

tie, easy to be established between the numerous hordes which had remained hostile to each other, and had been kept asunder by diversity of idioms; for, in uncultivated countries, after the lapse of several ages, dialects often assume the form, or at least the appearance, of mother-tongues.

When it is said that a Dane learns the German, and a Spaniard the Italian or the Latin, more easily than they learn any other language, it is at first thought that this facility results from the identity of a great number of roots, common to all the Germanic tongues, or to those of Latin Europe; it is not considered, that, with this resemblance of sounds, there is another resemblance, which acts more powerfully on nations of a common origin. Language is not the result of an arbitrary convention. The mechanism of inflections, the grammatical constructions, the possibility of inversions, all are the offspring of our own minds, of our individual organization. There is in man an instinctive and regulating principle, differently modified among nations not of the same race. A climate more or less severe, a residence in the defiles of mountains, or on the sea-coasts, or different habits of life, may alter the pronunciation, render the identity of the roots obscure, and multiply the number; but all these causes do not affect that which constitutes the structure and mechanism of languages. The influence of climate, and of external circumstances, vanishes before the influence which depends on the race, on the hereditary and individual dispositions of men.

In America (and this result of recent researches* is extremely important with respect to the history of our species) from the country of the Esquimaux to the banks of the Orinoco, and again from these torrid regions to the frozen climate of the Straits of Magellan, mother-tongues, entirely different in their roots, have, if we may use the expression, the same physiognomy. Striking analogies of grammatical construction are acknowledged, not only in the more perfect languages, as in that of the Incas, the Aymara, the Guarauno, the Mexican, and the Cora, but also in languages extremely rude. Idioms, the roots of which do not resemble each other more than the

* See Vater's Mithridates.