

NOTE SPECIALLY ADDRESSED TO CORRESPONDENTS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

The present paper is a further step in the general line of research indicated in the "Introduction to the Study of Sign Language among the North American Indians," &c., in which the study of these signs was suggested as important to illustrate the gesture-speech of mankind. Its contents may be useful to collaborators in all parts of the world, both to facilitate description by annotated reference and in suggestion as regards modes of observation. It may also give assurance of thorough and painstaking work at this Bureau for the final collation, in the form of a vocabulary, of all authentic signs, ancient and modern, found in any part of the world, with their description, as also that of associated facial expression, set forth in language so clear that, with the assistance of copious illustrations, they can be reproduced by the reader. The success of this undertaking will depend upon the collaboration, now and before requested, of many persons of several classes. The present paper shows that arrangements have already been made probably sufficient to procure all the gesture-signs of the aboriginal tribes of this country which can still be rescued from oblivion. The conventional signs of deaf-mutes in institutions for their instruction are accessible to the present writer, who also has obtained a large number of the natural signs of deaf-mutes invented by them before systematic instruction, and used in intercourse with their families and friends. More of these would, however, be gladly received. Further assistance is urgently sought from philologists, travelers, and missionaries, whose attention has been directed to the several modes of expressing human thought.

The efforts at intercommunication of all savage and barbaric tribes, when brought into contact with other bodies of men not speaking an oral language common to both, and especially when uncivilized inhabitants of the same territory are separated by many linguistic divisions, should in theory resemble the devices of the North American Indians. They are not shown by published works to prevail in the Eastern hemisphere to the same extent and in the same manner as in North, and also, as believed from less complete observation, in South America. It is, however, probable that they exist in many localities, though not reported, and also that some of them survive after partial or even high civilization has been attained, and after changed environment has rendered their systematic employment unnecessary. Such signs may be, first, unconnected with existing oral language, and used in place of it; second, may be used to explain or accentuate the words of ordinary speech, or may consist of gestures, emotional or not, which are only noticed in oratory or impassioned conversation, such being, possibly, survivals of a former gesture-language.

All classes of gestures may be examined philologically to trace their possible connection with the radicals of language, syllabaries, and ideographic characters. Evidence has accumulated to show that the language of signs preceded in importance that of sounds, the latter remaining rudimentary long after gesture had become an art. The early connection between them was so intimate that gestures, in the wide sense of presenting ideas under physical forms, had a formative effect upon many words, thus showing that language originated partly, at least, from the sounds which naturally accompany certain gestures. It seems certain that the latter exhibit the earliest condition of the human mind, and that mainly through them was significance communicated to speech.

Even if the more material and substantive relations between signs and language cannot now be ascertained, we may at least expect, from the inquiries suggested, lin-