paper to this Section.

Among these far western tribes, we find the use of dance and song, for ceremonial purposes, as firmly established as among the Indians of the east and south. Dr. Dawson describes no less than six distinct kinds of dance as in existence among the Haidas alone. These dances are, for the most part, accompanied by characteristic songs.<sup>2</sup>

Among the traditions and folklore of these people, Dr. Dawson gives a strange creation myth, in which the origin of man, animals, fire, water, etc., is accounted for.<sup>3</sup> Curiously this myth corresponds with what he had been told on the same subject by some of the Tinné tribes of the northern interior of British Columbia. This is not surprising, if Father Petitot's view as to the far-reaching extent of those myths be correct. The monographs of the zealous missionary and philologist on both the Dené-Dindjie and the Esquimaux-Tchiglit, were translated by Mr. Douglas Brymner, chief of the Archives Department, and printed in the *Dominion Monthly* for 1878. They form a valuable addition to our library of native American folklore. Some specimens of the dirges of the Dené-Dindjie may serve to illustrate their poetic capabilities. A man who had lost his brother sang, weeping:—

“ My younger brother, the celestial reindeer  
Allures but to deceive thee!  
My younger brother, return to earth! ”

A brother, lamenting the loss of a sister, sang:—

“ In the river whose course the great isle turns,  
My sister has, unknown to me, drunk of the little wave, alas!  
My little sister who condemned the little net, alas! ”

In carrying the corpse of a hunter around the tents in a hasty course, they affected disorder and a pretended flight, sounding a rattle and singing at the same time:—

“ In the upper earth thou huntest thy lakes for the white deer,  
Piercest the antelopes with thy darts; thy parents ask thee:  
Why art thou come to this earth to hunt the elk  
Which has caused thy death? ”

But, if they celebrate the death of an enemy, they vary the funeral theme:—

“ The fogs of the Glacial Sea descend on the waters;  
The great sea groans over his fate, alas!  
For the enemy of the Flat country will never return thither safe and sound.”

<sup>1</sup> Science, March 25, 1887.

<sup>2</sup> Geol. Survey of Can., Report of Progress, 1878-79, pp. 127B, 128B, 129B.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 149B.

Dr. Dawson, who, as we have seen, was astonished on discovering the likeness between the Haida myth and that of the Tinné stock of northern British Columbia, thinks the Haidas may have adopted the story from the Tshimsians. Father Petitot gives the racial and linguistic affinities of the Dené-Dindjie a far-reaching extension. Those who call themselves by that name inhabit a region bounded on the north and east by the Innuits, on the west, by the Flatheads, on the south, by the Sioux and Algonquins. But, scattered tribes of Indians who, he thinks, are evidently related to them, are found far to the south. The Nabajos, for instance, who call themselves Tinuui (which, like Tinné, Dené and Dindjie, means simply "men") speak a language which has many points of correspondence with that of the far-spreading northern race. The good missionary, who is not alone in holding this view, seeks the connecting link between the Athabaskan and Apache families in the Sarcee tribe of the Upper Saskatchewan, which has been adopted by the Blackfeet nation. Among themselves, the Sarcees speak a Dené dialect, which, while visiting Fort Pitt in 1873, he was able to understand by using a speech in part Chippeyan, in part Peau-de-Lièvre.<sup>1</sup>

It is, however, in the myths and folklore of the American Indians, and the ceremonies based thereon, that the most striking resemblances occur between widely separated tribes. But the utmost caution should be exercised in drawing inferences from such analogies. On this point, Dr. Brinton remarks: "My guiding principle has been that when the same, and that a very extraordinary story, is told by several tribes wholly apart in language and location, then the probabilities are enormous that it is not a legend but a myth, and must be explained as such. It is a spontaneous product of the mind, not a reminiscence of an historic event."

The flood or deluge myth, of which the story of "The Drying of the World," which Mr. Cushing designates the "Zuni Iliad," is a fair example, is common, in some form, to many tribes of Southern, Central and Northern Indians.

The Rev. F. A. Paley, in the Preface to his edition of Hesiod, calls attention to the wonderful coincidence, in some points, between the Hesiodic and the Mosaic cosmogony, but M. Alfred Maury maintains that the American traditions of the Deluge come nearer to those of the Jews and Chaldeans than those of any people in the Old World. The cause of those similarities he does not, however, pretend to explain. Equally noteworthy but, doubtless, more explicable, is the close likeness between the Norse cycle of folklore and that of the Eastern Algonquins which Mr. Leland has discovered in his "Algonquin Legends." In the Introduction to that most interesting work, he says that "there is hardly a song in the Norse collection which does not contain an incident found in the Indian poem-legends, while in several there are many such coincidences." Mr. Leland thinks it not impossible that the Eskimo and Indians may have listened to the Northmen.

The field of aboriginal research abounds in such possibilities, and Mr. Leland's hypothesis is certainly not the least hopeful of the theories which resemblances, real or fancied, between the folklores of the two hemispheres have suggested. The great difficulty is to distinguish clearly and decisively between what is native to America, and what is of foreign introduction. As in their weapons, their utensils, their domestic animals, their food and their clothing, the aborigines have all, to some extent, followed European usage,

<sup>1</sup> Congrès des Américanistes, *Compte-Rendu*, 1875, ii. 22.

so also their inherited memories have been affected by contact with the new-comers. In many cases, they had adopted the creed of the invader before any attempt had been made to commit their own traditions and beliefs to writing. Some of the "histories" and "sacred books" of the semi-civilised Quichua, Maya and Nahua nations bear evident marks of intermeddling. When Christian theology, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, and Old Testament stories, such as those of the giants, the flood and the tower of Babel, appear, *totidem verbis* in American legends, they are, at least, suspicious. The frequency with which the Deluge recurs in the traditions of all the tribes and tongues from the extreme south to the farthest north, is extraordinary. But the same catastrophe is common to the civilised and uncivilised nations of the Old World. The singular fact, as Mr. Alfred Maury pointed out years ago, is that the American accounts come nearer to the Biblical narrative than most of the trans-Atlantic versions. The late Admiral Fitzroy was so struck with this discovery, that he wrote a discursus to show that the flood had been universal.<sup>1</sup> Careful and patient research may ultimately succeed in effecting a differentiation between such memories or myths as are by origin American, and those which have been brought from beyond sea during the last four centuries. A like process is necessary for the identification of what is purely American in the so-called aboriginal poetry. There is a natural temptation in translating from a barbarous into a civilised language to produce, if possible, something that will stand the test of literary criticism according to the standards of the latter. For purposes of logical investigation such paraphrasing is inadmissible. The plan adopted by the Bureau of Ethnology, Washington, is to preserve and record the myths and folklore of the Indian tribes which form the subject of inquiry in their own languages, "with interlinear translation, and without foreign coloring or addition, in connection with the several dictionaries of those languages." Till this has been done, with all the compositions proved, as far as proof is possible, to be of native American creation, we shall seek in vain for the true character of their literary work, or the highest point of excellence to which they attained.

It would be easy (if space permitted) to multiply, from sources within reach, examples of poetry attributed to American Indians, ranging from such rude cries as (according to Father LeJeune's narrative) neither singer nor hearer could understand, to polished compositions like the Peruvian love-songs, or the elegiac verse of King Nezahualcoyotl. But, in many cases, these productions come to us without any trustworthy guarantee that they are, even in substance, what they purport to be. The few authenticated instances show that, unaided from without, the inhabitants of pre-Columbian America had advanced from a very low to a comparatively high stage of poetic cultivation. Whether any one American people passed through all the stages on American soil, we do not know for certain, though there are indications that seem to justify an affirmative conclusion. Dance and song are common to all the groups of north and south and centre. We can trace their progress from rhythmic motion of feet and hands to the mimetic arrow dance, described by Schoolcraft; the ballet, in its various types, as portrayed by Brinton; and the finished drama, like Ollanta, or Rabinal Achi. So the folklore of the tribes has taken all shapes, from the scarcely articulate superstitions of the Fuegian savage to the Popol Vuh, the Votan

<sup>1</sup> It forms the final chapter of the Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of H.M.S. Adventure and Beagle, between the years 1826 and 1836.

myth and the Zuni Iliad; while their love poetry has developed from the Sioux's simple offer of a modest tepee to the intensely passionate emotion of the Peruvian *yaravis*. If we would follow the steps of such a progress from its humble beginnings to the goal at which it paused, we may learn much by wandering with such a companion as Catlin, from wigwam to wigwam, and from tribe to tribe, till we have gained some insight into the genius of the race in its own wild home.<sup>1</sup> The dances by which, according to the traveller just mentioned, the Indians, north of the Gulf of Mexico, give expression to their emotions are as various as those emotions themselves. The eagle, the snow-shoe, the discovery, the begging, the slave, the pipe, the scalp, the buffalo—these are only a few of the names by which they are designated.<sup>2</sup> In almost every case, words accompany the movements—there being all grades of significance, from a mere meaningless lilt to a genuine song, intelligible and even enjoyable, in a translation. Sometimes the meaning has been lost, and the empty sounds are repeated with the reverence of superstitious awe. When Father Petitot asked the Dené-Dindjie what they meant by invoking “the mouse with pointed snout,” they replied that it was a mystery of which they did not wish to speak, as they would be speaking of the spirit of death.<sup>3</sup> Strange that the same little creature should enter into the mythology of two races so far apart in every way as the Greeks and the Athabascans, and in connection with the same worship, that of the sun!<sup>4</sup> It is to the abundance of such unexpected analogies that the mythology and poetry of aboriginal America owes not a little of its many-sided interest.

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<sup>1</sup> Among recent contributions to the literature of the subject by persons who have gained their information through intimate intercourse with the aborigines, I would direct attention to the extremely interesting article by Dr. Franz Boas on “The Poetry and Music of some North American Tribes,” which was published in *Science*, April 22, 1887. Therein the author gives examples both of songs and airs that he collected among the Eskimos of Baffin Land and the Indians of British Columbia. Some of these songs are joyous, others are mournful, while several of them reveal a rapturous appreciation of what is beautiful and sublime in nature. No people says Dr. Boas, are fonder of music than the Eskimos, while almost every Indian village in British Columbia has its singing-master.

<sup>2</sup> As to that most frightful rite of self-immolation, the Sun-dance, still practised by the Sioux, the Blackfeet, and some of the Western Crees, see an article on the Blackfoot Tribes, by Horatio Hale, in the *Popular Science Monthly*, June, 1886.

<sup>3</sup> “Those weird tales, which to us are puerility or poetry, according as we please to regard them, were to their believers history, science and religion.” *Native Races of the Pacific States*, by H. H. Bancroft, iii. 14.

<sup>4</sup> In his instructive little book, *Custom and Myth*, Mr. Andrew Lang has a chapter on “Apollo and the Mouse,” but he does not refer to the Tinné folklore.