

**THE LITERATURE OF
AMERICAN ABORIGINAL
LANGUAGES**

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The literature of American aboriginal languages by Hermann E. Ludewig

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HERMANN E. LUDEWIG

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PREFACE.

A NEW edition of Vater's "*Linguarum totius orbis index*," after Professor Jülg's revision of 1847, requires no apology. The science of Philology has made great progress within the last few years. Exotic languages are no longer considered as mere matters of curiosity, but are looked upon as interesting parts of the natural history of man, and as such receive their share of the brilliant light which modern critical studies have shed upon the natural sciences in general.

Ethnologists now understand how to appreciate the high importance of language as one of the most interesting links of the great chain of national affinities; and the reciprocity existing between man, the soil he lives upon, and the language he speaks, will become better understood the more our knowledge of these interesting topics is extended.

Comparative philology has begun to be established upon solid scientific foundations; and the recent endeavours to establish finally a uniform system of linguistic orthography will, when generally received, give a new and important impetus to that study, which must lead to most interesting results. In such a state of progress, new literary guides are constantly required; and one of them, embracing the aboriginal languages of our great western continent, is hereby offered to those who take an interest in American linguistics.

From the discovery of our continent, the languages of the American Indians have always been, as they are still, an object of high interest to missionary labour; and wherever the attention of the scientific world has been drawn to them, it was by the results of the exertions of these men, who, inspired by religious ardour, went out to teach the heathens, and, in their zeal for Christianity, soon learned to master the diversity of tongues.

It was, however, and is still, difficult to obtain access to these results; the greater part of Indian grammars and vocabularies existing either in manuscript only, or, when printed, having been confined to the use of a particular nation, country, or religious society. Thus it happened that the Jesuit, Lorenzo Hervás, who zealously collected such grammars and vocabularies for the linguistic part of his "Idea del universo," could give notice of fifty-five American languages which were before unknown to learned philologists, or at least unnoticed by them.

After Hervás and Gilií, whose discoveries were diligently revised and republished in Adelung's and Vater's *Mithridates*, Dr. Benjamin Smith Barton, of Philadelphia, drew the attention of the scientific world to the languages of our Indians. The historical societies of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, published, or republished, the scarce works of Eliot, Cotton, Roger Williams, Edwards, and Zeisberger; and the last-named Society committed to Stephen Duponceau the task of subjecting the American Indian languages to critical inquiries and studies. John Pickering, Henry R. Schoolcraft, and, above all, the venerable Albert Gallatin, continued these researches; and to Gallatin we are indebted for a better classification and a comparative view of the languages of the northern half of our continent and of Mexico.

By the exertions of these gentlemen the science of Indian philology has been actively promoted; and many officers of our

army and navy have paid attention to the languages of the aborigines visited by them in their official explorations.

In this way the materials for a more exact knowledge of the American Indian languages have been greatly increased; and a new inventory of our riches is undoubtedly wanted. This want is the more felt, because nearly all the Indian grammars and vocabularies are exceedingly scarce; and the greater part of these materials is dispersed in books of voyages and travels, historical and geographical collections, documents, and reports, which are generally found only in public libraries.

How far it was possible to supply the want in this country, where bibliographical researches are much more troublesome and difficult than anywhere else, the following pages will show. The interest felt in this country in collecting and publishing notices concerning the languages of the aborigines of our continent is naturally greater than elsewhere; and the earlier, therefore, these notices are published, the sooner we may expect that those who are better acquainted with the subject will submit them to critical examination, and supply the deficiencies which they undoubtedly contain.

This made the offer for the publication of the following bibliographical repertory, by their active and enterprising publisher, a welcome one. More welcome and, for the friends of science, really gratifying must be the care bestowed by Mr. Trübner upon this publication. With true love for the subject, and with a scientific zeal not to be surpassed, he has revised the manuscript, and supplied it with whatever his own knowledge furnished, aided by the ample means which London, and Europe in general, offer to bibliographical researches, and made many valuable additions which could not have been collected on this side of the Atlantic. He has been a true co-operator in the work now offered to the public.

Business, in our great commercial emporium of the new world, leaves to the professional man but very little time for minute literary researches; and our larger libraries being open

to the public only during business hours, but one of them could be consulted while correcting the notices collected in the course of several years.

The friendly aid which the officers of the Astor Library and of the American Bible Society lent for this purpose is thankfully acknowledged.

HERMANN E. LUDEWIG.

NEW YORK, December, 1855.

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THE EDITOR'S ADVERTISEMENT.

DR. LUDWIG has himself so fully detailed the plan and purport of this work, that little more remains for me to add beyond the mere statement of the origin of my connection with the publication, and the mention of such additions for which I alone am responsible, and which, during its progress through the press, have gradually accumulated to about one-sixth of the whole. This is but an act of justice to the memory of Dr. Ludwig; because, at the time of his death, in December, 1856, no more than 172 pages were printed off, and these constitute the only portion of the work which had the benefit of his valuable personal and final revision.

Similarity of pursuits led, during my stay in New York in 1855, to an intimacy with Dr. Ludwig, during which he mentioned that he, like myself, had been making bibliographical memoranda for years of all books which serve to illustrate the history of spoken language. As a first section of a more extended work on the Literary History of Language generally, he had prepared a bibliographical memoir of the remains of the aboriginal languages of America. The manuscript had been deposited by him in the library of the Ethnological Society at New York, but at my request he at once most kindly placed it at my disposal, stipulating only that it should be printed in Europe, under my personal superintendence.

Upon my return to England, I lost no time in carrying out the trust thus confided to me, intending then to confine myself simply to producing a correct copy of my friend's manuscript. But it soon became obvious that the transcript had been hastily made, and but for the valuable assistance of literary friends,