

world is to think sometimes of the nature and destiny of the world itself. And the man who does not now and then nurture his mind on great thoughts, or thoughts that wander through eternity, and that concern the history and destiny of the race to which he belongs, is never able to see his own daily work in its true perspective, or to perform it with wisdom and success.

In the poetry of every nation there is some peculiarity in its metrical structure, which makes it address itself not to the understanding only but to the ear and to the sense of harmony. In English poetry there is the regular occurrence of similar accents; and after that the occurrence at intervals of similar terminal sounds which we call rhymes.

In Greek and Roman poetry there is the regular recurrence according to a recognized law of long and short syllables, and in lyric and dramatic poetry of strophe and antistrophe. Our earliest Gothic forefathers, in their rude versification, used to a great extent the artifice by which similar sounds recurred at the beginning of words; and alliterative verse, although modern ears are hardly attuned to it, probably fell as musically on the ear of a Norseman or a Saxon thane as rhymes fall on a modern ear.

The characteristic of the Hebrew poetry is the recurrence not of similar sounds, accents or syllables, but of similar ideas. Hence the duplicate character of the versification of the Old Testament.

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.

Thy judgments are a great deep.

As you read sentence after sentence like this in the Psalms, in the books of Job and of the prophets, you cannot help feeling how well this peculiar structure of verse lends itself to the expression of lofty thought and strong emotion; how much it has helped to deepen in the minds of those who heard it a sense of the majesty of the Divine works and of the spirit of devotion and of worship.

I have not spoken yet of that form of poetry which we call the drama. To this form of literary art some of the highest minds in all ages have been attracted, and if you consider it well you will see that intellectual gifts of a very special order are needed to make a great dramatist. Other writers stand apart from the subjects they treat; discuss them *ab extra*, and explain to you the light in which they view them.

The great dramatist on the other hand sinks his individuality altogether, projects himself into the circumstances and the character of the person he represents, so that he speaks through them and in their names only. In the early days of Greek literature the drama was a great religious institution, a great moral teacher. The actors were often priests, and the object of the representations were not to portray the scenes of actual familiar life, but to exhibit the lives of heroes and demigods, and the great passions which those lives illustrated. The whole conduct of the stage and the actors on it were highly artificial. There were only two or three actors; they spoke not in familiar dialogue, but in a tone of impassioned declamation; there was no change of scene, no interval of time; it was the function of the chorus to comment on the actors, to express sympathy with the sufferings and the contests of the actors, and to impress on the audience the moral significance which passed before them. The play, however,

was no more like real life than a modern opera. Except in an allegorical and highly artificial way it was not a representation of life at all, but it sought to set the Athenian people thinking about the origin of good and evil, the conflict between them, the virtue of heroism and the relation in which man stood to fate and to the Gods.

The modern drama has, as you well know, a more direct aim, and seeks to illustrate various phases of actual human life. The greatest name in our literature—the greatest name in all literature—is that of one who, except in a few sonnets, never reveals himself at all, and tells you nothing about his own feelings, purposes or opinions. He represents to you kings, clowns, clergy, statesmen, knights and fair ladies; and he puts into the mouth of each language so appropriate that you cannot tell which of these interests and pleases him most, or to which of their characters his own was most nearly akin. You can stand aside and criticise his characters, but he never criticises or admires, he simply creates the men and the women themselves and leaves them to impress you as they will. He shows no more indignation for Shylock, no more loathing for Iago, no more scorn for King John than those worthies felt for themselves. By an effort of constructive imagination which is the nearest approach in literature to the miraculous, he has been able to place his own mind so completely into the attitude of that of his characters that you lose sight of him altogether and see nothing but the actors on the stage, their thoughts and the doings of their life. Shakspeare, as you know, was not a traveler. All his life he oscillated between Warwickshire and London, yet to judge from his writings he is as much at home in a palace in Verona as in the Boar's Head in Eastcheap. He had, so far as we know, little or no intercourse with foreigners. Yet in Othello, and Romeo and Juliet, you have vividly described the fierce passions which betray the Southern nature, and of which he in England could have had no experience. And the same marvelous gift which enabled him to realize distance in place and circumstance also seems to have given him an insight into the feelings and thoughts of another time. In his Roman plays he has caught the austere virtue, the peculiar superstitions, the high sense of honor and patriotism that characterized the best ages of Rome; and this was a very different moral world from that which surrounded him. Note, too, that the time of Elizabeth was not a speculative or doubting age. It was an age of healthy, robust, perhaps rather coarse prosperity. He, as a busy stage manager, a jovial companion, could hardly have met with a character like Hamlet. Hamlet is essentially a nineteenth century character, moody, self-conscious, anxiously peering into the grounds of his own belief, and into the growth of his own character, "letting I dare not wait upon I would" and far more characteristic of the age which has produced "In Memoriam" than of the age which produced "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

In later days we have had many among our novelists, only three, as I think, which have exhibited, though in a more limited degree, similar power of vividly realizing the life and thoughts of a past age. Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, Thackeray's *Esmond*, George Eliot's *Romola*, are the most remarkable examples of this power. There is hardly an anachronism in any one of these great books.

As I glance thus hurriedly at a few, though only a few, of the more prominent aspects of English literature, those who hear me are probably impressed with its wealth and variety, and with the vast store of experience which it comprehends. But the next thought, I hope, in the minds, especially of the