

ishing number of totally distinct languages which are spoken in the region bordering on the west coast of America. To appreciate this difficulty, we may contrast it with the simplicity of the problem which encountered those scholars who, in the last century, had to inquire into the connection between the Polynesian islanders and the races of Eastern Asia. Here the number of continental languages was small, and several of them, composing the monosyllabic group, were so utterly alien in character to the Polynesian tongues that no connection with them could reasonably be imagined. The comparison was practically narrowed down to some five or six idioms, — the Malayan family, the Korean language, the Japanese, the Ainu, and possibly one or two more northern tongues. In making this comparison, the resemblance between the Polynesian and the Malayan idioms became so instantly and decisively apparent that no doubt as to the conclusion could be felt by any scientific student of language.

On the American side, all is different. We find a long stretch of sea-coast, extending from north to south more than seven thousand miles, and inhabited by numerous tribes, speaking a vast number of distinct idioms, no one of which has any peculiar predominance, or presents any special characteristics inviting a comparison with the Polynesian tongues. The latest researches have shown that the total number of American languages spoken on or near the Pacific coast considerably exceeds a hundred, and that these belong to at least forty distinct stocks. On the latter point I can speak with some confidence. In making the ethnographic survey of Oregon, I found within the narrow limits of that territory, extending from Puget's sound to the northern boundary of California, and covering only seven degrees of latitude, no less than twenty-three languages, belonging to twelve stocks as distinct from one another as the Malayan is from the Japanese.

But of this large number of western American families, not one half have been studied grammatically. Of the rest we have merely vocabularies. This circumstance, while it might seem to lighten the labor of the comparison, would at the same time