

the idea of property and possession, and the relations of the person or persons addressed to the subject of the sentence.

Another prejudice against the Indian tongues is derived from the filthy or uninviting appearance of the red-skinned man himself. It is true that most Indians seem very miserable, disgusting, poor, silly, even grotesque and comical; yet this is partly due to the state of degradation to which he has been reduced by the land-grabbing Anglo-American settler, who has deprived him of his former, natural ways of subsistence; but it is also a characteristic of his cinnamon-complexioned race, and has been so for times immemorial. In the numerous settlements, where the condition of the Indian has undoubtedly undergone a great change for the better, through the advent of the white population, he seems just as miserable, shy, sad and filthy as before. To draw conclusions from the exterior appearance of a people on their language, and to suppose that a man not worth looking at cannot speak a language worth studying, would be the acme of superficiality, and worthy only of those who in their folly trust to appearances alone.

Pursuant to these intimations, I judge that the only means of bringing about a favorable change in public sentiment concerning the tongues of our aborigines, is a better understanding of the real object and purpose of linguistic science. Languages are living organisms, natural growths, genuine productions of race and country, and scientifically speaking, it is as important to investigate them as to describe minutely a curious tree, a rare plant, a strange insect or aquatic animal. But to gather information on them with success, a much more accurate method of transcription or transliteration than those generally used by word-collectors must be adopted. The old nonsensical method of using the English orthography, so utterly unscientific and unbearable to the sight of every instructed man, has at last been discarded almost universally. Only scientific alphabets must be here employed, and an alphabet can be considered as such only when *one* sound is constantly expressed by *one and the same* letter only. Such alphabets have been proposed by G. Gibbs, Professors Richard Lepsius, Haldeman, Alex. Ellis, and many others, and it would be a fitting subject for a congress of linguists to decide which system is the most appropriate for transcribing Indian tongues. Cursive Latin characters must be used, and in some cases altered by diacritical marks, to convey peculiar meanings; the invention of new alphabetic systems or syllabaries like those of Sequoyah, and the hooks and crooks recently used for transcribing Cree and other Northern tongues are not a help to science, because they are not *readily* legible or reducible to the accepted old-world systems of transcribing languages. A debate may also