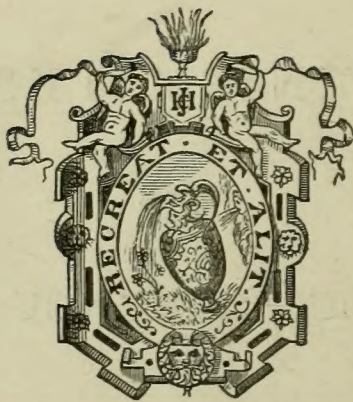


DARWINISM TESTED
BY THE
SCIENCE OF LANGUAGE.

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Translated from the German

OF

PROFESSOR AUGUST SCHLEICHER,

WITH PREFACE AND ADDITIONAL NOTES,

BY

DR. ALEX. V. W. BIKKERS.

LONDON :

JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, 74 & 75, PICCADILLY.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

LAW and order pervade the universe; as we proceed in unbiassed investigation of the realm of nature we see the clouds of wonder and ignorance dispelled by the torch of knowledge and truth. As the Italian poet has it:—

La maraviglia
Dell' ignoranz' è la figlia,
E del saper
La madre.

I have always looked upon the idea of creation from nothing as so absurd, so inconsistent, so unphilosophical, as hardly to deserve the very name of an idea except by way of courtesy.

My favourite study, glossology, or the science of language, was the first to convert

me to Darwinism. Here, as elsewhere, I trusted to the grand principle of analogy which underlies so many more of the mysteries of nature.

Ever since 1864, when Fritz Mueller published his remarkable pamphlet, "fuer Darwin," a test of Darwinism by one particular group of animals, the Crustacea, it occurred to me that other investigators of natural science might apply the main principles laid down in the "Origin of Species" to their own particular branch of study.

It is but fair to say that Dr. Mueller had been forestalled in his attempt by one of his countrymen, August Schleicher, a distinguished glossologist, and a Professor at the University of Jena. His open missive (or public letter) to Professor Ernst Haeckel, his learned colleague and the great champion of Darwinism in Germany, is the pamphlet here presented in an English garb.

As the translator of Dr. Mueller's treatise says of himself—"My chief object has been to furnish, as nearly as possible, a literal version of the original, regarding mere elegance of expression as of secondary importance in a scientific work." It is always hard to have to deal with any scientific dissertation written on a subject, the terminology of which is still unsettled, and in a language living on its own stock, possessing such words as *Entwicklungsgeschichte*, *Ursprache*, *Grundsprache*, *lautlich*, *Lautform*, and others of a similarly embarrassing nature.

Not the shadow of a doubt lurks in my own mind that the science of language, although still in its infancy, is the highest and at the same time the easiest test of Mr. Darwin's theory.

It is with such a conviction that I venture to issue this English translation of Professor Schleicher's brochure, not only as an addi-

tional witness to the soundness of Darwin's theory, nor even as a mere adding of material to the literature of Darwinism, already represented by the names of Bree and Daubeny (1860), of Von Pelzen (1861), of Rolle (1863), of Flourens (1864), of Hallier and Young (1865), of Haeckel and O. E. Schmidt (1866), of Professor Omboni (1867), of Buechner and Twemlow (1868), and last, not least, of Fritz Mueller, whose testimony hardly reached England before the beginning of this year.

The fruit of my labour may be regarded in no other light than that of an humble palm-leaf on the shrine of a man who has promulgated truth in his attempt to cut short the existence of error.

It may not be superfluous for the non-professional student of language to receive the additional assurance that all data furnished by the German glossologist, as far as his

own department is concerned, are acknowledged axiomata in the science of language, with the sole exception, perhaps, of the very bold statement (p. 47) concerning the impossibility of a common origin of speech, in which I for one do not concur.

Not until after I had finished my translation of Professor Schleicher's remarkable pamphlet did I receive information of the author's premature demise, which occurred at the close of the past year. I embrace this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Professor Ernst Haeckel of the University of Jena for this and other valuable communications directly or indirectly connected with the subject of Darwinism.

A. V. W. B.

LONDON, *Oct. 5th*, 1869.

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YOU would leave me no peace until I began reading Bronn's translation* of the much discussed work of Darwin "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life." I have complied with your request; I have

* "Ueber die Entstehung der Arten in Thier- und Pflanzenreich durch naturerliche Zuechtung, oder Erhaltung der vervollkommneten Rassen im Kampfe ums Dasein." The work was translated from the second edition by Heinrich Georg Bronn, an eminent German naturalist, and published at Stuttgart in 1860.—T.

waded through the whole of the book, in spite of its being rather clumsily arranged, and heavily written in a curious kind of German, and the greater part of the work I was tempted to read again and again. My first thanks are now offered to you for those repeated inducements of yours which ended in my study of this incontestably remarkable work. In supposing that Darwin's "Origin of Species" would please me, you were thinking no doubt, in the first place, of my amateur gardening and botanizing. I confess that our gardening presents many and many an opportunity of observing for example that "struggle for life" which we are wont to decide in favour of our chosen pets, and which, in the language of ordinary life, goes by the name of "weeding." Another point, which the gardener may experience more often than he wishes, is how one

single plant is capable of spreading, as soon as it finds room and favourable opportunities. Finally, with regard to "the variation of species," to "inheritance," in a word, with respect to "selection," there also is a large field of observation and experience for a man who has so long ridden the hobby of cultivating in different directions one of our beautiful flowers that is most capable of variation.

Yet, my dear friend, you were not altogether on the right track, when you wished to make me acquainted with the remarkable book, on account of my love for gardening; Darwin's views and theory struck me in a much higher degree, when I applied them to the science of language.

What Darwin lays down of the animal creation in general, can equally be said of the organisms of speech—nay, it is quite accidentally that I pronounced an opinion

coinciding in a remarkable degree with Darwin's views on "the struggle for life," on the extinction of ancient forms, on the widely-spread varieties of individual species in the field of speech, as far back as the year 1860—that is to say, contemporaneously with the publication of the German Darwin.* Can you wonder now that the book has made so strong an impression on me?

If you further wish to know what kind of an impression the "Origin of Species," has made upon me, I am quite willing to gratify your curiosity, and that of the public at large. To point out how the main features of Darwin's theory are applicable to the life of languages, or even, we might

* Professor Schleicher states in a foot-note that the original English edition, although published in November, 1859, was still unknown to him when he published his "Deutsche Sprache" (1860). The passage in his own work here alluded to will be found translated in the Appendix.—T.

say, how the development of human speech has already been unconsciously illustrative of the same, such a labour cannot fail to captivate you, the energetic champion of Darwinism. Moreover, I am inclined to believe that for others likewise my communication will not be altogether devoid of interest. Whilst, therefore, in the first place, I am addressing you, allowing myself the harmless pleasure of surprising you with an "open letter," I am, above all, appealing to the naturalists, whom I should wish to take more notice of language than they have hitherto done. I do not here exclusively refer to a physiological investigation of the various sounds of speech, a study which has made considerable progress of late, but also to the observation and application of linguistic varieties in their significance for the natural history of man. What if those linguistic varieties were

to form the basis of a natural system concerning the *unique genus homo*? Is not the history of the formation and progress of speech the main aspect of that of the development of mankind? Thus much is certain, that a knowledge of linguistic relationship is absolutely requisite for anybody who wishes to obtain sound notions about the nature and being of man.

It is my earnest desire that the natural history method should find more and more favour with those who investigate the subject of language in general. In this respect the following lines might induce a young glossologist* to take a leaf out of

* I am the first, as far as I know, to use this modern Germanism, or Jenaism, for the scientific, philosophical investigator of language; but a name had to be coined or adapted for the man of science, who is neither to be compared with the linguist nor to be confused with the philologist. The heart-rending complaints about innovation, about foreignisms—genus and species—will invariably be found to arise from

the books of able botanists and zoologists. I pledge them my word that they will never repent it, and, for my own part, I feel how much I am indebted to such works as Schleiden's "Science of Botany,"* Carl Vogt's "Physiological Letters,"† &c., for my conception of the nature and life of speech.

Those books were the first to teach me the history of growth and development. We may learn from the experience of the naturalist, that nothing is of any importance to science but such *facts* as have been established by close objective ob-

the side of those who are utterly ignorant of the nature of human speech. *Foreign* coin is not necessarily *base* coin; it is at least entitled to a fair test. If a French "smasher" offers us such a coin as "*bibliophile*" or "*patoisophile*," it will, of course, be refused by anybody who has not forgotten his government of the Greek verbs.—T.

* An English translation by E. Lankester was published in 1849.—T.

† "Physiologische Briefe fuer Gebildete aller Staende," 3 parts. Stuttgart and Tuebingen, 1845-47, 8vo.—T.

ervation, and the proper conclusions derived from them; nor would such a lesson be lost upon several of my colleagues. All those trifling, futile interpretations, those fanciful etymologies, that vague groping and guessing—in a word, all that which tends to strip the study of language of its scientific garb, and to cast ridicule upon the science in the eyes of thinking people—all this becomes perfectly intolerable to the student who has learned to take his stand on the ground of sober observation. Nothing but the close watching of the different organisms and of the laws that regulate their life, nothing but our unabated study of the scientific object, that, and that alone, should form the basis also of *our* training. All speculations, however ingenious, when not placed on this firm foundation, are devoid of scientific value.

Languages are organisms of nature;

they have never been directed by the will of man; they rose, and developed themselves according to definite laws; they grew old, and died out. They, too, are subject to that series of phenomena which we embrace under the name of "life." The science of language* is consequently a natural science; its method is generally altogether the same as that of any other natural science.† In this respect, the "Origin of Species," which you urged me to read, could not be said to lie so very far beyond my own department.

Darwin's book is, in my opinion, called forth by the tendency of our age, save that passage where the author, humouring the

* "Die Glottik," as the author says.—T.

† I argued this very point in the spring of the current year in a course of three lectures, "On the Formation and Progress of Human Speech," delivered to the members of the "Torquay Natural History Society."—T.

proverbial narrow-mindedness of his countrymen in matters of religion, delivers himself of the scarcely consistent confession that his views are not incompatible with the idea of the creation. Of course it is not our intention to touch upon that point here, but the passage is one in which Darwin contradicts himself; his statements admit only of the notion of a *gradual* formation and development of organisms, not by any means of the idea of a sudden starting from nothing. The only logical conclusion to be drawn from Darwin's theory is that the common beginning of all living organisms must be sought in that single cell, whence proceeded, in the course of ages and ages, the entire fulness of the now existing living beings and of those already recovered; that simplest form of life is now to be found in those organisms which are still on the lowest stage of development, and likewise in the

embryo of higher beings. Darwin's book, then, it appears to me, is in perfect harmony with those fundamental notions of philosophy which we find more or less consciously or deliberately expressed by the greater part of those who have written on natural science. I will enter into some particulars.

The tendency of modern thought is undeniably towards *monism*. *Dualism*, whether you are pleased to define it as the contrast of spirit and nature, of contents and form, of appearance and reality, is no longer a firm ground to stand upon, if we wish to survey the field of modern science. To the latter there is no matter without spirit (without the unavoidable force that governs it), nor, on the other hand, any spirit without matter. We might say, perhaps, that there is neither matter nor spirit in the usual acceptation of the words, but only a

something which is the one and the other at the same time.* It is true we are still without a philosophical system of monism, but the history of the development of modern philosophy is clearly indicative of a struggling for it. Besides, it should not be overlooked that the process of scientific labour has decidedly assumed a different aspect, *in consequence of* the modern way of thinking, and of looking at things in general. Whereas it was once customary first to prepare the system and then to mould the object accordingly, we now proceed exactly in the opposite direction. It is now more than ever necessary to occupy oneself with the most minute special study of the object, without thinking at all of a systematic upbuilding of the whole. We

* To charge this view—which is founded on observation—with materialism is equally unjust as to lay it at the door of spiritualism.—A.

bear with the greatest placidity the lack of a philosophical system answering to the condition of the closest and minutest of our special investigations, convinced, as we are, that such a system cannot be framed as yet, or rather anxious to forbear from the attempt until we can command a satisfactory supply of reliable observations and trustworthy data from every sphere of human knowledge.

The importance which the observation of facts* has acquired for science in general, but more especially for natural science, is the unavoidable result of the monistic principle, which does not look for anything behind the things, but looks upon the object as identical with its form or appearance. Observation is the foundation of modern knowledge; nothing else is acceptable but the necessary

* *Prior* to the framing of a system.—T.

conclusions arrived at through that channel. All *a priori* fabrics, all cut-and-dry systems, are not entitled to any higher consideration than any other witty trifling; their place is in the lumber-room of science.

Now observation teaches us that all living organisms, which fall at all within the proper reach of our observation, vary according to definite laws. These changes or varieties, this life, is the real essence or being of any organism; and we never know anything about the latter until we are cognizant of the former in their undivided entirety. In other words, so long as we are ignorant of how a thing arose we cannot be said to know it. The great importance which the developmental history and the scientific cognition of the life of the different organisms has assumed for the natural science of our time, is the necessary result of the principle of observation.

The importance of developmental history for the cognition of the individual organism is universally acknowledged. It was first of all applied to zoology and botany. It is well known that Lyell has represented the life of our planet as a series of regularly and gradually arising variations; a sudden and abrupt entering upon new phases of life is here equally unknown as in the life of any other organism of nature. Lyell appeals likewise to the observation of facts. Since the observation over a very short period of recent earthly life yields nothing more than the fact of a *gradual variation*, we are certainly not justified in pre-supposing anything to have been different in the past. I have always started with a similar view in examining the life of languages, which falls likewise within the range of our immediate observation during its ultimate, most recent and comparatively very short period of

existence. Yet this short time, a span of some thousands of years only, teaches us with a most positive certainty that the life of the organisms of speech runs on according to definite laws in variations perfectly gradual, and that we have not the slightest right to suppose that it has ever been otherwise.

Now Darwin, and those that preceded him, went a step further than the other zoologists and botanists; not only have individuals, said they, a life, but likewise the species and the races; they, as well, have arisen gradually; they, also, are subject to continual changes according to definite laws. Like all our modern scholars Darwin appeals to observation, although naturally spreading over a short period, just as in the life of our planet and in that of languages. Since the fact is noticeable that the species are not altogether constant or stationary, their capa-

bility of variation is clearly, however restrictedly, to be regarded as a point of observation. A mere accident—namely, the shortness of the period over which we are able to extend such observations as might be called practical—is the main reason why the variation of the species does not, on the whole, appear so very important. We have merely, consonantly with the results of other observations, to suppose that for thousands of millions of years there have been living beings in existence on our earth, and we shall soon understand how it was possible for the now-existing species and races to arise through continued gradual variations, analogous to those which have actually fallen under our own observation.

It appears, therefore, to me, that Darwin's theory is but the unavoidable result of the principles recognised in the modern science of nature. It is founded upon observation,

and is indeed an attempt at a history of development. Just what Lyell has done for the history of the life of the earth, Darwin has attempted for that of the inhabitants of our planet. The theory of "the origin of species" is, therefore, no accidental apparition, not the product of one individual head, but the true and legitimate offspring of our inquiring age. Darwin's theory is a necessity.

The rules now, which Darwin lays down with regard to the species of animals and plants, are equally applicable to the organisms of languages, that is to say, as far as the main features are concerned.

To demonstrate this proposition is the end and aim of these pages; but we did not deem it superfluous to point out in a general way how one common character pervades the whole cycle of the natural sciences—among which ranks the science of language

—namely, the modern principle of observation.

Let us now take up the origin of species, and consider how far it is possible to confront the science of language with the views represented by Darwin.

It is necessary to observe beforehand, that although the relationship in the specification of human speech is, in the main, identical with that in the realm of nature, yet the terminology of the glossologist is different from that of the naturalist. This I must request you not to lose sight of, for all that will follow depends upon it. What the naturalist terms a genus the glossologist calls a family, and such genera as are more closely related are often called the classes or branches of a family. I by no means deny that there is no more unanimity with regard to determining a genus or a family among the glossologists than among the zoologists and

the botanists ; this is a peculiarity recurring in all classification and specification, to which I shall have occasion to refer again.* The species of a genus are what we call the languages of a family, the races of a species are with us the dialects of a language ; the sub-dialects or patois correspond with the varieties of the species, and that which is characteristic of a person's mode of speaking† corresponds with the individual. It is well known that the individuals of one and the same species are never altogether and absolutely identical ; it is the same with the individual of speech ; " native accent " is always more or less strongly developed.

What Darwin now maintains with regard

* And which has beset the translator here with great difficulties, which he does not flatter himself that he has altogether surmounted.—T.

† *Native accent* I venture to call it : a phenomenon well worthy of the investigation of the physiologist.—T.

to the variation of the species in the course of time, through which—when it does not reveal itself in all individuals in like manner and to the same extent—one form grows into several distinct other forms by a process of continual repetition, that has been long and generally recognised in its application to the organisms of speech. Such languages as we would call, in the terminology of the botanist or zoologist, the species of a genus, are for us the daughters of one stock-language,* whence they proceeded by gradual variation. Where we are sufficiently familiar with any particular family of speech we draw up a genealogical table† similar to

* I know no better word to render *Grundsprache*, since the term *primitive language* is the one which I have reserved for *Ursprache*.—T.

† *Vide* the one drawn up in the "Appendix" to Max Mueller's first series of "Lectures on the Science of Language," p. 411 in the fourth edition.—T.

the one which Darwin attempted for the species of animals and plants. Nobody doubts or denies any longer that the whole Indo-germanic* family of speech—Indic, Iranic, (old Armenian, Persic, &c.,) Hellenic, Italic, (Latin, Oscan, Umbrian, with the daughters of the former, †) Keltic, Slavonic, Lithuanian, Teutonic or German, that all these languages, consisting of numerous species, races and varieties, have taken their origin from one single primitive form of the Indo-Germanic family; the same remark holds good with regard to the languages of the Semitic family, which is well

* I would have taken the liberty of substituting our more usual appellation of *Arian*, especially because I have already referred the naturalist to Dr. Mueller's tables, but for the author's own way of using the word; an inconsistent terminology is the cause of much misunderstanding.—T.

† That is to say, modern French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, Provençal as *now* spoken in some parts of the South of France, and Wallachian, forming the group of Romance or neo-Latin languages.

known to include Hebraic, Syriac, Arabic, &c.,* as well as of all other families of speech.† By way of illustration, we add‡ genealogical tree of the Arian family of speech representing what we imagine to be the gradual development of the same; in comparing this with Darwin's diagram,§ one should not forget that the author of the "Origin of Species" had to draw up an ideal scheme, whereas we have represented the actual process of development of a given family.|| Besides, it was not feasible to

* The Aramaic is the northern branch of the Semitic family.—T.

† There is one other family of speech already properly classified: the Turanian.—T.

‡ See after the Appendix.—T.

§ Page 130 of the fourth English edition.—T.

|| Better to be compared, and more in harmony, with Darwin's scheme, is the likewise ideal diagram of the development of the different species and sub-species of speech from one primitive form, which I have drawn up in my "Deutsche Geschichte," S. 28.—A.

make our table a correct picture in every respect; the sub-dialects (varieties) could merely be pointed out; the ramifications of the Iranian and Indic branch we were compelled to omit.

If our diagram could speak it would express itself most likely in the following strain:—

At a remote period of the existence of the human species, there was a language, a primitive language,* which we can pretty clearly recognise in the so-called Indo-Germanic languages to which it has given birth.† This primitive language, after having been spoken for several generations—the people who used it probably increasing and extending meanwhile—gradually

* “*Ursprache*” in the original.—T.

† In its application to grammatical forms I have made the experiment in my Compendium of the Comparative Grammar of the Indo-Germanic Languages. Weimar, Böhlau, 1861-2.—A.

assumed a different character in different parts of its domain, until at last it branched off into a couple of languages, or possibly into more than two, of which two only survived; the same applies to all ulterior ramification and division. Both these languages again submitted repeatedly to the process of ramification. The one branch or offshoot which, on account of its ulterior career, we will call the Slavonic. Teutonic divided in its turn through gradual re-ramification—Darwin's continual tendency to divergency of character—into Teutonic and Slavo-Lettic; of these the former became the mother of all the Germanic languages and dialects, whereas the latter gave rise to the Slavonic and Lithuanian (Baltic, Lettic) tongues. The other language which, by the process of ramification had developed itself out of the Indo-Germanic primitive form, the Ario - Graeco - Italo - Keltic—

pardon the sesquipedalian combination—again divided into a couple of idioms of which the one, the Græco-Italo-Keltic, became the parent of Hellenic, Albanic, and of Italo-Keltic, the latter, so called because Italic and Keltic arose from it, whereas the other produced the Arian* language, the closely connected stocks of the Indic† as well as of the Iranic (Persic) class. It would be

* The most ancient inhabitants of India and Irania (Persia) both called themselves Arians; hence the name for the common stock-language of Indic and Iranic.—A.

† The stock-language of the Indic class has been preserved to us in the language in which the old religious hymns of the Indians, the Veda hymns, are written. From that idiom proceeded in one direction the middle-Indic forms, the Prakrit branches (further away the neo-Indic languages and dialects—*i.e.*, Bengalese, Mahrattâ, Hindostanee, and cognate tongues), and in another direction Sanscrit, a written or literary language, which was never the language of the people, but the medium of the post-Vedic Indian literature; in some measure the Latin of India, the written Latin of the Romans, which remains up to the present time the vernacular of the learned.—A.

superfluous to go on with the translation of our diagrams into words.*

It would of course be easy to draw up a similar tree of any other family of speech of which the point of mutual kinship is sufficiently established.

In such languages and dialects as are closely related, we see an indication of recent separation from the common stock; the more any languages of the same family vary in character, the earlier we suppose was their migration from the native hearth, since we place the variety to the account of a longer individual development.

Now it is possible that you, my worthy colleague, and such naturalists as have not devoted themselves to the study of human speech, may feel inclined to ask

* For further details I refer to my "Deutsche Sprache," S. 71, &c.—A.

me whence we derive all this knowledge. To draw up a tree, similar to the one here adduced as illustrative of the development of speech, for such species of animals and plants as are sufficiently investigated, thereby supposing that they are descended from primitive forms, and to determine the latter in their principal features, is certainly not anything impracticable. But the question is whether it is admissible to suppose that such primitive forms ever did exist. Who gives you, glossologists, the right, you might ask, to give out that those stock- and primitive languages which you have arrived at through the existing forms of speech, can be safely taken for realities? Who assures us that your genealogical trees are anything better than the productions of your imagination? How is it that you are so unanimously convinced of the variation of species, of the rami-

fication of one form into several others in the course of ages, whereas we, zoologists and botanists, look upon all this as the *questio vexata*, whilst several among us, considering the existence of the species spontaneous or beginningless, are coolly sitting in judgment over Darwin because he holds very much the same opinion, with regard to the animal and vegetable kingdom, as you do of the species of language?

Here is my answer. To trace the development of new forms from anterior ones is much easier, and can be executed on a larger scale, in the field of speech than in the organisms of plants and animals. For once the glossologist has an advantage over his brother naturalists in this respect. We are actually able to trace directly in many idioms that they have branched off into several languages, dialects &c., for we are in a position to follow the

course of some, nay, of whole families of them during a period of more than two thousand years, since a faithful picture of them has been left us in writing. This, for instance, is the case with Latin. We know the ancient Latin quite as well as the Romance languages, its unmistakable offspring, partly through the process of ramification and partly through foreign influence, which you, gentlemen, would call crossing; we know the ancient Indic; we know the idioms which first emanated from it as well as its less distant offshoots, the neo-Indian dialects. So you see that we have a firm and solid ground to stand on for our observation. What we know now of those languages which, owing to an accident, we have been able to watch for so long a period of time, because the people who spoke them have been obliging enough to leave written records behind

from a comparatively early time, may be otherwise supposed in respect of other families of languages, which do not possess those exponents of their earlier forms. We therefore know positively from the observation of collected facts that languages change as long as they live, and for this knowledge we are indebted to the art of writing.

But for the invention of the art of writing the student of language would never have imagined, up to the present day, that such languages as Russian, German, and French, for example, are descended, after all, from one and the same stock. Nay it is quite possible that nobody would ever have hit upon the idea of a common origin for any languages whatsoever, however closely related, or ever would have supposed that a language is subject to any change at all. Without written records

we should be still worse off than the zoologists and botanists, who have at all events remains of anterior formations at their disposal, and whose scientific objects are generally more open to observation than languages. As it is, we are better off for materials of observation than the other naturalists, and therefore we have forestalled you in the idea of the non-creation of the species. Perhaps also the changes may have generally taken place in shorter periods of time in language than in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, so that the zoologist or botanist could only be favourably contrasted with us, if he had been able to observe in some genera at least a complete chain of what we might call pre-historic forms, and these moreover represented by specimens carefully preserved—that is to say, flesh and blood, leaf, blossom, and fruit. The kin-

ship of the different languages may consequently serve, so to speak, as a paradigmatic illustration of the origin of species, for those fields of inquiry which lack, for the present at least, any similar opportunities of observation. Besides, as we have already remarked, the difference in observing-material is merely quantitative, not specific, for it is an acknowledged fact that the capability of variation applies in a certain degree to the animal and vegetable kingdoms.

From what we have thus far stated with regard to the ramification of one primitive form into several others, gradually diverging the one from the other, it follows that it is impossible to draw any definite and distinct lines of demarcation for the different stages of human speech—that is to say, for language, dialect, patois, &c. The varieties indicated by these terms

have gradually developed themselves and grown out of each other ; they differ moreover characteristically in every group of languages. Thus, for instance, the relationship between the various languages of the Semitic family is essentially different from that between the offshoots of the Indo-Germanic stock, and quite distinct from both is the kinship of the Finnic languages (Finnish, the idioms of the Lapps and Magyars, &c.) This will explain the fact that no glossologist is as yet able actually to give a satisfactory definition of language in contradistinction to dialect, and so forth. What some call a language, others term a dialect, and *vice versa*. Even the field of the Indo-Germanic languages, however accurately explored, is a point in evidence. Thus many glossologists speak of the Slavonic dialects, others of the Slavonic languages ; even

the various idioms which constitute the German or Teutonic language have sometimes been spoken of as dialects.

Darwin says* in his book: "Certainly no clear line of demarcation has, as yet, been drawn between species and sub-species—that is, the forms which, in the opinion of some naturalists, come very near to, but do not quite arrive at, the rank of species; or, again, between sub-species and well-marked varieties, or between lesser varieties and individual differences. These differences blend into each other in an insensible series; and a series impresses the mind with the idea of an actual passage." Well, if for the terms species, sub-species, variety, we substitute the words language, dialect, patois, as used by the glossologist, Darwin's state-

* Page 60 of the fourth original edition.—T.

ment holds perfectly good with regard to those divergences of speech in the bosom of one family, of which we have already illustrated the gradual process of development.

But how stands the fact with the creation of the genera? that is to say, in the glossologist's phraseology, with the self-development of those mother-languages which have given birth to the different families of speech? Do we here observe the same phenomenon as we did in the offshoots of a family; do those parent idioms again descend from a common stock, and all these in the end from one single primitive form of speech?

This question might be decided with greater certainty if we had examined the primitive form of a good many more families of speech through their descendants than we have done, but for the present

we are almost entirely unprepared for that. Something however is to be arrived at with regard to the question raised, from the observation of such languages as we are sufficiently acquainted with.

Above all, the varieties of those special families of speech, which have been carefully examined, are so great and of such a nature, as to render it impossible for any unbiassed mind to believe in a common origin. Nobody, for example, is able to imagine a language that could have given birth, let us say, to Indo-Germanic and Chinese, to Semitic and Hottentot;* nay, even if we take the primitive forms of more

* I think it hardly fair to put a whole family in juxtaposition with single offshoots, especially when morphologically belonging to different orders or stages of the species. I unreservedly admit that the Arian and Semitic are two clearly distinct systems of grammar, but does that touch the radical elements of the languages based upon either?—T.

cognate families, as of Indo-Germanic and Semitic, we cannot arrive at the conclusion that they have descended from a common parent. What we may call a material derivation of all languages from one common primitive form, we may safely suppose to be impossible.

But the question assumes a different aspect with regard to the form of speech. All the languages of a higher organization—as for instance the Indo-Germanic parent which we are able to examine—show by their construction, in a striking manner, that they have arisen from simpler forms, through a process of gradual development. The construction of all languages points to this, that the eldest forms were in reality alike or similar; and those less complex forms are preserved in some idioms of the simplest kind, as, for example, Chinese. In a word, the point from which all

languages had their issue were significant sounds, simple sound-symbols of perceptions, conceptions, and ideas, which might assume the functions of any grammatical form, although such functions were not denoted by any particular expression, although they were not organized, as we might say. In this remote stage of the life of speech, there is consequently no distinction in word or sound* between verbs and nouns; there is neither declension nor conjugation. Let us endeavour by one example to illustrate our meaning. The oldest form of those words, which in modern German sound *That, gethan, thue, Thaeter, thaetig*,† was at the dawn of the Indo-Germanic primitive language *dha*, its meaning, to put, to do: old Indic, *dha*;

* lautlich.—T.

† The same holds good with the corresponding forms in English, *deed, done, do, doer, doing*.—T.

old Bactric, *da*, Greek, $\delta\epsilon$, Lettic and Slavonic, *de*, Gothic, *da*, high German, *ta*. Now this *dha* is found to be the common root of all the words given above, and although this cannot be demonstrated here, it is an established fact to any student of the Indo-Germanic family of speech. When this primitive idiom had reached a higher degree of development, certain particular relations began to be expressed by the agglutination or duplication of the radical elements, which still retained the function of words, and had an independent existence. To indicate, for instance, the first person of the present tense, one said *dha-dha-ma*; whence grew afterwards, as the result of the fusion of elements and the variability of roots, the trisyllable *dhadhámi*, old Indic, *dádhámi*; old Bactric, *dadhámi*; Greek, $\tau\acute{\iota}\delta\eta\mu\iota$; old high German, *tôm*, *tuom*, for *têtômi*; modern German, *thue*. In that

oldest form *dha*, slumbered the different grammatical relations,* verbal and nominal, with all their modifications, unsevered as yet and undeveloped, as we may observe in those languages that have remained stationary on this simple stage of development. What we have shown by an illustration selected at random, applies to all Indo-Germanic words.

You, and your fellow naturalists, will best understand my argument, when I characterize the radical elements as the *cells* of speech, not yet containing any particular organs for the functions of nouns, verbs, etc., and in which these functions (the grammatical relations,) are no more separated yet than

* Ernest Rénan is, so far as I know, the only glossologist who holds the opinion that all the so-called parts of speech had their respective functions eked out for them, so to say, at the very dawn of language. Does he imagine that they issued forth from an *arsenal* of human speech as "the blue-eyed maid" burst forth, speared and shielded, from the head-womb of thundering Jove?—T.

respiration and digestion are in the one-celled organisms, or in the ovary of the higher living beings.*

We assume therefore that all languages have had the same original form. When man had found his way from gesticulation and imitation of sound, to sounds expressive of meaning, these were yet mere forms of sound without any grammatical relation. Still, with regard to the sound-material of which they consisted, and in respect to the meaning which they expressed, those simplest beginnings of language differed among the different people; this is evinced by the diversity of languages that have developed themselves from those beginnings. We suppose, therefore, an innumerable multitude of primitive languages, but all alike, of one and the same form.

* Compare K. Snell, "die Schoepfung des Menschen." Leipzig, 1863, S. 81, etc.—A.

Somewhat analogous is, probably, the origin of the vegetable and animal organisms; the simple cell is, no doubt, the common primitive form of those, as the simple root is that of the languages. The simplest forms of the later animal and vegetable life, the cells, we may likewise suppose to have originated in a multitude at a certain period of the life of our earth, just as the simplest words in the world of speech. These incipient forms of organic life, that could neither be called animals nor plants, afterwards developed themselves in various directions. Just so the radical elements of the languages.

Since we are able to observe within a historical period that the changes in any language, when used by any people under essentially similar conditions of life, are symmetrical in the mouths of all individuals who speak it, we assume in conse-

quence thereof that language developed itself in a like manner in the case of like men. For the method which we have developed above, namely to conclude from the known to the unknown, does not allow us to suppose any other laws of life, in any period which lies beyond the range of our observation, than those which we have remarked over the course of observation to which we have had access.

Under different circumstances languages develop themselves also in a different manner; nay, it is highly probable that the diversity of languages is in direct ratio to that of the conditions of man's life in general. The original dispersion of the languages over the earth must therefore have been a very regular one; neighbour-idioms must have more resembled each other than the vernaculars of men who lived in different parts of the world. Issuing from a certain

point, and in proportion as they deviated from it, the languages must have grouped themselves in continually increasing deviation from the stock-idiom, since geographical distance entails a growing variety of climate and vital conditions. Even now we imagine that we observe traces of the absolute necessity of that regular division of speech. The American languages for instance, the idioms of the South-Sea Islands, clearly point to a common type in spite of all their variety. Nay, even on the European-Asiatic continent, where the linguistic relationship has been subject to such important change owing to historical events, even there we find, undeniably, certain groups of essentially similar branches of speech. Indo-Germanic, Finnic, Turkic, Tataric, Mongolic, Tungusic,* as well as Dekhanic, (Tamulic etc.,)

* The author's *mandshurisch*, not being very usual in our

all these idioms, for instance, resemble each other in the suffix-construction, that is to say in this, that all formative elements, all symbols of relation are grafted upon the termination of the root; they are never placed before or in the middle of the radical element.*

Let the roots be represented by *R*, one or more suffixes by *s*, infixes by *i*, prefixes by *p*, and we shall be able to explain our meaning in a very few words, as follows: the verbal form of all the idioms named is denoted by the morphological formula *Rs*; for the Indo-Germanic family it would be more correct to use the formula *R^xs*, for *R^x* denotes any root

English terminology, I have taken the liberty of substituting Tungusic, the language to which the vernacular of the Mandshu tribes belongs.—T.

* Exceptions, as, for instance, the augment of the Indo-Germanic verb, are merely apparent, but this we cannot enter into. Compare *i. a* on the augment my “Comp. der vgl. Gramm.” &c. S. 292, s. 567.—A.

capable of regular change to the end of expressing relation, as, for instance, *Band Bund, Bind-e; Flug, Flieg-e, flog; grabe, grub; riss, reisse; ἔ-λι-πον, λείπ-ω, λέ-λοιπ-α*, and so forth. Other languages have more than one verbal form; the Semitic family for instance has R^x , $p R^x$, $R^x s$, $p R^x s$, etc. Yet in spite of this great contrast to the Indo-Germanic family which is represented by the formula $p R^x$ (being the prefix-construction), the two neighbours do again concur in this respect that they are the only idioms which are known for a certainty to have the radical form R^x .

Such striking analogies in the construction of families geographically allied we imagine to be the posthumous births from the time of the earlier and earliest career of human speech. The homes and hearths of those languages which are essentially analogous in their principle of

construction; we hold to be not very remote from each other. The floras and faunas of the isolated parts of the world present a characteristic type in a similar way as the languages do.

Now we observe during historical periods how species and genera of speech disappear, and how others extend themselves at the expense of the dead. I only remind you, by way of illustration, of the spread of the Indo-Germanic family and the decay of the American languages. In the earlier times, when the languages were still spoken by comparatively weak populations, this dying out of forms of speech was, no doubt, of much more frequent occurrence, and, as the idioms of a higher organization must have existed for a very long time—as evinced by their superior development, by their senile forms, and by the slow variation of speech in general—it follows

that the pre-historic period of the life of speech must have been a much longer one than that which falls within the limits of historical record. Of course we have no knowledge of any language before the time that the people who spoke it committed its forms to writing. We must therefore suppose myriads of years, or at any rate a very long period, which witnessed the disappearance of organisms of speech and the breaking up of original relationship.* It is very possible that many more species of speech perished during the course of that time than the number of those which have prolonged their existence up to the present day. This explains the possibility of so great an extension as for instance that of the Indo-Germanic, the Finnic, the Malay and

* Comp. *Deutsche Sprache*, S. 41, etc.—A.

South-African families, which, over a large territory, branched off into such a multitude of directions. A similar process is assumed by Darwin with regard to the animal and vegetable creation; that is what he calls "the struggle for life." A multitude of organic forms had to perish in this struggle in order to make room for comparatively few favoured races. But let Darwin speak for himself. He says: "The dominant species of the larger dominant groups tend to leave many modified descendants behind, and thus arise new groups and sub-groups. In proportion as these arise, the feebler groups, in consequence of their common inheritance of imperfection, incline to a common extinction, without leaving any modified issue behind on any part of the surface of the earth. The complete extinction of any group of species may often be a

very slow process, when some species manage to prolong their languishing existence for a long time yet in sheltered or isolated places." This happens with languages in the mountains; I merely call your attention to the Basque in the Pyrenees, which is the ruins or remnants of an idiom which can be proved at one time to have been widely spread; the same phenomenon may be observed in the Caucasus and elsewhere.

"If any group has once been extinguished it can never appear again, because a chain in the link of generation has been broken."

"This explains how the extension of dominant species which admit of the greatest variation, peoples the earth in the course of time with other forms of life, closely related though modified; and how these generally succeed in supplant-

ing those groups of species which succumb to them in the struggle for existence.”*

Not a word of Darwin's need be changed here if we wish to apply this reasoning to the languages. Darwin describes here with striking accuracy the process of the struggle for existence in the field of human speech. In the present period of the life of man the descendants of the Indo-Germanic family are the conquerors in the struggle for existence; they are engaged in continual extension, and have already supplanted or dethroned numerous other idioms. The multitude of the Indo-Germanic species and sub-species is illustrated by our genealogical tree.

* Unfortunately I have not the edition at hand from which the German translation has been made. It must have differed a good deal from the fourth edition used by myself, and this may account for, if not excuse, my not having used, perhaps, Mr. Darwin's exact words.—T.

The extinction of such a vast multitude of idioms entailed the death of many intermediate forms; the migration of the peoples caused the shifting of the original kinship of languages, so that it may now happen that idioms of essentially different form have all the appearance of neighbours, whereas no intermediate forms are found between them. Such, for instance, is the case with the Basque, a stray island in the Indo-Germanic Archipelago. Darwin says essentially the same of the relations of animals and plants.

This, my dear friend and colleague, is about what occurred to me as I studied your favourite Darwin, of whose theory you are such an energetic advocate and missionary, so much so that, as I have just been informed, you have even incurred the wrath of journalistic zealots. Of course no more than the *principles* of Darwinism

could be applied to the languages. The realm of speech is too widely different from both the animal and vegetable kingdoms to make the science of language a test of all Darwin's inductions and their details.

So much the more positive however, in the realm of speech, is the origin of species through gradual ramification and the preservation of the higher organisms in the struggle for existence. The two main points in Darwin's theory have this in common with many other important discoveries, that they are confirmed even in those spheres which at first had been left unnoticed.*

* Darwin briefly touches the point of languages, and rightly suspects that the mutual kinship of the same would be a confirmation of his theory.—A. *Vide* p. 498, 4th Edition.

APPENDIX.

(See the Note, page 16.)

DURING so long a period, extending over thousands of years, the primitive relations might easily be shifted and disturbed, for languages are not as plants tied to their respective habitats; their bearers are nations capable of any change of seat and even of vernacular. Since we see in a less distant period, nay, up to the present day, how languages disappear and how the boundaries of speech are shifted, nothing is more natural than to suppose that many more languages disappeared, and that the shifting of the primitive

relationship of the geographical distribution of speech was much more violent, at a time when each language was the vernacular of a comparatively limited number of individuals. Thus arose the now observable anomalies in the distribution of languages over the earth, particularly in Asia and Europe.

We assume therefore that languages arose in a very great number; such as were neighbours resembling each other, although arising independently, and—taking Indo-Germanic or Semitic, say, as the centre—spreading more or less in this or the other direction. Many of these primitive languages now, or perhaps the greater part of them, died out in the course of ages; owing to this others gradually extended their territory, and the geographical distribution of languages was so much disturbed that it became im-

possible to discover hardly any traces of the primitive law of distribution.

Whilst therefore the surviving idioms, with the increase of the people that spoke them, gradually divided themselves into several branches (languages, dialects, &c.), many of the primitive languages which had arisen independently of each other, gradually died out. This very process—the decrease of the number of languages—is going on speedily and incessantly, even in our days, for instance in America. Here, likewise, let us be satisfied with the observation of the fact and leave it to philosophy to search for a clearer conception and explanation from the essence of mankind.

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