

lects of many epochs, and of divers nations.

I am not, however, going to inflict upon you any very learned disquisition regarding the topic in question. In the first place, time would hardly permit of such treatment; and secondly, I have not come here prepared to tender you an elaborate and exhaustive treatise on philology. I will merely present for your consideration a few fugitive thoughts on words and word-using, which I have endeavoured to collate and so arrange that they may be rendered in some way worthy of your attention, and not altogether unworthy of the great theme which first inspired them.

Words are the material with which we, the artisans of mind, embody our conceptions, illustrate our theories, or convey our instructions; they are the bricks with which we build the edifice of our conversations in oral tuition, or construct the fabric of our written composition, substantiating our ideas, and thus rendering them patent to the discerning faculties of our fellows. And as the expert workman in clay uses none but the purest forms of earth, etc., wherewith to perpetuate the fruits of his skill, and at the same time satisfy the claims of his employers, so we, the mechanics of the school-room, as moulders, not only of intelligent thought, but also of coherent speech, owe it to our employers, the pupils under tuition, to utilize none but the fittest and most apt expressions which a large and sufficiently varied vocabulary places at our disposal. More than this—we are not only bound to *use* none but the very best materials, we are, as progressive intelligences and educators, under the intellectual and moral obligation to *discard* much of the impure, inelegant and even vicious verbiage now obtaining in all classes of society, which passes with the masses as genuine Sèvres ware, but which is, after all,

but poor dross, adulterated in texture, and inartistic in design, and totally unfitted for the high offices it is, alas! too frequently chosen to perform.

What are words? *Literally* they are merely expressions of thought conveyed by sound to the ear through the medium of the organs of speech, or by sight to the eye through the instrumentality of the human hand or printing press—the links, in fact, spoken or written, out of which is forged the chain of intelligible speech. *Figuratively* they are pictures, vivid, artistic representations of mental conceptions or tangible objects, not limned by apprentice hands through the agency of blind chance or fortuitous circumstance, but indelibly stamped by the magic die of genius, of wit, of inspired fancy, or of erudite scholarship, on the surface of all time for the edification of all succeeding generations; or again, we may liken them to flowers, not poor weeds, taken haphazard from the wayside ditch, or dusty margin of some desert waste, but choice blossoms, carefully culled and garnered from the most favoured pastures in the fertile domains of philological research.

We are wont to talk of the hero's sword; but what a weapon does he wield who, armed with the pen and versed in all the niceties of his mother tongue, goes forth into the world of letters to wage warfare at that pen's point, to subdue new kingdoms of the mind, to bring under subjection new empires of thought, and put to utter and ignoble rout the brutish legions of intellectual apathy, prejudice, and incredulity. And as the reward of his successful enterprise, the literary victor beholds at last nations paying him homage, having in very truth wrung, from civilized humanity at large, tribute which at the outset is oftentimes so grudgingly afforded, and the final acquisition of which is the best and surest guerdon of success in letters.