

"I like to see your ready-smiling Messeri caught in a sudden wind and obliged to show their lining in spite of themselves."<sup>1</sup>

"Were I to adopt a pet idea, as so many people do, and fondle it in my embraces to the exclusion of all others, it would be, that the great want which mankind labors under, at this present period, is—Sleep!"<sup>2</sup>

"The hidden depths and unsuspected shallows were exactly what he loved her for: no one ever fell in love with a canal."<sup>3</sup>

"If, as poets are wont to whine, the outward world was cold to him, its biting air did but trace itself in loveliest frost-work of fancy on the many windows of that self-centred and cheerful soul."<sup>4</sup>

"He began his dramatic career, as usual, by rowing against the strong current of his nature, and pulled only the more doggedly the more he felt himself swept down the stream."<sup>5</sup>

"It will be a bitter pill to her: that is, like other bitter pills, it will have two moments' ill-flavour, and then be swallowed and forgotten."<sup>6</sup>

Whenever the resemblance between the things compared would not be perfectly clear if expressed in the metaphorical form, the simile is to be preferred to the metaphor. For example:—

Cases in which  
similes are  
preferable to  
metaphors.

"He look'd upon them all,  
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,  
But splendor in Saturn's, whose hoar locks  
Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel  
When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove."<sup>7</sup>

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!  
I fear thy skinny hand!  
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
As is the ribbed sea-sand."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> George Eliot: *Romola*, vol. i. chap. xxix.

<sup>2</sup> Hawthorne: *Mosses from an Old Manse*; *The Old Manse*.

<sup>3</sup> E. F. Benson: *Dodo*, chap. ii.

<sup>4</sup> Lowell: *Literary Essays*; Shakespeare *Once More*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*; Dryden. <sup>6</sup> Miss Austen: *Mansfield Park*, vol. ii. chap. vi.

<sup>7</sup> John Keats: *Hyperion*, book ii.

<sup>8</sup> Coleridge: *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, part iv.

"For she was jes' the quiet kind  
Whose naturs never vary,  
Like streams that keep a summer mind  
Snow-hid in Jenooary."<sup>1</sup>

"A fine lady is a squirrel-headed thing, with small airs, and small notions, about as applicable to the business of life as a pair of tweezers to the clearing of a forest."<sup>2</sup>

"The silence became so perfect that the tread of the syndics on the broad pavement, and the rustle of their black silk garments, could be heard, like rain in the night."<sup>3</sup>

"My child is welcome, though unlooked for,' said she, at the time presenting her cheek as if it were a cool slate for visitors to enrol themselves upon."<sup>4</sup>

"A dumpy, fat little steamer rolled itself along like a sailor on shore."<sup>5</sup>

"And it [Idealism] refuses to listen to the jargon of more recent days about the 'Absolute' and all the other hypostatised adjectives, the initial letters of the names of which are generally printed in capital letters; just as you give a Grenadier a bearskin cap, to make him look more formidable than he is by nature."<sup>6</sup>

In these instances, there is little room for difference of opinion. Not so with an example given by Mr. Herbert Spencer, first in the form of a simile, secondly in that of a metaphor:—

"As, in passing through the crystal, beams of white light are decomposed into the colours of the rainbow, so, in traversing the soul of the poet, the colourless rays of truth are transformed into brightly-tinted poetry.

"The white light of truth, in traversing the many-sided transparent soul of the poet, is refracted into iris-hued poetry."<sup>7</sup>

In this case, Mr. Spencer prefers the metaphor to the simile; and this preference would be justified in a discourse addressed to schol-

<sup>1</sup> Lowell: *The Biglow Papers*; *The Courtin'*.

<sup>2</sup> George Eliot: *Felix Holt*, vol. i. chap. v.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*: *Romola*, vol. i. chap. xxix.

<sup>4</sup> Dickens: *Our Mutual Friend*, book iii. chap. xvi.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Harding Davis: *The Exiles*, chap. i.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas H. Huxley: *Method and Results*; *On Descartes' "Discourse on Method"*.

<sup>7</sup> Spencer: *The Philosophy of Style*.

ars. In a popular lecture, however, the simile would be preferable; for persons not conversant with the phenomena of refraction would fail to grasp the idea unless the comparison were drawn out at length.

Burke has a similar figure, which is clearer than Mr. Spencer's metaphor and more forcible than his simile:—

"These metaphysic rights entering into common life, like rays of light which pierce into a dense medium, are, by the laws of nature, refracted from their straight line. Indeed in the gross and complicated mass of human passions and concerns, the primitive rights of men undergo such a variety of refractions and reflections that it becomes absurd to talk of them as if they continued in the simplicity of their original direction."<sup>1</sup>

It is often advantageous to use the simile until the meaning is plain, and then to adopt the metaphorical form. This is done by Burke in the sentence last cited. Other instances are:—

The two forms combined.

"Some minds are wonderful for keeping their bloom in this way, as a patriarchal gold-fish apparently retains to the last its youthful illusion that it can swim in a straight line beyond the encircling glass. Mrs. Tulliver was an amiable fish of this kind; and, after running her head against the same resisting medium for thirteen years, would go at it again to-day with undulled alacrity."<sup>2</sup>

"The One remains, the many change and pass;  
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;  
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,  
Until Death tramples it to fragments."<sup>3</sup>

"Sullen and silent, and like couchant lions,  
Their cannon, through the night,  
Holding their breath, had watched, in grim defiance,  
The sea-coast opposite."<sup>4</sup>

In such combinations, the simile prepares the mind for

<sup>1</sup> Burke: Reflections on the Revolution in France.  
<sup>2</sup> George Eliot: The Mill on the Floss, book i. chap. viii.  
<sup>3</sup> Shelley: Adonais, lii.  
<sup>4</sup> Longfellow: The Warden of the Cinque Ports.

the metaphor; the simile gives clearness to the figure, the metaphor force.

There are cases in which it is advantageous to put the simile after the metaphor, because the simile individualizes and emphasizes the idea in the metaphor and is therefore more forcible. For example:—

"Then, indeed, he would glare upon us from the thick shrubbery of his meditations like a tiger out of a jungle."<sup>1</sup>

"Under its loosened vest  
Fluttered her little breast,  
Like birds within their nest  
By the hawk frighted."<sup>2</sup>

"So far her voice flow'd on, like timorous brook  
That, lingering along a pebbled coast,  
Doth fear to meet the sea."<sup>3</sup>

"Then did their loss his foemen know;  
Their King, their Lords, their mightiest low,  
They melted from the field, as snow,  
When streams are swoln and south winds blow,  
Dissolves in silent dew."<sup>4</sup>

According to Whately, the simile in the lines last quoted serves to explain the metaphor in "melted;" but is this so? The word "melted," far from being obscure, suggests the idea of snow to any one who is accustomed to see snow melt from a field; the simile adds force by extending the comparison from snow that melts to snow that melts rapidly.

Sometimes a metaphor embodied in a single word is more suggestive than it would be if developed at length. For example:—

Condensed metaphors.

"The streets are *dumb* with snow."<sup>5</sup>  
"At one *stride* comes the dark."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hawthorne: The Blithedale Romance, chap. v.  
<sup>2</sup> Longfellow: The Skeleton in Armor.  
<sup>3</sup> Keats: Hyperion, book ii.  
<sup>4</sup> Scott: Marmion, canto vi. stanza xxxiv. <sup>5</sup> Tennyson: Sir Galahad.  
<sup>6</sup> Coleridge: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, part iii.

"The moonlight *steeped* in silentness  
The steady weathercock."<sup>1</sup>

"His very presence *stunts* conversation."<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes it is advantageous to keep a figure before  
the reader for a considerable length of time.  
For example:—

Sustained  
metaphors.

"No solemn, antique gentleman of rhyme,  
Who having angled all his life for fame,  
And getting but a nibble at a time,  
Still fussily keeps fishing on."<sup>3</sup>

"It is all a black sea round about me on every side. I have only one thing to cling to, only one thing, and how can I tell? perhaps that may fail me too. But you have nothing to cry for. Your way is all clear and straight before you till it ends in heaven. Let them talk as they like, there must be heaven for you. You will sit there and wait and watch to see all the broken boats come home, — some bottom upwards, and every one<sup>4</sup> drowned; some<sup>4</sup> lashed to one miserable bit of a mast — like me."<sup>5</sup>

"Monday 17th October, came the Baireuth Visitors; Wilhelmina all in a flutter, and tremor of joy and sorrow, to see her Brother again, her old kindred and the altered scene of things. Poor Lady, she is perceptibly more tremulous than usual: and her Narrative, not in dates only, but in more memorable points, dances about at a sad rate; interior agitations and tremulous shrill feelings shivering her this way and that, and throwing things topsyturvy in one's recollection. Like the magnetic needle, shaky but steadfast (*agilée mais constante*). Truer nothing can be, points forever to the Pole; but also what obliquities it makes; will shiver aside in mad escapades, if you hold the paltriest bit of old iron near it, — paltriest clack of gossip about this loved Brother of mine! Brother, we will hope, silently continues to be Pole, so that the needle always comes back again; otherwise all would go to wreck."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, part vi.

<sup>2</sup> Student's theme.

<sup>3</sup> Byron: Beppo, stanza lxxiii

<sup>4</sup> See page 84.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Oliphant: The Ladies Lindores, vol. iii. chap. xv. Tauchnitz edition.

<sup>6</sup> Carlyle: History of Frederick the Great, book xi. chap. vii.

"And indeed the Mr. Gilfil of those late Shepperton days had more of the knots and ruggednesses of poor human nature than there lay any clear hint of in the open-eyed loving Maynard. But it is with men as with trees: if you lop off their finest branches, into which they were pouring their young life-juice, the wounds will be healed over with some rough boss, some odd excrescence; and what might have been a grand tree expanding into liberal shade, is but a whimsical misshapen trunk. Many an irritating fault, many an unlovely oddity, has come of a hard sorrow, which has crushed and maimed the nature just when it was expanding into plenteous beauty; and the trivial erring life which we visit with our harsh blame, may be but as the unsteady motion of a man whose best limb is withered.

"And so the dear old Vicar, though he had something of the knotted whimsical character of the poor lopped oak, had yet been sketched out by nature as a noble tree. The heart of him was sound, the grain was of the finest; and in the gray-haired man who filled his pockets with sugar-plums for the little children, whose most biting words were directed against the evil doing of the rich man, and who, with all his social pipes and slipshod talk, never sank below the highest level of his parishioners' respect, there was the main trunk of the same brave, faithful, tender nature that had poured out the finest, freshest forces of its life-current in a first and only love — the love of Tina."<sup>1</sup>

In a complex or elaborate figure of speech, the danger is that the thing illustrated may be forgotten in the illustration, that which should be subordinate becoming the principal object of attention. A figure of this kind, instead of illuminating the path of thought, is a will-o'-the-wisp, which may lead the reader into a bog. Such are many of the conceits of Cowley, the allegories once popular, all exercises of intellectual ingenuity that resemble conundrums or enigmas. Writing of this kind is well described as "frigid;" it counterfeits the warmth and glow of poetry, but leaves those

Danger in sustained figures.

<sup>1</sup> George Eliot: Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story; Epilogue.

whom it deceives the colder for their disappointment.  
For example:—

“Man is a harp, whose chords elude the sight,  
Each yielding harmony disposed aright;  
The screws reversed (a task which, if he please,  
God in a moment executes with ease),  
Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose,  
Lost, till he tune them, all their power and use.”<sup>1</sup>

“The truth is that Macaulay was not only accustomed, like many more of us, to go out hobby-riding, but, from the portentous vigour of the animal he mounted, was liable, more than most of us, to be run away with. His merit is, that he could keep his seat in such a steeple-chase: but as the object in view is arbitrarily chosen, so it is reached by cutting up the fields, spoiling the crops, and spoiling or breaking down the fences, needful to secure to labour its profit, and to man at large the full enjoyment of the fruits of the earth.”<sup>2</sup>

The former of these examples is frigidity itself; the objection to the latter lies in the difficulty of giving equal attention throughout to both sides of the comparison. The reader is in danger of forgetting Macaulay in the excitement of the chase.

Figures suggestive of incompatible ideas should not be brought close together. The more forcible such figures are, each by itself, the stronger the objection to an attempt to combine them. The following sentences contain incongruous figures:—

Mixed metaphors.

“Seventy-five professors have catered to the demands of these young women now pushing toward the goals of higher education.”<sup>3</sup>

“We see now that old war-horse of the Democracy waving his hand from the deck of the sinking ship.”<sup>3</sup>

“‘Horrible!’ said the Lady Amelia; ‘diluting the best blood of the country, and paving the way for revolutions.’”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> William Cowper: Retirement.

<sup>2</sup> William E. Gladstone: Lord Macaulay. *The Quarterly Review*, July, 1876, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> American newspaper.

<sup>4</sup> Anthony Trollope: Doctor Thorne, chap. vi.

“He was biding his time, and patiently looking forward to the days when he himself would<sup>1</sup> sit authoritative at some board, and talk and direct, and rule the roast, while lesser stars sat round and obeyed, as he had so well accustomed himself to do.”<sup>2</sup>

... “there was, nevertheless, an under stratum of joy in all this which buoyed her up wondrously.”<sup>3</sup>

“The chariot of Revolution is rolling, and gnashing its teeth as it rolls.”<sup>4</sup>

“The bulk<sup>5</sup> of the original troops were very reluctant philanthropists, and had to be vigorously weeded and sifted, so that the toughest work was performed by a handful of seasoned and tested men.”<sup>6</sup>

“If no authority, not in its nature temporary, were allowed to one human being over another, society would not be employed in building up propensities with one hand which it has to curb with the other.”<sup>7</sup>

“Yet exactly upon this level is the ordinary state of musical feeling throughout Great Britain; and the howling wilderness of the psalmody in most parish churches of the land, countersigns the statement.”<sup>8</sup>

... “the other shall have used every tittle of the same matter without eliciting one scintillation of sympathy, without leaving behind one distinct impression in the memory, or planting one murmur in the heart.”<sup>8</sup>

A similar fault is that of joining literal with metaphorical expressions. For example:—

Literal with figurative language.

“Boyle was the father of chemistry and brother to the Earl of Cork.”

“It is an emotional wave that lacks organization.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See pages 63, 64.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Trollope: Barchester Towers, vol. i. chap. iii. Tauchnitz edition.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. chap. xviii.

<sup>4</sup> Transcribed from the report of a speech by a German Socialist. *The Nineteenth Century*, March, 1881, p. 424.

<sup>5</sup> Query as to this use of *bulk*.

<sup>6</sup> American newspaper.

<sup>7</sup> J. S. Mill: *The Subjection of Women*, chap. iv.

<sup>8</sup> De Quincey: *Essay on Style*.

<sup>9</sup> Student's theme.

"Such are the oratorical tendencies of the age; such the foundation stones on which they rest."<sup>1</sup>

"When entering the twilight of dotage, reader, I mean to have a printing-press in my own study."<sup>2</sup>

"It is not likely, therefore, that the Republican Convention will declare strongly against the South. They will, of course, throw a tub to the whale in that respect in some general phrases."<sup>3</sup>

Among the most forcible tropes is that which attributes life to the lifeless, or a life to the living different from its own, — as, "the raging torrent," "the fiery steed," "leaps the live thunder,"<sup>4</sup> "a bleak northeasterly expression."<sup>5</sup> This figure is called PERSONIFICATION.

Properly used, personification stimulates the imagination:—

"This music crept by me upon the waters."<sup>6</sup>

"On his crest  
Sat Horror plumed."<sup>7</sup> . . . . .

"Verse, a breeze mid blossoms straying,  
Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee —  
Both were mine! Life went a maying  
With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,  
When I was young!"<sup>8</sup>

"And Winter, slumbering in the open air,  
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!"<sup>9</sup>

"Armour rusting in his halls  
On the blood of Clifford calls; —  
'Quell the Scot,' exclaims the Lance —  
Bear me to the heart of France,  
Is the longing of the Shield —  
Tell thy name, thou trembling Field;

<sup>1</sup> Student's theme.

<sup>2</sup> De Quincey: Essay on Secret Societies.

<sup>3</sup> American periodical.

<sup>4</sup> Byron: Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.

<sup>5</sup> George Eliot: Felix Holt.

<sup>6</sup> Shakspeare: The Tempest, act. i. scene ii.

<sup>7</sup> Milton: Paradise Lost, book iv. line 989.

<sup>8</sup> Coleridge: Youth and Age.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.: Work without Hope.

Field of death, where'er thou be,  
Groan thou with our victory!"<sup>1</sup>

"I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea, and the solitude of forests: Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate."<sup>2</sup>

"For Winter came: the wind was his whip:  
One choppy finger was on his lip:  
He had torn the cataracts from the hills  
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles."<sup>3</sup>

"Mammon's trusty cur,  
Clad in rich Dulness' comfortable fur,  
In naked feeling, and in aching pride."<sup>4</sup>

"Against no matter whose the liberty  
And life, so long as self-conceit should crow  
And clap the wing, while justice sheathed her claw."<sup>5</sup>

"The pretension is not to drive Reason from the helm but rather to bind her by articles to steer only in a particular way."<sup>6</sup>

"Genius is always impatient of its harness; its wild blood makes it hard to train."<sup>7</sup>

Improperly used, personification is a form of fine writing.<sup>8</sup> It is dangerously easy in languages, like the English, in which a writer may attribute personality to an inanimate object by means of a masculine or a feminine pronoun, or by "the easy magic of an initial capital." Dangers in personification.

"Equally annoying," writes Mr. Leslie Stephen, "was Gray's immense delight in semi-allegorical figures. We have whole catalogues of abstract qualities scarcely personified. Ambition, bitter Scorn, grinning Infamy, Falsehood, hard Unkindness, keen Remorse, and moody Madness are all collected in one stanza not

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth: Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle.

<sup>2</sup> Shelley: The Revolt of Islam; Preface.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.: The Sensitive Plant. <sup>4</sup> Burns: To Robert Graham.

<sup>5</sup> Browning: Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau. <sup>6</sup> J. S. Mill: Nature.

<sup>7</sup> Oliver Wendell Holmes: The Professor at the Breakfast Table, X.

<sup>8</sup> See pages 102-105.

exceptional in style — beings which to us are almost as offensive as the muse whom he has pretty well ceased to invoke, though he still appeals to his lyre. This fashion reached its culminating point in the celebrated invocation, somewhere recorded by Coleridge, 'Inoculation, heavenly maid!' The personified qualities are a kind of fading 'survival' — ghosts of the old allegorical persons who put on a rather more solid clothing of flesh and blood with Spenser, and with Gray scarcely putting<sup>1</sup> in a stronger claim to vitality than is implied in the use of capital letters."<sup>2</sup>

"Gray's personifications," says Coleridge, "were mere printer's devils' personifications,"<sup>3</sup> — a remark true of some personifications of other poets. For example: —

"So may no ruffian-feeling in thy breast  
Discordant jar thy bosom-chords among!  
But Peace attune thy gentle soul to rest,  
Or Love, ecstatic, wake his seraph song!

"Or Pity's notes, in luxury of tears,  
As modest Want the tale of woe reveals;  
While conscious Virtue all the strain endears,  
And heaven-born Piety her sanction seals!"<sup>4</sup>

Excessive personification of abstractions, as in these lines from Burns, is especially objectionable. On this point George Eliot speaks strongly: —

"The adherence to abstractions, or to the personification of abstractions, is closely allied in Young to the *want of genuine emotion*. He sees Virtue sitting on a mount serene, far above the mists and storms of earth: he sees Religion coming down from the skies, with this world in her left hand and the other world in her right: but we never find him dwelling on virtue or religion as it really exists — in the emotions of a man dressed in an ordinary coat, and seated by his fireside of an evening, with his hand resting on the head of his little daughter; in courageous effort for unselfish ends, in the internal triumph of justice and pity over

<sup>1</sup> Query as to this construction.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie Stephen: Gray and his School. The Cornhill Magazine, July, 1879, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> Coleridge: Table Talk.

<sup>4</sup> Burns: To Miss Graham.

personal resentment, in all the sublime self-renunciation and sweet charities which are found in the details of ordinary life. Now, emotion links itself with particulars, and only in a faint and secondary manner with abstractions. An orator may discourse very eloquently on injustice in general, and leave his audience cold; but let him state a special case of oppression, and every heart will throb. The most untheoretic persons are aware of this relation between true emotion and particular facts, as opposed to general terms, and implicitly recognize it in the repulsion they feel towards any one who professes strong feeling about abstractions, — in the interjectional 'humbug!' which immediately rises to their lips."<sup>1</sup>

Tropes are sometimes used for purposes of ornament; but it may be doubted whether, in prose at least, they ever adorn a composition unless they also render it either clearer or more effective. Value and uses of tropes. Whenever they explain, enliven, or enforce the thought, they are properly employed. Their power may be traced to the superiority of the unfamiliar to the trite, of the things of the imagination to those of the understanding.

"The symbol," says Emerson, "plays a large part in our speech. We could not do without it. Few can either give or receive unrelieved thought in conversation. A symbol or trope lightens it. We remember a happy comparison all our lives."<sup>2</sup>

A trope should naturally grow out of the subject and be in harmony with the purpose and tone of the composition; it should be as brief as is compatible with clearness, and fresh enough to give the reader a pleasant surprise, but not so strange as to shock him.

Forcible as figurative language is in the hands of a master, it may be less forcible than plain prose "hewn

<sup>1</sup> George Eliot: Essays; Worldliness and Other-Worldliness, The Poet Young.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in "Mr. Emerson in the Lecture Room." The Atlantic Monthly, June, 1883, p. 822.

from life." "Nothing but great weight in things can afford a quite literal speech;"<sup>1</sup> but literal speech so weighted is irresistible. Hence the power of Demosthenes among the ancients, of Swift and Daniel Webster among the moderns.

## SECTION III.

## EASE.

Besides clearness (that which renders language intelligible to the reader) and force (that which renders it impressive in one way or another), there is a third quality essential to the best writing, — the quality which makes language agreeable. This quality has been called by different names, — *euphony, beauty, harmony, smoothness, grace, elegance, ease*. No one of these words covers the whole ground, but EASE covers more than any of the others. In books characterized by ease there is nothing that irritates or distracts, and there is much that pleases. The reader goes from well-chosen word to well-chosen word without a jar and with an agreeable sense that he is getting on.

"It will," says Trollope, "be granted, I think, by readers, that a style may be rough, and yet both forcible and intelligible; but it will seldom come to pass that a novel written in a rough style will be popular — and less often that a novelist who habitually uses such a style will become so. The harmony which is required must come from the practice of the ear. There are few ears naturally so dull that they cannot, if time be allowed to them, decide whether a sentence, when read, be or be not harmonious. And the sense of such harmony grows on the ear, when the intelligence has once informed itself as to what is, and what is not, harmonious. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> Emerson: Letters and Social Aims; Poetry and Imagination.

In order that familiarity may serve him [a writer] in his business, he must so train his ear that he shall be able to weigh the rhythm of every word as it falls from his pen. This, when it has been done for a time, even for a short time, will become so habitual to him that he will have appreciated the metrical duration of every syllable before it shall have dared to show itself upon paper."<sup>1</sup>

The negative merits of which Trollope speaks are within the reach of every writer who will take the requisite pains. It is possible for every one to train his ear by familiarizing himself with authors distinguished for ease. It is possible for every one to detect ill-sounding words and combinations of words in what he has written by reading it aloud or, still better, having it read aloud to him by a friend.

To avoid harsh or clumsy expressions is comparatively easy; but to acquire the positive excellences that contribute to ease in style is very difficult. These excellences few, even among famous authors, possess in full measure or have always at command. They are unattainable by any one who does not possess those qualities of character out of which they spring; for ease in its highest form is a gift rather than an acquisition, the gift of an engaging personality. It is, however, a gift that may be developed; even Steele and Addison, Goldsmith and Irving, Newman and Thackeray did not attain perfect ease without patient and persistent labor.

"Goldsmith put an anxious finish into all his better work; perhaps that is the secret of the graceful ease that is now apparent in every line. Any young writer who may imagine that the power of clear and concise literary expression comes by nature, cannot do better than study, in Mr. Cunningham's big collection of Goldsmith's writings, the continual and minute alterations which the author considered necessary even after the first edition — some-

<sup>1</sup> Anthony Trollope: An Autobiography, chap. xii.