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PRACTICAL COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC

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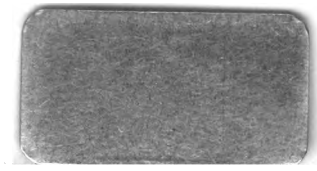

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PRACTICAL

COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC

BY

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WITH THE COÖPERATION OF

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SIBLEY AND DUCKER

BOSTON AND CHICAGO

1901

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PREFACE.

THE present book aims to meet the wants of teachers who hold that practice is the most essential thing in the teaching of composition, but it aims also to supply as much theory as will be really useful to the beginner, and to lead him by progressive stages through the entire process of the construction of a piece of composition.

Aim of the present book

Some teachers of composition are tempted to dispense altogether with a text-book. Yet, as I have shown more at length in the Suggestions to Teachers, a certain amount of theory must be supplied if the young writer is to make rapid progress. The theory may, of course, be presented by the teacher; but if so, there is danger that the time of the class will be consumed in listening to explanations no more systematic or practical than may be found in a text-book, and that the information thus imparted will be forgotten by the pupil just when he needs it most. The recitation period can surely be devoted more advantageously to practical criticism of themes than to lectures on composition or the theory of rhetoric. On the other hand, there is not time in most schools for the study of a detailed treatise on rhetoric. My chief concern, therefore, has been to discover what could be omitted rather than what could be included.

Why use a text-book?

The aim of the teacher of composition should be to bring his pupils into such an attitude of mind that a subject may be to them a genuine question to be answered, and not a mere occasion for combining words into sentences without regard to the thought. I have, accordingly, laid especial emphasis on the choice and treatment of themes, and have thrown in a large number of incidental hints to the pupil, showing how he may treat the specific topic before him. If a young writer can form the habit of choosing one sharply defined topic and of telling exactly what he thinks, the imperfect details of his composition can be corrected by reading and practice. I need scarcely remark, however, that no book of instructions will make a finished writer. Only constant practice and merciless

The proper aim of the teacher of composition.

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criticism by the writer himself can yield the desired result. My purpose is, therefore, rather to develop a few general principles than to prescribe definite rules.

The parallel study of composition and literature.

As far as possible the study of composition should be combined with the study of literature. Familiarity with the best models of English prose will supply what even the best text-books must fail to give — a standard by which to test one's own writing. With this in view, I have added a chapter of Hints to Pupils on Reading and an extended list of books for private reading. I have also suggested numerous topics for investigation and composition, based upon representative English and American classics.[1] Some of these topics are obviously too difficult for any except advanced pupils, but care has been taken in each case to include one or more topics suited to any one who is able to read the books with intelligence.

The present book.

The present book is to all intents a new one, though it incorporates a part of the author's *Elementary Composition and Rhetoric*, published a few years ago. The plan of the former book has been entirely changed; many pages have been omitted; some chapters have been almost wholly rewritten; some new chapters have been added; the practice work has been brought into close connection with the discussion of the theory; the exercises have been increased in number and differently grouped; suggestions to Pupils and to Teachers have been added. Throughout the book, simplicity of statement along with abundance of illustration has been aimed at.

Aid from teachers.

My thanks are due to the many teachers who have offered suggestions as to what, in their judgment, ought to be most emphasized in a book intended for secondary schools. More especially am I indebted to Principal W. F. Gordy, of the North School, Hartford, Conn., for suggestions that cover every part of the present book. He has read the whole of the manuscript and the proof, and has prepared the greater portion of the sections on Punctuation and Letter-Writing.

W. E. M.

Wesleyan University,
Middletown, Conn., May 1, 1900.

[1] The books upon which these topics are based are those required for the entrance examination in English at the principal American colleges.

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PART II.

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PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS[1] TO PUPILS ON WRITING.

"True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learned to dance."
POPE: *Essay on Criticism*, ll. 362–363.

THE following suggestions, which contain in a few words what is explained more fully in other parts of the book,[2] are designed to aid you in doing your work as easily and intelligently as possible.

No mere learning of rules will make you a good writer, any more than the mere study of a book on the theory of music will make you a musician. You may know all the principles of grammar and rhetoric, and yet write awkwardly and obscurely. You must, therefore, do for yourself what not even the best of books or the best of teachers can do for you; you must form the habit of thinking clearly, rapidly, and independently, and of making others see by means of your written words exactly what you have in mind to express. This habit you can form only by doing a large amount of writing.

[1] These suggestions are chiefly intended to aid the pupil in the work that he finds most difficult in the preparation of essays of several hundred words, but some of the suggestions apply equally well to the briefest exercises.

[2] With the help of the Index and the Table of Contents the fuller discussion of the various topics may be easily found.

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I.

PREPARATION FOR WRITING.

1. Select a topic that attracts you. If an interesting question occurs to you at any time, jot it down as a possible theme for composition. Choose topics that grow out of your everyday life, your thinking, your reading. Such topics you may find in your daily sports, in the newspapers, in the novels and poems you pick up for entertainment, in the books you study, and in the routine of your school work.

2. Use your eyes and your ears so as to collect as new and fresh facts as you can for your purpose. Talk over your subject with people best informed on it. Make brief jottings of suggestions concerning the treatment of the topic, and of facts that you think you can use.[1] If you have an original thought, take note of it at once; you may never be so bright again. Remember constantly that you cannot make something out of nothing, and that if you wish to write well you must have something to say.

3. Arrange and rearrange the slips that contain your rough material until they are in exactly the order you want, and then make a brief outline or plan for your essay.

4. Consider how many words (or pages) you are to devote to the whole composition, and throw out material for which you have no space.

[1] For notes, slips of unruled paper about six inches long and three inches wide will be convenient. Such paper can be procured very cheaply of any printer. Only one item or group of facts should be noted on a single slip. Much time will thereby be saved in rearranging material.

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II.

COMPOSITION.

If possible, write the whole of the first rough draft at a single sitting. Try to say as clearly as you can exactly what you mean. Write complete sentences, but do not think much at the moment about the words you are to use.

If you are in doubt as to which of several words to employ for expressing your meaning, write the alternative words in parentheses and leave them until you revise the whole.

III.

REVISION.

1. Leave the first draft until you have forgotten the exact wording, and then approach it with the purpose of finding all the fault you can.

2. Read the whole aloud, and see whether you have said the one thing you most wished to say.

3. Note whether any material is introduced that should be omitted (Unity); whether the whole is closely connected (Coherence); whether too much space is given to one part and too little to another (Proportion); whether the arrangement is such as to put each part where it will be most effective (Massing or Emphasis).

4. See that each paragraph properly grows out of its paragraph topic and that only one topic is developed in each paragraph.

5. See that each sentence has unity, is perfectly clear, and not too long. Look especially to your pronouns and to loosely placed phrases and clauses.

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6. Use no word of whose meaning or form you are not sure. Be especially careful in forming the plurals of nouns of foreign origin.

7. Search for words that are too often repeated, and use synonyms, unless you are repeating for the sake of emphasis.

8. In general, strike out as many words as you can, — all needless adjectives, all tautological expressions, and all pretentious and unnatural language.

IV.

THE FINAL COPY.

1. Use ruled composition paper (about $8\frac{1}{2} \times 7$ inches), with a margin of an inch at the left side.

2. Use plain black ink, and write legibly and neatly. Punctuate as you write.

3. Write on only one side of the paper.

4. Write the title on the first line of the first page, and leave a blank line between the title and the first paragraph. The principal words of the title should begin with capital letters.

5. Number each page.

6. Write the topic of each paragraph on the margin, near the beginning of the paragraph. Write nothing else on the margin. Observe the rule for indenting paragraphs (p. 50).

7. When you have finished copying your composition or exercise, fold it twice, as indicated in the diagram (p. xi), and indorse on the back of one of the folds your class, your name, the date when the paper is due, and the title.

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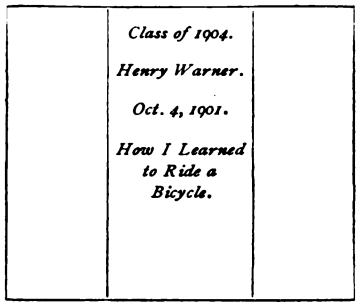

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CORRECTION OF COMPOSITION WORK.

Amb. — Ambiguous.
Ant. — Antecedent obscure.
Ar. — Faulty arrangement.
Awk. — Awkward.
Cap. — Use capital letter.
Cd. — Condense.
Con. — Connection imperfectly indicated.
Ex. — Expand participial construction to a clause.
Gr. — Ungrammatical construction.
Imp. — Impropriety.
L. — Sentences unduly loose.
lc. — No capital letter needed.
M. — Metaphor mixed o otherwise faulty.
Obs. — Obscure.
Om. — Omit.[1]
P. — Punctuation faulty.
Pl. — Plan faulty.
Pr. — Prolixity.
S. — Spelling.[2]
Tau. — Tautology.
tr. — Transpose. (Use numerals 1, 2, 3, etc., to indicate order.)
Un. — Unity not observed.
V. — Vague.
Var. — Variety lacking.
Vbs. — Verbosity.
¶ — Make a new paragraph.
No ¶ — Make no new paragraph.
! or !! — An absurd assertion, or pretentious language.
? — A doubtful statement.
⋀ — Insert letters or words.
⁀ — Bring together separated parts of word.
Vertical marks on margin or underscoring indicate a fault to be discovered by the writer.

[1] In most cases the corrector may as well draw a line through the words to be omitted.

[2] Underscoring of letters in misspelled words is perhaps the most satisfactory method to follow.

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SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

The teachers to whom these suggestions are addressed.

TEACHERS of experience will usually work in the classroom in their own way; and to such many of the following suggestions will appear unnecessary. But those teachers who have not fully worked out the difficult problem of how best to teach the theory and practice of English compositions may find a few words of suggestion not altogether unwelcome.

The relation of theory to practice.

Under present conditions of secondary school work teachers have largely to choose between a course in the theory of rhetoric and a course in practical composition. The practical course, if properly handled, is doubtless far the more valuable. Yet the proper conduct of the practical course involves a certain amount of theory. Some one has well said that we might as sensibly tell a boy to build a house without showing him how as to require him to write a composition without special instruction. The untrained pupil will perpetually stumble. His specific faults may be corrected orally or on the margin of his composition, but unless he has some systematic instruction in the principles on which everything depends he will be likely to commit the same or worse faults again.

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To take a single instance: Few young writers proceed far before they begin unconsciously to use figurative language, and they almost invariably use it badly. They mix metaphors or they jumble literal and figurative expressions in the same sentence. They read the corrections on the margin of the composition, and then sit down to perpetrate slips rivalling that of the worthy mayor who said, "Gentlemen, let us lay our heads together and make a wooden pavement." And although they may vaguely feel that they have blundered, they will not know exactly how. Pupils must, therefore, learn enough of the theory of figurative language to be able to avoid its dangers. Similar reasoning applies to the entire subject. **Illustration.**

Yet however important the development of the theory may be, the study of the text is not an end in itself but a means to an end; and that is, to enable a pupil to express his thoughts clearly, accurately, forcibly, gracefully. This end will usually be attained if the pupil becomes familiar with the general principles of composition and forms the habit of applying them in his ordinary writing. Whether this habit can best be formed by a systematic study of the text with accompanying practice or by a mere reading of the text as a guide in the practice is a matter on which there is room for honest difference of opinion. But even those teachers who feel that they cannot afford time for their pupils to study a text-book on rhetoric can have little objection to their reading practical suggestions as to the best method of treating various classes of topics. Such suggestions will save the time of the teacher during **The proper use of a text-book.**

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the recitation period for more important matters. Systematic instruction of some sort, however, cannot safely be dispensed with, whether it be got from a text-book or from lectures dictated to pupils.

The present text-book.

The text of the present book consists largely of warnings to the pupil as to what he is to avoid, and of specific directions as to how he may apply what he knows to the working out of topics that he has to treat. If, in the judgment of the teacher, a careful reading is sufficient to bring about the best results, then reading let it be. Certain portions of the book are in any case intended to be read rather than carefully studied, and no part of the book is intended to be memorized and recited in the words of the text. Such recitation is a mere exercise of the memory when it ought to be an exercise in oral composition.

Specific suggestions on the use of this text-book.

Specific indication of chapters to be read and of others to be studied may perhaps best be left to the teacher for decision. But the following hints may do no harm. The Introduction is to be merely read. If the teacher can find time to comment at the beginning of the course upon the purpose and the value of work in composition, the opening chapter will mean more to most pupils. The chapters upon the Theme, the Plan, the Paragraph, Sentences, Words, are fundamental, and should be studied as carefully as the time of the class will permit. The chapters on Sentences and Words may be expanded or contracted according to the varying needs of classes. But most pupils need careful instruction in these matters if they are to avoid glaring faults. Espe-

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cially important is the arrangement of sentences, which, if properly observed, will go far toward the correction of a great number of minor faults. The sections dealing with matters of grammar may be omitted if already sufficiently covered in previous work, but most classes unfortunately contain pupils not well grounded in fundamentals.

The order of treatment adopted in this book.

The order of treatment which places the careful study of words after the study of the theme, the plan, the paragraph, and the sentence, has been adopted after a long consideration of the advantages of the reverse order. By following the method here suggested the pupil rightly learns to regard structure as the fundamental thing. When he has clearly conceived his theme as a whole, and knows what he wishes to do with it, he will find words of some sort to express his meaning. After he has acquired a rough and blundering facility, he may well give attention to the minutiæ of criticism. There are, of course, many successful teachers who prefer to begin with the study of words and to work up by degrees to the whole composition. Such teachers will doubtless prefer to take the chapters in the order — vi, v, iv, iii, ii, vii. But a good teacher will succeed with any method.

The chapter on Kinds of Composition[1] should if possible be thoroughly studied, and it should in any case be carefully read in connection with the exercises, but it should not be allowed to take time that properly belongs

[1] In order that the work in practical composition may be delayed as little as possible, the pupils may begin some of the exercise work in Chapter VII while they are still studying the chapters on Sentences and Words.

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to the practice work. The chapter on Style calls for no more than a careful reading.

The amount of theory small.

It will be seen, then, that the amount of theory, apart from illustrative examples and exercises, is really small; and it is hoped that most teachers who use the book will find time for familiarizing their pupils with the greater part of the text.

Practice the one essential thing.

But, after all, we cannot repeat too often that the one essential thing is to train pupils to write with such accuracy that the clear expression of thought shall become habitual — in a sense even mechanical. Ease and readiness will thus, in most cases, come of themselves. As we learn to skate by skating, so we learn to write by writing. Accuracy of expression ought to be required by teachers in every department of school work, and hence every recitation and every examination ought to give training in expression. All oral explanations, all oral translations, and all written work, should be free from glaring errors in form. There should, of course, be a special teacher of composition, but the entire burden should not be laid upon one teacher.

Stimulation of the pupil's inventive power.

The inventive powers of the pupil should be stimulated in every way possible. What he already knows should be utilized as a means of passing to new material more or less closely related to the old. In this way each topic will become vital to him, and he will discuss it with intelligent interest because he will feel that he has an opinion of his own.

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The brief hints that are given under many of the topics in the exercises are in some cases mere catchwords that may well be set aside in part for better ones suggested by the pupil. The hints merely indicate the direction which the discussion of the theme may naturally take. But the pupil may often do best if he treats the topic altogether in his own way. Such independence should be welcomed, for it is by striking out new paths for himself that the young writer grows most rapidly.

Independence in the treatment of topics.

The same remark applies to the topics themselves. They are only a few out of the thousands that might be suggested, and they may often profitably give place to similar topics suggested by the pupil. Such topics may well be drawn to some extent from various departments of school work. If the class is also studying botany, or geology, or physics, or history, there will be abundant opportunity for utilizing the facts presented by such studies. Pupils should be encouraged to make out lists of topics (preferably in the form of questions) based upon their own observation or special reading. The simpler such questions the better. For example: — Why does a stone thrown into the air fall to the ground? Why do balloons tend to explode at great elevations? If Burgoyne had won the battle of Saratoga, what might have been the effect upon the American cause?

Independent suggestion of topics.

Of especial value are topics based upon the careful reading of the best English and American classics. In Part II will be found a list of several hundred such topics drawn

Topics based upon English and American classics.

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from the books required for the entrance examination in English at leading American colleges.[1] These topics will give ample range for a course in composition extending through the four years of the high school. A certain amount of writing upon topics of this sort is indispensable if high excellence is to be attained.

The hints on reading.

The Hints to Pupils on Reading should be supplemented by suggestions and explanations from the teacher. Reports on books read by pupils at home may be called for. The list of books for reading will afford opportunity for occasional

[1] It may be worth while to remind teachers of the recommendations adopted on Dec. 29, 1897, at the fourth meeting of the Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English.

These recommendations are: —

"1. That English be studied throughout the primary and secondary school courses, and, when possible, for at least three periods a week during the four years of the high school course.

2. That the prescribed books be regarded as a basis for such wider courses of English study as the schools may arrange for themselves.

3. That, where careful instruction in idiomatic English translation is not given, supplementary work to secure an equivalent training in diction and in sentence-structure be offered throughout the high school course.

4. That a certain amount of outside reading, chiefly of poetry, fiction, biography, and history, be encouraged throughout the entire school course.

5. That definite instruction be given in the choice of words, in the structure of sentences and of paragraphs, and in the simple forms of narration, description, exposition, and argument. Such instruction should begin early in the high school course.

6. That systematic training in speaking and writing English be given throughout the entire school course. That in the high school, subjects for compositions be taken, partly from the prescribed books, and partly from the student's own thought and experience.

7. That each of the books prescribed for study be taught with reference to —

a. The language, including the meaning of words and sentences, the important qualities of style, and the important allusions;

b. The plan of the work, i.e., its structure and method;

c. The place of the work in literary history, the circumstances of its production, and the life of the author.

That all details be studied, not as ends in themselves, but as means to a comprehension of the whole."

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comments by the teacher that may be of untold value to a class of intelligent pupils.

We have considered the general question of topics for writing. We have now to ask how many of them can be used. Evidently no single pupil can write on every topic suggested in the exercises. This would be undesirable even were time allowed for the work. The variety of choice offered is intended to meet a variety of tastes.

The number of topics to be used.

Schools vary so widely in their practice that no rigid scheme of work can be prescribed that will suit them all. Some schools content themselves with one written exercise a week (or less), while others require four or five a week. Wherever possible, a daily theme, however short, should be required, but in any case there should be not less than one written exercise a week.

The wide diversity in schools.

If time is carefully economized in the classroom, there will be opportunity during the recitation period for a five or ten-minute written exercise whenever the class meets. The rapidly written papers need not in all cases be corrected, but merely kept as supplementary data for estimating the progress of pupils. Ten minutes would suffice for evolving a group of themes from a general subject, for sketching a plan for a theme, or for writing a paragraph on a topic-sentence. Paragraphs may be built up sentence by sentence, as suggested by various members of the class. For this rapid work, the teacher may use many of the topics suggested in Chapter VII, or he may read a short narrative in prose or verse, or an exposition, or

Rapid writing in the recitation period.

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argument, and require the substance of the matter to be reproduced. Brief descriptions or narratives may be based upon pictures.[1]

The exercises not of equal relative importance.

Specific indication of the exercises that may for one reason or another be omitted can be safely left to the discretion of most teachers; and the hints given below are merely advisory. The teacher who studies the needs of his class will usually wish to emphasize certain portions of the work and hence to make a choice. None of the exercises have been added for the sake of padding, but some are of course of less relative importance than others, and may be set aside to make room for work that *must* be done in a brief course. A starving man can dispense with luxuries.

What exercises to choose.

In selecting exercises for composition work, the teacher will find that as a usual thing pupils will take most interest in topics drawn from the chapter on Kinds of Composition or in the Topics Based upon Reading. Exercises from these portions of the book may well be introduced as early as possible. Some classes will be ready to take up such work as soon as they have made a careful study of Paragraphs. The chapters on Sentences and Words may then be studied at the same time that practice is being gained in original composition.

Suggested lists of exercises.

Teachers who find themselves obliged to make a choice among the exercises may find the three following lists helpful. The first list, although by no means including all of the exercises in the book, affords opportunity for a liberal course in

[1] Pictures for this purpose may be very cheaply procured. Even the leaves of an illustrated paper or magazine will prove serviceable.

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composition. The third list is intended for those schools which are compelled to economize time to the utmost.

I.

EXERCISES 1, 2,[1] 3,[2] 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22,[2] 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 39, 40, 43 or 44, 45, 47, 50, 55, 57,[1] 60,[1] 61,[1] 62[1] or 63, 65, 66[1] or 67, 71,[1] 73,[1] 74.[1]

[1] Two or three topics. [2] Five or six topics.

II.

EXERCISES 2,[1] 3,[2] 5, 9, 10, 14, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 32, 36, 40, 43 or 44, 45, 47, 50, 55, 57,[3] 60,[3] 61, 62[3] or 63, 66[3] or 67, 71,[3] 74.[1]

III.

EXERCISES 2,[1] 3,[1] 5, 9 or 10, 21, 22,[4] 25, 28, 30, 32, 36, 43 or 44, 45, 55, 57, 60,[5] 61,[5] 62[5] or 63, 65, 66[5] or 67, 71,[5]

[1] One topic. [2] Two topics. [3] Two or three topics. [4] Three or four to be expanded. [5] One or two topics.

So much for work done by pupils.

The correction of written work.

We now come to the matter which is the dread of every teacher of composition, — the correction of essays and exercises. How much correction may be wisely attempted? In the first place, as already suggested, some of the rapid practice work need not be corrected and returned to the pupil, but merely used as supplementary data for measuring the pupil's progress. If very carelessly written, a paper prepared in the class-room may be returned to the writer for his own corrections.

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Advanced pupils may be utilized for correcting specific faults in the work of their classmates, such as bad spelling, careless punctuation, false concords, improper placing of pronouns, etc.[1] If required to look for certain definite faults, pupils will be more likely to succeed than they will if they are merely told to correct all errors. The correctors may well be excused from a part of their own written work as a compensation.

But when all the help possible has been got from pupils, there remains a heavy burden for the teacher.

How much correction should be attempted?

How much correction is desirable or practicable? The ideal thing for the teacher to do is to go over every piece of work with the writer alone, pointing out such mistakes as will profit him most to correct. Even under such ideal conditions too much criticism will develop self-consciousness and stifle thought and spontaneity. But such individual work is hardly possible where the composition classes are large. Care must, therefore, be taken to map out the work so as to economize time and labor to the utmost.

With this in view certain principles should be kept steadily in mind. One is that pupils will grow slowly in ability to write with accuracy and fluency. If they are not hopeless from the start, they will grow in a natural way out of bad habits into good ones if we will only give them time. But giving them time means that we must

Principles to be considered in correcting papers.

[1] Faulty sentences, commonly misused words, etc., found in the exercises may be copied by the pupils upon separate slips of paper and used as additional material for criticism in the recitation room. Free use should be made of the blackboard for the correction of sentences and paragraphs.

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pass lightly over some errors and fix attention upon a few that are most serious.

In saying this we must admit that many excellent teachers insist upon correcting with religious care all the mistakes that appear in pupils' work. The corrected papers are then returned to the pupils for rewriting. But this second attempt failing of success, another correction followed by another recopying is necessary.[1] Thus the tedious work goes on, until, in some cases, a practically faultless piece is the outcome. But in the meantime the pupil has had little real practice in composition. His own deficiencies have been made painfully evident to him, but he has gained very little in ease and fluency. He has learned at least one thing, however,— that such work is an intolerable bore.

The rewriting and recopying of essays.

Of course he has got something out of it, but has he gained as much as he might? Suppose he be allowed to write more themes with less correcting and copying, and therefore with less accuracy of form. Will he gain more or less in ability to tell in an interesting and original way what he knows? In other words, if in a year he writes forty exercises by the latter method instead of twelve or fifteen by the former, will he have more or less power to use his mother tongue with clearness, accuracy, and ease? Opinions will naturally differ, but many of the most successful teachers are firmly convinced that the less formal

More writing, with less correction.

[1] The time spent by pupils in recopying pages that are not seriously faulty but that happen to contain some sentences which are required to be rewritten is too often as good as wasted. In many cases a mere interlinear correction by the pupil is quite sufficient.

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method yields in the long run far better results, even in accuracy, and that it tends to keep alive that interest without which progress is painfully slow. A paper expressing genuine opinions with force and originality, though with many faults of expression, is far more promising than one that has been made practically faultless by having its life suppressed. There is sound sense in the familiar lines of Pope[1] — himself the severest critic of form in his generation: —

"Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be."

"A perfect judge will read each work of wit
With the same spirit that its author writ:
Survey the Whole, nor seek slight faults to find
Where nature moves, and rapture warms the mind;
. . . . . .
But in such lays as neither ebb nor flow,
Correctly cold, and regularly low,
That shunning faults, one quiet tenour keep;
We cannot blame indeed — but we may sleep."[2]

[1] *Essay on Criticism*, ll. 253–254. [2] *Ibid*, ll. 233–242.

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PRACTICAL

COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

"No matter how slow the style be at first, so it be labored and accurate."

"I remember the players have often mentioned it as an honor to Shakespeare, that in his writing, whatsoever he penned, he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, 'Would he had blotted a thousand.'"

BEN JONSON: *Timber.*

SECTION I.

Composition.

WE need spend very little time in showing the practical importance of English composition. The ability to write with clearness, force, and grace is unquestionably one of the most useful accomplishments that any one can possess. The business man, the lawyer, the politician, the preacher, the teacher, — all have frequent occasion to express their thoughts in written form; and they cannot afford to express themselves ob-

Practical importance of English composition.

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scurely or ineffectively. Writing should not, therefore, be regarded as a mere school exercise, but rather as something which is to be of use as long as one lives.

The dislike of composition work.

Yet, in spite of its evident importance, no work is so often slighted; and no requirement of the school course is less in favor among pupils than the writing of compositions. To some extent this attitude toward composition work will doubtless continue to prevail, for no method of presenting the subject can remove all its difficulties. But, on the other hand, much of the imagined difficulty can be removed by considering the successive steps to be taken in the construction of an essay.

The subject and the plan.

The first thing for a writer to do is to find some topic within the range of his ability and knowledge, and something in which he may be sufficiently interested to have an opinion. Of a sort to be avoided are fanciful subjects expressed in figurative language, such as "Chasing the Rainbow," "Sunbeams of Life," "Shadows." When a topic that really means something has been chosen, it should be narrowed until it includes no more than can be well treated within the limits assigned. The next step, provided that one has sufficient acquaintance with the topic to have something to say, is to decide in what order to say it; that is, the parts of the discussion should not be huddled together in a hap-hazard way, but arranged according to an outline or plan.

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After the plan is made, the work of actual composition consists in filling in the sketch. The plan, as we shall see, may be elaborately detailed, or it may be a mere series of catchwords. It may contain memoranda of leading facts or of details likely to be inaccurately remembered. The chief value of a plan is that it prevents the beginner from omitting essential facts or from inserting them in the wrong place. The more practised writer half-mechanically arranges his material as he writes, and after deciding upon his purpose he groups his facts according to their relations. He realizes, too, that his composition should, as far as possible, be an organic whole, rather than a mere confused mass of facts and opinions, and therefore, in expanding the most carefully prepared plan, he may, for the sake of harmony and proportion, modify many details as he writes.

Composition based on the plan.

Exactly how to form the habit of ready and accurate composition cannot be shown in few words. Lack of fluency is due, not merely to poverty of ideas, but to lack of habitual expression. Good talkers must talk,[1] or they forget how; good writers must keep in prac-

Rapid and accurate composition.

[1] Talking is, of course, nothing but oral composition, as important in its way as writing is. We should, therefore, learn to talk as well as we can; not too much in ragged, broken sentences, nor, on the other hand, in stiffly finished, carefully rounded phrases that sound like a book. Thackeray's novels and Dr. Holmes's *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* and *Poet at the Breakfast Table* afford reasonably safe models. We may well remember, too, that conversing is not exactly the same as lecturing, and that if we leave unsaid at least half of what we might say, no one will be a serious loser.

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tice, or they lose their facility. A profitable exercise for a young writer would be to write half an hour every day, merely for the sake of combining words into consecutive sentences. Subjects abound everywhere. A flower, a stone, the pictures on the wall, the view from the window, a report of a conversation or a dispute, a letter to a friend, anything, will give opportunity for practice. When habits of expression are once formed, thought will find an easy and natural outlet.

What to aim at while composing.

The suggestion of most value is that the writer while composing should care more for matter than for manner. Hamerton says:—

"There are two main qualities to be kept in view in literary composition — freshness and finish. The best way, in my opinion, to obtain both is to aim at freshness in the rough draft, with little regard to perfection of expression; the finish can be given by copious subsequent correction, even to the extent of writing all over again when there is time. Whenever possible, I would assimilate literary to pictorial execution by treating the rough draft as a rapid and vigorous sketch, without any regard to delicacy of workmanship; then I would write from this a second work, retaining as much as possible the freshness of the first, but correcting those oversights and errors which are due to rapidity."

Evidently, if the writer's mind is filled with the desire of explaining something that he wants to do, or of excusing himself for not doing something, or of answering some definite question, he may count the mere form of secondary importance, and he will find writing almost as easy as talking; for he is merely

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saying with the help of the pen what he might say orally if he had opportunity. But the form will ultimately gain by being for the moment made secondary. Words will come when occasion requires. Picturesque images will be formed in the very process of expressing a thought with exactness. Sentences will be forcible or beautiful because there is force or beauty in the conception. Whoever while composing thinks chiefly about the beauty or force of his sentences will succeed in putting into them little besides prettiness or bombast.

Mastery of the subject.

The writer should therefore so master his material that every utterance may be natural and spontaneous. If he shuns the preliminary labor, he cannot hope to give an appearance of ease to his work. He may bring some connection into isolated thoughts by later reconstruction, but he can seldom make the union perfect.

Mental attitude of the writer.

Writing, as just observed, is much like talking, only that the words are written rather than spoken. Any one who can talk, ought, we might suppose, to be able to write. But there are some special difficulties. In talking we have the stimulus of addressing another mind: in writing we too often forget that we are addressing any one in particular. If now, in writing, we can imagine that we have before us the person whose difficulties we are trying to remove, we shall at the same time address an entire group represented by

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that person. Letters owe much of their ease and grace to the fact that the writer has addressed one reader. To be equally effective in more elaborate compositions, the writer needs only to have the same attitude of mind and the same mastery of facts.

Composition and thought.

Composition is an excellent means of discovering what our thoughts are. On many questions we may know how we feel, but until we set in order our reasons we do not realize the grounds for our feeling or belief. Few young writers are able to think in a connected way without some mechanical means of securing thoughts as they arise. One important thought is almost forgotten before another worth recording appears. There are few subjects on which we get light all at once. Many of our most valuable thoughts come unsought and unexpectedly. If seized at the instant they appear, they are ours for all time; if neglected, they are perhaps lost forever.

Consecutive thinking.

The habit of thinking consecutively is formed after much practice. If we choose no definite subject, but, with no regard to the connection of ideas, transfer our thoughts to paper as they arise, we shall find that at first they will range widely, and stand in almost undiscoverable relations to one another. After a time, however, through the mere process of expression, they tend to become more and more closely connected. Furthermore, by the law of association of ideas, one thought

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suggests another. What had swept vaguely before the mind is reduced by writing to a form in which it can be examined. For the sake of practice, the beginner is recommended to write down with as much consecutiveness as he can his first thoughts. He may well destroy most of what he writes, for he will usually realize after his attempt how little he had to say. The few passages that survive will furnish a nucleus for a second attempt.

SECTION II.

Revision.

THE amount that one destroys will depend upon the thoroughness of one's revision. Writers differ much in the extent to which they revise their work. But some of the greatest masters of English prose have bestowed infinite pains upon the correction of the smallest details. When Burke wrote his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* he "revised, moderated, strengthened, emphasized, wrote and rewrote with indefatigable industry. With the manuscript constantly under his eyes, he lingered busily, pen in hand, over paragraphs and phrases, antitheses and apophthegms. . . . Burke was so unwearied in this insatiable correction and alteration, that the printer found it necessary, instead of making the changes marked upon the proof-sheets, to set up the whole in type afresh."[1] **Burke.**

[1] Morley: *Burke*, p. 149.

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We are told also "that he never sent a manuscript to the press which he had not so often altered that every page was almost a blot, and never received from the press a first proof which he did not almost equally alter." [1]

Macaulay.

Similarly we read of Macaulay, that he "never allowed a sentence to pass muster until it was as good as he could make it. He thought little of recasting a chapter in order to obtain a more lucid arrangement, and nothing whatever of reconstructing a paragraph for the sake of one happy stroke or apt illustration." [2]

Gibbon.

"Gibbon," we are told, "wrote his *Memoirs* six times, and the first chapters of his *History* three times."

Daudet.

The great French novelist, Daudet, said of his method of composition: "I write slowly, very slowly, and revise and revise. I am never satisfied with my work. . . . Apart from my notes, I write each manuscript three times over, and, if I could do so, I would write it as many times more."

Unrevised writing.

In sharp contrast with the painstaking care of these great writers is the carelessness of some verbose scribblers, possessed of a dangerous facility, who are content to offer the first draft, with all its incoherence and crudity, as a finished production. For some purposes hasty

[1] Payne: Introduction to Burke's *Select Works*, vol. i, p. xxxviii.
[2] Trevelyan: *Life and Letters of Macaulay*, vol. ii, p. 200.

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work may be all that is required, but it seldom attains high excellence.[1] There are, indeed, writers who by long practice have acquired such skill that the first form of their thoughts is nearly as good as the last. Such were Dr. Johnson, Scott, Lamartine. But the inexperienced writer can seldom call his work finished until he has unsparingly criticised every phrase, sentence, and paragraph. He must not hesitate to exclude wornout commonplace, or any passage that relies on mere words for effect. Each sentence should contribute a distinct addition to the thought. If it adds or explains nothing, it encumbers the paragraph by diverting attention from something of more value.

Varying need of Revision.

The need for revision varies with the character and extent of the theme. If the topic is simple, and the material can be easily arranged, the writer may sometimes express himself with sufficient fulness and accuracy in the first rapid draft. But if the discussion is long, he will almost certainly repeat in varying phraseology in one division what he has already said in

[1] "Professional writers who follow journalism for its immediate profits are liable to retain the habit of diffuseness in literature, which ought to be more finished and more concentrated. Therefore, although journalism is a good teacher of promptitude and decision, it often spoils a hand for higher literature by incapacitating it for perfect finish; and it is better for a writer who has ambition to write little, but always his best, than to dilute himself in daily columns. One of the greatest privileges which an author can aspire to is to be allowed to write little, and that is a privilege which the professional writer does not enjoy, except in such rare instances as that of Tennyson, whose careful finish is as prudent in the professional sense as it is satisfactory to the scrupulous fastidiousness of the artist." — HAMERTON: *The Intellectual Life*, Part xi, Letter 3.

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another. Moreover, the order in which thoughts are first suggested to the mind is rarely the most effective. The hurried jottings of the plan are found, when expanded in actual composition, to require careful rearrangement and excision. But shortcomings of this sort, and most other minor failures to accomplish the desired purpose, first come to light when the entire work is passed in review.

Revision not a matter of rules.

No rules of universal application can be laid down for the revision. The taste and judgment of the writer, his sense of proportion and of the relation of one part to another, must be his guides. He will see the impropriety of devoting much space to topics but slightly related to the main theme. These may not be unimportant in themselves; but their value is to be measured by their applicability to the topic under discussion. Illustrations well suited to a long article may be out of place in one of a few paragraphs.

Revision of sentences.

In actual composition the writer must not fix attention primarily upon making his sentences either forcible or elegant. The most important thing in writing is to transcribe thought from his mind to the page. At his leisure he may arrange and condense and reshape his sentences till he leaves not one in its original form. No suggestion will apply in every case; but the average beginner should, perhaps, not undertake composition and revision at the same instant. After

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long practice he may acquire such facility that his sentences will be at least clear and correct when first written, but even such sentences gain new force and beauty by a thorough revision. The final test of a sentence is that it shall express its meaning so exactly that the reader may take in the writer's thought precisely as he himself conceives it.

Proportion.

No part of the composition should exist for itself alone; and no part should be developed at the expense of another part equally important. Not infrequently a writer is limited to a certain number of words for the discussion of his theme. He must then choose between leaving something important unsaid and excluding what is less worth retaining. He must study his subject till he sees what can best be omitted. If he is allowed but five hundred words in all, he must decide how many words he can afford to waste in mere rhetorical amplification. Since he cannot tell everything, he should select the facts that tell most.

Balance of parts.

To secure an artistic effect, a balance of parts is necessary. One group of paragraphs may be contrasted with another group for the sake of symmetry. Such an arrangement of the larger divisions can best be made after the whole production is written, for then the transition from one part to another can be most clearly indicated. The skill with which the transitions are made will largely determine whether the

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completed work is to be an organized structure or a mass of fragments carelessly thrown together. The connection ought to be clearly indicated, and yet a sufficient break be made to allow each larger division to stand out prominently. The most important part should have the most conspicuous place.

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CHAPTER II.

THE THEME.

"Sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, æquam
Viribus, et versate diu, quid ferre recusent,
Quid valeant humeri."
HORACE: *De Arte Poetica*, ll. 38–40.

"All ye who labour in the Muses' bowers,
Select a subject proportioned to your powers,
And ponder long, and with the nicest care,
How much your shoulders can and cannot bear."
Martin's Translation.

Progressive steps in writing.

To write on any subject, we have to discover the facts important for our purpose and to arrange them in such an order that they will answer some question. The basis of all writing is thinking. Evidently, if our thinking is exact and consecutive, and based upon sufficient knowledge, we have merely to record our thoughts in written form. But, since many thoughts are not worth recording, we must select only those of most value. These when grouped and united by natural transitions form a connected whole. If we already possess the facts that we require, we may proceed at once to the discussion of the question that we propose to answer. Usually, however, we need to collect additional material, and then to arrange it according to its relations. These relations we shall discuss in treating of the different kinds of composition.

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In collecting information we shall do well to write out the leading questions suggested by the subject. We can then group the facts while we gather them.[1] We must proceed systematically, with the help of a trained curiosity, rejecting irrelevant matter and selecting only illustrative facts. In studying an unfamiliar topic we may well begin with a rapid view of it as a whole, so as to see more clearly the relation of one part of the subject to another. We may then select for more careful study the topic of especial interest for our purpose. A vast number of facts we see at once are of no value to the discussion. Hence the importance of deciding at the outset exactly what we intend to do is obvious.

Collection of information.

Suppose the general subject is Music. This topic is evidently so vague that it may include anything relating to music, from a technical discussion of the theory of harmony to an account of the methods of teaching singing in Italy, or a description of the sounds produced by a Chinese orchestra. But if our theme allows us to wander so widely, we must limit it sufficiently to enable us to decide in which direction we are to

Illustration of method.

[1] The habit of taking notes is easily formed, if one will begin in the right way. Envelopes bearing the names of subjects, and arranged alphabetically, may be made to contain all the information that is needed. With some attention to minor headings, every fact may be found as easily as a word in a dictionary. The notes should commonly be as simple as possible, and may be brief hints suggesting what we have ourselves observed, or exact references to books that give further information.

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travel. To neglect this precaution is about as sensible as it would be to embark upon a vessel bound for nowhere.

In these suggestions we have assumed that the writer has a question requiring investigation. Young writers are, however, sometimes encouraged to choose, almost exclusively, subjects that call for little or no research, the excuse being that invention will thus be more stimulated. A certain kind of invention is doubtless cultivated by writing stories, and letters, and other compositions based wholly upon the writer's general information. Yet few young writers have sufficient general knowledge of any broad subject to discuss it with much intelligence. In most cases, therefore, the first concern of the writer should be to gather the material necessary for the adequate treatment of a topic worth discussing. Those who shrink from this labor rarely develop into vigorous and successful writers. The range of their experience is too limited to interest them in the subject themselves, or to enable them to interest others.

Choice of a subject.

The collection of material is of little importance in comparison with the use made of it. A writer's effectiveness will depend largely on the thoroughness with which he masters his facts, and groups them in a suggestive way so as to answer an interesting question. Facts are of especial interest only

Choice of a question, suggested by the general subject.

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when they are brought into new and unexpected relations, and are permeated by the individuality of the writer.

Any large question involves several smaller questions. If we can discover what is most important to ask about a subject, we shall then see our way clear to ask minor questions. The chief question that the writer is trying to answer is his theme. The difference between a subject and a theme is briefly this: a subject is a general topic, and a theme a specific topic. A subject suggests an indefinite number of methods of treatment, while a theme may suggest but one. For example, Music, as already shown, is a general, indefinite subject, suggesting hundreds of possible themes. The specific question, How may deaf children be taught to sing? is evidently a very definite theme. The answers to this question may vary widely, but all must of necessity discuss the same topic.

Leading and subordinate questions.

The subject and the theme.

In actual composition we need not always state the theme in the form of a question, but may adopt some other means of indicating from what point of view we intend to treat the topic. The theme reduced to the most definite form is sometimes called the proposition. The proposition thus differs from the theme in being narrowed to the point where it can be used. In other words, the proposition tells what the writer intends to do with the theme.

The proposition.

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The importance of having a suggestive question can hardly be overestimated. Just as the result of a battle often depends upon the point of attack, and as a landscape appears best when seen from a certain position, so a subject yields most when considered from a favorable point of view.

Importance of a suggestive question.

The proposition, freed from all needless words, may well be introduced early. The form may vary with the character and the length of the article. In a biographical sketch the proposition will indicate that feature of the man's life which we intend to consider. We cannot well discuss in a short article the entire course of a long and busy life, such, for example, as Lincoln's, without compelling ourselves to deal with more facts than we can easily handle. We may therefore indicate at the outset that we wish to consider Lincoln from a single point of view, for instance, as a debater, or as an opponent of slavery. Other facts of his career may be touched lightly in passing. In an argument the proposition will state in plain, simple terms the precise question under discussion. Without some such indication of intention, a reader or hearer is in doubt as to the bearing of the whole discussion. There is economy of effort in devoting even an entire paragraph in a long discourse to limiting the subject and showing from what particular point of view we intend to treat it. In

Nature and position of the proposition.

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a short article a single sentence may be sufficient. Some writers are too formal, and introduce into short papers the same elaborateness of division as belongs properly to a large and complicated subject.

It remains to point out in more detail some common faults in the choice of themes.

Themes too broad.

Perhaps no fault is more common than that of choosing themes too broad to be discussed in the space allowed. As we widen a subject we diminish the possibility of treating minor topics in detail. We must, therefore, determine in advance how wide a question we are prepared to treat within the allotted limits. If we have but ten pages, we must not choose a subject that requires a hundred. The treatment of such a broad subject within narrow limits must be vague, superficial, and incomplete. The difference between a theme and a mere phrase must never be forgotten. A writer may for the sake of brevity adopt a striking phrase as a heading, but his theme should be a definite question, either written out or clearly conceived. The discussion is the answer to the question. If the general subject is Chalk, the theme will be some such question as: What is chalk? Where is it found? For what is it used? How is it prepared for the market? Such questions demand little thinking, but they require that facts be arranged in an orderly way. The interest of an article on such a subject will vary according to the skill with which

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one group of facts is brought into new relations to other groups.

About most subjects we can ask far more questions than we can answer at once. We must therefore select the question or questions that we most care to have answered, and in no case should we imply more in the subject than we are prepared to discuss in the article. The absurdity of such topics as Ambition, Hope, Gratitude, Memory, Home, Sleep, is that they allow the mind to wander in any and every direction, and require a volume for full treatment. Such subjects appear easy to a beginner; but he soon discovers that they are peculiarly difficult. They are practically unsuggestive, because they suggest too much, and thus scatter thought instead of stimulating and concentrating it. They direct attention to nothing in particular. Of the thousand things suggested by the word *Memory* there is none that we must consider, except, perhaps, a definition of the word itself. If, however, we take the specific question: In what way can the memory be improved? — we shall at least have a definite topic. We may make it still more definite by adding more specific terms: In what way can one's memory for dates be improved? With every addition to the definiteness of the theme we mark out more clearly for the writer the path in which he is to walk, but we compel on his part an increasing exactness of information.

Vague subjects.

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Suppose, for example, the general topic is Painting. This may serve as the subject of an article in an encyclopedia; but the general subject will even there be discussed under various headings, such as, The Fine Arts, or Schools of Painting, or the History of Painting, or Fresco Painting, and will present in compact form material that might well be expanded into several volumes. Evidently such topics are not for the young writer. He may be able to write something about how to paint in water colors, or, if he has kept his eyes open, he may describe how a house-painter mixes his colors, or how an artist succeeds in securing an effect of distance in a landscape painting, but a young fellow cannot be expected to know all of these facts at the outset. He may think, however, before he has actually tried, that he is ready to write about Painting in general, and he may indeed be able to string together a few loose facts about the subject. But he will not advance far before he will find that he has nothing in particular to say, and since his topic is indefinite, he does not know in which direction to proceed; and he rightly decides that composition is not easy work.

Illustration of method.

Specimen of a vague theme.

A specimen of what the vague theme may lead to is seen in George Osborne's composition in *Vanity Fair* (vol. ii. ch. xxiii.), *On Selfishness*.

"'This great effort of genius, which is still in the possession of George's mother, is as follows:—

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"'ON SELFISHNESS. — Of all the vices which degrade the human character, Selfishness is the most odious and contemptible. An undue love of Self leads to the most monstrous crimes; and occasions the greatest misfortunes in *States* and *Families*. As a selfish man will impoverish his family and often bring them to ruin: so a selfish king brings ruin to his people and often plunges them into war.

"'Example: The selfishness of Achilles, as remarked by the poet Homer, occasioned a thousand woes to the Greeks — *μυρί' Αχαιοῖς ἄλγε' ἔθηκε* — (Hom. Il. A. 2).[1] The selfishness of the late Napoleon Bonaparte occasioned innumerable wars in Europe, and caused him to perish, himself, on a miserable island — that of Saint Helena in the Atlantic Ocean.

"'We see by these examples that we are not to consult our own interest and ambition, but that we are to consider the interests of others as well as our own. GEORGE S. OSBORNE.

"'ATHENÈ HOUSE, 24 April, 1827.'

"'Think of him writing such a hand, and quoting Greek too, at his age,' the delighted mother said."

What is lacking in George's composition is perfectly evident. His topic is so general that his thoughts, or what pass for thoughts, are not arranged so as to discuss any question whatever. The word Selfishness is repeated until we are tired of it, but we really learn nothing new. The examples prove nothing, and they do not lead up to the conclusion, as the boy thought they did.

If, instead of writing on so vague a topic, he had tried to answer some question, such, for example, as, What am I likely to lose by being selfish? he might have written a tolerable composition, and possibly

[1] The accents are those of the "composition."

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have learned to be more generous in sharing his small possessions with others.

Themes that involve much new matter are usually too difficult for the beginner. Questions are much more easily asked than answered. A writer should therefore consider carefully in approaching a new topic, how far it will lead him; what it will compel him to do; whether he has the knowledge and reasoning power requisite to discuss it. As already remarked, exact knowledge is necessary in order to discuss a specific question; but the number of facts required diminishes in proportion as the question is narrowed. A writer may not be competent to handle a large subject, but may succeed admirably with a small topic, suggested by the main theme. A general acquaintance with the outlines of the larger subject may be easily gained, and the less difficult questions discussed as something subordinate. Such a piece of work well done is of far more value than an ambitious failure. In selecting a question for discussion, a beginner should, therefore, avoid one that lies far outside of his experience or reading. A topic remote from his everyday thought leads to vagueness and confusion, for each new sentence is a further step in the dark. Compositions on matters altogether above the writer's ability add to the amount of worthless writing already produced, and mislead any one who goes to them for help. A reader has the right to assume that unless

Themes too difficult.

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the writer knows his subject, he will not undertake to instruct others about it. Nothing is less excusable than ambitious and pretentious ignorance.

A writer should be sure that what he undertakes to treat is worth discussing. If he writes for his own amusement, he may be as trivial as he pleases; but if he writes for others he should not choose themes so trite that he can scarcely avoid repeating what has already been thought and better expressed a thousand times. The ease of writing on such subjects is only apparent. To write interestingly he must have something new or striking to tell, or he must have a style so attractive as to conceal the poverty of his thought. Sometimes he may give attractiveness to a threadbare topic by discussing an old question in a new light. If he writes on Home Life in the Country, he will probably have his trouble for his pains. But if he can describe from his own experience the home life on a Russian farm, he will have a novel and attractive topic.

Themes worth discussing.

There is a great difference between controlling the theme and being controlled by it. For example, if we write a sketch of the life of Washington we have little or no choice, but are bound to recount the leading facts of his life in about the order of their occurrence. If, however, we write on Washington's Lack of Humor, or on Washington as an Aristocrat, we can arrange our

Control of the theme.

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material in any order we please. Subjects that naturally suggest about the same thoughts to different writers, and lead to a similar arrangement of material, are not likely to stimulate originality. The chief value of such topics is that they give some practice in the use of words and sentences; but they are unsuggestive, for they do not compel us to consider facts in a new light. Every subject has a suggestive side; and we should not be content till we have found it. Comparison is always more suggestive than mere delineation; for through comparison we measure everything, and thus cultivate the judgment.

Specific faults of young writers.

Young writers dislike the labor of selecting and developing a stimulating topic. If asked to write on Napoleon, they are likely to produce a short biography, dry and unsuggestive, that merely condenses the facts they find in a cyclopedia. In such a production they discuss nothing. They do no reasoning. Strictly speaking, they have no proposition, no suggestive question that leads them to arrange all their material in a new form. They do not turn the subject in one light and another till the most attractive side flashes out. They fail to show why the subject should now interest us. They forget the human interest that a topic must possess if it is to be treated in a literary way; that is, so as to stir our feelings. In a word, they are not trying to express genuine convictions, but merely to "write a composition."

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EXERCISE 1. Give an exact account of how you try to write a composition. If you dislike the work, give your reasons.

The title.

Much depends upon the wording of the title. It should be free from needless adjectives and other verbiage. One should not write on "The sad fate of the good and beautiful Mary, Queen of Scots," or on "The great and evident evil of opening the gates on Sunday at the World's Fair at Chicago, discussed and illustrated." The title should be pointed and attractive; it should adequately indicate the general limits of the discussion, but it should not tell too much. If the title is long, it may occupy too much room; if too short, it may tell so little that even a reader who is in search of information on the very topic discussed may not suspect that the article contains anything for him. Especially important to a beginner is a suggestive title; for the inexperienced writer is constantly tempted to follow the words rather than the thought of the title. With him the mere wording often makes the difference between a genuine discussion and a mere enumeration of unrelated facts.

EXERCISE 2. Base five themes[1] upon each of the following topics by asking specific questions: Travel, The Air, Reading, City Life, Music, Time, National Holidays,

[1] The teacher will, of course, not feel bound to require a class to exhaust all the material suggested in Exercises 2 and 3. Here and elsewhere the teacher will select only as much as the time allotted to the subject will permit.

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Amusements, Baseball, Farming, Mountains, Rivers, Charities, The Poor, Cigarettes.

EXERCISE 3. Show in what respects the following topics are defective as themes, and add specific words so as to base five themes on each of the topics. Indicate how many words you deem sufficient for the treatment of each theme: —

Columbus.	Franklin.
Queen Elizabeth.	Garfield.
Peter the Great.	Kipling.
Washington.	Gladstone.

Flowers.	Winter.
Snow.	Truth.
Mountains.	Honesty.
Forests.	Gambling.
Our Country.	Hope.
Peace.	Rain.
War.	Rivers.
Disease.	Politeness.
Life.	The Indians.
Youth.	Idleness.
Morning.	Smuggling.
Evening.	Almsgiving.
Night.	Early Rising.
Spring.	National Prejudice.
Summer.	Civil War.
Autumn.	Dress.

An extensive range of topics may be found by discussing the relation of some man to politics, art,

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literature, science, religion, etc. We may illustrate an easy method of formulating such topics by making three or more columns and filling them in as follows: —

A method of formulating topics.

Tennyson's	relation to	Science.
Longfellow's	attitude toward	Religion.
Whittier's	feeling for	Art.
Lowell's	dislike of	Music.
Thackeray's	opinions on	Politics.
etc.		Plain People.
		Children.
		Love.
		Nature.
		(*a*) The Sky.
		(*b*) The Ocean.
		(*c*) Rivers.
		(*d*) Lakes.
		(*e*) Mountains.
		(*f*) Forests.
		(*g*) Flowers.
		(*h*) Birds.
		(*i*) Insects.
		etc.

Evidently, in place of Tennyson, Longfellow, etc., we may write any other names we please. The words in the second column and the third can also be added to at pleasure. Selecting, then, any name in the first list, we work out as specimen topics, — Whittier's Attitude toward Plain People; Whittier's Feeling for Nature; Whittier's Opinions on Politics, etc.

Another form of these topics may be preferred, as for instance: —

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Nature (*a*) The Sky (*b*) The Ocean etc. Mothers Children Politics, etc.	in	Longfellow's poems. George Eliot's novels. etc.

In thus choosing a topic a writer is not compelled to treat a great subject as a whole, but can easily trace it in outline. Great subjects are easily grasped when not overloaded with details.

Further explanation and illustration.

The methods here suggested may deserve a word of further explanation for, if thoroughly understood, they will enable any young writer to discover a great number of usable themes where, perhaps, he had not suspected their existence. Themes for writing usually contain one principal word, which we may call the theme-word. This is the term under discussion in the body of the article. The theme-word may be limited to almost any extent by adding modifiers on the one side or the other. For example, we may take the word Geography, and by the free use of modifiers we get a very definite topic: —

Noun.	*Prep.*	*Adj.*	*Noun.*	*Prep.*	*Verbal noun.*	*Theme-word.*
The	Need	of Improved	Methods	of	Teaching	Geography (Drawing) (Reading) (Music) (History) (Composition) etc.

Prep.	*Adj.*	*Noun.*
in	Primary (Grammar)	Schools

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In place of Geography we may write any other theme-word, like Drawing, Reading, Music, etc. The general phrase, "The Need of Improved Methods," may be made to serve for topics ranging from "The Need of Improved Methods in Street Cleaning" (or the Construction of Roads) to "The Need of Improved Methods in the Cultivation of Cotton" (or Wheat or Grapes, etc.). The young writer will do well, therefore, to make out lists of general phrases that may be used with all sorts of theme-words, and thus take advantage of a mechanical device for evolving a vast number of topics that may be of service to him.

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CHAPTER III.

THE PLAN.

"Above all things, *Order* and *Distribution* and *Singling* out of *Parts* is the life of *Dispatch;* so as the *Distribution* be not too subtill. For he that doth not divide, will never enter well into Business; And he that divideth too much, will never come out of it clearly."

BACON: *Of Dispatch.*

HAVING selected a topic, we have next to consider what we shall do with it. We have presumably collected enough information so as to have something to say. The order in which we shall say it is determined by the Plan.

We shall discuss the Plan under two divisions. Into the first will properly fall the discussion of plans in general; into the second the discussion of the essential parts of a discourse.

The arrangement of material.

I. Although we may know the precise question that we are to try to answer, and may have collected sufficient information for our purpose, yet we cannot use our material until we arrange it according to some plan. Material in disorder is as ineffective as an army in confusion.

In regarding each theme as a question, expressed or implied,[1] we have seen that the main question

[1] In the final shaping of the plan we need not always express the various divisions in the form of questions.

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really involves several smaller questions. These in turn lead to still other questions more and more subordinate. If now we group these questions so that each new inquiry shall grow naturally out of the answers to the preceding questions, the order of the questions will suggest the order of thought, and thus furnish the plan of the discourse.

Questions the basis of the plan.

The discussion will gain in clearness if we make the leading questions as comprehensive and distinct as possible. Every fact then falls into its proper place, and stands in clear relations to other facts. A well-considered plan reveals at a glance the extent of the whole discussion, and serves as a constant guide in the arrangement and proportionate development of the thought. The plan thus makes an organic whole of what would otherwise be a mass of unrelated fragments. Not the least of the advantages of the plan is that it indicates what is to be left out of the discussion. There is surely little use of polishing sentences and carefully choosing synonyms if the revision of the plan will compel the rejection of the entire paragraph that contains them.

The leading questions should be comprehensive and distinct.

The clearest writers bestow much pains upon the grouping of material. For instance, Macaulay, in his Essay on Croker's edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, answers three leading questions: (1) What sort of book has

Example from Macaulay.

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Croker given us? (2) What sort of man was Boswell? (3) What sort of man was Johnson? In answering these three questions he has to answer many others, but these he easily groups under the main topics.

In a somewhat similar way, Professor Huxley, near the beginning of a celebrated lecture on Evolution, says: —

"So far as I know, there are only three hypotheses which ever have been entertained, or which well can be entertained, respecting the past history of Nature. I will, in the first place, state the hypotheses, and then I will consider what evidence bearing on them is in our possession, and by what light of criticism that evidence is to be interpreted."

Some practical suggestions with regard to a plan will be of general utility: —

Practical suggestions.

1. A plan ought to have unity; that is, it should exclude facts or topics not closely connected with the main theme.

2. Its main divisions ought to be few and mutually exclusive; that is, two divisions apparently different should not involve the treatment of essentially the same topics.

3. It ought to be so arranged as to bring important topics into prominent positions, and to connect closely one part with another.

4. It should observe proportion, and not give to any part of the discussion more space than it deserves.

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5. It ought to be so complete as to include all facts necessary to the discussion.

Rules more specific than these cannot easily be given. The treatment of most themes can be indefinitely varied, and should never become stereotyped. When the construction is made mechanical the life of the discourse is at once lost.

Practical applications.

In carrying out the suggestions already indicated we have but to write questions as they occur to us.[1] These suggest the specific topics of the discussion. We may not at first ask the most important questions. Some may be so trivial that we may dismiss them at once. Those that remain after we have excluded the irrelevant, the trivial, and such as repeat a question under another form, we may arrange according to their relative importance for our purpose. When we have found an effective order and written out our answers, which generally consist of our own opinions fortified by facts, we have the rough draft of the whole work. The writing merely supplies the links to connect the scattered material.

EXERCISE 4. The two following plans were written as class exercises. They should be examined with a view to detecting any topic that does not grow out of the subject, or that is not placed in its proper position. Lacking divisions may be added if obviously required.

[1] There is considerable gain in convenience in writing the questions on separate slips of paper, which can be easily rearranged. Cf. Wendell, *English Composition*, p. 165.

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These plans can easily be reduced to the question form, though that is by no means always necessary or desirable. Changes should be made, if necessary, with a view to securing closer connection among the various divisions: —

LINCOLN'S EDUCATION.

I. His early education.
   (*a*) His advantages.
   (*b*) His teachers.
   (*c*) Books studied.
   (*d*) His diligence.

II. His later education.
   (*a*) The last of his school-days.
   (*b*) He studies surveying.
   (*c*) He studies law.
   (*d*) His knowledge of human nature.

THE NEED OF REFERENCE LIBRARIES IN HIGH SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

I. What do we mean by a *reference* library?

II. Few books that we read can be thoroughly understood without reference to other books.

III. Suitable reference libraries cannot be afforded by most families.

IV. Classes of books most needed.

V. Size of library.

As already remarked, there are few themes that cannot be treated in a variety of ways. A thousand cir-

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cumstances may modify the order. Thus it is that no two writers, though equally logical, would arrange their materials in precisely the same forms. Yet in a scientific treatise the arrangement is largely determined by the material. The definitions and other preliminary explanations must be placed at the beginning, and the whole developed in a regular order. In discussions not rigidly scientific a more flexible arrangement may be adopted, which may be called the literary or rhetorical arrangement. This places few restrictions upon the order of topics. The literary order is continually adopted, even by men of science, in treating scientific subjects in a popular way. A notable example is Huxley's "Lay Sermon" on "A Piece of Chalk." In simple narratives the plan may follow the order of events. In letters and other informal compositions the plan need be nothing more than a list of catchwords to remind the writer of the leading facts to be developed. Of such sort are the hasty notes which newspaper correspondents rapidly weave together in an article not lacking in coherence and finish.

Variety of treatment.

EXERCISE 5. If we write the words, — boy, river, rapid current, boat, broken oar, rock, overhanging tree, — we have enough to suggest the outline of a narrative that may be told in a hundred words or in a thousand. This very simple narrative would evidently take up each incident as it occurred. In a short version, such as might appear as

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a newspaper item, we should suppress most of the details, and recount only the most essential facts. In a fuller account we might describe the boy, the river, the boat, and many other things.

Similarly treat the following: —

Abandoned farm, weeds, shrubs, trees, decaying buildings. Two strangers. Quiet purchase. Oil-well. Machinery, buildings. New town.

To be most effective, the material must be arranged in accordance with the requirements of the purpose.

The plan modified by the purpose.

One will not arrange a letter in the same way as a speech. If a writer groups his materials by a sort of natural selection in ways familiar to him, he may in rough work dispense with the more careful written analysis. There is danger, however, that the unwritten analyses will become stereotyped and monotonous. The well-worn formula may serve its purpose in grouping the facts, but freshness and suggestiveness will be lacking. The writer should, therefore, constantly endeavor to embody in his plan whatever originality he has. If he looks at a subject in a new way, he can make this evident by changing the usual order. Many public discourses are dull, not merely because the matter is old and is treated in a lifeless style, but because the plan compels an unsuggestive grouping of the mate-

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rial. In any case a writer or speaker ought not to have a form of construction so well known that any one acquainted with his methods can foretell how he will treat a given topic.

Some further practical suggestions and warnings may be briefly noted.

Ill-considered plans.

Not infrequently a writer is tempted to discuss a subject with which he is but slightly acquainted. In the extremity of his ignorance he prepares a plan; but since his knowledge of the subject as a whole is limited, he gives undue prominence to minor topics, and leaves almost untouched the important matters on which everything depends. Then, in collecting further information, he follows his preconceived plan. In proceeding thus, he fails to see facts in their true relations, and produces in consequence a distorted and worthless discussion.

The trial plan.

Far better is it to make a brief trial plan, which may consist of the topics apparently most important. Then, after the subject is more thoroughly mastered, the plan can be modified to any degree necessary.

EXERCISE 6. Take any of the themes worked out by the pupils in Exercises 2 and 3, and require plans to be developed during the class period, in accordance with the suggestions made in the text. Five or ten minutes will be sufficient time in most cases. This sort of work should

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be a frequent drill. Other topics may be suggested by the pupils.

EXERCISE 7. A plan can be expanded in its details to almost any extent. We must remember, however, that if our space is limited we must not sacrifice important facts for the sake of unimportant trifles. We must determine, therefore, at the outset how much space is to be used.

The following plan is a not very successful attempt by a pupil to treat the topic, but it shows how single parts may be expanded. Criticise the plan for including too much or too little, and show how single divisions may be still further developed. The following questions indicate the direction that the criticisms may take: —

Do all the topics properly belong to the theme? Can the "location" properly be distinguished from the "surroundings"? Is the order of topics what it should be? etc.: —

NEW ENGLAND LIFE AS PORTRAYED IN HAWTHORNE'S HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES.

INTRODUCTION.

I. The old Pyncheon house.
   (*a*) Location.
   (*b*) Surroundings.

II. The shop.
   (*a*) The shop window.
   (*b*) The variety of goods.
   (*c*) Reasons why the shop was opened.

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III. Characters represented.

(*a*) Hepzibah.
  (1) Her personal appearance.
  (2) Her natural peculiarities.
(*b*) Uncle Venner.
(*c*) Phœbe.
(*d*) Judge Pyncheon.

IV. Superstition connected with the story.

EXERCISE 8. Expand one or more divisions of the plans produced by the class, as was suggested in Exercise 6. Decide how long you intend the whole discussion to be.

Revision of the plan.

Frequently, after an entire article is written, there will be an evident advantage in some rearrangement of parts, or in the retrenchment or expansion of some division. One reason why rearrangement is necessary is that the most effective order is seldom that in which thoughts are first presented to the mind. Every young writer may prove this by putting his thoughts into writing just as they occur to him. A practised thinker has little difficulty in choosing at once an effective arrangement; but the beginner will usually discover that his trial plan requires numerous changes. One topic will be seen to include another, while other topics will be entirely irrelevant.

The fulness of the plan as a preparation for composition will depend largely upon the writer and the character of the subject. Some persons write with-

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out placing upon paper a specific outline of topics, and find that they gain in ease and freedom by rejecting all formal helps; other writers find that they save time by finishing the plan in detail, almost as carefully as the expanded discussion. Most beginners are unable to think through a subject without writing each thought as it occurs to them. Till they acquire facility, they ought, therefore, to seek the help of a written plan, in order that the several groups of facts brought out in the discussion may find the place where they can be used to most advantage. A plan may be regarded as a table of contents, and it ought therefore to suggest the essentials of the discussion. On the other hand, it ought not be so detailed and complicated as to prevent the writer from taking in the whole at a glance.

The fulness of the plan.

A writer frequently has difficulty in continuously developing his thought, so as to pass in a natural way from one part of the discussion to the next. The remedy is easily prescribed: the chief difficulty arises in practice. Each part should be placed where it explains most. This is the same as to say that related thoughts should be grouped together. The connection is then most natural and effective, since the transitions are shortest. The final order of topics will depend upon a variety of considerations, chief among them being the leading purpose of the discourse. Digressions should be admitted only as incidental inquiries, ex-

Coherence.

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cusable because they illustrate the main question. This, however, should not be allowed to slip out of sight for an instant. It need not be specifically named at every turn, but it should so permeate the entire discussion as to give unity and coherence. Otherwise the whole will lack progressive movement, and will tantalize and bewilder the reader.

If the successive paragraphs grow naturally out of the paragraphs that precede, and each new group of paragraphs is prefaced by an introductory sentence or two, the connection of details will usually be sufficiently evident. The general drift of the thought may usually be indicated at the outset. Some topics may be enumerated that we exclude from our inquiry, and we may then outline the question we propose to answer. We need not always hasten to reveal at the very beginning what our ultimate purpose is; but sooner or later we must let the reader into the secret. No grace of diction, no finish of sentences can atone for the crowning fault of leaving the purpose unintelligible.

The connection of details.

EXERCISE 9. Make a plan for an essay by placing upon the blackboard the various subdivisions, as suggested by members of the class.

EXERCISE 10. Require plans written by the class to be criticised upon the blackboard.

II. The old books on rhetoric specified a large number of formal divisions of discourse, most of

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which are now abandoned. The necessary divisions are few. In fact, the only indispensable thing is the Discussion, that which carries the chief burden of the writer's thought. Of minor importance are the Introduction and the Conclusion. Many short articles may well dispense with both introduction and conclusion, and present without preliminary flourish or elaborate final remarks the essential matters with which the discussion properly has to do.

Divisions of discourse.

I. THE INTRODUCTION.

In many cases, however, we cannot discuss a subject intelligibly without some preliminary explanation, or we cannot arouse interest in what is to follow, without calling attention to some striking feature of the subject. Not everything, however, that might be said at the beginning is an introduction. The applicability of the opening remarks to the topic in hand must be the test of their value. One luminous thought at the beginning will sometimes flash a ray of light through the entire discourse; but a thought that is merely brilliant without being applicable may dazzle the reader without illuminating the subject.

Value of an introduction.

The introduction should be attractive, so as to win for a difficult subject a favorable reception from the start. It should be unassuming, and should not appear to promise more than can be performed. Above all, it should

Qualities of an introduction.

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really introduce the theme. An introduction that does not lead up to the discussion deceives the reader by engaging him in a train of thought of which no use is to be made, and wastes words at the most important point. The writer should therefore admit into the introduction no sentence which cannot be turned to account later. The connection need not always be immediately obvious, although this is usually best.[1]

Kind of introduction.

The kind of introduction will differ with the subject and the special purpose of the writer. Very effective is the narrative or historical introduction. Matthew Arnold is fond of quoting a striking sentence as a text that suggests the main theme.

Length.

As a general rule, the shorter the introduction the better, for the reader is thus brought without delay to the main topic. Lord Bacon says: "To use too many circumstances ere one come to the matter, is wearisome; to use none at all is blunt." In a short essay the introduction may well consist of only a sentence or two, or at most of a single paragraph. The long preludes that many writers play before they approach their theme are ridiculously out of place. The question of length is really a question of proportion. An extensive and

[1] As examples of introductions that really introduce, and yet are not obviously connected with what follows, we may note the opening of Thackeray's *Newcomes*, of Macaulay's *Essay on Robert Montgomery's Poems*, and of Matthew Arnold's *Essay on Lord Falkland*.

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unfamiliar subject naturally requires more preliminary explanation than one which is simple and generally understood. The introduction, then, reduced to its lowest terms, merely announces what is to be discussed. Whatever else it should contain must be determined by the length and purpose of the article.

II. THE DISCUSSION.

Importance of the discussion.

The discussion is the main body of the discourse. Without it the introduction and the conclusion are worthless, since the introduction must have something to introduce, and the conclusion something to conclude. The details of the treatment of the discussion are sufficiently considered in the remarks on the Plan and in the chapter on the various Kinds of Composition, and need not be elaborated here.

III. THE CONCLUSION.

Difficulty of concluding.

Some writers have as much difficulty in knowing how to stop as they have in knowing how to begin. Their difficulty is largely due to the fact that they follow no plan at all, or one so extensive that it cannot be carried out within reasonable limits. Hence, after reaching a certain point in the discussion, they perceive that they cannot continue the rest of the discourse on the same scale. They therefore have either to condense all that they have written, or to bring the discourse

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to a close without really finishing it. A conclusion that thus fails to conclude the discourse cannot grow naturally out of the discussion, but must be somewhat abrupt.

The form and the length of the conclusion must be modified by circumstances. It may present an appeal, or a brief summary of arguments, or an application of some part of the discussion. When the plan is carefully considered and due regard is paid to proportion, the conclusion will frequently be a mere expansion of the final topic of the plan.[1] The conclusion should not be unduly long, and may sometimes be best omitted altogether. In no case should it recommence after it has naturally come to an end. As between abruptness and tedious repetition we need not hesitate which to choose. If, however, the discussion stops when it is finished, there will be no abruptness.[2]

Form and length.

EXERCISE 11. Collect examples of Introductions and Conclusions to be read and discussed in the class. A good magazine or volume of essays will furnish numerous examples. Macaulay's Essays show in what way long articles may be introduced and concluded. Addison's

[1] Since both the Introduction and the Conclusion can be fairly judged only when considered in relation to the Discussion, the student must be referred for illustrations to the practice of the best writers.

[2] Pupils will find it to advantage to make an outline of pieces of composition that they find easy to follow. Such pieces are commonly so well thought out that their plan can without difficulty be discovered. Editorial articles, short stories, and many other forms of writing will furnish good examples.

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essays in the *Spectator* afford excellent illustrations of the method of handling a short article. The editorial columns of any reputable newspaper may be consulted for additional examples.

EXERCISE 12. Find all the fault you can with the following plans: —

GENERAL SUBJECT.

COMPARISON OF EVANGELINE AND PRISCILLA.[1]

THEMES.

1. Comparison of their Personal Appearance.
2. Difference between their Stations in Life.
3. Principal traits of Character.
4. Comparison of their Religious Life.

PLAN.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEIR STATIONS IN LIFE.

I. In early years: —
   (*a*) Evangeline, happy, industrious, in her peaceful home in Acadia.
   (*b*) Priscilla, surrounded with all the hardships of the early settlers of New England.

II. In later years: —
   (*a*) Evangeline, sad, homeless, searching in vain for her lover.
   (*b*) Priscilla, the happy, contented wife of one of the foremost men of the colony.

[1] If the pupils have not read Longfellow's *Evangeline* and *Miles Standish* they may omit this part of the exercise.

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GENERAL SUBJECT.

THE METHODS OF MODERN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS.

THEMES.

1. The Necessity of Methods in Modern Political Campaigning.
2. Are these Methods Degrading Politics?
3. Are the Present Political Methods Justifiable?
4. The Effect of the Present Methods of Campaigning.

PLAN.

THE NECESSITY OF METHODS IN MODERN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING.

I. Conventions necessary to draw up platform, which is essential for unity. The committees only continue work begun by convention.

II. Committees necessary to bring real issues before the people.

III. Present-day educational campaign requires: —
   (*a*) Judicious placing of speakers, pamphlets, etc.
   (*b*) Better use of money.
   (*c*) Cleaner methods.

IV. Unity of action a requisite factor in all campaigns.

V. Committees must distribute moneys for speaking, parading, etc., and meet all expenses.

WHAT WOULD BE THE ADVANTAGE OF AN INTERCONTINENTAL RAILWAY.

INTRODUCTION.

Who first proposed the Intercontinental railway?

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DISCUSSION.

I. What need is there of such a railway?
II. Would it be profitable?

CONCLUSION.

Would it tend to increase or decrease the population of our country?

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CHAPTER IV.

PARAGRAPHS.

"The triumph of modern Art in Writing is manifested in the structure of the Paragraph." EARLE: *English Prose*, p. 91.

"We ought to remember what a slow and painful operation reading is to the uneducated. Merely to read the native tongue is to them a labor so irksome that they are apt to lose the sense of a paragraph in seeking for that of a sentence or an expression." HAMERTON: *The Intellectual Life*, Part X., Letter 3.

ONE might think that the natural way to begin the study of composition would be to begin with the study of words, since without words we cannot write at all. Yet in real life we find that we do not commonly use single words or even single sentences to express our thoughts, but groups of sentences.

Reason for discussing paragraphs before words and sentences.

When a group of sentences relates to the same topic we call the whole a paragraph. A paragraph may, indeed, consist of only a single sentence, but commonly contains several.

Definition.

A single paragraph is often a complete article in miniature, since the paragraph may treat a topic so narrow that the entire discussion will comprise but a few sentences. In a long article a group of paragraphs sometimes discusses with considerable fulness a single topic subordinated to the main theme, and this group can be regarded as an article within an article.

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Paragraphs are indicated to the eye by printing or writing the first word a little to the right of the margin of the paragraph, as is illustrated throughout this book. In writing, the first word should be placed an inch or more to the right of the margin. Paragraphs thus indicated are said to be *indented.*

Indenting.

The common fault of leaving part of a line blank after the close of a sentence in the body of the paragraph should be avoided. There should be no break until the close of the final sentence.

The importance of clearly defined paragraphs is great. We cannot follow a long discussion without separately considering the leading divisions. If no paragraphs are made, the whole of the material is so closely massed that we cannot readily see the transition from one part of the discourse to the next. Where the new turn in the thought is indicated to the eye by the break in the page, and each new group of sentences contains a new group of facts, the successive steps in the development of the thought are easily followed. That is, if there are four paragraphs in a group, we naturally infer that there are four principal things to be said about the general topic discussed in the several paragraphs. But the reader is not the only one to gain in this matter. If a writer has mastered the secrets of paragraph structure, so as to be able to combine in a well ordered and transparent whole the

Importance of paragraphs.

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materials that concern a single narrow topic, he will find little difficulty in longer compositions, for these are only groups of paragraphs.

Length of paragraphs.

The length of the entire discourse will in part determine the length of the paragraphs, though rules of general application cannot easily be formulated. In a long article each topic may be more amplified than in a short discussion. A single condensed paragraph of a short article may thus be expanded in a more elaborate treatment of the same theme into a whole group of paragraphs. Extremes of length or brevity are in any case to be avoided. Paragraphs that are too long impose a heavy tax upon the reader's attention; paragraphs that are too short subdivide the thought unduly, and make obscure the relations of the larger parts of the discourse. But the young writer should not aim to make all his paragraphs of the same length. Some parts of the discussion will require more expansion than others, and hence must be longer.

EXERCISE 13. In any group of five or six paragraphs by some reputable writer,[1] count the number of lines in each paragraph, and point out, if you can, why one paragraph is made longer than another.

Structure of paragraphs.

In the ideal paragraph there is (1) a sentence that contains the topic of the paragraph; (2) a group of sentences amplifying and illustrating this topic; (3) a concluding

[1] Macaulay abounds in good illustrative paragraphs.

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sentence that ties together the whole of the thought of the paragraph. This ideal scheme cannot always be followed. In some forms of composition, we cannot in every case find a topic that can be expanded throughout the entire paragraph. Hence the structure of the paragraph allows much freedom; and conformity to the ideal will depend upon the nature of the topic treated.

The topic-sentence.

If a paragraph is well constructed, it can commonly be summarized in a single sentence, known as the topic-sentence. Sometimes this topic-sentence may be found at the beginning of the paragraph, sometimes near the middle, and sometimes at the end. Now and then a well written paragraph may contain no sentence that can be selected as the topic-sentence, but the drift of the thought may be discovered by taking the paragraph as a whole. Paragraphs of this sort abound in narrative writing. On the other hand, in descriptions, or arguments, or explanations of any kind, paragraphs easily range themselves under topic-sentences.

Relation to the plan.

If the plan has been carefully constructed, the various subdivisions may be readily transformed into topic-sentences. In an essay of about five hundred words we might write paragraphs containing from seventy-five to one hundred and twenty-five words each. There may, therefore, be a half dozen paragraphs based upon a half dozen topic-sentences. These topic-sentences

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may be, in turn, mere expansions of phrases in the plan.

EXERCISE 14. Take any of the plans written under Exercise 6, and require topic-sentences to be written as suggested by the plans.

EXERCISE 15. *a*) In a newspaper or magazine article, or a book (Macaulay's *Essays* furnish some of the best examples), copy the opening sentence or two of a half dozen paragraphs, and note whether these sentences embody the plan of the discussion. *b*) Show that the topics of the paragraphs are merely minor themes for brief essays, each complete within the limits of a few sentences.

EXERCISE 16. Simple paragraphs may be read to the class, and the topics of the paragraphs may be suggested by the pupils.

Development of the paragraph topic.

When we have our paragraph topic, what are we to do with it? How are we to develop the thought so as to fill the paragraph with something more than vain repetition? The method of development cannot be exactly prescribed, but it usually takes the following course: —

1. Whatever our skill in statement, we may not succeed in putting into a single sentence all that we want to say. We may include in our topic-sentence too much or too little, or we may present a bare assertion with nothing to prove it, or we may raise a question which we should try to answer.

2. We see, therefore, that we may need to restate

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the topic in another form that may be clearer to some readers. In the process of restatement we may give details which indicate precisely how we intend to continue the discussion. We may show, perhaps, what we conceive to be the limits of the topic. But we cannot usually make our meaning clear without illustration, and hence we cite one or more examples. Some writers, like Macaulay, often write a topic sentence and then fill the entire paragraph with illustrations. In the course of the paragraph we may make assertions which require further proof; or from the assertions or illustrations we may draw a series of inferences as necessary consequences. And thus, in a variety of ways, we group around the topic or nucleus of the paragraph whatever serves to amplify or illustrate or prove the theme of the miniature essay that we call a paragraph. Whatever is incapable of developing in some way the theme of the paragraph should find a place elsewhere. The opening or closing sentences may well point out the connection with other paragraphs, but such connection may often be best indicated by a single word or phrase.

Proper method of reading paragraphs.

By processes such as have been described most paragraphs are built up. The details of method must be reserved for advanced study, but the young writer should early form the habit of picking his way through the paragraphs that he reads and noting the elements of which they are composed.

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The following simple illustrations will make clear the methods of development that have been described: —

Illustrations of method.

"Birds which build their nests on the ground are exposed to special perils, and therefore adopt every precaution to screen the nest from observation. How often does the mower's scythe bring instant death to the lark while sitting on her nest? It happened that on one occasion the scythe passed clean over a lark's nest, neither injuring the mother nor disturbing the young. The cutting away of the grass had, however, laid the home open to every passer-by. The mowers went on with their work, and the courageous bird remained at her post of danger. After a short time the farmer passed, but could see nothing of the nest. After some close searching, the concealment was explained. The lark had actually placed over the nest a quantity of grass, so arranged as to hide the whole completely from view, but leaving a passage wide enough for her to go out and return. This case shows an intelligence adapting itself to the sudden emergencies of an unexpected crisis, which must be something more than instinct."[1]

Topic, with specification.

Illustration.

Inference from illustration.

"Many writers have remarked the intelligence and sagacity of ravens in judging of the dangers to which they are exposed by our weapons. A very lofty and bushy oak, far from any habitation, served as a shelter during the night for a number of ravens. Thither they were seen to retire every evening. One very clear night, about two hours after sunset, a gun loaded with ball was fired into the tree. The ravens took to flight, but not one of them flew horizontally; on the contrary, all rose perpendicularly, like a burst of fireworks. Their unanimous calculation seems to have been that the shot, which had been fired from the foot of the tree, might be followed by another; therefore it was best to rise out of reach, in a direction where the branches

Topic.

Illustration.

[1] Menault: *The Intelligence of Animals*, p. 137.

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could protect and hide them. It was not until they were at a great elevation that they began to disperse, in order to choose another resting-place."[1]

Topic, and explanation of "acted differently."

"In ages past, these mountain condensers acted differently. The wet winds of the ocean, which now descend in liquid showers upon the hills, once discharged their contents as snow. And a famous deposit they must have made. In addition to the charms which this region presents to every eye, the mind of him who can read the rocks aright is carried back to a time when deep snow-beds cumbered the mountain slopes, and vast glaciers filled the vales. In neither England nor Wales do the traces of glacial action reach the magnitude which they exhibit here."[2]

Inferences from the ancient snow-falls.

"But my theory of education agrees with that of Emerson, according to which instruction is only half the battle, what he calls *provocation* being the other half. By this he means that power of the teacher, through the force of his character and the vitality of his thought to bring out all the latent strength of his pupil, and to invest with interest even the driest matters of detail. In the present instance I was determined to shirk nothing essential, however dry, and to keep my mind alive to the requirement of my pupil. I proposed a series of ideal rambles, in which he should be always by my side. Oddly enough, though I was here dealing with what might be called the abstract idea of a boy, I realized his presence so fully as to entertain for him, before our excursions ended, an affection consciously warm and real."[3]

Topic, with a hint of other theories.

Definition.

Specific application.

Result.

Topic, reference to preceding paragraphs, and specific limitation.

"There are, however, rivers which have sources somewhat different from those just mentioned. They do not begin by driblets on a hillside, nor can they be traced to a spring. Go, for example, to the mouth of the river

[1] Menault: *The Intelligence of Animals*, p. 146.
[2] Tyndall: *Hours of Exercise in the Alps*, p. 415.
[3] Tyndall: *Forms of Water* (preface), p. xvii.

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Rhone, and trace it backwards to Lyons, where it turns to the east. Bending round by Chambéry, you come at length to the Lake of Geneva, from which the river rushes, and which you might be disposed to regard as the source of the Rhone. But go to the head of the lake, and you will find that the Rhone there enters it, that the lake is in fact a kind of expansion of the river. Follow this upwards; you will find it joined by smaller rivers from the mountains right and left. Pass these, and push your journey higher still. You come at length to a huge mass of ice — the end of a glacier — which fills the Rhone valley, and from the bottom of the glacier the river rushes. In the glacier of the Rhone you thus find the source of the river Rhone."[1]

Example.

Conclusion.

"A great chapter of the history of the world is written in the chalk. Few passages in the history of man can be supported by such an overwhelming mass of direct and indirect evidence as that which testifies to the truth of the fragment of the history of the globe which I hope to enable you to read with your own eyes to-night. Let me add, that few chapters of human history have a more profound significance for ourselves. I weigh my words well when I assert that the man who should know the true history of the piece of chalk which every carpenter carries about in his breeches-pocket, though ignorant of all other history, is likely, if he will think his knowledge out to its ultimate results, to have a truer, and therefore a better, conception of this wonderful universe, and of man's relation to it, than the most learned student who is deep-read in the records of humanity and ignorant of those of Nature."[2]

Topic.

Expansion of topic, showing more specifically what it implies.

"The distinguishing feature of the typical American college in its earlier days was the personal influence of the instructor upon the student. The professor knew the young men who came into his class-room, as the teacher

Topic.

[1] Tyndall: *Forms of Water*, p. 7.

[2] Huxley: *Discourses Biological and Geological*, p. 4.

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in a small school knows his pupils. He became familiar with their peculiarities of mind and character; he understood their special needs; he exerted, in many cases, an exceedingly strong personal influence over dozens of new students each year. Speaking of the period of 1850 in New Haven, then a town of moderate size, Dr. Dwight says it was the almost universal rule that the instructors met the entire company of students, and that not infrequently, during the course. With the great increase in the number of students, with the scattering of instructors' residences over a city of one hundred thousand people, and with the development of the elective system, attended as it is by the separation of students and teachers in their work, 'there is no such universal acquaintance between the two bodies possible as was characteristic of the former period.'"[1]

Expansion of topic by specification.

Illustration.

Contrast.

In all these paragraphs it will be noted that the writers aim to make unmistakably clear what is the topic to be treated. Whenever necessary, they restate the theme in one form or another and illustrate by examples. Comments upon the facts presented naturally follow. Many other methods may be adopted, but the general principle is essentially the same in all cases.

Comment on the methods followed in the illustrative paragraphs.

There remain three important things to be observed in the construction of paragraphs:

1. Each paragraph should possess variety of thought along with variety in the expression of the thought. (Unity with Variety.)

2. The constituent parts of each paragraph should

[1] *New York Nation*: vol. lxix, p. 7.

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be so closely united that nothing can be taken away or even changed in position, without evident loss. (Coherence.)

3. The materials that compose the paragraph should be placed where they will be most effective. This is styled by some writers the massing of the paragraph.

Unity.

A paragraph that contains nothing except what naturally grows out of the paragraph topic cannot fail to possess unity. If, on the other hand, the paragraph discusses with about equal fulness two or more topics only slightly related, it will not possess unity. Unfortunately, there is a constant temptation while we are writing to think of almost anything except the topic we are trying to discuss. But, to the utmost of our endeavor, we should hold to the leading thought of the paragraph, and subordinate all minor matters to it. This principal thought should usually, though not always, be introduced near the beginning of the paragraph, and should be expressed in the fewest words possible. On the highway a guideboard should give the direction at once; and so a sentence that points out the direction of thought in a paragraph should indicate the purpose at a glance.

EXERCISE 17. Study, sentence by sentence, the paragraphs on pages 55-58, and note whether unity is observed.

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In the paragraph no sentence exists for itself alone, but each is part of an organic whole. The form of each sentence will therefore be modified to suit the form of the sentences associated with it. The variations may be for the sake of greater coherence or for avoiding monotony. Sentences constructed on an invariable model are usually tiresome and ineffective. Especially lifeless is a series of compound sentences, each containing two clauses connected by *and*. Such a sentence begins with the subject and is followed by the predicate: the *and* in the middle of the sentence is followed by a second clause in the same form as the first. This kind of sentence is legitimate, but it ought not to be used so frequently as to keep the reader in a perpetual see-saw. The abuse of this form of sentence is seen in the following monotonous paragraph: —

Variety.

"The poet Longfellow was born at Portland, Maine, in 1807, *and* was a descendant on his mother's side of John Alden. He entered Bowdoin College at the age of fourteen, *and* was graduated at the age of eighteen. He wrote considerable while at college, *and* gave promise even then of his later career. He went to Europe for the study of modern languages, *and* he returned to be professor at Bowdoin in 1829. He published his first book of verse in 1833, *and* was at once recognized by discerning judges as a true poet. *And* he won no less praise for his prose book of travel, *Outre-Mer*, *and* some critics even preferred it to his poetry."

EXERCISE 18. Rewrite the foregoing paragraph with a view to greater variety.

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We should go too far if we were to advise an inexperienced writer not to begin or end two consecutive sentences in the same way, since emphasis and clearness are frequently gained by a repetition of the same forms; but for a mere exercise in variety, the experiment would be worth making.

Methods of securing variety.

A writer who aims at variety will transpose phrases and clauses so as to make prominent now one element and now another. He will avoid the excessive use of *and* or *but* in the middle of compound sentences. Complex sentences he will alternate with compound, long sentences with short, declarative sentences with interrogative. The subject will be prominent in one sentence and the predicate in another. Indirect quotations will be changed to direct, the active form to the passive, and *vice versa;* and thus, by a multitude of devices, the monotony of an invariable form will be broken. The writer may not consciously adopt these methods while actually composing, but in his revision he may vary his expression to any degree.

Illustration of variety.

Not all of the possibilities of variation can be exhausted in a single paragraph. The following example illustrates how long sentences may be relieved by short ones, and how skilfully the form of each sentence may be modified to fit the place assigned to it.

Hawthorne has been speaking of the little maiden Pearl, and he continues: —

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"Certainly there was no physical defect. By its perfect shape, its vigor, and its natural dexterity in the use of all its untried limbs, the infant was worthy to have been brought forth in Eden; worthy to have been left there, to be the plaything of the angels, after the world's first parents were driven out. The child had a native grace which does not always coexist with faultless beauty; its attire, however simple, always impressed the beholder as if it were the very garb that precisely became it best. But little Pearl was not clad in rustic weeds. Her mother, with a morbid purpose that may be better understood hereafter, had bought the richest tissues that could be procured, and allowed her imaginative faculty full play in the arrangement and decoration of the dresses that the child wore before the public eye. So magnificent was the small figure when thus arrayed, and such was the splendor of Pearl's own proper beauty, shining through the gorgeous robes which might have extinguished a paler loveliness, that there was an absolute circle of radiance around her on the darksome cottage floor. And yet a russet gown, torn and soiled with the child's rude play, made a picture of her just as perfect. Pearl's aspect was imbued with a spell of infinite variety; in this one child there were many children, comprehending the full scope between the wild-flower prettiness of a peasant-baby, and the pomp, in little, of an infant princess. Throughout all, however, there was a trait of passion, a certain depth of hue, which she never lost; and if, in any of her changes, she had grown fainter or paler, she would have ceased to be herself: — it would have been no longer Pearl!"[1]

In order that thoughts may illustrate and support one another, they must be developed consecutively.

Coherence. Some degree of coherence will be secured if nothing irrelevant is introduced into the paragraph, and the whole is arranged in a natural order. Just as we arrange clauses in a sen-

[1] *The Scarlet Letter*, Chapter VI.

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tence for the purpose of bringing together the parts most nearly related, so we must group sentences in the paragraph in such a way as to join those that amplify the same thought. We must arrange the parts of each sentence so that the transition shall be easy from one sentence to the next. We must look both at the beginning and the end of each sentence. Every sentence may be good in itself, and yet the connection may be difficult to follow. Each new sentence, therefore, should so naturally grow out of the preceding sentence that the order cannot be shifted without obstructing the flow of the thought. In other words, the beginning of each new sentence should be fitted as closely as possible to the preceding sentence.

EXERCISE 19. Try to change the order of the sentences in the paragraphs on pages 55-58, 62, and note the effect.

If the arrangement is good, and the thought not complex, the connection may for a little distance be made clear by the thought alone, as in the following paragraph. In this case the rapidity of movement is increased by the studied omission of the conjunctions. We may note, too, that the position of several of the sentences could be changed without special disadvantage.

Words of connection.

"Books, however, were the least part of the education of an Athenian citizen. Let us, for a moment, transport ourselves, in thought, to that glorious city. Let us imagine that we are en-

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tering its gates in the time of its power and glory. A crowd is assembled round a portico. All are gazing with delight at the entablature, for Phidias is putting up the frieze. We turn into another street; a rhapsodist is reciting there; men, women, children, are thronging round him; the tears are running down their cheeks; their eyes are fixed; their very breath is still; for he is telling how Priam fell at the feet of Achilles, and kissed those hands — the terrible — the murderous — which had slain so many of his sons. We enter a public place; there is a ring of youths, all leaning forward with sparkling eyes, and gestures of expectation. Socrates is pitted against the famous Atheist from Ionia, and has just brought him to a contradiction in terms. But we are interrupted. The herald is crying — 'Room for the Prytanes!' The assembly is to meet. The people are swarming on every side. Proclamation is made — 'Who wishes to speak?' There is a shout and a clapping of hands: Pericles is mounting the stand. Then for a play of Sophocles; and away to sup with Aspasia. I know of no modern university which has so excellent a system of education."[1]

The direction of the thought may usually, however, be made more evident by the use of connective words, such as conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs, pronouns, etc. Particularly useful are the words *this, that, these, those, such.* Useful, too, are such phrases and clauses as are suggested in the following exercise. A style well knit together is easy to follow, since the exact purpose of each new sentence and clause appears at once.

EXERCISE 20. Select the connective words and phrases from a few well-written paragraphs (to be assigned by the teacher), and use the same connectives, so far as you can, in your own paragraphs. The number of connective

[1] Macaulay: *Essay on Athenian Orators.*

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words is too great to be easily included in a list; but some of the more common may be noted here, as an indication of what you are to search for. Some of the connective words, as you will observe, serve to unite one paragraph with another: —

And, again, moreover, furthermore, henceforth, from this time on, let me notice in passing; that is, for instance, for example, by way of illustration, in such a case, in fact, in reality, with this in view, even in this; here, too; by this I mean; as I began by saying; as I have already remarked; hence, because, since, therefore, for, for this reason, consequently, accordingly, thus, in this way, so, how much more; but, yet, and yet, however, moreover, though, nevertheless, notwithstanding, while, after all; not only . . . but; on the contrary, on the one hand, on the other hand.

Excess of connective words.

Useful as connectives are when properly employed, they may easily be used to excess with fatal results to the vigor of the style. Especially liable to misuse is the conjunction *and*, with which some young writers begin nearly every sentence. The objection to this practice is that *and* expresses so close a relation that whatever can be properly introduced by it might usually as well be made a part of the preceding sentence. *So* and *and so* as inferential words are also to be avoided as far as possible.

EXERCISE 21. Examine upon the blackboard class-compositions with reference to the use of connectives.

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The connection between successive paragraphs is made clear by the use of such words and phrases as are enumerated in the list just given, by a specific mention of something discussed in a preceding paragraph, and by a variety of devices which can be learned only by close observation of the methods of skilled writers.

Connection between paragraphs.

When necessary connectives are omitted the reader has difficulty in quickly perceiving the relation of one part to another. He has to divert his attention from the thought to the imperfect expression, and supply the transitions as best he can. In some cases the enumeration of particulars may be made in one order as well as another, without the aid of special words to point out the relations; but even in such cases the connective words give a firmness and compactness otherwise lacking. Sometimes whole sentences may be introduced for the express purpose of binding the other sentences together, and thus combining or modifying the thought.

Improper omission of connectives.

Coherence is also aided by constructing in like form the parts that have a common relation. This structure appears in the following paragraph from Burke's speech on *Conciliation with America*: —

Similarity of structure.

"A further objection to force is, that you impair the object by your very endeavors to preserve it. The thing you fought for is not the thing which you recover; but depreciated, sunk, wasted,

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and consumed in the contest. Nothing less will content me than whole America. *I do not choose* to consume its strength along with our own, because in all parts it is the British strength that I consume. *I do not choose* to be caught by a foreign enemy at the end of this exhausting conflict, and still less in the midst of it. I may escape; but I can make no insurance against such an event. Let me add, that *I do not choose* wholly to break the American spirit; because it is the spirit that has made the country."

Transitions.

Transitions may be defined as the "intermediate ideas which are used for passing from one part of the discourse to the next." They have been compared to a knot that ties the whole together, and, still better, to a bridge that leads from one bank of a stream to another. They serve a double purpose: they mark the longer divisions of the discourse by indicating that the narrative or argument is entering upon a new stage; and they connect one part with another. Prominence may be given to the main outlines of the discourse by introducing the leading thoughts into transitional paragraphs, and by developing subordinate topics in the other paragraphs. Where the connection is very slight the best course may be to announce plainly, after a brief summary of what has preceded, that we now enter upon an entirely new division of the theme. The methods of transition may be indefinitely varied; but the connection of ideas should not be so strained as to be unnatural, or so sudden as to leave the reader in doubt as to what the relation really is.

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Satisfactory illustration of the methods to be observed in passing from one large division of the subject to another is not easy without using more space than can be allowed here. But, in general, a transitional paragraph is one in which we pause for a moment to look backward over the ground we have travelled before taking a new step forward. Such a retrospect usually covers several paragraphs, and gathers together the essentials of a large number of facts in a small compass. If we have been discussing the value of oral examinations, and wish to consider other means of discovering what pupils have learned, we may say: "But it is not merely by these tests that we can determine what progress the pupils have made. Other methods will be found to be quite as satisfactory. One of these is found," — etc. Similar devices are suggested by the following: "As has been shown in the preceding discussion;" — "We have seen in what sense this proposal is to be taken. We have now to decide whether we favor it or not;" — "But before I try to point out how the plan that has been laid before us would work in practice, it may be as well to get a clear idea of what is meant by another plan, of which we have now and then heard;" — "The objection may easily be made to the measure I have discussed, that it gives too much power to the working classes. That objection I should like to consider for a moment."

Illustration of transition.

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A good example of the paragraph which is at once a summary of what has preceded and a transition to what follows is found in Matthew Arnold's *Study of Celtic Literature:* —

Example of a summarizing and transitional paragraph.

"I have been obliged to fetch a very wide circuit, but at last I have got what I went to seek. I have got a rough, but, I hope, a clear notion of these three forces, the Germanic genius, the Celtic genius, the Norman genius. [These are defined in three sentences.] And now to try to trace these in the composite English genius."

Macaulay, at the beginning of his second essay on the Earl of Chatham, goes on for more than a score of pages to trace the rise of Pitt up to his twenty-fifth year. Nearly two thirds of the essay follow. Macaulay now interjects the following paragraph in order to prepare for the remainder of the discussion: —

Other examples of transition.

"This narrative has now reached a point beyond which a full history of the life of Pitt would be a history of England, or rather, of the whole civilized world; and for such a history this is not the proper place. Here a very slight sketch must suffice; and in that sketch prominence will be given to such points as will enable a reader who is already acquainted with the general course of events to form a just notion of the character of the man on whom so much depended."

Ten or fifteen pages later he makes a new transition. After treating at some length the growth of Pitt's success as a minister, Macaulay begins a second

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transitional paragraph with a look backward and a look forward : —

"To such a height of power and glory had this extraordinary man risen at twenty-nine years of age. And now the tide was on the turn."

Massing of the paragraph.

There is no uniform place to be prescribed for the materials in a paragraph. The very same facts may assume a variety of positions, according to the use that is to be made of them. Yet, most commonly, we must make evident early in the paragraph what it is to discuss. We must state a somewhat general proposition before we can particularize. We must make some assertion before we can illustrate it. We must specify facts before we can comment upon them. There is, therefore, a sort of natural order which indicates in a general way the method according to which the materials may be grouped. But within certain limits there is room for almost infinite variety.

Climax in the paragraph.

If the sentences are arranged naturally and compactly in the paragraph, the thought will usually develop progressively to the close. Such a development gives the effect of climax. The more important elements are thus introduced at the point where we are best prepared for them. Our interest does not flag, for we have constantly presented something more and more stimulating to the attention.

It is frequently possible to place at the end of a

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paragraph a sentence that briefly summarizes the whole. Such a terminal sentence is less adapted to narrative and to descriptive than to argumentative paragraphs, though examples abound in all kinds of composition.

The terminal sentence.

This form of repetition is well illustrated in the following paragraphs: —

"The temper and character which prevail in our Colonies, are, I am afraid, unalterable by any human art. We cannot, I fear, falsify the pedigree of this fierce people, and persuade them that they are not sprung from a nation in whose veins the blood of freedom circulates. The language in which they would hear you tell them this tale would detect the imposition; your speech would betray you. *An Englishman is the unfittest person on earth to argue another Englishman into slavery.*"[1]

Topic, — "temper and character unalterable."

"After this, it would be idle to dwell on facts which would indeed, of themselves, suffice to render a name infamous, but which make no perceptible addition to the great infamy of Barère. It would be idle, for example, to relate how he, a man of letters, a member of the Academy of Inscriptions, was foremost in that war against learning, art, and history which disgraced the Jacobin government; how he recommended a general conflagration of libraries, how he proclaimed that all records of events anterior to the Revolution ought to be destroyed; how he laid waste the Abbey of St. Denis, pulled down monuments consecrated by the veneration of ages, and scattered on the wind the dust of ancient kings. *He was, in truth, seldom so well employed as when he turned for a moment from making war on the living to make war on the dead.*"[2]

Topic, — "it would be idle," etc.

Examples.

[1] Burke: *Conciliation with America.*

[2] Macaulay: *Essay on Barère's Memoirs.*

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For the purposes of this book a detailed account of the various kinds of paragraphs is unnecessary. The essential characteristics of all may be found in the preceding discussion; and the particular purpose that each paragraph serves in a piece of writing — whether amplifying what has been said in another form, or presenting a contrast, or giving entirely new matter — may be discovered by a little close study.

Kinds of paragraphs.

We have thus far considered paragraphs mainly as parts of a larger whole. But we are often called upon to write single paragraphs that discuss in compact form a single sharply defined topic. Such paragraphs have become a useful part of the editorial page of the most important newspapers. In school work the independent paragraph is of especial value, for it may include all the essentials of paragraph structure, with the single exception of the connection of one paragraph with another.

Independent paragraphs.

EXERCISE 22. Expand the following topic-sentences into paragraphs of five or six sentences each. Use the methods already described, — definition, particularization, repetition in another form, illustration, inference, — in so far as they apply to the topic. Other topic-sentences, suggested by the teacher or by members of the class, may prove more serviceable than these: —

a) The more he thought on the duty of making a public confession, the more he shrank from the humiliation. He pictured to himself —

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b) Some people appear to be much busier than they really are. They are always bustling about with an air of importance as if —

c) Many people seem to have no sense of the fitness of things. I remember, on one occasion, I was going to —

d) It is by asking many questions that we become wise. I do not mean that we are to ask foolish and thoughtless questions, but that —

e) People that we are tempted to call dull are often very useful. The work they have to do may be as important as —

f) From his earliest boyhood he had spent his abundant leisure in reading. He had inherited a large library and a comfortable fortune, and hence —

g) We cannot expect to enjoy life if we have nothing to do. When we awake in the morning —

h) The value of property is increased by attention to little things. For instance, —

i) The house was an old-fashioned, rambling structure, with queer pointed gables and with many narrow windows. Valley, woods, winding river, mill, village, etc.

j) He was a man who had had much experience with the world. Law, travel, society, etc.

k) Few very rich men know how to spend their money as they should. They have passed their lives in a round of business engagements, and in advanced life they hardly know how to —

l) Perhaps the most important thing for a young student to know is that he knows very little. When he has gained a smattering of a few subjects he is tempted to think that — But —

m) We really know very little about the lives of our most intimate friends. We meet them every day, and we know almost everything that they do, yet —

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CHAPTER V.

SENTENCES.

"It is probably true that the construction of sentences and of paragraphs, in so far as they are intended for the communication of knowledge, may be subjected to more precise rules than any other processes of the art of composition. The principles on which these rules are founded are capable of extension to the method of whole chapters or essays. But it must be borne in mind that a writer can benefit from direct precept chiefly as regards the easy, clear, and complete communication of what is in his thoughts; for any effect of style beyond this, precepts are of comparatively little service."

MINTO: *Manual of English Prose Literature*, p. 3.

SECTION I.

The construction of sentences.

SINCE paragraphs are composed of sentences compactly joined together, we have to consider how sentences should be constructed. We have, of course, been writing sentences that roughly served our purpose. We must now observe how they may be written clearly, gracefully, and forcibly.

Definition of sentence.

A sentence is the expression of a complete thought. The shortest sentence must contain or imply at least two words, the subject and the predicate. The subject may be a clause or a group of clauses, and the predicate may be equally complicated. Beginners often write what they imagine to be sentences, but which are not because there is only a collection of words in no indi-

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cated relation. For example: "When I lived in Washington, I often heard Webster speak on the slavery question. A man of wonderful power as an orator." To make a sentence of the last group of words, we must say, for instance, "*He was* a man, etc.," or "A man of wonderful power as an orator *often opposed him*,"—the latter form thus applying the words to some other person.

Essential elements of a sentence.

A long sentence may contain several hundred words. Yet in the longest sentence no more than two essential elements are found: the subject, that about which something is said; the predicate, which says something about the subject. These two elements, which form the *nucleus of the sentence*, may be expanded indefinitely by the addition of adjectives, adjective clauses, prepositional phrases, adverbs, adverbial phrases and clauses. In the last sentence the nucleus is,—"elements may be expanded;" all the rest is comparatively unimportant. In order to write well, we must, therefore, never lose sight of the nucleus of the sentence, and we must place modifiers where they properly belong.

Classification of sentences.

Grammarians classify sentences as simple, complex, or compound. For our purpose we may classify them as short or long, and again as loose or periodic.

A sentence of two words is undoubtedly short: a long sentence is not so easy to define. In popular

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language we call a sentence short that does not exceed two or three lines of print, and long when it contains more than seven or eight lines. In reality, however, a sentence is long or short according to its adaptation to the work it has to do. A sentence of ten lines may be short, if the thought can be compressed into no smaller compass.[1] A sentence of three lines is too long if one line will answer the purpose.[2] Short sentences are usually clear, and they add vivacity by presenting a complete thought that can be taken in at a glance. When too frequent they break the main thought of the paragraph into fragments so small that the style becomes jerky, incoherent, and undignified.

Short and long sentences.

Certain kinds of work may therefore be best done by long sentences. Such sentences best group together the elements of a complex thought with its various modifications. They afford opportunity for climax, and give weight and dignity. On the other hand, long sentences are difficult to handle, and they are often unduly heavy and confused. Dependent clauses are frequently tangled with one another, so that the reader can scarcely follow the thought. Moreover, lightness and grace are not easily united in sentences that require a large space in which to turn themselves.

Advantages and disadvantages of long sentences.

[1] See the remarks on pp. 109–115. [2] See p. 115.

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We cannot say that either sort of sentence is absolutely the better; but on the whole the short sentence is the safer. Long sentences are edged tools that may do mischief. The greatest defect of inexperienced writers is that they have little conception of what a sentence is, and hence they try to include too much in it. One form of this fault, which grows out of ignorance of the proper use of the period and the comma, is illustrated in the following sentences: —

Practical cautions.

"The paper will be yours at the end of a month, it is well worth keeping."

"I met our new teacher this morning, he is evidently a well-trained writer and thinker."

"Yesterday afternoon I took a long stroll about the town, in one of the streets I saw a strange sight."

Another common error[1] consists in stringing many clauses together loosely by the help of *and* or *which*. These and similar faults cannot easily be avoided by mere rules; but much will be gained if new and independent assertions are indicated to the eye by proper punctuation and capitalizing, and if all sentences that exceed six or eight lines are regarded with some suspicion. The effect that we desire to produce must decide whether our sentences should be long or short. We may, therefore, in revising our work, deliberately introduce a short sentence into a group of long ones for the sake of liveliness. Long sentences we may

[1] For illustration see the examples on p. 87.

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cut into short ones, not merely because of the excessive length, but because on the whole the short sentence is freest from the obscurity that lurks in the long sentence. The short sentence is most easily mastered, and is thus best suited to the beginner. The habit of writing long sentences will grow without especial cultivation. As a final test we may apply the rule adopted by James Russell Lowell:—

"It was always present to my consciousness that whatever I said must be understood at once by my hearers, or never. Out of this I, almost without knowing it, formulated the rule that every sentence must be clear in itself, and never too long to be carried, without risk of losing its balance, on a single breath of the speaker."[1]

The difference in effect produced by short and by long sentences is seen by comparing the following examples:—

"The conspirators found that they had miscalculated. The governor was inexorable. The troops were steady. The Sepoys, over whom Clive had always possessed extraordinary influence, stood by him with unshaken fidelity. The leaders in the plot were arrested, tried, and cashiered. The rest, humbled and dispirited, begged to be permitted to withdraw their resignations. Many of them declared their penitence even with tears. The younger offenders Clive treated with lenity. To the ringleaders he was inflexibly severe; but his severity was pure from all taint of private malevolence."[2]

"The city was becoming mutinous. Oxford was becoming loyal. Cavendishes and Bentincks were murmuring. Somersets and Wyndhams were hastening to kiss hands. The head of the treasury was now Lord Bute, who was a Tory, and could have no objection to Johnson's Toryism."[3]

[1] Quoted in Bainton's *Art of Authorship*, pp. 29, 30.
[2] Macaulay: *Essay on Clive*. [3] Macaulay: *Second Essay on Johnson*.

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EXERCISE 23. Combine the short sentences into long ones.

Long sentences may be made up of a large number of particulars, each clear in itself. For example: —

"Johnson grown old, Johnson in the fulness of his fame and in the enjoyment of a competent fortune, is better known to us than any other man in history. Everything about him, his coat, his wig, his figure, his face, his scrofula, his St. Vitus's dance, his rolling walk, his blinking eye, the outward signs which too clearly marked his approbation of his dinner, his insatiable appetite for fish-sauce and veal-pie with plums, his inextinguishable thirst for tea, his trick of touching the posts when he walked, his mysterious practice of treasuring up scraps of orange-peel, his morning slumbers, his midnight disputations, his contortions, his mutterings, his gruntings, his puffings, his vigorous, acute, and ready eloquence, his sarcastic wit, his vehemence, his insolence, his fits of tempestuous rage, his queer inmates, old Mr. Levett and blind Mrs. Williams, the cat Hodge, and the negro Frank — all are as familiar to us as the objects by which we have been surrounded from childhood."[1]

EXERCISE 24. Break into several short sentences the long one on Johnson.

Of a different sort are the following, which are admirably clear, but have less vivacity: —

"Such are *their* ideas, such *their* religion, and such *their* law. But as to *our* country, and *our* race, as long as the well-compacted structure of our Church and State, the sanctuary, the holy of holies of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power, a fortress at once and a temple, shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Sion, — as long as the British monarchy, not more limited than fenced by the orders

[1] Macaulay: *First Essay on Johnson.*

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of the State, shall, like the proud Keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred and coëval towers, — as long as this awful structure shall oversee and guard the subjected land, — so long the mounds and dikes of the low, fat, Bedford level will have nothing to fear from all the pickaxes of all the levellers of France.

"As long as our sovereign lord the king, and his faithful subjects, the lords and commons of this realm, — the triple cord which no man can break, — the solemn, sworn, constitutional frank-pledge of this nation, — the firm guaranties of each other's being and each other's rights, — the joint and several securities, each in its place and order, for every kind and every quality of property and dignity, — as long as these endure, so long the Duke of Bedford is safe, and we are all safe together, — the high from the blights of envy and the spoliations of rapacity, the low from the iron hand of oppression and the insolent spurn of contempt."[1]

"The mantling of the pools in the rock shadows, with the golden flakes of light sinking down through them like falling leaves, the ringing of the thin currents among the shallows, the flash and the clouds of the cascade, the earthquake and foam-fire of the cataract, the long lines of alternate mirror and mist that lull the imagery of the hills reversed in the blue of the morning, — all these things belong to the hills as their undivided inheritance."[2]

EXERCISE 25. Make a half dozen distinct assertions about some object, and then combine these assertions into one long sentence. Note the difference in the effect.

EXERCISE 26. Compare the sentences in two or three pages of two good writers (to be suggested by the

[1] Burke: *Letter to a Noble Lord.* [2] Ruskin: *Modern Painters.*

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teacher), and find the proportion of short sentences to long.[1]

Write a short account of the results of the comparison.

For this exercise, papers written by members of the class may be substituted for the work of well-known writers.

Loose sentences.

A sentence is termed loose that can be ended at a point earlier than the close. For example: —

"Life, altogether, is but a crumbling ruin, when we turn to look behind; a shattered column here where a massive portal stood; the broken shaft of a window to mark my lady's bower; and a mouldering heap of blackened stones where the glowing flames once leapt, and, over all, the tinted lichen and the ivy clinging green."[2]

"We dwell but on the roses by the wayside, and the strong briers that sting us are, to our distant eyes, but gentle tendrils waving in the wind."[3]

"The times were peaceable, and the German nobles in general had abandoned their inconvenient old castles, perched like eagles' nests in the mountains, and had built more convenient residences in the valleys."[4]

"He loved to tell long stories about the dark old warriors whose portraits looked grimly down from the walls around, and he found no listeners equal to those who fed at his expense."[4]

EXERCISE 27. Show why the preceding sentences are loose.

[1] It is hardly necessary to remark that the teacher must determine what standard of sentence-length is to be taken for the examination.

[2] Jerome: *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, p. 158. [3] *Ibid*, p. 159.

[4] Irving: *Sketch Book, The Spectre Bridegroom.*

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To such loose sentences as the foregoing there can be slight objection. A bad example is the following: —

"In short, I act as a looker-on, never talking except in my own club, but constantly listening to all the conversations in a group, though apparently not noticing a word said, and thus I observe a neutrality between Whigs and Tories, the statesman and the soldier, and as I have in all parts of my life acted simply as a spectator to other men's deeds, I intend to preserve that character in these papers containing my unbiased and unprejudiced opinions."

EXERCISE 28. Rewrite the foregoing sentence so as to make three new sentences.

Advantages and disadvantages of loose sentences.

Loose sentences have the advantage of being easy and natural, like the sentences of conversation. If not too long and involved, they are especially adapted to narratives, to letters, to simple exposition, and to any other composition that approaches the ease of conversation. When too frequent, they give a careless, ragged appearance to the style.

Periodic sentences.

Sentences in which the thought is not fully expressed till the close are called periodic. Since the periodic structure makes possible a suspension of the most important elements of the sentence, this form is peculiarly adapted to forcible writing. One can thus stimulate the reader's attention throughout the sentence, and present the weightiest thought at the moment when he is best prepared to receive it.

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Examples of periodic sentences are the following:—

"If there is one person I do despise more than another, it is the man who does not think exactly the same on all topics as I do."[1]

"On the summit of one of the heights of the Odenwald, a wild and romantic tract of upper Germany that lies not far from the confluence of the Main and the Rhine, there stood, many years since, the castle of the Baron von Landshort."[2]

"Though the warlike disposition of his predecessors had much impaired the family possessions, yet the baron still endeavored to keep up some show of former state."[2]

Periodic sentences ought not to be exclusively used. If they are long, they cause impatience and weariness, and are thus hard to follow. The reader is in danger of forgetting before he arrives at the end of the sentence the topic with which he starts.

Disadvantages of the periodic structure.

We must adapt the form of sentence to our purpose, and this will constantly vary. The periodic structure must therefore give place at times to the loose. In cases, however, where many particulars are to be united, the periodic sentence is best fitted to make clear the relation of parts. Loose sentences, if long, break the attention by successive stops, any one of which may be final, and then compel the reader to retrace his steps so as to unite the scattered material.

The guiding principle.

[1] Jerome: *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, p. 122.
[2] Irving: *Sketch Book, The Spectre Bridegroom.*

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EXERCISE 29. Select from any of the pages of this book, or from the paragraphs of pupils' essays (copied upon the blackboard), the loose and the periodic sentences.

SECTION II.

CLEARNESS is the primary quality of good writing; for what is unintelligible might as well be written in an unknown tongue or not written at all. Clear expression does not always accompany clear thinking, but is impossible without it. A writer should therefore constantly strive to conceive his thought with perfect distinctness, and he should let no sentence pass until it is as transparent as the thought will allow and the intelligence of the class of readers he is addressing requires. Sentences that have no meaning are comparatively rare; but there are many whose meaning can be grasped only by an effort. Such sentences compel the reader to transfer attention from the thought to the expression, and thus cause a misdirection of effort and a waste of time. Perfect clearness is as difficult as it is important, since it demands exact knowledge as well as a trained intellect.

Clearness in sentences.

We cannot here enumerate all the causes of obscurity in sentences, but must touch upon a few of the more common.

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The clearness of sentences depends largely upon their unity. To have unity, a sentence, like the paragraph, should contain but one principal thought. A variety of equally important thoughts in the same sentence is likely to distract the reader's attention. Beginners often fail to keep the unity because they do not know when to end a sentence. After fully expressing a thought, they add words that properly belong to the following sentence. The length of sentences may be indefinitely extended by adding clauses introduced by *and*, or *but*, or *which*, or *while*; but such sentences rapidly lose clearness and rhythm. Short sentences rarely lack unity; for there is not room within narrow limits to introduce more than one principal thought. None but strong thinkers can see clearly to the end of a long sentence, and place every clause and modifying phrase where its exact relations will be evident. Especial prominence, therefore, should be given to the main clause in order that dependent clauses may be duly subordinated.

Unity of the sentence.

A few simple rules will indicate how to secure unity. The examples illustrate what is to be avoided: —

1. Have only one leading thought in a sentence: — **Rules for unity.**

"John Wesley was born at Epworth, in the county of Lincoln, on the seventeenth of June, 1703, and was the son of Samuel and Susannah Wesley, the former being the learned,

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laborious, and godly rector of Epworth, from about the year 1696 to his death in 1735." [1]

In this sentence the interest is divided about equally between John Wesley and his father.

"This excellent man had received a good education at Winchester School, which was founded several centuries ago by William of Wykeham, the Bishop of Winchester, and also the founder of New College, Oxford."

Before we have half finished the sentence we lose sight of the "excellent man," and give our attention to Winchester School and William of Wykeham.

"He had taken the farm in the early part of the winter, and it had been a very hard season, and everybody was suffering from malaria, a disease which some authorities say is caused by bad air, and some others account for differently."

In this sentence the new topic, "malaria," is suddenly introduced, and is treated with more fulness than any other.

"The boy went to the house, as he was directed in the letter which he carried, and a servant in blue livery, which was generally worn then, met him at the door with the message that the new doctor held out some hope of recovery."

Here we are puzzled to know which object holds the most prominent place in the mind of the writer.

2. Add nothing to a sentence already complete:—

"This was a matter which from his earliest years he had studied with great care in all its relations, | and had in a variety

[1] Tyerman: *Life of Wesley.*

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of ways brought to the attention of leading statesmen, | who listened sometimes with patronizing flattery, and sometimes with ill-concealed sneers, | and often advised him to apply to some high official who would be certain to oppose the schemes of such an adventurer, | since men in high station are likely to pay little heed to matters that appear visionary, | especially where no personal advantage is to be gained."

The vertical lines indicate that this very loose sentence might end at any one of several points.

3. Do not join a relative clause to another relative clause: —

"It would be interesting to trace Tindale's course closely, during the years that followed, but it is enough to say that because of inability to carry out his purpose in his own land he went into voluntary exile in 1523, going first to Saxony to consult with Luther, and afterward, hunted and persecuted by Sir Thomas More, was driven from place to place, but still persisted in his work, *in which* he was assisted by William Roy, *who* was a runaway friar, and by John Frith, his fellow student at Cambridge, *who* was devotedly attached to the principles of the Reformation, *which* at this time had begun to attract much attention."

4. Avoid parentheses, and especially avoid placing one parenthesis within another: —

"After admitting that the Laureate's style is exquisite — not without a sneer — the critic quotes a passage from Crabbe as being good wholesome English, as no doubt it is — every farmer's man would say so — and then makes an extract from Tennyson, describing a similar event, but treated poetically, in fact with certain additions (which he no more sees than the farmer's man would be likely to see) and politely designates it as 'Celestial Chinese.'"

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These rules are not absolute: they merely indicate how a sentence will be most likely to attain clearness and coherence.

EXERCISE 30. Rewrite the foregoing sentences so as to give them unity.

SECTION III.

THOUGH a sentence may possess unity, it may still be ungrammatical and otherwise badly constructed. A few common faults in grammar we note incidentally.

EXERCISE 31. All of the sentences in Section III. are, at the discretion of the teacher, to be criticised and rewritten.

False concords. Gross errors, such as the use of a singular verb with a plural subject, are never pardonable: —

"In this body the *effects* of the agitation of the land question that has been going on in England for ten years *has* been clearly seen."[1]

"To us the *delusiveness* of Bolingbroke's repeated observations, that he had now become a retired philosopher, *are* transparent enough."[2]

"The language of an heroic poem should be both perspicuous and sublime. In proportion as *either of these two qualities are* wanting, the language is imperfect."[3]

"We may see how their *pride*, or *presumption*, or *tyranny have* been followed by punishment."[4]

[1] Henry George: *Review of Reviews*, April, 1892.
[2] A. W. Ward: *Introduction to Pope's Works.*
[3] Addison: *Spectator*, No. 285. [4] J. S. Brewer: *English Studies.*

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"We beg to call attention to a magnificent pictorial guide to the British Isles. The *collection* of easy and familiar essays upon the various localities, originally issued by Charles Knight, *have*, in this revised edition, been reduced to a systematic whole by competent hands."

"Neither his *conduct* nor his *language have* left me with that impression."

"The privilege by which the *mina*, like the lamps of a mail coach moving rapidly through the midnight woods, *illuminate*, for one instant, the foliage or sleeping umbrage of the thickets, and in the next instant *have quitted* them to carry their radiance forward," etc.

"There *appears* to have been several *centuries* before the church again ventured to use the stage."

"During the last twenty years the negro population of the South has increased enormously, and the *depths* of ignorance and superstition in which the vast majority live *is* appalling."

"In my judgment *money*, as well as men, *are* wanting."

"But twenty men passed the gate, and before they could reach the bridge *every one* of them *were* slain."

Misuse of nominative and objective forms.

The objective form of pronouns is sometimes wrongly used for the nominative, and *vice versa*: —

> "You will see Coleridge; *he* who sits obscure
> In the exceeding lustre and the pure
> Intense irradiation of a mind." [1]

"It is with great pleasure that I recommend a man *whom*, in my best judgment, is well qualified for the position."

"*Whom* do you think it was?"

"The king wished to destroy the child *whom* the wise men declared would destroy Egypt."

"This is the man *whom* I said would undertake the work."

[1] Shelley: *Letter to Maria Gisborne.*

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Position of adverb with infinitive.

Some writers insert an adverb between the infinitive and its sign *to*. In some cases this may be admissible for the sake of clearness; but the majority of careful writers condemn this usage: —

"The persons represented in these plays were not characters calculated *to deeply interest* the audiences."

"It is no small task *to accurately keep* the accounts of a great business house."

"I should like to secure a position as assistant or instructor in a college where it will be possible for me *to also carry on* graduate work."

Relation of the infinitive.

The relation of the infinitive to the word on which it depends should be unmistakable. This is not the case in the following sentences: —

"On the next day Prince John proposed *to go* to the tournament at Ashby *to make* Rebecca the 'Queen of Love and Beauty' *to preside* over the tournament and *to mortify* the Saxons who would be likely to be present to view the spectacle."

"We desire the service of one reliable school boy or girl in the grammar and high school *to hang* in some conspicuous place, where many will see it, our beautiful lithographed hanger in twelve colors, 15 x 24 inches."

Tenses.

Verbs in principal clauses should keep the same tense throughout the sentence. Young writers especially should take this caution to heart, for scarcely any principle of composition is more frequently sinned against.

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The following sentences contain violations of this rule: —

"Now *comes* a sudden change: an increasing desire for dramatic performances *brought* ambitious young men to London, to make their fortunes by writing plays."

"The light of the known land *sinks* behind him, but the heritage of fame *lay* before him."

"Columbus then *proceeded* to lay the world under a new obligation to woman, and *rewards* her by finding a new land where she would rise to liberty and honor before unknown."

"Parliament *refused* to grant Charles as large a subsidy as he wished, and forthwith he *dissolves* Parliament."

"They *read of* and *praised* her nobleness and then *ask*, 'Where can a true heroine be found now?'"

"A battle *is* fought in which the Prince *was* among the wounded, and the college *is opened* and turned into a hospital."

"The danger is that she *will jump* at some conclusion and then believe in it so steadfastly that she *becomes* intolerant of others' views."

Tenses in subordinate clauses.

The time expressed by the present infinitive is present, past, or future, according as the verb in the principal clause is present, past, or future.

I am trying
I tried
I have tried
I had tried
I shall try
} to write.

The perfect infinitive should not be used unless the time to be expressed is plainly anterior to the

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time expressed in the principal verb. There is an evident difference between "He ought to write either to-day or to-morrow" and "He ought to have written yesterday"; "He was supposed to have stolen the money before coming to America."

The following sentences exhibit violations of this principle: —

"I have said that Mrs. Kemble was not (superficially) a vulgar woman, but it would have taken the soul of gentility *to have presented*, without quailing, her amazingly odd companion to her particular set of visitors."[1]

"It had been my intention *to have collected* the remnants of Keats's compositions."[2]

"I intended *to have insisted* on this sympathy at greater length."[3]

"I meant, when I first came, *to have bought* all Paris."

"He wanted *to have gone* to Europe last year, but he was afraid of the cholera."

"Macaulay had planned *to have delivered* a speech in Edinburgh, but was prevented by a variety of reasons."

A common fault is the omission of a verb or a preposition after *than* or *as*.

Omissions after *than* or *as*.

For example, the sentence, "I admire him more than his intimate associates," may mean, "I admire him more than I admire his intimate associates," or, "I admire him more than his intimate associates admire him": —

[1] Frances Anne Kemble: *Records of a Girlhood*, p. 105.
[2] Shelley: *Memorials*. [3] Ruskin: *Architecture and Painting*.

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"We want to see him as much as you."

"I confess that I was more suspicious of him than James."

"The British care for the Boer prisoners who are wounded as tenderly [1] as their own men."

Omission of auxiliaries.

Auxiliary verbs are sometimes improperly omitted. For example: —

"Such men always have [been] and always will be disliked."

"He *has*, during the last two years, *and will* probably next year *occupy* this responsible position."

Omission of verb.

An essential part of the verb is sometimes wrongly omitted: —

"At any rate it was owing to the help and sympathy of a devoted wife that Carlyle was enabled to accomplish what he has."

Past participle for present infinitive.

A gross blunder is the use of the past participle for the present infinitive. For example: —

"He might have let me *seen* him."

"You ought to have let me *known* before."

Omissions in dependent clauses.

Dependent clauses may sometimes omit the introductory conjunction or relative where the connection is close; but not where the relation of clauses would be thereby obscured. Allowable therefore are such sentences as: —

"He said [that] he would go to France."

"This was the man [whom] I saw in Paris."

[1] Position of "as tenderly"?

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The following would be obscured by the omission of the bracketed words: —

"He has stated to you [that] its own agents, in the year 1781, in the arrangement they proposed to make at Calcutta, were satisfied to have twenty-five per cent at once struck off from the capital of a great part of this debt," etc.

"They conceive [that] all things which give perpetuity are mischievous, and therefore they are at constant war with all establishments."

SECTION IV.

ONE of the most important aids to clearness is a careful arrangement. Every modifier should be brought as near as possible to the word it limits. Arrangement is of peculiar importance in English composition, since the grammatical construction and consequently the meaning of the sentence largely depend upon the order of parts.

Rules for arrangement.

EXERCISE 32. The interrogation point (?) in the following sentences indicates possible places at which the italicized words might be inserted. Of the various arrangements suggested, select that one which most exactly expresses the meaning, and give your reasons. Each change of the position of a modifying phrase or clause changes more or less the meaning of the sentence: —

"(?) I have been looking around for you (?) to play tennis, *all the morning.*"[1]

[1] Note the looseness of this and many of the following sentences.

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"(?) It was in the year 1300, which (?), since it was the end of a century (?), was a jubilee year, *from an old tradition of the church.*"

"(?) He probably (?) did not offer his conversation, *because he expected it to be solicited.*"[1]

"(?) A tradition, thus confirmed, may (?) perhaps (?) be accepted (?) as satisfactory evidence that Berkeley was born at Dysert, *in the absence of documentary proof.*"[2]

"When he saw that (?) they were really floating downward again *without an effort to stem the stream*, he put away his bill, and (?) sat himself down deliberately in his place, astonishing the on-lookers quite as much as Philammon had done."[3]

"(?) Gibbon incurred (?) the imputation of avarice (?), while he was, in fact (?), extremely generous, *simply by his ignorance of the purchasing power of money.*"

"Finally the condition of affairs had become so bad that (?) repeal could (?) make them (?) no worse, *at any rate.*"

"(?) Gardiner of Winchester (?), the most violent enemy of Cranmer and Latimer, *the untiring persecutor of Protestants*, hated her because of the sympathy and aid she constantly offered them."

One might imagine that Latimer was the persecutor of Protestants.

"(?) Mr. N. L. Munro (?) put up (?) the buildings (?) that were on fire *ten years ago* and virtually occupied the whole of them, all the other tenants being contractors for him."[4]

"(?) In most cases (?) the guests (?) continued reticent (?), about the inconveniences to which they had been subjected *long after they had moved away.*"[5]

[1] Johnson: *Life of Dryden.*
[2] Fraser: *Life of Berkeley.*
[3] Kingsley: *Hypatia.*
[4] *New York Times*, March 1, 1893.
[5] *New York Tribune*, March 24, 1893.

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"(?) Various estimates have been made (?) as to the time of the birth of Columbus *from the few facts which we have about his early life.*"

"(?) Buckingham hoped (?) to turn (?) the tide in favor of Charles *by a successful foreign war.*"

"(?) This period of his rule (?) was marked (?) by one of the most extraordinary events in the history of the times, *in Florence.*"

"The best we can do is to put together (?) what seem to be the most likely facts (?) concerning the history of the times, *from various authorities.*"

"(?) Sir Henry (?) was hardly a favorite in Elizabeth's court *because of his blunt, open manner.*"

"(?) I regret to find that Professor Ten Brink supposes that I (?) took (?) hints (?) from a book of his published in 1870 *without acknowledgment*, but I never saw his book till 1886, nor read it till 1887."

"His fame, such as it was (?), rested (?) upon his comedies *almost wholly.*"

"(?) They made it very unpleasant (?) for their victim (?) while he was being searched for booty *with their sarcasm.*"[1]

"(?) The bishop heard (?) the doubts which De Vaux stated *with that acuteness of intelligence which distinguishes the Roman Catholic clergy.*"[2]

Squinting expressions.

By a careful arrangement "squinting" phrases and clauses are avoided. These are so called because they may be taken to modify either what precedes or what follows: —

"He had not laid aside his buff coat, which displayed the crosscut on the shoulder, *for more than three nights*, enjoying

[1] *New York Sun.* [2] Scott: *The Talisman*, ch. viii.

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but such momentary repose as the warder of a sick monarch's couch might by snatches indulge."[1]

Does the phrase, "*for more than three nights,*" modify "laid aside," "displayed," or "enjoying"?

"Every attempt to dispense with axioms has proved unsuccessful; somewhere or other in the process *assumed* theorems have been found."

This is not a glaring instance. Most readers would doubtless connect "*assumed*" with "theorems," but one who had given no thought to the matter might regard "*assumed*" as a modifier of "process."

"William Cullen Bryant, who was a careful student of English, *while he was editor of The New York Evening Post,* sought to prevent the writers for that paper from using *over and above* (for *more than*), *artiste* (for *artist*), etc."[2]

Does the writer wish to imply that Bryant was a careful student of English only while he was editor?

"The streets are *paved with stone, and stone walls ten or twelve feet high,* giving the streets a desolate appearance, enclose the houses."

Position of participles.

Participles should be brought as near as possible to the words they modify, and never allowed to hang loosely in the sentence. A participial phrase should be expanded to a clause if the participle cannot be strictly construed with any part of the sentence.

"*Having just now spoken* rather of the discipline than of the master, *this opportunity* may be taken to say," etc.

[1] Scott: *The Talisman*, ch. vi. [2] Alfred Ayres: *The Verbalist*, p 82.

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