

odour, its spell is subtle and impalpable, and baffles all our attempts to explain it in words. Like that of fine manners, it is indefinable, yet all-subduing, and is the issue of all the mental and moral qualities, bearing the same relation to them that light bears to the sun, or perfume to the flower. Not even the writer himself can explain the secret of his art. In the works of all the great masters there are certain elements which are a mystery to themselves. In the frenzy of creation they instinctively infuse into their productions that of which they would be utterly puzzled to give an account. By a subtle, mysterious gift, an intense intuition, which pierces beneath all surface appearances, and goes straight to the core of an object, they lay hold of the essential life, the inmost heart, of a scene, a person or a situation, and paint it to us in a few immortal words. A line, a phrase, a single burning term or irradiating word, flashes the scene, the character upon us, and it lives forever in the memory. It is so in sculpture, in painting, and even in the military art. When Napoleon was asked by a flatterer of his generalship how he won his military victories, he could only say that he was *fait comme ça*.

It was a saying of Shenstone, which almost everyone's experience will confirm, that the lines of poetry, the periods of prose, and even the texts of Scripture, most frequently recollected and quoted, are those which are felt to be pre-eminently musical. There are writers who charm us by their language, apart from the ideas it conveys. There is a kind of mysterious perfume about it, a delicious aroma, which we keenly enjoy, but for which we cannot account. Poetry often possesses a beauty wholly unconnected with its meaning. Who has not admired, independently of the sense, its "jewels, five words long, that, on the stretched forefinger of all time, sparkle forever"?

There are verses and snatches of song that continually haunt and twitter about the memory, as in summer the swallows haunt and twitter about the eaves of our dwelling. Coleridge, Shelley and Poe seem to have written some verse only to shew how superior is the suggestion of sound to the expression of sense. How perfectly in Tennyson's "Lotus-Eaters" is the dreamy haze of the enchanted land he depicts reflected in the verse! How exquisitely do the refinement, the sentiment, the lazy scepticism of the age, find expression in his numbers! "No stanza," says a critic, "but is a symbol of satiety; no word but breathes itself out languidly as if utterly used up, and every line is glutted weariness." So with "the nectared sweets" of Keat's verse; it is so dainty and luscious that "it makes the sense of satisfaction ache with the unreachably delicacy of its epithets." There are passages in Milton, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth, in which the mere cadence of the words is by itself delicious to a delicate ear, though we cannot tell how and why. We are conscious of a strange, dreamy sense of enjoyment, such as one feels when listening in the night-time to the pattering of rain upon the roof, or when lying upon the grass in a June evening, while a brook tinkles over stones among the sedges and trees. Sir Philip Sidney could not hear the old ballad of "Chevy Chase" without his blood being stirred as by the sound of a trumpet. Shelley took fright and fainted the first time he heard a certain magnificent and terrible passage in "Christabel" recited, and Scott tells us that the music of that poem was ever murmuring in his ears. Pope could never read certain words of "Priam" in Homer without bursting into tears; Boyle felt a tremor at the utterance of two verses of "Lucan;" and Spence declares that he never repeated certain lines of delicate modulation