

WORDS.

THEIR PART HISTORY AND THEIR PRESENT STATUS.

WORDS AND THEIR WAYS IN ENGLISH SPEECH. By James Bradstreet Greenough and George Lyman Kittredge. 8vo, pp. x, 431. The Macmillan Company.

PARIS OF SPEECH: ESSAYS ON ENGLISH. By Brandegee Matthews. 12mo, pp. 23. Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The amazing phenomenon of articulate speech" comes from the practical man as a kind of commonplace miracle whenever he has time to think of it; and to answer some of the questions that occur at such moments, Professors Greenough and Kittredge say, is the object of their book. Their answers have made an interesting book, packed full of the results of deep learning, presented from a distinctly human point of view. It is indeed a labyrinth into which their exploration of the processes of English speech has taken them—one that touches on almost every sphere of human activity in some way or another. Of the origin of language it is made clearer and clearer that nothing certain can be known, especially as the stupendous length of man's residence upon this planet becomes recognized. Various theories that have been propounded may each have a grain of truth—the "bowwow" theory, that speech was an imitation of the sounds of nature; the "ding done" theory, that it was the spontaneous result by reflex action of impressions produced by external phenomena, and the "pooh pooh" theory, which finds its origin in involuntary exclamations. The authors suggest that if the problem is ever solved it may be conjectured that natural cries will be found to be the material, and the alternate building up and breaking down of words the means of the growth that has produced the root system of the Indo-European, the Semitic trilateralism and the Chinese monosyllables.

There is an unceasing element of surprise in tracing the changes in form and meaning, in observing the sources from which the language has seized and appropriated words, the "chemical certainties" with which it picks out what is suitable for it, enriching itself from every quarter of the globe. The language making instinct is the poetic faculty of man. Primitive metaphors cease to be metaphors and become the ordinary speech of people, our commonest words being worn out metaphors. Such common instances as "depend," originally to hang from; "gregarious," selected from the herd; "front," forehead; "sullen," at first solitary, are only instances of innumerable applications of the principle. Professors Greenough and Kittredge have accumulated a great mass of examples of the interplay of different forces and the accretion of different elements into English speech. The distinction is made between "popular" words, that every one has known since he first learned to talk, and "learned" words more or less loaned from the common speech of men. The latter are usually from the Greek and Latin, but many words directly thus derived have made themselves quite at home in ordinary conversation. Sometimes the "learned" word has driven out the popular, sometimes both the native and foreign words have kept their place, and the foreign has become the "popular," as when "divide" ousted "cleave," "travel," "fare," "prince," "atheling." We have the remains of extinct science in "temperament," "sanguine," "jovial," "mercurial." The abstruse philosophy of Aristotle through Cicero's translation has contributed such everyday words as "quality" and "quantity" and "elements."

In their account of the evolution of the standard English from the dialects and the admixture of Norman, French, the authors give a different impression of the weight of the latter from what is commonly accepted. There is no evidence that the Normans highly developed language with an abundant literature, and they certainly made no attempt to crush it. French became the language of the court, because the court consisted of French speaking Normans. The two languages lived amicably side by side for two hundred years, neither affecting the other essentially. After Normandy was lost to the English crown at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Englishmen were vigorously engaged in translating and adapting French literature; but it was the French of Paris, not the Norman dialect, and the court French was Parisian. From this influence came the wholesale borrowing that introduced so many French words into the English tongue. This signified, not the victory of French, but of English as the vernacular; Normans were Normans no longer, but Englishmen, and had long ceased to speak the Norman dialect.

The Latin element in English, besides that which came through this French importation, came principally in the fourteenth and early part of the fifteenth centuries, after the French period had passed, and was distinctly "learned" borrowing. It brought a multitude of useful words, but was carried to pedantic lengths, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was a revolt against it. This has reached almost an equally pedantic degree in the attempts that have been made from time to time to oust foreign words from our vocabulary. It is gratifying to see the tone in which our authors treat the "whimsical theorists" who have proposed this.

Foreign words that have long been in common use are just as much English as if they had been a part of our language from the beginning. Nor is there a principle on which of two expressions, that which is popular should be preferred to that which is learned or less familiar. The sole criterion of choice consists in the appropriateness of one's language to the subject or the occasion.

The vast variety of other sources from which English took its own wherever it found it is shown by an analysis of a brief paragraph of recent prose, in which are found, besides the native element, borrowings from no less than a dozen other languages, involving technical dialects, the whole history of European Christianity and all sorts of linguistic processes. It is indeed a "great panorama of linguistic history," convincing to show that the history of language is the history of mankind. Many different processes have helped bring the language where it is. The emergence from slang to a place in elegant speech is one of the most common, and it extends from ancient Roman days, as when the soldiers used the word "salarium," or salt money, to apply to their "salary," to the present. Generalizations of meaning play an important part, as when "virtue," tracing its origin to the Latin word for man, hence mainly quality, comes to mean any excellent quality, with even a particular reference to the chastity of women; and so generalizations, as "fond," from an Anglo-Saxon verb meaning to be foolish. "Radiation" is a process by which a word wanders far from its original significance; as "treacle," originally from a Greek word meaning "pertaining to a wild beast"; then applied to a "remedy" for the head's bite; then to any antidote, and, as these were put up in the form of syrup, to syrup. It was in the stage of its meaning an antidote that Chaucer used it figuratively as a comforter, in the expression, "Christ, 'treacle of every harm.'" Meanings degenerate; "lewd" meant belonging to the laity; then ignorant, since only the clergy were learned; then low in any sense, and finally, lascivious. The superstitions involved in language and the feeling of decency and propriety have always been potent forces in changing the meanings of words or driving them out of use. Death or misfortune must not be mentioned outright; moral delinquency must be softened, and so on.

Professor Matthews has discussed some features of the use of language in a much less detailed way, from the point of view of literature, indeed, rather than of linguistics. A principal thesis of his book is the equal right of the

American branch of the English speaking race to contribute its share to the development of the language and the establishment of its ideals. As many strains were mingled in England to make the Englishman and determine the quality of his speech, so, here in America, many have mingled to make the American and determine the quality of his speech. They have established race characteristics in which Professor Matthews sees much that is comparable with those of the Elizabethan English, far removed from the stolidity, the "insularity and inarticulateness" that nineteenth century English critics have found to be characteristic of their own nation. The Americans' interest in the language is as deep and as wide as that of their English cousins, and they must awake to their responsibility; the dominant influence in deciding its future must come from this side of the ocean, keeping it fresh and vigorous with this Elizabethan influence, resisting pedantic attempts to cramp its healthy growth, and urging along the simplification of its orthography. Professor Matthews is a spelling reformer himself in a limited way, and practises what he preaches in his book. He is at the pains to defend the American spelling at considerable length, going over the old familiar ground again of the false etymologizing and inconsistency that have made standard English spelling what it is. It is not for lack of argument and a showing of the facts that our orthography stubbornly remains as it has been fixed, with the slight differences between usage here and in England still persisting. Perhaps it is true, as the essayist thinks, that the reformers have asked too much, and so have received too little; and that the English speaking peoples, being unfaithfully opportunist, abhor radical remedies, and are wont to remove ancient abuses piecemeal.

Professor Matthews goes over more well trodden ground in his essays on Americanisms and on the function of slang, but he does not add much that is new to these well worn discussions, though he has contributed a few new examples. He plants himself with the most radical in the matter of clipped usage, and has no words too severe for the purist and the makers of rules. The subjunctive mood in English is dying out, is "a barbed" and must be cleaned away; such locutions as "he don't," "the house is being built," "he was given" something, the split infinitive, the use of an unnecessary "who" or "which" after an "and" or a "but" he defends. Professor Matthews himself would not take advantage of all these licenses, it is pleasing to learn; but he is arguing in general for a greater freedom in English.

It must not be too squeamish or even too particular, since excessive refinement goes only with mental weakness. It must be allowed to venture on solecisms, on neologisms, on Americanisms, on Britishisms, on Australianisms, if need be, however ugly some of these may seem, for the language uses itself up fast, and has to be replenished, that it shall not lose its vigor and its ardor.

It is not a gospel that stands in any great need of preaching. Professor Matthews' essays embodying it, as well as one or two others on rhyme of course, he spells it "rime"; and "The Poetry of Place Names," while they may occasionally give his more timorous readers a slight shock at his determination to oppose all those in authority, are somewhat inconsequential. The point of view is that of a rather rambling and dilettante scholarship.

ABDUL HAMID.

HIS PORTRAIT AS DRAWN BY AN ENEMY.

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE SULTAN OF TURKEY. By Georges Dorys. Translated by Arthur Hornblow. 12mo, pp. xiii, 277. D. Appleton & Co.

If the Sultan is half as bad as M. Dorys has painted him, it is not difficult to see why that autocrat should have sentenced him to death. We should imagine it would be something lingering, with boiling oil in it, for a more baleful and forbidding portrait of a malignant spirit it would be hard to imagine. M. Dorys, who writes under a pseudonym, is described as the son of the late Prince of Samos, one of the Sultan's ministers, and at one time Governor of Crete. He has also been a correspondent of "The London Times." He may, therefore, be supposed to have had uncommon facilities for knowing the news of the Yildiz Palace and its ruler, and to have supplemented his own knowledge from his father's experience. His realization of what the Sultan's rule means for Turkey led him to join the Young Turk party of reformers, and this was a step to his banishment and retirement to Paris, in the comparative safety of which capital he produced this book. It is vivid, but it is easy enough to see a good deal of the animus of political enmity in it.

There is scarcely any relation of life in which Abdul Hamid's character is not portrayed in the darkest colors. It is not perceptible that he has a single redeeming trait. As a boy he would steal his brothers' childish treasures; a "youthful misanthrope," he would "watch his brothers laugh and play with a fixed stare and an expression in his eyes of infinite sadness, except when fear or malice lit them up with a fugitive flame." He displayed great antipathy to study, and is now practically uneducated and ignorant even of his own tongue. The story of his accession to the throne is told in full, including the details of his incarceration of his brother Mourad as a lunatic. The political events since that time are summed up. They include, says this author, the strangling of the constitution and his retirement to his immense fortress at Yildiz, surrounded by a "veritable army," where he works tirelessly to impoverish the people, to stifle public education, to destroy all that remained of political and religious liberty, to gag the press, to erect insurmountable barriers between Turkey and Europe and to attempt the pan-Islamic crusade.

According to M. Dorys, a continual terror of death is the thought that chiefly occupies his mind. His private kitchen is a little cell, with barred windows and an iron door, resembling a safe. The large tray that is filled with dishes for the Sultan's meal is covered with a black cloth, the ends of which are sealed. When the meal is served the seals are broken by the proper official. His majesty eats alone, and his meals last but a few moments.

Sometimes the despot, seized with a sudden suspicion, orders the khaliji, or controller of the cellars, to taste the dish served him, under the pretence of convincing him that it is badly cooked, but in reality to assure himself as to its harmfulness. He also surrounds himself with cats and dogs, to which from time to time he gives pieces of meat before touching it himself.

The limits of his promiscuity become narrower every year, so that at present he no longer goes away from his residence, but merely walks around it for exercise. Darkness terrifies him, and at night the smallest rooms and out of the way lobbies of the palace, and the most distant alleys of the immense park, are lighted brilliantly from twilight until dawn. The silence of night, too, frightens him, and he has the palace orchestra play till a very late hour, or else gives orders that men in his employ march ceaselessly before his room, that their measured tramp may calm his nerves. Before he goes to sleep he is read to. His favorite books are those on assassination and executions. The stories of crime excite him and prevent him from sleeping, but as soon as the reader reaches a passage where blood flows the Sultan immediately becomes calm and falls asleep. He has a horror of a quick gesture or movement by any one in his presence, and he always carries firearms, which he has used with fatal results. A garden-er once, on seeing the Sultan approach unexpectedly, rose suddenly from a stooping posture. Abdul Hamid instantly drew and killed him. One of his highest ministers, on the occasion of a conference, rose abruptly to shut a window

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I can tell you a story about Pomona and this baby. I had planned out the book of Pomona's travels and was about ready to write it. I was in Philadelphia at the time, and had a business appointment with a dentist, an old friend. By the way, you should never change your dentist any more than you should your plumber. Both will want to take out the work of their predecessors, swearing that it was done very badly. Well, while in the chair I got to talking with this friend about my new book. I told him I had serious thoughts of killing that baby. He was much interested. We talked over the advisability of doing this, and, while he was not quite convinced, he in the main agreed with me. I had been finished with, and clamping his hand, went into the waiting room on my way out. This waiting room was filled with women. As I passed through the door I heard him call: "Then you have positively decided to kill that baby?" "Positively," I replied. You should

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have seen the women stare. It was not until I got well out in the hallway that I realized what they must, of course, have been thinking.
Mr. Stockton, by the way, is still obturate, and will not solve the bewilderment of his readers as to whether it was the Lady or the Tiger that came out of the door. In fact, he says, with a twinkle in his eyes: "I have no earthly idea myself."
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