STYLE IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING.

The conductors of this journal have had for more than a year an opportunity to judge of the literary aptitudes of the scientific writers of this country. The pecuniary resources of *Science* have been sufficient to enable the editor to pay suitably for accepted contributions: his correspondents have been sought in all the places of intellectual activity in this country. Young writers and old, men of fame and the obscure, have all been welcomed as helpers, provided they had any thing worth saying. It is not for us to pronounce upon the results which have been attained, but it may be worth while for us to point out how our friends and helpers can make this journal still more acceptable to those who read it.

We begin with a general principle. One of the results of scientific study is to make men accurate, to encourage exactness in thought and expression. The first quality, therefore, to be desired in scientific writing, is trustworthiness; and, without it, all other merits are of no account. On this point we have no suggestions to make; for our writers, as a class, are men whose statements of fact may be taken with the greatest confidence.

But in addition to accuracy, scientific writing should be in good form. Indeed, proper attention to literary requirements will promote rather than embarrass the desired precision. One of the clearest and most acceptable writers on scientific subjects told us, in reply to the inquiry how it was that he made himself so easily understood on difficult points, that it was because, before addressing a mixed assembly on any abstruse or complex theme, he took great pains to find in advance just the words and the phrases which conveyed his meaning. Certainly one reason why the writings of Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, Tyndall, and Lubbock, — to specify only foreign writers, — have been so widely read, is that their language is so good. It is easy to understand their meaning, for they comply with the well-known law of a well-known authority on style; the desideratum, he tells us, is "so to present ideas that they may be apprehended with the least possible mental effort." We are inclined to add to this dictum of Herbert Spencer the declaration that a good style will exact that amount of attention which animates without fatiguing the reader. Verbosity, awkwardness, undue con ness, forgetfulness of the reader's attitude ors into which it is easy to fall: clearn ss, grace, are merits which it is hard . e. That which stimulates further though., and invites to continued reading, is the kind of article most to be desired.

Those writers will do best who keep constantly in mind the audience they are called upon to address. *Science* is not a journal for any class of specialists. It is not published for the sole benefit of the entomologist, or the electrician, or the geometer, or the morphologist, but for the perusal of all such persons, and also of teachers, librarians, engineers, physicians, editors, lawyers, clergymen, and other intelligent and educated men and women who wish to keep informed upon the progress of scientific discovery in all its general aspects, and who wish to be directed to more detailed statements if they have occasion to seek for special information. These pages should present articles so trustworthy, and at the same time so readable, and from writers of such acknowledged ability, that every educated person will be obliged to keep his eye upon all that we print, particularly if he is engaged in any pursuit connected with science.

This is the aim of the conductors of this journal. But such a purpose can never be fulfilled without the hearty co-operation of all the leading scientific men of the country. No editorial staff, however large and complete, can possibly prepare the requisite articles. All that we can do is to call forth, arrange, adjust, amend, and edit that which is produced in the various laboratories, studies, museums, colleges, and technical schools of the country.

Our contributors must, however, remember that the editorial judgment calls for articles by leaders in one department which will be satisfactory to men of intelligence in other departments. As a general rule, the chemist must write so that the biologist may understand him; the mathematician must keep his language of symbols for his own pages, and present us only the conclusions which are of general interest.

But there are limitations to this general principle. There are some announcements so important, or so new, that we shall gladly open our columns to them, in whatever form they are made. Contributions which bring out for the first time important discoveries and researches will always be welcomed, even though they are technical. Words are constantly migrating from the domain of the specialist into that of the general reader. The progress of information rapidly tends to familiarize the public with the scientific vocabulary. It is not against the use of fit words that this article is directed, but against the abstruse, complex, scholastic diction, which any writer may turn, if he will, into clear and accurate English.