

THE SECRET OF GOOD WRITING.—The grand secret of good writing seems to be in this very simple maxim: Be sure you have an idea before you attempt to express it. If you clearly comprehend in your own mind what you wish to communicate, nature and reason, together with a little practice, will most certainly teach you how to say it in an appropriate manner.

A single idea is fully sufficient for one mind to manage at one time. And it may be added that if the idea is of much importance, it would be the most dignified by being honored with a private carriage.

Divide and conquer is as valuable a rule in literary as in military tactics. The more extensive the theme which the writer proposes to himself to discuss, the less, usually, he has to say upon it. Some subjects can be mastered with ease only by descending from generals to particulars, and treating of the subjects in their individual parts.

There is nothing more popular, especially with young writers, than brilliancy of style. This manner of writing is certainly excellent in its proper place, but there are many topics which do not require this quality, and many are much injured by it. The language of every dissertation should be that which is best calculated to express the thoughts in the happiest manner.

As the ray of the sun will not enkindle a blaze unless brought to a focus, so the thoughts of the writer will not set the hearts of his readers on fire, unless all are made to converge to a single point.

Some writers seem unable to express themselves in a cool rational manner on any subject. With them every virtue is God-like, every fault villainy, every breeze a tempest, every molehill a mountain. They appear to think their manner of writing is sublimity; but their judicious readers (if they have any such) call it tragedy and absurdity.

The design of language gives expression to thought—that style of writing, therefore, must necessarily be the best which most perfectly conveys to the reader's mind what the writer intended he should understand.—*Gæthe*.

AMUSING MISCONCEPTION.—Home, the author of *Douglas*, one day entertained at lunch the Lady Randolph of his play, the celebrated Mrs. Siddons. She was asked at table what beverage she would take, and replied, "A little porter." Ringing the bell—"Bring a little porter for Mrs. Siddons," said the reverend dramatist to his servant. The servant returned in a few minutes, bringing in from the street the least of the Gaelic porters he could find on the stand. Mrs. Siddons was convulsed with laughter—just as Faulkner, of the Durham Circuit, was, when, between two acts, running about the stage after he had been slain as Rolla, he roared to the property man, "Where's the bier?" and a little urchin answered, "Here, sir!" thrusting in his face "a gill of ale," which he had been intrusted to take behind the scenes from the *Green Dragon*.