

it a canon of style that, in writing, one's only aim should be to express his ideas as simply as possible. He should also try to express them as vividly and as elegantly as possible. Simplicity is no more inconsistent with elegance than is ornament with strength. The Damascus blade cuts none the less keenly because it is polished, nor is a column less strong when its sides are fluted and its capital carved. The plumage that makes the beauty of the eagle supports it in its flight. The "Provincial Letters" and the writings of Courier are examples of perfect simplicity and of perfect style. If a writer has sufficient wealth of imagination to justify an exhibition of his riches, we need not fear that the groundwork of good sense will be slighter for the delicate arabesques and exquisite traceries with which he beautifies his useful products. On the contrary, as Bulwer has said, "the elegance of the ornament not unfrequently attests the stoutness of the fabric. Only into the most durable tissues did the Genoese embroiderers weave their delicate tissues of gold; only on their hardest steel did the smiths of Milan damaskeen the gracious phantasies which still keep their armour among the heirlooms of royal halls."

To say, as some do, that the all-sufficing aim of writing is to make one's self understood with the smallest expenditure of words, is to adopt a Board of Trade or Corn Exchange standard. There are themes which require that we should draw upon the prismatic powers of language, and evoke its hidden melodies. Words can yield a music as thrilling as the strings of any instrument; they are susceptible of colours more gorgeous than the hues of sunset; they are freighted with associations of feeling which have gathered about them during hundreds of years; and, therefore, to use them for the conveyance of ideas only, as one con-

veys goods in a waggon, is not enough. Such a rule, if adopted, would reduce all our literature to the dull level of a Traveller's Guide—to the vocabulary of a courier, and the eloquence of an almanac. Arrangement and repetition, harmony and illustration—every grace and every charm—all that makes "L'Allegro" and the "Castle of Indolence," "The Stones of Venice" and "The Marble Faun," what they are—would be wanting. The cup you drink from, the dagger-hilt you handle, are not more useful though they be chased by Benvenuto Cellini; but was Cellini's labour useless? The truth is, however, that these devices and beauties of style, which are supposed to be separable from the thought, are not mere distinct decorations, but a part of its vivid presentation. Even in reading purely useful works, who has not a hundred times lamented their lack of style? Who ever read Grote's Greece without wishing that its author had known something of the cadence of a period, or Butler's Analogy without wishing its sentences were less involved and elliptical? Who can doubt that Locke's meaning is often made needlessly difficult by the ruggedness of his style, and that many of the wrong inferences drawn since his death from his system, and which would have shocked him had they been published in his lifetime, were due to that lack of verbal precision which the culture of euphony insures? We cannot sympathize, therefore, with the feeling of the poet Rogers, whom a single superfluous word, like the crumpled rose-leaf on the couch of the princess, made restless and captious. It was one of his peculiar fancies that the best writers might be improved by condensation. In vain did one warn him that to strip Jeremy Taylor or Burke of their so-called redundancies overlaying the sense, was like stripping a tree of its blossoms and foliage in order to bring out the massive pro-