

INTRODUCTION.

"Archæological" is rather inappropriate in connection with the present monograph, whose scope embraces nothing archæan or really ancient. The prehistoric Dénés are the Dénés of but yesterday. For, what are the one hundred years which have elapsed since the discovery of their country compared with the twenty or more centuries which separate us from the famous civilizations of ancient Egypt and Assyria? Yet, to check possibly too sanguine expectations from such archæologists as may happen to read these lines, I hasten to declare that it is perhaps more easy to present the lover of technological lore with graphic illustrations of the arts and industries which flourished among the subjects of the Pharaohs and the Assyrian monarchs, than to thoroughly illustrate from actual specimens the *ensemble* of the arms, working implements, household utensils and ceremonial paraphernalia, which should concur in reconstructing the peculiar mode of life pursued by the primitive Dénés. The original Egyptians and Assyrians have left us, besides authentic records of their own doings on imperishable material what promises to prove well nigh unlimited stores of practical illustrations of their past sociology in their tombs, their temples and other public monuments. So that the antiquarian's task is greatly facilitated by the abundance of the material at his command. Furthermore, where the hieroglyphic and cuneiform chronicles fail to clear up difficulties of interpretation or to enlighten him on the particular use of ancient implements, he has only to delve into Herodotus and other historians for the desired light.

Not so, however, with regard to the prehistoric Dénés. As I have elsewhere demonstrated,* that family of American aborigines, and more especially the Carrier tribe to which prominence will be given in the following pages, is characterized by a wonderful power of imitation and self-adaptation which prompted it, upon the advent of the whites, to discard most of its native customs, indigenous weapons and working implements. As a natural consequence, many of the latter are now in a fair way towards complete obliteration. Moreover, the nation's historians, I mean the old men who witnessed the manufacture and use of some archæological articles the duplicates of which have caused speculations from more than one antiquarian, are fast disappearing from

* Are the Carrier Sociology and Mythology Indigenous or Exotic?" Trans. Roy. Soc. Canada, Section II. 1892.