

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.

"Chacun, pris dans son air est agréable en soi;
Ce n'est que l'air d'autrui qui peut déplaire en moi."

One special object of training, therefore, is to guard against vices of unnaturalness, springing out of imitation.

The necessity for writers being trained will further appear from the fact that *language*, which is the instrument whereby thought and feeling are expressed, or conveyed out of one mind into another, is composed of words whose meaning is arbitrary, and which are put together in an arbitrary manner.

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Quem penes arbitrium est et jus et norma loquendi."

The meaning of words and the right method of combining those words can be gathered only from observing a multitude of instances in which they are employed by good writers, and by studying dictionaries and grammars and treatises on synonyms in which this work is attempted to be done for us. Evidently, then, none but a master can, in any language, choose absolutely the best word and set it in its right place (and this is what constitutes a good style), or correct the error of another in these respects.

Beneath these arbitrary uses of words there lie certain great principles and analogies belonging to each particular language, constituting, as it were, its idiomatic individuality. Underneath these, again, there lie principles of universal application, principles which are involved in the very laws of thought, and the organic structure of the human mind itself, and so prevail in every tongue. By developing these principles according to the immutable laws of beauty, order, strength and truth, languages are to be cultivated, and style is to be brought to perfection.

It is in order to guard against breaches of good usage, and to educate the writer to an appreciation of these internal harmonies and analogies, so that he may clearly, vividly and truthfully set forth his thought in words of unfading propriety and beauty, that a living master is to be desired.

Style is one's manner of showing his thought.

But since the written language is a revelation, likewise, of the inward processes of the mind, it betrays the mental gait and shows the manner in which the mind travels from point to point; while it reflects, moreover, its passions and tastes, whether good or evil. And it is evident that the style will greatly depend upon the structure of the mind, the moulding of its intellectual habits and the regulation of its feelings. No one has a perfect mind. No one has all his faculties completely developed—no one has all his passions under perfect command. He that would be truly a teacher, an educator, or bringer out of all that is best in men, must examine the structure of their minds, and teach them how to develop and to use their powers and get them wholly under their control.

Here appears the utility of Logic and the Mathematics which are a branch of it, for when taught in constant connection with a practical application of critical analysis and active reproduction they are a kind of mental gymnastics to train the mind, to grasp, to lift, to walk, leap, strike, build up and tear down with the greatest effect possible, in proportion to its natural organization and vital force. A perfect system of logic, when it is discovered, will show how a perfectly developed mental organization works.

Most minds are a little lame and have one leg shorter or weaker than the other. This affects their mental gait. Some men travel from premise to conclusion more swiftly, more surely and more gracefully than their neighbours. Many (especially, it is said, of the gentler sex) seem to leap to their conclusions, some run, some walk, some hobble, and some even seem to crawl.

The mere logician marches firmly, and is an Antæus in strength long as his feet touch his mother earth, but the genius, the poet so and the seer have wings, and easily rise over his head.

Would-be poets have their wings so small, their bodies so heavy and their legs so weak, that it is hard for them to get upwards or onwards, and very easy for them to fall into the mire. It is better first to learn to walk. Still, tame geese seem to enjoy an occasional flight, and I see no great objection to their making the attempt, so long as we are not expected to admire their appearance or their note. Nay, further, the writing of verses, as an exercise, helps us, no doubt, to obtain a command of language, and few men will write really rich and classic prose, who have not at some time or other been beguiled into flapping their rudimentary wings and floundering along, like Cicero himself, in indifferent verse.

"O fortunatam natam me consule Romam,"

Every true orator has wings, and although they may not qualify him to soar with the eagle, yet, by the help of his poetic pinions, he is enabled, like the ostrich, to travel with marvelously greater rapidity and force along the earth.

The organization of a man's mind will show what nature intended him to do best, and yet even in his best faculties there will be defects. Let his powers be explored, drawn out, tried, corrected, subsidized. Where one mental faculty is weaker than the average, another is often much stronger. One more readily masters a general principle, another has a more tenacious hold upon isolated facts. We must teach one faculty to help the other.

Those subjects which a man's powers are best adapted to, he will most love, and what he most loves he will most easily and completely master, and what he most loves and most completely masters, he will write about in his best style.

"No profit grows, where is no pleasure to'en.
In brief, sir, study what you most affect."

Moral qualities also will manifest themselves in the style, and, therefore, in order to cultivate the style, the *moral character* must be cultivated also.

The treacherous cowardice of a foe "willing to wound and yet afraid to strike"; the ambiguous verdict of sceptical indecision; the self-sufficient scorn which for a refutation substitutes a sneer; the disrespectful tone of allusion to woman characteristic of an unripe lord of creation, or of a pusillanimously malicious and rejected suitor; that depravity of imagination which rejoices in a purient suggestiveness of detail from which uncontaminated nature with instinctive delicacy shrinks—how clearly are all these reflected in the splendid periods and prodigiously able and learned pages of the historian Gibbon.

Even one moral defect may place an immeasurable distance between two writers, whose intellects, possibly, are of an equal order.

Thus Cicero's style, for example, seems to me so much further perfection than that of Demosthenes.

To the irrepressible vanity of the former are attributable the chief defects of his style. His constant effort to touch every thing with so fine a point, and his palpably laborious pursuit after an artificial pomp, and a too melodious rotundity of expression, cannot escape notice; while it is difficult to say whether his prodigal expenditure of synonymes, where Demosthenes would have used only one word, and that the best, arose from mental indecision, or from a desire to display his own verbal wealth and his subtlety in discovering distinctions where others found them not.

If Cicero is to save his country, he must do it (metaphorically speaking), *perfusus liquidis odoribus*, and with his *toga* elegantly gathered upon his arm, and an admiring senate must applaud the magnificently rounded periods with which he lashes Catiline out of the city. And, if I may trust my memory, even in his moral essays, while he is professedly pointing us with outstretched finger to the pole star of eternal truth, there seems to be at times a display, by no means unintentional, of the jewelled ornament which flashes on his fair and graceful hand.

All these things subtract just so much from his excellence and power, and the marvellous *practical effect* of some of his most celebrated orations is to be accounted for by remembering that they were first delivered unwritten, when he was raised above himself by the grandeur or exigence of the occasion, and were afterwards committed to MS., and corrected in cool blood when he had subsided to his ordinary level.

To hear Demosthenes thunder in the peerless Attic tongue, against the Macedonian Philip, or to listen to the Prince of Latin orators, while under the noble impulses of patriotism and humanity and righteous indignation, he levelled all his mighty powers against the brutal and rapacious Verres—this was to hear the highest perfection of style ever yet attained by mortal man.

And yet neither of these men became orators by a single effort or a happy chance. They both labored almost to agony in their vocation; subjected themselves to a length and severity of training at which we modern students may well stand amazed.

But what, think you, did Demosthenes, for example, aim at, in his laborious physical and mental culture? Was it to catch some favorite gesture of his tutor, Satyrus, or to train himself up to some actor's predominant majesty of lungs? I think not. If he ever spoke with sword suspended, point downwards, over his shoulders, it was to break himself of some unnatural shrug which might otherwise have distracted the attention of the audience. If he ever declaimed with pebbles in his mouth on the roaring beach, it was not in order that he might attain to the dainty utterance of some Athenian exquisite, or out-bellow some Athenian senator, but rather that he might remove from the polished shaft of his speech, every, even the most trivial roughness that could per-