

THE SENTINEL

(From the Oregon Daily Bulletin.)

AN ACHIEVEMENT OF SCHOLARSHIP.

William Dwight Whitney, Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology in Yale College, has recently published a book on "Oriental and Linguistic Studies," which is a highly creditable accession to American literature and one of the most valuable of the recent productions of American scholarship. The Greek and Latin languages were once considered the corner-stone of lingual studies, and scholars were able to trace the family of European languages no farther back than their supposed source in those two tongues. But recent scholarship has opened a wider view. It enables us to see down a much longer vista. The learning we get from Greek and Latin does not carry us back to the origin we long supposed. That origin is now founded in the Sanskrit, the ancient language of India, from which by direct descent, as analogies prove, the Greek and Latin and all modern European tongues alike trace their genealogy. Our knowledge of the languages of Greece and Rome is proved not to be absolute in itself, but, as a writer expresses it, to be simply "a link in a much longer chain." Modern scholarship refers us back to Sanskrit literature and mythology as antecedent to the mythology and oldest literature of Greece, and enables us to find in the former, to a large extent, the original of the latter.

It has been but a few years since the Vedas became well known to European scholars. The Vedas are the sacred books of the Brahmins, written in ancient Sanskrit. They are of the highest antiquity, the oldest of them being ascribed to a period as early as 2,400 B. C. This carries back the date to a time at least 1,500 years before Homer. These books are written in poetical style, as all early compositions are, and resemble considerably in syntactical structure and form of expression many portions of the Bible. The Rig-Veda, the principal monument of Vedic literature, contains 1,017 hymns. Most of them have been translated by modern scholars, but some must always remain without interpretation. The whole range of ideas expressed in the most difficult of these hymns lies entirely beyond our intellectual horizon. We despair of reaching the thought; the expression is a sound that has no meaning. But the larger portion of Vedic literature is clearly interpreted by modern scholars. In these compositions they find in the unsettled and growing state the mythology which afterwards appears full grown in Homer and Hesiod. Says Max Muller, one of the most eminent of Sanskrit scholars: "In the Vedas we can study a theogony of which that of Hesiod is but the last chapter."

Thus recent scholarship carries us back to a much earlier period in the history of the human mind than we had before any knowledge of. The study is one of the most interesting that can be presented. History is valuable mainly as it acquaints us with man's intellectual and moral development. The "Oriental and Linguistic Studies" which are the subject of Professor Whitney's book have an importance and value which are inestimable.

The Aryan race, which had its origin in India, spread in its migrations toward the northwest. It spread over Eastern Asia and Europe, and its language, the Sanskrit, became the parent of the Greek, the Latin, and the modern tongues. Comparative philology finds unmistakable traces of Sanskrit in all the principal languages of Europe. The proof thus furnished shows indubitably the common origin of European nations formerly supposed to be of widely different descent. Intermixture of different bloods, vicissitudes of climate and a multitude of physical causes produce changes in man's nature and appearance, and create distinctions which are visible between Celts and Germans, Slavonians and Italians; but there was a time when the ancestors of all these nations were, as Muller expresses it, "living together beneath the same roofs." Language tells the story of consanguinity; it is a witness which is infallible, and the only one from which appeal is impossible.

We have not space to pursue this subject, but it is one of the most interesting in the domain of literature, one of the great discoveries in the history of man's intellectual progress. It establishes most important facts in the science of language and is the key to much knowledge which before was a mystery and a puzzle even to those who knew it best.

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LITERARY.

Prospectus for 1873—Sixth Year.

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U. S. Deputy Surveyor,

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All persons desirous of entering mineral claims in said district under the act of Congress approved July 22, 1866 and amendatory act approved July 22, 1870, must have the same surveyed by authority.

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B. F. MYER,

U. S. Deputy Surveyor.

Dated at my Office, near Ashland Mills, Oregon, March 24, 1871.-1f1ap

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JOHN BILGER,

DEALER AND WORKER IN

TIN, SHEET-IRON, COPPER,