

should bring forth meat, and if out of the strong one we should bring forth sweetness."

Not a few of the difficulties of scripture arise from the form and circumstances in which it has been given to us, and these difficulties are of such a character that if they had not existed, their absence would have been justly regarded as a ground for grave suspicion. Suppose that some one were to publish a volume of tracts in the Latin language, and to declare in the preface to the volume that the tracts were composed by various individuals, differing in their age, and habits, and intellectual culture; that one was written by a Roman senator of high birth, in the best days of the republic; that another was written by a shepherd boy in the time of Augustus; that a third was written by an Englishman in the days of Alfred the Great—a man whose vernacular was the Anglo-saxon, and who had acquired a knowledge of Latin when he was well advanced in life; suppose that it was found there was no allusion in these tracts to customs and manners but such as men living in Britain or America in the nineteenth century could fully and at once understand; that words and phrases were always employed throughout the volume in precisely the same sense, and that the figures and illustrations used were of a uniform character, the suspicion would be immediately excited in the minds of thinking men that the work was spurious, and that the editor was either an impostor or one who had been imposed upon. History and experience tell us that habits of thought and forms of expression are continually changing, just as are modes of dress and orders of architecture; words and phrases distinct and intelligible to men of one generation, become obscure and indefinite to men of another. New words are coined, if we may so speak, in order to express new subjects and shades of thought; metaphors once easily understood and appreciated become, as the age grows less poetical and more utilitarian, antiquated and unintelligible; and we sometimes look with astonishment on a composition greatly admired by our ancestors, at least till we have by scrutiny learned to know its meaning and discern its excellence, just as we gaze with surprise and pain on a withered countenance and drooping frame, and find it difficult to realize the truth of which our fathers have told us, that these were once known and admired as a face and form of marvellous beauty. Nay, more, we find that a man's age and occupation and place of residence tend to mould his thoughts. The sailor's metaphors are of the sea and the sky; the merchant's flowers of rhetoric have the odor of the desk and of the counting room; the heaven of the Indian is a land where, in the company of his faithful dog and his father's spirit, he shall find a well stocked hunting ground; the Laplander's idea of paradise is a land where frost and snow are unknown, and where large and ever blazing fires shall shed a genial warmth; the Italian's is a land where men may repose for days under the spreading branches of lofty trees, listening to the sound of the water-