APPENDIX B

D. L. Richardson's "On the Education of the People of India through the Medium of the English Language" (From: Richardson, D. L. Literary Leaves or Prose and Verse Chiefly Written in India, Calcutta: 1836)

Some of the admirers of Orientalism have battled with more ability than success in favour of the vernacular, in preference to the English language, as a means of communicating the literature and science of the West to the people of India. They venture to compare it with the Latin and the English, and even roundly assert that the Bengali is quite as rich and expressive as either of those languages. It is added that all the subtle distinctions of metaphysics may be taught in Bengali quite as well as in English. How a language which has scarcely any literature at all can be compared for copiousness, flexibility and precision, to a language that has been cultivated for ages by the greatest poets, orators, and philosophers which the world has known, is a riddle that it would be difficult to solve. Bengali compared to English is as lax and meagre, as are almost all other ancient languages compared with Greek, "The obstacles," says Sir James Mackintosh (in the introduction to his View of the Progress of Ethical Philosophy), "which stood in the way of Lucretius and Cicero, when they began to translate the subtle philosophy of Greece into their narrow and barren tongue, are always felt by the philosopher, when he struggles to express, with the necessary discrimination, his abstruse reasoning in words which, though those of his own language, he must take from the mouths of persons to whom his distinctions would be without a meaning." If Latin compared with the Greek is a "narrow and barren tongue," the same may be said of the Bengali when compared with the English; for the latter has been so vastly improved
by careful cultivation, by the taste and genius of a host of native writers, and by the judicious introduction of expressive foreign words, that, perhaps, no other living language may be compared with it for force, fertility and exactness. And yet this language, all its excellencies, is not even now entirely fitted for the use of the metaphysician, and perhaps will never be. Nothing is more common amongst our authors than the most pathetic complaints respecting the imperfections of the language. Professor Stewart, amongst other eminent metaphysicians, has spoken of the perplexing obscurity, in which mental philosophy has been involved by the vagueness and ambiguity of words. If so comparatively rich and flexible a language as ours, is often found inadequate to express the subtler metaphysical distinctions, how unreasonable is it to imagine that such a language as the Bengali, in its present state, can be successfully devoted to such a purpose! It would take several centuries to bring it to a state of copiousness and refinement.

The obstacles in the way of introducing the English language to the people of India, have been greatly exaggerated by the Orientalists. If there were but one spoken and written language in all India, the objection to the introduction of the English language would seem more plausible; but when we consider the multiplicity of languages and characters already in use amongst the natives, it seems perfectly ridiculous to talk of the difficulty of introducing a foreign tongue. Are not the Arabic and Persian, foreign languages? Is not the greater part of the learning of the east embodied in the Sanscrit? Would it be a whit more difficult or less useful to teach the living English than the dead sanscrit? Is the Roman character more hierogly-physical or less distinct than the Nagree?
Some of our most ardent Orientalists insist upon the necessity of translating the productions of the Western writers into Arabic or Sanscrit, then when they carried everything before them in the councils of the Committee of Public Instruction, they devoted no less a sum than 65,000 rupees to remunerate Doctor Tytler for the translation into Arabic of six books —five of them of a medical character, and one of a mathematical! Luckily for the youth of India, Lord William Bentinck had sense and decision enough to put a sudden stop to this preposterous waste of toil and money, and since that time a most wholesome change has been effected in the entire system of Indian education. We now send out of our colleges hundreds of fine-minded youths who are not only familiar with English words, but with English thoughts and feelings. Instead of the old system of bribing boys with a fixed remuneration of some 16 or 20 rupees per mensem to acquire a knowledge of the astronomy of Ptolemy and the medicine of Galen, we have our schools crowded with enthusiastic youths who deem it a precious privilege to be admitted upon the payment of a monthly sum*, which, small as it may seem, is often given with difficulty and inconvenience. But yet they seem, is often given with difficulty and inconvenience. But yet they willingly and proudly make this pecuniary sacrifice for the sake of an acquaintance not with Ptolemy and Galen, or with the Oriental writers of licentious tales, but with Shakespeare and Milton, and Bacon and Newton, and Addison and Johnson! Even the late Doctor Tytler himself, an indefatigable student in Oriental Literature and a violent opponent of the Romanizing system introduced by Sir William Jones and followed up with so much ardour by Mr. Trevelyan, acknowledges that the English language ought to be “an object, nay, a paramount object,

* The boys at the Hindu College pay five rupees per mensem.
in Native education;” and while he is opposing Mr. Trevelyans plan of Anglicizing the whole literature of India, on account of its supposed difficulty, or rather its supposed impossibility, he admits that vernacular dialects cannot be thoroughly understood by the natives of India, or used with propriety without a knowledge of their learned languages. If, then, amongst the natives of India, all education beyond the ordinary kind, requires the knowledge of more than one language besides the vernacular, what impropriety or unreasonableness can be imputed to those who desire to supplant such an extra or foreign acquisition as that of Arabic or Sanscrit by the most bigoted Orientalist, that the latter contains nobler treasures of literature and science than any Eastern language.

One would imagine that all mankind would be anxious to get rid as much as possible of the curse of Babel, and would aim at acquiring a uniformity of language; but there are natives of considerable acuteness who yet do not understand how great a blessing would be conferred upon their country by the abolition of the immense variety of dialects which now divide so many millions of their countrymen into different tribes. Nothing would more speedily or more effectually civilize the people of this vast land, and give them political strength, than a uniformity of language. It is the great bond of special union. It would change a thousand tribes into one people. A community of language is a community of thought. And if the people have now to choose a language it is natural to suppose that they would give the preference to that of their more enlightened governors, many of whom, we hope, are quite as anxious to improve the mind of India, as to increase its revenue. When people talk of the extreme difficulty of introducing the English language, they forget that it is not offered to men but to children. It is not the present but the rising generation upon whom the blessing is to be conferred;
and everyone knows with what extreme facility a child imbibes a language. The children of European parents in India generally speak English and Hindustani with equal facility. They learn them both simultaneously. And why should not the children of Indian parents do the same? We will venture to say that, if Government would offer teachers a remunerating salary, instead of the pittance that is now awarded to them, a sufficient number of competence persons would almost instantaneously be found, and if the English language system were pursued with zeal and assiduity, in less than a quarter of a century there would be millions of young natives able to speak and write it with ease and accuracy. It cannot be doubted that it would take a much longer time for the natives to improve any of their own languages than to learn English. The science of the West could not be introduced into the Bengali language without the cultivators of the latter borrowing or inventing the entire nomenclature, and there are delicate shades of thought, and exquisite turns of expression that could never be transferred into the dialects of the east. The improvement of an imperfect language is a dreadfully slow process whereas the acquisition of a new one, especially by the young, may be effected with the utmost ease and rapidity. If the Government once set earnestly to work upon their present plan, the result would be far more speedy and effective than is generally imagined, even by the majority of Anglicizers themselves. It is not easy to reckon the good that has already been compassed by the English education bestowed on Indian youths. Many of them, with a most generous and noble zeal, excited by the moral influence of an English education, are in the habit of devoting their leisure hours to the task of communicating to their poorer countrymen and blessings they have themselves received at the hands of Englishmen. The public little know what a vast number of native children are thus
receiving gratuitous instruction in English from the alumni and the ex-students of our colleges. We are to add to the effect of the most benevolent practice, the influence of their example and conversation even upon their seniors who have not enjoyed the same advantages. Knowledge spreads like wild-fire.

The Orientalists are rejoiced to have Mr. Adam on their side. It must be admitted that if a clear head and strict integrity be entitled to respect, there are not many men in the world who have a better claim to it than Mr. Adam. At the same time, we may take the liberty to observe, that his authority on a question of this nature is not decisive. When he went to Rajshye to make his Education Report, his sentiments betokened "a foregone conclusion." He was always prejudiced in favor of the native languages; and Mr. Adam is one of those men who combine the most honest intentions with an obstinacy of will that no opposition, however fair and reasonable, can easily subdue. He will grant nothing. He is "predetermined not to give a single sous." Because he discovered that in Rajshye there were more schools for instruction in the vernacular than in the English tongue, he jumped to the conclusion that the fact affords an index to the disposition of the people and that we ought to attend to their desires. This is as much as to say that the miserables system of education, if education it can be called, pursued in any semi barbarous country should by all means be encouraged because it is still adopted by as many of the people as have enjoyed little or no intercourse with Europeans. What is to expected from the ignorant inhabitants of obscure villages in India in which a white face is a wonder? It is assuredly a wild absurdity to imagine that these simple people can form any conception of the comparative advantages of different systems of education. They are utterly ignorant of the nature of the blessings that an English education would
confer. If it be true, that they desire an Indian education in preference to an English one, we hope the British government will not act the part of Jupiter, and curse its petitioners by granting their foolish prayers. Let us not be guided by the blind. The natives in the neighbourhood of Calcutta and other large cities, have had their mental vision couched. The filmy curtain has been drawn aside and they can distinguish good from evil. These men acknowledge the vast advantages of a study of the English language, and they eagerly sent their children to our colleges. The youths themselves voraciously devour the mental treat that we placed before them. Their appetite for European literature and science is so intense, that no ordinary exertions on the part of their teachers can keep pace with their desires. At the opening of the Hooghly Colloege there were no less than fifteen hundred native boys amongst the candidates for admission. The Hindoo College is always as full as it can hold of students who pay for their education. Is not this a stronger argument in favor of the English language than can be drawn in favor of the vernacular dialects from the customs of ignorant villagers, who are guided solely by the example of their forefathers?

We are sorry to see some of the Orientalists quoting with approbation the vulgar absurdities of Cobbett upon the subject of the learned languages. Cobbett wrote with clearness and vigour upon local or temporary topics, but he knew nothing of general principles, and was a very miserable philosopher. The learned languages are not taught for the words alone but for the thoughts with which the words are indissolubly connected. The signs of thought cannot be studied without familiarizing the student with what they stand for. We are free to confess that somewhat too much time is devoted at our Colleges in England to the acquisition of Greek and Latin to the neglect of our
mother tongue. If the English were a barbarous and barren language, there would be a fair excuse for such expenditure of time and labour; but as it is unquestionably enriched with high and elegant and varied learning, it is injudicious to pay less attention to our own living tongue than to the dead languages of foreign countries. Many a tolerable Greek and Latin scholar is utterly ignorant of the great authors of his own country and is unable to write or speak his own language with grammatical propriety. But while we condemn this absurd preference of other languages to our own, we are by no means disposed to second the opinions of those who think that in reading the works of the great ancient authors, a boy is learning words alone. We cannot learn words alone. It is impossible to learn words without making ourselves in some degree acquainted with the objects of which they are the simple. In fact as it has been often observed, true words are things and the only things too that last forever! Temples and towers and cities and their inhabitants pass away but written words remain. The works of Homer and Hesiod exist in words, as the mind exists in conjunction with the body. Separation is death. Dr. Joseph Warton was right enough in his strictures on a couplet of Pope in which the sentiment of Cobbett is anticipated. "To read," (says he, with the generous enthusiasm of scholar) "to read, to interpret, to translate the best poets, orators and historians, of the best ages; that is, those authors 'that supply must axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, most examples of virtue and integrity, and most materials for conversation', cannot be called confining youth to words alone, and keeping them out of the way of real knowledge."

It was the opinion also of a far higher authority, the clear and lofty minded Milton, that "if passages from the heroic poems, orations and tragedies of the ancients
were solemnly pronounced, with right accent and grace, they would endure the scholars even with the spirit and vigour of Demosthenes or Cicero, Euripides or Sophocles".*

Any time that could be spared from the study of our own authors might be devoted by our English youth with great advantage to the ancients; and if the field of English lore were less fertile than it is, we should hardly object even to the present disproportionate attention to the literature of Greece and Rome. The case is very different with the Bengali and the English. The most strenuous advocates for the Bengali do not venture to deny that there is an infinitely larger quantity of noble materials for the food of the mind in the language of England. But they imagine that they can transfer with case and rapidity the best portion of this intellectual wealth into the vernacular, through the medium translation. There cannot be a more deplorable mistake. A glance at our English translation of the works of the ancients would suffice to convince any reasonable man of the excessive difficulty of transferring the literature of one language into that of another, even where there is some congeniality between the languages of the original and the translation. Good English scholars, acquainted with the ancients only through English versions, are at a loss how to reorganize the justice of those fervid praises that they have been lavished through so many ages and in so many different lands upon the authors of Greece and Rome. But the learned have no difficulty in furnishing the solution of the mystery. They tell us that the spirit of the great authors, who have become immortal heirs of fame, has evaporated entirely in the process of translation.

* The same may be said of the perusal of Shakespeare and Lord Bacon by the young natives of India.
One of the Orientalists observes, that Pope's translation of Homer is a masterpiece, and must rank among English Epics next to Paradise Lost. If Pope had written nothing besides this translation or rather paraphrase of Homer, his rank as a genuine poet would have been far lower than it now is. The truth is, that all English critics at present concur in condemning it. The simple and sublime old bard is dressed like a modern coxcomb. "It is a pretty poem," said Bentley to Pope, who had urgently pressed for his opinion of his translation, "but you must not call it Homer." If the entire spirit and character of ancient authors is so changed by translators of skill and genius, who have a copious and flexible language at their command, we must expect a still greater loss of original spirit in translation of ideas from English into Bengali. The late Dr. Tytler used to say that nothing could be more contemptible than the attempts hitherto made to transfer our literature into the vernacular, and though he himself was a man of very great ability and learning, we may fairly express a doubt whether his own Arabic translations were not better adapted to furnish food for mirth to those acquainted with the original language, that the means of instruction to the majority of native students.

Our opponents acknowledge, that if the vernacular dialects be the exclusive means of cultivation, then English poetry, from the difficulty of translation, must be given up altogether. And yet our poetry is by no means an insignificant or useless portion of English literature. When we speak of British genius, amongst the very first names that start up in our memory and demand our gratitude and admiration, are those of Shakespeare and Milton! The influence of the writings of such men upon the intellectual character of a nation, is as vast as it is indefinable. Shakespeare's magical creations have become fixtures in the minds of his countrymen, and his finer thoughts and axioms are
as familiar in our mouths as household words. The editor of a native paper lays the flattering unction to his soul that his countrymen are richer in poetical genius than the English, in spite of our Chaucer and Spencer and Shakespeare and Milton! "Every body knows," says he "that we, the inhabitants of this sunny clime, have poetry in greater abundance than the inhabitants of the bleak regions of England, and other polar countries." We confess that we are amongst the no bodies, if every body is of this opinion. If we could be convinced that there was so much glorious poetry in the vernacular, and that the natives could do so well without ours, we should be less disposed to advocate the English; for there is no doubt that mere science could be transferred into any language with more ense and success than poetry*. We have always had a notion, however, that the all-sidedness of mind, and the profound and philosophical knowledge of the human heart displayed by Shakespeare, and the sublime morality and lofty imagination of Milton, were immeasurably beyond the reach of Indian poets, who were little better, in our estimation, than dealers in miscellaneous stores of tears and smiles, clouds and sunbeams, and germs and flowers. The general impression of all other nations regarding the poetry of the East is extremely unfavorable. The poetry of Indian Bards is looked upon as glittering gewgaw. It is bespangled like a coronation robe. There can be no great poetry where there is no simplicity of taste or purity of feeling. The greatest poet that the world ever knew was remarkable for the naked grandeur of his style, and Milton, who does not stand much below him was also

* Let us communicate as much of our scientific knowledge as we can; but at the same time we should always remember the science alone ought not to be our sole or even chief object in the education of the natives. It is of paramount importance that we should raise the moral tone of their minds; a desire for the acquisition of science and general knowledge must necessarily follow.
distinguished for a chaste sublimity. His poetry is often sculptural and colourless. But, perhaps, our opponents do not mean to institute a comparison between the poetry of India and that of England in reference to quality, so much as in point of quantity. If this be their intention, we have no wish to disturb their complacency.

With respect even to prose literature, there is scarcely a book that we can mention, that would not greatly suffer translation into Bengali. Style is as much a part of an author as the mortal frame is a part of our strangely compounded being. Even the Orientalists will acknowledge that the glorious thoughts of Milton, expressed with such extraordinary force, would lose more than half their effect in any other diction. We are of opinion that it would be the same with the prose writings of our moralists. There is an insinuating grace in the manner of Addison and Goldsmith, that could only be imitated to perfection by kindred genius and in the same language. But in such a language as the Bengali, the charm could never be preserved by even greater skill and ingenuity than are displayed in the original. Such writers make morality enchanting.

"Truth from their lips prevails with the double sway."

It is astonishing how little novelty of thought is to be found in any age or country in the writings of the most eminent moralists and philosophers. New truths are rare, and the human hearts remain unchanged. It is the wondrous felicity with which great writers place old truths in a new light, and the grace, clearness or force of their style, that raises our admiration and renders them so useful to mankind. We are told of
the difficulty of procuring schoolmasters; but this difficulty is trifling, indeed, when compared with that of procuring competent translators*

When we take all these considerations into a fair account, it is not difficult to come to a conclusion upon the main subject of the article. We are thoroughly convinced, that by instructing native children in the English language (which in the dawn of their intellects is an easy attainment), we put into their hands the golden key of a vast treasury of precious knowledge that they would never gain access to by any other means. For their present feeble and defective language (which still, however, they are not obliged wholly to neglect) we give them an instrument for the use of their minds that is in a state of comparative perfection; and we expedite their passage in the road to knowledge, at a rate that will cause the rising generation to make greater progress in twenty years, than could be effected through the medium of the vernacular languages in a century.

* Perhaps the most convincing argument in favour of native education through the medium of English tongue, is a reference to the character and accomplishments of some of those young men who have passed through the Hindu College. Their minds are infinitely more elevated and more robust than those of their compatriots in general, and they talk and think and act like well educated Europeans; they read Bacon and Shakespeare and Johnson and Addison with delight, and have a sense of the true and the beautiful, which could never be acquired from oriental literature alone, of which the general character is confessedly feeble and impure.