

the ever-varying play of feeling, to the multitudinous forms of opinion. All the philosophers in the world could never make a language for a woman! Indeed, it is a most happy and beautiful provision that children should imbibe their native language primarily and mainly from their mothers, should suck it in, as it were, along with their milk: this it is that makes it their mother tongue. For women are much more docile recipients of the laws of nature and society; they are much less liable to be deluded by fantastical theories; and it is an old and very true remark, that, in order to feel all the beauty and purity of any language, we must hear it from the lips, or read it from the pen, of a sensible, well-educated woman. That is to say, literally from the pen, in letters, not in books. For when women turn authors, they step in a manner out of their sphere; the swanlike ease and grace of their effortless motions passes away from them; and, like that most graceful of all animals, they often appear clumsy and awkward when they get out of their natural element."

But as this train of reflections might be misapplied to justify innovations uncongenial and injurious to the language, the writer adds: "In this, as in every other practical question, there are two extremes into which one may err. No true patriot—for our language is a part and a most important part of our country—will think of meddling with it rashly. Nobody who is aware how a nation's feelings and opinions, and whatever characterizes it, are interwoven with its language by myriads of imperceptible fibres, will run the risk of severing them. Nobody who has a due reverence for his ancestors, or even for his own spiritual being, which has been mainly trained and fashioned by his native language—nobody who rightly appreciates what a momentous thing it is to keep the unity of a people entire and unbroken, to preserve and foster all its national recollections, what a glorious and inestimable blessing it is to 'speak the tongue that Shakspeare spake,' will ever wish to trim that tongue according to any arbitrary theory. But though our language, like every thing, and indeed more almost than any thing else, which we have inherited from our ancestors, is to be regarded with dutiful veneration, that veneration is not to be merely passive, in which case it would soon degenerate into idolatry, but active. It is not to be put aside and locked up as an heirloom, but to be employed and cultivated and improved as an estate. We are to uphold our native language, but not the impurities it may in course of time have contracted from ignorance, or indolence, or caprice; on the contrary, we uphold it best by freeing it from these impurities; we are to call forth its plastic powers, and to