

portions of its trunk. "There," he exclaimed one evening, after condensing one of Burke's noblest passages (in which every word has its appointed task), "there, concentrated as it now is, it would blow up a cathedral!"

We are aware that there are persons who have no appreciation of the graces of literary composition. They would have every sentence trained down to its fighting weight; not a particle of adipose tissue, but all sinew only, tense, close-knit—for use and not for beauty. So there are persons who cannot feel the difference between a sonata of Beethoven and the Battle-Cry of Freedom, between a gravestone-cutter's cherub and the masterpieces of Raphael. But what does this prove? Only that they lack a sense, that is all. Napoleon belonged to this class. "What is called style, good or bad," said he to Madame de Rémusat, "does not affect me. I care only for the force of the thought." As well might he have said: "I care nothing for the arrangement of my soldiers in battle; I care only for the energy with which they fight." The fighting power of soldiers depends upon the tactical skill with which they are handled; and the force of ideas depends upon the way in which the verbal battalions that represent them are marshalled on the battle-fields of thought.

The last element of style we have named is *completeness in preparation and finish*. The most brilliant intellect cannot do without an accumulated fund of facts and ideas. Even the poet, who seems neither to toil nor to spin—whose creative exuberance appears to be innate—can use only materials which have been stored in his brain during years of thought, reading, and observation. Before Johnson began the *Rambler* he had filled a commonplace book with thoughts for his essays. Addison amassed three folios of manuscript materials before

he began the *Spectator*; and when a new publication was suggested to him after the *Guardian* was finished, he replied: "I must now take some time *pour me délasser*, and lay in fuel for a future work." Frederick W. Robertson spent his leisure hours in the study of geology, chemistry, and other sciences, to gain the materials of thought and illustration, and to give freshness to his sermons; and John Foster, for the same purpose, rambled many hours in the woods and fields. Scott did not hesitate to spend the leisure of a week in settling a point in history, or in gathering up the details of a bit of scenery which he wished to work into a poem or a novel. Again, the mastery of any important subject demands time. It cannot be accomplished by pressure or cramming, or by the most heroic extempore endeavour. The subject must be brooded over from day to day, till, by the half-conscious, half-unconscious processes of thought, all that is unessential, incongruous, or foreign, has been sloughed off; till all difficulties, surveyed again and again from new angles of vision, have been resolved, and that which was at first but a faint suggestion of truth, has surrounded itself, by a kind of elective affinity of ideas, with appropriate imagery and illustration, and stands out, at last, in bold relief and in full proportions before the mental eye. Then how simple and lucid the statement, how luminous the exposition! The stream of thought runs so clear as almost to seem shallow; it glides so noiselessly that few suspect the depth, the volume, and the majestic sweep and force of its movement. It is because there is to-day so little hard thinking that we have so little good writing. The poverty of style is due largely to the very activity and restless impatience of modern thought. It is because thought and feeling do not have a brooding time—because