

EDITORIAL.

RACE AND LANGUAGE.—Dr. Roy in this number discusses the effect of language upon national character, and gives one view of the subject, but there are other questions to be asked than those Dr. Roy proposes. Why is it natural for Frenchmen, Germans, etc., to talk in a particular way? Language undoubtedly exerts an influence toward the conservation and propagation of certain mental traits in the people who use it, when once the genius of the language has taken "set" in a distinct form, as is ably shown in the article to which reference is now made; but this language-structure is an effect, the offspring of the mental characteristics of the nation. The final question then comes to be, What is the origin of these mental traits, and what are the laws of their unfolding into language?

These are the questions discussed in a recent work entitled, "General Principles of the Structure of Language," by James Byrne, Dean of Clonfert. According to a review of the work in *Science* for April, Mr. Byrne considers the quality most influential in determining the form of a language is the greater or less excitability of the people who speak it and that where there is a bountiful soil and genial climate to make subsistence easy, there will be quickness of thought, impulsiveness and thoughtlessness of character, giving rise to a language consisting of brief fragmentary words and disjointed phrases, as is the case with the African tribes. In contrast with these the learned dean cites the American tribes with their languages (polysynthetic), which tend to combine many qualifications in a single long and many-jointed word—the natural expression of their slow and considerate temperament begotten of a life everywhere one of anxiety and hardship, whether they live as hunters, fishermen or agriculturists. This method is applied to languages in all parts of the globe. The reviewer vigorously criticises the author on two points. Mr. Byrne considers that the inflected idioms are indicative of the highest grade of intellect, overlooking the fact that the Delaware and the Sahaptin of Oregon are languages as highly inflected as the most highly