

the undeserved insinuations to which we allude. We shall give an example or two from the earlier writers. The extraordinary capacity of compounding words, which is so remarkable in the Indian languages, was remarked upon so long ago as the time of the celebrated New England missionary, called *apostle Eliot*; who, in his *Grammar of the Massachusetts Indian Language* (first published at Cambridge, New England, in 1666, and republished at Boston, in 1822), thus speaks of it: "This language doth greatly delight in compounding of words for abbreviation, to speak much in few words, though they be sometimes long, which is chiefly caused by the many syllables which the grammar rule requires, and suppletive syllables, which are of no signification, and curious care of euphonic." Again; speaking of that very remarkable feature of these languages, the want of the verb *to be*, Eliot says: "We have no compleat distinct word for the verb substantive, as the learned languages and our English tongue have, but it is under a regular composition, whereby many words are made verb substantive;" of which he gives an example, corresponding to the modes of formation existing in these languages at the present day: "The first sort of verb substantives is made by adding any of these terminations to the word—*yewoo*, *oo*, *ooo* (i. e., *yew-oo*, *a-oo*, *o-oo*)—with due euphonic; and this is so, be the word a noun, as *wosketomp-o-oo* (he is a man), or adnoun, as *wompivyew-oo* (it is white), or be the word an adverb, or the like." As to the copiousness of these languages, Mr. Du Pontceau observes, that it has been said, and will be said again, "that savages, having but few ideas, can want but few words, and therefore that their languages must necessarily be poor:" to which opinion he replies by this appeal: "Whether savages have or have not many ideas, it is not my province to determine: all I can say is, that, if it is true, that their ideas are few, it is not less certain that they have many words to express them. I might even say, that they have an innumerable quantity of words; for, as Colden justly observes, they have the power of compounding them without end." As a further proof, he adds the fact, that Mr. Zeisberger's dictionary of one of the Iroquois languages—the Onondago (in German and Indian)—consists of seven quarto manuscript volumes, equal to 1775 full pages of writing, consisting of German words and phrases, with their translation into Indian; upon which he justly remarks,

"that there are not many dictionaries of this size; and, if this is filled, as there is no reason to doubt, with genuine Iroquois, it is in vain to speak of the poverty of that language." We add one more testimony, of an ancient date, respecting the North American dialects. It is that of the celebrated Roger Williams, who was distinguished for his knowledge of the Indian languages. So long ago as 1648, he published his valuable little work (reprinted by the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1827) called "A Key into the Language of America," that is, of New England; and, in describing his work, he says, "The English for every Indian word or phrase stands in a straight line directly against the Indian; yet sometimes there are two words for the same thing, for their language is exceeding copious, and they have five or six words sometimes for one thing." The same copiousness is found to exist in the languages of Middle America, as was made known to the European world, long ago, by Clavigero, in his *History of Mexico*; and also in the languages of the southern part of our continent, as will be found in the valuable *History of Chile*, by the abbé Molina. We must content ourselves with barely referring to these works on the present occasion, as our principal object is the languages of *North America*; but, in regard to those of *Middle and South America*, the reader will find, in the works here cited, and in some others, a thorough refutation of the strange opinions of speculative writers, who have presumptuously passed judgment upon a subject, before they had the means of becoming acquainted with it, and decry what they could not comprehend. We are not yet possessed of sufficient data for determining how many principal stocks, or families of languages, there are in *North America*. Mr. Jefferson, in his *Notes on Virginia*, upon information which is admitted to be very imperfect, has hazarded an opinion, that they are very numerous; and then he proceeds, from this assumed state of facts, to draw an inference in contradiction of the received opinion of the Christian world as to the age of the earth. His reasoning, which has been too hastily adopted into some popular works in general use, is as follows: "But, imperfect as is our knowledge of the tongues spoken in America, it suffices to discover the following remarkable fact. Arranging them under the radical ones to which they may be palpably traced, and doing the same