

to write in verse than in prose, he reserves for the poetic form of writing his choicest thoughts and his best emotions. Thus, poetic thought requires a certain dignity and elevation of diction inconsistent with the employment of trite, trivial, vulgar and slangy expression. Poetry is the immortality of language. As regards arrangement and connection of words, poetry and highly impassioned prose are sometimes not very dissimilar; but in the choice of words a marked distinction is observed by the best prose-writers. Poetry, in its different styles, uses almost all the words of poetic prose; but prose avoids a number of words belonging to poetic diction. The poet, by virtue of his calling as maker, invents new words and recalls old words. Forms and words, constantly repeated by successive poets, become, as it were, the legitimate inheritance of all who write poetry. Poetry being less conversational than prose, is less affected than prose is by the change of a living language, and more affected by the language of the poetry of past ages. It is, to use the words of the rhetoricians, the diction of poetry is archaic and non-colloquial, and it is also more picturesque, ornamental, euphonious and concentrated.

Real poetry is rich thought clothed in rare words. The attentive reading of poetry is so far from being a waste of time, that it should, I venture to think, be made an indispensable condition of education, as it gives us not only a deep and broad insight into our own language, but also sharpens our taste (vitiating by sucking at trashy magazines and nibbling at still more trashy novels) for the undoubted masters of the world, and restores to us the healthy use of the great classics of antiquity.

To indicate with anything like precision the distinctive amount of benefit which our language has gained from any special form, is a work that call for better ability than mine. But, it is probable, that the lyric in all its phases, especially the song and its sister, the hymn, has done most to enrich, ennoble, and beautify our language.

It is quite certain—and this bears closer on my present theme—that since the sonnet was given a home in British Literature by the unfortunate Earl of Surrey, it has been made, in each succeeding age of its progress, the fitting vehicle of deep and refined feeling, of lofty and noble sentiments, of bold and soaring