

certain peculiarities in their several organizations and in the qualities and proportions of their physical and mental faculties, so as to make one man evidently distinguishable from another. And as the *organizations* of no two men will be precisely alike, so neither will their *productions* be altogether similar. As is the mould, such will be the casting. No two men, therefore, do any one thing in one and the same way, whether it be to walk or stand, to laugh or cry, or throw a stone, or sign a name, or read, or speak, write poetry or prose.

Every one's peculiar manner of doing anything is his style; and every natural and true man has a style of his own, which fits him as closely and is as little capable of being appropriately exchanged for that of any other man as his own coat, nay, I might have said his own skin.

This great fact must lie at the very foundation of any correct notions concerning the formation of style. To set up certain authors, be they ever so eminent as exclusive models, by a minute and slavish imitation of which true excellence can be obtained, is a huge mistake which must lead to nerveless, insipid propriety, or pointless, heartless affectation.

Every style, in order to be good, must be natural.

Excellence in writing is only to be attained by letting Nature speak.

But, it may be asked, "Why, then, should men be taught and trained to form their style? Why not leave every man's style to form itself, to grow up like a tree without pruning or clipping it, and twisting its branches this way and that? Would not any set rules for this purpose tend to make the style unnatural, and thus bad?"

I answer that there are good reasons why every writer should be trained, and why his style requires to be formed. In writing, as in reading, walking and speaking, it is natural to almost every one to be *unnatural*. We learn to do these things chiefly by imitation. But there are no perfect exemplars, and it is most natural because it is most *easy* to imitate the faults rather than the excellencies of our model. "*Decipit exemplar vitiis imitabile.*" And even were our model perfect, *i. e.*, were its way of doing what it does perfectly appropriate and the best possible for its author, yet for the imitator it might be the most inappropriate and the worst.

We have seen an ambitious little man of five or six years old, striding along the road with the measured tread of his ponderous and venerable sire.

The walk of the father was well enough, but who could help smiling at the little imitator marching on behind?

So do youthful writers, scarcely out of petticoats, delight to stalk along the literary highway with the majestic gait of a Johnson or a Burke.

"*Risum teneatis, amici.*"

One species
unnaturalness

The necessity
fact that *language*
are expressed
words whose
arbitrary manner

The manner
can be gathered
they are emulated
aries and gait
attempted to

Evidently
absolutely the
constitutes a

Beneath the
and analogies
were, its idiosyncrasies
principles of
very laws of
itself, and so

It is by degrees
of beauty, or
and style is

It is in order
the writer to
so that he may
words of un-
desired.

Style is of

But since
processes of
in which the
its passions
style will grow
its intellectual
perfect ruin
one has all
a teacher, i