

with many of their contemporaries. The volume, therefore, is far from being a handbook to the greater prose writers of the century; the words "some of" should have been inserted between the "to" and the "the." With this necessary limitation, Mr. Dawson's well-written pages of gossiping information and genial criticism, are worthy of commendation to the student of English literature who wishes to know the chief characteristics of the writers enumerated, and the opinions entertained by the most competent judges of them and their works. What the author means by calling Johnson, Boswell, and Goldsmith, Burke and Gibbon "prose writers of the century," when they all died before the century began, is more than the Talker can fathom. Perhaps it is a way he has of talking at large. Within the present century, Mr. Dawson has left as many masters of English prose out as he has found in. Grote, Arnold, Roscoe, Maurice, Martineau, Kingsley, Chalmers, Caird, Kinglake, MacLeod, Jewett, Pater, and a host of others who have formed modern English style, he ignores completely. He is like the reviewer who wrote an article upon "Poetry, Prose, and Coventry Patmore," and the American who summed up the population of the United States into "the whites, the blacks, and the Beechers." The line must be drawn somewhere. The fact is that every thinking, reading, and writing man has his own set of literary models, and ignores the masters he doesn't care for. The exception is the Talker, who writes fair English, though he says it, and follows nobody. If he has a literary mission at all, it is to lead his readers and hearers to steer clear of turgid ponderosity, and to eschew vulgar flippancy, to be natural and comprehensible, and to talk as a gentleman would to an intelligent lady or to a theological student of superior merit. This is pretty much what Mr. Dawson does.

How many volumes of tales from Shakspeare have been published since Charles Lamb wrote his, and thus laid the foundation for many criticisms on "lamb's tails," the Talker does not know. Hazlitt and Seymour, Quiller Couch, and many writers whose fame has not survived, have attempted the task, and have achieved it with greater or less success.