

should occupy our thoughts, the aims we should follow, the principles and methods which we should make use of. The bulk and substance of this they indeed inherited themselves; but the finer distinctions of their reasoning, the delicate shading of their feelings and aspirations, they added and modified for themselves, modelling for their own special use the pliable and elastic medium of the mother tongue. With this finer moulding we have inherited the spirit of the former generation: predisposing us to certain phases of thought and placing in our path a difficulty in acquiring otherwise than by gradual and almost imperceptible degrees the faculty of assimilating new and unexpected opinions, tastes, and feelings. Many of us adhere to the special character and phase of thought acquired in our youth. Some by learning foreign languages, and living in other countries, gain a facility for understanding quite different phases of thought: very few among us develop so much original thought that they burst the shell of conventional speech, coining new words and expressions for themselves, embodying in them the fleeting ideas of their time, the indefinable spirit of their age. Once expressed, these new terms are rapidly circulated, and if we look back on the period of a generation, we note easily the progress and development of opinion and tastes in the altered terms and style of our language.

19.
Inadequacy
of conven-
tional
speech for
original
thought.
Coining of
new words.

Thus it is that the writer, and those of his readers whose memory carries them back to the middle of the century, and whose schooling and education embodied the ideas of a generation before that time, can claim to have some personal knowledge of the greater portion of the nineteenth century, of the interests which it created and