II.—*The Literary Faculty of the Native Races of America.*

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What have the research and learning that have been brought to bear on pre-Columbian America disclosed as to the literary faculty in any of its populations? Before attempting to answer this question it will be well to seek a reply to another. Were any of the American languages suitable for employment in literary composition? The common notion regarding them would, perhaps, imply a negative answer, and this notion is supported by some great names. M. Ernest Renan, in his work on the Semitic languages pronounced a judgment which was, by implication, so indiscriminately adverse to the native tongues of America that Abbé Cuoq felt himself called upon to stand up in their defence. In an able pamphlet he claimed for the Algonquin and Iroquois languages all the excellences that his antagonist attributed to the Aryan tongues, while he put them far above the Chinese and even those of the Semitic group. M. Cuoq does not lack followers; neither does M. Renan. The elaborateness, which the former so highly recommends as a prominent feature in the American languages, Dr. Farrar looks upon as childish excess. On that point Professor Whitney says: "Of course, there are infinite possibilities of expressiveness in such a structure, and it would only need that some native American should arise to fill it full of thought and fancy and put it to the use of a noble literature, and it would be rightly admired as rich and flexible, perhaps, beyond anything else that the world knew." But as it is, he considers it "cumbrous and time-wasting in its immense polysyllabism." Professor Whitney, in fact, seems to think of the languages of the West as Byron thought of the Land of the East, that "all save the spirit of man is divine," and that, if only those who speak them were as gifted as they are expressive, the harmony would be fruitfully complete.

Professor Max Müller on this as on some other points is at variance with Professor Whitney. As we know from his writings, the great German-English philologist loses no opportunity of profiting by intercourse with such foreign students as he may come in contact with at the university which benefits by his services. Among them there happened some time ago to be a Mohawk and to him, as we learn from a note in Mr. H. Hale's interesting work, "The Iroquois Book of Rites," Professor Müller said one day: "To my mind the structure of such a language as the Mohawk is quite sufficient evidence that those who worked out such a work of art were powerful reasoners and acute classifiers." (*Book of Rites*, p. 99, note). In a letter to Mr. Hale, Professor Müller has also given the following emphatic testimony to the value of the American tongues to the philological student: "It has long been a puzzle to me why this most tempting and promising field of philological research has been allowed to be almost fallow in America—

as if these languages could not tell us quite as much of the growth of the human mind as Chinese or Hebrew or Sanscrit." No one, I think, need wait for a more forcible incentive to the scientific study of our native American languages than what we find in this distinct avowal of their worth from one of the greatest philologists of our day. It is still more to the purpose of this paper that the author of "Prehistoric Man" describes the tongues of the New World as "languages of consistent grammatical structure, involving agglutinate processes of a complexity unknown before and capable of being employed in an effective native oratory and even as vehicles of the sacred and profane literatures of the ancient world."

The judgments just quoted apply to the whole range of American speech. But it is almost needless to say that language on this continent is not one but manifold. How perplexing the variety is, may be imagined from the fact that Mr. Hubert Bancroft has enumerated nearly six hundred languages or dialects between northern Alaska and the Isthmus of Panama on the western side of the continent. "An exhaustive classification of the American languages," says Professor Whitney, "is at present impossible. . . There are many great groups and a host of lesser knots of idioms or dialects, isolated or unclassified. The Eskimos line the whole northern coast and the north-eastern down to Newfoundland. The Athabascan or Tinné occupies a great region in the far north-west (the Apache and the Navajo in the south also belonging to it), and is flanked on the west by the Selish and other smaller groups. The Algonquin had in possession the north-eastern and middle United States and stretched westward to the Rocky Mountains; within its territory was included that of the Iroquois. The Dakota (Sioux) is the largest of the families occupying the great prairies and plains of the far west. The Muskokee group filled the States of the south-east. In Colorado and Utah commence the towns of the settled and comparatively civilized Pueblo Indians, rising to the more advanced culture of the Mexican peoples, attaining its height in the Maya of Central America, and continued in the empire of the Incas of Peru. The Quichua of the latter, with the related Aymara, are still the native dialects of a considerable part of South America; with the Tupi-Guarani also on the east, in the valley of the Amazons and its tributaries. The condition of the American languages is thus an epitome of that of the languages of the world in general. Great and wide-spread families, limited groups, isolated and perishing dialects, touch and jostle one another."—(*The Life and Growth of Language*, pp. 263, 264).

Having followed Profesor Whitney in his hasty course from north to south, it may be worth while to consider briefly the characteristics of the more important languages of the region traversed. We may do so in inverse order, which is also, generally speaking, the order of their merit. Prescott tells us of the prudent despotism, not without its imitators in modern times, which substituted for the well-nigh countless and troublesome variety of tongues spoken by the inhabitants of Peru the rich and beautiful Quichua. This language is said by those who have studied it to bear resemblance to the dialects of Central America. The Tupi or Guarani now serves the same purpose of a *lingoa geral*, according to a writer quoted in the *Revue du Monde Latin* (Senhor Bautista Caetano), from Guiana to Patagonia. The same writer says that all the languages of South America may be reduced to five. Of the languages of Central America the Tzendal was once looked upon as the most ancient, but it has lately been recognized as a branch of the Maya, now spoken in Yucatan, and the mother tongue of most of the languages of the central region.

Going still northwards, we meet with the Nahua or Aztec, which is said to have been at its best in the century just preceding the Conquest. "If the Maya," says Mr. Strong in "The North Americans of Antiquity," "has been compared to the Greek, the Aztec has been likened to the Latin, not in structure or vocabulary, but in its relation to ancient American civilization, in its expressiveness, politeness, its capability for the sublime and for the romantic coloring with which it is able to clothe that which is humble and even insignificant." "Those who imagine," writes Dr. Brinton, "that there was a poverty of resources in these languages or that their concrete form hemmed in the mind from the study of the abstract, speak without knowledge. One has but to look at the inexhaustible synonymy of the Aztec, as set forth in Olmos or Sahagun, or at its power to render correctly the refinements of the scholastic theology, to see how wide of the fact is any such opinion. And what is true of the Aztec is not less true of the Quichua and other tongues." —(*American Hero-Myths*, p. 24).

If we still advance northward, we enter upon the apparent chaos of the numerous languages that have been or are still spoken by the Indians of the area comprised within the United States and Canada. Several of these languages have won praise almost as emphatic as that which has been bestowed on the tongues of Central and South America, while others are of a low type and incapable of development for literary purposes. Of the former class may be mentioned the Creek, the Cherokee, the Zuni, the Cree, the Ojibway, the Dakota and the Iroquois, on some of which fresh light has recently been shed by Canadian students such as Fathers Lacombe and Cuoq. A notable instance of the other class is furnished by Dr. Wilson, who compares the utterances of the Chinook to the "inarticulate noises made from the throat, with the tongue against the teeth or palate, when encouraging a horse in driving." (*Prehistoric Man*, II, 335). The same author refers to the Babel of languages heard at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia river, which is visited by Walla-Walla and other tribes for purposes of trade, and describes the *patois*, with a substratum of strangely metamorphosed English, which serves as a common means of communication. The fact, noted by Mr. Hale, (to which Dr. Wilson draws attention) that this factitious language is spoken by the rising generation more readily than any other form of speech, may supply a key to some puzzles in American philology. For who can tell how often the same process has been gone through in days when there was no European language to form a basis for the mongrel structure? The sight of such unlooked for and really unimaginable distortions of our English speech as "*pos*," "*paia*," "*tumola*," for "suppose," "fire," "to-morrow," should prove a warning to those who love to detect kinship in mere verbal likeness.

Having now shown by respectable authority that some of the American languages are not unfit to serve as media for literary production, let us see whether there is evidence of any kind of writing being employed by those who thus turned them to account. If that evidence should be deemed too slender, are we to be expected to give up the main inquiry as practically futile? Is it not absurd to look for any traces of literature where there is no written language, or means of committing it to writing? On this question it is to the point to hear Max Müller. "Here, then," he says, "we are brought face to face with a most startling fact; writing was unknown in India before the fourth century before Christ, and yet we are asked to believe that the Vedic literature in its three well defined periods, the Mantra, Brahmana and Sutra periods, goes back at least a thousand years

before our era." (*India: What can it teach us?* Lecture VII.) And then he goes on to state that those ten books of hymns, containing 10,580 verses, were handed down from generation to generation for 3,000 years by memory alone. It seems incredible, yet Professor Müller tells us that he had students who thus learned the Vedas by heart, who could not only repeat them but repeat them with the proper accents and even correct mistakes in his printed edition. The Gauls, he also reminds us, on the authority of Cæsar, had their Druidic literature only in their memories, having religious objections to committing it to writing. The instances, indeed, that might be cited of oral transmission are so numerous and so well authenticated that, if there are any products of the American muse said to be thus handed down, we need not suspiciously reject them on that score. The late Patrick McGregor, in the Preliminary Dissertation to his "Genuine Romains of Ossian," says: "The allegation that it is impossible to commit to memory such a quantity of verse is disproved by the fact that even at this day, when the lore is nearly extinct, a few individuals are to be found through the Highlands who can repeat as many songs or hymns as would fill a volume large enough to contain all that Ossian ever composed." The extraordinary memory of Lord Macaulay may have been a case of survival to more degenerate and book-relying days of just such a faculty as Mr. McGregor here speaks of. Our own McGee, another Celt, was similarly gifted.

But the Americans were not all lacking in the means of recording their thoughts or registering historic events. "South America," writes Dr. Wilson, "had her miniature picture-writing, her sculptured chronicles or basso-relievos, her mimetic pottery, her defined symbolism and associated ideas of colours and her quipus. North America had her astronomical science, her more developed though crude picture-writing, her totems, pipe-sculpture and wampum; and also her older mound-builders, with their standards seemingly of weight as well as of mensuration." The *quipu*, Prescott informs us, "was a cord about two feet long, composed of different coloured threads, tightly twisted together, from which a quantity of smaller threads were suspended in the manner of a fringe. The threads were of different colours and were tied into knots; the word *quipu*, indeed, signifies a *knot*." These colours denoted sensible objects or abstract ideas and by means of the knots the Peruvians were able to calculate with great rapidity. Of course, such an instrument could not be used for writing in anything like our sense. It helped the memory by way of association.

The Mayas are credited by some writers with a sort of alphabet. Bishop Landa, whose name it bears, says they had books, formed of long narrow strips of parchment, folded map-wise, so as to have the appearance of a modern volume. By means of coloured figures of a peculiar character, the value of which is as yet imperfectly known, they could commit their thoughts, so as to be intelligible to each other, to the folded sheet. Out of the holocaust which the Spanish clergy thought due to religion, four documents have been saved. These are known as the *Dresden Codex*, the *Codex Troano* (from Señor Tro y Ortolano), the *Codex Peresianus* (from Señor Pio Perez) and the *Codex Cortesianus*, lately published by M. Léon de Rosny. Each of these codices has an interesting history, but a word or two as to the last may suffice to show the manner in which such documents sometimes come to light. In 1876 or 1877, a Spaniard offered to sell to the *Bibliothèque Impériale* of Paris an ancient American manuscript, photographed specimens indicating its possible value. But the price asked was thought too high by the *Bibliothèque*

authorities, and soon after it was purchased by the Spanish government for the Archæological Museum of Madrid. In 1880, M. de Rosny went to that city to study it and he was permitted to make two photographic copies of it. In his opinion, it and the *Codex Troano* belong to the same original document.

In 1863, an event occurred which gladdened the hearts of all Americanists. The indefatigable Brasseur de Bourbourg found, in the archives of the Royal Academy of Madrid, a Spanish manuscript styled "Relacion de las cosas de Yucatan," of which the author was said to be the Bishop Landa already mentioned. This churchman had lived in Mexico for thirty years (from 1549 to 1579), and his name was a familiar one in the annals of Central America. Yet this *Relacion* had hitherto, like many another, doubtless, escaped notice. Among the most interesting contents of the book was nothing less than a key to to the Maya symbols. "Eureka!" was the cry that echoed through the antiquarian world. The mysterious epigraphy which had heretofore baffled the most obstinate questioning would now stand revealed. But Bishop Landa had been unable or had not chosen to be very clear in dealing with the alphabet that bears his name, and, though the appearance of the *Relacion* set many a scholar to work at it, the mysterious manuscript is still undeciphered. M. de Rosny, Mr. Cyrus Thomas, Dr. Brinton and other gentlemen are, however, still earnestly engaged in the endeavour to interpret it and a complete key, it is to be hoped, will soon be discovered. Dr. Philipp Valentini, after careful study, has come to the conclusion that the so-called alphabet is not an alphabet at all. He closes an able pamphlet written to prove that it is a Spanish contrivance, with the remark that, though "Landa's alphabet," had been in the hands of students for seventeen years (that is, in 1880), it had proved of no avail whatever for purposes of decipherment. He, therefore, believes it to be merely a device of the missionaries and not, as has been claimed, an ancient product of the native intellect. (*The Landa Alphabet a Spanish fabrication.* Proc. Am. Ant. Soc., 1880).

Many books in the Aztec picture-writing, which differs from the Maya, were also destroyed on the ground of idolatry—some of them, like the annals of the Mexican State committed to the flames by Zumarraga, being extremely valuable. They were mostly printed on cotton cloth, prepared skins and maguey paper, and were put up in the same fashion as those of the Mayas. Documents written since the Conquest, some of them with a Spanish translation, are numerous, a fine collection of them being preserved in the museum of the University of Mexico. The series of pictures in the *Codex Mendoza*, representing the practical home educational curriculum of the ancient Mexicans, is considered a good instance of the Aztec symbolic writing. The Maya and Nahua calendar systems are highly interesting and have suggested analogies with almost every nation in the old world.

Leaving the civilized races of Mexico and Central Ameria and directing our steps northward, we meet with no system of writing or inscription comparable with theirs. Dighton Rock, the markings on which Professor Rafn claims to have deciphered, the Cincinnati Tablet, by some considered a calendar stone, and the "Cremation Tablet" found at Davenport, Iowa, and which Professor J. Campbell believes he has interpreted by means of Landa's alphabet, are the most remarkable of northern epigraphic "finds." But of anything like an alphabet in the accepted meaning of the term, evidently or even probably purposed to serve as such, the only instance as yet known is a modern one, that of

the Cherokee chief, Sequoyah. Of it Sir John Lubbock said that, as far as the inventor's own language was concerned, it was superior to ours. It is syllabic and has eighty-five characters.

We have now prepared the way for a consideration of the literary faculty of some of the American races, not as possessing so admirable an instrument for recording their thoughts as the Cherokee, or even the English alphabet, but as being, even the most advanced of them, like the Hindoos, the Greeks, the Romans, the Germans, when they were literally in that stage of progress which the Italians figuratively describe as *analfabeti*. They are universally conceded the story-telling instinct. "As a *raconteur*," says Dr. Brinton, in his excellent monograph on "Aboriginal American authors," he (the American Indian) "is untiring. He has in the highest degree Goethe's *Lust zu fabuliren*. In no Oriental city does the teller of strange tales find a more willing audience than in the Indian wigwam. The folk-lore of every tribe which has been properly investigated has turned out to be most ample. Tales of talking animals, of mythical warriors, of giants, dwarfs, subtle women, potent magicians, impossible adventures, abound to an extent that defies collection." (*Aboriginal American Authors*, p. 10). An important branch of the education of the young Peruvian nobility was to listen to the chronicles of the *amantas* and they were also taught to speak their own language with purity and elegance. (*Prescott's History of the Conquest of Peru*, Book I, chap. 4). That some of the American languages were susceptible of all the phases of style has been already shewn, and they doubtless improved from generation to generation, as the teachers, chiefs and orators brought out their excellence by practice and a well trained ear. Mr. Strong says that, in seeking northward the lingual traces of Aztec migration, the fact has been too often forgotten that the Mexican tongue, at the time of the Conquest had been modified by centuries of cultivation.[1] No Peruvian production has been published, Dr. Brinton says, but there are Quichua manuscripts accessible. Of these the most important is a treatise on "The errors, false Gods, superstitions and diabolical Rites of the provinces of the Inca Empire." It has been, in part, translated by Dr. F. DeAvila and the fragment has been done into English by Mr. Clements Markham for the Hakluyt Society. Another Quichua manuscript is the "Advertencias" of Don Luis Inca, a member of the royal line, but its fate is unknown. That the educated speakers of the Quichua tongue were accustomed to historical or narrative composition we learn from Prescott. "Annalists," he says, "were appointed in the principal communities whose business it was to record the most important events that occurred in them. Other functionaries of a higher character, usually the *amantas*, were entrusted with the history of the empire and were selected to chronicle the great deeds of the reigning Inca or his ancestors. The narrative thus concocted could be communicated only by oral tradition; but the *quipus* served the chronicler to arrange the incidents with method and to

[1] Mr. J. R. Bartlett (*Personal Narrative*, etc., vol. ii, p. 283) says that "no analogy has yet been traced between the language of the old Mexicans and any tribe at the north, in the district from which they are supposed to have come; nor, in any of the relics, or ornaments, or works of art, do we observe a resemblance between them." But Dr. D. Wilson points to some probable connection between the "uncouth, clicking sounds" of the Chinooks and other tribes and the *tli*, *txl*, *atl*, *iztli* and *yotl* of the most characteristic Mexican terminations. These similarities of speech Dr. Wilson regards as the "more reflex traces of later and indirect Mexican influence." Perhaps, from the same point of view, the syllables *tl* and *hl*, which occur in Haida words and which, Dr. G. M. Dawson suggests, may represent the article, are not without significance. (*Report of Progress of Geol. Survey of Canada* for 1878–79, p. 177 B).

refresh his memory." (*History of the Conquest of Peru*, Book I, chap. 4). After Professor Max Müller's testimony as to the oral transmission of the Vedas, this mode of composition need not be wondered at. Among a people so conditioned and trained, the exercise of their mnemonic and oratorical powers in the council and in the drama would become second nature. The eloquence of the native races of the North is well known. With them the warrior was not necessarily the man of few words that he customarily is among the practical Anglo-Saxons. Like the Greek and the Roman, he could talk as well as fight and defend his cause in the forum as well as in the field. In the Hon. A. Morris's "Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba," we may see how apt and lawyer-like are the questions, how subtle the arguments, how effective occasionally the metaphors, of the Indians of our own North-West. The wonderful tact of some of the chiefs in carrying on the negociations for the N. W. Angle Treaty is especially emphasized. The demeanour of the Indians on that occasion is thus described: "Whether the demands put forward were granted by the governor or not, there was no petulance, no ill-feeling evinced; but every thing was done with a calm dignity that was pleasing to behold and which might be copied with advantage by more pretentious deliberative assemblies." (*The Treaties of Canada, etc.*, p. 76). In reminding the governor of the retentiveness of the native memory, one of the chiefs said: "You must remember that our hearts and our brains are like paper; we never forget." (*The Treaties, etc.*, p. 68). In the monarchies of Peru, Central America and Mexico liberty of speech would not be so widely enjoyed as under the more free-and-easy tribal rule of the North. But still they doubtless had their orators, and, at the outset of the tragic invasion, which robbed prince and peasant of national independence for ever, we may see, from the recorded interviews between the new-comers and the chosen spokesmen of their sovereign, with what art the latter conducted the negotiations.

But it was in the form of the drama especially that the inter-tropical races displayed their gifts of speech and action. "The Peruvian pieces," says Prescott, "aspired to the rank of dramatic compositions, sustained by character and dialogue, founded sometimes on themes of tragic interest and at others on such as, from their light and social character, belonged to comedy." Though rude the execution may have been, the historian points out that the mere conception of such an amusement distinguished the Peruvians from those rougher races whose pastime was war. In his *Storia critica dei Teatri*, Signorelli devotes a chapter to the native American theatre. He does not so much credit the Peruvians, however, with dramatic skill as with taste for the divine art of poetry; and he praises a poetical composition or *haravec*, preserved by Garcilasso de la Vega, as enriched with just and vivid images. He acknowledges, at the same time, the existence of a certain kind of drama in Peru, which had its most effective representation at the great festival of the sun at Cuzco which Marmontel has made so prominent a feature in "Les Incas." Before long we are likely to have a triple treat of Peruvian poetry. Dr. Brinton has just now in preparation an American anthology which will be a characteristic "collection of the songs, chants and metrical compositions of the Indians, designed to display the emotional and imaginative powers of the race and the prosody of their languages." He also informs us, in his "Aboriginal American Authors," that Señor Gavino Pacheco Zegarra is about to publish a *Trésor de la Langue des Incas*, which will contain many of the Peruvian *yaravis* or elegiac chants and that Mr. Clements Markham collected some twenty songs

of ancient date during his travels in South America which he may be expected to give to the world before long. "What would not one now give," says this last writer, in his introduction to the Ollenta drama (as quoted by Dr. Brinton), "for those precious relics of Inca civilization which the half-breed lad (Garcilasso de la Vega) allowed to slip from his memory!" The drama just mentioned is the most famous of such compositions in the Quichua tongue. It treats of love and war, has an ingenious and eventful plot, and the dignity of the chief characters and incidents is relieved by the jokes of some of the minor personages. (Brinton: *Aboriginal American Authors*, p. 56). It is rather singular that Señor Santa Anna Mery, whose article in the *Revue du Monde Latin* on *Les aborigènes du Brésil* I have already mentioned, should, in a description of the *porasses* or pantomimic dances of the Brazilian Indians, have almost repeated in substance what Signorelli says of the sacred ballets of the Peruvians. "All the sufferings of human life," says M. Mery, "all the great deeds of their ancestors, forced marches, struggles, persecutions, captivity, the anguish of defeat, are reproduced in those mimic dances, which are, in fact, dramas of the most thrilling character."

If the letterless Peruvians could be said to have a literature of their own, with stronger reason may such an honour be ascribed to the civilized peoples of Yucatan and Mexico. I have already spoken of their books in symbolic writing. Some of the Spanish writers of a past age quite complacently confess the destruction of all such volumes that they could get possession of on the ground of idolatry or immorality; and in some cases they sincerely believed that they were doing right. But the loss is irreparable and we cannot bless the memory of those who caused it. "The Maya Chronicles," edited by Dr. Brinton, the first volume of his Library of Aboriginal American Literature, contains the five chronicles in the Maya or Yucateque language composed shortly after the Conquest and carrying back the history of the country many centuries. These are supplemented by a history of the conquest written by a Maya chief in 1562. This is one of the most important of the contributions to the aboriginal literature of America that have as yet seen the light. Apart from its great historical interest, enhanced by Dr. Brinton's excellent notes, it affords an opportunity of contrasting the genius of the Maya with that of the Aztec or Mexican language.

Allied with the Maya is the Quiché, in which there is quite a respectable literature. The *Popul Vuh* or National Book, of which a translation was published in French by Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg, is a surprising production, the story of the hero being of thrilling interest and the language sometimes of remarkable beauty. The story of Votan belongs to the Tzendals, another branch of the Maya race. It was written down in the 17th century by a Christianized native whose manuscript afterwards came into the hands, first of Bishop Nunez de la Vega and secondly of Ramon Ordonez y Aguiar who showed it to Cabrera in 1790. But where it is now is unknown. The Quiché people had also their dramas—the most interesting being that of *Rabinal Achi*—a story of successful audacity made unexpectedly tragic by the death of the forceful hero, virtually by his own act.

The "Annals of Chauhtitlan" is a Nahua or Mexican manuscript which was first translated by Faustino Chimalpopocatl Galicia, after whom Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg christened it the *Codex Chimalpopoca*. Dr. Brinton has included it also in his Library.

Boturini gave a list of some forty or fifty Nahua or Aztec manuscripts, including a *Cronaca Mexicana* giving the history of the nation from the year 1068 to 1597.

What most interests us in the Nahua, as well as in the Maya literature, is its poetry. Some Maya poems are preserved in the book of Chilan Balam and in the Popul Vuh, and the "Maya Prophecies" contain some mystic songs of the priests of Kukulcan and Itzamna. Dr. Brinton, who gives this information, adds that the modern Maya lends itself readily to poetic uses, as verses in his possession by Garcià y Garcià, the Yucatan historian, abundantly show. "The Comedy Ballet of Güegüence," in the Nahua-Spanish dialect of Guatemala, an edition of which by Dr. Brinton is to form a volume of his Library, is worthy of mention as well for that reason as for the vivid indications that it gives of a sense of the ludicrous in the native mind. For information regarding it and also regarding the other forms of Mexican, Central and South American literature, the didactic, the oratorical, the religious, etc., I must refer to Dr. Brinton's "Aboriginal American Authors." I will now take leave of those ancient and mysterious civilizations to roam for a while with northern sachems over more familiar ground.

No native northern poet has won such praise as that which was elicited from the pen of Montaigne by the refrain of a Tupi song. (*Essais*, Livre I, ch. 30, p. 321). Some of the northern tribes have, nevertheless, some share of literary ability. The Jesuit, Father Lafitau, gives them credit for sound judgment, lively imagination, ready conception and wonderful memory, though he does not deny that they have serious faults. If less civilized than the races of Mexico and Peru, they had, at least, the germs of civilization which, in more favorable circumstances, might have fertilized and borne good fruit. Statesmanship and diplomacy—of a rude kind, indeed, but yet capable, now and then, of coping with the wisdom of trained European politicians—were displayed by several of the chiefs. Their schemes of government, though primitive, were suited to their condition. The framers of the Iroquois and other federations must have been men of skill and foresight. In war it was natural that they should distinguish themselves, as it was the main occupation of their lives. In arts and manufactures they had made the first steps and some of them showed considerable invention and taste. If care in the choice of language, the exercise of logic or of imagination, as the occasion called for close reasoning or appeal to the emotions, and a corresponding eloquence for which the listeners seldom failed to show due appreciation, be any token of literary faculty, some of the northern nations were certainly not destitute of it. Some writers ascribe to the Celt the possession of artistic gifts in excess of either the Teutons or the Latins. But the Celts were preceded by an earlier race, of which the Basques are a remnant, with which it is more than likely that they intermarried, thus gaining some of the qualities by which they have ever been characterized. Whether the gift of ready speech was one of these qualities it is impossible to say; but stranger things have happened. It is singular that the Basque is the only language of the old world which is marked by peculiarities of structure that differentiate it and the American tongues from the rest of human speech. Does that argue kinship in remote times, or is it due to influences in the evolution of language as yet undiscovered, which befel these tongues—the American and the Basque—and these alone? It would be strange, if it should turn out that the race, of which some refugees found a permanent shelter in Pyrenean recesses, while others, as Gibeonites at first, as equals

afterwards, contributed to the making of the Celts and thus to European civilization, should be of the same stock with the red man found on this continent ages after by the modified descendants of those ancient half-breeds. It is, at least, not unworthy of remark that the Basque was an habitual visitor to these shores long, we cannot say how long, before Jacques Cartier set foot on them. Some have even found in the language of the maritime tribes traces of more than a mere trading intercourse between the Christian Basque fishermen and the pagan Indians. However we may try to account for the oratorical genius of some of the Indians, there is ample proof of its existence. Nor is it in connection with that point alone that we might justly ask to include our aborigines among Dr. Boyd's "people of whom more could have been made." There seems to be little doubt, indeed, that the Indians, accosted by Europeans at and immediately after the time of Columbus, were generally of a kindlier, more humane, and more tractable character than their descendants have come to be after some generations of experience of their uninvited guests. We may well ask ourselves what they might have become, had the explorers and colonists been inspired by purer motives and more generous sentiments. If we find them, and if some writers delight to qualify them, as treacherous, blood-thirsty, as well as ignorant and superstitions, it ought not to be forgotten that the example set them and the treatment which they received, were not always such as to improve their minds or morals or to win them over to the usages of civilization. Civilization to them was, in many instances, presented in the most odious form of selfishness, rapacity, and all injustice.

What they have been capable of growing to under the favourable auspices of upright dealing and wise training, the records of civilized and partially civilized Indians testify. Of their skill in warfare I need not speak. Some of their chiefs, had they served in the armies of civilized nations, would have had their place on the rolls of fame as great generals or conquerors. With more pleasure I recall their achievements in the arts of peace. They have furnished inventors, artists, physicians, lawyers, preachers. As to their literary faculty we find its germ in the legend of the tribe, the story-telling of the wigwam, and the speech-making of the council. "Multitudes of poetical tales and legends," writes Sir. W. Dawson, in "Fossil Men," "have been written down from the lips of old Indian men and women," and he mentions as a specimen an unpublished myth, collected by Mr. Rand among the Micmacs entitled "Rushing Wind and Rolling Wave." This characteristic has been utilized by the greatest poet and the greatest novelist of America in their most truly American productions. When they wrote the works in question, the scientific study of the American races had hardly well begun. The organization of the Bureau of Ethnology at Washington and of the "Congrès des Américanistes" in Europe is pleasing evidence of the enlightened and fruitful interest taken in the subject in recent years. Some investigators have endured hardships and faced perils which can only be paralleled in the annals of missionary self-devotion. It would be strange if all this labour did not yield some important facts, if some fresh light were not shed on the origin, habits, traditions, and modes of thought and speech of the Indian nations. Even Indians themselves have engaged in the same research. Peter Dooyentate Clark wrote a book on the "Origin and Traditional History of the Wyandots," which was published in Toronto in 1870. A later contribution by an Indian to Indian history is the "History of the Six Nations" by chief Elias Johnson, of the Tuscaroras. An earlier work on the same confederacy was written

by David Cusick, also a Tuscarora. These works were written in English, but a production has just been given to the world, under the editorial care of Mr. Horatio Hale, which is the most speaking testimony to the literary ability of the race.

Of all the tribes that peopled this continent at the time when the colonial annals of Canada began, there is no group in which we have so much cause to feel an interest as the Huron-Iroquois federation. "In the great valley of the St. Lawrence," writes Dr. Wilson, "at the period of earliest European contact with its native tribes, we find this confederacy of Indian Nations in the most primitive condition as to all knowledge of progressive arts; but full of energy, delighting in military enterprise and amply endowed with the qualities requisite for effecting permanent conquests over a civilized but unwarlike people. Nor did the primitive arts of the Iroquois prevent the development of incipient germs of civilization amongst them. Agriculture was systematically practised; and their famous league, wisely established, and maintained unbroken through very diversified periods of their history, exhibits a people advancing in many ways towards the initiation of a self-originated civilization, when the intrusion of Europeans abruptly arrested its progress, and brought them in contact with elements of foreign progress pregnant for them only with the sources of degradation and final destruction." It would take too long, in a paper like this, to tell by what events and motives such a league in that distant day was brought to pass. The whole story is related by Mr. Hale in the "Iroquois Book of Rites," the second volume in Dr. Brinton's Library of Aboriginal American Literature. It may suffice to say that, when the Huron-Iroquois first became known to Europeans, they occupied the valley and uplands of what is now northern New York, in the region that stretches westward from the head waters of the Hudson to the Genesee. In the same order they succeeded each other under the names of the Caniengas or Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Onondagas, the Cayugas and the Senecas. Subsequently (about 1715), the Tuscaroras of the Roanoke valley were added, thus making six allied nations, instead of five. Though living so far south, the Tuscaroras were of the same stock as the nations with which they united. That stock primarily included the Wyandots or Hurons, the Attiwandaronks, the Eries or Neutrals, and the Conestogas or Andastes, besides the original constituents of the league. That in the course of time the timbers of their "long house" should have been riven apart and the severed portions have become hostile to each other, is not to be wondered at. Such breaches occur in civilization as well as barbarism. But *longa est injuria; longæ ambages.* Enough to say that a common danger from the powerful Mohicans prompted the eastern Caniengas and Oneidas to unite. The western Senecas and Cayugas were also drawn together by a common fear of Atotarho, the tyrant of the Onondagas. In this last community, however, it was destined that the deliverer should arise. We know him chiefly as a legendary personage. Mr. Hale claims for him a complete flesh-and-blood reality. At all events, Hiawatha (who is also known by less musical and less pronounceable names), after long thinking, devised a plan by which his own and the neighbour nations should be permanently protected against outside and inside perils. The machinations of Atotarho proved too much for him among the Onondagas. So he passed beyond the limits of his canton and people, and made his way to the dwellers on the Mohawk. There his wisdom and eloquence prevailed and ultimately, by a course of negotiation which I cannot now linger to describe, the confederacy was formed. But, as in nearly all such cases, success was the issue of compro-

mise. Not the wise and gentle Hiawatha, but the self-willed and unscrupulous Atotarho, was made the chief of the confederacy. His badness and Hiawatha's goodness entered the region of fable, but the spirit of the league, in the formation of which they were prominent actors, survived for centuries.

But what has this to do with a native literature? It happens that the most authentic and most interesting of the evidences of literary ability among the North American Indians is found in the "Book of Rites", which Mr. Hale has published in full with a literal translation and copious comments. The English missionaries taught their Indian pupils to write in their own language. As early as 1714, the Anglican Prayer-book was translated into the Mohawk tongue. The council chiefs saw that it would be well to preserve in the same way their own traditions and ceremonies. One of them, David, a friend of Brant, perhaps David of Schoharie, who fought with Sir W. Johnson against the French in 1757, undertook the task. In 1832, Chief Johnson went to visit another chief, then ill of cholera, and the aged host told his visitor of an important book that he had in his possession and suggested that he should copy it. Johnson did so, only omitting, as he afterwards regretted, what referred to the later history of the Six Nations after their removal to Canada. Soon after, the old chief's house was burned and the volume perished with it. A second copy Mr. Hale subsequently obtained from Chief John Buck. A further portion, or supplement of the book, was found with a small remnant of the once powerful Onondagas, near Syracuse, New York.

In his translation, Mr. Hale had the assistance of the two chiefs Johnson, father and son, of the Rev. Mr. Bearfoot, Onondaga by birth, Canienga by adoption, an educated man and the pastor of a white Anglican congregation. To be estimated at its true ethnologic and literary value, the "Book of Rites" should be read throughout, with Mr. Hale's introduction and comments. Its full name is "The Ancient Rites of the Condoling Council." This council held a peculiarly high rank in the Iroquois political system. "Among the many councils," says Mr. Hale, "civil and religious, tribal and federal, in which the public spirit and social temper of the Iroquois found their most congenial and most popular mode of display, the Yondennase, or Condoling Council, held the highest rank. It was, in a certain way, typical of the whole, and comprised the elements of all the other councils." (*The Iroquois Book of Rites*, edited by Horatio Hale, p. 481). At it took place, not only a public lamentation, but the great elective act of the league. It was, therefore, like a state funeral and a presidential election combined. The summoned chiefs approaching the place of meeting, the opening formalities began, "at the edge of the woods," (which circumstance gave its name to the preliminary ceremony), where a fire was kindled, the calumet lit, and an address of welcome pronounced. The greeting touches on the sad loss sustained, on sorrow for the dead, on the need of union, and on the dangers of the journey,—"thorny ways, falling trees and wild beasts lying in ambush." The list of nations is gone over, with their towns and various clans. Then there is a hymn, bidding hail to the league, the kindred, the warriors, and the women, and ending with the words, "My forefathers, hearken to them!" This, Mr. Hale terms the national anthem of the Iroquois. All through the condolence occurs the contrast between the great and wise of the past and their degenerate successors. It closes with a sort of chanted litany to those who were "rulers and founders." The following passage from it is arranged for singing and will give some notion of the spirit and poetic tenor of the dirge:

"Woe! Woe!
Hearken ye!
We are diminished!
Woe! Woe!
The cleared land has become a thicket!
Woe! 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!"

The Onondaga document is similar in spirit. It begins with the speech of the sympathizer: "I come to your door where you are mourning in great darkness, prostrate with grief," and closes with the choice of a successor to the dead chief. Such is "The Book of Rites," which, Mr. Hale thinks, affords unquestionable evidence of the character both of those who composed it and of those who received it. For traditions, gathered by Europeans from the lips of Indians, for speeches reported to have been delivered at council or negotiation, we are at no loss, but "The Book of Rites" is the only instance extant of an Indian production, of a time preceding the discovery of America, composed in an Indian language and throwing light on Indian history and character. Mr. Hale's work is made exceedingly valuable by an introduction, in ten chapters, treating, in succession, of the Huron-Iroquois nations, the league, and its founders and laws, and the character, policy, language and customs of the federate tribes.

Of books written by Indians in English, a few have been already mentioned and, in dealing with the nations of Central and South America, we have seen that they also used the language of their Spanish conquerors as a medium for literary composition. Many others, written in these and other tongues, might be mentioned, which are, at least, sufficient to prove that the native races are not quite devoid of the literary instinct, though, from the force of circumstances, their oratorical powers were more developed. It is not generally known, perhaps, that Chief Joseph has written a history of his Oregon campaign in "Nez Percé" hieroglyphics—a work which is said to have brought him more renown among his people than his warlike exploits. No grander-looking Indian, it is said, has appeared since the days of Black Hawk. The present chief of the Cherokees is, like not a few others of the civilized chiefs, a minister of the Gospel, and preaches eloquent sermons in his own tongue. Poetic talent has been by no means wanting among the northern Indians. Some of their traditions and folk-tales are imbued with the true spirit of poesy, though no chief that I am aware of has, like the sad sovereign of Tezcuco, left seventy odes as the fruit of his devotion to the muse. If the best of the scattered productions of northern genius were, however, collected and properly edited, they might form no contemptible anthology. Those who are interested in the subject will eagerly await the publication of Dr. Brinton's promised work, in which the North will, doubtless, have due place, as well as the selections now in preparation by the Bureau of Ethnology at Washington. When they appear, it may be seen that the grand and beautiful scenery of the

New World was not without its creative influence on the wild children of the forest and the plain, as well as on the more civilized communities of the tropics. Can I better supplement this hope than by a reference to a Caughnawaga poetess, Miss Emily Martin, a manuscript volume of whose poems was shown at the Indian exhibition of September, 1883? Some of her poems display poetic feeling and mastery of language—the English language. It will have been noted, indeed, that it is in another tongue than their own that most of the literary Indians of America have written. Some of them have written even in Latin, and there are instances of respectable Indian linguists. Although, as long as a large proportion of those who speak them are isolated from the rest of the population, there is little fear of the native tongues growing into disuse, it is more than likely that, as civilization advances, the number of persons speaking any Indian tongue will diminish. In the Indian Territory of the United States, in the schools of the more cultivated nations, the other branches of education are studied at the expense of the native languages. Miss Jenness, writing in the *Atlantic Monthly* for April, 1879, mentions the case of a young Cherokee lady, a teacher of languages, philosophy and mathematics, who confessed to having understood only two words of a Cherokee sermon. Intermarriage, of course, tends to produce a like result. Miss Jenness sees therein the great solution of the Indian question, as regards the civilized tribes, and it may prove the solution not only of the Indian but of many questions which now look difficult. It is possible, therefore, that some of the existing languages may in time (some of them, perhaps, before very long) wholly disappear, as others have already done. But to allow any of them thus to vanish, without some effort to discover whatever tradition and comparative philology may be able to reveal concerning them, would be a neglect only less blameworthy than the destruction of the historical monuments of Central America and Mexico.

It has, I think, been brought out by manifold evidence that some of these languages are not unfit for literary uses, and that those who spoke them were not without a consciousness of their strength and beauty and comprehensive force of expression. Such gathered testimony, of which a small share has been presented in this paper, adds much to their interest, and suggests new inducements for their critical study as important members of the great family of human speech. A good deal has been done in that way during the last forty or fifty, and more especially during the last fifteen or twenty, years. Since Mr. Stephens bade adieu to the ruins of those cities of Yucatan, which he had done so much to bring to light, a new era has begun for American archæology, and its philology has not been forgotten. But notwithstanding all the conquests of recent years, there are still many provinces of knowledge that Americanists have not yet securely won. New vistas of investigation, new paths of research which inquirers, judicious and persevering, may follow out to fruitful conclusions, have been opened up, and from every such path numerous by-paths branch off, which may offer prizes of ascertained truth to the trained eye that looks for "good in everything." In the true sense, though nearly four centuries have passed away since Columbus caught the first glad glimpse of the "dashing silver-flashing surges of St. Salvador," America remains yet to be discovered. For, until its people and their languages have been traced home to their lost kindred in the far-off prehistoric past, the work so valiantly begun by that great explorer cannot be pronounced completed.