

conversationist is the tinsel of fake wit. Very little inducement will lead the vain man or woman to mistake the most frivolous nonsense for wit. The true coin from this mintage is very rare, on the contrary, a base and self-exposing counterfeit of it is plentiful, and, strange to say, we often appear to receive it as genuine and countenance, knowing all the time that it is spurious. You could not insult a money dealer more than by attempting to pass a counterfeit coin upon him. You cannot hurt the man or woman of true intelligence more than by offering to his mental grasp the cast off wittiness of others or a poor imitative of them molded in the egotism of your own country. Pedantry may be condoned, spurious wit is unpardonable and befits only the circus ring or the minstrel show.

But there is a far higher aim than that of entertainment for the attainment of which the conversational power should be exercised. "Thy speech betrayeth thee" from a moral point of view. The words of a man's mouth ought to be and are intended by the Almighty to be a faithful index of his heart meditations; hence that logical prayer of the Psalmist: "let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." The egotist in tongue is an egotist at heart, the man of silly frivolous speech is a man of shallow intellect, he is all foulness within whose mouth is filled with filthy conversation. There are poor unfortunates so diseased in body that for self preservation we are obliged to avoid their contact; the leper of Bible times while suffered to go at large was required to keep away from human habitations, and to cry out "unclean" when approached by his fellowmen; God keep us and our homes and innocent ones from the contagious breath of him whose conversation is a germ bed of pollution! Young man, I sometimes hear the warning signal "unclean" from lips that are contaminated whilst heart is not yet wholly foul. Be reasonable in time, he who handles pitch cannot long remain undefiled, he who handles jargon and puts him-