

FOR THE ACADIAN MAGAZINE.

ON COMPOSITION AND STYLE.

NO. I.

LANGUAGE may be called the picture of our thoughts. Every particular language is a part of universal grammar. Every nation and people having objects of the same kind to name, they must have methods of expressing these peculiar to themselves. Greek and Latin are properly original or mother languages. The Teutonic or German, as it has no connection with any other, may be ranked with the same. From these the French, Italian, Spanish, and a large portion of the English, languages are derived. The latter, however, is more properly connected with the Teutonic.

This language then, is composed of the Saxon, Celtic, French, Latin, and many others, all which have been a common nucleus whence its present form has arisen. That which we now speak is as different from what it was about three centuries ago, as the low Dutch is from the German. Many words have become old and obsolete, and others invented in their room. At the time of the Norman Conquest, the language undoubtedly underwent great alterations. William the Conqueror, we are informed by historians, attempted to introduce the Norman, and in some measure was successful. The origin and progress of language define satisfactorily, the progress of reason. When men are rude in speech, their reason is also unenlightened. By means of this power, the fabric of human society has been raised. Without its assistance, man would be timid and solitary. The art of language is not capable of very rapid improvement, but is acquired from habit and experience. At first, there could be no language: it was to be found out: it was brought to perfection by the labors of many ages. Some have thought, that men

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originally, had no other kind of speech than the inferior animals, and that language is the result of human ingenuity. Others suppose that man was taught it by God. This opinion is partially confirmed by what we read in the book of Genesis. The animal creation was brought in review before Adam, and God instructed him, to give names to each creature.

Men have two kinds of signs by which to express themselves,—natural and artificial. Such for example, are certain tones of the voice. Grief and joy have tones different from each other, as they express two different feelings of the mind. These are natural, and are easy to be understood by all. Every formed language is artificial. Thus the sign *table* might as well signify a human being as the sign *man*. Audible and visible signs are those by which we express ourselves: *Speaking* and *Writing* are such. Action is a branch of natural language. Though we are in possession of an artificial language, still, natural language is of advantage. Mankind have departed from the latter and substituted the former. One great difficulty in tracing artificial language arises from the necessity we are under of referring it to human ingenuity. We can have no proper history of the first, or of the beginning of artificial language, because at that time, it was impossible to commit any thing to writing.

The language of visible signs might serve when there was no need of accuracy, but when men wish to be exact, they must invent some artificial signs. The human voice being capable of many inflections, an artificial method of communication would necessarily spring out of a natural one. We are not to conclude that an *invented* language was introduced all

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