

could be spared. Our literary ancestors were accustomed to write too much; they obviously did not possess the power of condensation. They evidently thought, and they were encouraged in the idea, that they could not write enough; they poured out all they had to say, or that might be said, upon any and every topic, and that in the most prolix manner, to the wearying of their reader, and the injury of their subject. The same thing could have been said in a neater form, and with the same eloquence, or as great profundity and learning, though with less prolixity. Could we not spare much even in Milton's great prose works? Are not his sentences often unnecessarily involved, and is it not only a passage here and there, through many pages perhaps, that redeems the cumbrous and prolonged periods? Could Locke not have been pruned to advantage? Have we not often in his diffuseness the very vagueness which has made his philosophy the subject of unfair criticism? Was it Owen or Dr. Gill that Robt. Hall pronounced a "continent of mud?" This would be unjust to Owen, but Owen is undoubtedly prodigiously tedious. We detract nothing from the sterling value of his theological treatises. Barrow even could be condensed, and the stately Howe, the most purely intellectual of all writers has written many an unreadable page. Jeremy Taylor would be a more delightful author than even he is, were his sermons shorter, and his treatises more succinct. His splendid and eloquent thoughts, eloquent in themselves, and eloquently embodied, would shine to more advantage were they not overlaid by much that is extraneous and superfluous. The noblest sentences are followed by as many indifferent ones; the most eloquent passages are set in a framework of the flattest and heaviest matter. It was not the quantity they wrote that made these authors what they are, and gives them their value in modern times. Is Hopkins less prized because he is less voluminous, and Reynolds less esteemed because he is not so prolix? Would Arch-bishop Leighton's commentary on St. Peter have merited Coleridge's splendid encomium—that it is next to inspired thought—inspiration—the vibration of that one-struck hour—had it been less condensed, or less logical in its method? Gems sparkle on every page of Leighton, and you have not the trouble of separating them from the surrounding ore. We altogether dissent therefore from the disparaging view that is taken of modern authorship, or we put it upon altogether different grounds, if it is inferior to the giants of former days. Bacon and Milton and Jeremy Taylor, have not their equal in modern times just as Shakspeare has not—but is that to be set down to the account of periodical writing, or to the prevalence of newspapers? The Elizabethan age has not yet had its counterpart in the literary firmament; it shines all alone in the literary skies: shall we ascribe it to our mode of writing, and not to the absence of the minds that formed that earlier galaxy of genius? We are not destitute of authors that have well nigh approached that glorious epoch. In some respects we would give the preference to Wordsworth over Milton or Shakspeare. Milton and Shakspeare have not the kind of mind of Wordsworth. The more subjective philosophy of the latter was unknown to