

Barring the modes of writing in vogue among the Mayas and the ancient Mexicans which, to this day, have remained too little understood to permit of their being safely classed, pictography is the only system which could be put to the credit of the aborigines.

Later inventions, the Micmac hieroglyphs and the Cherokee syllabics, are due to a French priest and to a half-breed respectively, while the Cree syllabary is the work of an English missionary.

The first of these graphic systems dates from as far back as 1656. It was devised by the Rev. C. Le Clercq, a missionary belonging to the Recollet branch of the great Franciscan order. It is ideographical, each sign or cluster of signs representing an idea or a word, and it was not before more than two centuries had elapsed since its invention, that the Rev. C. Kauder, also a Catholic priest, caused books to be printed with those characters.

The Cherokee so-called Alphabet is a set of 85 syllabic signs *plus* a single consonant, 21 of which consist in mere Roman letters made to represent syllables, while a few others are only slight modifications of the same. It was invented in 1821 by a half-blood Cherokee named George Guess and, in my humble opinion, its ready adoption by his tribe despite its utter lack of method and the close resemblance of many of its characters, speaks more for the mental capacities of its members than for the ingenuity of the inventor himself.

As to the Cree Syllabary, it is due to the genius of a Protestant missionary, the Rev. James Evans, who composed it in 1841, while stationed at Norway House, in the Hudson Bay territory. The distinctive and most meritorious feature of those syllabics is the principle according to which the value of a sign changes with the direction it is made to point to relatively to the line. This is an immense advantage which must be put entirely to the credit of Evans alone.

Though originally designed exclusively for the Cree language and, at most, its Algonquin congeners, the use of that syllabary has been extended to the dialects of the Eskimos and,