

LEGEND OF THE FIN-BACK WHALE CREST OF THE
HAIDAS, QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S ISLAND, B. C.

THE following story I heard among these people many years ago. What I then learned was merely a fragment of the tale as I know it to-day. After first hearing it, I spared no time or trouble, in order to obtain the whole if possible. Yet with all my labor, through many long years, I am afraid that what I now possess is very far from correct, but am determined to satisfy myself on this point whenever I have an opportunity.

What I do know I give in this paper, believing it to be an interesting piece of Haida Folk-lore.

As a people, the Haidas were, up till lately, divided into a number of *crests*, or clans, each having for its crest some animal, bird, or fish.

There were formerly two principal crests, or as some people style them, phratries, each being divided into a number of smaller ones.

The two principal were the Raven, or as he is called in the Haida language *Chaoeh*, and the Eagle, called *Choot*.

The smaller ones were as follows:—

The Raven contained the Wolf, Bear, *Scannas*, Skate, *Mut* or Mountain-goat, Sea-lion, *Che-moose*,¹ Moon, Sun, Rainbow, and Thunder-bird.

The Eagle contained: the Eagle, Frog, Beaver, Shark, Moon, Duck, Codfish, *Wasco*, a sort of whale, Whale, and Owl. Each of these crests had a legend. Those of the Bear crest and of the Sun crest have already been printed in the Journal of American Folk-Lore. That given in this paper is the legend of the *Scannas* or crest of the fin-back whale, *Orca ater*. *Scanna gan Nuncus* means, the hero or the story of the Fin-Back Crest.

SCANNA GAN NUNCUS.

It has long been related among these people, the Haidas, that at Quilcah, where the oil-works stand, about three miles west from the village of Skidegat's Town, lived, long ago, a boy, who dwelt with his aged grandmother. He was the youngest of a family of eleven sons, both his parents being dead, and also his brothers, of whom I shall say more by and by. Excepting himself and the old woman, no other person lived in that place, all the other Indians in that quarter being on Mand Island. Our hero and his grandmother belonged to a different crest from the others. Close to the spot where they lived were three stone boats or canoes. What is meant

¹ A sea animal, said to live in Skeena River, British Columbia.