

school or college young men and young women are seldom, if ever, subjected to any really wholesome and instructive literary discipline, such as we would consider calculated to make an endurable impression by refining the taste and rectifying the judgment; and but very few, indeed, will voluntarily submit to undergo the necessary training immediately after "finishing their Education" and receiving their Diploma. Our young friends generally make their acquaintance with the *Belles Lettres* through the medium of some sensational novel. But few, very few indeed, have sufficient moral power or "self-denial" to voluntarily "devote their days and nights to Addison," Johnson, Goldsmith and Pope, so that they may improve their minds and acquire a pure, simple, graceful and vigorous style. The average novel is but a poor exemplar of style. There are, at least (so far as we know) but few volumes of this frivolous literature which we would dare to recommend for perusal or imitation, and even if these were recommended and the others ostracised, young people would read the latter with more avidity and would probably treat the former with the greater indifference, if not with supreme contempt. Such is human nature. A taste for sound reading and skilful writing should be inculcated at School, and cultivated during early life. It is a mistake to defer these things until our "Education is finished."

Thomas de Quincy, a good critic and an accomplished writer, alluding to modern novels, affirms that the contents of half a dozen different volumes will not exhibit as many consecutive pages of decent English. It is true that novels seldom afford place for a good style, and, as a rule, worse models we could not have. Their style (like that of the majority of newspaper articles) is of a slipshod, free and easy character, whilst their diction is deficient in unity, continuity, perspicuity and point—they are "common place" in fact, the effusion of a moment "the creature of a day." A good style can only be attained by a diligent study of the classic exemplars. The works of the great masters of the art must be our models. I do not intend to convey the idea that we

should slavishly imitate our predecessors—I merely wish to state that through their works we should study the laws and principles of written language with a view to the acquisition of a certain elegance or excellency in the art of prose composition. In prosecuting our studies of the principles and practice of this art, it would not be wise to commence with the very old or recent authors. The former may be antiquated and uninviting, the latter may be frivolous or unsuitable. Before turning our attention to the production of these writers, it would be advisable to study the works produced during "the Augustan age of English Literature."

It would be impossible for us within the limits of one short article, to give a list of the English Authors whose works we would recommend as aids in the formation or acquisition of a graceful, elegant and vigorous style; we will however take the liberty of naming a few of the great Lights whose works have shed a lustre on our race and are at the same time the glory and ornaments of our mother tongue. Whilst alluding to their intrinsic merits we will point out the characteristic qualities of each—indicating their beauties and apparent defects.

English Literature does not furnish us with better or more classical writing than that which is to be found in the pages of Addison, Goldsmith, Johnson, Junius and Swift. To those may be added Burke's Orations, Sheridan's Speeches, Gibbon's Rome, Hume's England, also, Macaulay's England, and last but not least, the productions of the fruitful pens of Trollope, Thackeray and Dickens.

Goldsmith's essays, as a rule, are superior to those of either Addison or Johnson. They abound with features of exquisite grace and elegance, characteristics in which Johnson, at least, is rather deficient. Johnson's style is very peculiar—difficult to manage, extravagant, unsuited for ordinary purposes, but quite *apropos* on dignified or unusual occasions. It is characterised by either inordinate diffuseness or unnecessary brevity—two opposite qualities. His *Lives* and *Debates* are regarded as the most elegant and elaborate of his productions. They will well repay a careful perusal and materially