

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

The University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma

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Preface Text Appendix

Dear Mr/ Weygold:

I have read Brinton's book with much interest, and it has led me to alter my original idea for the book I have long had in mind/. I suggested that very roughly in a previous letter. Now I would like to go into it more fully/.

I believe that there is no book which deals with our American mythology in a comprehensive manner, or which makes any attempt to arrange or narrate the general stories of the races. That is to say, there is no one popular and well illustrated book which does for our American Mythology what the numerous handbooks have done for Classical and Norse mythology. All I have seen, and I have read a good many, deal with fragmentary and tribal myths selected at random, without any conception of their relation or inner meaning, or any recognition of a wide-spread unity throughout our continent/.

I believe that such a book would meet with instant welcome and long continued sales--IF well written and arranged and composed of well selected myths/ and IF it were well illustrated. The book would then appeal to schools and general readers, who have heretofore taken only a languid interest in Indian myths, as merely childish stories.

For a long time I have wanted to write such a book, though I must confess that I had not thought of going so far afield for my materials as Brinton does/. Now the matter is clearing itself in my mind, and I think that I am beginning to see my way to doing it/. There are plenty of cheap books of adapted and expurgated myths gathered at random from one or a few tribes and hastily printed in cheap editions with cheap and disgusting illustrations/. For example-- but you need no examples/.

Our book would be something new in this field/. For 1. it would not be narrow in scope, or deal with random stories of one tribe or one class of tribes. 2/. It would give a comprehensive and essential view of the best told versions of the great myths(mentioned in Brinton(Serpent, Bird, Deluge, Manibozho etc etc) in a reasonable order. 3. It would sympathetically and well illustrated, if you undertake the work. 4. It would appeal to ALL Americans, not merely to those acquainted with a particular tribe/.

My plan for the book would be to have a good ~~xxxx~~ preface giving the essential meaning and relations of the myths, and their relation to the myths of other lands...(based, to some extent on Brinton and others) , and following this a series of perhaps a dozen of the great representative myths (chosen from the many versions for the most poetical forms and most clear style) (Possibly rewritten in parts to include the best versions of the same myth, where details of one version surpass those of another?), all well illustrated. Finally, an appendix, giving such data as scholars might find of interest.

My idea would be to use myths from ~~all~~ the tribes ~~xxxxxxxx~~ of the whole continent, Mayas, Aztecs, Algonkins, Eskimo, etc etc/.

*Show
1. Unity
2. Beauty
3. Meaning*

*Down in American
to Helen Down*