

the formation of sentences. The best topics, for the practice of learners, are those which come under the head of narrative or description. In narrative, or historical, or biographical compositions, the method is very simple. Events must be taken in the order of *time*, that is, in the order in which they occur; and the same method must mark the facts of a biography. But there is one general principle which should be clearly understood and invariably followed, especially in the first essays of composition. The student must always take a comprehensive and general view of the whole subject, and then seize the most striking details for elaboration. Suppose a pupil has to write the Life of Moses. The general view would be to regard the events of his life in this order:—His parentage—his adoption—his education—his elevation—his sympathy with his nation—his flight from Egypt—the causes which made him their deliverer—his career as a ruler and legislator, and his death. Now, this general view may be taken of the lives of all eminent men; and the chief difficulty then would be to know which of the events demanded most elaboration. The difficulty would be reduced in all such cases if the student after taking the comprehensive outline of generals, would consider the special quality, which made the subject of biography eminent; and the lesser events which contributed to develop the special quality, would have more or less prominence as they aided the past purpose. Again, the law of association is a sure guide in narrative or descriptive compositions. Thus similarity of ideas lies at the foundation of memory, and cause and effect are naturally related. Hence if we write in the order and similarity of ideas and of cause and effect, there is method in our composition. It is for this reason, that the narrative, which develops facts according to the order in which they occur, or by cause and effect, is called the natural method, and probably for the same

reason, it is the easiest method for young composers.

It is by a similar way that descriptive compositions must be constructed. Similarity and contiguity are the guides, and as in narrative or biography, the young writer must take a general view first. But in description, *observation* is the source of knowledge. The writer must see what he describes, and while in the application of method he must always take a comprehensive view of the whole, he may in details adopt either the *circumstantial* or the *picturesque* method. On the circumstantial method he describes each object as it meets his eye, but in all cases keeping likes with likes, and in the order of succession, connecting objects with others near them. The subject of description may be a city, or a country, a building or an animal. But however minute the circumstantials may be, there must be method and similarity. If the description be of a country viewed from an elevation, and the object be to give a circumstantial account of it, while the general view would take in at a glance its extent, its variations of hill and vale, and its contrasts of cultivated fields and forests and sheets of water, or meandering streams, the writer might either be guided by the points of the compass and delineate each side on that plan, or he might commence with the vast and the natural, and end with the cultivated and the human and living features of the prospect.

The circumstantial method is the better one, where exactness of detail is required. But where the imagination is warmed and we desire to color our description with the golden hues of poetry—not necessarily make any rhythm—then the *picturesque* is better adapted for our purpose. Here again, we must begin with a comprehensive survey, but with the object of selection and exclusion, and, as in painting, the dark and the light should be brought into contrast. But the chief object in this species of des-