

The English Language.

By Clewower.

Of all the monuments of human ingenuity and labor, I can think of none greater than the English Language. It is the language of a people peculiarly favored of Heaven, both in respect to the gifts of intellect and the period in which it has been their lot to flourish. Great were the natural powers of the Anglo-Saxon race, and greatly have they been developed. We see evidence of this in the rude yet sterling qualities of their early heroes, and their heroic struggles for national existence; we see it in their subsequent achievements in arms, in commerce, and in high philosophy; we see it in their foreign settlements, giving rise in one instance to a second independent, extensive, and liberally-conducted Saxon Empire, and that too by a revolution so singularly great and happy, that one might well consent to bear the disgrace of its origin for the sake of sharing the glory of its result—to be an *Englishman* with George the Third, that he might be a *Saxon* with Washington. And lastly, we see it in that complicate and most wondrous engine of civil power—the British Constitution:—a strange medley of antagonistic elements, resulting in a most compact and durable structure,—resisting all shocks from abroad, and by an inherent restorative power, overcoming every symptom of rottenness and decay within—holding together, and even yet advancing an Empire whose convulsive forces would send any other constitution into broken and dishonored fragments.

If from these high exploits, evincing the superiority of the race, we turn to their language, we need not wonder that we find an object of unrivalled admiration. For here the spirit of the people has embodied itself. Here are laid up in an indestructible store-house the fruits of their national toil; here the results of that proud ambition which acknowledges no superior; of that depth of intellect which searches the hidden things of Nature; and of that vigorous imagination which sends forth conjectures into the regions of possibility, throws new beauty over the sensible world, and peoples, with forms of divinest excellence, the infinite and invisible.

The stranger, of another tongue, passing over the borders of English literature, finds himself ascending from the dreary plain below into a paradise of all things pleasant to the sight, and good for intellectual food. There are trees dropping delicious fruit; flowers that ever bloom; birds of choicest song; and streams, now gently gliding, now leaping and sparkling in the sun-beams. Or we may liken the language to a vast reservoir, into which have been flowing for centuries the noblest truths of science, history, and song—original truths, from the minds of her own Shakespeares and Bacon, and borrowed truths, from every kindred and every age. At this golden fountain the learned of all lands now fill their little urns, and carry thence to the thirsty multitudes around them.

And if, as the sanguine lovers of human progress would believe, the time is at length at hand, when the healthful influence of a pure religion, and the more general spread of knowledge, shall give stability to political institutions, and secure a uniform improvement of the social fabric; and when also the increased and most wonderful facilities for internal and foreign communications shall diminish national jealousies; beget a greater community of interests; restrain the inclination to war; enlarge and deepen the stream of popular sympathy; and finally, make of one blood all the nations of the earth: Then, it is a pleasing, and by no means fanciful, view of the future, to consider the English nation as the leader and prince of this great national brotherhood, and her language as becoming more and more enriched with thought; more and more enlarged in its vocabulary; more and more adapted to the infinite complexities of human emotion; more and more sufficient for the native, and more and more necessary for the foreigner; until, by the silent, yet iron law of usage, its subtle, colonizing sway, has superseded all the minor dialects of earth; restored again the breach of Babel, and enclosed all literature, from the Ganges to the St. Lawrence, in an universal Saxonism. But if any person deem us too confident as to the future perpetuity of empires, and prefer the gloomy dogma of those determined analogists who argue,

from the natural growth and decay of plants and animals, a corresponding growth and decay in every social compact; and from the fall of admired Greece and Rome, infer the fall of all succeeding nations: we, nevertheless, cannot forget, whatever changes or dissolution may befall particular organizations of society, there is still one fabric of national skill—one relic of a kingdom's greatness—which does not always vanish with the "little brief authority" of its builders. Before this imperishable Coliseum of Language, the mourner of departed dynasties, and most of all, the friend of social advancement, may be allowed to pause ere he embrace the disheartening doctrine, that man is doomed, by the condition of his nature, to run, alternately, the career of improvement and degeneracy, and to realise the beautiful but melancholy fable of Sisyphus, by an eternal renovation of hope and disappointment. No nation can ever wholly perish that has a literature of her own. And if the rhapsodies of one blind bard, wandering from door to door, and singing for his bread, have been able to eternalise the achievements of Troy, then, surely, a most cheering prospect is opened up for the Isle of Albion. If, as some too boldly predict, the time at last must arrive when Britannia's royalty shall be laid low; when her renowned universities shall shelter but the owl and the serpent; when her "cloud-capt towers, gorgeous palaces, and solemn temples," shall moulder into dust; when the poet of other lands shall come to draw inspiration from the gloomy grandeur of her ruins; and the Queen-Isle of Ocean, having passed from nothingness to glory, from glory to oblivion, shall hear the song of her revelry and triumph fast dying away into the mournful echoes of the Atlantic billows, as they dash upon the dreary cliff of Dover, it is some consolation to know, that even then, her language will still survive, in all the freshness and force of a living tongue, among a great Anglo-American people, where her Miltons and her Burkes will continue to be read and admired as patriarchal laborers of the same great Saxon family. To this language of their fathers the British descendants of the New World will ever fondly turn as the common treasury of human lore, and will seek supplies for the wants of their own nature, and the exigencies of their own land, from a volume of history holding forth the most varied and extensive political experience, enriched by the first productions of original genius, and made universal by spoils gathered from all languages and all times. And when the now young America herself, having lived "three score years and ten," shall go, in a good old age, to sleep with her fathers; when the ever-varying, yet still onward, stream of human progress, has swept back again to the long-deserted shores of Italy and Greece; when the Seven-hilled City shall once more give laws to the nations, and the Acropolis of Minerva become a temple of Christianity; even then the school-boy shall acquire his mental discipline; the statesman, his precepts of wisdom; the philosopher, his principles of speculation; the poet, his highest models of art; and the divine, his best discourses on morality and religion, from the venerable language of the Saxon.—*Literary Garland.*

BENEFITS OF WALKING.—"Were I a gentleman" said Dr. Abernethy, "I would never get into my carriage."

"Dr Unwin in his book on Mental Diseases says: "Last week I conversed with a veteran in literature and years, whose powers of mind no one can question, however they may differ from him in speculative points. This gentleman has preserved the health of his body and the soundness of his mind through a long course of multifarious and often depressing circumstances, by a steady perseverance in the practice of walking every day. He has survived, for a very long period, almost all the literary characters that were his contemporaries at the period in which his own writings excited much public attention; almost all of them have dropped into the grave one after the other, while he has continued on in an uninterrupted course, were men of far less regular habits, and, I am obliged to add of much less equanimity of mind; but the preservation of his equanimity has, I verily believe, been ensured by the unvaried practice to which I have referred, and which to others would prove equally available, if steadily and perseveringly pursued."