

this class that dictates the style of literature for the public. It is this class of literary critics that moulds public opinion. They care for no writings but their own, which are generally of an inferior type. Yet out of these they have tried to form a standard, which, as often as set up, the public has pulled down. Every book is open to their fiendish machinations. They seem to think that unless they can find some fault they are not critics. They are too jealous to give reward where it is deserved. They are slaves to their own prejudices. Nor are they content in finding fault with the writings of the present day. They fall upon the master-pieces of antiquity. They will ridicule the style of Homer and Virgil.

They will show you how, if Demosthenes had differently arranged his chain of argument, the calamities that befell Greece would never have happened. They will show how Cicero might have written more elegantly, and Macaulay could have made his criticisms more effective. It is this class of critics that has ever been working against a standard in American literature. They cannot make the standard themselves, nor will they allow it to be established by others.

Their manner of criticism is indeed ridiculous. They first attack the substance of an article. It matters not how true the theory, something has been misstated. They do not forget to rail at the author for holding such opinions, but correct him by suggesting their own. They then attack the rhetorical structure. They cite you to the vagueness of certain passages, and inform you how the various topics of the discourse should be introduced, and how the argument adduced should be arranged. He shows how the figure of speech may be varied, and how a different arrangement of words may be more effective. Such is the course of fault-finding that the critic of the second class pursues with every article that comes in his way. Whether it is just remains to be seen.

As men have differed in opinions, in re-

ligion and politics, so have they differed in the manner of expressing those opinions. Macaulay writes in one style, Irving in another, and Addison still in another. If human nature changes, it none the less differs. One will write without the least emotion; another, in the height of his imagination pictures the scene in brilliant colors. The one will use the simple prose; the other the poetic diction. What one will detest, the other will admire. Sentences that would appear ridiculous to the prose writer, would be charming to the poetic fancy. The one will write with energy; the other will sacrifice energy for the sake of beauty. But energy and beauty are two requisites of style, and the relation in which they are used determines the style. But energy and beauty of language are used by no two alike, since every writer has used a different shade of their color, and that shade has formed his own peculiar style.

He who admires a landscape or the grandeur of nature, writes not as he who cannot appreciate that beauty or that grandeur, and before the latter can write like the former he must become a man similar to him, moved by the same fancy, and aroused by the the same passions. Or as Spencer says: "To write like a Bacon, a man must think and reason like a Bacon." But Bacon stands alone in his style of writing, hence no writer has ever thought or reasoned like him. So on every topic, men differ on some question connected with it. These different shades of opinion have given rise to different forms of expression, or different styles of writing.

To say, then, that there is but one style of writing is false. If this be true, what is the attitude of the critic of the second class? By his constant criticism, he has no standard. Criticism with him, then, is merely a matter of opinion. His opinion is his standard for criticism, and his opinion is derived from his style of writing. And since he criticises all others because they do not conform to that style, he takes for granted that there is but one style,