

mute, are indeed marked, they leave the language less harsh than German, though infinitely more intractable than the triune daughters of Latin, the French, Spanish, and Italian.

Perhaps, as an aid towards the attainment of the supernal finish which more than aught else lends to literary composition the lasting charm and value that make literary masterpieces rank among the eternal monuments which are carved in stone that can never crumble, and which is generally produced, not by intuition—although there are, I willingly grant you, rare cases of “inspiration,” of “divine afflatus”—but rather by patient work with the file and the pumice-stone, the scoring-pencil and the rubber eraser, it is just as well that the raw material out of which our poets are compelled to chisel rather than to mould their creations should be in part refractory. The very intractableness of the raw material compels the artist in words, by filling him with doubts (if his head be not swelled by conceit) and by spurring him to put forth his most strenuous efforts, to work slowly, carefully and thoughtfully.

To paraphrase a famous saying of Shelley to the effect that no man can say, I will compose poetry, it may be affirmed with at least equal correctness that no poet using the English language can say, I will compose poetry without exertion. Great art is the production of great labor and mental suffering. Nothing that is really excellent is easy to do or to find. The “divine afflatus,” as displayed in the verse of an overwhelming majority of versifiers everywhere through the English-speaking world in our time, appears to be the direct opposite to the divine.

Real poetry is nobility of intellect. A language may have versifiers, with smooth numbers and easy rhymes, and yet have little or none of that dignity of thought which always goes to the making of poetry worthy of the name; as witness the Troubadour lays of Provence, the volatile chansons of Spain, and the mass of the amatory verse of Italy, especially the article produced in modern times. To think deeply is to toil hard, and wearing toil goes against human nature. Very few would refuse to join the numerous and noble Order of Sons of Rest were there no such things as dinners to be earned. In the case of the Latin languages, their flexibility greatly relieves the poet from the arduous toil of profoundly thinking, and all too frequently allows him to follow