

upon the grass to bleach, the dew makes it disappear. It used to be spun only by native women who had been trained to the task from infancy; and so nice was the sense of touch required for the spinning of this yarn, that they were constantly waited upon by a retinue of servants, whose duty it was to relieve them of all menial offices that might endanger the fine tactual faculty which long practice and seclusion had bestowed on their delicate finger-tips. So those whose calling it is to spin the fine thread of thought, to be woven in the loom of the mind into the web and woof of a literary production, should jealously seclude themselves from all vulgar and debasing occupations—all that can hurt the delicacy of their minds, or blunt those fine perceptions of truth and beauty which can be acquired by those only who have been trained to the quest of them from early youth.

We sometimes read of model styles; but there is no model style. As in painting, the manner which we admire in Albano and Vanderwerf would be misplaced in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, or even the extended canvas of the Transfiguration, so it is only relatively, not absolutely, that any literary style can be said to be the best. Macaulay, who was certainly not lacking in literary taste, went so far as to say that the style of a magazine or review article, which should strike at the first reading, might be allowed sometimes to be even viciously florid. It is not by his own taste, he said, but by the taste of the fish, that the angler is determined in his choice of bait. That is the best style relatively to the individual, in which his particular cast of thought best utters itself, and in which the peculiarity of the man, that which differentiates him from other men, has the fullest and freest play. That is a good style generally, in which the words are vitalized by

the thought, so that if you cut them they will bleed; in which the language is so fresh and forceful as to seem to have been just created; which is so elastic that it accommodates itself unconsciously to all the sinuities of the thought, so that the thought and the expression are never for a moment separated, but are a simultaneous creation, coined at one stroke. The perfect writer, so far from having any one ideal style, will have a hundred styles, shifting and varying with every variation of his ideas and feelings. His instrument of expression will not be a pipe, but an organ with many banks of keys; capable of giving expression alike to thoughts that require only mellifluous cadences and gliding graces, and to those that demand diapason grandeur or trumpet stop—to the complex harmonies of a Heroic Symphony, or the tumultuous movements of a Hailstone Chorus.

To define the charm of style—to shew why the same thought, when conveyed in one man's language, is cold and commonplace, and, when conveyed in another's, is, as Starr King says, "a rifle-shot or a revelation," is impossible. It is easy to see how a magnetic presence, an eagle eye, a commanding attitude, a telling gesture, a siren voice, may give to truths when spoken a force or a charm which they lack in a book. "But how it is," as the same writer says, "that words locked up in forms, still and stiff in sentences, will contrive to tip a wink; how a proposition will insinuate more scepticism than it states; how a paragraph will drip with the honey of love; how a phrase will troil an infinite suggestion; how a page can be so serene or so gusty, so gorgeous or so pallid, so sultry or so cool, as to lap you in one intellectual climate or its opposite,—who has fathomed this wonder?" There is a mystery in style of which we cannot pluck out the heart. Like that of beauty, music or a delicious