

## THE THUNDER-BIRD AMONGST THE ALGONKINS.

BY A. F. CHAMBERLAIN.

The interesting article of Rev. Myron Eels in Vol. ii, pp. 329-336, has suggested a brief discussion of the same subject with regard to the tribes of Algonkian stock amongst which the belief in the thunder-bird appears to be very wide-spread. It is found with the Crees of the Canadian Northwest and amongst some of the tribes of Micmac lineage dwelling near the coast of the Atlantic, on the shores of Hudson's Bay, and in the States on the southern banks of Lake Superior. The investigation of this peculiar belief must therefore cover the whole Algonkian region.

The Crees believe that certain divine birds cause the lightning by the flashings of their eyes, and with their wings make the noise of thunder. The thunderbolts are the "invisible and flaming arrows shot by these birds." Hind<sup>2</sup> speaks of the Plain Indians of the Northwest as "anxious and timid during the roll of thunder, invoking the Great Bird by whose flapping wings they suppose it to be produced, or crouching from the blink of his all-penetrating eye, which they allege is the lightning's flash." Cognate is the belief of the Blackfeet that winds are caused by the flapping of the wings of a great bird in the mountains.<sup>3</sup>

Among the Algonkian tribes of the Lake Superior region the same, or similar, beliefs are current. Rev. John McLean<sup>4</sup> informs us that the Pottowattamies look on one of the high mountain peaks at Thunder Bay as the abode of the thunder, and that at one time a nest containing the young thunder-birds was there discovered by them.

From Rev. E. F. Wilson<sup>5</sup> we learn that the Ottawas believed the thunder was "a great bird which flapped its wings on high over the

<sup>1</sup> Lacombe, *Dict. de la Langue des Cris* (1874), pp. 575, 262. The thunder-bird is called *piyesis-i. e.*, "bird"—identical with Ojebway *binési*, Mississagua *pinési*, Illinois *pineusen*, Ottawa *pinási*, evidently a common Algonkian word for "bird."

<sup>2</sup> *Narrative of Canad. Explor. Exped. of 1857, etc.* (1860), ii, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> McLean. *The Indians, their Manners and Customs* (1839), p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 182.

<sup>5</sup> *Our Forest Children*. N. S. No. 1 (July, 1889), p. 5.