

the electric flash? Take the word *flash* itself, and compare it with *sound*—one short and one sharp, like the lightning's fork; the other broad and dull as the answering peal. *Querulous*,—is there not something peevish in the very sound? Is there not something sturdy and self-reliant in the word *bold*? *Defiance* has an aggressive tone. *Weak*—is it not a sickly sound? Is not *strong* robust and hearty? In *lean, thin, spare*, have you no visions of sheep-shanks, contracted chests, hollow eyes, Don Quixotes charging upon Rosinantes at skeleton wind-mills? *Robust, rotund, obese, fat*—do no Falstaffs rise before your mind's eye—no portly and circumspect Sancho Panzas on plethoric mules? *Fair, white, blonde*—is not want of colour depicted on the very articulation? *Dark, black, opaque*—is there not a sense of obscurity in the sounds? *Sharp*, I imagine, is a fine word to denote a keen edge; *blunt* describes admirably the dull blade or the unpolished speech; *little* seems itself diminutive; *big*, though a little word, is self-important and full; *mean* has a mean sound, but *honest* has a ring about it which begets confidence; *hiss* has a tone of derision or cunning, or hate, very unpleasant to the ear; but *hurrah* or *bravo* are resounding plaudits compressed into dissyllables. *Ugly* is a word which has no euphony of sound to commend it; but *pretty, graceful, beauty, lovely, winsome, elegant*, are all typical of what they are intended to represent—each is “a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.” Notice the difference between *lightsome* and *sombre, sparkling* and *dull, sad sigh* and *cheery smile*; *home* and *mother* are synonyms for all that is peaceful and all that is holy in domestic life; *lady, girl, sky*, are verbal jewels of the purest water, set by a magic inspiration of articulate utterance in the golden garniture of our beautiful language; the first—a pearl—

pure and calm in its passionless enunciation, spotlessly fair, as the lady ever should be in mind and action; the second—*girl*—an opal, pure and fair, and bright, too, in sound, but with an ever-varying cadence, like the young nature it depicts, or like the gem itself, which changes its tints with every transient change of position; the last—*sky*—a diamond, an oval brilliant, sparkling and joyous, flashing under the sunlight of a glorious vocalisation. *Fitsful*, I imagine, is a word which, like *querulous*, admirably illustrates by sound the meaning intended to be conveyed by association. There is something erratic and Will-o'-the-wisp-like about its orthoepy, and always calls up to my mind the leaping of a dying flame, spasmodic and ghost-like, before it flickers out for ever. *Rally round* the colours, *sullen frown* of discontent, *murmur* of the sea, *muttering* of the distant thunder—is there not something in the articulation of each of these phrases which does more than convey by habit of association a bare sterile idea, or set of ideas, to the mind? Is there not something inherent in the words themselves which appeals to more than the outward ear? “An eternal fitness,” proclaiming that the word sounds and their meanings are in closer relationship than might at first be apparent to the unobservant listener. So with *spark* of *hope, day* of *doom*. What a contrast is here!—one short, bright and cheery; the other broad, sombre and desponding. Compare mentally these two passages: *Above, the laughing sky, sparkling with constellations; beneath, the sombre, shadowy precincts of the silent tomb*. In one all crisp, sibilant, bright and fresh as the dew of the May morn; the other labial and gloomy, fit representative of funereal thought. In the following passage, which I have constructed with a view to illustrate how onomatopœia influences the choice of word pictures, notice the sounds empha-