

make it a daily task—no day without a line. But it may be asked, on what subject are we to write? And I answer, that this must be left very much to the taste of the individual. One remark, however, may occur to yourselves from what I have said above—it should be a subject with which your minds are thoroughly acquainted—for no solecism can be greater than this, to attempt to explain what we do not understand. The daily press may be viewed as giving us a contemporaneous history of the sayings and doings of the leading men in the world. Suppose, then, that the student has been reading the oration of some statesman in behalf of a public or patriotic measure, or of some eminent lawyer in a case of special interest—here, then, is a subject which he has selected for himself—and let him carefully consider all the facts and circumstances which such professional men bring under his attention, the argument or series of arguments by which they wish to carry conviction to those they are addressing, and after he has so digested them in his mind that he comprehends their whole scope and bearing, let him write out a narrative of the case according to that order which appears to him most natural. I cannot, therefore, but think that the complaint which is sometimes made by young students, that they find great difficulty in getting a subject on which to write, may be obviated by calling them to reflect on subjects with which they are daily conversant. But perhaps it may be your wish to have a different choice. You have not confidence enough in your own powers to write on law or public policy even though daily reading about both. Well, then, let us try another class of subjects. It has been frequently observed, that conversation proceeds with most vigor when some controverted point is under discussion. The idea of opposition whets men's faculties, and on occasions of this kind an amount of art and eloquence is elicited which we should have sought for in vain had no controversy arisen. The same principle, I think, applies to composition; and I would advise those of you to whom the exercise above alluded to may appear less suitable, to select the alternative in a question of no great difficulty, and to write in defence of it as fully and clearly as you are able. I need scarcely submit to you any list of questions, as these may be trivial or important, according to the age and mental progress of the student. I would not wish, however, to pass over a very important remark of Dr. Blair's, that students should be careful always to choose that side of the question to which in their own judgment they are most inclined, and defend it by no other arguments than those which they believe to be solid. I have known teachers also recommend their students to write a narrative of the life of some distinguished individual for the purpose of introducing them to the practice of composing; and here I may observe, you have an ample field from which to make your choice; for besides the many special biogra-

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