

the natural bent of a first notion without a single effort at reflection, so the minor composer in the Latin languages—in French or Spanish, or Italian—rhymes, as Cunon whistles, for want of thought. The minor bards among the Latin nations are more numerous than the minor bards that use the English language; for one Austin Dobson or Edmund W. Gosse that we could show, the Latins could produce several scores, and with these careless singers the rhythm is jingle, the words are strained, the pictures are hazy and the sentiment is silly. So, I make bold to repeat, a language that puts the poet on his mettle from the outset, constraining him to bring all his resources of conception, contemplation, and expression into action, as a military commander in extremity does with his troops, is very far from being an unmixed evil to the industrious artist in words, and such the true poet must always be.

The English tongue—our cartilaginous tongue, as someone has styled it—has been described, even by scholars, and great writers, as harsh, hard, dry and inadequate. But surely those learned men spoke of the language rather as it was than as it is. The very works of more than one of these sweeping witnesses refute their testimony and stamp their medium of expression as the reverse of harsh and inadequate. When we contemplate what those men have said about the language in the light of the masterpieces which their genius has constructed by its means we are struck by the incongruity, and we find ourselves instinctively recalling glaring instances of inconsistency, that for instance, of Carlyle's life task of preaching eternal silence in over thirty portly volumes of words, or the three-hour sermon on the Brevity of Human Life. Without in the least desiring to stand out as the protagonist of learned men and great writers, I nevertheless without hesitation venture the opinion that the fault, if fault there be, lies oftener with the user of the language than the language itself, to confirm which statement I need only refer the reader to his own linguistic experience, for, although the English language is comparatively defective in unity and symmetrical grace of proportion, it possesses vast resources and is of immense power. Of it Sir Thomas Moore declared: "It is plenteous enough to express our minds." It is allowed by all that our language grows sweeter