

approve Pope's trite verso "True ease in writing comes from art not chance."

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The question therefore forces itself upon us: Is there in the English course sufficient demands made upon the student in the way of original work. For one who has in mind the weekly essays of the Freshman and the monthly of the Sophomore year, it were scarcely possible to reply in the negative; and yet it does seem that an improvement might be made. The student upon entering college looks ahead and says: "I will not have to stand before the public till the junior year. No need of giving much attention to the essays yet. Plenty of time." Were he expected towards the close of the first year, to read a brief paper before his own class, the most careless would toil to acquit himself creditably. One essay written under such conditions, outweighs in care and time of preparation, and in consequent benefit to the student a half-score of the average weekly productions. Again, the members of the second year, are required to come before the college with school-boy declamations. The development of this Sophomore exhibition into the presentation of original work by the members of the class, while removing the reflection which seems now to be cast upon their literary ability would at the same time afford a sure guarantee of assiduous practice in anticipation of that very event. It is for the majority of students a true though apparently a sweeping statement that an exhibition of such a nature is calculated to ensure as much training in English composition as the whole course of monthly essays. It may be too late this year to provide for the changes here suggested, but whatever determines the closer study of English can be instituted none too early.

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Class '88 on the day of their graduation offered to the writer of the best series of essays a money prize open for competition to all but the Seniors. That class in praiseworthy action judged rightly as to the preeminence of English. Rightly also judged they that for most students the spur of a laudable ambition is in writing a potent factor to the out-put of every energy. Will not others of our old graduates take to themselves the responsibility of providing permanent prizes for original literary work in all the classes?

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What shall be said then concerning the innovation which permits but one essay to be delivered in the

closing exercises of the Seminary graduating class? The custom has been for several members of this class to read original papers on the occasion of receiving their diplomas, a custom which no doubt afforded a healthful inspiration to the assiduous practice of the writing of English. What a stimulus in the thought that upon the last night the public were to become the judges of their literary skill. A dread incubus this to the careless—a pleasing anticipation to the toilsome—but to both the very strongest work-incentive.

For some inexplicable reason or whim there was introduced last year an innovation distasteful to those immediately concerned, disappointing to a large audience which always honors the occasion, and—if it prove a permanent arrangement—blighting in its effect upon the practice of English composition in the Seminary. Of the young ladies one only was selected to read a paper. We would hope that a speedy return may be made to the old and better custom: for its beneficial effects upon the institution are two-fold—direct, in the advertisement which the exhibition itself contains of the excellent training here obtainable; indirect, as intimated above, in the increased culture it brings to the young ladies who will themselves be looked upon by the world at large as representatives of their Alma Mater.

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In public speakers the art of writing will not atone for weak and inelegant use of extempore language. Manuscripts may serve a very good purpose in their place. That place assuredly is not before an audience. Spurgeon doesn't *read* his sermons. The successful advocates at the bar are not the men unskilled in off-hand expression. But power in this direction is acquired only at the price of frequent and persistent practice, for which in the class-meetings and the Athenæum there are provided excellent opportunities. Here there is a minimum of criticism—no one expects to see full-fledged orators. In a word, the most fitting time to commence speaking is during the student days. Let none of our young men make the mistake of supposing that the word orator is synonymous with essay-reader.

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A HEALTHY enthusiasm is a good thing. It lifts its possessor from the slough of dismal monotony. To say that this is the only distinctive feature between the man of power, and others would perhaps be too much. It may however be