

## LINGUISTICS.



### THE PRESENT STATUS OF AMERICAN LINGUISTICS.

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[Abstract.]

THE survey of American linguistics which I shall present to you shall have as its chief object the indication of the fields which have been least cultivated, and which, for this reason, demand the closer attention of future workers.

In the extreme north, the various Eskimo dialects have of late been studied by a number of competent observers, and their relationship rendered more clear, while their sharp contrast to the Ural-Altaic languages has become evident. In the Déné, or Athabaskan, the labors of the Rev. A. J. Morice in the west have supplied excellent material for the important comparisons which should be instituted between the Déné of the northern interior and the dialects of the coast, and the Navaho and Apache of the south. The relationship of the northwest coast tongues has been most fruitfully examined by Dr. Boas, whose conclusions will be laid before this Congress.

Throughout the United States the native tongues have long been systematically studied by the linguists of the Bureau of Ethnology, and many interesting discoveries have resulted. The linguistic map lately issued by the Bureau will long be the guide to laborers in this field. To Mr. Horatio Hale we owe, among many other valuable contributions, the discovery of the extension of the Dakota stock to the eastern seaboard among the Tuteloes, a suggestion followed up by Messrs. Gatschet and Dorsey in the identification of the Biloxis, and probably the Catawbas, as other members of the same family. We still ask further evidence of the identification of the Cherokee with the Iroquois; and the stocks of Texas, Southern Florida and Southern California are not yet positively established.

In Mexico, under the active supervision of Dr. Antonio Penafiel, a mass of material has been collected in the shape of vocabularies by the Ministerio del Fomento; but practically none of this has been

published. It is very likely that entirely new and unknown linguistic stocks survive in this republic, and it is certain that of many languages and dialects still spoken there we possess only the most meager information. We cannot too strongly urge upon the intelligent scholars of our sister republic to collect and publish the new linguistic material which is at their hands in the less traveled portions of their own country.

The same cannot be said of the Central American, or, as I have called it in my work on "The American Race," the "Inter-Isthmian" region. I do not believe that a single new stock will be discovered between the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and that of Panama; and the only important historic tribe which we cannot assign to its linguistic place is the Guetares of Costa Rica. Dr. C. Sapper, of Guatemala, has, indeed, recently promised me a vocabulary of a new stock from Tapachula, but I shall be surprised if on receipt it does not turn out to be one already familiar.\*

Passing to South America, I avail myself of this opportunity to make public for the first time a conclusion which I have reached, opposed not only to the opinion hitherto always expressed by linguists, but to my own former statements. This opinion, so long held, is that the linguistic stocks of South America are more numerous than those of North America. This view I have been obliged to renounce after a prolonged and special study of all the accessible materials concerning South American languages. I am persuaded that the really astonishing multitude of dialects there found will resolve themselves into a comparatively small number of stocks, less, certainly, than those already recognized in the northern continent.†

The interesting question of the possible relationship of some of these stocks with tongues on the northern continent has been noted by Herzog, Uhle, Adam, Ernst, and others, and is eminently deserving of continued investigation. It cannot be said that, up to the present, wholly satisfactory results have been reached.

We have recent and excellent studies of the Carib by Von den Steinen and Adam, of the Southern Brazilian dialects by Ehrenreich,

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\* This proved to be the case, as it is found to be a dialect of the Zoque-Mixe family.

† Some evidence may be seen in my *Studies of South American Native Languages*. (Philadelphia, 1892.)

of the Pano by R. de la Grasserie, who also contributes one on the Puquina to this Congress, on the Kechua, by Middenorff, on the Tupi by Nogueira, Rodrigues and Seybold, on the Chaco dialects by Lafonequevedo, on the Yahcan by Brydges and Hyades; but we have inadequate information of the numerous tongues spoken along the great divide between the basins of the La Plata and Amazon rivers; of those which still survive in the mountains of Southern Colombia and Ecuador, and in Andaqui and the neighboring provinces. We have yet to establish the relationship, if any exists, between the Patagonian Tzoneca, the tongues of Fuegia, and the Great Araucan and Chaco families to the north. Nor can it be allowed that the last word has been said as to the connection of the Aymara with the Kechua, or of the Arawack with the Tupi.

These are hasty references to the geographical lacunæ which are visible on the linguistic map of America; but there are others keenly felt by the student who is in earnest on this subject. He perceives that not only in some localities the material does not exist, but that in others, while it does exist, it remains inaccessible. Here is where we should appeal urgently to governments, learned societies and the intelligent wealthy for aid. We shall never know Nahuatl till the great history written in that language by Father Sahagun, the unique manuscript of which is in the Medicean Library in Florence, is published; we can never learn the full resources of the Maya language until the dictionary written at the Convent of Motul in the middle of the sixteenth century is printed, two manuscripts of which exist—one in my possession. In similar case is the Micmac-English Dictionary of Rand, the Cakchiquel Dictionary of Coto, and many others. How fruitful has been the liberality of Julius Platzmann in republishing extremely rare works on American languages! How valuable the *Library of American Linguistics*, edited by Shea; the *Bibliothèque de Linguistique Américaine*, published under the auspices of various French scholars in Paris; and the similar series brought out by Alphonse Pinart!

I have scarcely left myself room to refer to many scholars who have made general or special studies on American languages, such as Friedrich Mueller, who, in his epochal *Grundriss der Sprachwissenschaft*, offers a systematic analysis of over forty of them; of Lucien Adam, who, besides general studies, has published model monographs on the Chapanec, Mosquito, etc.; of Charencey, whose *Chrestomathie*

*Maya* merits the highest commendation; of Dr. Stoll, who has taken as his field the numerous South Maya dialects; of Dr. Sapper, whose recent linguistic map of Guatemala is most satisfactory; or Dr. Darapsky, whose analyses of South American groups are always scholarly; of the Licentiate Belmar, who is exploring the untilled field of South Mexican dialects; of Fernandez Ferraz, to whom we owe valuable publications on Central American native tongues; of Dr. Leon, who has opened the treasures of the Tarascan; of the Abbé Petitot, whose *Dene Dictionary* is the standard; of Rink and Bourquin, whose works on the Eskimo are unsurpassed; and in this list of those who have lent the greatest aid to American linguistics it would be a signal omission to forget the name of James C. Pilling, whose bibliographies of the native languages of North America are unequalled in their class for fullness and accuracy.