

of Vittoria, respectively. A brick Court-House had been erected at the latter place in 1822, at a cost of about \$9,000, and which was accidentally burned down in November, 1825. Between this period and 1827 there were two or three Courts held in a private house, and then was removed to St. Thomas for a couple of sessions, until a temporary Court-House could be built in the then town of London. They were then held in such temporary buildings until the present Court-House in London was erected, which was ordered by an Act of the Legislature, then in session, (7 Geo. III, cap. 14,) despite the opposition of the people of St. Thomas, that the County buildings should be erected in London.—*Strathroy Home Guard.*

### III. Correspondence of the Journal.

#### OUR LANGUAGE—IN TWO PAPERS.

##### PAPER I.—ITS ORIGIN AND PROGRESS.

Some one has cleverly defined speech as thought made palpable to other men's minds, and language as the vehicle by which thought is conveyed. In fact, the majority of prominent writers on ethics, theology, and philology, have given some new and expressive definition to these terms, and yet, notwithstanding so much attention apparently having been given to the subject of comparative philology, it is within the pale of our own century that it has been classed among the sciences, and not until the present generation has it been considered as a physical science. Our language we proudly designate the English Language, and the query may be easier asked than answered, What is the English Language? It has been styled the "plum pudding language," because of its inexplicable composition; and it well merits the appellation, since, if we trace its genealogy, we are at once found speaking in all the principal languages of the present day, as well as in tongues which, if not obsolete, are retained only in a contorted form. Let us retrospectively examine our Anglo-Saxon: follow the twig to the branch, the branch to the trunk, and the trunk to the root. Three centuries ago, because Shakespeare and Milton signalized that age, the language was considered perfect—the maximum purity of the vernacular. If such was the case, we must be returning to barbarism: there is nothing beyond perfection. The corollary is evidently wrong, and instead of a prospective vandalism we anticipate a glorious future—a natural consequence of a Christian foundation guided by an exalted moral philosophy. Still receding, we reach Bacon, who stands out in broad relief as the fountain of our modern philosophy—a philosophy that has lifted the veil of superstition and taught men the art of handling the elements. From Bacon to Chaucer and Wyckliffe, and another epoch is marked in the history of our language, one which in reality may be termed its commencement. Three centuries beyond these fathers and our English is unrecognizable. Although the Norman words did not exactly come with the Norman conqueror, the ancient Saxon lost its favour among the people, and, as it were, oscillated between French and Saxon for two centuries subsequent to the battle of Hastings. This was a period of transition from chaos to order, a chasm in its chain of history. Little appears to have been done for its improvement between Alfred's time and the conquest, as the preserved manuscripts manifestly show, and as possessing a characteristic sameness throughout this transitional space. In fact Saxon was but the dialect of the serfs, Latin being exclusively used in legal instruments and among the feudal lords. Such was especially the case prior to King Alfred: but with his advent a new system was inaugurated, himself being dux, and who, though coping with the Danish arms on sea and land, battled against the disruption of his native tongue through intermixture with that of his enemies. His first impulse to the study of the Saxon language was received when quite young, while competing with some princely cousins for a volume of Saxon poetry, offered by his mother-in-law to the prince that was first able to read it. Alfred triumphantly bore away the prize, and the nucleus of a study was then deposited which proved a blessing to mankind, and the solace of his after wearied wandering life. To him more than to any other man, belongs the enduring honour of having rescued our mother tongue from the breakers of disseverance and extinction, and firmly placing it on the rock of progression—a meet inheritance for Layamon to mould in Norman vessels and pass it on the heirloom of the universe, yet the servant of Chaucer. True that for three centuries posterior to Alfred it possessed no acknowledged standard; but this king embalmed the roots with his royal favour, and when the mediæval sun lit up the morning of pure literature, dispelling the haze of bigotted ignorance, the roots shot out apace, and only budded in our Augustan age. Contemporaneous men of erudition kept aloof from it. William the Conqueror could not learn it, William Rufus shunned it, and Beauclerc, the Scholar, hated it.

Anterior to the emigration of St. Augustine to Britain to sow the seeds of Christianity, the identity of spoken language is but mere speculation, and the genealogical philologist finds his connecting link in the mountain passes of Wales, and the rugged cliffs of the Highlands, still discovering in these banished Celts the germ of our own Saxon. Trace the exiled child to its parent, the Aryan or Indo-European, from which is derived also the Sanscrit, Gothic, Greek, Slavonic, and the Romance languages. The whole of these families of languages, excepting the Gothic, are still extant, while the mother, like a germinating seed, has died in giving them birth. At this stage of growth philologists differ, some even denying the existence of the Aryan altogether, for while, indeed, there is no evidence of there having been such a language, yet such a conclusion is paralleled in the growth of the sister sciences. Two principal and probable theories are advanced respecting its origin. One belief is that it was divinely imparted to man—a medium of thought replete with expression of abstract ideas as well as descriptive of objects. The other theory, which has numerous partizans, accredits its origin to the invention of man, a gradual structure consequent on physical requirements and the intuitiveness of intellect. Lord Monboddo is not without his disciples who believe in the human race springing from two monkeys, and language being an invention of some European gods. Cosmogony has no collateral literature, no contemporaneous proof, and to sustain any theory otherwise than on the appearances of nature and geologic experience would be yielding too much to the paradoxical opinions of cosmographers. Indeed an eminent Dutch scholar asserts that Dutch was the language of Paradise and other over patriotic individuals have claimed a similar distinction for their respective tongues. The multiplication of languages, doubtless, commenced with the Babel confusion, which is the strongest argument against the self creating theory yet advanced. But modern philological research has refused this heterogeneous doctrine by proving an affinity between all dialects and tongues. The Chinese jargon, the monotonous Mohawk, and the poetic Italian, when shorn of their modern terminations and the changes of custom, the fortunes of conquest and the revolutions of dynasties considered are virtually similar. The Old Testament Scriptures were undoubtedly written in Hebrew, which, however, ceased to be a living language as early as 500 B.C. Christ himself spoke in the Aramaic, a branch of the Semitic, a dialect that superseded the Hebrew in Palestine, but which is now only preserved in some isolated tribes in Syria. It is probable that with the conflagration of the Alexandrian Library, of which Zenodotus was the first librarian, perished the key to writing *ab initio*, but for which, instead of wild conjectures and partial statements resting on the merits of probability we should have a world's history that would puzzle sceptics, and unravel the mystery that unquestionably enshrouds the ante-Christian period.

Thus we have traced our present Anglo-Saxon language back successively through the Middle, Saxon, the corruption of Saxon, Danish, and Norman, to the Celtic and the Gothic, which in turn merge into the Aryan or Japhetic stock, until lost in the "mist of ages past"—a problem reserved for a heavenly solution. cursorily reviewing, let us mark contemporary dialects and their embodiments. Literature is the arbiter of language, affirming, appending, or detracting periodically, the one the agent of the other, the former as the preserver of the latter. Hence they are inseparable. An entire language is meant one capable of expressing emotions, ideas, and objects alike, and not confined to the representation of objects by arbitrary signs, and consequently incapable of communicating all that is angelic about us, or worthy of communication. The literature of India takes its rise in the "veda" as that of England does in Chaucer. This "holy hymn of India" was probably written in the time of Alexander, and is the earliest Sanscrit writing on record. The gradual corruption of Sanscrit has resulted in the Hindostani, although the original was employed down to the reign of Akbar, whose name Moore has so romantically associated in his poem of Lalla Rookh. As soon as a literature was evident, the want of a system was felt; the first incoherent ejaculations had grown into endless multiplicity, and all without form or order until the appearance of a genius in the person of one Dionysius Thrax, who supplied this deficiency when he composed the first Greek Grammar, and to the more harmonious adaptation of language, St. Ambrosius, in the fourth century, initiated the use of rhyme. It was in olden times as it is in modern, that great individuals gave universality and decision to the language. Thus Homer laid the foundation of Grecian poetry, as did Wyckliffe of English prose, Chaucer of English verse, Luther of modern German; and Dante has done for the Latin language what Luther subsequently did for the German. But Dante, with others mentioned, would have but a legendary fame, an oral reputation; they would have been like the foaming cataract, when once over lost forever, or, if preserved, subject to the mutilating effects of time and favor. Such a superficial existence was denied them; the continuity of races and ages