

the flowers, filling hill and dale with their beauty and fragrance; the sunset, lending a new glory to the earth; the mountains, raising their lofty heads toward heaven; the waters, sparkling in the sun, or rolling in majesty when the storm clouds gather—all these objects, from the least to the greatest tend to make us conscious of a power above and beyond us, and to direct our thoughts to a higher sphere. But of many of these beauties we are unmindful; we grow used to them, or we do not stop to inquire into their hidden beauty or significance until the poet, through his song, brings them to our notice, and so leads us to commune with nature. Nature is one of the great domains of poetry, perhaps the most extensive of all the fields whereon the poetic genius displays its power. Chaucer is the first great poet who makes us feel the beauty of natural objects. "The beauty of the morning, and the fields, and woods, and streams, and flowers, and singing of little birds, made his heart full of revel and solace." Spenser was likewise a lover of nature, and doubtless spent many hours among the alder shades of the river Mulla, which flowed near his home in Ireland. The poets of the Renaissance showed a familiarity with the beauties of the eternal world, and, in modern times, Wordsworth has, more truly than any other poet, heard and interpreted the throbbings of the great heart of nature.

All elevating qualities, by being described in poetry, gain in influence upon the reader; for truth expressed in this manner, both fixes the attention, and impresses itself most deeply upon the memory.

It has been urged by some that poetry does not deal with real life, but gives us only ideal pictures. But life is not wholly prosaic, and finite. The poet "extracts and concentrates, as it were, life's ethereal essence, arrests and condenses its volatile fragrance, brings together its scattered beauties, and prolongs its more refined but evanescent joys." The need of poetry increases more and more as society advances. The questions—what shall we eat? and what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?—which are of such absorbing interest to the majority, tend to narrow our minds, and loosen the ties which should bind us in sympathy to our fellow-men. Poetry lifts the mind from the engrossing cares of life, and fixes it upon that which is purer and nobler. Through this tendency to carry the mind above and beyond the weary walks of ordinary life, and to breathe into it more wide-spread sympathies, poetry acts as the refiner, and elevator of society.

Poetry and religion are closely allied. Channing says that the former, like Christianity, tends to spiritualize our nature. It defines the vaguer aspirations which tend toward the infinite, and puts them into clearer form and expression, and, through the brightness of its visions, gives us a clearer, and firmer conception of the future life.

Poetry is closely connected with music, the influence

of which has been felt and recognized for ages. Frequent mention is made in the Old Testament of song, in which poetry is an essential element. There were songs of triumph and songs of woe, songs of joy and songs of mourning. The music of the early races was very rude and simple, but yet important in its influence. The first songs of our nation were those relating to war, the chase, and the sea; and, though without beauty, art, or reflection, they were full of power. It was the verse of warriors, 'the brief passionate expression of brief passionate emotions.' The images in these early poems start out, harsh and vivid; and fall like sword-strokes of the people themselves in the thick of battle. When the English embraced Christianity a change came over their poetry; the fierce war-songs became imbued with a milder element, the love of nature and of home gave an increased tenderness, and the stern fatalism which had before been prominent began to disappear. And, while the rude and warlike verse gradually changed to poetry of milder subjects, the music grew more harmonious. So have poetry and music advanced hand in hand.

The other arts are also closely related to poetry. We have, perhaps, been much impressed with the beauties of some scene, existing either in nature or on the painted canvass. We feel that there is *poetry* in the scene; that a certain analogy exists between the essential qualities of the painter, and those of the poet. On account of this analogy the former is able to illustrate the poems of his brother artist. The true painter throws into his picture his whole soul, just as the poet breathes into his poems the tenderest, and most intense workings of his heart. The same may be said of statuary; the sculptor moulds the cold marble into a form glowing with *poetic* warmth and power. Whatever educative and refining influences belong to painting and sculpture, belong in a higher degree to their sister art—poetry.

The influence of poetry on the patriotism of a nation is of considerable importance. Many of the earlier nations excited their soldiers to deeds of heroism by the patriotic character of their songs; and all through history we may notice the important influence of stirring national poetry. 'Let me write the ballads of a nation,' says one, 'and I care not who makes her laws.' Perhaps no country has exerted more influence upon her people through the patriotic nature of her songs than Scotland. All her verse seems to be national in its subjects, and the patriotism of the Scottish people has been greatly fostered by this pre-eminent feature of their poetry.

Poetry exerts a permanent influence upon language itself. The words which express largeness and growth of soul belong more naturally to poetry than to prose. Poetry, then, in creating these words has made very important additions to our language. The almost inspired words of the poet, burning with passion, or shining with the milder light of that sentiment which