

leap into life as the national life grows stronger and purer,—all this brings its own recompense in the sharpening and strengthening of the faculties, in widening the mind and opening mines of intellectual wealth, thus making it clear to the reflecting that the history and life of one word may give far larger reward than can be gleaned from the chronicles of a revolution or the most comprehensive knowledge of a Sedan or a Waterloo. Still it is possible, nay it is common to walk up and down in the midst of intellectual marvels, and yet have no eye to see and no mind to perceive, moving in a region which, with insight to divine them, would be full of beautiful thoughts and images.

It may be remarked that in scholarship the tendency is ever to simplicity; if to the simpler, then to the clearer, the more precise and select. The advice of the critic ought ever to be, lop off, lop off, eliminate, castigate, for “true culture seeks the greatest ends by the smallest means, as the gods are said to hang the greatest weights upon the smallest wires.” See the immeasurable difference between the callow *orator* and the veteran speaker! As the horizon of the knowledge of words widens, the more extensive becomes the expression—*extensive* in range of thought and familiarity with words, *intensive* in utterance. The vague and the superfluous are mercilessly lopped from the sentences so that the thought may stand out in its sinewy strength. It is the keen-edged word that finds its passage to the heart: or, in another sense, every word is weighty. As was said of Webster, every word weighs a pound. As in painting and sculpture, so in words. As a small defect will spoil the picture or the statue, so a mischosen or redundant word may mar a thought. See how the masters of language describe tender, pathetic scenes! a few words and you have a picture. Dickens’ account of little Nell’s death brings the tears to the eyes because the expressive, vivid words bring one face to face with the scene. In the very white-heat of oratorical fervor, the words, consume the rubbish as they flame into expression. Sometimes a happy, well-chosen word has an effect akin to that produced by a keepsake or by the sight of a flag of one’s country. Tender memories are awakened; you seem to feel again the touch of a vanished hand and to hear the music of a voice that has long been still; or you live over again the victories and defeats of fatherland, and meet those noble men whose great hearts spent themselves in the battle for freedom and knowledge. The utterance of a word will thrill the heart of a nation. In the Bible, the words live in their deathless setting.