

# INTRODUCTION

TO THE

# STUDY OF INDIAN LANGUAGES,

WITH WORDS, PHRASES, AND SENTENCES TO BE COLLECTED.

In March, 1881, the Smithsonian Institution published a paper entitled "Instructions for research relative to the Ethnology and Philology of America," prepared by Mr. GEORGE GIBBS; an octavo pamphlet of 51 pages, divided into two parts—the first relating to general Ethnology, the second to Philology. Under the first head Mr. Gibbs treated of the facts that should be observed and the material collected relating to "crania," "specimens of art," &c., &c., "names of tribes," "geographical position," "number," "physical constitution," "picture writing," "dress," "food," "dwelling," "arts," "trade," "religion," "government," "social life," "war," "medicines," "literature," "calendar and astronomy," "history and antiquities." Under the head of Philology he gave a brief account of some of the peculiarities of the Indian languages, with general directions for the best methods of collecting certain words; a simple and practical alphabet; and a comparative vocabulary in English, Spanish, French, and Latin. This vocabulary contains 211 words. The whole was followed by Appendix A, "Physical character of the Indian races," with a tabulated statement on particulars of inquiry, and Appendix B, "Numeral Systems." The paper was distributed widely among the missionaries, Indian agents, travelers, and local collectors in Ethnology, and has served a valuable purpose, resulting in the collections, by various persons, of a large number of vocabularies comprising all or nearly all of the languages and dialects of the Indian tribes of the United States and many in British America and Mexico. It served also to direct inquiry in the several branches of Ethnography, of which it treats, resulting in the collection of many valuable notes and minor papers on this subject. It has also led to the collection of a great many articles illustrating the industries, arts, means of subsistence, &c., found among the Indian tribes. It has in fact greatly stimulated investigation, giving wiser direction to inquiry, and the results have abundantly proved the value of the "Instructions" and the wisdom of its publication; and it serves to mark an epoch in the history of ethnographic investigation in America. The material which has thus been accumulated is of great amount, and its study has led to such important conclusions that it is deemed wise to prepare a new system of instruction, more comprehensive in plan and more elaborate in detail. First, it is found necessary to enlarge the alphabet so as to include a greater number of sounds, which have been discovered in the North American languages, and to mark other letters with greater precision. Second, it is necessary to enlarge the vocabulary so as to modify it somewhat, as experience has dictated, so that new words may be collected. Third, it is desirable that many simple phrases and sentences should be given—so chosen as to bring out the more important characteristics of grammatical structure.

In Mythology so much has already been done that it is possible to construct an outline of North American mythology and to give many of its important characteristics. Much has also been discovered in the social and governmental organization of the Indian tribes. This branch of investigation has been carried on to such an extent that many interesting conclusions have been reached, especially by Mr. LEWIS H. MORGAN, and the subject has been placed on a new and scientific basis. In like manner an advanced stage of study has been reached in all the other branches of ethnographic investigation, and that proper advancement may be made in the future, by taking advantage of what has been done in the past, it is proposed to publish a "Manual of North American Ethnography," which will give a brief outline of the subject in its several departments, with instructions and hints to the student.

The present paper is to be one of the chapters in this manual. In its preparation, the alphabet was considered to be of prime importance. After devoting much time to the consideration of the subject, and the examination of many alphabets devised by scholars and linguists, none was found against which there was not serious objections, and the author attempted to devise an alphabet which would contain all the supposed requirements; but there were many difficulties in the way, and many compromises to be made in weighing the various considerations. At this stage of the work he applied to the eminent philologist, Professor W. D. WHITNEY, for assistance. After much consultation and the weighing of the many considerations arising from the large amount of manuscript material in the author's hands, Professor WHITNEY kindly prepared the following paper

## ON THE ALPHABET.

In dealing with a new Indian language in a practical way, one of the first things to be done will naturally be to determine how it shall be written down; what sounds it has, and what characters shall be used to represent them.

This is by no means an easy matter. It is always hard to understand the sounds of an unfamiliar language so thoroughly as to be able to reproduce them with accuracy. Moreover, no two languages are made up of precisely the same sounds. Every Indian tongue will be found to contain