

DERIVATION OF "MANITOBA."



IN a recent number of *Magee's Illustrated Weekly* there is a quotation from the *Helena Independent* under the above title. Living on the spot and being well acquainted with those who, perhaps, first pronounced this now wide-spread name, I may be in a position to correct the *Independent's* erroneous derivation, and give the correct origin of "Manitoba." In the Indian language the word is "Manitowaba," which signifies "the strait" (waba) "of the spirit" (manito). The origin is a legend among the Indians of this quarter, to the effect that, in former times, from the rocks in the narrows of the lake, strange noises were distinctly heard which were, of course, put to the account of the "Manito." And in the course of this Manito's (or fairy's) nightly revels, the beating of his drum was quite intelligible. This noise was heard best in a great calm, so that the Indians themselves repudiate the idea that it was caused by the rolling of the waves on the pebbles along the lake shore. Moreover, the idea of a "speaking god" was never the meaning the Indians intended to give the word, as the "Manito" never addressed them a syllable, not even to invite them to join his dance. This is, as I said, a legend of old nothing remaining at present but the name, the afore-said "Manito" having changed his quarters, in deference, I suppose, to the approach of civilization; so that there is no longer any awe or spell about the place. A free translation of "Manitoba" might be "the fairy's strait". It is the Indian's legendary spot, as their more civilized fellowmen of other countries have theirs. We hear elsewhere of the "Giant's Causeway," "Fairies' Green," "Devil's Leap," etc. The classics had their "siren of old who sang under the sea," the Irish had their fair maiden Fionnuala, who in the waters of Moyle used "to tell to the night star her tale of woes."