

tells of the books that he gradually became acquainted with, and of the influence they have exerted upon his thinking and his style. It is a curious list, beginning with Goldsmith, Cervantes and Irving, and ending with Zola, Trollope, Hardy, and Tolstoi. The narrative is a very candid one, almost naive in its simplicity and confession of humble resources. The author did not cultivate literature on a little oatmeal, but he knew straitened circumstances, and it speaks well for his indomitable pluck that he triumphed over them. His grandfather had begun his religious experience as a Quaker and had ended it as a fervent Methodist, but his father became a Swedenborgian, and what Mr. Howell's persuasion is the Talker does not know. He is on the side of spirituality, however, and is an ardent apostle of altruism. In his sixteenth essay, the *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer form his text for a philippic against the lewd in literature, which he holds must necessarily exercise a demoralizing influence on thought and thereby on life. Mr. Howell's writings are essentially pure, and this is something that cannot always be said of the work of two of his literary heroes, Zola and Tolstoi. The aim of each is moral, as is that of Marie Corelli, and of the preachers of special sermons on the sins of great critics, who may be pious, well-meaning men, but the end of their teaching is often the very reverse of their intention. Handling filth is always a risky business.

The names of Austin, Stevenson, and Howells lead one to a practical consideration, namely, the value to a preacher of a good prose style. Of course an excellent style may be marred by bad delivery, and no elegance of composition will atone for lack of thought or the absence of a devout spirit. But nowadays education is so widely diffused that even humble congregations are critical of literary blemishes in the pulpit. The fatal gift of fluency, which we in Canada share with our United States brethren, sometimes at an early age, has been the grave of many a young minister's promise of eloquence. Tongue-tied plodders, by careful reading of masters of English, and by incessant writing, in the long run far surpass the confidently fluent, as the tortoise of the fable outstripped the hare. In the formation of a style, the minister to be should read anything but sermons, for his own style should be his own, not Guthrie's nor Robertson's, Beecher's nor Spurgeon's. Huxley popularized agnostic science by the charm of his present day diction, and a great part of Professor Drummond's success lies in his language. People will not listen long to discourses couched in the phraseology of the Puritan divines, and the marvel is that modern theological works, rivalling the works of these ancients in dryness and infelicity of expression, ever find a market. An hour spent in reading Stevenson's *Will of the Mill*, and *The Treasure of Franchard*, contained in his *Merry Men of*