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ART. I.—*The Life of Robert Blair, Minister of St. Andrews, containing his Autobiography from 1593 to 1636, with a Supplement to his Life, and Continuation of the History of the Times to 1680.* By his son-in-law, Mr. William Row, Minister of Ceres. Edited for the Wodrow Society, from the Original Manuscript, by Thomas McCrie, D.D. Edinburgh: Printed for the Wodrow Society, 1848.

ROBERT BLAIR was a remarkable man, and lived through a large part of a century, in very eventful times. His history has not, hitherto, been so well known, as that of other Scottish worthies; but by the exertions of the Wodrow Society, it has recently been brought to light. He was born at Irvine, in the year 1593, and was the youngest of four brothers; the names of the other three were John, James, and William: the two eldest rose to be chief magistrates of Irvine, and William was first a regent in the University of Glasgow, and afterwards minister of Dumbarton.

Robert entered the University in the year 1611, and took his degree of A.M. in 1614. After teaching two years in the public school, he succeeded his brother as one of the Regents

tion, we are prepared to express our full conviction that he has made good all the important points of his argument.

ART. VI.—*The Rise, Progress and Structure of the English Language.* By the Rev. Matthew Harrison, A. M., Rector of Church Oakley, Hants; and late Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford. Philadelphia: E. C. & J. Biddle, No. 6, South Fifth St. 1850. 12 mo. pp. 393.

We have often wondered that the field of research and discussion covered in this volume has been left so long unoccupied; and had at last begun to hope, that an American scholar, who is understood to be devoting considerable attention to the Anglo Saxon and its relations to our tongue, would have the honour of supplying the desideratum in Literature, which the author of this treatise has essayed to furnish. Although this is an essay in the right direction, there is still scope enough for other labourers in the same wide and rich field of authorship.

We have in the first place a very compact history of the origin and formation of the English Language, and the changes it has undergone; in which the several sources contributing both to its vocabulary and its grammatical forms, are brought into view, as well as the nature and extent of the contribution from each. In this there is very little that is new to any one conversant with the learned labours of Bosworth, Thorpe, Turner, Prichard, Kemble and Percy. The summary, however, is well done, and adequate acknowledgments are made in general, to his predecessors in the historical department; except in the case of Bishop Percy, whose classification of the Celtic and Gothic affiliated tongues, is too important a contribution to the literature of a difficult and previously very confused subject, to be adopted entire, without some special acknowledgment.

The second part of the work is Philological, consisting of a dissertation on the principles of the formation of Languages,

the genius and character of the English tongue and the sources of its corruption. Although this portion of the book is instructive, and in the main satisfactory and true, we must enter our protest against the hypothesis adopted, conditionally at least, in the opening sections, which accounts for the structure of language as if it were purely a human invention, springing out of the social wants of men, casually meeting each other as they roamed the forest, in a state of the lowest savagism. We are well aware that the adoption of this hypothesis is no avowal of hostility to the revealed history of man, and we are aware that it underlies the philological speculations of some able authors on language, who are firm believers in Revelation. We find it even in the judicious, moderate, and matter-of-fact reasonings of Dr. Blair. In the lips of those who, like Horace, regard the human race as originally a "mutum et turpe pecus," assuming by slow degrees, the divine perfection of form and intellect, reached by man, this language would be at least consistent. But how men who regard the scriptural account of the creation as true, can treat us to such hypothetical reasonings about the formation of language, has always seemed to us surprising. If it be meant as a conditional hypothesis, intended to explain the philosophy of language calculated backwards,—that is, on the supposition that such would have been the natural process in the formation of language, provided it had been a human invention,—still we must take leave to except strongly to the mode of statement, as savouring of a hostile dialect; and also, to say the least, of very questionable utility. This is evinced by the endless conflicts and contradictions in which these philosophical architects of language are involved with each other. The same mode of reasoning has been applied, as is well known, to all the great social institutions of the race, even to the origin of government itself. Nothing could be more untrue both to history and to human nature. Man began his career, both individual and social, not as a savage or an oyster, but in possession of the highest powers and in the highest state of perfection the human race has ever known. It is useless to inquire what we can gain, even hypothetically, by representing men as casually meeting in

the forest or the plain, and interchanging human sentiments and affections by inarticulate cries, or broken fragments of natural sounds, gradually articulated into the philosophical structure of a perfect language. Of course there is no indication of such a process within the period of history; but the reverse. The whole tendency has been to simplify, instead of rendering speech complex. The oldest historic languages, and even the languages of barbarous and savage nations, like those of the American Indians, are far more complex in their forms, than those which embody the highest philosophical culture, the race has yet reached.

And besides, it is obvious that man needs language—perfect as far as it goes—for the purposes of thought, to meet his fundamental wants as a human being in his individual capacity, just as much as to gratify his social nature. To suppose Adam without the divine endowment of language, is to suppose him an irrational and irresponsible being. It is to throw into confusion the whole history of man's creation, fall and recovery. It is a rational and moral heresy, as well as a historic untruth. The only hypothesis consistent with the facts of the case is that of Humboldt and others, which supposes that man was endowed by the creative act, with a perfect language, just as he was with a perfect reason; both of which were available instantaneously for every necessary rational and moral purpose.

We are sorry to see the author, in his discussion of the sources of corruption of the English Language, quoting from the intentional mock-vulgar style, of some American authors, such words as *wide-awakety*, *betweenity*, *go-awayness*, &c., &c., as if they were veritable Americanisms, and received by us outside barbarians, as English terms; against which it was necessary to put the empire of English letters on their guard. He might just as well cite the mock-vulgar spelling of Sam Slick, as evidence that we were corrupting the orthography of the King's English. We do not mean by this remark to plead not guilty to the indictment which the author is establishing. We only wish it were in our power to do so. But we object to evidence from such witnesses. We are bad enough, but we are not so bad as Mr. Harrison would make us appear, if such

specimens were allowed to pass unchallenged, as American English.

The third and much the largest part of the work is on the present structure of the English Language, and treats of the fundamental nature, the construction and relation of the several parts of speech. It is really, what is greatly wanted in these days of grammatical empiricism, an attempt at a philosophical grammar. Without expressing any opinion at present about the various points brought out, or to pronounce upon the views of the author, where he comes into conflict with such men as Harris, and Horne Tooke, we venture to assure our readers that few among them, who have studied the subject in the ordinary way, can read the work, without finding their horizon of knowledge greatly enlarged, and light shed upon some of the difficulties and anomalies of our difficult and anomalous tongue. It is, we repeat, an essay in the right direction, for which we are grateful; though it may leave much room for further research and discussion, both in the way of correction and improvement. We have no hesitation in affirming that there are many grammatical forms in the language, which can be made clear in no other light than that of their history. Modern usage is often unsatisfactory and even contradictory. The author quotes example after example from the classics of the language, showing clear mistakes in the usage of some even of the less difficult forms and idioms, which disfigure almost every page of inferior writers. These forms may be intelligible, but they are not explicable, and still less susceptible of right usage under new circumstances, without a knowledge of their true original form and use. Grammarians must learn, as well as others, that the only method of comprehending any complex historical subject, is to study it historically.

ART. VII.—*A Modern History, from the Time of Luther to the Fall of Napoleon.* By John Lord, A. M., Lecturer on History. Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwaite & Co.

The scholarship of our country is gradually availing