GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PHILOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION AND THE VALUE OF GROUPS,

WITH

PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE LANGUAGES OF THE INDO-EUROPEAN CLASS.

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In respect to the languages of the Indo-European class, it is considered that the most important questions connected with their systematic arrangement, and viewed with reference to the extent to which they engage the attention of the present writers of philology, are the three following:—

1. *The question of the Fundamental Elements of certain Languages.* The particular example of an investigation of this kind is to be found in the discussion concerning the extent to which it is a language akin to the Sanskrit, or a language akin to the Tamul, which forms the basis of certain dialects of *middle* and even *northern* India. In this is involved the question as to the relative value of grammatical and glossarial coincidences.

2. *The question of the Independent or Subordinate Character of certain Groups.* Under this head comes the investigation, as to whether the Slavonic and Lithuanic tongues form separate groups, in the way that the Slavonic and Gothic tongues form separate groups, or whether they are each members of some higher group. The same inquiry applies to the languages (real or supposed) derived from the Zend, and the languages (real or supposed) derived from the Sanskrit.

3. *The question of Extension and Addition.* It is to this that the forthcoming observations are limited.

Taking as the centre of a group, those languages which have been recognised as Indo-European (or Indo-Germanic), from the first recognition of the group itself, we find the languages derived from the ancient Sanskrit, the languages

derived from the ancient Persian, the languages of Greece and Rome, the Slavonic and Lithuanic languages, and the languages of the Gothic stock; Scandinavian, as well as Germanic. The affinity between any two of these groups has currently been considered to represent the affinity between them all at large.

The way in which the class under which these divisions were contained, as subordinate groups, has received either *addition* or *extension*, is a point of philological history, which can only be briefly noticed; previous to which a difference of meaning between the words *addition* and *extension* should be explained.

To draw an illustration from the common ties of relationship, as between man and man, it is clear that a family may be enlarged in two ways.

a. A brother, or a cousin, may be discovered, of which the existence was previously unknown. Herein the family is enlarged, or increased, by the *real* addition of a new member, in a recognised degree of relationship.

b. A degree of relationship previously unrecognised may be recognised, *i. e.*, a family wherein it was previously considered that a second-cousinship was as much as could be admitted within its pale, may incorporate third, fourth, or fifth cousins. Here the family is enlarged, or increased, by a *verbal* extension of the term.

Now it is believed that the distinction between increase by the way of real addition, and increase by the way of verbal extension, has not been sufficiently attended to. Yet, that it should be more closely attended to, is evident; since, in mistaking a verbal increase for a real one, the whole end and aim of classification is overlooked.

I. *The Celtic.*—The publication of Dr Prichard's Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations, in 1831, supplied philologists with the most definite addition that has, perhaps, yet been made to ethnographical philology.

Ever since then, the Celtic has been considered to be Indo-European. Indeed its position in the same group with the Iranian, Classical, Slavono-Lithuanic, and Gothic tongues, supplied the reason for substituting the term Indo-*European* for the previous one Indo-*Germanic*.

2. Since the fixation of the Celtic, it has been considered that the Armenian is Indo-European. Perhaps the well-known affinity between the Armenian and Phrygian languages directed philologists to a comparison between the Armenian and Greek. Müller, in his Dorians, points out the inflexion of the Armenian verb-substantive.

3. Since the fixation of the Celtic, it has been considered that the old Etruscan is Indo-European.

4. Since the fixation of the Celtic, it has been considered that the Albanian is Indo-European.

5. Since the fixation of the Celtic, Indo-European elements have been indicated in the Malay.

6. Since the fixation of the Celtic, Indo-European elements have been indicated in the Laplandic.

7. Since the fixation of the Celtic, it has been considered that the Ossetic is Indo-European.

8. Since the consideration of the Ossetic as Indo-European, the Georgian has been considered as Indo-European likewise.

Now the criticism of the theory which makes the Georgian to be Indo-European, is closely connected with the criticism of the theory which makes the Ossetic and the Malay to be Polynesian; and this the writer reserves for a separate paper. All that he does at present is to express his opinion, that if any of the seven last-named languages are Indo-European, they are Indo-European not by real addition, in the way of recognised relationship, but by verbal extension of the power of the term Indo-European. He also believes that this is the view which is taken, more or less consciously or unconsciously, by the different authors of the different classifications themselves. If he be wrong in this notion, he is at issue with them as to a matter of fact; since, admitting *some* affinity on the part of the languages in question, he denied that it is that affinity which connects the Greek and German, the Latin and Lithuanian.

On the other hand, if he rightly imagine that they are considered as Indo-European on the strength of some other affinity, wider and more distant than that which connects the Greek with the German, or the Latin with the Lithuanic, he regrets that such an extension of a term should have been made without an exposition of the principle that suggested

it, or the facts by which it is supported; principles and facts which, when examined by himself, have convinced him that most of the later movements in this department of ethnographical philology, have been movements in the wrong direction.

There are two principles upon which languages may be classified.

1. According to the first, we take two or more languages as we find them, ascertain certain of their characteristics, and then inquire how far these characteristics coincide.

Two or more languages thus taken might agree in having a large per-centage of words in common, or a large per-centage of grammatical inflexions; in which case they would agree in certain *positive* characters. On the other hand, two or more such languages might agree in the *negative* fact of having a small and scanty vocabulary, and an inflexional system equally limited; whilst, again, the scantiness of inflexion might arise from one of two causes. It might arise from the fact of inflexions having never been developed at all, or it might arise from inflexions having been lost subsequent to a full development of the same. In all such cases as these, the principle of classification would be founded upon the extent to which languages agreed or differed in certain external characteristics; and it would be the principle upon which the mineralogist classifies minerals. It is not worth while to recommend the adoption of the particular term *mineralogical*, although mineralogy is the science that best illustrates the distinction. It is sufficient to state, that in the principle here indicated, there is no notion of *descent*.

2. It is well known that in ethnographical philology (indeed in ethnology at large) the mineralogical principle is not recognised; and that the principle that *is* recognised is what may be called the *historical* principle. Languages are arranged in the same class, not because they agree in having a copious grammar or scanty grammar, but because they are descended (or are supposed to be descended) from some common stock; whilst similarity of grammatical structure, and glossarial identity are recognised as elements of classification only so far as they are *evidence* of such community

of origin. Just as two brothers will always be two brothers, notwithstanding differences of stature, feature, and disposition, so will two languages which have parted from the common stock within the same decennium, be more closely allied to each other, at any time and at all times, than two languages separated within the same century; and two languages separated within the same century, will always be more cognate than two within the same millennium. This will be the case irrespective of any amount of subsequent similarity or dissimilarity.

Indeed, for the purposes of ethnology, the phenomena of subsequent similarity or dissimilarity are of subordinate importance. Why they are so, is involved in the question as to the rate of change in language. Of two tongues separated at the same time from a common stock, one may change rapidly, the other slowly; and, hence, a dissimilar physiognomy at the end of a given period. If the English of Australia were to change rapidly in one direction, and the English of America in another, great as would be the difference resulting from such changes, their ethnological relation would be the same. They would still have the same affiliation with the same mother-tongue, dating from nearly the same epoch.

In ethnological philology, as in natural history, *descent* is the paramount fact; and without asking how far the value thus given to it is liable to be refined on, we leave it, in each science, as we find it, until some future investigator shall have shewn that either for a pair of animals *not* descended from a common stock, or for a pair of languages *not* originating from the same mother-tongue, a greater number of general propositions can be predicated than is the case with the two most dissimilar instances of either an animal or a language derived from a common origin.

Languages are allied just in proportion as they were separated from the same language at the same epoch.

The same epoch.—The word *epoch* is an equivocal word, and it is used designedly because it is so. Its two meanings require to be indicated, and, then, it will be necessary to ask which of them is to be adopted here.

The *epoch*, as a period in the duration of a language, may

be simply *chronological*, or it may be *philological*, properly so called.

The space of ten, twenty, a hundred, or a thousand years, is a strictly chronological epoch. The first fifty years after the Norman conquest is an epoch in the history of the English language; so is the reign of Henry the Third, or the Protectorship of Oliver Cromwell. A definite period of this sort is an epoch in language, just as the term of twenty or thirty years is an epoch in the life of a man.

On the other hand, a period that, chronologically speaking, is indefinite, shall be an epoch. The interval between one change and another, whether long or short, is an epoch. The duration of English like the English of Chaucer, is an epoch in the history of the English language; and so is the duration of English like the English of the Bible translation. For such epochs there are no fixed periods. With a language that changes rapidly they are short; with a language that changes slowly they are long.

Now, in which of these two meanings should the word be used in ethnographical philology? The answer to the question is supplied by the circumstances of the case, rather than by any abstract propriety. We cannot give it the first meaning, even if we wish to do so. To say in what year of the duration of a common mother-tongue the Greek separated from the stock that was common to it and to the Latin is an impossibility; indeed, if it could be answered at once, it would be a question of simple history, not an inference from ethnology: since ethnology, with its palæontological reasoning from effect to cause, speaks only where history, with its direct testimony, is silent.

We cannot, then, in ethnological reasoning get, at the precise year in which any one or two languages separated from a common stock, so as to say that *this separated so long before the other*.

The *order*, however, of separation we *can* get at, since we can *infer* it from condition of the mother-tongue at the time of such separation, this condition being denoted by the condition of the derived language.

Hence the philological epoch is an approximation to the

chronological epoch, and as it is the nearest approximation that can possibly be attained, it is practically identical with it, so that the enunciation of the principle at which we wish to arrive may change its wording, and now stand as follows,—*Languages are allied, just in proportion as they were separated from the same language in the same stage.*

Now, if there be a certain number of well-marked forms (say *three*) of development, and if the one of these coincide with an early period in the history of language, another with a later one, and the third with a period later still, we have three epochs wherein we may fix the date of the separation of the different languages from their different parent-stocks; and these epochs are natural, just in proportion as the forms that characterise them are natural.

Again, if each epoch fall into minor and subordinate periods, characterised by the changes and modifications of the then generally characteristic forms, we have the basis for subordinate groups and a more minute classification.

It is not saying too much to say that all this is no hypothesis, but a reality. There *are* real distinctions of characteristic forms corresponding with real stages of development; and the number of these is three; besides which, one, at least, of the three great stages falls into divisions and subdivisions.

1. The stage anterior to the evolution of inflexion.—Here each word has but one form, and relation is expressed by mere juxtaposition, with or without the superaddition of a change of accent. The tendencies of this stage are to combine words in the way of composition, but not to go further. Each word retains, throughout, its separate substantive character, and has a meaning independent of its juxtaposition with the words with which it combines.

2. The stage wherein inflexions are developed.—Here, words originally separate, and afterwards placed in juxtaposition with others, as elements of a compound term, so far change in form, or so far lose their separate signification, as to pass for adjuncts, either prefixed or postfixed to the main word. What was once a word is now the part of a word, and what was once Composition is now Derivation, certain sorts of Derivation being called Inflexions, and certain In-

flexions being called Declensions or Conjugations, as the case may be.

3. The stage wherein inflexions become lost, and are replaced by separate words. Here case-endings, like the *i* in *patr-i*, are replaced by prepositions (in some cases by post-positions), like the *to* in *to father;* and personal endings, like the *o* in *voc-o*, are replaced by pronouns, like the *I* in *I call.*

Of the *first* of these stages, the Chinese is the language which affords the most typical specimen that can be found in the present *late* date of languages—*late*, considering that we are looking for a sample of its earliest forms.

Of the *last* of these stages the English of the year 1849 affords the most typical specimen that can be found in the present *early* date of language—*early*, considering that we are looking for a sample of its latest forms.

Of the second of these stages we must take two languages as the samples.

1. *The Greek.*—Here we have the inflexional character in its most perfect form; *i. e.*, the existence, as separate words, of those sounds and syllables that form inflexions is at its maximum of concealment; *i. e.*, their amalgamation with the primary word (the essence of inflexion) is most perfect.

2. *The Circassian, Coptic, or Turkish.*—In one of these (it is difficult to say which) the existence as separate words of those sounds and syllables which form inflexions, is at its *minimum* of concealment; *i. e.*, their amalgamation with the primary word (the essence of inflexion) being most imperfect.

This classification is, necessarily, liable to an element of confusion common to all classifications where the evidence is not exactly of the sort required by the nature of the question. The nature of the question here dealt with requires the evidence of the historical kind, *i. e.*, direct testimony. The only evidence, however, we can get at is indirect and inferential. This engenders the following difficulty. The newest language of (say) the languages of the secondary formation may be nearer in chronology, to the oldest language of the third, than to the first formed language of its own class. Indeed, unless we assume the suspension of all change for long epochs, and that those coincide with the periods

at which certain languages are given off from their parent stocks, such *must* be the case.

Now, although this is a difficulty, it is no greater difficulty than the geologists must put up with. With them also there are the phenomena of transition, and such phenomena engender unavoidable complication. They do so, however, without overthrowing the principles of their classification.

The position of a language in respect to its stage of development is one thing,—the position in respect to its allied tongues another.

Two languages may be in the same stage (and, *as such*, agree), yet be very distant from each other in respect to affiliation or affinity. Stage for stage the French is more closely connected with the English, than the English with the Mœso-Gothic. In the way of affiliation, the converse is the case.

Languages are allied (or, what is the same thing, bear evidence of their alliance), according to the number of forms that they have in common; since (subject to one exception) these common forms must have been taken from the common mother-tongue.

Two languages separated from the common mother-tongue, subsequent to the evolution of (*say*) a form for the dative case, are more allied than two languages similarly separated anterior to such an evolution.

Subject to one exception. This means, that it is possible that two languages may appear under certain circumstances more allied than they really are, and *vice versâ*.

They may appear more allied than they really are, when, after separating from the common mother-tongue during the ante-inflexionary stage, they develop their inflexions on the same principle, although *independently*. This case is more possible than proved.

They may appear less allied than they really are, when, although separated from the common mother-tongue after the evolution of a considerable amount of inflexion, each taking with it those inflexions, the one may retain them, whilst the other loses them *in toto*. This case also is more possible than proved.

Each of these cases involves a complex question in philology:—the one the phenomena connected with the *rate of change;* the other the *uniformity of independent processes.*

These questions are likely to affect future researches more than they had affected the researches hitherto established. Another question has affected the researches hitherto established more than it is likely to affect future ones. This is the question as to the *fundamental unity, or non-unity of language.* Upon this the present writer has expressed an opinion elsewhere. At present he suggests that the more the general unity of the human language is admitted, the clearer will be the way for those who work at the details of the different affiliations. As long as it is an open question, whether one class of languages is *wholly* unconnected with others, *any* connection engenders an inclination to arrange it under the group previously recognised. I believe that this determined the position of the Celtic in the Indo-European group. I have great doubts whether if *some* affinity had been recognised from the beginning, it would even have stood where it now does. The question, when Dr Prichard undertook his investigations, was not so much whether the Celtic was in the exact ratio to any or all of the then recognised European languages in which they were to each other, but whether it was in any relation at all. This being proved, it fell into the class at once.

The present writer believes that the Celtic tongues were separated from their mother-tongue at a comparatively early period of the second stage; *i. e.*, when but few inflexions had been evolved; whilst the Classic, Gothic, Lithuano-Slavonic (Sarmatian), and Indo-Persian (Iranian) were separated at comparatively late periods of the same stage, *i. e.*, when many inflexions had been evolved.

Hence he believes that, in order to admit the Celtic, the meaning of the term Indo-European was extended.

Regretting this (at the same time admitting that the Celtic tongue is more Indo-European than any other), he believes that it is too late to go back to the older and more restricted use of the term; and suggests (as the next best

change), the propriety of considering the Indo-European class as divided into two divisions, the older containing the Celtic, the newer containing the Iranian, Classical, Sarmatian, and Gothic tongues. All further extensions of the term he believes to be prejudicial to future philology; believing also that all supposed additions to the Indo-European class *have* (with the exception, perhaps, of the Armenian) involved such farther extension.

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Note.—After the statement of the preceding remarks, Mr Kingsford suggested the possibility of languages becoming wholly uninflexional, and, as such, reduced to a condition like the languages of the first period, in which case they might (as in a *cycle*) undergo a second series of similar development, *de novo;* and so on, *ad infinitum.* This the present writes believed to be a philological possibility; indeed, in his Inaugural lecture at University College, he had expressed a similar notion.

Note.—Since this was written, a heavy loss has fallen upon the learned world, in the death of Dr Prichard. This induces me to insist more strongly than I should otherwise have done, upon the exception taken to his position of the Celtic being more *verbal* than *real.* High as I put his work upon the Physical History of Mankind (especially as it appeared in the first edition, where, though less learned, it was more critical, more original, and more in advance of contemporary thinkers, than in its final form), I put his Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations equally high; and, as a definite addition to ethnographical philology, even higher.