

*TOO MANY WORDS.*

One great difficulty in learning what is the law on any given subject is that its expounders use too many words. Open one of the portly compilations which are often put forth as treatises, and read. A thorough master of the English language could put three or four pages into one; could express all the ideas of several paragraphs in as many sentences. And by this condensation contradictions would be brought together in contrast, inconsistencies exposed, cautiously concealed doubts brought to light, and the distinction between settled law and debatable questions forced upon the attention of the writer or the reader, or both.

*Language is an instrument of thought.* And the current legal language, as used in setting forth the law, is as clumsy and burdensome as are the ploughs and harrows of two centuries ago compared to the implements of to-day.

But this is not a mere question of expression. Better rhetoric will not alone suffice. It will aid, and only aid. What is needed is that clearness of conception which only requires a few words. When our ideas upon a subject are vague, undeveloped, nebulous, we require amplitude of space and phraseology to do justice to them. Clear conclusions can be shortly expressed.

The same principle applies to the process of reasoning by which those conclusions are reached. Unsatisfactory reasons force us to expansion and amplification to make them appear to fill the need. Satisfactory reasons can be shortly stated.

If a student, when required to abridge a case or a passage in the work he is studying, is allowed to take all the space he inclines to, he will probably make a long screed which will leave the critical instructor in doubt whether he has really mastered the thought. But compel him to reduce the chain of reasoning to its separate links, and state each in a single sentence, and all on a single page of small notepaper, and we see from the result, at once, whether he has made the subject his own.

Erroneous conceptions, confusion of thought, unrecognized inconsistencies, unperceived inadequacies, easily hide themselves in a superabundance of flowing sentences rambling on without restraint. Conciseness is the great detector of fallacies. To introduce severe terseness into unrestrained verbiage brings all