--HU HOLLIS# AQP1887 /bks

AUTHOR: Mills, Abraham, 1796-1867.
TITLE: Outlines of rhetoric and belles-lettres / by Abraham Mills.
PUB. INFO: New York : R.B. Collins, 1854.
DESCRIPTION: 243 p. ; 19 cm.

SUBJECTS: *S1 English language--Rhetoric.
*S2 English literature--Study and teaching.
AUTHORS: *A1 Mills, Abraham, 1796-1867.
OTHER TITLES: Outlines of rhetoric and belles lettres.
Harvard reading textbooks preservation microfilm project ; 04123.

LOCATION: Gutman Education: EducT 768.54.570
Gutman Education: Film HRT 00573
Master Microforms: Film Mas 24749
Microfilm. Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Library Microreproduction Service, 1994. 1 microfilm reel : negative ; 35 mm.

OUTLINES

OF

RHETORIC AND BELLES-LETTRES.

BY

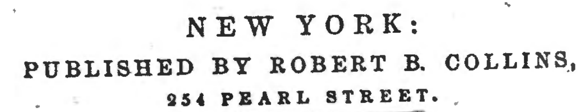
ABRAHAM MILLS, A.M.

AUTHOR OF THE POETS AND THE POETRY OF THE ANCIENT GREEKS, ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED BY ROBERT B. COLLINS,

254 PEARL STREET.



Educ T 768.54.570

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
GIFT OF
GEORGE ARTHUR PLIMPTON
JANUARY 25, 1924

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1854, by
ABRAHAM MILLS,
In the Clerk's Office of the Southern District of New York.

THOMAS B. SMITH,
STEREOTYPER & ELECTROTYPER,
216 William Street.

PRINTED BY
C. A. ALVORD,
29 and 31 Gold St.

Preface.

THE author of these brief outlines of Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres makes no pretensions to originality with regard to the *materials* of this work. He has carefully adhered to the principles of Aristotle, Longinus, and Quintilian, so far as they are found applicable to the English language; and has adopted those principles, as they are developed in the large work of Dr. Blair. It is for the present arrangement only of these materials, and for the manner in which they are here, for the first time, presented to the public, that he claims any credit.

Commencing, after a brief view of the principles of Taste, with the origin of language, the author has endeavored to conduct the student through the various departments of this difficult, but interesting study, in the order which Nature herself indicates, until he reaches the most elevated and sublime strains of the epic and the dramatic muse.

The division of the work into two parts, and the distinction between Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres, the author thinks is also new: at least the distinction

has never, in any other practical work, fallen under his own observation. He would still observe, however, that these Outlines are designed to be merely suggestive; and that, being abstract in themselves, the careful filling of them up before a class, must materially depend upon the knowledge and skill of the teacher.

Without farther remark, therefore, the author submits the work to the judgment of the public; and especially to that of those who are most deeply interested in the practical utility of all such performances.

NEW YORK, August, 1854.

Contents.

INTRODUCTION,

PAGE

TASTE 11

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

LANGUAGE.

SECTION I.

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE 17

SECTION II.

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF WRITING 25

SECTION III.

STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE 33

SECTION IV.

STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE 41

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

STYLE.

SECTION I.

PAGE
PERSPICUITY AND PRECISION 49

SECTION II.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES 57

SECTION III.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES 65

SECTION IV.

STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES 72

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

SECTION I.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE . . . 81

SECTION II.

METAPHOR—ALLEGORY 86

SECTION III.

HYPERBOLE—PERSONIFICATION—APOSTROPHE 93

SECTION IV.

PAGE
COMPARISON—ANTITHESIS—INTERROGATION—EXCLAMATION—VISION—CLIMAX—IRONY 100

SECTION V.

GENERAL CHARACTER OF STYLE 108

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

THE COMPONENTS OF A REGULAR DISCOURSE.

SECTION I.

INTRODUCTION—DIVISION—NARRATION 117

SECTION II.

ARGUMENT—PATHOS—PERORATION 125

SECTION III.

PRONUNCIATION AND DELIVERY 131

SECTION IV.

MEANS OF IMPROVING IN SPEAKING . . . . [illegible]

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

BEAUTY AND SUBLIMITY.

SECTION I.

BEAUTY 147

SECTION II.

PAGE

GRANDEUR, OR SUBLIMITY IN EXTERNAL OBJECTS . . 155

SECTION III.

SUBLIMITY IN WRITING 163

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

ELOQUENCE.

SECTION I.

NATURE AND HISTORY OF ELOQUENCE 170

SECTION II.

GRECIAN ELOQUENCE 174

SECTION III.

ROMAN ELOQUENCE 180

SECTION IV.

MODERN ELOQUENCE 184

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF PUBLIC SPEAKING.

SECTION I.

ELOQUENCE OF POPULAR ASSEMBLIES 190

SECTION II.

PAGE

ELOQUENCE OF THE BAR 194

SECTION III.

ELOQUENCE OF THE PULPIT 198

SECTION IV.

HISTORICAL, EPISTOLARY AND FICTITIOUS WRITING . . 203

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

POETRY.

SECTION I.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF POETRY 211

SECTION II.

PASTORAL AND LYRIC POETRY 218

SECTION III.

DIDACTIC AND DESCRIPTIVE POETRY 224

SECTION IV.

EPIC POETRY 230

SECTION V.

DRAMATIC POETRY 236

INTRODUCTION.

TASTE.

TASTE is an internal sense, and may properly be called the power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art. As it is built upon sentiments and perceptions which belong to our nature, its foundation must be the same in every human mind.

In children, the rudiments of taste discover themselves very early, in their fondness for regular bodies, their admiration for pictures and statues, and their strong attachment to whatever is new or marvellous. On the same principle, the most ignorant peasants are delighted with ballads and tales, and are struck with the beautiful appearance of nature in the earth and the heavens. Even savages, in their most uncultivated state, have their ornaments of dress, their war and their death songs, their harangues and their orators. The principles of taste must, therefore, be deeply founded in the human mind, and be, in some degree, common to all mankind.

What is taste? Upon what is it built; and where must its foundation be laid? How do the rudiments of taste appear in children, in peasants, and in savages? How

Although, however, none be wholly devoid of this faculty, yet the degrees in which it is possessed are widely different. In some men, only the feeble glimmerings of taste appear; the beauties which they relish being of the coarsest kind, and even of these they have but a weak and confused impression: while in others, taste rises to an acute discernment, and a lively enjoyment of the most refined beauties. This inequality is, doubtless, to be ascribed, in part, to the different frames of their natures—the nicer organs, and the finer internal powers with which some are endowed above others; but it is evidently owing still more to culture and education.

Taste, from its very nature, is necessarily one of our most improvable faculties. Of the truth of this remark we may be easily convinced, by reflecting on the immense superiority which education and improvement give to civilized over barbarous nations, in refinement of taste; and on the superiority which they give in the same nation to those who have studied the liberal arts, over the rude and untaught vulgar. The difference is so great that there is, perhaps, no one particular in which these are so far removed from each other, as in respect of the powers and pleasures of taste.

The chief source of the improvement of taste, is exercise. This is evident from the acuteness to

---

does it appear that the degrees in which this faculty is possessed by different persons is widely different? To what is this difference to be attributed? How does it appear that taste is one of our most improvable faculties? From what examples does it appear that exercise is the

which the senses of those persons attain whose trade or profession leads to nice exertions of them. Of this we have a clear proof in what is called an ear for music. At first, the simplest and plainest compositions only are relished; but practice extends our pleasure, teaches us to relish finer melody, and, by degrees, enables us to enter into the intricate and compounded pleasures of harmony. So also an eye for the beauties of painting is never acquired at once, but is gradually formed by being conversant among pictures, and studying the works of the best masters. In the same manner, with respect to the beauties of composition and discourse, attention to the most approved models, and study of the best authors, contribute to the refinement of taste. At first, the sentiment will be obscure and confused, but, by experience, the taste at length becomes enlightened and exact. You not only perceive the character of the whole, but the beauties and defects of each part; and thus become able to describe the peculiar qualities which we praise or blame.

We are not to infer from these remarks that taste belongs exclusively to instructive sensibility; for reason and good sense have so extensive an influence on all the operations and decisions of taste, that a thoroughly good taste may properly be considered as a power compounded of natural sensibility to beauty, and of an improved understanding. To be satisfied of the correctness of this re-

---

chief source of the improvement of taste? Of what is a thoroughly good taste compounded; and of this, how

2

mark, we have only to observe that the greater part of the productions of genius are merely the imitations of nature—representations of the characters, actions, and manners of men. The pleasure which we receive from such imitations, as representations, is founded on mere taste; but to judge whether they be properly executed belongs to the understanding, which compares the copy with the original.

From the frequent exercise of taste, then, and from the application of reason to the objects upon which taste is to be employed, this faculty, as a power of the mind, receives its improvement. But we must not forget that, as a sound head, so likewise a good heart, is a very material requisite to a just taste. The moral beauties are not only themselves superior to all others, but they exert an influence, either more near or more remote, on a great variety of other objects of taste. He who has no admiration of what is truly praiseworthy, nor the proper sympathetic sense of what is soft and tender, must have a very imperfect relish of the highest beauties of eloquence and poetry.

The distinctive characters of taste, when brought to its most improved state, are delicacy and correctness. Delicacy respects, principally, the perfection of that natural sensibility on which taste is founded. It implies those finer organs or powers

may we be satisfied? What remark follows? Besides a sound head, what else is requisite to a just taste? Of the moral beauties what is observed; and what remark follows? What are the distinctive characters of taste? What does delicacy of taste respect; and what does it

which enable us to discover beauties which lie hid from the vulgar eye, and is judged of by the same marks by which we judge of the delicacy of an external sense. Thus, as the goodness of the palate is not tried by strong flavors, but by a mixture of ingredients, where, notwithstanding the confusion, we remain sensible of each, so, in the same manner, delicacy of internal sense appears, by a quick and lively sensibility to its finest, most compounded, or most latent objects.

Correctness of taste respects, chiefly, the improvement which this faculty receives through its connection with the understanding. A man of correct taste is one who is never imposed on by counterfeit beauties—who carries always in his mind that standard of good sense which he employs in judging of everything. He estimates, with propriety, the comparative merit of the several beauties which he meets with in any work of genius; refers them to their proper classes; assigns the principles, as far as they can be traced, whence their power of pleasing flows; and is pleased himself, precisely in that degree in which he ought to be pleased, and no more.

Delicacy and correctness of taste, notwithstanding their difference, still mutually imply each other. No taste can be exquisitely delicate without being correct, nor can it be thoroughly correct without being delicate; but still a predominancy of one or

imply? How is this illustrated? What does correctness of taste respect; and of a man of correct taste what is remarked? How does it appear that delicacy and cor-

the other quality, in the union, will often be visible. The power of delicacy is chiefly seen in discerning the true merit of a work; the power of correctness, in rejecting false pretensions to merit. Delicacy leans more to feeling; correctness, to reason and judgment: the former is the gift of nature, the latter the result of culture and education.

But, notwithstanding, the principles of taste are so clearly defined, yet the variations of taste have been so great and frequent as to lead some to think that there is no standard by which a true taste may be distinguished from one that is corrupt. In architecture, in poetry, and in eloquence, not only one nation, but also one age, has differed widely from another. This, however, only argues that, though taste may, at different times, vary, and admit of a diversity of objects, still this can take place only when the objects themselves are different. The true standard of taste to which the ultimate appeal must ever lie, is the sense of mankind—the taste of men in polished nations, where arts are cultivated and manners refined—where works of genius are subjected to free discussion, and taste is improved by science and philosophy.

---

rectness of taste mutually imply each other? In what is the power of delicacy chiefly seen; and in what correctness? Of these faculties what is farther remarked? Of a standard of taste what is observed; and where must the true standard be found?

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

LANGUAGE.

SECTION I.

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF LANGUAGE.

LANGUAGE is the expression of our ideas by means of articulate sounds. The connection between words and the ideas which they are intended to express, is arbitrary and conventional, and depends upon the agreement of men among themselves. To make this appear evident, we have only to consider the difference that exists between the language of different nations, or the different articulate sounds through the medium of which different nations express their ideas.

This artificial method of communicating our thoughts has now attained so great a degree of perfection, that it has become the vehicle through which the most delicate and refined emotions of one mind can be conveyed to another. Not only are specific

---

What is language? How does it appear that the connection between words and ideas is arbitrary? What is the present state of this artificial method of communicating thought; and how is this fully

of true, pervading, and active piety, is indispensable to successful pulpit eloquence.

The principal characteristics of the eloquence suited to the pulpit, are gravity and warmth. The serious nature of the subjects belonging to the pulpit, requires gravity; and their importance to mankind requires warmth. It is, however, far from being easy or common to unite these characters of eloquence. The grave, when it predominates, becomes a dull, uniform solemnity; and the warm, when it wants gravity, borders on the theatrical and light. The union of these qualities should be studied by every preacher with the utmost care, both in the composition of their discourses, and in their manner of delivery. When united, they form that affecting, penetrating, and interesting manner of preaching, which flows from a strong sense in the preacher of the importance of those truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they may make a full impression on the hearts of his hearers.

Whether it be most advisable to write sermons fully, and commit them accurately to memory, or to study only the matter and thoughts, and trust the expression to the delivery, no general rule can be given. The expressions which come warm and

and what remark follows? What are the principal characteristics of pulpit eloquence; what requires the former, and what the latter? Of the grave, or of the warm, when either predominates, what is remarked? Of their union what is observed; and when united, what manner of preaching do they form? Of the relative advantages of reading sermons, and of preaching extemporaneously,

glowing from the heart, during the fervor of pronunciation, will often have a superior grace and energy to those which are studied in the retirement of the closet. But then this fluency and power of expression, cannot always be depended upon; and it is, therefore, perhaps, proper to begin, at least, the practice of preaching, with writing as accurately as possible. This will give the power and habit of both speaking and thinking correctly upon religious subjects; but after habits of correctness shall have been thoroughly formed, the preacher may venture partially to relax his attention to this subject.

SECTION IV.

We shall now proceed briefly to notice those departments of written composition in which eloquence may be attained. These we shall comprehend under the heads of historical writing, epistolary writing, and fictitious history.

As the primary end of history is to record truth for the instruction of mankind, impartiality, fidelity, and accuracy are the fundamental qualities of an historian. He must neither enter into faction,

what is observed? In what manner should preachers begin; and from this course what advantage will they derive?

To notice what shall we now proceed; and under what heads shall they be embraced? What are the primary ends of history; and hence, what should be the funda-

nor indulge in affection; but, contemplating past events and characters with a cool and dispassionate eye, must present to his readers a faithful copy of human nature. The record we make must be of such a character, as to enable us to apply the transactions of former ages for our own instruction. The facts should be momentous and important; represented in connection with their causes, traced to their effects, and unfolded in clear and distinct order.

History, it must be remembered, is designed to supply the place of experience; and though it enforce not its instructions with the same authority, yet it furnishes us a greater variety than it is possible for experience to afford, in the course of the longest life. Its object is to enlarge our views of the human character, and to give full exercise to our judgment in human affairs. It must not, therefore, be a tale calculated to please only, and addressed to the fancy; but gravity and dignity are its essential characteristics. The writer must sustain the character of a wise man, writing for the instruction of posterity, one who has studied to inform himself well, who has pondered his subject with care, and addresses himself to our judgment, rather than to our imagination.

In the conduct of his subject, the historian should aim to give it as much unity as possible. The different portions of his history should be linked together by some connecting principle, which should produce in the mind the impression of something that is one, whole, and entire. Whether pleasure or instruction be the end sought by the study of history, either of them is enjoyed to much greater advantage when the mind has always before it the progress of some one great plan or system of action, when there is some point or centre, to which the various facts related by the historian can be referred.

After attention to unity, the next thing that requires the care of the historian is, to study to trace to their source, the actions and events which he records. To do this successfully, he should be acquainted with human nature, and also possess a large share of political knowledge. His skill in the former will enable him to describe, with eloquence, the characters of individuals; and his proficiency in the latter, will prepare him for the task of recording revolutions of government, and for accounting for the operation of political causes in public affairs.

In the narration of facts, the first virtue of the historian is, clearness, order, and due connection. To attain this, he must be completely master of his

---

mental qualities of an historian? How is this remark fully illustrated? For what is history designed; and of it what is observed? What is its object; what must it not, therefore, be; and why? What character must the writer sustain? In the conduct of his subject what should the historian do? How should the different portions of his history be linked together; and what remark follows? After attention to unity, what next requires the historian's care? To do this successfully what are requisite; and of his skill in the former, and his proficiency in the latter, what is remarked? In the narration of facts, what is the first virtue of the historian? To attain this, what is nec-

subject. He must see the whole as at one view; and comprehend the chain and dependence of all its parts, that he may introduce everything in its proper place; that he may lead us smoothly along the track of affairs which he records, and may give us the satisfaction of seeing how one event arises out of another. Without this there can be neither pleasure nor instruction in reading history. To effect this, much will depend on the observance of unity in the general plan and conduct; and much, also, on the proper management of transactions, which forms one of the chief ornaments of this kind of writing; and is one of the most difficult in execution.

As history is a very dignified species of composition, gravity must always be maintained in the narration. There should be nothing mean nor vulgar in the style; no quaint nor colloquial phrases; no affectation of pertness, nor of wit. The smart or the sneering manner of telling a story, is inconsistent with the historical character. The historian may, however, occasionally let himself down a little, in order to diversify the strain of his narration, which, if he is perfectly uniform, is apt to become tiresome.

As history must be read with pleasure to be read with profit, the great study of the historian should

essary; and why? To attain this, on what will much depend? As history is a very dignified species of composition, what must always be maintained in the narrative? What properties should, therefore, be avoided; what, however, may the historian do; and why? What should be the great study of the historian; and of this

be to render his narration interesting. This is the quality that chiefly distinguishes the genius and eloquence of the writer. To effect this, a just medium in the conduct of the narration should be observed, between a rapid or crowded recital of facts, and a prolix detail. An historian that would interest us, must know when to be concise, and when to enlarge —passing lightly over slight and unimportant events, but dwelling on such as are, in their nature, striking and important. The historian must also particularly attend to the proper selection of circumstances belonging to those events which he choses to relate fully. These render a narration interesting and affecting to the reader; giving life, body, and coloring to the recital of parts, and enable us to behold them at present, and passing before our eyes. It is this employment of circumstances in narration, that is properly termed historical painting.

History being a species of composition designed for the instruction of mankind, sound morality should always reign in it. Both in describing characters, and in relating transactions, the author should always show himself to be on the side of virtue. To deliver moral instructions in a formal manner, it is true, falls not within his province, but, as a good man, we expect him to discover sentiments of respect for virtue, and of indignation at vice.

quality what is observed? To effect this, between what must a just medium be observed; and what should an historian that would interest us know? To what should the historian also particularly attend; and why? As history is designed for the instruction of mankind, what should reign it it? How is this remark illustrated?

The inferior kinds of historical composition, are annals, memoirs, and lives. Annals are a collection of facts according to chronological order: all that is required, therefore, of an annalist, is fidelity and distinctness. Memoirs pretend not to hold out a complete detail of the period to which they relate, but only to record what the author knows personally, or from particular information, concerning any certain object, transaction, or event. Biography is a sort of composition less stately than history; but it is, perhaps, more instructive. It affords full opportunities of displaying the characters of eminent men, and of entering into a thorough acquaintance with them.

[illegible]cupies a sort of middle place between serious and amusing composition; and it becomes distinctive in its character when it is of the easy and familiar kind—a conversation carried on upon paper between two friends at a distance. Much, therefore, of its merit will depend on its introducing us to some acquaintance with the writer. There, if anywhere, we look for the man, not for the author. Its first and fundamental requisite is, to be natural and simple; for a stiff and labored manner is as bad in a letter, as it is in conversation. This does not, however, banish sprightliness and wit; for these, when they flow easy, and without being studied, are as graceful in letters as they are in conversation.

What are the inferior kinds of historical composition; and what is said of each? What place does epistolary writing occupy; and when does it become distinctive in its character? Upon what, therefore, will much of its merit depend; and why? What is its first requisite; and why? What does this not exclude· and why? What

The best letters are, uniformly, those which are written with the greatest facility. What the heart or the imagination dictates, always flows readily; but where there is no subject to warm or interest these, constraint appears; and hence, those letters of mere compliment, congratulation, or affected condolence, never fail to be the most disagreeable and insipid to the readers. It must, however, be remembered that the ease and simplicity here recommended in epistolary correspondence, are not to be understood as importing entire carelessness; for, in writing to the most intimate friend, a certain degree of attention both to the subject and to the style, is requisite and becoming. It is no more than what we owe, both to ourselves and to the friend with whom we correspond; as a slovenly and negligent manner is a mark of disrespect.

Fictitious history furnishes one of the best channels for conveying instruction, for painting human life and manners, for showing the errors into which we are betrayed by our passions, and for rendering virtue amiable, and vice odious, that can possibly be afforded. The effect of well-contrived stories towards accomplishing these purposes, is greater than can be produced by simple instruction; and

are the best letters; and how is this illustrated? Of this ease and simplicity what, however, must be remembered; and why? For what do fictitious histories furnish one of the best channels? Of the effect of well-contrived

hence the wisest men, in all ages, have frequently employed parables, fables, and other fictions as the vehicles of knowledge, It is not, therefore, the nature of this kind of writing, considered in itself, but the manner in which it is too frequently executed, that has brought it into contempt.

Lord Bacon remarks, that our taste for fictitious history is a proof of the greatness and dignity of the human mind. "Not satisfied with the sober realities of life," he observes, "we create worlds according to our fancy, in order to gratify our capacious desires; accommodating the appearance of things to the desires of the mind, not bringing down the mind, as history and philosophy do, to the ordinary course of events." While, therefore, the flimsy novelist and romancer, who pander to the baser passions of our nature, are justly reprobated, such writers as Scott, and Irving, and Dickens, should be held in grateful and everlasting remembrance, as the benefactors of their race.

---

stories for accomplishing these purposes; and hence, what have the wisest men, in all ages, done? What remark follows? Of our taste for fictitious history, what has Lord Bacon remarked; and what inference follows?

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

POETRY.

SECTION I.

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF POETRY.

Poetry is the language of passion, or of enlivened imagination, formed, most commonly, into regular numbers. As the primary aim of the poet is to please and to move, it is to the imagination and the passions that he addresses himself. He may design to instruct and reform, also; but these ends he can effect in no other way than by first pleasing and moving his readers or hearers. To this end his own mind must be animated by some object which fires his imagination, or engages his passions; and which naturally communicates to his style a peculiar elevation suited to his ideas, and very different from that mode of expression which is natural to the mind in its calm and ordinary state.

Though versification is, in general, the external

What is poetry? What is the primary aim of poetry; and to what does the poet address himself? What may he also design to do; in what way only can he effect these ends; and to what end what must be the state of his own mind? Though versification is the general distinction of