

NOTES ON FORTY VERSIONS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER IN ALGONKIN LANGUAGES.*

In offering as a contribution to the comparative grammar of Algonkin languages some desultory notes on versions of the Lord's Prayer, I do not overlook two considerations that affect the value of any results to which collation and analysis of these versions may lead: first, the probability that few of the translators had a competent knowledge of the languages into which, respectively, their translations were made; and secondly, a certainty that the true meaning of this prayer, in its several petitions, cannot be conveyed to any savage tribe by mere translation, and consequently that the *best* version is not likely to be that which is most *literal*. Scarcely a word — not more than three or four, certainly, — in the English version can be literally translated into any Algonkin language without injury to the sense of the clause in which it occurs. Some words represent ideas which are foreign to the Indian mind. Others have become to all who, in any tongue, have made this prayer their own, mere vocal symbols, whose significance does not inhere in the letter. The words *father*, *heaven*, *kingdom*, *earth*, *bread*, *debts*, *trespasses*, *temptation*, have, to a Christian, other than their literal or primary meanings. For *hallowing* and *forgiving*, the untaught savage had neither words nor conceptions.

The versions here brought together cover a period of nearly two and a half centuries — between the Montagnais of Father Massé (printed in 1682) and the latest revision of the Chipeway New Testament. They are the work of missionaries of various nations and languages — French, English, Swedish, German, — and were made, not directly from the Greek, but each from that European version which was most familiar to the translator. And each translator has adopted a phonetic

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