i. What is Philology?

1. It is an almost invariable rule in the growth of scientific knowledge that when a mass of facts large enough to form a separate science has been collected, an old name is at first extended to cover this sum of new information. Thus Geology which denotes properly the science dealing with the earth was formerly used (and is still so used in popular acceptation) to include also the body of knowledge dealing with the remains of extinct animals found in rocks. But when this became a very important branch of study a new name—Palaeontology—was invented to distinguish it from Geology properly so called.

2. The same holds true of that body of knowledge with which this book proposes to deal. When the sum of facts dealing with language and languages was comparatively small and the study novel, the term Philology, previously used in a somewhat different signification, was extended to cover this branch of research.

The meaning of the word in former times was, and its most common meaning still is, the study of a language looked at from the literary standpoint. In Germany the word Philologie means only the body of knowledge dealing with the literary side of a language.
as an expression of the spirit and character of a nation, and consequently the department dealing with language merely as language forms but a subordinate part of this wider science. But in England the study of language as such has developed so largely in comparison with the wider science of Philology under which it used to rank, that it has usurped for itself the name of ‘Comparative Philology’ and in recent years of ‘Philology’ without any limitation. This is justifiable by the derivation of the word which only denotes vaguely all that deals with words; but for the sake of definiteness it is better to use some term not so open to the charge of ambiguity. ‘Comparative Philology’ is an unfortunate title’, for, looking at the original application of the word it ought to mean the comparative study of the literature of different countries, whereas it is always employed to denote merely the comparative study of sounds and words as elements of language. The actual usage of the word is thus at variance with the original meaning, for many languages such as the Gipsy, the Lithuanian and various others spoken by semi-civilised or barbarous peoples have no literature, but are notwithstanding of the greatest interest and importance to the student of language\(^1\).

3. Hence various other names for the science have been proposed, such as Comparative Grammar and the Science of Language. The latter is the wider and the better term; Comparative Grammar is more properly applicable to the study of a group of languages closely related to one another, such as the Indo-Germanic group or the Semitic group.

\(^1\) Cp. Whitney in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s. v. Philology.

\(^2\) F. Müller, *Grundriss der Sprachwissenschaft*, p. 4.
§ 5] COMPARATIVE PHILOLOGY.

4. Philology, therefore, if we may use this term to denote the Science of Language, deals with all the phenomena of speech—with the production of the sounds which compose it, with their combinations into syllables, with the union of these syllables in words, and with the putting of words together into sentences. In its widest sense it includes also the important but abstruse question of the origin of language, of articulate utterance, a characteristic so remarkable that Aristotle fixed upon it as the test of distinction between man and brute; λόγον δὲ μόνον ἀνθρώπος ζητεῖ τῶν ζῴων...ό δὲ λόγος ἐπὶ τὰ δηλοῦν ἐστὶ τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερόν, ὃτε καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἁδικὸν 1.

5. But the number of languages on the earth is so enormous that it is a task far too great for any single man to thoroughly master all, or even a large part of them. Hence the principles of the science must be studied in connexion with a few languages which are taken as types of the great body of languages. As the science sprang from the study of the classical languages, and as these languages have had a very important influence on the development of English thought and of the English tongue, and are moreover members of the same great group of languages to which English belongs, we naturally turn to them in the first place when we begin the study. Probably the great majority of philologists begin with Latin and Greek, but no one can advance far in the study till he has made himself master of other languages which throw a flood of light on the problems which lie before the student of language. To clear up many difficulties

1 Politics, 1. 2. 1258 a.
not only in Greek or Latin but also in English a knowledge of Sanskrit forms is indispensable; to settle the character and position of the original accent of words it is necessary to study the early history of the Germanic languages, the family to which English belongs; some Slavonic dialects again preserve features long effaced in all other Indo-Germanic tongues; in short there is no language and no dialect however remote which belongs to the Indo-Germanic family that may not throw light upon some important branch of the study of these languages. For other questions, again, some knowledge of languages which are formed on different principles and belong to different families is necessary: nothing elucidates better the nature of inflexion than a comparison of an Indo-Germanic tongue with Chinese on the one hand and with Turkish on the other. The beginner must not suppose that the philologist knows all or even many of these languages so far as to be able to read them fluently: in most cases his information is supplied by the grammar and the dictionary alone; but on each language or group of languages there are specialists at work who store up results available for the student of languages in general.

ii. What is an Indo-Germanic language?

6. In the last chapter it was mentioned that English, Latin, Greek and Sanskrit belonged to the same family of languages. This family is known at present as the Indo-Germanic. In older books other names for it will be found such as Aryan or Indo-European, sometimes Indo-Keltic. The first of

1 To this branch the name Teutonic is sometimes applied.
these words is derived from Sanskrit and the objection to
the use of it in this meaning is that it more appro-
priately denotes' the group formed by the Iranian and
Indian dialects of the family, which are very closely con-
nected. Against 'Indo-European' it is urged that some
languages such as Armenian which exist neither in India
nor in Europe are excluded and that prima facie the
term suggests that all Indian and all European languages
belong to this family. This is far from being the
case; in India the dialects belonging to this family are
mostly confined to the broad belt across the north of the
Peninsula from the Indus to the Ganges, while the
Deccan and the south generally are occupied by people of
different races who speak languages of quite another
origin. In Europe also, on the other hand, there are
many languages which do not belong to this family, such
as the Turkish, the Hungarian, the Basque, the Lapp,
and the Finnish.

7. The term 'Indo-Germanic' is an attempt to de-
note the family by the names of those members of it
which form the extreme links of a chain stretching from
the North-East of India to the West of Europe. As the
name was applied to this family of languages before it
was finally ascertained that Keltic also belonged to the
same family, it has been proposed to use Indo-Keltic in-
stead. But this is not necessary, for though the Kelts
have gradually been driven into the furthest corners of
the West of Europe by the inroads of the Germanic
tribes, yet Iceland the most westerly land belonging to
the European continent has been for a thousand years a
settlement of a Germanic people.

8. A great advance in knowledge was rendered possible by the discovery of Sanskrit. On its introduction to Europe by English scholars like Sir William Jones, Colebrooke and others, the conception was gained of a family of languages not derived from one another but all returning like gradually converging lines to one centre point, to one mother language—the original Indo-Germanic. From that felicitous conception the whole of the modern science of Language may be said to have sprung. The similarity of Sanskrit to the classical languages and its wide geographical separation from them made scholars see that old notions such as that Latin was derived from a dialect of Greek must be given up. Men now realised clearly that the relation between Greek and Latin was not that of mother and daughter but of sisters. This led to eager investigation for the purpose of determining what other languages belonged to the same family. In some cases the investigation has been far from easy, languages having occasionally lost the distinguishing characteristics which would clearly mark them out as members of the family. In some cases too it has been found very hard to decide whether an individual dialect was to be treated merely as a local variety of another dialect or whether it deserved to be classed as a separate language.

9. The distinguishing marks which would be looked for are very different in these two cases. In separating two languages the difficulty is often occasioned by the mixture of words borrowed from a neighbouring or a conquering nation and becoming at last so large a part of the vocabulary as to obscure the original character of the language. Thus in the English language a
§ 9] COMPARATIVE PHILOLOGY.

very large number of words in ordinary use are not of Germanic origin. A very large part of any English dictionary is taken up by words of Latin or Greek derivation which have been imported into English at different times and for different reasons. Some were borrowed in Anglo-Saxon times; these were more especially words connected with Christianity and the Christian Church, as bishop, priest and many others; a very large number were introduced because the country came for a time under the political control of the Normans. The words introduced at this time have not come directly from Latin but indirectly through the medium of the French. The influence here was much greater than in the previous case. The Anglo-Saxons borrowed words to express ideas which were new to them. Instead of translating ἑρίκαρος as they might have done by ‘over-seer,’ they preferred in this special and technical use to keep the foreign term for the office. These new words once introduced became part and parcel of the language and changed with its changes, hence the Greek ἑρίκαρος is metamorphosed in time into the modern English bishop. But the importations from Norman French affected the most ordinary things of common life, and hence it is that we use good Germanic words for common animals as cow, steer, sheep, swine, while for the flesh of these animals we employ words of French, i.e. Latin origin, beef, mutton, pork. A third period of importation was after the Renaissance when men in their enthusiasm for the new learning thought to improve their Saxon tongue by engrafting multitudes of classical words upon it. Hence we sometimes have (1) the same word appearing under two different forms, one being borrowed earlier than the other, as in the case of priest and presbyter, both
through Latin *presbyter* from *πρεσβύτερος*, or (2) besides difference in the time of borrowing one of the forms comes through another language, as *blame* and *blaspheme*. Both of these go back to *βλασφήμων* through Latin *blasphemare*, but the former has also passed through France on its way from Latium to England. The same is true of double forms like *surface* and *superficies*, *frail* and *fragile*, and a great many more. In the later period when the literary sense had been awakened to the origin of many of these words, old importations were furbished up to look like new by giving them a more classical spelling than they had previously had. This has happened in the case of words like *fault* and *doubt*, earlier *faust* and *doute*.

10. But though so many words have been borrowed by English no one doubts that it is a Germanic language, for (1) such inflections as are still left to it are essentially Germanic and (2) though the majority of the words in our dictionaries are Latin and Greek, a very large number of them are not in everyday use, and in ordinary conversation words of Latin and Greek origin are in a minority. It has been said that the common rustic uses as a rule scarcely more than 300 words; and with a few exceptions, such as *use*, *fact* and some others, these 300 words are all of Germanic origin. The statement however is not true; the vocabulary of the rustic about ordinary things may be small, but he has a very large supply of technical terms.

1 Owing to the difficulty which exists in English of forming new compound words we still fall back upon the classical languages for new terms for scientific discoveries, in most cases without much regard to the proper rules for the formation of such compounds. From the classical standpoint, words like *telegram*, *telephone*, *photograph*, are absolute barbarisms.
§ 12] COMPARATIVE PHILOLOGY. 11

—mostly too of Germanic origin—for his ordinary work. Of these a great number is always purely local and would be quite unintelligible to the ordinary Englishman.

The most common borrowed words are naturally substantives—names of wares, implements etc., and occasionally the verbs which express their function. But use and fact do not come under this class, nor does take, a verb which has been borrowed from the Danish invaders of the Anglo-Saxon period and which has completely ejected the Middle English words fangen (Old English fôn), and nimen (O. E. niman) from the literary language, though 'stow' n fangs,' i.e. 'stolen goods,' is a phrase still known in Scotland, and Byron's poem of the Nimmers shows that 'let's nim a horse' was still intelligible in some dialect last century and may be even now.

11. But in some languages the history of borrowing and the relations of the neighbouring tongues are not so clear as they are in English; hence some tongues, such as the Armenian and the Albanian, are only even now asserting their right to a position in the Indo-Germanic family not as subordinate dialects but as independent languages. In the case of Albanian the problem has been complicated by the great variety of languages which have encroached upon its territory; Slavonic, Turkish, Greek, Latin have all foisted some words into it.

12. Hard, however, as the problem of distinguishing nearly related languages is, it is far surpassed in difficulty by that of deciding whether a language is Indo-Germanic or not. What
criteria can be laid down to guide the philologist in this investigation?

In order to assign a language to the Indo-Germanic family several things must be proved:

1. That the word-bases or roots of this language are prevailingly the same as those which appear in other Indo-Germanic languages, (2) that the manner in which nouns and verbs are formed from these bases is that which appears in other Indo-Germanic languages, (3) that the changes which words undergo to express various relations within the sentence are of the same kind as in other Indo-Germanic languages.

Of these three (1) is the only condition which is indispensable; (2) and (3) may be so obscured as practically to disappear. In English the distinction between noun and verb and between both of these and roots has in many cases disappeared. Noun inflexion is now confined to a limited number of possessive and plural forms; verb inflexion remains only in a very mutilated condition.

13. A fairly certain inference may be drawn from the identity of the pronouns and the numerals. Pronouns are so essential to the life of a language that they are not likely to be given up in favour of others from a foreign source. But even these are not always certain authority for the connexions of a language. Perhaps the question does not arise in the case of the Indo-Germanic languages, but in another family of languages—the Semitic—it presents a great difficulty. The Coptic and

---

1 According to Gustav Meyer, however (Essays und Studien, p. 68), it is probable that Albanian has borrowed its article and some important pronouns from Latin.