

TAHKAHT GRAMMAR.

THE LANGUAGE.

PERHAPS it is not fanciful to suppose that the Tahkaht language is in that elementary condition from which the more formed languages have sprung, or rather is exhibiting that incipient process of mutation, by which they came into their present condition. It is easy to detect, underlying the whole, a system of roots; but these, unlike what we are told of the roots of the Chinese tongue, are not generally in themselves words, and suffer so much change by the abbreviation of contraction, or elision, as sometimes to lose their identity. There are appearances of grammatical construction, just enough to indicate an unconscious effort after more systematic expression—an effort continually foiled by the limited reasoning powers of those who use the language. One feature to be noticed is, that it is essentially a language of consonants, all the stress, as a rule, being on these and the main significance contained in them. Owing to this, while it is comparatively easy, after practice and careful listening, to take down the consonants correctly, it is much more difficult, and one is liable to much more mistake, in getting the vowels. This is exhibited in what has before been noticed with regard to the terminal of the tribal names, where all agree with regard to the final *t*, while differing so much in the vowel. Even Indians themselves pronounce uncertainly and variably in this respect. At the same time, after experience, and with