business as a printer, it was settled that Ben should be bound to him.

Ben was at first delighted with the change, and would have been very happy if his elder brother had been better tempered, but he was of the genus Tyrant, and knocked the young typo about in a very unnecessary and unbecoming manner. But the profession was admirably suited to Ben's inclination. He was fond of reading,—fond of conversing or listening to others on topics beyond his years. He saved up all the money he could get for books, denied himself many indulgences to gratify this appetite. He read everything he could procure; a good deal of controversial divinity; Plutarch's Lives, Defoe's Essay on Projects. Most boys of his age would have turned from all this with aversion, or fallen asleep over it in a vain effort to arrive at the author's design; a book was a book to Ben, and he read it carefully, and marked it, and made it his own.

From reading to writing is an easy transition. Ben wrote some ballads; they were printed by his brother, and he was sent out to sell them. One of them about a certain pirate of unenviable reputation sold prodigiously, and the poet was highly delighted with his success. Better than making tallow candles! His father, however, pointed out to him that the making of ballads seldom led to fortune—that even a poet of the better sort wore a threadbare coat, a greasy hat, and starved in a garret, as was indeed too true at that time; so Benjamin let go his hold of Pegasus and resumed his "stick."

But the *cacathes scribendo* was still strong within him; he burned to emulate the authors whom he personally knew by sight, men who wrote slashing leaders in *the* paper, and talked politics as if they were each prime minister, and passed criticism with all the authority of accredited censors. But Ben knew that his own compositions were infinitely inferior to those of some of his fellow apprentices, and therefore he set about improving his style. The method he pursued we may give in his own words:—

"About this time," he says, "I met with an odd volume

of the 'Spectator;' I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent; and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With that view, I took some of the papers, and making short hints of the sentiments in each sentence, laid them by for a few days; and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should occur to me. Then I compared my 'Spectator' with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual search for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind and make me master of it. Therefore, I took some of the tales in the 'Spectator,' and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collection of hints into confusion; and after some weeks, endeavoured to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and complete the subject. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of my thoughts. By comparing my work with the original, I discovered many faults and corrected them; but I sometimes had the pleasure to fancy, that in certain particulars of small consequence, I had been fortunate enough to improve the method or the language; and this encouraged me to think that I might, in time, come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious."

He read carefully "Locke on the Human Understanding;" mastered "Cocker's Arithmetic," and went through some Dissertations on Logic and Rhetoric. He saved more money to buy books than he had previously found practicable by adopting a vegetable diet. A slice of bread, a few raisins, and a cup of water served for his dinner, and he

UB Braunschweig http://www.digibib.tu-bs.de/?perid=00031385&imgid=00000047.jpg