

lation of the Bible acted as a powerful cause of 'selection,' giving at once to one of many competing dialects (that of Saxony) a prominent and dominant position in Germany; but the style of Luther has, like that of our English Bible, already become somewhat antiquated.

If the doctrine of gradual transmutation be applicable to languages, all those spoken in historical times must each of them have had a closely allied prototype; and accordingly, whenever we can thoroughly investigate their history, we find in them some internal evidence of successive additions by the invention of new words or the modification of old ones. Proofs also of borrowing are discernible, letters being retained in the spelling of some words which have no longer any meaning as they are now pronounced,—no connection with any corresponding sounds. Such redundant or silent letters, once useful in the parent speech, have been aptly compared by Mr. Darwin to rudimentary organs in living beings, which, as he interprets them, have at some former period been more fully developed, having had their proper functions to perform in the organisation of a remote progenitor.

If all known languages are derivative and not primordial creations, they must each of them have been slowly elaborated in a single geographical area. No one of them can have had two birthplaces. If one were carried by a colony to a distant region, it would immediately begin to vary unless frequent intercourse was kept up with the mother country. The descendants of the same stock, if perfectly isolated, would in five or six centuries, perhaps sooner, be quite unable to converse with those who remained at home, or with those who may have migrated to some distant region, where they were shut out from all communication with others speaking the same tongue.

A Norwegian colony which settled in Iceland in the ninth century, maintained its independence for about 400 years, during which time the old Gothic which they at first spoke