

§ -- THE VIRTUE OF SIMPLICITY

The great French Philosopher, Voltaire, wrote the following to Mr. de Sideville - 1733.

For the last five days, my dear friend, I have been dangerously ill; I had not the strength either to think or write. I have just received your letter and the first part of your 'Alegory'. In the name of Apollo, do not go beyond your first subject, do not smother it under a mass of foreign flowers; let your meaning be clearly seen; too much brilliance often detracts from clearness. If I might venture to give you a word of advice it would be this: «Make simplicity your object, order your work in a manner perfectly clear, which demands no strained attention from the mind of your reader. Don't attempt to be brilliant, but paint with the brush of truth and your work will be delightful.

Go sraight to your point without saying more than necessary. You will still be more brilliant than others, even after you have removed what is superfluous.

Good-bye, I am too ill to write more.»