

is the perfecting of himself in English Composition, will find his labour abridged by familiarizing himself with the thoughts and modes of expressions of some of our best British authors.* Let me advise you, then, gentlemen, frequently to read leisurely and with attention, not for information merely, but with a view to the style and manner, portions of our most approved writers. You can be at no loss here, if you have access to any of the accomplished authors to whom we have just referred. It is not so much the quantity that is read which leads to excellence, as the manner of reading. This cannot be too much kept in mind in an age when reading has degenerated into a kind of mental dissipation.— There is a brief sentence which I have met with somewhere, of Lord Bacon's, well worthy of the attention of every student who aspires after the cultivation of his mental powers. I quote it from memory. "Read not for the purpose of finding matter to cavil at, or to confute, neither to assent to, and take for granted, neither to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider." And here I cannot omit noticing a practice recommended by several respectable writers, and which will be found to be only a following out of the principle we have now recommended, of improving our taste and style, by setting before ourselves the most approved authors as patterns we are to imitate, or, it may be, to rival and surpass. The practice I now allude to is, to prosecute a series of translations into our own language, of some good English author, until we have made his excellences all our own. Among others; Franklin recommends this to young men. It was his custom, when a boy, he tells us, to select a passage generally from the writings of Addison, to read it over with care once or oftener, and after he had apprehended the meaning, to close the book, lay it aside, and some days afterwards, when he could not be supposed to remember the precise words, to sit down and write in his own language fully and accurately the sentiments of the author, and then to judge of his performance by a comparison with the original. This practice has several recommendations.— First. It tends to form in the young student a habit of thoughtful reading, which is a matter of great importance in mental training. Second. It provides against that complaint which is often made by young students when required to compose, namely, that they have no ideas; and third, as we suppose the model author to be one approved both for moral and intellectual excellence, the student has a safe guide on entering the field of speculative science, and will thus be guarded against aberrations at a period in his mental history when he is prone to fall into them. Another writer of distinguished authority also recommends the practice we have just noticed, to all young men who are any way ambitious of excelling

* The Author need scarcely add, that to the professional student he considers the study of the classical writers of Greece and Rome, of very great importance.