

MONOGRAPH OF THE DÈNÈ-DINDJIÉ INDIANS.*

BY THE REV. E. PETITOT, OBLAT MISSIONARY, ETC., ETC.

TRANSLATED BY DOUGLAS BRYMNER.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Recent events both in Canada and the United States have made the question of the treatment of the Indian tribes one of very considerable interest. Much as has been written of them, there is still much to learn. The following treatise by the Rev. M. Petitot, an Oblat missionary, who has for years lived amongst the tribes of which he writes, and who has not only had unusual opportunities of becoming thoroughly acquainted with their habits and modes of thought, but is also, from the bent of his mind, peculiarly qualified to study their past history, traditions and beliefs, will be found attractive to those whose attention has been drawn to such investigations.

Archbishop Taché, in his "Sketch of the North-West," says: "When was America peopled? An answer to this question would be extremely interesting, but I am sure it will not be discovered here, and I even think that it will never be found. Our Indians of the Northern Department have no chronicles, no annals, no written monuments, nor record of any kind whatever. They do not know even their own or their children's ages, or did not until our arrival amongst them." Without disputing the correctness of the Archbishop's statement as to the want of chronicles, &c., it may yet be possible, not to fix the date, perhaps, but at least to trace the route followed by the Indians from the birth-place of their race, as the glacial drift has been tracked by the boulders dropped during its advance.

This is what M. Petitot has attempted to do, without dogmatizing on so obscure a subject.

The work is divided into two parts. The first describes the present state of the Indians, the second relates to their origin. The advocates of the Anglo-Israelitish theory are strongly recommended to study carefully the latter, in which the reverend author believes he has produced sufficient proof of the Asiatic origin of the Redskin nations, and indicated the probability of their identity with the lost Ten Tribes of Israel. He, however, expresses himself with great modesty on the latter point, contenting himself with furnishing the evidence which has most strongly inclined him to adopt such an opinion.

I had at first thought of presenting a summary of the work, but the author had already so condensed the information he possessed, that it was difficult to reduce it to greater brevity without losing much of the essential information it contains. Besides, however conscientious such a summary might be, it would almost unavoidably be colored by the mental peculiarities of the writer undertaking such a task, and I have, therefore, preferred to give a faithful translation, allowing the author to speak for himself, although through the medium of a different language from that in which he has written.

DOUGLAS BRYMNER.

OTTAWA, January, 1878.

* Monographie des Dènè-Dindjié, par Le R. P. E. Petitot, Missionnaire Oblat de Marie Immaculée, Officier d'Académie, &c., &c., Paris.