

of language outside of that which is familiar to the ordinary mind; but the number of obsolete words among the older writers is not as large as the number of new and unusual words introduced by many recent writers. Ease of comprehension depends upon simplicity of expression. When this simplicity is carried too far, as was the case occasionally with Wordsworth, the result is puerile. An author who feels strongly what he has to say will always use simple words. Where mere beauty is sought, there must be involved forms of expression that cannot be appreciated without careful examination. A student can always comprehend a grand thought expressed in familiar language much more readily than one possessing a beauty which is largely due to elaboration in its structure.

The modern tendency is to elaboration. This is owing to various causes: to periodical writing, which is paid for by the column; to want of leisure, when leisure is absolutely necessary in order to equal previous literary work; to the undue haste which the public demand seems to require; and, perhaps too frequently, to a lack of intense conceptions.

Ideas are comparatively few in number; their forms of expression, almost infinite. What has been admirably said once, especially when the thought was fresh and strong, can never be improved upon. If we master that original expression, we not only add to our stock of knowledge, but also acquire the capacity to judge how well others have uttered the same thought.

What authors are our greatest representatives? Unquestionably Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Bacon and Milton. Any teacher or student who becomes familiar with the best works of these writers, will acquire a mastery of the language which no other study can give him. With this knowledge, in all subsequent reading and study, the constant allusions to their works, the numerous quotations, and the more frequent references which take for granted a certain definite knowledge of them, will be as familiar as the alphabet. Further; as these authors use English words in their primitive meanings, the study of their works is the shortest and most effective way of securing a large vocabulary of the very best words in the language.

But perhaps the greatest benefit of all is in the opportunity they give for making English literature a genuine study, as certain a means of development as even the mathematics. This