

**ESSAYS ON STYLE,
RHETORIC,
AND LANGUAGE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649577033

Essays on Style, Rhetoric, and Language by Thomas De Quincey & Fred N. Scott

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THOMAS DE QUINCEY & FRED N. SCOTT

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THOMAS DE QUINCEY

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EDITED

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

FRED N. SCOTT, Ph.D.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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Boston

ALLYN AND BACON

1898

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PREFACE.

RHETORIC, in spite of the attention which in every age of the world has been earnestly bestowed upon it, is probably to-day the most belated of the sciences. For this the text-books must to some extent be held responsible. They all, good and bad, have a depressing air of fixity and finality. The principles of expression, we are told, were all discovered hundreds of years ago, they are rigid and inalterable, not to say sacred, and the student who lays violent hands upon them is liable to the charge of presumption and want of reverence. Teaching like this, in flat contradiction to the scientific spirit, has done much to check independence of inquiry and restrict the field of research. This state of affairs, however, cannot long endure. There are signs, such as the introduction of the study of literary criticism into the college curriculum, and the investigation of what are properly questions of rhetoric, in the psychological laboratories, which indicate that old prejudices are in process of breaking down and must ultimately be swept away. It is to take advantage of this change of front as well as to help bring it about, that the publication of this little series has been undertaken. As soon as the scientific point of view is assumed, the history of contributions to the subject becomes of great importance. In such a history, the two preceding issues, Lewes's 'Principles of Success in Literature' and Spencer's 'Philosophy of Style,' will surely find a place, and with them must be ranked the essays of De Quincey which

make up the present volume. Other of De Quincey's essays, as for example those on 'Greek Tragedy' and 'Conversation,' and the whole series of papers included under the head 'Literary Criticism' in the American edition of De Quincey's works, might properly have been included; but on the whole it seemed better to restrict the selection to those essays which deal directly with the theory of literature, and to throw into an appendix such passages from his other writings as will be of most assistance to the student.

The materials for the study of De Quincey's life, style, and ideas, now exist in abundance. The definitive edition of his works is that of Masson, in fourteen volumes, with a good index. The essays on 'Style,' 'Rhetoric,' and 'Language' will be found in Vol. X., that on 'The English Language,' in Vol. XIV. The introduction in Vol. X. deals briefly with De Quincey's theories, and long footnotes on p. 82-87 discuss special points with regard to his interpretation of Aristotle's 'Rhetoric.' The best biography is that of A. H. Japp ('H. A. Page'), recently reissued in a single volume. Masson has written the volume in the English Men of Letters series, and Leslie Stephen the exhaustive article in the 'Dictionary of English Biography.' A very readable little book is 'Personal Recollections of Thomas De Quincey,' by J. R. Findlay, who is also author of the article 'De Quincey' in the last edition of the 'Encyclopedia Britannica.' De Quincey's own 'Autobiography' and 'London Reminiscences,' as well as the more strictly autobiographical passages of the 'Confessions,' should not be overlooked. Much correspondence has recently been edited by Dr. Japp in his 'De Quincey Memorials.' On De Quincey's style and writings, aside from what is to be found in the volumes just cited, may be mentioned Leslie Stephen's article in 'Hours in a Library,' 1st series, p. 349 (reprinted from *Fortnightly* 15: 310), Minto's sketch in his 'Manual of English Prose

Preface.

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Literature,' p. 31-76, Shadworth Hodgson's 'Genius of De Quincey' in 'Outcast Essays,' p. 1-98, and Masson's essay in his 'Essays, chiefly on English Poets.' Less important articles will be found in *Macmillan's* 62: 101 by George Saintsbury (reprinted in 'Essays in English Literature'); *Fraser's* 62: 781, 63: 51, by 'H. W. S.,' *Atlantic* 12: 345, by H. M. Alden; *Atlantic* 40: 569, by G. P. Lathrop; *North American Review* 74: 425, by S. G. Brown; *North American Review* 88: 113, by G. S. Phillips; *Blackwood's* 122: 717; *British Quarterly* 20: 163, 38: 1; *Westminster* 61: 519.

As in the previous issues, the introduction and notes are intended to reinforce, not to forestall, the researches of the student.

FRED N. SCOTT.

ANN ARBOR, Feb. 18, 1883.



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