

What is Chinook anyhow, and how can It pretend to be a Universal Language?

Such was a question found in one of the "Kamloops Wawa's" exchanges, to which it was necessary to answer. As the answer may be of some interest and information to the readers of this paper, it will be reproduced here.

Chinook, as used in the "Wawa," is not an Indian language: it is only a Jargon. Our Indians are not Chinook Indians, but British Columbia Indians, what the ethnologists call the Salish stock of Indians—Salish, after the word *Shaleesh*, means "knife" in the Thompson language, the old Indians of that tribe being always on the defensive, and constantly carrying a knife with them under their clothing,—hence the name of *Shaleesh* or Salish. They speak Thompson, Stalo, Okanagan, Lillooet, Shushwap, Skwamish, Seashel and other Salish dialects.

What, then, are the Chinook Indians? The Chinooks proper are, or rather were, a tribe of Indians from Oregon, somewhere about the mouth of the Columbia river. Their language, the Chinook proper, was as different from the Chinook Jargon as Greek is from Gaelic. In the Jargon used in the "Kamloops Wawa" there are scarcely over fifty words of Chinook origin. The origin of each word in our Chinook vocabulary will be given in some future issue of this paper.

How can this Jargon pretend to be a universal language? At least as reasonably as the Volapük; for where is the Volapük spoken?—whereas, without pretending to make the Chinook the language of the twentieth century, it is true to say that it is understood by 20,000 or 30,000 people in British Columbia, Washington and Oregon. As it is a trade or international language, it is used by Indians, Chinamen and Whites and Europeans of all descriptions. Hundreds of people, former residents of these countries, have now carried with them their little knowledge of Chinook to every corner of the world. There are some very amusing instances of Chi-

nook becoming very handy on the streets of London, England, in South Africa or in Australia.

In the Chinook vocabulary given in the "Kamloops Wawa," can be remarked, in the spelling of the words, a difference to that found in English hand-books of Chinook. Here we have *Aiak*, instead of *Iy-ack*. In answer, it is sufficient to state that neither French nor English orthography is here used, but simply a phonography of sounds. See next issue for the explanation of our Chinook pronunciation. Indeed, the "Wawa" has already succeeded in unifying the writing and pronunciation of the Chinook among its readers.

Our Chinook up this way may have very striking differences from the one spoken in Oregon or Washington, and even along the sea coast of British Columbia and on Vancouver Island. Phonography has not yet been introduced in those countries, and we have not had many opportunities of comparison. But the discrepancies are not such as to prevent mutual understanding. As soon as the advantages of the Chinook writing are made known in those other districts, all those difficulties will be smoothed away.

The "Kamloops Wawa," complete from the beginning, has been taken by the British Museum, London, by the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, by the Provincial Library of British Columbia; by the Laval University, Quebec, who all remitted very willingly for the paper.

"Kamloops Wawa" would be glad to know of other places where it might find a similar welcome.

This paper has, thus far, pretty well supported itself, notwithstanding some extra expenses which were unavoidable at the start. Yet it is still a source of anxiety to us. It costs now from \$700 to \$1,000 per annum, and we are not too confident of finding all that among the Indians of this country. Indians are very slow in paying; and, in truth, they are not so very well off. We wish there were resources enough from the outside to let them have their paper at a nominal figure.

Will any bookseller or news-agent happening to read this, and willing to handle the paper at a liberal commission, please correspond.