

as if these languages could not tell us quite as much of the growth of the human mind as Chinese or Hebrew or Sanscrit." No one, I think, need wait for a more forcible incentive to the scientific study of our native American languages than what we find in this distinct avowal of their worth from one of the greatest philologists of our day. It is still more to the purpose of this paper that the author of "Prehistoric Man" describes the tongues of the New World as "languages of consistent grammatical structure, involving agglutinate processes of a complexity unknown before and capable of being employed in an effective native oratory and even as vehicles of the sacred and profane literatures of the ancient world."

The judgments just quoted apply to the whole range of American speech. But it is almost needless to say that language on this continent is not one but manifold. How perplexing the variety is, may be imagined from the fact that Mr. Hubert Bancroft has enumerated nearly six hundred languages or dialects between northern Alaska and the Isthmus of Panama on the western side of the continent. "An exhaustive classification of the American languages," says Professor Whitney, "is at present impossible. . . There are many great groups and a host of lesser knots of idioms or dialects, isolated or unclassified. The Eskimos line the whole northern coast and the north-eastern down to Newfoundland. The Athabaskan or Tinné occupies a great region in the far north-west (the Apache and the Navajo in the south also belonging to it), and is flanked on the west by the Selish and other smaller groups. The Algonquin had in possession the north-eastern and middle United States and stretched westward to the Rocky Mountains; within its territory was included that of the Iroquois. The Dakota (Sioux) is the largest of the families occupying the great prairies and plains of the far west. The Muskokee group filled the States of the south-east. In Colorado and Utah commence the towns of the settled and comparatively civilized Pueblo Indians, rising to the more advanced culture of the Mexican peoples, attaining its height in the Maya of Central America, and continued in the empire of the Incas of Peru. The Quichua of the latter, with the related Aymara, are still the native dialects of a considerable part of South America; with the Tupi-Guarani also on the east, in the valley of the Amazons and its tributaries. The condition of the American languages is thus an epitome of that of the languages of the world in general. Great and wide-spread families, limited groups, isolated and perishing dialects, touch and jostle one another."—(*The Life and Growth of Language*, pp. 263, 264).

Having followed Professor Whitney in his hasty course from north to south, it may be worth while to consider briefly the characteristics of the more important languages of the region traversed. We may do so in inverse order, which is also, generally speaking, the order of their merit. Prescott tells us of the prudent despotism, not without its imitators in modern times, which substituted for the well-nigh countless and troublesome variety of tongues spoken by the inhabitants of Peru the rich and beautiful Quichua. This language is said by those who have studied it to bear resemblance to the dialects of Central America. The Tupi or Guarani now serves the same purpose of a *lingua geral*, according to a writer quoted in the *Revue du Monde Latin* (Senhor Bautista Caetano), from Guiana to Patagonia. The same writer says that all the languages of South America may be reduced to five. Of the languages of Central America the Tzendal was once looked upon as the most ancient, but it has lately been recognized as a branch of the Maya, now spoken in Yucatan, and the mother tongue of most of the languages of the central region.