

somewhat meagre yet not inexpressive language in which Alfred wrote and conversed. In a succeeding volume, the Saxon, both in word and letter, gives place to Norman French. The Norman French yields, in turn, in a yet succeeding one, to a massive black-letter character, and an antique combination of both tongues, which we term the genuine old English. And then, in after volumes, the old English gradually modernizes and improves, till we recognize it as no longer old: we see, too, the heavy black-letter succeeded by the lighter Italian hand, at first doggedly stiff and upright, but anon bent elegantly forward along the line. And in these various successions of character and language we recognize the marks of a genuine antiquity. Nor, in passing from these, — the mere externals of the register, — to the register itself, are the evidences less conclusive. In reading upwards, we find the existing families of the district preceded by families now extinct, and these, in turn, by families which had become extinct at earlier and still earlier periods. Names disappear, — titles alter, — the boundaries of lands vary as the proprietors change, — smaller estates are now absorbed by larger, and now larger divide into smaller. There are traces not a few of customs long abrogated and manners become obsolete; and we see paroxysms of local revolution indicated by a marked grouping of events of corresponding character, that assume peculiar force and significance when we collate the record with the general history of the kingdom. Could it be possible, I ask, to believe, regarding such a many-volumed register, — with all its various styles, characters, and languages, — its histories of the rise and fall of families, and its records of conquests, settlements, and revolutions, — that it had been all hastily written at a heat on a Saturday night, some three or four weeks ago, without any intention to deceive on the part of the writer, — nay, without