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Friday, Feb. 2nd, 1906.

The Value of a Common Tongue.

BY H. ATTERSON.

There is nothing that binds people together more than commonality of needs, interests, and form of expression. As soon as people, even diverse nations, perceive that their needs are alike, there is recognition of that which makes the neighbour; for there is more attraction in similarity of purpose than in nearness of residence. When we identify the interest as general, then, if there is no mighty obstruction or hostile feeling with insurmountable efforts to oppose the common good, we endeavour to secure our unity by having a common language. This identity of purpose and uniformity of language will go far in supporting that great Economic and Political Association—that is known under the name of the British Empire. There is not any portion of that Empire that affords scope for petty-fogging disagreements more than the South African; and for that reason it is the duty of every able person to view South African politics and economics from the Imperial standpoint. Inasmuch as action taken on such a broad basis of consideration is more likely to result in successful issues. For that reason then, I submit my opinion, which I have carefully weighed before making it public.

I do not hesitate to assert that for the good of the Empire, it is necessary that every tribe living under British protection should be familiar with the recognised official language; for there are no other means by which, day by day, the people can, and would, willingly blend themselves into an economic mass that would certainly be impregnable. The idea of defence being in mind it is not improper to mention that South Africa should be one of the Empire's great fields of supply of men and horses. I am sure there are no better men to be found in the whole of the Empire than the so-called Kafir, who, when properly trained, would be fit for service in our most trying climates. I know what a buzz of dissent will arise among our local "Jellies" who, as the famous Chas. Dickens has shown, do not know how to do it, although there is no lack of either fuss or wantonness as the case may be. I assure you I am not willing to be tied up to the Parish Pump or to be bedevilled with the gas of brag or mere local importance.

I presume our localities are not aware that they often stand in the way of the Natural Progression of the Empire; the sooner it is understood that the good of the Empire must qualify our local Parliamentary transactions the better for us all. And as an earnest of our goodwill to that large British wellbeing, we must adopt the wise and natural process of cultivating one language and one interest for all people of South Africa. We of course acknowledge that the varieties and capabilities of the South African folk cover the whole gamut Mental Musings; from which the localities will gather many a distressing discord, but the man of the broad Imperial bias will do his best to bring out those fine harmonies for which providence has placed abundant raw material in South Africa.

An Improved manner of spelling and writing the Zulu Language

Rev. A. T. Bryant

But there is another matter to be considered besides the spelling of the words; there is also the manner of writing and constructing them. Different races of mankind have grown up to think in the most diverse of ways. Their language consequently present the most diverse of constructions. It may be quite impossible and quite unnatural to form words in one language on exactly the same lines as they are formed in another. We must, therefore, right here at the start, give up the idea that there is only one language in the world, and that one is English, or German or Swedish, or what ever else our own may be, and that all other languages must be found, or be made, to conform to its principles. Each language has its own principles, its own peculiar genius and characteristics. And the difference between the English, and the German, and the Swedish, on one side, and the Zulu language on the other, is the distance of the north pole from the South. They are as radically apart as are the flora and fauna of their respective countries, as the physique of their respective speakers; they are at the opposite extremes on the long list of varieties in human speech. We must, therefore, not look for similarities, but rather for extreme and radical differences in their respective manners of thought, and methods of putting that thought into words.

We are well accustomed in English to two varieties of word. Besides we may call words simple, there is another kind called compound words. Compound words are such as amalgamate in one concrete expression several distinct ideas. They might be called also complicated or complex words. We are permitted to form such expressions in English, not arbitrarily as we like but according to certain indefinable principles inherent in the language. Thus, we say, "a pick-me-up," "self-command," "a flying-machine." We have the custom of stringing these compounded words together by means of hyphens; but we might just as correctly have accustomed ourselves to massing the component parts all together in one lump, without any separation.

But why any hyphen, any uniting together at all? Why could we not write "a pick me up," in separate portions of speech? Simply because such a mode of writing would not correctly represent our mode of speech and our manner of thought. In our mind these several wordlets have become somehow united together into one single effort of thought and speech. Have we any tangible proof that this is really the case beyond our merely "feeling" that it is so? Yes; a change in our accentuation has occurred; and this change of accent, acquainted as we are with the peculiar genius of our language, has made us aware that our mind has now grasped together these several parts of speech into one word. Hence, we no longer say "a pick me up," (with the accent on the up) as we should do, if we really thought as here written, but "a pick-me-up," (with the accent on the pick), which fact has the effect of drawing all the succeeding particles rapidly together into one concrete vocal effort or word. So also with "thereupon," "whatever," and all other compound words. The chief external guide, then, as to whether a word is a compound word or not is the accentuation of our speech.

Now, if in English we have this custom of constructing compound words, and if our minds find not the slightest difficulty in comprehending at a glance their complex meanings, much more so is it the case with the Zulu. He absolutely grasps what to us appears the most complicated mental gymnastics; verily the Zulu custom is no less a fact than is the English, and, as a much vaster fact, we must be prepared to meet it as it actually stands in his language. We must not feel ourselves justified in finding fault with the Zulu when he says wangitola (he picked me up) or ukuzitanda (the loving oneself) in one same word, for these ideas are as easy for him to think and express in one word, as it is for us to think "a pick-me-up" or "self-love."

But does he really utter the above expressions, as I have stated, in one compound word, and not in several simple ones? I believe that he does. How do I know it? By his accentuation. The manner in which he pronounces these statements is that which the genius of his language indicates as the pronunciation proper to separate words. He does not pronounce these compounds in the same manner as he does their component parts when standing alone. He says wa-ngi-tola, with a peculiar accentuation of the penult. He does not say wa, then ngi, then dola, as so many entities. But this peculiar accentuation of the penult which he affixes to this verbal combination, in these particular circumstances only is identically the same as that which he uses to mark the ending of all polysyllabic simple words. There is no independent polysyllabic word possible without it (unless in a few clearly marked exceptional cases); and wherever we find it, we may be certain that it reveals to us the penult of a word; and of that word all those several particles of speech that have been rapidly strung together before and on to it, are subordinate component parts. But if it reveals to us the penult of a word, what can that word be, in the above-given example, unless the whole combined expression wangitola? If it is not as I think, then the existence of the penult in Zulu is quite purposeless, and its constant use in the language is without rule. But we know with absolute certainty that its use is a fixed rule, working on principle; we know, too, that it has an undeniable purpose, viz. to announce the completion of each separate, independently standing word. If it is not so, what is its use and raison d'être in the language?

The thought and language of the Zulu, I have already observed is fundamentally different from our own; and this is especially evidenced in his using an endless variety of prefixes and suffixes in a way quite beyond our understanding or experience. He sticks a prefix on to every noun; and these prefixes in a manner correspond to what with us are separate distinguishing adjectives or articles. He sticks a prefix on to every adjective; and these prefixes correspond with our separate relative pronouns. He sticks a prefix on to every verb; and these prefixes are his equivalent of our separate personal pronouns. Indeed, he sometimes goes so far as to affix two or three different prefixes at once, representative, perhaps, nominative and accusative personal pronouns, or relative and negative qualification combined. But all and any of these prefixes are with him never separate or separable parts of speech, standing independent and alone, as they do with us. For the Zulu they have absolutely no practical purpose when separated from their governing nouns verbs or adjectives. In the sentence Isitha sawa (the vessel fell), we are no more justified in separating the pronominal prefix sa from its governing noun wa (and) write or speak (st), then (sitha). If we feel justified in doing it in one case, then we must be logical and do it also in the other. In the sentence ukudhla okuncane (the little food), the noun dila has the inseparable pronominal prefix uku, and the adjective has the equally inseparable pronominal (relative) prefix oku. We cannot disjoin the one prefix and leave the other united. In the sentence ukudhla okuncane (the food which is not little), we have the prefix uku carrying the prefix uku and the second carrying a double prefix, each part of which has its own special import, but neither of which, nor both of which, if separated from the governing adjectives, have any clear purpose in Zulu speech—and equally none in Zulu mind requires the suffix nga to stand separated and alone. I think we may reasonably infer that, for the same reason, it requires also the prefix ang to be conjoined to it and not to stand separated and alone.

In a word, the Zulu does not think with an Aryan mind, nor does he speak with an Aryan tongue, as we Europeans do. He has an African mind, and his is a prefix-using language—a peculiarity of speech unknown and unintelligible to our way of thinking, practically confined to Africa and perhaps produced there. But before we Aryans can presume to sit in judgment over Zulu, we must, first of all, come to grasp thoroughly what a "prefix-using" language means, how the prefix-using mind thinks, and only then shall we be able to offer any satisfactory opinion as to how it speaks. And this brings us to see the unsoundness of that contention of some who maintain that, because we in the Aryan languages know nothing of prefix-using modes of thought and modes of speech, in other words, that because we are in English and kindred languages separate all our words, therefore in the prefix-using languages, including Zulu, it must be the same. We say, for instance, "he cheated me" in three separate words, therefore corresponding Zulu, wangidhla, must also be separate words. But if this is so, I repeat what I asked before—what is meaning of the Zulu's penultimate accentuation? If wa and ngi and dila are in his mind three separate mutually independent parts of speech why should he go out of his way to give an altogether peculiar accentuation to the particle ngi, and the ngi alone and, mind here! I am not referring to emphasis, but to the accent peculiar to and inseparable from the penult of words? Answer, please! But if we concede that the particle ngi is not independent of the particle dila, but is dependent on and connected with it, then also is the particle wa. But if wangidhla is to be taken as one inseparable word, then also ukudhla and ukukungidhla, and equally so wangibulala and ukukungibulala, and all the rest of them.

Again, how do we know that in the English sentence "he cheated me," we are using three and not one word? Apart from all etymological proof, as Englishmen born, we simply "feel" we know it to be so. And how do we know that in the Zulu sentence, wangidhla, we are using one, and three words? First of all, because we have absolutely no reason to think, no etymological evidence to prove, that in the faint prefix-using languages, wa and ngi are or ever have been separate and self-dependent words, have even been anything else than pronominal prefixes; from their governing verbs is the one fact standing unmistakably clear in all the grammars of the African languages.

Isaziso.

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