

count of things the like of which the narrator has not seen. Such long ages have elapsed since the events hinted at have occurred and so many generations of aborigines have been accustomed to the mode of life of their present descendants that it is but in order to be indulgent when it is a matter of detail.

One and the same personage is also often made to play the role of various historical heroes, as we shall see further on.

Another point of mythological exegesis which it is hardly necessary to mention is that when the narrative, turning into an apologue, introduces animal characters, these are not, of course, to be taken literally.

There is also a last point which might be noted here, that relative to the mystic or sacred numbers of some myths. But this will be found explained at length in the course of my remarks on our first legend.

The Carrier stories are generally much more elaborate and longer than those current among the Eastern Dénés. They evidence also a tendency to become apologues or allegories not to be found in their Eastern counterparts. Must this be regarded as a mark of a more cultivated mind and consequently of later origin, or should their very completeness be looked at rather as indicative of greater purity? This I leave to the reader to decide.

A word now as to the way the texts have been collected. Most published accounts of native legends purport to be the English version of the words of some old Indian written on dictation by the transcriber. I tried this system when I resided among the Tsiṣṭoh'tin some twelve years ago, but the results were most unsatisfactory. I could find no Indian clever enough to dictate to me without interruptions, repetitions or omissions, any single legend. Therefore it is but fair that I should give an idea of my present mode of transcribing aboriginal myths, so that the reader may be in a position to gauge the degree of accuracy of the following texts.

I have a reliable Indian narrate me as clearly as possible the whole of one myth (when this is not too long) in his native language. I then repeat as verbatim as I can what I have heard, subject to corrections when such may be necessary, and then I write down the whole in Indian. My last step is generally to read out my version in the hope of provoking further notices of inaccuracies.

This mode of gathering native legends may appear rather loose and fanciful. Yet it is but justice to myself, no less than to the present versions, to remark that, as I speak Carrier more fluently than English or even than my native French, my thoughts are generally through the channel of the aboriginal idiom, so that I find no great difficulty in