

not say to one another, "Here is a particle that corresponds to the forms of such a dialect, and here is another that corresponds to the forms of such another dialect; let us employ them both and be odd and irregular in our speech." The forming of their language is as thoughtless, unintentional, and unphilosophical as is possible, as near the natural process, seemingly, as was that of the first beings who had need of communication, and if the natural growth, so almost entirely uninterfered with, produces such a mongrel type, it is a marked exception to the rule that nature abhors monstrosities.

The most formidable argument in favor of the "Physical" theory is that furnished by the curious relation of certain languages, which is set forth in "Grimm's Law." It would be scarcely feasible to hold that this is the result of deliberate agreement on the part of tribes or nations, but it is a well known fact that to-day certain consonant combinations of some languages are unpronounceable by people who are bred in the use of another: for instance, the universal inability of the Germans to master the "th" of English, it is always "d" in their mouths: and the gutteral "ch" of the German is commonly passed as "k" on the English tongue.

The occasional isolated cases of lispers and stammerers of every description, who are unable to pronounce certain sounds, hint, at least, that these may be remnants of ancient tribes whose "Shibboleth" that betrayed them, has not yet become entirely lost in the onward march of time, but now and then comes to the surface on the tongue of some unwitting descendant. In view of these facts it is easy to see how historical circumstances should have caused tribes to adopt the languages of other tribes, with the exception of those necessary consonant changes, and now the two divisions from the want of kindred affinity, have drifted far asunder in their speech by the process of phonetic change which affects all tongues, and chiefly the vowel elements, until the two

dialects have become unrecognizable as bearing any relation to one another, with the exception of that curious one previously mentioned.

Whitney, who maintains that comparative philology is a moral science, uses these words: "Language has, in fact, no existence save in the minds and mouths of those who use it; it is made up of separate articulated signs of thought, each of which is attached by a mental association to the idea it represents, is uttered by a voluntary effort, and has its value and currency only by the agreement of speakers and hearers. It is only in the power, subject to their will, as it is kept up, so is it modified and altered, so may it be abandoned, by their joint and consenting action, and in no other way." J. F. P.

#### SPELLING REFORM.

**T**HE "phonetic" craze is again exhibiting restive symptoms. Away down East they have been holding meetings and resolving that English orthography is a humbug and a swindle. It seems to bother the reformers that we do not spell as we pronounce. It seems to trouble them that our language is so prolific of sound that our children do not learn to spell naturally, as they learn to speak. They want us to remodel our dictionaries, to spell "wife" *yf*, for instance, to drop all double letters, and use but the single one unless the sound of the word demands it. Now, when you inaugurate a reform, it is well to begin at the beginning. Suppose these anxious gentlemen first secure a uniform system of pronunciation. Possibly it has never occurred to them that in the United States there are local forms of pronunciation, wide and various; that many people say "keers," while some of us call it "cars," that what is "chair" to some is "cheer" to others. Would they have us say "culcher" or "culchaw?" And then the one who says "hyar" and "thar" could establish his claims to recognition. Of