

If there is this subtle relation between poetry and the noblest life and speech in other spheres, then the minister of all men needs its study, for he deals with life and seeks the most living form of speech.

What particular value has the study of poetry for the ministry ?

The influence of poetry is elevating and refining ; it cultivates the finer sensibilities, and makes the sympathies keener and broader.

It deals in beauty, finding and expressing whatever appeals to the æsthetic nature, so making the soul sensitive to spiritual impression. "No man can attain to highest excellence who is insensible to highest beauty."

There was the most practical philosophy in Robertson's work for the laboring men of Brighton. To the thousand men or more whom he could not get into his church he read the best English poetry, doing this as a clergyman, with a deep, religious purpose, knowing that if he could lift these men above the stupefying influence of material things, fill the soul with thoughts of duty and heroism and forms of beauty, then he had opened the door for the entrance of Gospel truth.

All great work gets its impulse from the unseen. To save the life from the deadening effect of routine, to keep the faculties from being made callous by the daily touch of duties, men must dwell much upon the ideal side. And poetry will help them to do this. It casts over the commonplace an ideal light, and dignifies common things. It breaks into the monotony and drudgery of work by its states of intense feeling, and so helps to lift us into a nobler mood than we would otherwise feel. It leads to aspiration. By the poets we learn that

"Wings have we, and as far as we can go  
We may find pleasure : wilderness and wood,  
Blank ocean and mere sky, support that mood  
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low."

Sensitiveness to his age, to the movements of thought and life about him, is a condition of continued power for the minister. The truth of revelation is unchangeable, but not so the conception and expression of it ; it is ever being uncovered and adapted to human need, even as the truths of the natural world. To use the speech of men long buried is to make the pulpit a monument, not a living voice. It is a sad day for truth when the pulpit stands deaf and dumb to the new problems of the generation, and great moral and social movements take their beginning and course without its knowledge or help. But such fatal dulness cannot be true of the man who has the poetic instinct or cultivates the taste for the best poetry. He will be able to feel as the poets do the most delicate and subtle phases of the life about them. Poetry is the very language of feeling. The poet feels because he is a poet, and he feels more intensely than other men, because his nature is more sensitive. Every great poet searches the age to the very depth of its consciousness. Would you know the intellectual and spiritual forces of the present era ? You will find the complex