

Breathes over our country,
And breaks down the pine boughs."¹

But while the common speech of some of the tribes seems thus to pass naturally into poetic expression, there are aboriginal chants which sound poorly or even absurdly in a translation. Apart from their natural surroundings they seem to have lost all meaning. Indeed, it sometimes happens, in civilised as in savage life, that, while compositions expressly put forward as poetical, are devoid of meaning, grace or melody, words uttered in joy or grief, or just indignation, glow with the live heat of poetic passion.

This is shown very clearly in the contrast between the "Dakota Mother's Lament," written by Mrs. Riggs, after listening to the wail of a poor, bereaved tenant of the tepee—a production which her learned husband pronounced to the life—and some of the songs of the Dakota people, gathered by Mr. Riggs himself. All these specimens are included in that admirable storehouse of information on the Dakotas, or Sioux, entitled the "Tahkoo-Wahkan, or the Bible among the Dakotas," a work practically out of print, but kindly lent me by Mr. Horatio Hale, a philologist and ethnologist, whom Canada is proud to number among her citizens.

The Indian Mother's Lament consists of five unrhymed stanzas, of which I give a part of the first and the last :—

"Me-choonk-she! Me-choonk-she! My Daughter! My Daughter! Alas! alas! my comfort has departed and my heart is very sad. My joy is turned into sorrow and my song into wailing. Shall I never behold thy sunny smile? The Great Spirit has entered my tepee in anger and taken from me my first, my only child. . . . Me-choonk-she! Me-choonk-she!"

"My Daughter, I come, I come! I bring the parched corn. Oh! how long wilt thou sleep? . . . I will lie down by thy side, . . . and together we will sleep that long sleep from which I cannot awake thee. . . . Me-choonk-she! Me-choonk-she!"

Now, if we compare the foregoing with any translation of the actual songs of the chase, of war, of love or friendship, we cannot but mark the inferiority of the latter.

"Cling fast to me and you'll ever have a plenty,
(bis)
Cling fast to me."

"Whenever we choose,
Together we'll dwell:
Mother so says.
This finger-ring
Put on and wear."

These are Dakota love-songs. Here is a Dakota war-song :—

"Terrifying all I journey,
(bis)
By the Toonk-kan at the North,
Terrifying all I journey."

¹ What is of most interest to the ethnologist regarding the Zuni people, is contained in the admirably illustrated account contributed by Mr. Cushing to the Second Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology. His articles in the Century (Dec., 1882, and Feb. and May, 1883) may also be consulted with advantage.