

commonplace. The thing said has been said in some form a thousand times before; the writer's merit lies in the *way* he says it. We talk, indeed, of *creative* intellects, but only Omnipotence can create; man can only *combine*. As Praxiteles, when he wrought his statue of Venus, did not produce it by a pure effort of the imagination, but selected the most beautiful parts of the most beautiful figures he could obtain as models, and combined them into a harmonious whole, so, to a great extent, are literary masterpieces produced. Wherein lies the charm of the "golden-mouthed" Jeremy Taylor? Is it in the absolute novelty of his thoughts?—or is it not rather in the fact that, as De Quincey says, old thoughts are surveyed from novel stations and under various angles, and a field absolutely exhausted throws up eternally fresh verdure under the fructifying lava of burning imagery? Even the wizard of Avon can strictly produce nothing new; he can only call in the worn coin of thought, melt it in his own crucible, and issue it with a fresh superscription and an increased value.

What would De Quincey be without his style? Rob him of the dazzling fence of his rhetoric, his word-painting, and rhythm—strip him of his organ-like fugues, his majestic swells and dying falls—leave to him only the bare, naked ideas of his essays,—and he will be De Quincey no longer. It would be like robbing the rose of its colour and perfume, or taking from an autumnal landscape its dreamy, hazy atmosphere and its gorgeous dyes. Take the finest English classic, *The Fairy Queen*, *L'Allegro* or *Il Penseroso*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*; strip it of music, colour, wit, alliteration—the marriage of exquisite thoughts to exquisite language—all that belongs to form as distinguished from the substance—and what will the residuum be? All

the ideas in these works are as old as creation. They were everywhere in the air, and any other poet had as good a right to use them as Milton, Spenser, and Shakspeare. That critical mouser, the Rev. John Mitford, in his notes to Gray's poems, has shewn that hardly an image, an epithet, or even a line in them originated with the ostensible author. Gray cribbed from Pope, Pope from Dryden, Dryden from Milton, Milton from the Elizabethan classics, they from the Latin poets, the Latin from the Greek, and so on till we come to the original Prometheus, who stole the fire directly from heaven. But does this lessen the merit of these authors? Grant that the finest passages in poetry are to a great extent but embellished recollections of other men's productions, does this detract one jot or tittle from the poet's fame? The great thinkers of every age do not differ from the little ones so much in having different thoughts, as in sifting, classifying and focalizing the same thoughts, and, above all, in giving them to the world in the pearl of exquisite and adequate expression. Give to two painters the same pigments, and one of them will produce a "Transfiguration," and the other will exhaust his genius upon the sign-board of a country tavern; as out of the same stones may be reared the most beautiful or the most unsightly of edifices—the Parthenon of Athens, or an American Court-House.

What is the secret of the popularity of our leading journals? Is it their prodigious wisdom, their prophetic sagacity, the breadth and accuracy of their knowledge, their depth and range of thought—in short, their grasp of the themes they discuss? No; the newspaper which each man reads with the most delight is that which has mastered most perfectly the art of putting things; which flatters his self-esteem by giving to his own inchoate ideas artistical development and ex-