

A story of the Tusayans relates the adventures of a mystic Snake Youth, who brought back and married a strange woman. She gave birth to rattlesnakes which, biting the people, compelled them to migrate¹.

In the Blackfeet mythology the story of the woman and the serpent is so much alike to that of our Carriers that we must trace its main details to a common origin. Briefly told, it is as follows :—The wife of a hunter had a black-snake for a lover, which lived in a cavern or den in a patch of timber. The children set fire to the timber and were chased by the head of their mother, while the body went after the father. The children threw sticks behind them, which became forests; stones, which became mountains; moss, which became a river, into which the head rolled and was drowned².

Now as to the identification of these various traditions with sacred history. According to the Carrier legend, a wife had criminal relations with two big serpents—why *two* will soon be explained. Her husband kills the snakes, cuts off his wife's head and throws it out of the lodge with the result that her children become miserable, wandering over land which is not theirs and incessantly pursued by their mother as if they had to pay for her own guilt. In the same manner, through guilty intercourse with the serpent hailing, as in the American legend, from the tree of "knowledge", Eve deserved death at the hands of her Lord and was punished even in her posterity. She was driven out of the terrestrial paradise, and her children have now to suffer for the sin of their first parent.

The myth as current among the Déné (Carrier and Chippewayan) and the Algonquin (Blackfeet) tribes is rendered even more significant by the fact that even in far-off Ceylon, the natives venerate a statue representing the first woman naked and with a snake coiled round her. Now that woman is represented there *headless* and *at the door* of the temples, while her head is, according to Petitot³, placed on the outside of houses as a talisman against her own malefic powers.

As to the two serpents of the Carrier myth, the duality of the reptile is a matter of mere mysticism of numbers. The sacredness of the number seven among the Semitic nations is well known. Persons ever so little conversant with American mythology are no less aware of the frequent occurrence in native legends of the number four and the mystic virtue

¹ A study of Pueblo Architecture, by Victor Mindeleff. Fifth Annual Report Bur. Ethnol., 1891, p. 17.

² Rev. S. D. Peet in Am. Antiq., Vol. XVI, p. 30.

³ *Traditions indiennes du Nord-Ouest*, p. 393.