



of amateurs are dangerous, and I cannot help remembering, in this connection, the extraordinary feat of the late Professor John Campbell, who imagined that he had successfully identified the Dénés of Northwest America with the Tungus of Asia, on the strength of words which, to a Déné scholar, were as un-Déné as possible.¹

The first requisite under such circumstances is a clear concept of what is essential in a word. The comparative philologist must mercilessly reject those consonances which are mere accidents in the structure of two languages, and none but the student who has mastered several dialects of a language can be regarded as really qualified to properly distinguish the essential from the accidental.

And then it is so seldom that one meets with a man who is proof against mixing up words, disfiguring them through transcription or ascribing thereto meanings which they never had!

Take but one instance: while disclaiming any intention of seeing in America anything more than adjuncts from Asia to a population which he probably deems to have been autochthonous, the Norwegian Lewis K. Daa adduced in the Transactions of the Philological Society for 1856 some twenty-two pages filled with what he considered to be terms which have identical structures and meanings in both Asia and America. But some of these would-be assimilations are far from reliable.

To speak of only those of which I am qualified to judge, *sikkane* never meant man in any Déné dialect. It is a corruption by unscholarly fur traders of the compound noun *tsé-kék-ne*, which means: people on the stones, or Rocky Mountains (*i.e.* Mountaineers).

That same author gives, p. 265, the word *ninasta* as the would-be Tahkali, or Carrier, synonym for mother, while on the next page he would have this to be *skaka*. Neither term ever meant mother in Carrier. The former is absolutely unknown to that language, while the latter is nothing else than the Babine *skhakha*, which corresponds to our plural: children.

According to the same philologist, *sak* is the Carrier equivalent of the word wife. That term means in that language: alone, apart (Latin *seorsum*), and forms a part of the adjective *sak-w'sta*, which happens to correspond to the opposite of wife, namely single, or virgin. The transcriber of the same had perhaps in mind *s'at*, which means not wife in general, but my wife.

The term he gives for girl *cekwi* is evidently *t'sékhwi*; but this is synonymous of woman, not of girl, in the same way as his *anna* (or better

¹ "The Dénés of America identified with the Tungus of Asia" (*Ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 167 *et seq.*). See in this connection the latter part of my own essay on "The Use and Abuse of Philology", especially pp. 94-96.