

ethnologists or historians, among whom we must name H. H. Bancroft,¹ would fain do away with the whole difficulty by eliminating all its elements, and pretend that the American Indians are simply autochthonous. But to my mind such a sweeping assertion raises such momentous questions that I prefer to pass it by with the only remark that it could lay claim to greater consideration had not Pasteur's experiments with regard to spontaneous generation ever been made—unless, of course, we should regard the American continent as the cradle of the human race, an hypothesis which is scarcely more tenable than that of the autochthonousness of our Indians.

I, for one, cannot bring myself to entertain such opinions, and must regard the original inhabitants of this continent as emigrants from an older world. Yet it is not my purpose to show in them relatives, or descendants, of any particular race or nation existing under other climes. I merely wish to compare some of the families into which they are divided, especially the Dénés of British North America, with whom I have passed the twenty-four happiest years of my life, with the present inhabitants of northeastern Asia, their neighbours, as it were, and see whether there are between them any points of resemblance which would warrant an ethnological argument.

I am well aware that even such an unpretentious task is fraught with difficulties. The fact that so many wild theories have clamoured for recognition and the very excesses of their promoters cannot but work against all attempts at even mere comparisons. But my purpose is more to state facts than to theorize.

II.

"We may fairly conclude that America was peopled from the north-east part of Asia", writes John McIntosh on page 81 of his book on the "Origin of the North American Indians".² He relies on philology to help him prove this assertion. Unfortunately such a resource has been tried by others without much avail. For, as I wrote myself fifteen years ago, "philology is a double-edged weapon, inasmuch as, in the hands of an injudicious enquirer, it may bring forth nothing but futile and imaginary results".³

McIntosh gives, indeed, three full pages of words from Algonquin, Sioux and other American languages which would seem to corroborate his opinion. But I repeat that philological comparisons at the hands

¹ "The Native Races", Vol. V, p. 129; San Francisco, 1883.

² New York, 1853.

³ "The Use and Abuse of Philology" (Transactions of the Canadian Institute, Vol. VI, p. 85; Toronto, 1899).