

kwiskwis, a word invented on the opposite side of the continent to imitate the grunt of the animal thereby designated.

Another legitimate deduction from this example which applies to many other cases is that the only permanent, and therefore the really important, consonants are those which commence a word or at least a syllable.* Non-initial consonants, though generally more immutable than the vowels, have but a relative importance.

The consonants are then the most important element in the formation of words. But even among them there are some which are convertible with others to such an extent relatively to the various dialects that they are practically one and the same. This convertibility may manifest itself in three different ways: first, within the same dialect, as is the case with *d* and *t*, *g* and *k*, etc., within each of the Déné idioms which cannot detect the slightest difference between, say, *ta* and *da*, "lip"; *ku* and *gu* "worm," etc. Secondly, between related dialects or dialects belonging to the same linguistic group so that, though not changing the sense of the word, it indicates the nature of the idiom; such are the aforesaid letters with regard to most Aryan languages compared with one another; for instance "dance" is *tanz* in German; the Latin *dens* is *tand* in several germanic tongues, etc. Consonants of this second class, besides those already mentioned, are many and varied. Thirdly, we might extend this convertibility to another category of consonants, a category wherein cognate consonants in words from heterogeneous stocks, as the Aryan and the Turanian, do service in connection with words originally the same. Such are the *p*, *b*, and *f* of the Sanskrit (Aryan) *pita*, "father," the Syriac (Semitic) *batara*, the Zend or old Persian (Aryan) *fedre* and the Déné (American) *pa*, *pip*, etc., all of which terms have the same signification. To be brief; some consonants are convertible with corresponding letters within the same dialect, others' commutability manifests itself from dialect to dialect, while others again are commutable from stock to stock, that is between unrelated languages.

The German philologist, Jakob L. Grimm, was the first to formulate the law which bears his name and which regulates the interchange of consonants in the corresponding words of the different Aryan languages. American phonetics are quite peculiar, as is well known, and in connection therewith Grimm's law not only does not cover the whole ground, but in several instances it is positively at fault. A prerequisite to safe comparisons between words from stocks of the old and of the new worlds would then seem to be the acquisition of some principle

* For an apparent exception, see my paper "Déné Roots," Trans. C. I. vol. III, p. 131.