

is the true cause of the large incorporative power of the American tongues, which in many of them culminates in an extended polysynthetism, and embodies whole sentences in one single verbal form.

At a time when the principal languages and dialects of Asia, Africa and Australasia, the living as well as the extinct, are being investigated with uncommon ardor; myths, popular songs, dirges and speeches collected, published and commented upon with erudition and corresponding success, very few of the American languages, North and South, have been the object of thorough research. There is no scarcity of thorough linguists among us, but the reason for their want of activity in this direction simply lies in the want of proper encouragement from the authorities, the publishers, the press and the public. This is very discouraging, we confess; but it shall not hinder us from examining somewhat closer this topic, and from trying to get at the true facts.

The general public is very ignorant of languages and linguistics, and as a rule confounds linguistics with philology. Many people have a horror of philology because the Latin and Greek paradigms which they had to study in college classes, recall to them the dreariest days of "compulsory education," juvenile misery and birch-rod executions. From these two languages they infer, superficially enough, that the study of all other foreign tongues must involve similar mental torments. Others believe that the Indian languages are not real tongues, deserving to be termed so; but only thwarted productions of the diseased heathen mind, because they do not agree with classical models, nor with the grammar of the primeval language of the world, the Hebrew, "which was spoken in paradise."

The majority, however, suppose that any Indian language is simply "a gibberish not worth bothering about;" they ought to remember that every language, even the most harmonious and perfect, is a gibberish to those who do not understand it, sounding unpleasantly to their ears, because they are unaccustomed to its cadences and phonetic laws. The mastering of a language is the only remedy against a certain repugnance to it on the side of the listener.

A further objection which is sometimes raised against studying the tongues of the Red Man, consists in the erroneous assertion that they have no literature of their own. This statement is founded on a profound ignorance of existing facts, and moreover, is only the expression of the old-fashioned, mistaken idea that languages should be studied only on account of their literatures, thus confounding philology with linguistics. Indians never did and do not write down their mental produc-