

are few men who have not their set phrases and forms of speech, acquired inadvertently, in most cases at an early period, when the habit of giving expression to their ideas is in the forming,—phrases and set forms which they learn to use a good deal oftener than the necessities of their thinking require; and I have seen, in the course of a few months, the peculiarities of this kind of some one or two of the more intelligent and influential mechanics of a party, caught all unwittingly by almost all its members, and thus converted, to a considerable extent, into peculiarities of the party itself; and peculiar tones, inflections, modes of pronunciation, at first, mayhap, chance-derived, seem at least equally catching. A single stuttering boy has been known to infect a whole class; and no young person, with the imitative faculty active within him, ever spent a few months in a locality distant from his home, without bringing back with him, on his return, a sensible twang of its prevalent intonations and idioms. Of course, when the language of a town or district differs greatly from that of the general standard of the country, or very nearly approximates to it, there must have been some original cause of the peculiarity, which imparted aim and object to the imitative faculty. For instance, the Scotch spoken in Aberdeen differs more from the pure English standard than that of any other town in Scotland; whereas the Scotch spoken in Inverness, if Scotch it may be called, most nearly approximates to it; and we may detect a producing cause in both cases. The common dialect of Inverness, though now acquired by the ear, was originally, and that at no very remote period, the book-taught English of an educated Celtic people, to whom Gaelic was the mother tongue; while in Aberdeen—one of the old seats of learning in the country, and which seems to have been brought, in comparatively an early age, under the influence of