

Words as an Instrument of Mental Culture.

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WHEREVER man exists we find language. It is one of his most distinct and marked characteristics, or, perhaps, we might better say nothing so much characterizes him as language. Surely Adam and Eve had the faculty of speech and its development, otherwise they must have indulged in pantomime and have helped to develop the bow-wow, the ding-dong and pooh-pooh theories of language. Their conversations in Paradise must have been held in language adapted to convey clear and definite ideas, else an intelligent understanding of the Divine word is not possible. In that beautiful and blessed place themes of great moment were the subjects of conversation. Since God made man in His own image, it is difficult to believe He made him languageless, or, at best, with only sufficient inventive genius to supply his needs. It seems far more probable that speech was at first as pure and noble as those who used it, and that as the taint fell upon man, so it passed upon speech. If so, then both man and language had their Paradise. For as Adam was a perfect type of created humanity, so he must have been endowed with all that was essential to life. Lessing says, "that God was too good to have withheld from his poor creatures, perhaps for centuries, a gift like speech." "Any one," says Steinthal, "who thinks of man without language thinks of him as one of the brutes," nor is it incompatible with this theory to admit that language has been enlarged and enriched by sound-imitation. To illustrate: our interjection ah! probably has in it greek *achos*, a pang, Sanskrit *aku*, Anglo-Saxon *accan*, and so our word ache, anxious, anguish, and agony. In like manner Farrar thinks that myriad is from the root *mur* in murmur, implying the rush of water drops; that *mystery*, beyond which in its highest meanings language cannot go, is but an extension of the syllables *mu*, *mum*, an onomatopoeia from the closing of the lips, "What is *mother*," he asks, "but a lengthening of the first crooning of childhood's labials? What is Heaven but the space *heaved* over us? What is hell but a hole beneath our feet?" It is not our purpose however to treat of this *crux* of the critics, and besides on such a subject we may all be savants. Adopting, then, the theory of the divine origin of speech, man may properly be styled the *converser*. Even