

INDIAN NUMERALS.

MR. HALE'S idea of the origin of languages is that in certain instances, especially among such people as our native Indians, a family may have chanced to become separated from the rest of the tribe while hunting, father, mother and elder members of the family have been stricken by some disease and perished, and two or three little children left alone. Such children, he thinks, if they survived, would gradually invent a new language of their own, retaining perhaps a few words or parts of words of their native dialect. In this manner, he thinks, may be accounted for the great diversity of speech among the Indians of the Pacific Coast, where, among the mountains, they would be more likely to lose themselves, and the comparative oneness of speech among the natives of such a wide-open country as Australia.

If there is any good foundation for such a theory as the above, we should expect that the old words retained by these young founders of new varieties of speech would be words of the simplest character, and those most often in use in the domestic circle. And indeed I think we do find that fire, water, I, you, one, two, three, four, five, are the words that generally approach the nearest to one another in a comparison of the different vocabularies.

The North American Indians as a general rule count by the decimal system, as in most civilized countries ; but it is noticeable that after giving a distinct name to each figure from one to five, they, in many of the dialects, seem to commence anew with the figure six, the first part of that numeral sometimes being a contraction or other form of the numeral one, and the latter part of the word seeming to point on towards ten. Thus in the Ojebway we have (1) *pejig*, (2) *nij*, (3) *niswi*, (4) *niwin*, (5) *nanān*, (6) *ningodwaswi*, (7) *nijwaswi*, (8) *nishwaswi*, (9) *shangaswi*, (10) *midaswi*. It will be noticed here that from six to ten inclusive the termination is *aswi ningo*, with which six begins, is another form of *pejig*, never used alone, but only in composition, thus : *ningo-gijik*, one day ; *ningo-tibaigan*, one measure. In the Cree language (another Algonkin dialect) the first ten numerals are as follows : (1) *peyāk*, (2) *niso*, (3) *nisto*, (4) *ne'o*, (5) *niya'nān*, (6) *nikotwasik*, (7) *tepakūp*, (8) *ayena'new*, (9) *keka mita'tat*, (10) *mita'tat*. Here it will be noticed that these Cree numerals resemble those of the Ojebways from one to six, but with seven they branch out into distinct words altogether ; then with ten they come together again, *mita'tat* not being dissimilar to *midaswi*, and still more like *midatcing*, the Ojebway equivalent for "ten times." Neither is the Cree numeral for nine so unlike that of the Ojebways as might at first sight appear. *Keka mitatat* means "nearly ten," and this suggests that the Ojebway word *Shangaswi* may be derived from *chegaiy' midaswi*, near ten.