ON THE PLACE OF THE INDIAN LANGUAGES IN THE STUDY OF ETHNOLOGY.*

BY PROF. J. B. FEULING PH. D.
Professor of Comparative Philology in the University of Wisconsin.

Physical ethnology has shown that all the different tribes of Indians constitute but one race from the Arctic Ocean to Cape Horn. But physical evidence of race is as incomplete without the confirmation of linguistic evidence, as is the latter without the former. Race and language run parallel only in prehistoric times, or at the very dawn of history. The connection therefore between physical ethnology and linguistic ethnology consists in giving mutual advice and suggestions. Accommodation and mutual concessions should not enter here.

As languages change more rapidly than races, it seems often impossible, even in languages whose current we are able to ascend beyond the dawn of tradition, to gather up the connecting links between language and race, or to point out, when, where or how they separated. Besides we must be careful in drawing conclusions from facts, which may be the "result of accident." All this must be borne in mind by the student the more carefully, as the philological details are very scanty and insufficient. Although the affinity between the Indian languages, as determined by their vocabularies, is not less real than that inferred from the analogies of their grammatical forms, it would not be a conclusive evidence for the original unity of the various tribes, because we have no historical documents, and tradition is silent as to the existence of a "specific centre." If we had documentary evidence of the

*The loss, by accident, of this paper, as originally presented, has necessitated its publication in the form of a brief abstract.
intermediate dialects, we would be able, perhaps, to give a complete account for the great dissimilarity of Indian languages. For the present the question of their mutual relation and possible transmutation from a common prototype will best be cleared up by a careful systematic study of the actually existing dialects.

Then followed a critical account of what had been accomplished in this field by eminent scholars, e. g. Gallatin, G. Gibbs, E. G. Squier, Lewis H. Morgan, Dr. Brinton, J. Shea, Dr. J. H. Trumbull and others; the materials and theories of Duple

ceau, Heckewelder, Schoolcraft, etc. are worthless.

Besides the importance of the Indian languages in an ethnological view, the possibility of an approach through them to the great problem of the origin of language was pointed out.

Mr. F. showed the duty of the Academy towards assisting to secure from destruction the languages of the Indians of America and to facilitate the work of the linguistic scholar by collecting materials, as books, etc. In collecting materials special attention should be paid to those tribes (about 26), which, since our first knowledge of them (a. 1670), lived within or passed through the State of Wisconsin. Attention was called to Col. George Gibbs’ “Instructions for research relative to the Ethnology and Philology of America”* and to the hints given by Hon. J. H. Trumbull in a paper “On the true method of studying the American Languages,” read before the American Philological Association, at Poughkeepsie, 1869.†

There are other monuments, besides languages, which claim our attention in the elucidation of the ethnological problems involved in the past history of America,—monuments left by a people, whose very name has vanished. “Mound-Builders” is a conventional name. Geology, and the extreme

*Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, (Vol. vii., Art. xi.)
†This valuable paper has been published since in the “Transactions of the American Philol. Association,” (Vol. I, Art. iv.)
decay in which skeletons of Mound-builders are found, have assisted in ascertaining that the mounds are of high antiquity, which is also attested by their relation to forest-growths. It is impossible to give any fixed data; it is, however, safe to say that 2000 years at least have passed since the disappearance of a people which were not the ancestors of the wild Indians, as it is commonly believed. For many reasons (mining operations, etc.) the Mound-Builders must have been stationary and agricultural in their habits. We may never be able to answer the question, Who were these Mound-Builders or whence did they come? Still it is not impossible to find the thread which connects these ancient monuments and their scanty relics with those of Central America and, perhaps, with more distant quarters, after their extent and contents, as well as their general character, have been better understood.

We have a meritorious work by Dr. I. A. Lapham, "The Antiquities of Wisconsin" (Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, Vol. vii), which has however not made unnecessary further exploration and study. There remain a great many mounds unnoticed and unexplored, which may lead to more important results. It is hoped that these mysterious antiquities within our State will be saved as sacred mementos of the past from oblivion and destruction.

There is hardly a farmhouse in Wisconsin, where some kind of relics, as stone-implements, etc., are not either kept as a curiosities or thrown aside like so many other "useless things." Sufficient interest should be awakened among the people to care for the preservation of such relics or to forward them generously to some place of collection.*

Let us mark the words of William D. Whitney, safest and surest of guides: "Our national duty and honor are peculiarly concerned in this matter of the study of aboriginal

*Mr. F. S. Perkins of Burlington, Wis., has the largest collection of stone implements, beside that of the Smithsonian Institute, and he spares neither time nor money, in order to make new additions to his valuable collection. We hope that the State may be able to procure this collection some day, as the beginning of a State Museum of American (Wisconsin) Antiquities.
American languages, as the most fertile and important branch of American archaeology. Europeans accuse us, with too much reason, of indifference and inefficiency with regard to preserving memorials of the races whom we have dispossessed and are dispossessing, and to promoting a thorough comprehension of their history. Indian scholars, and associations which devote themselves to gathering together and making public linguistic and other archaeological materials for construction of the proper ethnology of the continent, are far rarer than they should be among us.” “So much the more reason have we to be grateful to the few who are endeavoring to make up our deficiencies by self-prompted study, and especially to those self-denying men who, under circumstances of no small difficulty, are or have been devoting themselves to the work of collecting and giving to the world original materials.”

M.