

well as to charm the ear. Accordingly, all writers on education have urged the work of independent thought and reflection as a matter of primary importance in learning to compose well. "A writer is often obliged" says Dr. Blair, "to prune the luxuriance of his imagination—seeing that an excessive amount of embellishment encumbers rather than illustrates good writing; but information, good sense, sound and judicious observation, must form the basis of all good writing." Do not attempt then to separate the eloquence of words from the eloquence of thought, by seeking after fine expressions, when you should rather be seeking after clear conceptions of your subject. The truth is language, adheres as it were naturally to thought, and every good writer will admit that he seizes the expressions he uses rather through the medium of thought, than the thought through the medium of expression. By accurate and premeditated thought, previous to taking up the pen, our composition comes to have a certain continuity running through it; and the ornaments which belong to it are all the more graceful, that they are interwoven as if naturally with it. Dr. Blair considers that the first and most important direction which can be given is, to "study clear ideas on the subject concerning which we are to write or speak. This is a direction which may at first appear to have small relation to style. Its relation to it, however, is extremely close. The foundation of all good style is good sense, accompanied with a lively imagination; whenever the impressions of things upon our minds are faint and indistinct, or perplexed and confused, our style in treating of such things will infallibly be so too. Whereas, what we conceive clearly, and feel strongly, we shall naturally express ourselves with clearness and with strength." Here, then, gentlemen, be assured, is an admirable rule in introducing you to the acquirement of a good style. Think closely on the subject till you have attained a full and distinct view of the matter you are to clothe in words—till your attention is awakened and your whole soul becomes interested in it—and not till then will you find expression begin to flow. Horace in his art of poetry gives an opinion in conformity with all that has now been said—"a thorough knowledge of our subject is both the principle and source of writing well, and words not unwillingly will follow well premeditated thought."

There are some writers also who advise not merely careful reflection on the subject about which we are to write, but the importance of drawing up a rough outline of the chief topics we intend to handle; and there can be no doubt this practice will be highly subservient to our forming a full and accurate conception of the whole subject of discourse,

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