

From the inspired psalms of the Royal Singer to the war-songs now sung by our brave armies, poetry has swayed the devotion, patriotism and every other great sentiment of the soul. The influence of Edda in Ireland, the Sogas in Scandinavia, the Nibelungen lied in ancient Germany, the poems of Ossian in Scotland, can be but faintly imagined. Those were poetic days when the bards were prophets, priests, and I had almost said kings. In those times of undisciplined strength, when men, from great ignorance were in danger of sinking into a mere animal existence, the voice of *scard* and minstrel awoke the humanity that was almost dormant in the race and made them warriors, loves, patriots and worshipers. Poetry still stands the expression of the best that is in us. Would that this poetic element could flow more through the channels of every day existence! There are too many poems in books, too few in life. We should work up our poetries into happiness. We believe with the earnest realist, that what is good as ideal must be good as real, or it is a failure. Pretty words are to be despised, if, like the unnatural blossoms of the Snow-ball they produce no seeds, no life-germs.

Poetic culture is the best because it reaches the heart, the true center of all fine living and fine thinking. Why it should so influence us we can not tell. The *spirit* of poetry eludes all analysis, In *form* it is vivid, graphic, sculptured language. There is no stony rigidity in it as in prose. It is living sculpture, warm with the blush and glow of inspired life.

It would be impossible to tell the wondrous, deep influence of Shakspeare's poetry. Next to Holy Writ it is the Bible of poetry. The poets of our day have not the universal vision of a Shakspeare or a Goethe, but they are cultivating the people in their own peculiar gifts. Tennyson, in pure æsthetics, in refined sensibility, in delicacy of taste; Longfellow, in the warm heart-life and aspirations for the Beautiful and Good; and Emerson, in the deep mysteries of man and nature. Tennyson gives us his lessons in quaint, original imagery, in words that "ring like golden jewels down a golden stair." They cultivate fineness of ear and