

took of the spirit of the Romantic School, felt the electrical touch of Lord Byron's verse, listened to the great orators of the third French Revolution, and could tell us of the now forgotten spell which Napoleon I. exercised over millions of reluctant admirers. Most of these fascinations and interests live only in the narratives of contemporaries and surviving witnesses, few of whom have succeeded in perpetuating them with pen or brush, making them intelligible to a future age; most of them die with the generation itself. Not only have we listened to their words and seen in their features the traces of the anxieties they lived through, in their eyes the reflected enthusiasms and aspirations, in their glances and in the trembling of their voices the last quiverings of bygone passion and joy,—we have received from them a still more eloquent testimonial, a more living inheritance. But this we cannot hand down to our children in the form in which it was given to us: it has not passed through our hands unaltered. This inheritance is the language which our parents have taught us. Unknowingly they have themselves altered the tongue, the words and sentences, which they received, depositing in these altered words and modes of speech the spirit, the ideas, the thought of their lifetime. These words and modes of speech they handed to us in our infancy, as the mould wherein to shape our minds, as the shell wherein to envelop our slowly growing thoughts, as the instrument with which to convey our ideas. In their language, in the phrases and catchwords peculiar to them, we learnt to distinguish what was important and interesting from what was trivial or indifferent, the subjects which

18.  
Changes  
which Lan-  
guage under-  
goes from  
parent to  
child, a  
proof of the  
changing  
life of  
Thought.