

when the imitation of the movement of riding signifies a horse, or the pretence of smoking signifies a pipe. The best collections of gesture-language have been made among the wild hunters of the American prairies (see accounts in Tylor's 'Early History of Mankind,' and the special treatise of Mallery, 'Sign-language among the North American Indians'). There is still a considerable use of gesture-language within the Dominion of Canada as a means of intercourse between native tribes ignorant of one another's language, and any observer who will learn to master this interesting mode of communication and record, as used in the wild districts of the Rocky Mountains, and will record the precise signs and their order, may contribute important evidence to the study of thought and language. The observer must take care that he fully understands the signs he sees, which through familiar use are often reduced to the slightest indication; for instance, a Sioux will indicate old age by holding out his closed right hand, knuckles upward; a gesture which a European would not understand till it was more fully shown to him that the sign refers to the attitude of an old man leaning on a staff. The sequence of the gesture-signs is as important as the signs themselves, and there is no better way of contributing to this subject than to get a skilled sign-interpreter to tell in gestures one of his stories of travelling, hunting, or fighting, and carefully to write down the description of these signs in order with their interpretations.

Coming now to the philological record of native languages, it must be noticed that small vocabularies, &c., drawn up by travellers, are useful as materials in more thorough work, but that the treatment of a language is not complete till it has been reduced to a regular grammar and dictionary. As to several Canadian languages this has been done, especially by the learned missionaries Fathers Barraga, Lacombe, Cuog, and Petitot, who have published excellent works on the Ojibway, Cree, Iroquois, and Athapaskan (Denedinjie) languages respectively; while Howse's Grammar is a standard Algonkin authority, and it is hoped that the knowledge of Mr. McLean and others of the Blackfoot language may be embodied in a special work. On the other hand, the study of languages west of the Rocky Mountains is in a most imperfect state. Nothing proves this better than the volume of 'Comparative Vocabularies of the Indian Tribes of British Columbia,' by W. Fraser Tolmie and George M. Dawson, published by the Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada. These vocabularies of the Thlinkit, Tshimsian, Haida, Kwakwiool, Kawitshin, Aht, Tshinook, and other languages are important contributions to philology, well worth the pains and cost of collecting and printing; but the mere fact that it was desirable to publish these vocabularies of a few pages shows the absence of the full grammars and dictionaries which ought to be found. This want is felt even in districts where there are white missionaries using the native languages, and native teachers acquainted with English, so that the necessary philological material actually exists, and only the labour of writing it down is required to preserve it from destruction. A general effort, if now made, would save the record of several dialects on the point of disappearance. It is suggested by the Committee that inquiry should be made for lists of words, &c., hitherto unpublished; that the terms and phrases possessed by interpreters should be taken down; that sentences and narratives should be copied with the utmost care as to pronunciation and accent, and translated word by word.