

with freedom, that great instrument of thought, the English language. I stated also that that quality which was looked upon as a great grace in writing, namely, the simple and the natural, was really the result of much study and practice—that in truth the one great object of the teacher who professes to give instruction in this branch of knowledge, is just to teach the art of using language as a translucent medium for reflecting the perfect lineaments of thought and feeling—consequently, other things being equal, he is really the most natural writer of letters who has cultivated the powers of taste and language with the greatest success. And I concluded with observing, that in order the more efficiently to initiate you into the art of writing well, it was my purpose to prescribe a weekly exercise which you would be expected carefully to write, and that thus I felt confident you would acquire, in the course of your attendance at this class, a facility of expressing yourselves in writing clearly and copiously on any given subject. And now, in the prosecution of what I intimated in my former Lecture, I proceed to bring before you some observations as to the best method of acquiring a good English style.

1. The first grand requisite to which I desire to call your attention is, that you *read always the best and most approved authors*. A great part of our most important knowledge is learned by a process of imitation. For example, it is in this way that a child comes to acquire the art of expressing his wants and feelings by means of articulate language. In the early stage of his being, he seems as incapable of speech as any of the inferior animals. He has no other way of communicating his wants to those about him than in the way they adopt, by means of cries or other outward signs. In the course of time, however, by hearing his parents addressing him, or conversing together in articulate speech, his mind is excited by the pleasing sounds, and he attempts to imitate with his own lips that which he hears from the lips of others. In this instance we see how strong are those powers of imitation, seeing they develop themselves as if spontaneously at the most tender age—and by means of these the child is enabled to furnish himself with the gift of articulate speech—thus raising himself to a higher state of intellectual existence. And not only are these powers of imitation strong, they are also delicately accurate. Not only does the child learn the gift of articulate speech from his parents, but he learns it in the very dialect they use, however unseemly it may be,—nay, more, he acquires their exact mode of expression and intonation,—so that in one generation, you have a pretty exact transcript, generally speaking, of that which went before.—Now these powers of imitation do not belong exclusively to infancy. In point of fact, we are ever more or less under their influence; and

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