

in European countries; and with the assistance of the Greek, and a slight knowledge of the demotic characters previously known, the hieroglyphic symbols were deciphered, the three inscriptions having been shown the similar in meaning. The inscription was an ordinance of the priests of Egypt, decreeing certain honors to Ptolemy Epiphanes on the occasion of his coronation, 196 B. C. Ptolemy Epiphanes was one of a Greek line of sovereigns in that country, and the inscription was written in the Greek language for the convenience of the mixed population of Egypt under its Greek rulers. By this means the alphabet of the hieroglyphics was made out, and a new flood of light thrown on the ancient history of Egypt. It is stated that the great work of deciphering was principally effected by the French savant Champollion.

In all parts of the world the human organs of speech are the same; their mode of action is the same; and therefore the sounds they are capable of producing are the same. These sounds, it is said, do not probably exceed one hundred, and all the languages of the world are formed out of this number, each nation adopting a comparatively small number to express its own ideas, and of which our own English claims forty one. The examination of the sounds of a language constitutes phonetics. Mr. Peile in his popular work on Philology, says: "Some sounds are more difficult than others. As a rule we find the same sounds altered in different ways in different languages. These two kinds of change produced in the beginning the differences of languages, which differences increased according as the languages once separated varied their forms still further, and also increased their stock of words by borrowing from different sources. As an example of the first kind of change let us take the sound of *k* (*c*) in Latin. In French it is changed into *ch*; so *camera* becomes *chambre*, though sometimes the *a* may change afterwards into *i* or *e* as in *chien* (*canis*), *cheminée* (*caminus*). As an example of the rejection of sounds in a language, we can again compare the Latin and French. Taking the sound of *h* once more, from *habere* we have *avoir*. The French also disliked *p* or *b* in the middle of a word; so that

the Latin *ripa* became *rive*, and *avoir*, as already noticed, drops the *b* from *habere*."

In examining the history of language, therefore, we find from its elementary sounds what a multiplicity and variety has been produced. As mankind from the earliest times have been scattering and spreading from the original dwelling place of the human race, placing themselves under the various circumstances of climatic influences, which have produced such a variety of physical development; so likewise under ever changing conditions and necessities did their ideas vary with their surroundings, new thoughts being inspired as the boundaries of their domain were extended, and calling for expression in words or signs which the mother tongue failed to supply, but which the inventive genius of man created, in the natural effort to meet his wants, and discharge his duties as a social being. Thus we find that languages multiplied, and at the present day there are nine hundred known to science, according to Max Müller; whilst amongst savage nations, language is in a continual state of flux, and it is said that in America an Indian language does not last more than a generation; the change of vocabulary is so rapid, that a book when translated may be totally unintelligible to the children of those for whom the translation was made.

There are some countries in which the entire native population speak one language, as in Italy, Portugal, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. In other countries two, three, or even more are spoken by large bodies of the people, as in Great Britain, France, Holland, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Russia, Switzerland, and the United States. In Switzerland three languages, the German, French and Italian are to some extent regarded as national languages; in all other countries one language only has the character of a national language, though in some cases, as in Belgium, Austria and Hungary, it is the mother tongue of a minority of the population.

The future aspect of the language question was recently discussed with considerable interest at Manchester, England, where a jubilee celebration of phonography was held last Sept. Several papers on phonetics were read at this