

while those that formerly existed have been increased and perfected. Foremost as a means of education and general improvement stands the periodical. At the close of the eighteenth century the critical magazines and reviews had greatly increased in numbers, but at the present time they have become almost innumerable, as have also the daily papers. They are the greatest political organs, giving to the people the thoughts and actions of their representatives. Good and bad are both brought before the people, and are upheld or condemned. The movements of other nations are published, and thus sympathies are enlarged and thoughts widened, as people are no longer limited to the knowledge of affairs in their own narrow circles, but are also interested in that which occupies the attention of their brothers in other lands. They contain articles on all current topics, especially in science and philosophy. They are also the great organs for literary criticism, and all classes have the results of our greatest thinkers, published in the literary reviews. Owing to the limit of space they have introduced a brief, clear, concise style, often elegant and eloquent, but always positive and effective. It is the surest proof that the general mind is becoming more elevated and that the desire for knowledge is increasing, as shown by the growth of the periodical and daily papers. The increase of the former has greatly perfected the essay, and was in truth the instrument by which it was originated. Many writers of the essay attain almost to poetry in their grand and lofty style, and we would lose much that is attractive and valuable in our literature were the productions of the essayist left out of the account. Philosophy, science, art, religion—all come under their sway, and their influence on all has been unbounded. We do not find in the critical essayists the personal bitterness that so often predominated in the writers of former periods. With the enlightenments of this age has come a more profound and enlarged conception of the functions of a critic. This is seen to a superior degree in the works of Macaulay, Carlyle, Arnold, Ruskin and many others

hardly less known. They each possess their characteristics, and they differ in style, but in the works of each we find the innate refinement and elevation of thought, opulence of adornment and illustration. To deal with their peculiarities in the least—to try to write of the majesty of Macaulay, the profundity of Carlyle, the exactness of Arnold and Froude, or the sublimity and beauty of Ruskin—requires time and space unlimited, but they are and ever will be upheld as the greatest writers of English prose in its golden age.

In America, also, the essay is the great instrument of enlargement of thought, and in this branch of literature the writers have attained to great excellence. Thoreau, Hawthorne and the sublime Emerson need but be mentioned to prove its perfection.

As the drama was the great instrument of education and amusement in the Elizabethan era, so has the novel become in our own day. It is our drama, and to it the people turn for enlarged ideas of the manners and customs of the day and true pictures of life. During the early portion of last century this branch of literature was almost extinct and continued so until, in 1814, it acquired an unprecedented lustre by the masterpieces of Scott. The same influences that drew from him his historical poems brought to light the historical novel, written in a style, easy and graphic, full of grace and glowing with brightness, but never polished; always devoted to the elevation of truth and virtue—to the degradation of vice. We find in him one who looks at the broad general effect, devoting more time to his pictures than to the melody, and impressing all who read his works with the love and sympathy he has for his followers. The favorite of his age and read throughout the country, he still holds that position in the hearts of the people. In our own day, the pictorial novel is the most popular. It possesses characteristics of the historical and descriptive novels, but all the productions possess to a greater or less extent, the romance element. Lord Lytton is the most illustrious representative of this branch, and was a great power in his day. No one can read his "Last Days of Pompeii"