

**LANGUAGE**

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Language by Andrew Findlater

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**ANDREW FINDLATER**

# **LANGUAGE**



31  
CHAMBERS'S  
ELEMENTARY SCIENCE MANUALS.

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# LANGUAGE

BY

ANDREW FINDLATER, LL.D.



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## PREFACE.

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THE vital importance of diffusing some knowledge of the leading principles of Science among all classes of society, is becoming daily more widely and deeply felt; and to meet and promote this important movement, W. & R. CHAMBERS have resolved on issuing the present Series of ELEMENTARY SCIENCE MANUALS. The Editors believe that they enjoy special facilities for the successful execution of such an undertaking, owing to their long experience—now extending over a period of forty years—in the work of popular education, as well as to their having the co-operation of writers specially qualified to treat the several subjects. In particular, they are happy in having the editorial assistance of ANDREW FINDLATER, LL.D., to whose labours they were so much indebted in the work of editing and preparing *Chamber's Encyclopædia*.

The Manuals of this series are intended to serve two somewhat different purposes :

1. They are designed, in the first place, for SELF-INSTRUCTION, and will present, in a form suitable for private study, the main subjects entering into an enlightened education; so that young persons in earnest about self-culture may be able to master them for themselves.

2. The other purpose of the Manuals is, to serve as TEXT-BOOKS IN SCHOOLS. The mode of treatment naturally adopted in what is to be studied without a teacher, so far from being a drawback in a school-manual, will, it is believed, be a positive advantage. Instead of a number of abrupt statements being presented, to be taken on

trust and learned, as has been the usual method in school-teaching; the subject is made, as far as possible, to unfold itself gradually, as if the pupil were discovering the principles himself, the chief function of the book being, to bring the materials before him, and to guide him by the shortest road to the discovery. This is now acknowledged to be the only profitable method of acquiring knowledge, whether as regards self-instruction or learning at school.

The subject of the present manual is the SCIENCE OF LANGUAGE. The term is not to be understood as meaning a knowledge of languages for practical use, but the physiology, as it were, of speech in general, and the scientific classification of the various tongues spoken by men. The study of language from this point of view, though of recent origin, possesses an interest that is not confined to learned philologists; and an attempt is here made to present such an outline of the subject as may be intelligible to the ordinary reader. Some knowledge of Latin, French, and German, on the part of the student will be of great advantage; but there is little in the book that he will not be able readily to follow if he have a competent knowledge of his mother-tongue, from which most of the illustrations have been taken.

For simplification in teaching, the subjects are divided into sub-sections or articles, which are numbered continuously; and a series of Questions, in corresponding divisions, are appended. These Questions, while they will enable the private student to test for himself how far he has mastered the several parts of the subject as he proceeds, will serve the teacher of a class as specimens of the more detailed and varied examination to which he should subject his pupils.

EDINBURGH,  
*July 1875.*



## CONTENTS.

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INTRODUCTORY—	PAGE
NATURE AND NAME OF THE STUDY.....	8
ITS HISTORY.....	11
THE VOICE.....	13
VOWELS.....	14
CONSONANTS.....	15
PHONETICS.....	18
HOW LANGUAGE CHANGES—	
NEW WORDS; DECAY AND DEATH OF WORDS; CHANGES IN MEANING; CHANGES IN FORM; PHONETIC DECAY; MODERN ENGLISH AND FRENCH WORDS COMPARED WITH THEIR EARLIER FORMS; DECAPITATED WORDS.....	19-26
WORD-BUILDING—	
COMPOUND WORDS; AFFIXES; INFLECTIONS; REDUP- PLICATION; ENGLISH PAST TENSE IN <i>d</i> OR <i>ed</i> ; DEATH OF AFFIXES; ASSIMILATION; IDIOSYN- CRASIES OF TONGUES.....	26-33
DIALECTS—	
DEFINITION; STANDARD DIALECTS; THE TERM DIA- LECT RELATIVE.....	33-36
FAMILIES OF LANGUAGES—	
THE ARYAN FAMILY AND ITS STOCKS; MARKS OF AFFINITY IN TONGUES.....	36-39
GRIMM'S LAW.....	39
CAUSES OF DIALECTIC DIVERSITY.....	41
WORDS IDENTIFIED UNDER DISGUISE.....	43
NUMERALS AND FAMILY RELATIONS.....	43
THE PARENT ARYAN NATION AND LANGUAGE.....	44
THE SEMITIC FAMILY.....	46

## TYPES OF LANGUAGE—

THE MONOSYLLABIC ; THE AGGLUTINATE ; THE  
 INFLECTIONAL ; THE SYNTHETIC AND ANALYTIC  
 STAGES ; ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF  
 INFLECTIONS ; GENDER ; CLASSIFICATION OF  
 MONOSYLLABIC AND AGGLUTINATE TONGUES ;  
 SYNOPSIS OF THE LANGUAGES OF THE EARTH. 47-55

UNITY OR DIVERSITY OF ORIGIN.....55

MIXTURES OF LANGUAGES AND RACES.....56

CONFLICT OF TONGUES.....57

ROOTS.....59

MODES OF DERIVATION FROM ROOTS ; AUXILIARY  
 AND SUBSTANTIVE VERBS ; NATURE OF THE  
 VERB ; NUMBER OF ROOTS.....60-64

## ORIGIN OF LANGUAGE—

THE TWO THEORIES—THE 'DING-DONG,' AND THE  
 'BOW-WOW ;' WORDS DERIVED FROM INTERJEC-  
 TIONS.....64-68

QUESTIONS.....69

# LANGUAGE.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

1. LANGUAGE, in its widest sense, signifies any means by which one conscious being conveys what it thinks or feels to another. Thus, we speak of the language of the eyes, the language of birds. But in ordinary usage we understand by language the system of sounds uttered by the human voice in the intercourse of society—articulate speech. The writing of language does not alter its character in this respect; it only introduces an intermediate set of signs or marks. The written characters do not convey the meaning directly, they only indicate certain sounds; and it is these sounds that are still the immediate vehicle of the thoughts. It is language in this sense—the communication of our thoughts by means of spoken signs\*—that is the subject of the present manual.

2. *Natural Language.*—Human speech is the result of a kind of tacit convention as to the meanings of the several signs, so that they are intelligible only to those who have learned them. Such signs are in this respect *artificial*. But distinct from this there is a kind of *natural* language which is universally understood without being learned, and which the lower animals to some extent possess. It is made up of the instinctive and untaught movements of the body that feelings, passions, and desires give rise to. The screams and

\* This is the proper etymological meaning of Language, which is a French word formed from *langue*, the tongue. In classical Latin the word is *lingua*; but the old form was *diingua*, and with this the English *tongue* is evidently cognate. See page 43.