

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

## ARTICLE II.

## EDWIN P. WHIPPLE, AS AN ENGLISH ESSAYIST.

BY PROFESSOR T. W. HUNT, PH. D., L. H. D., PRINCETON COLLEGE.

MR. WHIPPLE, as an American and a man, is so clearly identified with his work as an author, that no estimate of his writings and style should be attempted apart from the fact of such a relationship.

Born in Gloucester, Mass., March 8th, 1819, his comparatively uneventful life ran its serene and even course on to the date of his death, in the city of Boston, June 16th, 1886. The son of Matthew Whipple and of Lydia Gardiner Whipple, he was a descendant of that stern and sterling New England stock which has gone so far toward making the American character of to-day what it is in its solidity and moral force. From Gloucester, we follow him to Salem. Graduating with honor from the English High School of that historic town, we find him, at the early age of fifteen, a clerk in the Bank of General Interest. It was here, while in connection with the Athenæum Library, that we see positive proof of his awakening literary instincts. Already he had read with keenest zest the earlier stories of the gifted Hawthorne, and now that the messengers of that notable novelist were in and out of the Library in the literary service of their master, Whipple the eager and aspiring boy was more than ever alive to all that pertained to books and men of books, and was especially anxious to see in person the face of Hawthorne. It is thus, with a playful and yet a plaintive emphasis, that he writes: "I remember the bandanna handkerchief in which four volumes were punctually returned, and I

saw the same handkerchief enclose the four more volumes asked for, but of Hawthorne in person I could never obtain even a glimpse."

At Boston, in 1837, he again illustrates the suggestive union of business and literature in his character, as Banking House Clerk and Superintendent of the Merchant's Exchange News Room; as a member of the Mercantile Library Association and of a literary club known, at that time, as the "Attic Nights."

Whipple was now thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the author, and felt somewhat as the great Schleiermacher of Germany felt when he declared, that, if he could but give adequate expression to the ideas that agitated him, his life would be a marked success. Reading all that came to his hand, and writing at every available opportunity, he may be said to have gathered up and expressed his best ability in an article on Macaulay, published in the Boston *Miscellany*, February, 1843, and now published as the opening paper of his "Essays and Reviews,"—the opening paper, indeed, of the nine volumes of his collected writings. How striking the coincidence just here, between Whipple's review of Macaulay, written at the age of twenty-four, and Macaulay's review of Milton, written at twenty-five! It was at this time that Whipple may be said to have become identified with the *North American Review*, already a quarter of a century old, and to have given to it, as he received from it, a literary name of high repute. He thus became a member of what Edgar Allan Poe was pleased to call, "that magnanimous cabal which has so long controlled the destinies of American Letters." It was indeed a "magnanimous" and an imposing group of America's foremost men, as it has been, also, for a generation since Whipple added his name and influence to it. With such a list of editors and contributors as Edward Everett, Richard Henry Dana, Irving, Prescott, Sparks, Motley, Emerson, Bancroft, Holmes, Curtis, and

Lowell, criticism and culture were embodied in their supreme forms. Nor was the shy and reticent reviewer of Macaulay a man of an average type among these masters of prose and song, but an author worthy of his company and at home among them when at their best.

Literature was now his profession, as it had always been the choice of his heart, and, from his first accredited critical paper on to the close of his life, he lived and loved to think and read and estimate the merits of authors, and, with pen in hand, to express in wide variety of form the wise reflections of his fertile and active mind. Mr. Whipple, as is known, was not a man of academic training, as were Emerson and Everett and Hawthorne and Longfellow; although, in this particular, he belongs to a goodly fraternity of American authors, made up of such names as Irving and Cooper and Halleck and Bayard Taylor and Howells. Here and there, in his writings, he seems to hit many of our college graduates squarely on the head, and to strike with a relish. Thus, in his paper on Matthew Arnold, he speaks of a class of so-called cultured readers who have gone through college "without having college go through them, and who pride themselves on their culture," the culture, he adds, "of self-importance." In his discussion of "Mental and Moral Pauperism," when treating of the vicious methods of education, so much in vogue, and of the pressing need of capable educators, he writes: "Education in its largest sense includes all the influences which operate on the mind from infancy; but, even in its restricted application to the school and the college, it is heavily responsible for the processes by which mental forces are turned into mental paupers. Vigorous natures break through these impediments and, at last, leave the schools with the possibility of being men, if not scholars." There is no reflection here, or anywhere else in our author's writings, upon liberally educated men and academic methods, but simply an insistence upon the fact that

such men who have been trained on such methods, should be characteristically free from that pride of opinion which is the rightful property of the ignorant and the pedantic, and the first to concede that genius, and, most of all, literary genius, may thrive, as it has historically thriven, outside the limits of collegiate privilege. In this respect, therefore, Whipple was what the old critics would have called, "an untaught writer." In this respect, he was original, self-educated, and unique, and while he lost, as we shall see, thereby, he also gained thereby, in the natural evolution and expression of his mind.

The way is now open for an impartial study and estimate of our author's work as an essayist and critic and American man of letters. The nine volumes of his collected writings, as they lie before us, are as follows: "Essays and Reviews" (2 vols.); "Literature and Life;" "Character and Characteristic Men;" "The Literature of the Age of Elizabeth;" "Success and Its Conditions;" "Outlooks on Society, Literature, and Politics;" "Recollections of Eminent Men;" "American Literature." An edition of Dickens; of the Sermons and Essays of Thomas Starr King; and the preparation, in connection with James T. Fields, of the Family Library of British Poetry, completes the enumeration of his works.

Representing in their pages a period of forty years of mental and literary activity, these volumes reveal to us a province of critical investigation and conclusion as inviting as it is imposing, and one in the rightful examination of which any ingenuous mind must be stimulated, chastened, and ennobled. "What works of Mr. Baxter shall I read?" asked Boswell of Dr. Johnson. "Read any of them," was the answer, "for they are all good." Such are the words approvingly quoted by the poet Whittier in his characteristically brief eulogium of Edwin P. Whipple,—a man, writes Dr. Bartol, "than whom none speaking and writing

the English tongue has done more in our generation to keep the genius and virtue of others fresh in our recollection."

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF STYLE.

I. *Critical Insight.*—Mr. Whipple was, more than anything else, a critical essayist; a critic by preference, profession, and natural aptitude. His various productions as a writer may be said to be included, substantially, in what is known as *Critical Miscellany*, and might all thus be designated by the name given to his earliest collected publications, as "*Essays and Reviews.*" It is thus highly interesting to note that, in his first article of any merit,—that on Macaulay, 1843,—he writes the following sentence: "It is impossible to cast even a careless glance over the literature of the last thirty years, without perceiving the prominent station occupied by critics, reviewers, and essayists," and he significantly adds, "Many of the strongest minds of the age will leave no other record behind them than critical essays and popular speeches." In his paper on "*Coleridge as a Philosophical Critic,*" he renews his discussion of this fruitful theme, and gives expression to ideas and principles well worthy of remembrance and application on the part of every critic of books and authors. No language at his disposal is too strong to use in condemnation of that species of criticism which is nothing more nor less than "*intellectual anatomy,*" and which, as he justly asserts, such a reviewer as Lord Jeffrey signally exhibited. He expresses a fundamental truth when he says, "that Coleridge's mind was eminently interpretative; that he changed criticism from censorship into interpretation; that the form or body of a work of genius he considered as physiognomical of the soul within; and that, when he was dogmatic, his dogmatism was that of knowledge, and not ignorance."

"The first thing to be settled," he profoundly says, "in

reviewing a composition, is its vitality." "Has it life?" It was because Coleridge thus descended to the organic and vital below all that was mechanical and external, that he speaks of him as the redeemer of Shakespearean and general English criticism from the trammels of the schools, and the founder of a new and nobler order of literary judgment. In all this, Whipple reveals a keen and peering critical insight, and amply justifies the tribute paid him by the historian Prescott, as "discriminating and acute." In fine, we are here in the region of criticism, on the side of analytic acumen. Whipple's critical eye was penetrative and interpenetrative. He was possessed of that inwardness of vision and nice discernment of qualities and functions which may be said to indicate the presence of intuitive, as distinct from disciplined, power. His judgment in this regard was innate and connate, rather than developed by the slow process of education and observation. His discussion of the character of Queen Elizabeth and of Elizabethan Letters is of this instinctive order, as is, also, that of "Literature and Life;" of "Character and Characteristic Men." When he tells us that "Tennyson rises but occasionally into that region where Wordsworth permanently dwells;" that "no person can be called educated until he has organized his knowledge into faculty;" that "Hawthorne had spiritual insight, but did not penetrate to the sources of spiritual joy;" and that "Emerson declared that 'Truth is mighty and will prevail,' while Carlyle retorted 'that Truth is mighty and has prevailed,'" we mark the presence of that discriminating view of truth and error which depends for its sagacity and scope more upon the native endowment of the critic as a man, than upon any form or measure of acquired skill. Hence, the clearness and conciseness with which he apprehends and embodies his ideas; the notable absence of the obscure and diffuse. There is nothing here of that mystical and often perplexing vagueness which mars, to some extent,

the suggestive pages of Emerson and Carlyle, Matthew Arnold and De Quincey. The analytical instinct and habit are so pronounced that what is seen is seen clearly, and expressed clearly, and must be accepted or rejected on the face of it as it reads. One may open the essays of the author quite at will to find emphatic endorsement of this habit of clear and clean deliverance of thought. When he writes that "Johnson is big, but Shakespeare is great;" that "Marlowe's Tambourlaine is a strange compound of inspiration and desperation;" that "the first condition of true expression is an effort of mind that restrains, rather than stimulates, fluency;" and that "grit is in the grain of character," we have what the Old English called, telling sentences, carrying their own meaning and cogency with them, and quite without the need of comment.

Much of that pithy, pungent, and antithetical bluntness that is found in Whipple is directly traceable to that acute discernment of mind before whose open vision the truth was vividly palpable. Analytical acuteness in style and authorship has its faults, and may easily be pushed to dangerous extremes, by which its very purpose is defeated. Its excellence, however, consists in this, that it is an ever-present protest against the superficial and obscure; reminds the writer of his errors in the line of the irrelevant, and goes far to lay a safe and stable basis for the best results in literary art. Analysis, moreover, it cannot be too strongly urged, is a mental, and not a merely verbal or dialectic, function; a positive exercise of intellect as an organ of discernment. In treating of the critical quality of Whipple's Prose, special mention must be made of its Candor and Conscientiousness. So ingenuous and impartial was he in the formation and utterance of his judgments, that, in the current acceptance of the term, he was scarcely a critic at all. As an American author has said, "He was intellectual sympathy incarnate," "writing," as Whittier tells us, "with conscience always at

his elbow, and never sacrificing his real convictions for the sake of epigram." That cynicism, and censoriousness, and dogmatic pride of opinion, which has been so frequently exhibited, from the days of the Edinburgh Reviewers to those of Carlyle, is conspicuously absent. So striking is this fairness of dealing, and so strong the author's desire to bring to light the better side of that which came under his censorship, that such a narrow and bitter critic as Poe failed to appreciate it, as he writes of him, "He has been infected with that boast of heresy—the cant of critical Boswellism—by dint of which we are to shut our eyes to all autorial blemishes, and to open them, like owls, to all autorial merits." What more desirable eulogium could be given upon our author's catholicity and moral justness as a critic, than that thus reluctantly given by a poet who wrote so many of his opinions of others with his pen dipped deep in gall, and spoke of "Mr. Longfellow and Other Plagiarists" with contemptuous disdain? It is under the influence of this genial spirit that Whipple condemns the historian Hallam as too unsympathetic. One of his papers is suggestively named, "The Economy of Invective," in which he pleads for its necessary but moderate and kindly exercise. Readers of his review of Matthew Arnold are well aware as to how he deals well-deserved blows at that imperious autocrat of English criticism, in his "moral and intellectual superciliousness." He cannot brook that high conceit with which this English critic assumes the place of a censor and satirizes the Philistines without mercy.

This is not to say that Whipple is not an independent critic, with his own views and his own way of stating them. No critic of his day was more courageous than he. He speaks of Agassiz and Sumner, of Choate and Emerson, as he does, because in science and politics and jurisprudence and literature they did, respectively, their own thinking, and spoke to men straight out from their innermost convictions.

If any one has serious doubts on this point, he has but to read such papers as "The Sale of Souls," "Mental and Moral Pauperism," and "Intellectual Health and Disease," to have all misgivings removed. But Whipple was charitable and appreciative, as well as decisive, and always gave the benefit of the doubt to the subject of his criticism. Those who knew him the best speak of his "singular lowliness" of spirit; of that modesty of bearing and opinion which made him so attractive as a friend; of that "shyness at the core of his being," to which he refers in speaking of Edward Everett, and assert that "he valued only what fault could be found with him."

There are few, if any, passages in his collected works more beautiful in this regard than those we find at the close of his Elizabethan Literature, in which, after reviewing as a critic the different authors of that notable era, the thought of his own imperfections as a man and an author rises vividly to view, and he humiliates himself in penitence and conscious shame at the feet of those whom he has deigned to judge, and who have long since passed, as all must surely pass, into the open presence of the "only infallible critic and judge of works and men." If this is charity and humility at the expense of "even-handed justice," would that English and American Letters had a larger infusion of it.

Before we dismiss the Style of Whipple, on its critical side, it should be especially noted that he was, first and last, a literary critic. A rapid glance at the character of the themes which he chose is sufficient to justify such an assertion. Of the nine volumes of his works, there are no less than five that are distinctively in the line of literary criticism, while each of the remaining four is so largely imbued with this spirit as to make its final effect upon the reader literary in its type and measures. Essays upon "Everett" and "Agassiz," on "Religious and Scientific Theories" and "Young Men in History," while not so pervasively literary

as those on Bacon and Wordsworth and the Old English Dramatists, are sufficiently so to mark them as the written product of a critic who always gave to his criticisms a literary cast, and, as he himself strikingly states it, kept within the "artistic region of principles."

In fine, Whipple never loses sight of the author, in his function as a critic; always subordinates the examination of literary product in the origination of such product; vitally connects the critical and the creative, and ever seeks to confirm the impression that criticism is a means, and not an end, and never reaches its best and most fruitful functions save when it stimulates the authors of a nation to new and nobler endeavors in literary art.

II. We come to a second and equally notable feature of the style of Whipple, in its *Solidity*.

It is substantial and weighty throughout; possessed of much of that suggestiveness on which he placed such high value in the writings of Shakespeare and others. He exhibits, thus, the first feature of the Intellectual Style, in the emphasis of subject-matter over the form or manner in which it is expressed. He had, as a man and a writer, what one of his New England admirers has called, "massive good sense." We can state our meaning at this point in no better way than by saying, that it was quite impossible for Whipple to give utterance to the nonsensical or insignificant. In the strictest etymological usage, he was a sensible writer, full of sense, "immersed in matter," as he affirms was true of Bacon, so that no reader can peruse his pages sympathetically save in a reflective and somewhat inquisitive state of mind. Hence it is that he confined his attention to prose, rather than to verse, and, even in the sphere of prose itself, emphasized those forms and features of it that are meditative and instructive, rather than those lighter forms which have mainly to do with the attractive and pleasurable. However entertaining much of his authorship may be, such a purpose was

never with him a primary one, so eager was he to raise somewhat by his pen the existing level of intelligence, and incite his readers to thoughtful activity.

One of the most striking proofs of this eminently didactic and substantial quality of the style before us is the fact, that, from almost any page of the several volumes of the author, extracts may be taken which are full of mental meaning. In this respect, he is similar in his style to many authors who on other grounds are decidedly his superiors—to Matthew Arnold and Emerson, Holmes and Lowell. A few of these quotable passages must suffice. Of Agassiz he says, "A naturalist pure and simple, he rose into supernaturalism in the most natural way," and "that to be ten minutes in his company was to obtain the strongest argument for the immortality of the soul." Of men of genius he finely remarked, that "they have no fear of death because their souls are thoroughly alive; the idea of death never occurs to a live mind." "How many go down to the grave," he adds, "without having known, during a long life, what thought is. "Error and immorality—two words for one thing, for error is the immorality of the intellect, and immorality the error of the heart." "Great poems are the creations of great individualities." "Great characters are those within whom the celestial city is actually organized." "The moment a scientific man begins to bluster about his discoveries and call them, my truth, it is all over with him." Writing of the pure-minded Hooker, he says, "We feel that he has communed with all the principles he communicates."

Such are a few of these salient and seminal utterances,—concise and condensed up to the limit of verbal and mental terseness; so matterful as to demand serious study on the part of the reader, as also, in their fertility of suggestion, to repay any measure of attention which is given them. At this point, it would not be amiss to characterize the style under criticism as the *teaching* style—the art and language

of authorship as instruction, ever intent upon the communication of truth for the truth's sake. Whipple's style is, in the best sense, educating and educational, imparting knowledge, and evolving faculty, and never, for a moment, losing sight of the tuitional function of the author as an expositor of truth. It is just here, beyond question, that our author justifies himself in dealing so frequently with what are termed practical, everyday themes, as in his volumes on "Success and Its Conditions," "Outlooks on Society and Politics," "Literature and Life." He is attracted to them by reason of their substantial and instructive character, and seeks to maintain, in his maturest years, that close relationship between books and men, authorship and common activities, which he so fitly maintained, in earlier days, at Gloucester and Salem and Boston. As Dr. Bartol tells us, "He was a thinker living in the thick of affairs;" was never so absorbed as a writer as to forget his duties as a patriot, and felt bound, when he wrote, to exalt the substantial above the visionary, or even imaginative, and to say what he said chiefly to accomplish some salutary effect. One of the prime reasons why the style before us may safely be studied by the English writer of to-day is found in the fact, that Whipple never wrote for the mere sake of writing; never reduced verbal expression to what he justly calls "word-piling;" never confined literature within the narrow circle of the Fine Arts, but wrote as a teacher of truth for minds in quest of truth, and therefore wrote solidly and practically. "Nothing succeeds," he tells us, "that is not based on reality." Words, he insists, are valueless, save as they afford a something in which "thought can be embodied and embrained." Trimmers of the truth he despised, as he did all that was artificial and that was accomplished by the "tricks of imagination." He thoroughly believed in the supremacy of Common Sense in the domain of letters; took exception, at times, to Hawthorne's prose, because it was undernatural; sharply

demurs to many of Matthew Arnold's sentences, because they mean nothing, and seem to be used for negative ends, and cannot too strongly commend those writers and styles and books and literatures in which thought is uttered, naturally and fully, for the sake of the thought, and to add to the sum-total of known truth.

III. A further and final feature of Whipple's style is its *Sedateness*. An appreciative study of his portrait as given us in his "Recollections of Eminent Men," is enough in itself to lead us to expect an order of style characteristically marked by sobriety. As we examine it closely, in its serene and gracious expressiveness, we can well endorse the eulogium of another, "that he was an unworldly man of the world," and trace in his clear-cut facial lineaments many of those benign and lofty qualities that mark the features of Whittier and Milton and the spiritual-eyed Emerson. So as to his themes, so significantly serious, as in his volume on "Character and Characteristic Men," and in those especially ethical papers of which each of the several volumes of his works is seen to have its share. We may fittingly say of him, as he so beautifully says of Hooker, "that his mind gravitates to truth." He illustrates that "intellectual character and conscientiousness" in speaking of which he never wearies; "that passage of holiness into intelligence," which, as seen in any book or author, is enough to evoke his highest eulogium. He laments that Shakespeare, great as he was, "exercised his genius in the creation of no character in which religious passion is dominant;" remarks, in writing of Bacon, that "the intellectual eye is no substitute for conscience;" and repudiates with scorn the pretensions of those so-called "spiritualists" whose dominant quality of character is the love of the carnal.

Few things awakened more fully his personal indignation than the undevout manner in which the majority of the scientists of his time approached and discussed the serious ques-

tions that lay before them; and the special reason for his fondness for Agassiz as a man and a scientist is found in the fact, that that great investigator of natural law always conducted his researches in the reverential spirit, and never pressed, or wished to press, his inquiries so far as to push the Creator outside of the creation. Few more fitting and practical rebukes to the untheistic and irreverent methods of many scientific students could be found than those given us by the sober-minded essayist in such papers as "Religious and Scientific Theories," "Intellectual Health and Disease," "Recollections of Agassiz," and "The Derivation of Man." His profound admiration for such authors as Hooker and Milton and Wordsworth and Emerson, and his profound condemnation of such as Marlowe and Byron and Bulwer, is but the natural outcome of his intense ethical convictions as to what an author of right ought to be. His main objection to Matthew Arnold is that "no one has been led to act nobly by any inspiration derived from his books," while he is bold enough to speak of Thackeray's "pervading scepticism" as the governing error of his works.

Readers have been impressed with the pronounced satirical element in the writings of Whipple. The explanation is easy to find in the deep ethical instincts and tendencies of his nature. He could in no wise brook what he tersely called the "deception of dignity" or "the trappings of pretence." It was because of his inborn honesty of heart that ingenuous natures were attracted to him and found in him so choice a friend. So strongly did the main currents of his being set toward goodness, and so revolting to him was the presence of evil under the guise of goodness, that he is obliged to forsake, at the time, the established forms of direct address, and resort to the most trenchant invective against the wrong. As far back as his early manhood in 1840, in the very year of his majority, he penned a satirical poem for the Literary Association of which he was a member,

and from that time on never failed when occasion demanded it, to protest and denounce in the intensest language of rebuke. In such papers as "Eccentric Characters," "The Sensational in Literature and Life," "The Romance of Rascality," "The Croakers of Society and Literature," "The Ludicrous Side of Life," "The Ethics of Popularity," and "The Sale of Souls," he exhibits sterling specimens of the satirical in combination often with the grotesque and humorous. His very wit was ethical, the expression, in playful form, of the serious side of his nature, if so be, by this exceptional and attractive method, he could effect his beneficent ends when other methods might fail. Some of these ironical utterances will repay citation; as, when he speaks of those "authorlings who mistake indigestion for inspiration." In his paper on Dickens, when alluding to those who substituted an unhealthful sentiment in fiction for open immorality, he tells us that "the dynasty of rakes was succeeded by the dynasty of flats," and that the "drawing-room and the boudoir, white waistcoats and top-boots," were their inspiring themes. Once and again he mercilessly satirizes those who, while "observing the proprieties of piety, practise the precepts of atheism," "the linen decencies of their behavior contrasting strangely with the coarse vices of their conduct." Equally severe is he against any "suspension of the damnatory clauses of a creed, out of respect to eminent individuals who can give benefices, if they cannot practise duties," as also, against what he styles "the strut and bluster of Mediocrity." What we are presenting as the ethical seriousness of the style of Whipple expressed in satirical form is, perhaps, nowhere better illustrated than in those pungent sentences which we find in his paper on Agassiz, in which he is contrasting that modest spirit of inquiry which the great Swiss-American so signally manifested with that haughtiness of spirit which those scientific Frenchmen evinced whose very "valets" considered belief in God as the mark of a vul-

gar mind, and who, at last, felt themselves compelled, in the interests of advanced thinking, "to withdraw their patronage from the Deity."

Here we reach and touch the very quick of Mr. Whipple's life and character and style as a writer. It is found in his pervasive moral earnestness,—the explanation of his candor and impartiality as a critic, of his solid and instructive method of teaching, and of those decisive and well-directed onslaughts which he made upon whatsoever he deemed to be iniquitous. Of his religious antecedents and religious life, he said but little, and but little of it is a matter of history; but a more devout and spiritually minded author it would be difficult to find in the annals of New England. In sympathy, denominationally, with the beliefs and worship of the Unitarian Order, his large catholic nature claimed moral kinship with all sincere believers, and, in matters of religion, as well as in those of literature and common life, he ever subordinated the letter to the spirit. In fine, authorship with him was more than a profession or secular vocation: it was a sacred responsibility and trust, for the rightful acceptance and fulfilment of which he felt himself amenable to God and man. Rarely has an author lived and worked among us who was less ostensibly under the governance of personal and legitimate ambitions in letters. Sensitive as to literary repute, as he was; untiring in the use of every agency by which his thought might find outlet and impression among his fellows; keenly alive to all those healthful competitions that were so pronounced within the gifted circle of which he was a member,—he was still immeasurably above them all; a man more than an author, a servant of truth more than a teacher of truth, and ever intent, by voice and pen, upon raising the prevailing standard of contemporary thought and life. Rarely has a man better known his scope and mission, and more quietly and faithfully fulfilled it. Rarely has a writer been truer to his best ability, and to

the generation in which Providence has placed him, and no American essayist, we are safe in saying, is found to be more humble and open hearted than he, in the presence of any alleged defect of style and character.

#### THE LIMITATIONS OF WHIPPLE AS AN ENGLISH WRITER.

In the line of those limitations that are distinctively literary, it may be truthfully affirmed, that Whipple's imagination was not of the highest order. It cannot be said to have been constructive and creative in that pronounced sense which is true of some other authors. There is little in it that is Shakespearean or Miltonic in its character. Though in his diction, method, and general style, he is always elevated, he is rarely, if ever, sublime and inspiring, so that we rise aloft, and are borne along, by the majestic sweep of his imaginative power. If we contrast the manner in which Carlyle discusses the subject of Heroic Character with that in which Whipple discusses it, or the manner in which Emerson discusses it, we at once perceive the difference between the lower and the higher functions of imagination in prose expression.

So as to the impassioned element on its literary side. The sphere of satirical invective apart, in which the author reveals in the form of indignant rebuke the existence of vigorous emotional life; there is but little evidence in the style before us of passion on the side of a deep and sustained and an all-controlling pathos; of that resistless ebb and flow and tidal rush of feeling which is the property of the greatest masters of prose and verse. There is but little of "that gush of the heart into the brain," that emotional intensity of utterance, and that inspiring dramatic movement of mind and heart, which always carries stimulus and impulse with it. Often on the very verge of this special type of impassioned expression, the border line is rarely crossed over into the province of passion in its most pronounced phases, where

human feeling rises to the level of inspiration. So, also, as to ease and freedom of movement, we mark, at times, this literary restriction. The author is not always or frequently found working in "that free heaven of art" of which he speaks to us. We often crave the spontaneous and exuberant manner at the author's hand, when we find the cautious, reserved, and measured manner; careful to a fault lest the strict proprieties of literary procedure should be offended. In fine, the essayist is too often prominent over the writer, the teacher over the author, the critic over the man; so that what we find of flexibility of touch, and facility of utterance, and general grace of word and phrase, in such standard names as Lamb and Macaulay, Irving and Holmes, we fail to find, in any pronounced degree, in the volumes before us. The art of Whipple on its literary side is that of Hooker and Bacon and Samuel Johnson, and rarely that of De Quincey and Addison and Matthew Arnold.

When we leave the sphere of the literary and come into the region of the logical, we mark in Whipple the undoubted presence of limitation. We fail to detect, as we read his papers, the superintending presence of a pre-arranged and all-embracing plan. We have to advance but a short distance ere we note the want of that unity of design, method, and ultimate purpose which we are wont to regard as an essential element in prose expression. The author, in his paper on the poet Spenser, justly remarks of the "Faerie Queen," "that the parts organically conceived are not organically related; that there is no such vital combination of them as would convey unity of impression." It is this lack of logical and vital combination that the careful critic notes in Whipple, and hence a lack of progressive and cumulating effect. The author himself seems to be aware of this, and is anxious to anticipate and remove any consequent objection that may be made. In more than one of his Prefaces he tells us that his papers were prepared "without any view

to their connected publication;" that, as he attempts to collect them, he finds that "they refer, more or less," to some one generic idea. Thus it is that, in the same volume, we have discussions of "Panics and Investments," "Domestic Service," "The Swearing Habit," and "Lowell as a Prose Writer;" in another, "Shoddy," and the "Genius of Dickens;" and in another, "Intellectual Character." It is of this very "lack of logical order" he is speaking, as he says of Emerson "that much criticism has been wasted in showing that his sentences are connected by mere juxtaposition, and not by logical relation, and that at the end we have no perception of a series of thought leading up to a clear idea of the general theme." "Such criticism," he adds, is "just," and far juster, it may be still added, in the case of Mr. Whipple, with whom it is more dangerous than with Emerson to ignore the demands of a logical sequence of thought, and allow his suggestions on the various topics examined, to take their place at random, quite independent of any specific prevision on the writer's part. It is just here, and for the first time, that the question rises into prominence, as to the possible reference of this unlogical habit of mind and art, to the author's want of a liberal training in his earlier years—the failure to pass through the continuous training of those disciplinary studies which serve to develop the logical faculties, and hold the author closely to the principles of unity and continuity in style. We are thus led to state what must be regarded as the most emphatic limitation of our author. We may term it limitation of thought and scope. He had not that breadth of faculty of which he speaks when discussing the Elizabethan writers. He was devoid of that "mental space" which he found in Coleridge as a philosophical writer and Shakespearean critic. His intellectual area was not spacious, and capacious, and ever broadly widening, in the sense in which this is true of Emerson. Nor is it meant by this that he did not examine as a writer

a wide variety of topics, and in the discussion of such topics did not exhibit them with some diversity of form and method, but rather that he often failed to write on comprehensive themes, in a comprehensive way; failed to grasp them in their totality, and multiform relations to other truths. At this point he is a discursive or an excursive writer, rather than a comprehensive one; versatile rather than original; possessed of more insight than outlook; microscopic rather than telescopic; and, while able to grasp a subject with a good degree of intellectual vigor, not always able to follow it on, and follow it up, in all its numerous bearings and out-reachings, and thus reveal what he has fittingly called "its aptitudes and affinities." Interpretative, as an author, rather than inventive; with pronounced ability this side of genius; too circumscribed in range and function to be an undisputed and unapproachable master of expression, he yet, as we have seen, had special gifts and special capabilities, and holds to-day a permanent place of high repute in American Life and Letters. If closely pressed to an avowal as to just where that place may be said to be, we answer, Right next to the first of Modern English and American Essayists, though not the first,—standing, in all justice, closely near the border of that "charmed circle" where the masters have stood and now stand. Speaking of Sir William Hamilton and Daniel Webster, our author says, he "should hesitate to call them creative thinkers, and equally hesitate to place them in point of greatness below any but creative thinkers of the first class." Somewhat so, as we judge, must we speak of Whipple, whom we may assign without hesitation, to the topmost place in the second order of our modern authors. Not a great writer, as Goethe and Pascal and Emerson are great, his relation to the growth of American Literary Criticism is so intimate; his ability within his legitimate sphere is so positive and pronounced; and the sum total of his influence upon modern thought and life so

substantive and expressive, that his sterling work and characteristics must be duly acknowledged. Always instructive though rarely brilliant; always an interesting writer though not a popular writer; critically acute though not possessed of philosophic breadth of view; obedient, at every point, to the high demands of literary taste though not a literary artist of supremest form and function, and without a superior, in his day or since, in the ethical energy of his prose, we place him, with Coleridge and Thomas Arnold, with Lord Brougham and Sir William Hamilton, with Alexander Hamilton and Rufus Choate, among those "Eminent Men" of whom he so suggestively and sympathetically speaks.

We note, as a final word, the important relation which such an author holds to the developing literary interests of our time, and, most especially, to young men and aspiring authors, as a safe and stimulating guide.

Whipple was a pupil of no literary school, and left no school behind him, and yet, but few writers can be cited who are more normal and healthful in type than was he, and whom it would be less dangerous to accept as a model of clear and cogent English. He was signally free from prevailing extremes, denouncing "malignant reform and stupid conservatism;" absolutely free, as a writer, from that despondent and somewhat sceptical tone that the reader so clearly discerns in the pages of George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, Carlyle and Goethe. He evinced that "equilibrium of the mind's powers and passions" which is one of the surest signs of intellectual health and power; that serene and stable equanimity of thought and temper that is as beneficent as it is pleasing, and which makes it safe for the student of style to aim judiciously to reproduce it. The tonic influence of such high-minded authors as these cannot be estimated; needed, as never before, in these restless and despondent days with their ever stronger tendency toward the superficial and sceptical in the domain of authorship, and where, most

especially, such men as Whipple are needed to remind authors and readers once again of the fact that the first requisite to the highest results in letters is vigor of thought and vigor of conscience—a valid something to say, and a valid purpose in saying it. Even in literature itself, there are some elements more important than those that are specifically literary, and these, as Whipple unceasingly insists, are the educational and the ethical. Mind and moral purpose first and, after these, in due succession, taste and art and æsthetic grace, and this is a succession upon the due adjustment and observance of which, as we must believe, the very existence of Modern Letters, as a helpful factor in the progress of the race, necessarily depends.

It was because the clear-minded and clear-eyed Whittier detected, at the outset, in the character and work of Whipple, this mental and moral soundness, that he chose him instinctively as a life-long friend, and gratefully commended him, as an author, to his own and to every succeeding generation.

Whittier and Whipple, the Poet and the Essayist—the impersonations of character and culture in vital combination. What better can be desired for the developing interests of American Verse and Prose than that they be committed, without reserve, to the safe and sacred guardianship of authors such as these!