

of the perishable materials on which they are written ; so that to question the theory of all known languages being derivative on the ground that we can rarely trace a passage from the ancient to the modern through all the dialects which must have flourished one after the other in the intermediate ages, implies a want of reflection on the laws which govern the recording as well as the obliterating processes.

But another important question still remains to be considered, namely, whether the trifling changes which can alone be witnessed by a single generation, can possibly represent the working of that machinery which, in the course of many centuries, has given rise to such mighty revolutions in the forms of speech throughout the world. Every one may have noticed in his own lifetime the stealing in of some slight alterations of accent, pronunciation or spelling, or the introduction of some words borrowed from a foreign language to express ideas of which no native term precisely conveyed the import. He may also remember hearing for the first time some cant terms or slang phrases, which have since forced their way into common use, in spite of the efforts of the purist. But he may still contend that, 'within the range of his experience,' his language has continued unchanged, and he may believe in its immutability in spite of minor variations. The real question, however, at issue is, whether there are any limits to this variability. He will find on farther investigation, that new technical terms are coined almost daily in various arts, sciences, professions, and trades, that new names must be found for new inventions, that many of these acquire a metaphorical sense, and then make their way into general circulation, as 'stereotyped,' for instance, which would have been as meaningless to the men of the seventeenth century as would the new terms and images derived from steamboat and railway travelling to the men of the eighteenth.

If the numerous words, idioms, and phrases, many of them