

## THE CREE LANGUAGE. BY REV. E. B. GLASS, B.A. (VICTORIA).

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## I.

Of the Algonquin stock, the Plain and Wood Crees use, perhaps, the purest and most euphonic branch amongst the Cree dialects :

## EUPHONY.

On the Saskatchewan 'duck' is 'sesep'; 'duckling,' 'sesepis.' At Moose Factory these words are 'sheshep' and 'sheshepish.' The former two words please the eye and ear, and are readily enunciated. There is a natural tendency to place a vowel between consonants in order to secure agreeable sounds. 'Iron' or 'metal,' is 'pewāpisk,' 'road' is 'māskunow' and 'rail' or 'iron-road' is 'pewāpisko māskunow.' 'Kīyās,' 'old,' 'kākwīya,' 'things'; 'old things' is 'kīyāse kākwīya.'

These Indians do not stammer—they are noted for ready utterance and eloquence. Rapid delivery is necessary on account of the syllabic character of the language, as distinct from the alphabetic of the English and most European languages; therefore euphony must be studied to aid pronunciation. I shall give an illustration :

"The new Government wishes to know how the Crees are prospering," has sixteen syllables. This in Cree is, "Kāōske pūminā'kik weyusowāwin wekiskāye'tum-wuk mā'te kespīn Nāheyāwā peyechehenā'kōō'chekāyēkwānik," and contains thirty-seven syllables. Hence it can be seen that to convey the same idea in the same time as the Englishman, the Cree must speak more quickly.

## PRECISION.

There is a definiteness about this tongue that is very striking, and in contrast to the ambiguity of many other tongues. If an elder brother is referred to it is 'nistās,' 'my brother,' if a younger brother, the word is 'nisēm.' My (elder) sister is 'nimis'; 'my (younger) sister,' 'nisēm.' It is observed that 'nisēm' is either 'my (younger) brother' or 'my (younger) sister'; but it is usual to add, in this case, by way of explanation, "nāpāō," 'man,' and 'iskwāō,' 'woman,' as 'nisēm iskwāō.'

All verbs are precise in first and second plural, and third singular and plural. In English, French, Latin, Greek, "we advise," for instance, is indefinite; but in Cree these forms of the verb leave no doubt in the mind of the reader or hearer addressed. "Ne se'ke'kāmūnān," "we advise," excludes second person or persons, including only first and third; "ke se'ke'kāmūnow," "we advise," takes in first and second only.

In addressing the Deity it is unpardonable to say "kemoostowinānow," "we desire it," which form embraces the first and second persons; "ne moostowinānān" must be used.

If I ask a friend whether Mr. Jackson's son is home, the answer is "āpēyewa," not "apēu"; the latter word is, in substance, "he is home," and refers to Mr. Jackson himself; but "āpēyewa" has the relative ending "yewa," relating to the second party mentioned, that is, the son.

My friend may then say, referring to Jackson and son, "nātwāyē'tum kita pāetu'tūt ootā" "he desires to come here," that is, Jackson. If it is said, "nātwāyē'tum kita pāetu'tāyit ootā," the relation extends to the son, and the meaning is that Jackson wishes his (son) to come here."