

feelings, imaginations and aspirations which pass within him, so as to become the faithful expression of his personality, indicating the very pulsation and throbbing of his intellect, and attending on his own inward world of thought as its very shadow—and, strangest, perhaps, of all, the magical power it has to suggest the idea or mood it cannot directly convey, and to give forth an aroma which no analysis of word or expression reveals—is one of the marvels of human speech. Because language is thus the faithful mirror of our natures—because expression is literally the pressing out into palpable form of that which is already within us—it is plain that nothing can be more foolish than imitation. In the old text-books of rhetoric it used to be stated, in the words of Johnson, that whoever wished to obtain a perfect style should give his days and nights to the study of Addison. But we now know that a good style can never be acquired by aping the manner of another. The only effect of such copying is to annihilate individuality by substituting process for inspiration, mannerism for sincerity, and calculation for spontaneity. It was because he understood this that Rembrandt had such a horror of imitation, and condemned his pupils to solitary study, lest they should borrow one from another. All the virtues of style are, in their roots, moral. They are a product, a reverberation, of the soul itself, and can no more be artificially acquired than the ring of silver can be acquired by lead. If a man has a vulgar mind, he will write vulgarly; if a noble nature, he will write nobly: in every case, the beauty or ugliness of his moral constitution, the force and keenness or the feebleness of his logic, will be imaged in his sentences. "Language," as Goldwin Smith says, "is not an instrument into which if a fool breathe it will make melody;" to which we may

add, that it matters little that your violin is a genuine Cremona, and the warranted workmanship of Straduarus, unless you have the music of Paganini in your soul, with his masterly touch and his exquisite nervous organism, in vain will you seek to conjure from the instrument the startling notes, the tones of ecstasy or anguish, which the great magician of the bow evokes from its strings.

Of the various elements of the literary art, the most important are five, namely: simplicity, freshness or attractiveness, arrangement, choice of words, and careful preparation and finish. We might have added *clearness*, were not its necessity obvious; as Dr. Jortin says, "the man that is not intelligible is not intelligent." Our space will not allow us to dwell upon these qualities, and we must content ourselves with a word or two. Of all these elements of good writing, *freshness* is the most vital; it is the quality which is felt when we turn from Blair's page to Bushnell's, from Prescott to Motley. The best recipe for the acquisition of this quality is to keep one's life fresh and vigorous. To have one's page alive, he must be alive himself. He must be constantly acquiring fresh thought; else he will only dexterously repeat himself—become his own echo. We have not space to consider the next or logical element of style, important as it is, and pass, therefore, to the *choice of words*, of which it may be said that the simplest and most idiomatic are generally best. Joubert has well said that it is by means of familiar words that style takes hold of the reader and gets possession of him. "They begot confidence in the man who uses them because they shew that the author has long made the thought or the feeling expressed his mental food; that he has so assimilated and familiarized them that the most common expressions suffice him in order to ex-