

be correct and the talker wrong. It is an old adage about oral speech that a man who understands but one language understands none. The science of a sign-talker possessed by a restrictive theory is like that of Mirabeau, who was greater as an orator than as a philologist, and who on a visit to England gravely argued that there was something seriously wrong in the British mind because the people would insist upon saying "give me some bread" instead of "*donnez moi du pain*," which was so much easier and more natural. A designedly ludicrous instance to the same effect was Hood's arraignment of the French because they called their mothers "*mares*" and their daughters "*fillies*." Not binding ourselves to theories, we should take with caution any statement from a person who, having memorized or hashed up any number of signs, large or small, has decided in his conceit that those he uses are the only genuine *simon-pure*, to be exclusively employed according to his direction, all others being counterfeits or blunders. His vocabulary has ceased to give the signs of any Indian or body of Indians whatever, but becomes the vocabulary of Dr. Jones or Lieutenant Smith, the proprietorship of which he fights for as did the original Dr. Townsend for his patent medicine. When a sign is contributed by one of the present collaborators, which such a sign-talker has not before seen or heard of, he will at once condemn it as bad, just as a United States Minister to Vienna, who had been nursed in the mongrel Dutch of Berks County, Pennsylvania, declared that the people of Germany spoke very bad German. The experience of the present editor is that the original authorities, or the best evidence, for Indian signs—*i. e.*, the Indians themselves—being still accessible, the collaborators in this work should not be content with secondary authority. White sign-talkers and interpreters may give some genuine signs, but they are very apt to interpolate their own inventions and deductions. By gathering the genuine signs alone we will be of use to scholars, and give our own studies proper direction, while the true article presented can always be adulterated into a composite jargon by those whose ambition is only to be sign-talkers instead of making an honest contribution to ethnologic and philologic science. The few direct contributions of interpreters to the present work are, it is believed, valuable, because they were made without expression of self-conceit or symptom of possession by a pet theory.

So far as only concerns the able gentlemen who have favored this Bureau with their contributions there is no need to continue these remarks. Suffice it to repeat with more emphasis, that their criticisms and suggestions are invited as to all matter herein contained, even to the details of grouping and title-words in the alphabetic arrangement, synonyms, and cross references. In the present private and tentative work many hundreds of separate slips of paper are for the first time connected together, thereby rendering perfect order unexpected. It may be mentioned that some of the title-words and phrases which have a quaint appearance are those used by the older printed authorities, for which it is not always safe to supply a synonym, and the signs of those same authorities being the most curtly and obscurely described of all in the collection, there is no alternative but to print them as they stand for such use as may be possible, which will chiefly be in their bearing upon the questions of persistency and universality. The present edition will allow the verbal expressions of the living and accessible to be revised and to be compared with, thus perhaps to correct the imperfections of descriptions made by the dead and inaccessible; but the language of the latter cannot now be changed. The arrangement of the VOCABULARY is more to group the concepts than the English title-words according to the synonyms of that language. A further step in the study will be to prepare a synoptic arrangement of