

of subjects, which play no part in the practical usefulness of after life. But perhaps you will say that the study of words and the study of composition will not develop the reasoning powers; if so, you are greatly mistaken. No other study will tend to whet your mind to so discriminating a point as that of the study of words. What game requires the reasoning faculties to be on the alert so much as chess? Yet the study of composition is nothing more than a game of literary chess, in which the single shifting of a word may undo the whole game of sense. But enough about the study of composition. Let me now turn to the derivation and origin of words. There is no language that requires the same digging and delving in order to reach the first strata as the English. Like the nation, which has derived its strength from so many sources, our language partakes of the healthy origin of our people, and flows in one grand and mighty tide, fed by a band of streams, the fountain heads of which are hidden among the rugged wilds of the past, and as they sound down the valleys of time, bright accents of peace and pæans of progress sweep o'er their bosoms with such majestic melody that they noiselessly blend with the measureless notes that play upon the great ocean of eternity. Yes, Briton and Roman, Saxon and Dane, Angle and Norman, hold notes in the great bank of the English language. As you put your hand in to draw in this great lottery of language, you may bring to the surface a word which had birth by the boiling springs of Iceland, or perhaps was nurtured amid the vine-clad hills of Spain. It is this composite character that makes the English language superior to all others; for we have in it a portion of the depth of the German, the gaiety of the French, the majesty of the Spanish, the nobility of the Greek and the softness of the Italian. We

are indeed proud of our English language, for it is no quilt patchwork, but a blending of all the beautiful colours in the many languages of the world. I cannot expect in this essay to go into the philosophy of language or shew the diversity which characterizes the English tongue as spoken in different ages; such a disquisition would require a paper in itself. It may, however, be safely stated that the English language as spoken to-day began to take shape and form about the thirteenth century, or coeval with that period when Macaulay says the English nation began to take shape and form. We know that during the Norman period French was largely spoken in England, and hence nearly four-fifths of the foreign words in the English language can be traced to the French, which makes it difficult at times to determine whether a word has been taken from the Latin through the French or directly from the Latin. After the French Provinces had been wrested from the feeble hands of King John, the Norman of England fought against the Norman of France, and then it was that the English language, with the English nation, began to evolve. But perhaps you may ask me what are the chief causes of the diversity of languages. There are three grand causes. 1st. Difference of occupation; the vocabulary of a shepherd must differ from that of a mariner. 2nd. Difference of improvement in sciences and the arts of life. 3rd. Difference of climate by bringing different classes of objects before the mind. Another cause of diversity in language is as the distinguished philosopher, William Von Humboldt, says, "that no one assigns precisely the same meaning to a word which another does, and a shade of meaning, be it ever so slight, ripples on like a circle in the water through the entirety of lan-