

ON THE CLASSIFICATIONS OF THE DÉNÉ TRIBES.

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THE fifth volume of the "Transactions of the Canadian Institute" contained a paper by the Rev. John Campbell, LL.D., which could not fail to interest me.* To say that, after a careful perusal of its pages, all doubt and uncertainty as to the origin of my Déné Indians have vanished from my mind would certainly be going beyond the truth. It may be that I am too exacting; but, as I went on reading, I could not but mentally formulate the strongest objections against, especially, the philological portion of the reverend author's effort. My intention to-day is not to expatiate on what I consider the shortcomings of that most important part of his essay, nor do I even wish to take exception to his conclusions. I intend to confine my attention to answering a few questions, correcting some misinformation and supplying omissions, and that in so far only as I am directly or indirectly concerned. In other words, I would beg to hazard a few remarks on the classifications of the Northern Dénés, such as reviewed by Prof. Campbell.

I hold that the reverend gentleman needlessly impugns the accuracy or appositeness of my information on the subject, such as embodied in my previous communications to the Institute, and, were his queries and hints left unanswered, ethnology would retrograde, on that particular point, to what it was ten years ago. Nor should it be forgotten that other well-meaning ethnographers have lately re-edited the errors against which I have several times protested. Hence the necessity of the following remarks.

Before going any further, and the better to define once for all our respective positions, may I, at the risk of appearing egotistical, be pardoned a remark of a somewhat personal character? † Ethnographers

* "The Dénés of America identified with the Tungus of Asia." My interest in that essay will appear so much the more natural as, some years ago, I published myself a short paper "Déné Roots," the main object of which was to ask for the collaboration of philologists towards the discovery of the Dénés' origin.

† The fact that the opening pages of my first paper contributed to the Institute were devoted to a criticism of an inaccurate classification of the Dénés, a criticism which Prof. Campbell now implicitly rejects, must be my excuse for offering remarks of such a personal character. People should know the grounds of my assurance, so that they may gauge the degree of accuracy of my information. A good point in favour of Prof. Campbell's essay is that, in common with a few other ethnographers, he has adopted the name Déné, which is the only appropriate word to represent that great aboriginal family which in other quarters continues to be called Athapaskan or Timneh.