

He has some erroneous impressions as to the nature of style, or as to the manner in which a good style may be formed. It may be that he is labouring too much on the choice and arrangement of his words, or the construction of his sentences; or assigning undue importance to the ornaments of style; he may be seeking principally after what is figurative, and the elegance of expression; or again, with false notions of what is original and forcible, he may be striving after what is sententious and striking. Sometimes too, there exists a fastidiousness of taste, which is detrimental. The student is kept from doing anything, because he is unable to do anything better than he can do. In other instances there is an injurious propensity to imitation. The student has fixed upon some writer as his model, and servilely copying his master, his own native powers are neglected." These, gentlemen, are common errors into which young students more especially are apt to fall; and we shall best avoid them by keeping in remembrance that a correct style is a perfect representation of the ideas of the mind, and of the order in which these have been arranged; consequently we shall come nearer to the classical model according as we approximate to that noble simplicity of diction which, by the testimony of the men of all ages, is the truest echo of the voice within. In this way, more than in any other, composition will become easy and agreeable; and should it lack the showy ornaments which those who are ambitious of fine writing are ever attempting to portray, these will be amply compensated by that varied and genuine eloquence which wells forth from the recesses of thought and of feeling.

4. The fourth and last grand requisite in acquiring a good English style is, practice in composing. All rules are supposed to be given in order that they may be put in practice, for without this they are comparatively insignificant. The rules of Syntax, for example, are of small importance in themselves—they are of the nature of a practical commentary on a language—or rather they are certain great principles that have been found to characterize it, and which in translating or in writing are intended for our direction—and so also those rules which are laid down by Rhetoricians are of small importance in themselves. They suppose that we are about to begin the task of composition—and they are given not to supersede all labor on our part, which no device of man can do—but to guide us while engaged in it. Rules contribute something towards our acquiring the art of composition, but they do not contribute every thing. In order to their being profitable, we must make a beginning. The ancient Rhetoricians keep this steadily before the student, and in urging him to practice composition, they advise that he should