

should cultivate a noble simplicity of style, and perspicuity of diction that was really his own,—and therefore the most suitable medium for conveying his sentiments to other minds.

4. The fourth requisite was, that the student should practise the art of composing. I observed, that without practice the best rules were of no avail; but by means of this, composition, so irksome at first, would become comparatively easy. I mentioned certain classes of subjects that might furnish you with matter for an essay, and I recommended you to have a blank book, in which you should regularly transcribe your essays in the order they were written.

I have only a few general observations to make before concluding this Lecture. It will now appear very manifest to all of you, that the art of writing well supposes not only a facility of expression, but a clear knowledge of our subject. This is the substance of all good writing, and he who would distinguish himself in this, requires to be given to study and reflection. He requires to have the habit of sustaining his attention. It is said of the famous Sir Isaac Newton, that being asked on one occasion, by some of his friends, wherein it was that he so differed from other men, that it was reserved for him to make those notable discoveries which had escaped the notice of all other men,—he is reported to have said, with that noble modesty and wisdom which might be expected from so great a philosopher,—that he was not conscious of any particular difference between himself and other men; but if there was any, he thought it was only this, that he had acquired a greater power of keeping up his attention on any given subject. Here, then, we find the secret of that force of mind which enabled the great British philosopher to solve the true principle which maintains the planets in their orbits. This, gentlemen, is the germ of all intellectual proficiency; and it will be of much importance to keep in mind, that the cultivation of this faculty of attention belongs as much to the heart as to the understanding. There is thus an inseparable connexion between virtuous feelings and mental vigor; and for this reason, even though there was no other, we would deprecate in the student all immoral or dissolute habits, seeing that his mind will neither be directed to the steady contemplation of truth, nor to the unwearied prosecution of higher attainments, who cherishes passions altogether earthly and debasing. In fine, we shall make but small advancement in the art of composing, by merely gathering a collection of facts and heaping them up in the memory—by reading the history of the past to know all the strange things that have turned up in the world—