

## A CHANGING MOOD—THE SUBJUNCTIVE.

SHERIDAN, Walker, Perry, Jones, Fulton, Jameson, Knowles, Smart and Reid may talk of "sleivers," but if the mass of people talk of "slivvers," slivvers will they be, and to the pronunciation of the latter the former must adapt themselves. Custom makes and unmakes dictionaries, clips off Anglo-Saxon case-endings, decapitates unwieldy sesquipedalian combinations of syllables, and modifies our whole language from article to verb. If custom terms a man "*a*" hero, and speaks of "*an*" heroic deed, she settles the question, and even the most contrary pedant must bow before her. Custom *uses* words and often *abuses* them. Edge-tools become blunt by use—so do words; crystals are smoothed by handling—so are words; diamonds dim in lustre by familiarity—so do words. Words are formed and reformed, used and abused by the common people, and though some may scornfully recall "*oli profanum vulgus*," yet it remains true that this same profane vulgus rules the world to a very great extent.

It is not to the pronunciation of words that we wish here to refer, it is to a certain use which will, perhaps, carry us back to the days of school and English grammar. Do not let that, however, interfere with our interest and attention. Built upon the Anglo-Saxon, the structure of the English language has been changed and altered by the mingling of Latin, French, and even Greek ideas, so that the architecture now is somewhat complicated. The ravages of time, the crumbling of the ages, the mellowing of years, are rendering more and more homogeneous the material, and we at times look long and intently before we are able to trace out the huge foundation-stones of Saxon, or the gilding and frescuing of Norman.

The tendency of time and use is to simplify words and terms, to change the language from synthetic to analytic. With this simplifying of speech in certain directions, there is creeping into the language of even our most correct speakers and writers of the present day a carelessness in the use of the