

CHAPTER I.

ETHNOLOGICAL SKETCH.—THE NAME "DÉNÉ."

For the benefit of such of my readers as may not have seen my former essays, I must repeat that by Dénés I mean that large family of American Aborigines commonly known under the names of Tinné, Tinnéh, Tenni (Bompas), Tenne (Kennicot) and Athapaskans. As I have already pointed out elsewhere, all of these appellations are inappropriate. For more reasons than one, they should, in my estimation, be discarded in favour of "Déné." Neither Tinné nor Tinnéh have any meaning in the dialect of the many tribes into which that extensive stock is divided. The ethnologists who are responsible for these nicknames gathered them from the desinenes of several tribal names probably badly pronounced, and certainly misspelt, by the earliest *voyageurs* or traders who made mention of these Aborigines. The verbal suffix 'Tinne, or 'Tenne, is evidently the term they aimed at rendering. Now to the native ear the difference between T and 'T is infinitely greater than is with us that which exists between such letters as W and G, since these are commutable in the Aryan languages,* while the former are not in the Déné dialects. Thus, in Carrier, *ta* means "lip," and '*ta* "feather;" *to* means "up," and '*to* "nest;" *tis* stands for "younger sister," and '*tis* for "coals;" *taz* is the root for "heavy," and '*taz* signifies "backward;" *nstailh* is equivalent to "I dance," while '*nstailh* means "I ripen." These contrasts could be multiplied almost *ad infinitum*.

Furthermore, 'Tinne, being a suffix, cannot stand without its verbal support. This would-be noun is composed of the root of the verb *hwo's'ten* (or *kwo's'tin*, etc., according to the dialect) which means "I inhabit," and the personal plural particle *ne* (or *ni*) resulting in the verbal noun *hwo'tenne* (or *kwo'tinni*, etc.) "inhabitants," which when suffixed to a name of river is contracted into '*tenne*, etc., as in *Naz-Koh-tenne*, *Tsip-Keh-tinni*. Thus this pretended word corresponds in every particular—save that in Déné it is a verbal not substantive, affix—to the final *-enses* of Lugdunenses, Massilienses, Carthaginienses, Colossenses, etc. Now who ever dreamt of denominating by that final the latin speaking peoples? Who would, for instance, call *Ens* the French nation

* As is evident from the conversion of William into Gulielmus, Guglielmo, Guillermo, Guilhaume and Guillaume; of War into Guerre and Guerra, etc.; of Warrant into Garantir, etc.