

now altogether out of his proper element. He manifests an awkwardness in his manner. He seems as if he scarce possessed the powers of speech and utterance; and if he can so far compose himself as to address those about him, he does it in such a timid, confused, and faltering manner, that every one is well pleased for his own sake he should remain silent. See, however, how another displays himself, who has been often in company—who has practised from his infancy his conversational powers in the social circles. He manifests no confusion in his manner, and no faltering in his utterance. His mind is familiarised to what he is engaged in. He has a hundred times over been in the same scenes before. He has practised the art of being communicative in company so often, that young though he may be, he is a proficient in it. All his mental powers, therefore, are seen at their ease. He talks on subjects grave or gay with the greatest fluency; and such an adept is he in the art of being communicative, that his topics as well as his language, seem really inexhaustible. All this, gentlemen, is to be traced to no other source than to practice; and the like excellent result will be found to attend it in its application to the power of writing as well as of speaking.

I shall now, in conclusion, sum up the chief topics adverted to in the preceding discourse.

1. I have stated that the first requisite in acquiring a good English style was, that you should frequently read the best and most approved authors—that thus, by a process of imitation, you would be led to transfuse their graces into your own compositions, and comparing your performances with theirs, to correct whatever was faulty or defective in the use of language.

2. The second was, that you should always, before writing, make yourselves master of your subject. I have said that this was a matter of special importance; for so intimate is the connection between thought and language, that in order to our writing continuously and well, little else is required, than an accurate apprehension of the subject. I observed also, that in formal essays it was desirable the student should draw up an outline of what he meant to treat of, that thus there might be comprehensiveness and a lucid arrangement in his performance.

3 That the student should have such a confidence in himself, that he should aim at being natural. Although it was important he should have a taste cultivated by the study of the best authors, yet that he