

and vivacious ; in condolence, tender and sympathetic ; in congratulation, lively and joyous. To superiors, it should be respectful ; to inferiors, courteous ; to friends, familiar ; and to relatives, affectionate. Ease should distinguish familiar letters, written on the common affairs of life, because the mind is usually at ease while they are composed. The dependant writes unnaturally to a superior in the style of familiarity ; the suppliant writes unnaturally if he rejects the figures dictated by distress. Conversation admits of every style but the poetic ; and what are letters but written conversation.

2. *Arrangement of Ideas.*—The purport of any letter should be well considered before its commencement, not only with a view to the attainment of a thorough clearness of expression, which is of primary importance, but likewise that the principal points to be discussed may be prominently brought forward, while those of a trivial nature are but slightly mentioned. It requires, however, not only a certain amount of tact, but some quickness of perception, to avoid that stiffness and formality which are incident to the arrangement of the subject, and which are great defects in letter writing.

3. *Ornamentation.*—A redundancy of ideas and of language is a common fault with those capable of writing with facility. As a rule, therefore, all striving at effect or attempt at ornamentation should be avoided ; and as the chief charm of a letter is its originality, writers should not avail themselves either of hackneyed expressions or of ideas borrowed from others. An exhibition of epistolary talent is far less likely to gratify a correspondent than an easy, free, and faithful expression of the sentiments of the writer ; and by thus expressing himself he will also naturally avoid any excess of flattery or exaggerated professions of

regard, so peculiarly objectionable in a letter, and at variance with all delicacy of taste. At the same time, a strict adherence to the natural expression of the thoughts will gradually introduce a degree of ease, fluency, and force which may be carried to a high degree of perfection.

4. *Long Sentences.*—Unpractised persons will, at first, find it desirable to make their sentences as short as possible, that they may have them completely under control. Long sentences, even when well constructed, frequently occasion some degree of obscurity, and are less forcible than short ones. Parentheses, though sometimes necessary, likewise tend to obscure the meaning of the writer, besides weakening the effect of sentences ; they should therefore be avoided as much as possible.

5. *Composition.*—As regards the composition of letters, it is generally desirable, except with those upon business matters, to commence with some introductory remarks, not as a mere formality, but for the purpose of conciliating attention to the main subject of communication, which may otherwise strike too abruptly upon the mind of the reader. The introduction should be followed by the development of the topics for discussion, according to the importance attaching to each ; and the conclusion should, when occasion requires, be devoted to the confirmation or summing up of what has been previously stated, and to expressions of regard or affection.

6. *Tautology.*—Tautology, or the repetition of the same words, should be guarded against, as forming a blemish of a striking character. In this effort the continual need of words of like meaning will soon render a writer familiar with a variety of synonyms ; and the possession of a copious vocabulary will conduce greatly to the general freedom of the composition.