LANGUAGES

By Carl Sandburg

THERE are no handles upon a language

 Whereby men take hold of it

 And mark it with signs for its remembrance.

 It is a river, this language,

 Once in a thousand years

 Breaking a new course

 Changing its way to the ocean.

 It is mountain effluvia

 Moving to valleys

 And from nation to nation

 Crossing borders and mixing.

 Languages die like rivers.

 Words wrapped round your tongue today

 And broken to shape of thought

 Between your teeth and lips speaking

 Now and today

 Shall be faded hieroglyphics

 Ten thousand years from now.

 Sing--and singing--remember

 Your song dies and changes

 And is not here to-morrow

 Any more than the wind

 Blowing ten thousand years ago.

The First Book of Moses, Called

Genesis

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The Tower of Babel

1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.

6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.