

ON SOME IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES OF COMPARATIVE GRAMMAR AS EXEMPLIFIED IN ABORIGINAL AMERICAN LANGUAGES.

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SO soon as a scholar seeks to acquire the knowledge of a language other than his own, he enters the domain of comparative philology. It is impossible for him to proceed in his studies with any degree of intelligence, without comparing his native forms of speech with those of the language he strives to master. The declensions and conjugations of Latin, Greek, Sanscrit, French, German open up a new world to one who has known little more of declension than a possessive case, and whose ideas of conjugation are largely limited to the use of auxiliaries. The divinity student, whose mother tongue is Gaelic or Erse, is not astonished to find only two tenses in his Hebrew and Chaldean verb and to meet with the pronoun as a suffix instead of a prefix, because these are in accord with the genius of Celtic grammar; but his English-speaking companions awake, in the study of these languages, to the realization of a new order of thought. Grammar is found not to be the same all the world over; the mechanical disappears in the philosophical; and the memorizer of forms becomes an observer of mental processes. In the syntax of different languages he learns what prominence is given by those who speak them to existence, quality, personality, action, time, modality, relation, and instrumentality; and grammar thus becomes

a psychological phenomenon worthy of any man's investigation. Such studies have generally been pursued within the narrow range of the Indo-European languages, to which the Semitic have occasionally been added. The Turanian languages have been paid little attention to, save by professed philologists, although it is among them that the simplest representations of mental processes are to be found. Nearly all the shades of Turanian grammatical distinction appear in the tongues of this continent, and I propose to refer briefly to some of them in this connection.

The student of Latin, Sanscrit, or German grammar knows that prepositions are not always placed before the words they govern, but that they sometimes merit to be called postpositions. Thus in *Æthiopia tenus*, *Italiam versus*, *meum*, *Ehre halber*, *Uns entgegen*, *die Nacht durch*, we have the impossible English constructions, *Æthiopia as far as*, *Italy towards*, *me with*, *honour for the sake of*, *us against*, but also one that is possible, *the night through*. The Latin frequently dispenses with a preposition, which is not therefore regarded as unexpressed, but is recognized in the case-ending of the word governed. Was this case-ending originally a postpositional particle in Latin, and in Greek, Sanscrit, German and other languages possessing declension?