

pose, have in view the profession of an author, must, I think, appear obvious enough to you all. Suppose you were wishing to teach a little boy to speak with correctness, and while you told him he must give the proper pronunciation to this and the other word, that he must observe the pauses while reading, and lay aside some unseemly intonation he had acquired, he should excuse himself from all this trouble by saying, "I am not going to be a Preacher, or a Barrister, and what matters it to me either to speak or to read with propriety." The absurdity of such an excuse is very manifest; and yet I do not think it more so than saying, that we need not take much trouble in learning to compose because we do not mean to publish. That composition of the highest order is attainable only by a few choice spirits who devote themselves to a life of study, I freely admit; but that a respectable proficiency may be acquired by young men of ordinary talents, consistently with a proper attention to their daily avocations, I conceive to be as certainly true; and I would therefore repeat to you the counsel I have given already, to begin the task, and prosecute it with vigour. There is much of practical wisdom in the injunction of Dr. Johnson to a gentleman who asked him as to the best manner of learning to compose—"Sit down doggedly to it, Sir!" was the reply.\* Rules, as I have already stated, are of importance to the student. They are like so many finger posts pointing out the way by which he is to walk; but in order to appreciate their true value and importance, he must walk on the path-way himself. I have often known young students complain of the arduousness of the task of composing. They could commit any thing to memory. They could encounter any difficulty in the matter of translating from a Greek or Latin author. They could follow any demonstration in geometry, but to sit down and write, with pen and ink, their cogitations upon paper, in the shape of an essay, was something for which they felt a total inaptitude. They would undergo any drudgery rather than attempt a task so irksome. Now this supposed incapacity is altogether imaginary. It is a feeling of the mind originating altogether from a want of practice in the art. I might illustrate the truth of this by referring to the good effects of practice in conversation. Compare the case of a person who has lived altogether in retirement, with that of another who has spent his time in mingling with the best society. In talents, information, and liveliness of fancy, there may be no real difference between them. But bring them into company, and you will immediately see that the apparent difference is very great. The man who has lived in retirement, is

\* See Note C.