

## LECTURE I.

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BEFORE entering on the subject of this evening's Lecture, I must revert very briefly to what I said in the last Lecture which I had the honor of delivering some weeks ago in this place. You may remember that it referred to the importance of acquiring the art of English Composition. I am aware that there are prejudices in the minds of some men against this branch of education being introduced generally among the people; and yet, were it needful, I think it might be very easy to shew that these are rather founded on the vitiated mode in which English Composition has been too often practised, as well as taught, than on any solid objection to the art itself. Certain it is, that every objection which may be urged against improving the popular capacity in the matter of composing, is equally applicable to in any degree—and I can hardly believe that there is any mind who would wish to see the art and privilege of the great mass of our people. At all events, I am well satisfied that this feeling forms no part of the policy of the enlightened country which gave us birth; and no stronger proof can be adduced of this fact, than the philanthropic measure adopted some years ago by the British Parliament, of reducing the charge on letters passing through the post-office to so low a scale, that the peasant as well as the peer, has the power of upholding a written correspondence with his friends on matters of business or friendship,—and his humble epistle, though in the present state of education it may be “in characters uncouth and spelt amiss,” enjoys the same security and dispatch as one emanating from the bureau of a Minister of the Crown. And in adverting to this noble act of legislation, illustrating as it does a certain greatness of mind, in conferring a favor on the people, which contrasts wonderfully with the debasing bribes and largesses by which the statesmen of Greece and Rome sought to purchase popularity, I may be allowed to say, that its authors are entitled to the esteem of every friend of education. No doubt the enactment is wholly a matter of domestic