

Evidently "*this opportunity*" has not spoken. What the writer means to say is:—

"As I have just now spoken of the discipline rather than of the master, I may take this opportunity to say," etc.

"*Wearied out* by his efforts, his *examination* proved unsuccessful."

In this case the participle is made to refer to the person obscurely suggested by "his." We may correct the sentence by expanding "*wearied out*," as in the preceding example, or by writing: "Wearied out by his efforts, he was unsuccessful in his examination."

EXERCISE 33. Rewrite the following sentences, and show wherein they are defective:—

"The faith of his guests exceeded even his own; they listened to every tale of wonder with open eyes and mouth, and never failed to be astonished, *even though repeated* for the hundredth time."¹

"Shy and sensitive, *living* always under the shadow of a heavy family affliction, and almost entirely isolated from any congenial companionship, except that of his sister, the friendship of Coleridge was the chief treasure and embellishment of Lamb's life—a life of much restraint and of many limitations, patiently accepted and bravely endured."²

"*Being the only child* of a man well-to-do, *nobody* would have been surprised had Agnes Stanfield been sent to a boarding school."³

"*Allowing for the exaggeration* of friendship and poetry, *this* is not a bad description of what Lord John Russell's style became at its best."⁴

¹ Irving: *Sketch Book*, p. 193.

² Sanford: *Life of Thomas Poole*.

³ Mrs. Oliphant: *Agnes*.

⁴ Justin McCarthy: *History of Our Own Times*.

"*Being* a mediator and peacemaker also served to keep him from taking an active part with either the Bianchi or Neri, who were at this time beginning to agitate Florence."

"To be appreciated, the poem must be taken up in the right mood. *Read* in the busy rush and excitement of study hours, *one* is almost sure to lose its charm."

"You had better get lunch now, for *nothing* is sold after *leaving* here."

"*Being universally unpopular*, to torment him was excusable, legitimate, and even commendable."

"*Though apparently unattractive and unproductive*, the early settlers of Newbury found convenient pasturage at the southern extremity of the island for horses and cattle."

Correlative words should be so placed that their relations may be unmistakable : —

**Position of
correlatives.**

"I *neither* estimated myself (?) highly *nor* lowly." ¹

"Oswald *not only* communicated (?) a copy of his commission, *but* a part of his instructions and a letter from the Secretary of State." ²

"Webster (?) went *not only* to Boston, *but* delivered a great speech in Faneuil Hall."

How is the meaning changed by the suggested alterations ?

The word *only* is frequently so placed as to modify a part of the sentence other than the writer intended : —

**Position of
only.**

"Fossils can *only* be deposited in regions (?) where and in times when there is a deposit of sediment."

¹ Mill : *Autobiography*.

² Bancroft : *History of the United States*.

"I can *only* write (?) this letter now, but I hope to scribble a few more lines this evening."

"He (?) was *only* there (?) in summer, when the heat was very oppressive."

"When he arrived at New York he *only* had (?) enough money to pay for his dinner."

Alone *Alone* is often wrongly used in place for *only*. of *only*: —

"I do this, not *alone* that you may appreciate how great the sacrifice is, but that you may some day be willing to undertake the same task."

"This city stands first, not *alone* in its wealth and enterprise but in its noble achievements."

"He was not *alone* a man of education and refinement, but a man of affairs, and prominent in all public movements."

SECTION V.

Misuse of pronouns. No class of words is more misused than pronouns. The examples that follow illustrate a variety of common faults.

EXERCISE 34. Rewrite the faulty sentences in this Section.

Person of the pronoun. The person of the pronoun should not be changed without good cause.

"This study trains *our* memory, teaches *us* to think for ourselves, and also teaches *one* to express the thoughts of others in *his* own words, thereby giving that ease of expression which is so valuable to *us* all."

"I think that if *one* has carefully followed *our* discussion, *he* will realize that every one of *us* have *their* peculiar difficulties in doing *his* particular work."

"*One* hesitates to believe that all *our* impulses are naturally bad."

"The heat was of that dreadful, enervating kind that seemed to take the life out of *one*, depriving *you* of all power of resistance, so that there was nothing to do but to lie down and suffer, praying for a change."

"When a landing was made below, *it* was necessary to walk up a narrow, winding way, damp and dark, until suddenly *you* emerge¹ into a large cave, filled with light from above."

Some writers use the pronoun *he* as the equivalent of the indefinite *one*; but the best usage favors the retention of *one* throughout the sentence.

Examples of this fault are: —

One and he.

"If *one* should attempt to trace the history of this movement, *he* would be met with a storm of abuse."

"*One* should never make advanced study of American history unless *he* has had opportunity to master English history of the period following the Reformation."

"If *one* goes out for a ride on *his* bicycle, *he* does not enjoy being stopped at every turn by a policeman."

On the other hand, the principle of ease would suggest, in many cases, the substitution of some pronoun such as *we* or *you* for *one* throughout the sentence.

A pronoun should be of the same number as its antecedent: —

**Number of
the pronoun.**

"*Any man* caught getting ready to leave shop before the bell rings will be reported to the captain for *their* discharge."²

¹ Tense?

² Notice in U. S. Government shop, Washington.

"*Nobody* ever put so much of *themselves* into *their* work."¹

"*No one* can afford to give up the momentum of *their* popularity and start afresh without it up the hill."²

"*Nobody* meant to be unkind, but nobody put *themselves* out of *their* way to secure her comfort."³

"In lowliness of mind let *each* esteem other better than *themselves*."

"Despite a damp, cold rain *everybody* appeared to be in good humor as *they* went over the side."⁴

Pronouns should be replaced by nouns, or the antecedent should be repeated, if there is danger of obscurity. Macaulay's sentences are models in this particular : —

**Obscure
pronouns.**

"While Goldsmith was writing the *Deserted Village* and *She Stoops to Conquer* he was employed on works of a very different kind — *works* from which he derived little reputation but much profit."⁵

Especially to be avoided is the careless use of the pronoun *it*, which is often employed so indefinitely as to puzzle and irritate the reader.

**The
pronoun *it*.**

The pronouns in the following sentences are obscure : —

"*They* know nothing about *them*, and if *they* were suggested to *them*, *they* would be greeted with derision."⁶

"By his own father's request he afterward studied law, but on *his death* quitted that profession for eloquence and poetry."⁷

¹ Leslie Stephen : *Hours in a Library*. ⁵ Macaulay : *Essay on Goldsmith*.

² James Payn : *Literary Recollections*. ⁶ *New York Times*, March 23, 1893.

³ Jane Austen : *Mansfield Park*.

⁷ *Chalmers's Biographical Dictionary*,

⁴ *New York Times*, March 27, 1893.

vol. x, p. 95.

"I believe this influence to be twofold, bad and good, and that¹ the last is by far the most significant. Let us consider *them* in the order named."

"Place an ordinary college graduate in a position inferior to that of the non-college young man and *he* will quickly overtake *him* and soon pass *him* by."

"Always a sound *sleep*er, he is one of those fortunate individuals who do not need so much of *it* as the average man engaged in intellectual occupation."²

"He had three acres of greenhouses with the finest collection of flowers and plants in the New World. *One of them* was an eighth of a mile long."³

"No doubt he had imperfections of character, but they are weaknesses which the present day witnesses in much more vivid realization than *those* of Columbus's day."

"Nowadays statesmen and divines are seldom or never disposed to carry out *their* principles to *their* legitimate extent."⁴

"An aide-de-camp brought *him* another horse, and as a colonel held the stirrup a cannon ball took off *his* head."⁵

"Though these lines of sequence may be for a time concealed and apparently obliterated by great political changes, by the presence of marked intellectual lethargy, or by a general tendency to literary lawlessness, a careful scrutiny will detect *its* unvarying presence, and in due time *it* will emerge into prominence."

"Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others; and think that *their* reputation obscures *them*, and *their* commendable qualities stand in *their* light; and therefore *they* do what *they* can to cast a cloud over *them*, that the shining of *their* virtues may not obscure *them*."⁶

¹ See p. 107.

² *Review of Reviews*, August, 1892, p. 29.

³ *Ibid*, February, 1893, p. 41.

⁴ Arthur Helps: *Friends in Council*.

⁵ E. E. Morris.

⁶ Tillotson.

"Since reading of this kind may be fittingly called the general reading of the student, *it* is proper to consider how far poetry and fiction should engage the attention of the student."

"Many passages in the ancient writers on philosophy seem to us mere rhetorical commonplace, but to *them they* were living truths discovered by *them* which *they* taught because they believed and practised *them*."

"It must be admitted that certain elements are attracted westward by the prospects of making a fortune, and *these* are often anything but religious."

"The work has value, in tracing to their sources sayings which belong to a far earlier *date* than *those* popularly assigned to them, and in refuting the authenticity of *others*."

"If English authors had been hampered in this way, their productions would have doubtless lost in vigor and spirit, and the English drama would not have towered above *those* of other countries."

"A play in which persons of the time were allowed to be satirized could not help being used for political and ecclesiastical purposes in a time so unsettled as that in which *these* appeared."

Relative clauses should be closely joined to the antecedent which they explain. The multiplication
Position of of relative clauses, particularly in long
relative sentences, is to be avoided. Where such
clauses. clauses can be changed to appositive and adjective forms of expression, the sentence frequently gains in strength and clearness :

"I have letters from college students and other *that* are curiosities in their way."

Are college students curiosities ?

"My birthplace was the small hereditary estate of our *family, which*, according to tradition, has been handed down, unaltered, from generation to generation since the days of William the Conqueror."

What "has been handed down" ?

"There was a twinkle of merriment in her eye at the sensation she was causing, *which* was unmistakably Hibernian."¹

What was "unmistakably Hibernian" ?

"He gives an itemized account of the whole cost of the house and the plan *which* is quite amusing, though not intended for that purpose, I suppose."

What is "quite amusing" ?

A very common fault is illustrated in the following examples :—

**Improper
reference of
the relative.**

"He is *one* of the best men that *has* [have] ever gone out from this school."

"This is one of a series of important books that *is* [are] being published for the University of Oxford."

"He is *one* of those unpleasant persons who always *goes* [go] on talking without saying anything."

A relative pronoun is sometimes improperly used to refer to a verb or a whole clause. For example :—

**Relative
referring to
a clause.**

"Exasperated by the long discussion, the Captain, with many violent gestures, threatened to imprison the impudent young fellow, *which*, however, only stirred him up the more."

Which refers loosely to *threatened*, as if it were a noun. We may write, "but this threat" in place of *which*, and omit *however*.

¹ *London News*, February 27, 1892.

"He struggled desperately and in the struggle he dropped his revolver, *which* probably saved his life."¹

We may write, "and thereby" for *which*, or we may supply an antecedent for *which*, such as, "a fact," "a lucky accident," etc.

"Hawthorne, in his *Note Books*, speaks of meeting Robert Browning at a reception in England, and tells us that Browning expressed *his* appreciation for *his* works, and — *which* Hawthorne says has not often happened — mentioned that he liked *The Blithedale Romance* best."

"The intellectual powers being, as has been said, under the immediate control of the will, *which* the feelings are not, an address to the understanding is direct; to the feelings, indirect."²

"I am glad to learn that Mr. Green is prospering, *which* he well deserves."

Relative without construction. The relative should not be left without a construction: —

"And the reason seems to be given by some words of our Bible, *which*, though they may not be the exact rendering of the original in that place, yet in themselves they explain the relation of culture with conduct very well."³

Which has the best right to be the subject of "explain," but "they" usurps its place.

"He turned back with the doctor, *who*, having declined taking anything before dinner but a glass of wine and a biscuit, they went up together to the library."⁴

Such and which. *As* and not *which* should be used after *such*: —

¹ *New York Tribune*, March 11, 1893.

² Whateley's *Rhetoric*.

³ Matthew Arnold: *Literature and Dogma*.

⁴ Peacock: *Gryll Grange*, p. 129.

"With his natural qualities grew apace *such* wealth of knowledge, *which* surprised even his friends."

The construction of clauses on the same plan throughout a long sentence is a help to clearness. A change of construction nearly always produces awkwardness, if not obscurity.

Similarity of construction.

Faulty in construction are such sentences as the following : —

"He saw the golden *ball* glittering in the blaze of sunlight, *and how* every nook of the gray old cathedral was flooded with radiance."

A better form is : —

"He saw the golden ball glittering in the blaze of sunlight, and every nook of the gray old cathedral flooded with radiance."

"The crowd with horror perceived the approaching *train*, *and that* in a moment a collision might result."

This may be changed to : —

"The crowd with horror perceived that the train was approaching, and that in a moment a collision might result."

"Load after load of gravel is dragged into the centre of the road by the *farmers* who are 'working out their taxes,' *and dumped there*."

"We object *to receiving* objectionable foreigners into our midst *and make* citizens of them, even if they come a few at a time."

"The domain of the husband to whom she felt she had sold herself, and had been paid the strict price — nay, paid more than she had dared to ask."¹

¹ George Eliot : *Daniel Deronda*.

"The right of suffrage was conferred on every white man who . . . acknowledged God. All persons *who so believed, and that* God is to be publicly worshiped, might form religious societies."¹

"In spite of failing health and of the reflections from her mirror, Elizabeth *considered herself* the loveliest of women, *and that* all her courtiers were enamoured of her."²

"He determined *on selling* all his estates, and as soon as this was done, *to quit* the country, believing that his honor demanded this sacrifice *and in the hope* of satisfying his creditors."

"In my last lecture I spoke of the meaning Wordsworth had for the term 'Nature,' of his conception of Nature as having a life of her own, *and of the characteristics* of that life, its endless joy, central peace, *and how* all its forms, each having their own life, were knit together by unsullied love."

"Orders were issued to the effect that they *should be dispersed* among the English colonists, and *thus prevent* any future difficulties."

SECTION VI.

AFTER making sentences clear, we may make them forcible or elegant as occasion requires.

Force resides primarily in the thought. Where the expression is too vigorous for the thought, the style is forced rather than forcible. But **Means for attaining force.** genuinely forcible thought requires forcible expression. This may be attained in various ways: — by the use of specific terms and figures

¹ Bancroft: *History of the United States.*

² W. Ewald: *Stories from the State Papers.*

of speech ; by brevity ; by throwing the sentence into emphatic forms. Of course, not all figures and specific terms and condensed forms of expression are forcible, but these are more likely to be vigorous than language which is vague and diffuse.

In general we should use words enough to express our meaning, and no more.¹ Brevity does not, however, consist precisely in using few words, but in saying nothing superfluous. **Brevity.** A narrative of ten pages is short if it contains nothing but what is necessary. A narrative of twenty lines is long if it can be contained in ten.² We need not put into our compositions every thought that occurs to us. We must learn to select the most important thoughts and let them suggest the rest. The reader has but a limited amount of attention, and if he must distribute it over matters of secondary importance, he may fail to notice those of real value.

We may secure brevity (1) by using words in apposition instead of relative clauses ; (2) by using participial constructions in place of clauses ; (3) by using exact and expressive words ; **Rules for brevity.** (4) by using figurative expressions that picture what must otherwise be explained at length ; (5) by selecting suggestive particulars.

¹ Sydney Smith's advice is often quoted : " In composing, as a general rule, run your pen through every other word you have written ; you have no idea what vigor it will give to your style."

² Verniolles : *Cours Élémentaire de Rhétorique*, p. 88.

Brevity must not be carried too far, or there may not be words enough left to make the thought clear. Some instances of improper omission have been already noted.¹

Opposed to brevity are tautology, verbosity, prolixity.

If a writer, after fully expressing his meaning, repeats the same thought in another form, he leads the reader to suppose that there is an addition to the thought, when in reality nothing is added. Such writing is confusing and exasperating, and usually gives ground to doubt the writer's ability to think clearly. The feebleness caused by tautology is seen in the following sentences.

EXERCISE 35. Rewrite the faulty sentences in this Section: —

"I noted not only his *words* but his very *expressions*; and, as you know, I am very *fastidious* and *particular* and *hard to please*."

"There are important questions before us for settlement, and if we are not *ready and prepared* to settle them now, it is time we gave them sufficient thought to settle them intelligently."

"Cicero, too, was a man who loved companionship and who was always ready to adapt himself by his *complaisance* and *pliability* to the whims of his friends."

"In another book he *criticises* and *blames* and *finds fault with* men for the course that they are pursuing."

"From a careful study of the *failures and successes*, of the *trials and triumphs*, and of the *defeats and victories* of these

¹ See pp. 92-94.

two lives, one can learn many a lesson of *long-suffering, patient endurance and self-sacrifice.*"

"The situation may well command our *thoughtful study and careful attention.* One need have little of the spirit of enthusiastic investigation to discover that the rights of individual *liberty and freedom* are, at present, abused. One need be little of a communist, still less even of a socialist, to see that commercial evils exist."

"Without delay for *preparation or training* thousands of such itinerants were to be sent out on the circuits, and tens of thousands of local and lay preachers and exhorters, as helpers and unpaid assistants."

"When we consider the *hardships and trials* these early itinerants *suffered and endured* for the sake of preaching the gospel, we are lost in wonder."

"He found much to *censure and object to* that he would not have noticed if he had been an active and zealous participant in the life of that 'great beehive.'"

"I hope that if you are *not too busy and have not too much to do*, you will be able to deliver your lecture in Boston."

"Here we have another *example and instance* to verify the statement that the man and the hour always meet."

"Unfortunately, the answer must be *vague and indefinite* so long as the information we have must be gathered in *remote and distant* countries."

"He was by no means deficient in the *subordinate and limited* virtue which *alleviates and relieves* the wants of others."¹

Even more common than tautology is verbosity. This consists not so much in vain repetition as in a wordy expression of thought. Conscious of having little to say, the inexperienced writer, in his desire to cover a required number of

Verbosity.

¹ Scott: *The Talisman.*

pages, expands each phrase and clause to the utmost. Such writing is feeble, since it contains little thought in proportion to the number of words. Circumlocution—or *talking around* a subject—may be convenient if a writer wishes to conceal his thought under a cloud of phrases; but if his purpose is to be clear and forcible, he has no excuse for his verbosity.

Examples of verbosity : —

“I should like to ask whether *or not* some provision is to be made for *the alleviation of* the wants of *those worthy individuals who are not so bountifully provided with this world's goods* as some whose homes are *situated in the immediate neighborhood of the persons just mentioned*.”

“To say that the verdict *thus rendered* was a surprise would be *making* a very mild assertion. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that the *measure of success achieved* exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the more prominent political leaders of the victorious party.”

“However, before *proceeding to the work of making comparison of the relative merits of the two systems*, it may be profitable to ask whether *or not, according to the constitution*, the government has a right to assume control of the telegraph system.”

“Since the great navigator on two *several and successive occasions makes mention of* himself as having been born in Genoa, we may rest assured that we have conclusive evidence *of the fact that* he was a native of that important maritime city.”

Mere redundancy may be corrected by excision of the needless words. For example, in the **Redundancy.** first of the following sentences, the word “*without*” actually reverses the meaning of the sen-

tence; in the second sentence "*help*" should be omitted.

"Political enthusiasm, discouraged by the results of the French Revolution, was already dying out, *without* having produced hardly any modifications of laws or customs."¹

"In lives such as these the most extreme ideas could not *help but* arise."

"The difference lies not only in the style of lamp, but in the way it is joined *up* in the circuit."

"I do not doubt *but that* these people are sincere."

"It is evident that we must *open up* the whole question again."

"Suppose that it is true that the petals of a flower are nothing but leaves. *Nevertheless* they *yet* retain their beautiful forms and colors."

The conjunction *that* is sometimes needlessly repeated. For example: — **Repetition of**
that.

"He said *that* in case we wished to return to Paris so as to see the Exposition, *that* we must take the first steamer that sailed."

A common fault appears in the following sentence: — **Obtrusive conjunction with which.**

"In this library are thousands of rare and costly volumes, *and which* have been collected in every great city in Europe."

"Canada has a great amount of woodland as yet untouched, *and which* could be used for our needs, should it become necessary."

The obtrusive *and* serves only to obscure the connection between *which* and its antecedent.

¹ Hildreth: *History of the United States.*

Perfectly correct, however, is the following :—

“In this library are thousands of rare and costly volumes *which* have been collected in every great city in Europe, *and which* are of untold value to students of early French literature.”

Young writers are tempted to make too free use of adjectives and superlative forms of expression.

Epithets. They heap epithets upon every substantive till it is smothered under qualifying words. They talk about the “beautiful, glorious, redeemed, sunny South, and the other portions of this vast, wealthy, magnificent country, with its unexampld system of excellent and beneficent laws and its perfectly organized, well-equipped, and well-managed public schools.” When needed, adjectives are as serviceable as any other class of words, but they should not be lavished without stint.

Adjectives in threes. A fault not unknown in school compositions is the following, which is delicately ridiculed by Oliver Wendell Holmes :—

“There is a natural tendency in many persons to run their adjectives together in *triads*, as I have heard them called,—thus: He was honorable, courteous, and brave; she was graceful, pleasing, and virtuous.”¹

EXERCISE 36. Examine upon the blackboard compositions written by pupils, and strike out all needless adjectives.

¹ *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, p. 85.

Some writers leave nothing to the intelligence, but enumerate every detail, to the distraction and weariness of the reader. So much prominence is given to each circumstance that attention is diverted from matters of real importance to those too insignificant to deserve mention. **Prolivity.**

For example : —

"He went into the room, stood a moment, took off his hat, threw it into a chair, removed his coat, folded it carefully, and laid it beside the hat. Then he looked over the bookshelves, and, after some deliberation, selected a small volume and sat down to read."

Evidently this tells us little more than, —

"He entered the room, removed his hat and coat, and sat down to read."

"When I alighted from the train I took my handbag, my two parcels, and my umbrella in one hand and the birdcage and the three newspapers in the other, and so I toiled up the street to the house. When I got there I set down the birdcage, piled the newspapers and the parcels and the umbrella into a little heap, took my keys out of my pocket, and after some trouble selected the right one. Then I picked up the things I had brought, and went in and lit the gas, and congratulated myself that I was once more at home."

This means merely, —

"I went with my luggage from the train to the house."

People who are afflicted with prolixity waste a vast deal of time whenever they speak or write, and they are a torment even to their friends. Their wealth of words is usually expended upon thoughts that require

only the simplest expression. Of Philip II. of Spain we read:—

“He was prolix with his pen, not from affluence, but from paucity of ideas. He took refuge in a cloud of words, sometimes to conceal his meaning, sometimes to conceal the absence of any meaning, thus mystifying not only others but himself.”¹

The needlessness of prolixity appears when we examine a passage containing skilfully selected particulars. A suggestive writer will sometimes put into a sentence what a prolix writer could not express in a page. Motley says of William the Silent, the great Prince of Orange:—

“As long as he lived he was the guiding-star of a whole brave nation, and when he died the little children cried in the streets.”²

One of Thackeray’s most characteristic traits is the choice of striking details. For example:—

“Meanwhile the glimmering dawn peered into the windows of the refreshment room, and, behold, the sun broke in and scared the revellers. The ladies scurried away like so many ghosts at cock-crow, some of them not caring to face that detective luminary.”³

Emphasis may be secured—

- (1) *By putting words in emphatic positions ;*
 (2) *By repetition ;* (3) *By using words that*
Emphasis. *give prominence to what requires emphasis.*

¹ Motley : *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, vol. i, p. 143.

² *Ibid* : vol. iii, p. 627.

³ *The Newcomes*, vol. i, chap. xxxiv.

A sentence may be written in two forms — the usual or unemphatic, and the unusual or emphatic, form. Any words that are taken out of their usual place we notice because they are not where we expect to find them. The emphatic positions in a sentence are naturally the beginning and the end : the beginning, because it first strikes the attention ; the end, because it leaves the last impression. The usual place for the subject is at the beginning of the sentence, and for the predicate, at the end. To emphasize the subject or the predicate we have therefore only to make them exchange places. In English, the degree of permissible variation from the normal order is limited. In inflected languages, such as Greek, or Latin, or German, the order may be changed in a great variety of ways without causing obscurity. The explanation lies in the fact that in English the grammatical relations depend almost wholly on the arrangement ; while in these other languages the inflectional endings are equally expressive in any order.

Examples of emphasis by inversion are :—

“ Personal offence I have given them none.”¹

“ Pension for myself I obtained none.”¹

“ Scoundrel though he was, he still had some sense of honor.”

Emphasis may be secured by antithesis : that is, by so arranging the sentence that a word or phrase

¹ Burke : *Letter to a Noble Lord*.

or clause in one part may be contrasted with a word or phrase or clause in another part. A sentence so constructed that the second half is contrasted with the first half is termed balanced.

The principle of antithesis is of very wide application. Sentences may be contrasted with sentences; one paragraph may balance another paragraph; and a whole group of paragraphs may be contrasted with another group:—

“The prizes in the wretched lottery of book-making were scarcely less ruinous than the blanks.”¹

Examples of antithesis. “The judgments which Johnson passed on books were, in his own time, regarded with superstitious veneration, and, in our time, are generally treated with indiscriminate contempt.”¹

“He began to be credulous precisely at the point where the most credulous people begin to be skeptical.”¹

“St. James’s would give nothing; Leicester House had nothing to give.”¹

Examples of balanced sentences. “He had eminent talents for government and for debate; but he had paid little attention to books, and felt little respect for authors.”¹

“The season of rich harvests was over, and the period of famine had begun.”¹

“As every climate has its peculiar diseases, so every walk of life has its peculiar temptations.”¹

“Johnson, incredulous on all other points, was a ready believer in miracles and apparitions. He would not believe in Ossian, but he believed in the second sight. He would not

¹ Macaulay: *First Essay on Johnson*.

believe in the earthquake of Lisbon, but he believed in the Cock Lane Ghost.”¹

“The nature of Voltaire was, indeed, not inhuman, but he venerated nothing. . . . The more solemn and august the theme, the more monkeylike was his grimacing and chattering. The mirth of Swift is the mirth of Mephistopheles; the mirth of Voltaire is the mirth of Puck.”²

Whole sentences can be contrasted with each other :—

“A man who told him [Dr. Johnson] of a waterspout or a meteoric stone generally had the lie direct given him for his pains. A man who told him of a prediction or a dream wonderfully accomplished was sure of a courteous hearing.”³

“The question with me is not whether you have a right to render your people miserable; but whether it is not your interest to make them happy. It is not what a lawyer tells me I may do; but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do.”⁴

Skilful repetition may give emphasis. **Emphasis by repetition.**
For example :—

“*Such are their ideas, such their religion, and such their laws.*”⁵

“I plead *for the rights* of laboring men, *for the rights* of struggling women, *for the rights* of helpless children.”

“Gentlemen, I am a *Whig*, a Massachusetts *Whig*, a Faneuil Hall *Whig*, a Revolutionary *Whig*, a constitutional *Whig*. If you break up the *Whig* party, sir, where am I to go?”⁶

“All his books are written in a learned language; *in a language* which nobody hears from his mother or his nurse; *in a*

¹ Macaulay: *Essay on Ranke's History of the Popes*.

² Macaulay: *Essay on Addison*.

⁴ Burke: *Conciliation with America*.

³ Macaulay: *First Essay on Johnson*.

⁵ Burke: *Letter to a Noble Lord*.

⁶ Quoted in Wendell Phillips's *Oration on Daniel O'Connell*.

language in which nobody ever quarrels, or drives bargains, or makes love ; *in a language* in which nobody ever thinks.”¹

“The place was worthy of such a trial. It was the great *hall* of William Rufus, *the hall* which had resounded with acclamations at the inauguration of thirty kings ; *the hall* which had witnessed the just sentence of Bacon and the just absolution of Somers ; *the hall* where the eloquence of Strafford had for a moment awed and melted a victorious party inflamed with just resentment ; *the hall* where Charles had confronted the High Court of Justice with the placid courage which has half redeemed his fame.”²

Tennyson, in describing the lonely ocean island on which Enoch Arden was shipwrecked, says that he saw —

“*No sail* from day to day, but every day
The *sunrise* broken into *scarlet shafts*
Among the palms and ferns and precipices ;
The *blaze upon the waters* to the east ;
The *blaze upon* his island overhead ;
The *blaze upon the waters* to the west ;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in heaven,
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The *scarlet shafts of sunrise* — but *no sail*.”

The parts of a sentence may be so arranged that the thought shall increase in vigor from the beginning to the end. Such an arrangement is called a climax. The chief value of the climax is that the attention is stimulated more and more as the sentence proceeds. For example : —

¹ Macaulay : *First Essay on Johnson*.

² Macaulay : *Essay on Warren Hastings*.

"They gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die."¹

"I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds
Have rived the knotty oaks; and I have seen
The ambitious ocean swell, and rage, and foam,
To be exalted with the threat'ning cloud."²

"What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason!
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and
admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how
like a god!"³

"They were mocked, stoned, hanged, tortured, burned alive."

In the anticlimax the order is reversed: the transition is from the stronger to the weaker, and usually produces an absurd effect. **Anticlimax.** Sometimes anticlimax is unintentional, but it is sometimes purposely used for humorous effect. For example:—

"Here thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey,
Dost sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tea."⁴

"Mlle. Mars stormed and raved, and was quarrelsome and impertinent."

"The men were taken to the prison, where they were beaten and insulted, and deprived of the luxuries to which they had been accustomed."

Emphasis is also secured by the help of words that make the important parts of the sentence stand out from the rest.

Compare, for example, these sentences:— **Emphasis by additional words.**

¹ Pope: *Dunciad*, iv, 648.

² Shakespeare: *Julius Caesar*, act i. sc. iii.

³ Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, act ii. sc. ii.

⁴ Pope: *Rape of the Lock*, iii. 7, 8.

"He was a great jurist, and an eminent orator and statesman."

"He was *not merely* a great jurist, *but* an eminent orator and statesman."

"This conduct is not wise or honorable."

"This conduct is *neither* wise *nor* honorable."

Some writers hesitate to end a sentence with an unemphatic word, such as a preposition, **Unemphatic ending.** a pronoun, or an adverb. They object to such sentences as, —

"This was a subject he had given much attention to."

"He had less patience than any one I have ever heard of."

"He was the man that I meant to refer to."

and prefer to write, —

"This was a subject to which he had given much attention."

"He had less patience than any one of whom I have ever heard."

"He was the man to whom I meant to refer."

The emphatic ending is more dignified, and better suited to serious discourse; but in conversation and informal composition the unemphatic ending is altogether preferable. Especially is this true when the unemphatic particle really forms a part of the verb. For example: —

"That is the best house I can *think of*."

"Whilst in this learned body, I applied myself with so much diligence to my studies that there are very few celebrated books, either in the learned or the modern tongues, which I am not *acquainted with*."¹

¹ *The Spectator*, No. 1.

SECTION VII.

Now that we have studied in the preceding pages by what means sentences may be made forcible, we may next consider how they may be made beautiful. **Beauty of style.**

Beauty, or, as it is sometimes called, elegance, cannot be attained by following specific rules, but is rather the product of a cultivated taste exercised by much practice. **Beauty not taught by rules.** A few suggestions, however, may be of value. The general principle is that elegance is opposed to vulgarity of every sort, as well as to harshness of sound, breaks of construction, and whatever hinders the easy movement of the sentence.

1. Some letters of the alphabet are more easily pronounced than others, especially in combinations. Compare *alleluia*, *marble*, *meander* with *blockhead*, *bludgeon*, *blunderbuss*, *execrable*, *scrawl*. The latter words offer mechanical obstacles to easy utterance. Lack of euphony in the sentence can frequently be remedied by changing the order, so as to separate the discordant sounds. In some other cases, the only help consists in rewriting the entire sentence. The following sentence, which should be read aloud, must be rewritten before it can be melodious :

“ With the other matters there were ways in which we could become familiar with particular processes as a help to a larger grasp on the whole.”

2. A long succession of monosyllables affords too little variety of accent. Pope illustrates this fault while condemning it:—

“And ten low words oft creep in one dull line.”¹

Alternation of long words with short affords relief by allowing groups of syllables to be passed over lightly.

Compare, for example, —

“Merrily, merrily whirled the wheels of the dizzying dances.”²

“Empty and drear was each room, and haunted with phantoms of terror.”²

3. In prose we should avoid the movement and, to some extent, the diction peculiar to poetry. There is a rhythm of prose as well as of poetry; or rather there is in prose a sort of cadence, while in poetry there is a succession of regular beats. When prose has this regularity of movement it ceases to be good prose, but does not become poetry. Unfortunately, some young writers are very liable to write sentences having a movement somewhat like that of blank verse. This fault can usually be corrected by a slight change in the order of the words.

4. Jangling rhymes convert a sentence into something that is neither prose nor verse. For example:—

“No man who values himself can believe it is *right* to work all *night*.”

¹ *Essay on Criticism*, l. 347. ² Longfellow: *Evangeline*.

"The children have been noisy, sir, but they're *quite quiet* now."

"So we finished the day, much *excited* and *delighted*."

5. Alliteration should usually be avoided in prose. For example : —

"The daring doer of this dastardly deed will doubtless be dealt with in a determined way."

6. Some use may be made of imitative words, especially in descriptions ; but a continual striving to make sound and sense correspond renders the style affected. The best examples are found in poetry. Tennyson's famous line —

"The league-long roller thundering on the reef,"

suggests the very sound of the ocean.

The quiet approach of a summer evening cannot be better suggested than in the familiar lines : —

"Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds."¹

7. Elegance requires that the flow of thought shall not be interrupted by sudden breaks of construction.² To be avoided, therefore, is the suspension of prepositions. For example : —

"Her positive dislike *to* and alienation *from* knowledge was amazing."³

¹ Gray : *Elegy*.

² Cf. p. 107.

³ Mrs. Ward : *David Grieve*, p. 430.

" Nevertheless she was scarcely more at home *in*, and, after a certain fashion, an inmate *of*, the one house than the other." ¹

8. A word should not be used in two senses in the same clause or sentence. For example : —

" It is *certain* that a *certain* suspicious character was seen near the wharf on the evening of the robbery."

" When he *had taken* a moment to consider, he realized what *had taken* place."

Where elegance is the chief aim of a writer, the style is rarely vigorous. Force and beauty may co-exist, but the union of the two requires much skill.

EXERCISE 37. Search your own compositions for illustrations of the faults pointed out in paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8.

¹ Walford: *A Sage of Sixteen*, p. 1.

CHAPTER VI.

WORDS.

"Every word in the language has once been used happily. The ear, caught by that felicity, retains it, and it is used again and again, as if the charm belonged to the word, and not to the life of thought which so enforced it."

EMERSON: *Quotation and Originality.*

SECTION I.

THE only way by which a writer can express thought is through words. Written words are arbitrary signs representing certain sounds, which in turn represent ideas. In process of time the written form, the pronunciation, and the meaning may change. Changes are constantly going on. A word generally used to-day may narrow its meaning to-morrow, and after a time may go out of use altogether. A writer of English must therefore aim to become familiar with the words accepted as English by those speakers and writers who best represent the English of his own day.

This familiarity may be gained in a variety of ways. We have all learned to speak by hearing other people and by imitating them. The conversational method would be ideal, if the information and culture of the speakers were sufficiently wide. But in the absence of the

**Words
and their
changes.**

**Learning a
vocabulary.**

ideal we may turn to books. In them we find in far greater variety than in ordinary conversation a vocabulary of choice and expressive words. By mastering a few hundred pages of good literature,—that is, by noting all unfamiliar words, and carefully discriminating the shades of meaning in each word, we may acquire a vocabulary that will rarely prove insufficient. Familiarity with the sound of words may be gained by reading aloud, and with their practical use, by employing them in our own writing. Translation, when properly done, is of the utmost value as a means of insuring copiousness and exactness in the use of expressive words. But the jargon that too often passes for translation deserves in no sense the name of translation. It is a clumsy form of expression that merely transfers Latin or Greek constructions to English sentences, and even presses into service, as far as they will go, the actual forms of the words to be translated. Such a process is translocation rather than translation, and is liable to do more harm than good.

The labor of forming a working vocabulary need not be great, for even the most copious writers use but a few thousand words. The smallness of the number is indeed surprising. Ordinary speakers and writers do not use more than three or four thousand words. The English Bible employs about six thousand words, Milton, in his poems, about eight thousand, Shakespeare, about fifteen thousand.¹

**Number of
words in a
working
vocabulary.**

¹ Marsh: *Lectures on the English Language*, pp. 263, 264.

EXERCISE 38. At the discretion of the teacher, exercises may be suggested for the increase of the pupils' vocabulary. For instance, a list of ten or fifteen unusual words may be selected by the teacher from any page of good prose and dictated to the class. These words may be required to be properly used in a short composition. The pupils may be required, in some cases, to make their own selection and to use the words as before. A short story or paragraph may be read aloud to the class with the request that the less common words be noted. The class may then reproduce the substance of what has been read.

The dictionary¹ is of service for the careful study of a piece of literature ; but from the dictionary alone no one can learn to speak or write. It may explain difficulties, and give the exact meanings of words already somewhat familiar, but it cannot supply the place of extensive reading. As we read we see words in actual use, and get the finer shades of meaning from the connection. Even rare words yield up their meaning after comparison of the passages where they occur.

¹ Every pupil should, if possible, possess at least an abridged dictionary for the explanation of the difficult words that are often necessarily used, even in school text-books. But the habit of frequently consulting the large dictionary should be early formed. A little study will show that a large proportion of the longer and apparently more difficult words are formed either by putting two or more words together, such as *never-the-less*, *not-with-standing*, or by adding syllables to the beginning or the end (or both) of a word that may be used as a separate word. If we take, for example, the word *cover*, (itself a compound) and add the prefixes *ir-re-* and the suffix *-able*, we get *ir-re-cover-able*. In a similar way tens of thousands of other words have been formed. The importance, therefore, of getting an early acquaintance with the exact meaning of the more common prefixes and suffixes is too evident to call for further remark.

In any case an acquaintance with the mere form of unusual words makes the labor of learning their meaning in a lexicon comparatively easy.

English has been used as a written language for more than twelve centuries, and in that time has undergone great changes in pronunciation, in spelling, and in vocabulary. Many words that were once understood by every one who used English have been lost forever. Some words have not been altogether lost, but, although no longer in general use, they still linger in remote districts. Such words obtain no literary recognition except in dialect stories; but they may, through a variety of circumstances, again come into wide circulation. Many so-called Americanisms are good old words that have for some reason failed to hold their own in England. To this class belong *freshet*, meaning *flood*, *fall*, meaning *autumn*, and *guess*, meaning *think*. But there are numerous other expressions peculiarly American, which seem never to have been used elsewhere in the sense applied to them in this country. Some of these words are used only in the South and some only in the West, and some only in the East and North.

Examples of provincialisms are *tote* for *carry*; *ornery* for *ordinary*; *notions* for *knickknacks*; *bad* for *ill*; *pack* for *carry*; *rock* for *small stone*; *train* (verb) for *frolic*; *fix* for *mend, repair*. We hear occasionally: "This is an ever-

lasting big farm " ; " I *don't* guess the corn is *shucked*, but we're goin' to *meetin'*, for they say the preacher is a *rouser* ; " " So you've moved into your new house. Well, *how do you like?* "

Provincialisms in pronunciation appear in saying *cheer* for *chair* ; *ma'sh* for *marsh* ; *keow* for *cow* ; in making *calm* and *psalm* rhyme with *ham*, and in numerous other expressions.

Closely allied to provincialisms are slang phrases. Slang is low or vulgar language, not generally adopted by careful writers and speakers. Slang words may have some vogue

Slang.

for a few months or years, but they usually give place to other phrases, which in turn run a brief career. Some slang is more picturesque and forcible than more dignified phrases ; and some terms once regarded as slang are now counted among our most valued words. In serious composition, however, all phrases of doubtful propriety should be avoided, though probably no one but a pedant excludes them entirely from his conversation. In any case there is no need of haste to form a slang vocabulary, for it will usually grow without artificial cultivation.

Quite as objectionable as slang is the use of trite and meaningless phrases. The vulgarity of such language is well exposed by a forcible writer in *The (London) Spectator* : —

**Trite
phrases.**

" The people who seem to find it impossible to speak of an unmarried man except as ' a gay bachelor,' with whom the sea

is always 'the briny' or 'the herring pond,' and a horse 'a fiery steed,' who eternally talk about 'Sunday go-to-meeting clothes,' and who have¹ such phrases as 'no extra charge,' 'agitate the tintinnabulator,' 'the noxious weed,' 'the pipe of peace,' 'forty winks,' and 'braving the elements,' are capable of producing a sense of disgust in those who care to see language kept bright and clean, which is absolutely intolerable.² It is difficult to say whether these cant phrases — that is a perfectly proper description of them — are more odious when used consciously or unconsciously, that is, by people who believe them to be funny, and intend that their hearers should consider them funny, or by those who have merely caught them up and repeat them like parrots and without any intention, good or bad. In our own opinion the use of 'common-form' jocularities is most offensive in those who think of them as wit, though most painful in persons who use them unconsciously and as mere methods of expressing their meaning. . . . As a rule, however, people who take to the use of mental jocularities combine the mental standpoint of those who try to be funny with the hollow sprightliness of mere imitation. They have a half-hearted belief that they are being funny, but at the same time their chief reason for talking about 'maternal relatives' and 'people of the masculine persuasion' is the fact that they hear those with whom they associate doing the same. They say, 'Why this thusness?' or 'A fine day for the ducks,' just as they say 'Yes' or 'No.'"

We must distinguish between the vulgarity of slang and the homeliness of plain, familiar terms. The highest culture appears in using the simplest words possible to express a thought.

Familiar words.

No form of vulgarity is so offensive as pretension; and nothing is more amusing than affected refinement. People whose diction is uniformly over-

¹ Is this the best word? ² Position of this clause?

elegant set up a false standard of excellence. They have an uneasy consciousness of narrow culture, and they try to make a large display on a small basis.

Writers of this sort betray the crudity of their taste by using pretentious phrases. An ordinary speech is a "masterly effort"; a tolerable actress is "queen of the tragic stage," and her performance is a "triumph of the histrionic art"; a picture of some merit is called a "matchless work of inspired genius" or a "symphony of gorgeous coloring," and so on *ad nauseam*.

**Pretentious
phrases.**

"When people have had 'a good schooling' and are 'genteel' and yet have no ideas and no tastes, you will notice that they keep up gentility and consideration by fine words, which mean just what plain ones mean, but which are as velvet paletots to plain broadcloth.

"'And so,' says the young man, 'we found an excellent hostelry, and mine host gave us some delicious salmon, and we discussed the viands set before us with considerable relish and imbibed a quantity of the vinous fluid,' etc. Actually the man thinks he has been talking to you in a refined and genteel way."¹

Other examples of the pompous and strutting style so dear to some writers are here quoted in order to indicate what is to be avoided:—

"She gave an exquisite rendition of a passage from one of Mozart's symphonies;"

that is, she played the passage well.

"The accomplished artist rendered several selections upon the violin."

Some people are content merely to *play pieces*.

¹ *Letters of James Smetham*, pp. 167, 168.

"Yesterday afternoon, as a gentleman representing the agricultural interests of our neighborhood was proceeding to town, he was attacked by a canine of pugnacious temperament, and before the termination of the unequal conflict, he was cruelly lacerated in the right lower limb. He was at once transported to the palatial residence of a well-known member of the legal fraternity, where, under the skilful attention of Dr. Blake, one of our rising medical practitioners, his sufferings were speedily alleviated."

The writer of the foregoing item doubtless intended to adopt a jocular and humorous tone, and he drew upon all the inflated language at his command. But such writing, though it may make the unwise laugh, makes the judicious grieve.

"She took her journey with these bloody messengers, expecting very soon to be shielded in the arms of legitimate affection. A short distance only then seemed to separate two of the happiest of mortals. Alas! how soon are the most brilliant pictures of felicity defaced by the burning hand of affliction and wo! How swiftly are the halcyon dreams which lull the supine indolence of thought succeeded by the real pangs which are inflicted by a punishing Providence, or a persecuting foe!"¹

"I spent my time in an uninterrupted scene of sylvan pleasures, when my brother, to my great felicity, met me at our old camp."

"On the first of May I resigned my domestic happiness and left my family and peaceable habitation to wander through the wilderness of America."

"The purpose of his peregrinations was to escape the consequences of some rash acts which he had committed during one of his periodic times of financial stringency."

¹ Trumbull: *Indian Wars*, p. 113.

Pretentious writers fail to see that their inflated and unnatural diction is an imposture certain to be detected, and that they cannot make a composition forcible and dignified by bolstering up small thoughts with large phrases. In the effort to be uniformly magnificent they write a style that is fatally inexact. They expend all their fine words on unworthy objects, and thus leave none for things of real importance. How can one adequately describe a hurricane if one's strongest phrases have been spent on a gale?

The people who are given to the use of pretentious language are easily led to overlook the fact that the more than two hundred thousand words recorded in the dictionaries will probably enable them to express their thoughts, and they eagerly take up new foreign terms. Travellers may, indeed, be pardoned for occasionally adopting the name of an object peculiar to a foreign country, as, for instance, *jinrikisha*, for the national carriage of Japan. But what excuse is there for spicing one's conversation with scraps of French such as *distingué* or *haut goût* or *coup d'œil*, or for advertising, as a London theatre does, that "in the parterre the *fauteuils* are the most *recherchés* in London"? The French of the liveryman who keeps a *hôtel-de-horse* can be rivaled only by the wonderful language of restaurant bills-of-fare, which is certainly not English, and sometimes anything but French. The acqui-

**Falsity of
pretentious
diction.**

**New foreign
words.**

sition of a few foreign words is not so great an achievement that the borrowed phrases must constantly be paraded before our less fortunate neighbors. An unfamiliar foreign term may be intrinsically as good as a word borrowed five centuries ago, but until the new word is generally used it may best be left to writers and speakers who have nothing to lose by making experiments.

Some linguistic purists insist that English words should in all cases be preferred to words of foreign origin. The rule cannot be made so dog-

**The choice
of words.**

matic, since the whole matter depends upon the use we wish to make of the words. The safest rule is to select those words, of whatever origin, that most exactly express our meaning. If clearness is our sole purpose, we may, when the subject is simple and untechnical, convey our full thought by means of the native vocabulary alone. But if, in a scientific treatise or in any writing that takes us a little outside of the usual run of experience, we confine ourselves to words of English origin, we shall write a clumsy and blundering style that will be hardly intelligible. Beauty and force, as well as clearness, are best secured by a judicious alternation of the native and the foreign elements. A passage from which all words of foreign origin have been excluded appears somewhat stiff and affected; while, on the other hand, a passage needlessly crowded with borrowed words is usually heavy and

pompous. The best English prose writers use from seventy-five to eighty per cent, and in short passages even ninety per cent of native words. In poetry there is in general a higher proportion of native words than in prose.

The difference in the effect produced by native and by borrowed words may be seen by comparing and analyzing the following passages :—

“ Now, as the waves were not so high as at first, being near land, I held my hold till the wave *abated*; ¹ and then fetched another run, which brought me so near the shore, that the next wave, though it went over me, yet did not so swallow me up as to *carry* me away; and the next run I took I got to the *main* land, where, to my great *comfort*, I clambered up the cliffs of the shore, and sat me down upon the grass, free from *danger*, and *quite* out of reach of the water.” ²

“ The singing birds, with *reference* to their songs, may be *divided* into four *classes*. First, the *rapid* singers, whose song is *uninterrupted*, of *considerable* length, and uttered with *fervor* and *apparent* *ecstasy*. *Second*, the *moderate* singers, whose *notes* are slowly *modulated*, but without *pauses* or rests between their *different* *strains*. Third, the *interrupted* singers, who seldom *modulate* their *notes* with *rapidity*, and make *decided* *pauses* between their *several* *strains*, of which there are in *general* from five to eight or nine. Fourth, the warblers, whose *notes* consist of only one or two *strains*, not *combined* into a song.” ³

“ On a soft, sunny morning in the *genial* month of *May* I made an *excursion* to Windsor *Castle*. It is a *place* full of *storied* and *poetical* *associations*. The *very* *external* *aspect* of the *proud* old *pile* is enough to *inspire* high thought. It rears

¹ Borrowed words are italicized.

² Defoe: *Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*.

³ J. Elliot Cabot: *The Songs of Birds*.

its *irregular* walls and *massive towers* like a *mural crown* round the brow of a lofty ridge, waves its *royal banner* in the clouds, and looks down with a lordly *air* upon the *surrounding world*.”¹

The first passage is very simple, and requires for the complete expression of the thought only the most familiar words. Of these not more than six are borrowed. In the second passage, which is but slightly removed from the tone of ordinary conversation, all of the less common words, as well as some familiar ones, are borrowed. The third passage, which abounds in meditative turns of thought, contains by far the largest proportion of words of Latin (or French) origin. We cannot make words of the sort used in the first passage produce the effect which we feel in the selection from Irving, nor can we, by using the more studied language of Irving, attain the simplicity of Defoe.

People who are ignorant of the history of our language are prone to enlarge their vocabulary by adding well-known terminations to words already in good use. When the proposed word supplies a real need, and the termination is of the same origin as the word to which it is added, the objections are not serious ; but where to words of English stock foreign terminations are needlessly appended, the danger of deterioration is great. We do indeed apply some English prefixes and suffixes to

**Comment
upon the
quoted
passages.**

**Formation
of new
words.**

¹ Irving: *The Sketch Book*.

borrowed words, and some borrowed prefixes and suffixes to English words. We say *unnatural* and not *innatural*, and we add the English suffixes *ly* and *ness* to make *unnaturally* and *unnaturalness*. Such formations as these take us back to a time when, owing to unsettled usage, many new elements crept into the language. In the course of centuries the exceptional usage has acquired the authority of a law. To these words we therefore make no objection, and we add the formative elements without any thought of incongruity.

More serious objection may be raised against adding foreign suffixes to native words. If we are to have *skatist* and *walkist* and *shootist* for *skater* and *walker* and *shooter*, then why not *runnist* and *workist* and *writist*? If *soapine* and *skatorial* are good words, what is to be said against *wheatine* and *cornine*, *runnorial* and *writorial*? A substitute for ice is advertised under the name *freezine*; and a pamphlet issued by a manufacturer of leather goods bears the title *Shoeology*! We see now and then advertisements of bargains in *trouserings*, *vestings*, and *overcoatings*. Such words are not only not needed, but they mar the purity of the language, and hinder its natural development.

The use of a new word covering the same ground as an old one involves the disuse of the old word. For this reason we condemn *signist* for *sign-painter*, *combine* for *combination*.

**Bad
formations.**

**Needless
disuse of
old words.**

The invention of new terms that follow the analogy of words already adopted may easily be carried to absurdity. From *nation* we get *national* and then *nationalize*; *denationalize* and *denationalization* easily follow. Much farther we cannot well go. If we plead the analogy of *nationalist* and coin *denationalizationist*, we shall have a word made regularly enough, not much worse than *denominationalist*, but we shall have added another hideous formation to the long list of un-English words.

By applying the foregoing tests we may rid our vocabulary of some of the words clearly unfit to be retained. But there are numerous expressions whose status is not exactly determined. They may be put into a class by themselves, and used cautiously.¹ A writer can usually find for such terms substitutes not open to question. If, however, no other word already in good use expresses the same meaning as a proposed new term, the latter will be likely to win favor.

What has been said applies only when one's intention is to conform to the standards of the literary language. When, however, a novelist or dramatist or poet adopts the dialect of his characters, he is under few restric-

¹ Such a list may perhaps be best gathered from the essays of the pupils, and placed upon the blackboard as a constant warning of what to avoid, or, at best, to use with hesitation.

tions in his choice of words. Any expression, however technical or antiquated or provincial, is admissible if it is really characteristic. Shakespeare uses many doubtful phrases, but he puts them into the mouths of suitable persons. Oliver Wendell Holmes in *The Wonderful One-Hoss Shay*, James Russell Lowell in *The Biglow Papers*, and Tennyson in *The Northern Farmer* use words unknown to standard English. Yet the very lack of conformity to ordinary grammatical and literary standards is in such cases a positive merit. But when a writer professes to speak in his own person, he must be satisfied with nothing short of the purest English, free from vulgarity and affectation.

If we have no precise idea of what we wish to say or if we lack the precise words to express what we clearly conceive, we shall not succeed in making our thought clear to others. **Clearness of diction.** Had every word but one meaning, and were all readers possessed of equal intelligence, there would be comparatively little difficulty in writing clearly. A glance at the dictionary teaches us, however, that even common words like *face*, *frame*, *matter*, *subject*, *object*, have a great variety of meanings. To express our thought exactly, we must therefore use each word as far as possible in the same sense throughout the discourse. Especially important is it that each word retain the same meaning throughout the same sentence.

In order to select the precise terms that we need we must have a large vocabulary. Poverty of diction compels us to use the same term in a variety of senses, and to multiply weak circumlocutions. We can either name an object or describe it. The description may be exact, but it requires more words. The writer must therefore increase his vocabulary to the point where it can do all the work laid upon it. Otherwise he will perpetually use clumsy paraphrases, instead of the exact words needed to convey his meaning.

The varying age and attainments of readers make necessary a diction suited to their capacity. A book clear to an adult may be obscure to a child; and a book clear to a man of science may yield no meaning to a general reader. When the reader's difficulty grows out of the use of terms required for exactness, there may be no real obscurity in the expression. The trouble is with the reader, who is not prepared to understand the subject. Perfect clearness of diction can thus be attained only by modifying the treatment of the topic according to the capacity of those for whom we write. Where the obscurity is due to the writer's confusion of thought, the difficulty lies deeper, and is often beyond remedy.

Every art and science has a multitude of technical words, necessary for conveying an exact meaning.

The botanist cannot intelligibly describe a flower without mentioning the *petals*, the *sepals*, the *corolla*. Thus far he will be generally understood by almost any one. But if he goes on to speak of *petioles* and *corymbs* and *parenchyma*, he must either define his terms or leave most people in doubt as to his meaning. Everybody understands what is meant by the breaking of one's knee-cap, but the equivalent phrase, fracture of the patella, conveys no definite meaning to the majority of people. The unfamiliar terms which are so essential to the scientific writer are not really English; they are rather technical symbols which afford no meaning except to a specialist. Before using them we should determine whether the class of readers we wish to address will understand them. If the words are not likely to be understood, they should be accompanied by definitions. In writing for specialists we may make our diction as technical as we please; in writing for the general public we must make some sacrifice of accuracy for the sake of being understood at all. A topic that cannot be discussed without resorting to numerous technical terms is evidently unsuited to popular treatment.

Technical words.

Precision in the use of words requires a careful discrimination of synonyms. For example, we must distinguish between what is *impossible* and what is *impracticable*; we must not confound *rashness* with *temerity*, *imprudence*, *presump-*

Precision.

tion, audacity. In the following sentences the substitution of the alternative words changes more or less the meaning :—

“It was *clear* (*evident, apparent*) to me that he could not do the work.”

“Being closely associated with the President, the Secretary had the *chance* (*opportunity*) of seeing him every morning.”

Precision cannot be taught by rules ; it is rather the result of long practice by which the writer ultimately attains an exquisite skill in selecting those words, and those only which exactly convey his thought.

EXERCISE 39. At the discretion of the teacher, exercises in Precision, similar to those given below, can be suggested in abundance by a moment's reference to such books as Roget's *Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*, Crabbe's *Synonyms*, Smith's *Synonyms Discriminated*, or any of the larger dictionaries :—

A. Find at least two synonyms for each of the following words and indicate clearly the difference in meaning: dwell, mad, manner, vocation, famous, scare, salary, look, lead.

B. Write sentences in which the following words are used correctly: fearless, brave, bold; fatal, deadly, mortal; incline, slope, slant; knave, rogue, rascal; labor, work, toil; jealousy, suspicion, envy; just, right, fair; keen, sharp, stinging; invent, devise, contrive; need, require, want; fright, alarm, terror, panic.

Words, to be used properly, must be employed in their generally accepted English signification. Violations of this rule are called **improprieties**. No fault is more common among inexperienced writers and careless speakers. Examples of improprieties are the use of *liable* for *likely*, as, "His salary has n't been raised yet, but it's *liable* to be any time"; of *indorse* for *sanction* or *approve*, as, "I *indorse* what the minister said this morning"; of *most* for *almost*, as, "Is n't he *most* done?" of *like* for *as*, in "Why don't you write *like* he does?" of *like* for *as if*, or *as though*, in "It looks *like* it might be clear to-night"; of *aggravating* for *provoking*, as, "He is so *aggravating*"; of *transpire* for *occur*, as, "A fight *transpired* last evening"; of *quite* and *nice* in such expressions as, "It is *quite* a *nice* day"; "Gladstone is *quite* an orator"; "*Quite* a few students are in town"; "He thinks he's *quite* *some*." Miscellaneous examples of improprieties appear in the following sentences.

EXERCISE 40. In the following sentences, select from the italicized words those that express most clearly the meaning of the sentence, and give your reasons: —

"Scarcely had Phœbe's eyes rested again on the judge's countenance *than* (*when, before*) its ugly sternness vanished."¹

"The deepening shadows of Lady Rich's character made it impossible, had he been so minded, for Shakespeare to laud her (*as*) *like* Sidney had done."²

¹ Hawthorne: *The House of the Seven Gables*.

² Gerald Massey: *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

"Law books are *well* (*fairly, thoroughly*) sprinkled with Latin phrases."

"He was called an idiot by his older brother, (*in*) *with* which *estimation* (*estimate, opinion*) he largely acquiesced, and, as he says in later years, with some reason."

"She hotly replies that there are thousands of such women now, but their heroic qualities are undeveloped because the men will not allow them to obtain a *fitting* (*suitable*) education."

"Carlyle (*pretends*) *claims* to be an English editor who edits an autobiography of a German scholar."

"We can *set down* (*point out, indicate, designate*) three classes that occur almost without exception in all the plays where love-making forms a principal part of the action."

"It is interesting to note in what different ways similar effects will be produced by similar causes among people of different characters and times. A striking example of this is seen in the effect of the monkish life as (*described, depicted*) *shown* (*it appears*) in the eastern and western countries."

"As to a girl's general reading Ruskin gives some good *points* (*suggestions*)."

"I think that many students forget that a good foundation is as essential to special excellence in (*education*) *mental lines* as it is in athletics."

"When her resolve is taken, she adheres to it firmly and in such a positive manner, that De Bois Guilbert knows the *surety* (*for a certainty*) that it will not be broken."

"How, therefore, under the present *dispensation* (*construction, interpretation*) of the constitution, can the government consistently take the telegraph system into its hands, thereby interfering with State rights?"

"Gutenberg had only *discovered* (*invented*) printing with movable types in 1440."

"It was very different *than* (*to what, from what*) I expected to see."

"He lost his *position* (*situation, place*) on account of his (*incapacity, inability*) *disability* to do the work."

"The (*golden*) gold ring (*sparkled*), *flashed*, (*glittered*) in the strong light."


"They *extorted* (*exacted, extracted*) from him a promise that he would never appear in their neighborhood again."

"This *likeness*, (*liking, fondness*) for travelling is in contrast with the later part of his life, when he had shown what he was capable of doing as a writer."

"Johnson's Dictionary was a very important *factor* (*element, authority*) in the matter of orthography."


"For some months past wheelmen have (*followed, initiated, adopted*) *inaugurated* the common practice of riding on the platform at the depot."

How can the sentence be shortened? 

 "Both of these writers employ many words of Latin origin, but De Quincey was (*especially, particularly*) *notably* addicted to the *usage* (*use*) of them."

"From Italy to the Netherlands he journeyed, looking at men and affairs with interest and *study* (*closeness, attention*)."

"What saved Tennyson from becoming an Atheist or a Rationalist, or rather the point in which he differed from these (*sects*), *thinkers*, was that he did not attempt to solve these religious questions by the intellect alone."

 "Just such a mind and just such a (*high, elevated, lofty*) *flighty* imagination as Carlyle's was necessary to originate such a scheme as that of 'Sartor Resartus' for bringing before the eyes of men this chaotic state of morals, society, religion, and indeed of every human institution."

"His recall from exile, however, took place after Dante had (*abdicated, abandoned, resigned*), *laid down* his office, so that we cannot accuse him of being partial."

"The whole play (*was composed, was presented*), *took place* always in conformity with the cumbersome 'unities' of time, action, and place."

Wrong preposition. A preposition is sometimes carelessly chosen : —

"She is not forgetful of past kindnesses showed her by another, and feels that she cannot do enough in return (*to*) for one who has befriended her."

"We are gratified to have Tennyson devote several thousand lines *in (to)* the consideration of this very *fitting (suitable, appropriate)* subject of the nineteenth century."

"His sentimentality is important, first of all (*in, for, because of*), *from* its effect on his life."

"I shall take great pleasure *in (from, by)* conferring this favor *to (upon, on)* him."

"After a short trial he was acquitted *from (of)* the charge."

"I have cut several roses from the bush since I brought it *in (into)* the house."

Adverb for adjective. An adverb is sometimes wrongly used instead of an adjective : —

"My Lord Duke's entertainments were both *seldom (rare)* and shabby."

"The trees look very *prettily (pretty)* in the soft light."

"His clothes looked *ridiculously*."

A word may fail to convey instantly the writer's meaning, and may thus contain an impropriety.

Ambiguous words. This is especially true of words that are used as prepositions, adverbs, or conjunctions, according to their position in the sentence : —

"Fourteen years *after* (*later, afterwards*) he had not been forgiven *for* this work, *for* his candidacy, *for* the seat rendered vacant by the death of Thiers was defeated partly on this account."¹

"Not long *since* (*ago*) the attention of the commercial world was attracted by the death of one of America's railroad kings."

The wrong conjunction is sometimes **Wrong**
used : — **conjunction.**

"*While* (*although*) the ceremonies were delayed by an unfortunate railway accident, the change of colors was witnessed by a brilliant assemblage, and was honored by a naval salute from the *Chicago*."²

The correlative of *neither* is not *or* but **Neither**
nor. Incorrect, therefore, is the fol- **and nor.**
lowing sentence : —

"Tennyson could *neither* ³ become an unfeeling rationalist or an unthinking evangelist."

A common impropriety, the misuse of **Shall**
shall and *will*, deserves special notice. **and will.**

"The mistake most commonly made in the use of these words, and the one, therefore, most carefully to be avoided, is the use of *will* for *shall*, and of the corresponding *would* for *should*. *Shall* is much less often used for *will*.

"Among people of Anglo-Saxon race and of average education the mistake, when made, most commonly takes the indicative form, thus: 'I *will* go to bed at ten o'clock to-night,' or 'We *will* breakfast at eight to-morrow,' instead of, 'I *shall* go to bed,' etc., 'We *shall* breakfast,' etc. Not quite so often we hear: 'I *would* be glad to go,' 'We *would* be happy to see you,' instead of, 'I *should* be glad,' 'We *should* be happy,' etc.

¹ *Springfield Republican*, March 6, 1893.

³ Position of *neither* ?

² *New York Tribune*, February 23, 1893.

“*Will* in the first person expresses a wish and an intention, or a promise; as, ‘I will go,’ that is, I mean to go, or I promise to go. *Will* is never to be used as a question with the first person, as, ‘Will I go?’ A man cannot ask if he wills to do anything. That he must know, and only he knows.

“*Will* in the second person declares or foretells; as, ‘You will go with him.’ As a question, *will* in the second person asks the intention of the person addressed; as, ‘Will you go to-morrow?’ that is, Do you mean to go to-morrow?

“*Will* in the third person also declares or foretells; as, ‘He will come,’ that is, He is coming, and may be looked for. As a question, *will* in the third person asks what is to be the future action of the person spoken of with a necessary reference to intention; as, ‘Will he go?’ That is, Is he going? Does he mean to go, and is his going sure? In the third person, *will* has of course no mandatory force.

“*Shall* in the first person simply declares or foretells, without any reference to wish; but when it announces personal action, it of course may accompany intention; as, ‘I shall go,’ that is, I am going, I am to depart hence. Used as a question in the first person, it is a simple inquiry as to the future; as, ‘Shall I find him?’ That is, May I expect to find him? or it asks direction; as, ‘Shall I go?’ That is, Decide for me as to my going. *Shall* in the second person and in the third declares authoritatively, and therefore promises, commands, or threatens; as, ‘You shall be paid,’ ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ ‘They shall suffer’ — which need no paraphrase.

“*Would* and *should* conform to the usage of *will* and *shall*; *would* referring to an exercise of will, and *should* implying contingent dependent action, or obligation.”¹

Summarizing the entire foregoing discussion, we may say that we shall have little difficulty if we remember, in the first place, that we are likely to misuse the words *shall* and *will* only in speaking of ourselves, very

¹ White: *Everyday English*, chap. xxiii.

rarely when others are concerned. Hence if we say, "I will," "We will," only when we mean to promise something or to express a determination, and, in other cases, say "I shall," "We shall," the main problem will be solved. The proper use of *shall* and *will* in the second and third persons is comparatively simple.

As for *should* and *would*, the following working rule will cover most cases¹: — Reduce the form of expression to that of the simple future, and apply the rule for the use of *shall* and *will*. Then use *should* in place of *shall* and *would* in place of *will*, as is illustrated in the following examples :

"I shall be happy if my money has come."

"I should have been happy if my money had come."

"I will help him if my money has come."

"I would help him if my money had come."

EXERCISE 41. Write a short story or dialogue illustrating the correct and the incorrect use of *shall*, *should*, *will*, *would*.

Words that name a general conception we call general terms. Examples of such words are *substance*, *rock*, *animal*, *vegetable*. We may take any general term and group under it a series of terms more and more specific. Thus under *animals* we may class *mammals*, *quadrupeds*,

General
terms.

¹ It will, of course, be understood that some of the complicated questions that arise now and then concerning the use of *shall*, *will*, *should*, *would* in dependent clauses cannot be disposed of in one brief, summary rule. But the discussion of complicated questions does not properly belong in this book.

horses, dray-horses, race-horses, etc. General terms are convenient if we do not wish to enumerate every object included under them, but to express by a single word a great variety of different things. Instead of naming granite and sandstone and limestone and basalt, we may group them all under the general term *rock*. Evidently the greater the number of objects suggested by a general term, the less it can tell about any single object. The term *substance* includes every material object, and suggests scarcely any image at all. *Tree* is a general term, yet far more specific than *substance*. *Oak* is sufficiently definite to call up an image having certain well-marked features.

We cannot say that a general term is of more or of less value than a specific term. Each is best in

its place, since those words are best that most exactly convey the meaning intended. In discussions of general principles a writer cannot dispense with general terms: in descriptions he must use concrete phrases that suggest exact images. An excess of general terms, however, makes the style vague and feeble.

Words are forcible in proportion as they are specific. Compare the indefiniteness and feebleness of *sound* or *noise* with the definiteness and force of *clash, crash, slam, buzz, whiz, rustle, creak, jar, grate, clank*; or compare

vociferation with *cry*, *roar*, *yell*, *howl*, *scream*, *whine*. Yet the occasions when we can use the most specific terms, like *whiz* or *buzz* or *clank* are few, and such words are therefore of less general utility than the terms *noise* and *sound*.

The difference of effect produced by general and specific terms is illustrated in the following passages:—

R. "The common duties and benefits of society, which belong to every man living, as we are social creatures, and even our native and necessary relations to a family, a neighborhood, or a government, oblige all persons whatever to use their reasoning powers upon a thousand occasions. Every hour of life calls for some regular exercise of our judgment as to times and things, persons and actions. Without a prudent and discreet determination in matters before us, we shall be plunged into perpetual errors in our conduct. Now, that which should always be practised, must at some time be learnt."¹

"A crow, who had flown away with a cheese from a dairy window, sat perched on a tree looking down at a great big frog in a pool underneath him. The frog's hideous large eyes were goggling out of his head in a manner which appeared quite ridiculous to the old blackamoor, who watched the splay-footed slimy wretch with that grim humor belonging to crows. Not far from the frog a fat ox was browsing; whilst a few lambs frisked about the meadow, or nibbled the grass and buttercups there."²

"So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He stepping down,
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake."³

¹ Watts: *Improvement of the Mind*, Introduction.

² Thackeray: *The Newcomes* chap. i. ³ Tennyson: *Morte d'Arthur*.

The first passage abounds in general terms, and although not difficult to understand is somewhat dull. The second and third passages are full of specific terms and are correspondingly vigorous and picturesque.

EXERCISE 42. Rewrite the foregoing quotations, substituting specific terms for general, and general terms for specific.

There are occasions when force is not required, and only clearness and precision are desirable. Expression more forcible than is needed is sometimes called bombastic, and is merely another form of so-called "fine" writing.¹ An unduly striking diction diverts attention from the thought to the words, and thus partly defeats the primary purpose of good writing—the clear expression of thought.

In making our thought clear and forcible we should not hesitate to repeat a word as often as may be necessary. But if we are not on our guard we shall use favorite words so frequently that our writing will show mannerism and monotony. The temptation to mannerism is especially strong when we choose as a model some noted writer and copy the prominent features of his style. We may well catch some of the spirit of a great writer, and learn from him correctness and variety of

¹ See pp. 133-135.

expression, but from a slavish imitation we shall get more harm than good. "It is the nature of man," says Saintsbury, "to select the worst parts of his models for imitation."¹

SECTION II.

✓ WE have thus far assumed that the words we employ are taken in their literal signification. When we use a word in other than its plainest meaning we make a figure of speech. **Figures of speech.** Figurative language is as natural as plain language and abounds even in the talk of children and uneducated people. The variety of possible figures is great, but comparatively few need mention here. For practical purposes the elaborate distinctions drawn in the older rhetorics between figures almost, but not altogether, alike are worthless, and worse than worthless. If the young writer can get a thorough mastery of the simile and the metaphor, he may consider that the most essential part of his task is done. The figures most commonly in use are those which imply closeness of relation, likeness, unlikeness.

Writers on rhetoric are not entirely agreed in their use of the technical terms applied to figures of speech. The mere name, however, is of relatively small importance. **Tropes and figures.**

For the sake of convenience we shall here discuss only those figures that imply :—

¹ *English Prose Style*, p. xxxii.

1. CLOSENESS OF RELATION,

(a) Synecdoche.

(b) Metonymy.

2. LIKENESS,

(a) Simile.

(b) Metaphor, Personification, etc.

Other so-called figures — antithesis, climax, anti-climax — are best studied in connection with sentences and paragraphs.

I. FIGURES IMPLYING CLOSENESS OF RELATION.

Instead of naming an object directly, we may name some part of it that suggests the whole, the material that suggests the object made of it, etc. **Synecdoche.**¹ Thus cattle may be spoken of as “so many head ;” workmen, as “so many hands ;” ships, as “so many sail.” Other examples are : —

“The *dome* where pleasure holds her midnight train.”²

“Where through the long-drawn *aisle* and fretted *vault*
The pealing anthem swells the *note* of praise.”³

“King Richard lies
Within the limits of yon *lime* and *stone*.”⁴

“Will you wear your *sealskin* (cloak) ? ”

“I welcome you to my *fireside*.”

“I will never go under his *roof*, though he offer me untold gold.”

¹ Greek, *συνεκδοχή* from *συνεκδέχεσθαι*, to receive jointly.

² Goldsmith : *Deserted Village*.

³ Gray : *Elegy*.

⁴ Shakespeare : *King Richard II*, act iii, scene iii.

EXERCISE 43. Rewrite the foregoing examples in plain language without figures.

One form of synecdoche consists in selecting an individual to represent a class. For example : — **Antonomasia.**

"Some critics have ventured to call Bryant the *Wordsworth* of America."

"Some village-*Hampden*, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious *Milton* here may rest,
Some *Cromwell*, guiltless of his country's blood."¹

A lavish use of this figure in prose gives an affected air to a composition.

Somewhat like synecdoche is metonymy. In metonymy, however, we do not represent an object by some part of it, but we put the name or attribute of one thing in place of the **Metonymy.**

name or attribute of another. Hence in metonymy we turn from the object itself to something that suggests it. The chief relations thus expressed are those of cause and sign.²

The varieties of this figure are numerous. Thus we may speak of the *glass* when we mean the wine within the glass; of the *dizzy* height, when we mean the height that makes **Examples of metonymy.** one dizzy; of the dim *religious* light, when we mean the light that suggests quiet religious meditation.

¹ Gray : *Elegy*.

² Cf. De Mille : *Elements of Rhetoric*, p. 137.

Other examples are : —

"The *pen* was, therefore, a more formidable political engine than the *tongue*."¹

"If we prevail, their *heads* [lives] shall pay for it."²

"And *drowsy* tinklings lull the distant *folds*."³

"I have been studying *Shakespeare*."

"From the *cradle* to the *grave* he has led a selfish life."

"Jeffreys disgraced the English *bench*."

"A *coronet* was his reward."

"After such a life he came naturally enough to the *gallows*."

"A false *balance* is an abomination to the Lord."

EXERCISE 44. Rewrite the examples in unfigurative language.

2. FIGURES OF RESEMBLANCE.

The mind is constantly making comparisons between objects of the same kind, or between objects of different kinds. Thus when we say **Comparisons.** that Shakespeare is a greater dramatist than Sheridan, or that London is a larger city than New York, we compare objects of the same class. If, however, we call Shakespeare, as Ben Jonson does, the "Swan of Avon," or describe London as a giant with a hundred arms, we select for comparison *points of likeness* in two objects belonging to different classes.

When we point out by means of *like* or *as* or equiva-

¹ Macaulay: *Essay on Addison*.

³ Gray : *Elegy*.

² Shakespeare : *Richard II*, act iii, scene iii.

lent expressions the *resemblance between two objects of different sorts*, we make a simile. The objects themselves are taken literally, and the "figure" consists in the resemblance between them. The simile is sometimes very easily suggested. For example, a lamp seen at a distance in the evening may easily be mistaken for a star low on the horizon. What more natural, therefore, than to describe an illumination by comparing the lights to stars? Resemblances more or less complete are observed at every turn; hence the number of possible similes is limited only by the number of objects that are more or less alike in different classes.

Examples are numerous:—

"The glaciers creep,
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slowly rolling on."¹

"The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea."²

"Thy *soul was like a star*, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a *voice whose sound was like the sea,*
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free."³

"With haggard eyes the Poet stood;
Loose his beard and hoary hair
Stream'd like a meteor to the troubled air."⁴

¹ Shelley: *Hymn to Mont Blanc*.

² Tennyson: *Morte d'Arthur*.

³ Wordsworth: *Sonnet on Milton*.

⁴ Gray: *The Bard*.

" This City now doth *like a garment wear*
 The beauty of the morning : silent, bare,
 Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
 Open unto the fields, and to the sky,
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air." ¹

" This life which seems so fair
 Is *like a bubble blown up in the air*
 By sporting children's breath,
 Who chase it everywhere." ²

" *Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore*
 So do our minutes hasten to their end." ³

" There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
 But in his motion *like an angel sings*." ⁴

" That light we see is burning in my hall.
 How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world." ⁴

" Like a shield embossed with silver, round and vast the
 landscape lay." ⁵

" *As a ship aground is battered by the waves, so man, im-*
 prisoned in mortal life, lies open to the mercy of coming
 events." ⁶

" *As water does a sponge, so the moonlight*
Fills the void, hollow, universal, air." ⁶

" *Like wingèd stars the fireflies flash and glance*
 Pale in the open moonshine ; but each one
 Under the dark trees *seems a little sun,*
A meteor tamed ; a fixed star gone astray
 From the silver regions of the milky-way." ⁷

¹ Wordsworth : *Sonnet upon Westminster Bridge*.

² W. Drummond.

⁵ Longfellow : *The Belfry of Bruges*.

³ Shakespeare : *Sonnet*.

⁶ Emerson : *Intellect*.

⁴ Shakespeare : *Merchant of Venice*, act v, sc. i.

⁷ Shelley : *Letter to Maria Gisborne*.

“That orbèd maiden, with white fire laden,
 Whom mortals call the moon,
 Glides glimmering o’er my fleece-like floor,
 By the midnight breezes strewn;
 And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
 Which only the angels hear,
 May have broken the woof of my tent’s thin roof,
 The stars peep behind her and peer;
 And I laugh to see them *whirl and flee*,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
 When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
 Till the *calm rivers, lakes, and seas*,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
 Are paved with the moon and these.”¹

“And they gazed wonderingly and admiringly at Pearl, *as if a flake of the sea-foam had taken the shape of a little maid, and were gifted with the soul of the sea-fire that flashes beneath the prow in the night-time.*”²

“They had fortitude and self-reliance, and, in time of difficulty or peril, stood up for the welfare of the state *like a line of cliffs against a tempestuous tide.*”²

EXERCISE 45. Fill out the following incomplete similes:

- a) Life is like a —
- b) They advanced like —
- c) The tree fell like —
- d) His hair was yellow as —
- e) The flowers stood stiff and red like —
- f) The sea-fog crept slowly in like —
- g) She scornfully wrapped her mantle about her like —
- h) The old woman’s face was brown and withered like —

¹ Shelley: *The Cloud*.

² Hawthorne: *The Scarlet Letter*, chap. xxii.

- i) In the harbor the lights are shining like —
- j) The snow on the tips of the branches looked like —
- k) The great white waves lashed over the bows of the vessel like —
- l) Down the valley the yellow waters of the broken dam rushed like —

In the simile the two objects compared are asserted to *resemble* each other *in some particular*; in

the metaphor, the two objects compared are taken to be *identical*. The simile and the metaphor are therefore essentially alike; and a metaphor can be made from any simile by omitting the word *like* or *as*. We may say, for example, of a soldier, that he is *like* a lion in the fight, or we may say that he *is* a lion in the fight. The identity cannot, however, in all cases be safely affirmed, for the resemblance may be too slight to warrant us in assuming identity. In other words, the metaphor would be too bold. For example, if we take the simile —

“With haggard eyes the Poet stood;
Loose his beard and hoary hair
Stream'd like a meteor to the troubled air.”

We hardly venture to say that the poet's hair was a meteor, for it was like a meteor only in streaming.

EXERCISE 46. In studying the following examples of metaphor, try first to discover exactly what the writer meant to say. Having thus determined in plain speech

what the figure means, you will readily see wherein the figure consists. That is, two objects unlike in most respects resemble each other sufficiently in some particular to allow us to assume their identity. When Burke says,¹ "Thus are *blown away* the *insect race* of courtly falsehoods," he means merely that the petty lies of the court are exposed and refuted. These lies are like swarms of insects in number, and their individual insignificance is emphasized by the contemptuous comparison:—

"Place yourself in the middle of the *stream* of power and wisdom which *animates* all whom it *floats*, and you are without effort impelled to truth, to right, and a perfect contentment."²

"In the *fog* of good and evil *affections*, it is hard for man to *walk forward in a straight line*."³

"We are the *prisoners of ideas*."⁴

"The *walls* of rude *minds* are *scrawled* all over with facts, with thoughts."⁵

"He in whom the love of truth predominates will keep himself aloof from all *moorings* and *afloat*."⁶

"Along the cool, sequestered *vale* of *life*,
They kept the *noiseless tenour* of their *way*."⁴

"That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When *yellow leaves*, or none, or few do hang
Upon those *boughs* which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang."⁵

"The world's a *bubble*, and the life of man
Less than a span."⁶

"Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with *sovereign eye*,

¹ *American Taxation.*

² Emerson: *Spiritual Laws.*

³ Emerson: *Intellect.*

⁴ Gray: *Elegy.*

⁵ Shakespeare: *Sonnet.*

⁶ Lord Bacon: *Life.*

Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy ;
 Anon permit the basest clouds to ride,
 With ugly rack on his *celestial face*,
 And from the forlorn world his *visage* hide,
 Stealing unseen to west with this disguise.”¹

“That westward penetrating wedge of iron-browed, iron-musclcd, iron-hearted men, who were now beginning to be known as Kentuckians, had not only cleft a rock for themselves ; they had opened a fresh highway for the tread of the nation and found a vaster heaven for the Star of the Empire.”²

“One by one the cabins disappeared in the darkness. One by one the stars *bloomed out* yellow in their still *meadows*. Over the vast *green sea* of the eastern wilderness the moon *swung her silvery lamp*, and up the valley floated a wide *veil* of mist bedashed with *silvery* light.”³

“For even then, sir, even before this *splendid orb* was *entirely set*, and while the western horizon was in a *blaze* with his descending *glory*, on the opposite quarter of the heavens arose another *luminary*, and for his hour became lord of the ascendant.”⁴ [Lord Chatham and his successor are referred to.]

“When we speak of the commerce with our colonies, *fiction* lags after truth ; invention is *unfruitful*, and imagination *cold* and *barren*.”⁵

“And well his words became him : was he not
A full-cell'd honeycomb of eloquence
 Stored from all flowers ?”⁶

“The light cloud *smoulders* on the summer crag.”⁶

“With one black shadow *at its feet*
 The house thro’ all the level shines.”⁷

“And the far-off stream is *dumb*.”⁸

¹ Shakespeare : *Sonnet*.

² Allen : *The Choir Invisible*, p. 277.

³ *Ibid*, p. 281.

⁴ Burke : *American Taxation*.

⁵ Burke : *Conciliation with America*.

⁶ Tennyson : *Edwin Morris*.

⁷ Tennyson : *Mariana in the South*.

⁸ Tennyson : *The Owl*.

As we investigate language further, we find that the distinction between plain and literal speech is not easy to draw. Nearly every word when traced to its source is found to contain a **Hidden metaphors.** metaphor. In many words, however, the original metaphorical meaning has entirely faded out. If it had not, we could scarcely write a sentence without danger of confusion. These words reveal their hidden pictures to the students of language, but to the ordinary reader they are plain and literal. Many other words are on the border line, so that only a cultivated taste can decide whether an expression suggests an image too vividly to be used in the same sentence with another word equally faded.

"Metaphor," observes Max Müller, "is one of the most powerful engines in the construction of human speech, and without it we can hardly imagine how any language could have progressed beyond the simplest rudiments."¹

Poverty of vocabulary compels men to use a great variety of word-combinations, and to use the same word in a number of ways.

"Thus, when we speak of a crane, we apply the name of a bird to an engine. People were struck with some sort of similarity between the long-legged bird picking up his food with his long beak and their rude engines for lifting weights."²

Examples of faded metaphors are found in *exorbitant*, *gallery*, *hamper* (verb), *javelin*, *profile*, *record*, *socket*, *sobriquet*, *trade*, *travail*, *verse*, etc.

¹ *Science of Language*, Second Series, p. 368.

² *Ibid*, p. 369.

If the same object is compared in the same sentence to two different things, there will be confusion of two pictures, each blurring the other. The more vividly the pictures are suggested, the more disastrous is the mixture.

Mixed metaphors.

To be avoided also is a too lavish use of metaphors, for even though we may not confound the images in the same sentence, we may so hurry the reader from one image to another as to confuse rather than enlighten him.

Too frequent metaphors.

EXERCISE 47. Show in what respects the metaphors in the following examples are mixed. Compare the mental pictures suggested by the italicized words and note whether the images agree. For instance, how would you set to work to *unravel obscurity*, i.e., darkness?

"To trace the allusions contained in them, to *unravel the obscurities* inwrapped in them, involves a degree of labor which few are willing to bestow."¹

"Such flimsy pretences Swift brushes aside; and beyond the handful of malcontents he appeals boldly to the nation, by the same instinct which guided himself in his later struggles, and which he seems to have suggested to Bolingbroke as the *key-note* of the *political ideal* with which Bolingbroke endeavored to *link* his own name."²

"Into what final *mold* his [Sidney's] powers would have *run*, to what *heights* they might have *attained*, had they not been *cut off* so prematurely, is matter for speculation."³

¹ Lounsbury: *Studies in Chaucer*, vol. iii, p. 364.

² A. W. Craik: *Life of Swift*.

³ A. H. Welsh: *English Literature and Language*.

"By her own internal schism, by the abominable spectacle of a double pope, the church was *rehearsing*, as in still earlier forms she had already rehearsed, those vast *rents* in her *foundations* which no man should ever *heal*."¹

"Hawthorne enjoyed the fellowship of a few chosen friends, but he did not care to *shine as a star* in the *upper crust* of *society*."

"When the last awful moment came the *star of liberty* went down with all on board."

"No base or false *views* of life should *freeze* her *warm, tender heart*."

"I want to have as many *strings to my bow* as I *can*, so as to be able always to *land on my feet*."

"As we look over the sea of faces representing almost every country of the globe, we are *impressed with* the *widespread influence* of Christian Endeavor."

"In the *current* of these mysterious and awful events we cannot fail to see the *footprints* of an almighty *hand*."

"Ruskin talks like a man who has been disappointed in some cherished object of his life and thereby has become so *embittered* as to *see* all things *through smoked glasses*."

"This infamous business, as it is carried on to-day, must be wiped out, for every night its *tentacles enter* ten thousand homes and *drown* in scalding tears the *smile* on the face of innocent childhood, *tear the rose* from the cheek of woman, and *pluck the whitened lock* from the face of age."

"Soldiers were posted in all parts of London by the Duke of Wellington; 170,000 special constables were sworn in; *the public offices, the bank, and post-office were armed to the teeth*."²

"These young men do not realize that they are *sowing the seeds* of a drunkard's *grave*."

¹ De Quincey : *Joan of Arc*.

² O. Browning : *Modern England*, p. 70.

Mixture of literal and metaphorical expressions. A lack of harmony appears in uniting in the same sentence literal and metaphorical language.

For example :—

“As Columbus *set out from Palos the morning star of the Reformation was brightly shining* that had risen with Wyclif in 1380, and it ushered in the dawn early in the sixteenth century with Martin Luther’s translation of the Bible.”

“We thus entered upon the work with a *flowing sail*, and spent *two years* not unpleasantly in *deciphering* and *arranging* the multifarious *materials*, so as to form an agreeable and continuous life of the authoress.”¹

In deciding whether to use the simile or the metaphor, we must apply the test of clearness and adaptation to our purpose. If the resemblance is too slight to allow us to assert identity, we must be content with the simile.

Thus in the following example the simile seems preferable :—

“Whittier’s verse is clear as rock crystal, and melodious as a shepherd’s horn heard among the mountains.”

Professor Hill suggests that “it is often found advantageous to use the simile until the meaning is plain, and then to adopt the metaphorical form; thus the advantages of both forms are secured.”²

The metaphor is more forcible than the simile, since we are surprised to find identity where we

¹ *Memoir of William Harness*, p. 206.

² *Principles of Rhetoric*, p. 122.

had perhaps not even suspected likeness. How can the dulness of a writer be more vividly suggested than in Rivarol's remark that Condorcet wrote with opium on a page of lead? What can exceed the vigor of one of Victor Hugo's descriptions in which he calls the flying chain of a cannon loose on the deck of a ship in a storm "a whip of iron in a fist of brass"? Figures such as these add a new power to language, and give unexpected life to words that have lost much of their force.

✓ Personification is a form of metaphor in which inanimate objects are regarded as living beings. Examples are common:—

Greater force
of the meta-
phor.

Personifica-
tion.

"The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare."¹

"From Helicon's harmonious springs
A thousand rills their mazy progress take:
The laughing flowers that round them blow
Drink life and fragrance as they flow."²

"Now the golden Morn aloft
Waves her dew-bespangled wing,
With vermeil cheek and whisper soft,
She woos the tardy Spring."³

In apostrophe an absent person or personified object is addressed as if present:

Apostrophe.

¹ Wordsworth: *Ode on Immortality*. ² Gray: *The Progress of Poetry*.

³ Gray: *Ode on Vicissitude*.

"Blow, blow, *thou winter wind!*
 Thou art not so unkind
 As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
 Because thou art not seen,
 Although *thy breath* be rude.

 Freeze, freeze, *thou bitter sky!*
 Thou dost not *bite* so nigh
 As benefits forgot:
 Though thou the waters warp,
Thy breath is not so sharp
 As friend remember'd not."¹

"*O wild West Wind*, *thou breath of Autumn's being*."²

Apostrophe is generally unsuited to such compositions as a beginner naturally writes; since a real elevation of style is necessary in order to prevent this figure from being ridiculous in prose.

When figures are used in moderation and so illustrate the thought as to form an integral part of it, they add variety, force, and beauty. When employed too freely they produce an effect as unpleasant as an excess of ornament in dress, and give too often an appearance of pretension or mere prettiness. Far better is it, for example, to say of a man: "He was born in 1835," than "The year 1835 marks the dawn of his existence;" or "He died," than "He swept through the portals of eternity." This nauseating style we have already sufficiently discussed elsewhere.

Use of
figures.

¹ Shakespeare: *As You Like It*, act ii, scene vii.

² Shelley: *Ode to the West Wind*.

To be effective a figure must not be so obvious as to lack all novelty, nor so far-fetched as to require an acquaintance with obscure facts in history or geography or science in order to be understood. Figures that need to be explained can evidently explain nothing themselves. Trite and tawdry figures give an air of commonplace and vulgarity. Figures that are too forcible for the occasion are bombastic.

**The choice
of figures.**

We should avoid not only an excess of figures, but the too extended use of the same figure. We may think of influence as a stream, but if we recur through a series of pages to this obvious comparison, we shall lose more than we gain. Any figure that is repeated so often that it is, so to speak, taken literally and reasoned upon, appears overstrained and affected. For instance, we may speak of faith as a bridge or of hope as an anchor, but if we enumerate the various parts of the bridge or of the anchor, and assign an appropriate work to each part, we may win admiration for our ingenuity, but none for our taste.

**Strained
metaphors.**

EXERCISE 48. Pupils should be required to select and explain the figures found in good poetry or prose. Almost any reputable author will afford an abundance of examples. Longfellow and Tennyson make very free use of simile. Shakespeare's plays and James Russell Lowell's prose are full of metaphors.

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CHAPTER VII.¹

KINDS OF COMPOSITION.

"Expediency of literature, reason of literature, lawfulness of writing down a thought, is questioned; much is to say on both sides, and, while the fight waxes hot, thou, dearest scholar, stick to thy foolish task, add a line every hour, and between whiles add a line."

EMERSON: *Experience*.

"A man's honest, earnest opinion is the most precious of all he possesses: let him communicate this, if he is to communicate anything."

CARLYLE.

SECTION I.

Description.

A DESCRIPTION is an answer to the question: How does an object or scene appear? More specifically, a description answers questions that concern shape, size, position, color.

Definition of description.

Description is of more importance for the use that can be made of it than for its own sake.

In a narrative, for example, there is often need of description in order to make vivid the scene in which the action proceeds. So, too, in treatises on geography and history and botany, descriptions are an aid to the clear understanding of the subject.

Value of description.

¹ The most important part of this chapter is to be found in the numerous exercises. In case, therefore, there should be lack of time for doing justice to the practice work, the pupil may be required to read the chapter with care and use it as a mere guide in preparing his written work.

Description has its limitations, and it can represent adequately only those objects which contain few details. In the most vivid descriptions it is surprising how few things are really told. **Limitations of description.** A description cannot reproduce a complicated scene, but only suggest something like it. Seldom can one recognize either a place or a person from a description. Even in the longest description we are obliged to pass over innumerable details, every one of which, if introduced, would slightly modify the whole. But in the attempt to introduce them all, one detail takes attention from another, and adds confusion to the picture. In any description there is, too, the disadvantage of having to reproduce by a succession of words something that must be realized as a whole. There is danger that the reader will forget the beginning of a long description while he is yet becoming acquainted with the end.

Hawthorne realized these limitations and expressed himself freely on the matter in his *Note Books*: —

“Nature cannot be exactly reproduced on canvas or in print; and the artist's only resource is to substitute something that may stand instead of, and suggest, the truth.”¹

“The beauty of English scenery makes me desperate, it is so impossible to describe it, or in any way to record its impressions, and such a pity to leave it undescribed.”²

“I am weary of trying to describe cathedrals. It is utterly useless; there is no possibility of giving the general effect, or any shadow of it, and it is miserable to put down a few items

¹ *English Note Books*, vol. ii, p. 261.

² *Ibid*, vol. ii, p. 93.

of tombstones, and a bit of glass from a painted window, as if the gloom and glory of the edifice were thus to be reproduced.”¹

To the same effect writes the novelist, Marion Crawford :—

“No two men agree together in giving an account of a country, of natural scenery, or of a city; and though we may read the most accurate descriptions of a place, and vividly picture to ourselves what we have never seen, yet, when we are at last upon the spot, we realize that we have known nothing about it, and we loudly blame the author, whose word-painting is so palpably false.”²

Since, therefore, we cannot reproduce the whole, we must not attempt the impossible, but must select the most important elements, and so group them that they may suggest the whole. What those most important elements are we may see by taking a view of an object in its entirety. In looking at a building, a tree, a mountain, we first note the shape, the size, the color. Then by various devices we may bring the form of the object or the scene before the mind of the reader, and, as it were, make him see it through our eyes. We may take objects of familiar shape to explain those not so well known. The outline of a building may resemble a letter of the alphabet — **E, L, T** — or a cross or a horseshoe. A river may wind like an **S**; a tree may look like an umbrella with a long handle; a mountain may suggest a recumbent

¹ *English Note Books*, vol. ii, p. 80.

² *Paul Pateff*, p. 7.

lion. The homelier and more familiar the illustration, the more surely will it make clear what it illustrates. Note the vividness given to the two following descriptions by the use of familiar comparisons : —

In the first the writer is endeavoring to describe the island on which the city of New York is built, and imagines a "pastoral peasant of the Seine" to be suddenly placed above the yet uninhabited region, and says that "he would see a *long, canoe-shaped island just loosened astern from the solid land, moored in twice its width of water, and pointing its prow into a wide bay*. This island is thirteen and a half miles long, and of an average width of more than a mile and a half ; its entire surface of twenty-two miles is bold and granitic, and *in profile resembling the cartilaginous back of a sturgeon*." ¹

"A mile from either arm of the Potomac River, on a commanding hill, ninety feet above tide water, stands the United States Capitol. It is of Greek architecture, in order, Corinthian. Two white marble wings, connected by a middle building of white freestone, over the latter of which rises a white dome of iron — that is the Capitol of Washington. *Take three dominoes and place two of them lengthwise against the ends of the middle one, stand a pullet's egg on the middle domino, and you obtain a suggestive miniature of the building*." ²

EXERCISE 49. (1) Enumerate other familiar objects that may serve as an aid in descriptions.

(2) Make a list of familiar comparisons descriptive of rivers, lakes, mountains, buildings. The teacher should suggest features of local scenery for this exercise.

¹ Townsends: *The New World Compared with the Old*, p. 471.

² *Ibid*, p. 83.

EXERCISE 50. Let the class suggest various elements that may enter into a description of persons, places, etc.

This is a useful blackboard exercise. To be made most successful, the places, buildings, etc., should be those most familiar to the pupils.

For exercises in describing persons, the portraits appearing in illustrated journals may be used in the classroom. Pictures of places may also be used to advantage.

It is difficult to make an exact classification of descriptions, since they follow a variety of methods, and one kind of description is not sharply differentiated from another.

I.

In the objective method an attempt is made to reproduce the object as exactly as possible without regard to the emotions it excites. This reproduction may be a mere catalogue of prominent features taken in the order in which we find them. The descriptions of lost articles, or of flowers in a work on botany, follow this method. Note, for example, this description, recently issued by a detective agency in search of a young man : " Age, thirty years ; height, 5 feet, 6 inches ; weight, 130 pounds ; complexion, florid ; oval face ; high forehead ; dark brown hair ; light brown moustache ; eyes, bluish gray ; square shoulders ; holds himself erect ; has swinging walk and slender build."

Less formal, but nevertheless of the type just described, are the following examples : —

“ Long lines of cliff breaking have left a chasm ;
And in the chasm are foam and yellow sands ;
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf
In cluster ; then a moulder'd church ; and higher
A long street climbs to one tall-tower'd mill ;
And high in heaven behind it a gray down
With Danish barrows, and a hazelwood,
By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes
Green in a cuplike hollow of the down.”¹

“ But there remained a broken country, bold and open, a little village at the bottom of the hill, a broad sweep and rise beyond it, a church-tower, a windmill, a forest for the chase and a crag with a fortress on it used as a prison.”²

“ Finally, between two and three o'clock, I saw the great tower of Ormskirk church with its spire, not rising out of the tower, but sprouting up close beside it ; and, entering the town, I directed my steps first to Ormskirk church.

“ It stands on a gentle eminence sufficient to give it a good site, and has a pavement of flat gravestones in front. It is doubtless, as regards its foundation, very ancient, but has not exactly a venerable aspect, being in too good repair and much restored in various parts ; not ivy-grown either, though green with moss here and there. The tower is square and immensely massive, and might have supported a very lofty spire ; so that it is the more strange that what spire it has should be so oddly stuck beside it, springing out of the church wall.”³

“ The Castle Hotel stands within fifty yards of the water-side ; so that this gusty day showed itself to the utmost advantage, — the vessels pitching and tossing at their moorings, the waves breaking white out of a tumultuous gray surface, the

¹ Tennyson : *Enoch Arden*.

² Dickens : *A Tale of Two Cities*, chap. vii.

³ Hawthorne : *English Note Books*, vol. ii, p. 155.

opposite shore glooming mistily at a distance of a mile or two; and on the other side boatmen and seafaring people scudding about the pier in water-proof clothes; and in the street, before the hotel door, a cabman or two, standing drearily beside his horse."¹

Carlyle's description of the town of St. Ives is so exact that with its help we can draw a map of the place:—

"The little Town, of somewhat dingy aspect, and very quiescent except on market-days, runs from Northwest to Southeast, parallel to the shore of the Ouse, a short furlong in length; it probably, in Cromwell's time, consisted mainly of a *row* of houses fronting the River; the now opposite row, which has its back to the river, and still is shorter than the other, still defective at the upper end, was probably built since. In that case, the locality we hear of as the 'Green' of St. Ives would then be the space which is now covered mainly with cattlepens for market-business and forms the middle of the *street*. A narrow, steep old Bridge, probably the same which Cromwell traveled, leads you over, westward, towards Godmanchester, where you again cross the Ouse, and get into Huntingdon. Eastward out of St. Ives, your route is toward Earith, Ely, and the heart of the Fens.

"At the upper or Northwestern Extremity of the place stands the Church; Cromwell's old fields being at the opposite extremity. The Church from its Churchyard looks down into the very River, which is fenced from it by a brick wall. The Ouse flows here, you cannot without study tell in which direction, fringed with grass, reedy herbage, and bushes; and is of the blackness of Acheron, streaked with foul metallic glitterings and plays of colour. For a short space downwards here, the banks of it are fully visible; the western row of houses being somewhat the shorter, as already hinted: instead of houses here, you have a rough wooden balustrade, and the

¹ Hawthorne, *English Note Books*, vol. ii, p. 73.

black Acheron of an Ouse River used as a washing-place or watering-place for cattle. The old Church, suitable for such a population, stands as yet it did in Cromwell's time, except perhaps the steeple and the pews; the flagstones in the interior are worn deep with the pacing of many generations. The steeple is visible from several miles distance; a sharp high spire, piercing up far above the willow trees. The country hereabouts has all a clammy look, clayey and boggy; the produce of it, whether bushes and trees, or grass and crops, gives you the notion of something lazy, dropsical and gross. — This is St. Ives, a most ancient Cattlemarket, by the shores of the sable Ouse, on the edge of the Fen-country.”¹

II.

We have apparently assumed that descriptions are commonly made for their own sake. This is, however, not usually the case. We do not introduce descriptions for merely ornamental effect, but because they help to make clear some story we are trying to tell or something we are trying to explain. Most narrative writing may be defined as description with action, but with the description subordinated to the story, and employed only when necessary. Such descriptive writing may therefore be rather a series of rapid glances at an object than an elaborate and detailed description of it. Shakespeare admirably illustrates this method in Hubert's account of the effect upon the people of the rumors of Arthur's death: —

¹ Carlyle: *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, part i, letter i.

“ Young Arthur’s death is common in their mouths :
 And when they talk of him, they shake their heads
 And whisper one another in the ear ;
 And he that speaks doth gripe the hearer’s wrist,
 Whilst he that hears makes fearful action,
 With wrinkled brows, with nods, with rolling eyes.
 I saw a smith stand with his hammer, thus,
 The whilst his iron did on the anvil cool,
 With open mouth swallowing a tailor’s news,
 Who, with his shears and measure in his hand,
 Standing on slippers, which his nimble haste
 Had falsely thrust upon contrary feet,
 Told of a many thousand warlike French
 That were embattailed and rank’d in Kent :
 Another lean, unwashed artificer
 Cuts off his tale and talks of Arthur’s death.”¹

EXERCISE 51. *a)* Note how many different things are told in the foregoing rapid narrative. *b)* Find in some novel or short story brief illustrations of narrative combined with description.

The humbler productions of the pupil will not usually contain a series of pictures dashed off in a word or two, but even the pupil may well use the condensed method as far as possible, and hang his descriptions on a thread of narrative.

III.

Hitherto we have considered objects without regard to the impressions they make upon us. But objects may also excite some emotion. Wordsworth

¹ *King John*, act iv, sc. ii.

finds in the meanest flower that blows thoughts that lie too deep for tears ; although an ordinary observer might see in the same flower nothing more than a weed. The variety of im-
The subjective method.
pression gives great variety to descriptions of the same object. The imagination and the fancy play upon it and transform it into something filled with the personality of the writer. But for such descriptions we must usually allow time enough for the feelings to be moved. It is not the object immediately before the writer that is most likely to be filled with enchantment. It is rather something that his memory brings before him as he muses upon a scene or object once familiar : —

“To lay down the pen and even to think of that beautiful Rhineland makes one happy. At this time of summer evening, the cows are trooping down from the hills, lowing and with their bells tinkling, to the old town, with its old moats, and gates, and spires, and chestnut-trees, with long blue shadows stretching over the grass; the sky and the river below flame in crimson and gold; and the moon is already out, looking pale towards the sunset. The sun sinks suddenly behind the great castle-crested mountains, the night falls suddenly, the river grows darker and darker, lights quiver in it from the windows in the old ramparts, and twinkle peacefully in the villages under the hills on the opposite shore.”¹

“Esmond came to this spot in one sunny evening of spring, and saw, amidst a thousand black crosses, casting their shadows across the grassy mounds, that particular one which marked his mother’s resting-place. . . . A thousand such hillocks lay round about, the gentle daisies springing out of the grass over

¹ Thackeray : *Vanity Fair*, vol. ii, chap. xxii.

them, and each bearing its cross and requiescat. A nun, veiled in black, was kneeling hard by, at a sleeping sister's bedside (so fresh made, that the spring had scarce had time to spin a coverlid for it); beyond the cemetery walls you had glimpses of life and the world, and the spires and gables of the city. A bird came down, from a roof opposite, and lit first on a cross, and then on the grass below it, whence it flew away presently with a leaf in its mouth: then came a sound as of chanting, from the chapel of the sisters hard by; others had long since filled the place which poor Mary Magdeleine once had there, were kneeling at the same stall, and hearing the same hymns and prayers in which her stricken heart had found consolation. Might she sleep in peace — might she sleep in peace; and we, too, when our struggles and pains are over! But the earth is the Lord's as the heaven is; we are alike his creatures here and yonder. I took a little flower off the hillock and kissed it, and went my way, like the bird that had just lighted on the cross by me, out into the world again. Silent receptacle of death; tranquil depth of calm, out of reach of tempest and trouble! I felt as one who had been walking below the sea, and treading amidst the bones of shipwrecks."¹

The beginner can scarcely hope to produce effects like these, for most young writers have no such depth of feeling as Thackeray had. But there **Use to be** can be little harm in expressing the emo-
made of this tions that a scene or an object awakens in
method. one's mind, provided always that the feeling be genuine, and not mere borrowed sentimentality.

EXERCISE 52. Let members of the class collect examples (from poems, novels, books of travel, etc.), of the three kinds of description.

¹ Thackeray: *Henry Esmond*, Book II, chap. xiii.

IV.

As has been remarked, the three methods are not always kept distinct : for in the same description one portion may be treated objectively, while another part may be glanced at in the course of the narrative and be pervaded with the emotion of the narrator.

Whatever the method, the whole should be suggestive and compact as possible. If we waste words, we shall make a feeble and indistinct impression. The examples that follow show what may be done in a line or two, when all the particulars are chosen with skill : —

“ Looking up suddenly, I found mine eyes
Confronted with the minster’s vast repose.
Silent and gray as forest-leaguered cliff
Left inland by the ocean’s slow retreat,” etc.¹

“ In that building, long and low,
With its windows all a-row,
Like the portholes of a hulk,
Human spiders spin and spin,
Backward down their threads so thin
Dropping, each a hempen bulk.

At the end, an open door ;
Squares of sunshine on the floor
Light the long and dusky lane ;
And the whirring of a wheel,
Dull and drowsy, makes me feel
All its spokes are in my brain.”²

¹ Lowell : *The Cathedral*.

² Longfellow : *The Ropewalk*.

The writer, by dwelling upon a single feature in his description, can indicate the chief impression which a scene makes.

In the first of the following examples, the effect of desolation is enhanced by showing how completely the old life has died out of Gaunt Square :—

“All the world knows that Lord Steyne’s town palace stands in Gaunt Square, out of which Great Gaunt Street leads, whither we first conducted Rebecca, in the time of the departed Sir Pitt Crawley. *Peering over the railings and through the black trees* into the garden of the square, you see a few *miserable* governesses with *wan-faced* pupils *wandering round and round it*, and round the *dreary* grassplot in the centre of which rises the statue of Lord Gaunt, who fought at Minden, in a three-tailed wig, and otherwise habited like a Roman Emperor. *Gaunt House occupies nearly a side of the Square.* The remaining three sides are composed of *mansions that have passed away into dowagerism*; — *tall, dark* houses, with window-frames of stone, or picked out of a lighter red. *Little light* seems to be behind those *lean comfortless casements* now; and *hospitality to have passed away from those doors*, as much as the laced lackeys and linkboys of old times, *who used to put out their torches in the blank iron extinguishers* that still flank the lamps over the steps.”¹

In the following example the italicized words indicate what is meant to be made most prominent :—

“It was a *heavy* mass of building, that *château* of Monsieur the Marquis, with a large *stone* court-yard before it, and two *stone* sweeps of staircase meeting in a *stone* terrace before the principal door. A *stony business altogether*, with *heavy stone* balustrades, and *stone* urns, and *stone* flowers, and *stone* faces of men, and *stone* heads of lions, in all directions. *As if the*

¹ Thackeray : *Vanity Fair*, vol. ii, chap. vii.

Gorgon's head had surveyed it, when it was finished, two centuries ago.

"Up the broad flight of shallow steps, Monsieur the Marquis, flambeau preceded, went from his carriage, *sufficiently disturbing the darkness* to elicit loud remonstrance from an owl in the roof of the great pile of stable building away among the trees. *All else was so quiet* that the flambeau carried up the steps, and the other flambeau held at the great door, *burnt as if they were in a close room of state*, instead of being in the open night-air. *Other sound than the owl's voice there was none, save the falling of a fountain into its stone basin: for it was one of those dark nights that hold their breath by the hour together, and then heave a long low sigh and hold their breath again.*"¹

Carlyle was master of the art of painting an entire scene by the selection of a few particulars :—

"Sunday I started broad awake at 3 A.M., went downstairs, out, smoked a cigar on a stool: have not seen so lovely, sad, and grand a summer weather scene for twenty years back. Trees stood all as if cast in bronze, not an aspen leaf stirring; sky was a silver mirror, getting yellowish to the north-east; and only one big star, star of the morning, visible in the increasing light. This is a very grand place, this world, too."²

Here is a portion of his description of Daniel Webster :—

"A grim, tall, broad-bottomed, yellow-skinned man, with brows like precipitous cliffs, and huge, black, dull, wearied, yet unwearable-looking eyes, under them; amorphous projecting nose, and the angriest shut mouth I have anywhere seen. A droop on the sides of the upper lip is quite mastiff-like—magnificent to look upon; it is so quiet withal."³

¹ Dickens: *A Tale of Two Cities*, chap. ix.

² Froude: *Thomas Carlyle*, vol. iv, p. 164.

³ *Ibid*, vol. iii, p. 141.

Especially serviceable are words denoting color. These strongly impress the senses and help to complete the picture. We are compelled by the structure of our minds to imagine every object as possessing some color. Hence, if the color is suggested at once, the image will gain in vividness.

**Words
denoting
color.**

EXERCISE 53. Select from the following descriptions the parts that are evidently most important:—

“He took out a blackened pipe, filled it, lighted it with flint and steel, pulled at it until it was in a bright glow.”¹

“As the road-mender plied his dusty labor, and the hail-clouds, rolling away, revealed bright bars and streaks of sky which were responded to by silver gleams upon the landscape, the little man, (who wore a red cap now, in place of his blue one) seemed fascinated by the figure on the heap of stones. His eyes were so often turned towards it, that he used his tools mechanically, and, one would have said, to very poor account. The bronze face, the shaggy black hair and beard, the coarse woollen red cap, the rough medley dress of homespun and hairy skins of beasts, the powerful frame attenuated by spare living, and the desperate compression of the lips in sleep, inspired the mender of roads with awe.”²

“Nor must I forget the suddenly changing seasons of the Northern clime. There is no long and lingering spring, unfolding leaf and blossom one by one; no long and lingering autumn, pompous with many-colored leaves and the glow of Indian summers. But winter and summer are wonderful, and pass into each other. The quail has hardly ceased piping in the corn, when winter from the folds of trailing clouds sows

¹ Dickens: *A Tale of Two Cities*, chap. xxiii.

² *Ibid.*, chap. xxiii.

broadcast over the land snow, icicles, and rattling hail. The days wane apace. Erelong the sun hardly rises above the horizon, or does not rise at all. The moon and the stars shine through the day ; only, at noon, they are pale and wan, and in the southern sky a red, fiery glow as of sunset burns along the horizon and then goes out. And pleasantly under the silver moon, and under the silent, solemn stars, ring the steel shoes of the skaters on the frozen sea, and voices, and the sound of bells.

“And now the Northern Lights begin to burn, faintly at first, like sunbeams playing in the waters of the blue sea. Then a soft crimson glow tinges the heavens. There is a blush on the cheek of night. The colors come and go, and change from crimson to gold, from gold to crimson. The snow is stained with rosy light. Two-fold from the zenith, east and west, flames a fiery sword, and a broad band passes athwart the heavens like a summer sunset. Soft purple clouds come sailing over the sky, and through their vapory folds the winking stars shine white as silver.”¹

EXERCISE 54. (1) Let pupils write as long a list as they can of words synonymous with *red*, and apply each word to a suitable object.

(2) Do the same with other words of color, — yellow, green, blue, etc.

(3) Let members of the class point out differences between landscape coloring at noonday and at sunset.

EXERCISE 55. Fill out the blanks in the following topics, and suggest others : —

A Sketch of —.

Glimpses of —.

A Visit to —.

A View of —.

¹ Longfellow: Note to *The Children of the Lord's Supper*.

EXERCISE 56. Change whatever appears to you faulty in the following outlines, as regards order or choice of topics, and write a description, using some of the headings : —

THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

I. The dwelling.

- (a) Gables.
- (b) Verandas.
- (c) The hall.
- (d) Parlor.
 - (1) Fireplaces.
 - (2) Pictures, etc.

II. Dooryard.

- (a) Plants.
- (b) Trees.
 - (1) Ornamental.
 - (2) Fruit.
- (c) Fishpond.

III. Surrounding country.

- (a) The meadows.
 - (1) Cornfields.
 - (2) The brook.
- (b) The forest.
 - (1) The pines.
 - (2) The oaks.
- (c) Hills in the background.

DESCRIPTION OF A CITY.

- I. General view of its outline from some prominent point.
- II. Comparison with some well-known object which will definitely fix its form in the mind.

- III. The approaches to the city.
- IV. The most striking characteristic to be stated so as to fix it permanently in the mind.
- V. Its streets.
- VI. Its dwelling-houses.
 - (a) Costliness.
 - (b) Architecture.
- VII. Its public buildings.
- VIII. Its parks and public gardens.
- IX. Its manufactures.
- X. Its people.
 - (a) Education.
 - (b) Occupations.
 - (c) Morals.
 - (d) Dress, etc.

EXERCISE 57. In trying to describe anything, note first the most characteristic and important things, those without which no one could form an idea of the object or scene you wish to depict. Then introduce anything, however trifling, that will make your sketch more vivid and picturesque. *Keep the same point of view throughout your description.* Use color-words if they are needed, but do not imagine that every description must abound with such words. Above all, do not remain satisfied with any descriptive word short of the one that *exactly* applies.

We may remark, too, that although we should never attempt to describe anything without noting carefully its exact appearance, we may often succeed best in describing a complicated scene, such as a landscape, by observing the most prominent features and reproducing them

with the aid of our notes, instead of attempting to portray the scene while we are actually looking at it. This is not an invariable rule, but it will be found true in many cases.

From the following topics select those that you are best prepared to treat, and supplement in any way you can the hints suggested below. Bear in mind the person for whom you are writing the description. Consider how many words you are to use in the entire description, and select the details accordingly:—

(1) Description of Our High School Building (in a letter¹ to a high school scholar in another town).

(2) Read a description (written by a pupil) of some familiar building, and let members of the class decide which is meant.

(3) Describe the room where you study (for one who will occupy the room next year).

(4) The General Country Store.

Point out what is usually to be seen in such a store,—the variety of goods (specify), the company, and the talk there.

You are supposed to be visiting in the country and are describing the store to a friend in the city.

(5) The Blacksmith's Shop.

Overhanging tree, brook, forge, bellows, fire, smoke, sparks, anvil, hammers, horseshoes, bits of pared hoofs, rusty iron in corners, old wheels, etc.

The writer will do well to visit, if he can, some shop

¹ For Letter-forms, see Appendix II.

where he can note the actual appearance of the place. His work will thereby be far more interesting than it can be if he trusts mainly to his imagination or vague recollection.

(6) The Carpenter's Shop.

Benches, piles of wood, shavings, chips, tools, unfinished work.

Note suggestions under (5).

(7) The Old Mill.

A long village street, with a swiftly running stream near by — a hollow. The disused mill — moss, broken windows, the great wheel. Venturesome boys.

(8) The Island in the River.

Shape, size, trees, boat-landing, picnic-ground.

(9) Buildings Recently Erected in Town.

(10) Sights on Election Day.

(11) The American Country Hotel. Select one that you have seen.

(12) *a*) A letter from an Englishman to *The Times*, giving an account of a visit to your town.

b) The President's Visit to Our Town.

(13) A Walk up Main Street.

Jot down the most important things as you see them; note the time of day, the effect of light and shade, the appearance of the stores, the crowding of wagons and carriages, the people, etc. Bring into the description all the life you can. Do not select so many things that you cannot make the account of them vivid.

(14) The State of Our Streets.

Mud, rubbish, broken curbs, badly laid sidewalks, etc.
(A letter to the newspaper.)

(15) The Lost Purse.

Write a note to some one who has found a purse (or whatever it may be), and describe your own lost property.

(16) A Railway-Station Lunch Room.

Describe the long counter, with the revolving seats; the not too inviting food (specify), the arrival of the train, the haste and confusion, the people one sees, etc. Select one or two persons for more detailed description. (A travel-sketch.)

(17) The Ferry Boat.

Describe the shape as compared with other boats, the accommodations for passengers, the places for the machinery and the steersman, the haste of passengers to get ashore, etc. (Letter by an Englishman travelling in America.)

(18) Select for description any fruit that you happen to know, an apple, a pear, a peach, a banana, etc. Imagine that you are writing to some one who is a stranger to the country, and has never seen this particular fruit. Use comparisons in describing the shape and the color. Do not trust to your general recollections, but actually study the fruit before you write.

(19) An Elm Tree Compared with a Maple.

Do not treat the subject technically, but point out the differences in popular language. Select two trees that

you happen to be familiar with, and with pencil and paper carefully note the shape of each.

(20) Differences in the shape of a cat and a dog ; a cat and a tiger ; a dog and a wolf.

Pictures may be useful for exact comparison, if other animals are suggested.

(21) Describe a picture, and if possible, base a story upon it. Do not describe it as a *picture*, but gather hints from it for your narrative.

(22) Select from a picture ten of the most important elements, and write a description of not more than two hundred words.

(23) Describe in fifty words some person you have seen.

In describing persons, call attention to those features that indicate character.

(24) The People One Sees in a Passenger Train.

The old man who wears a black silk cap, the woman with three children, the young man who wants the window open, the little girl who always wants a drink of water, etc.

(25) The Banana Vender and his Cart.

Describe the man who often passes your house, — his dress, his general appearance, his voice, his cart with its contrasts of color. (A letter.)

(26) The Organ-grinder.

One of the earliest signs of spring ; the organ, what it is ; quality of the music. The monkey and his antics. Gathering bands of children. The story of the organ-grinder's life as he told it. How he came to America. His daily life, gathering coppers, etc.

(27) Boys on New Ice.

Describe what you have actually seen of the venturesome pranks of youngsters on a half-frozen pond or stream.

(28) The "Old Folks'" Concert.

The country church, — high pews with doors, galleries, etc. Old costumes. Old fashioned tunes, quaint melodies in minor key.

(29) Describe the palm of your right hand. How does it differ from that of your left hand?

(30) A Visit to a Department Store.

Add just enough narrative to hold the description together. (Letter.)

(31) An Afternoon at the Circus.

The parade. The borrowed half-dollar. The performance in the tent.

Some narrative will be needed.

(32) Devices on Old Tombstones.

Describe a visit to an old country cemetery, — the old wall overgrown with vines, the high grass, the leaning stones, the half-obliterated inscriptions, the quaint heads, and other carvings.

(33) An Ice-wagon in Summer.

Describe the heavy, lumbering wagon, the blocks of ice, the scales, the steady drip of the melting ice, the children picking up lumps of ice, etc.

(34) The Burning River.

The oil-region. Explosion of oil-tank — a carelessly thrown match. Smoke, flame, etc. (Newspaper report.)

(35) The Broken Mill-dam.

Describe the scene at the breaking of a dam, — the confusion, the broken trees, fragments of buildings, etc. A daring rescue. (Letter.)

(36) The Stone Quarry.

Where, — hillside, overlooking river. Shape, size, color. How operated, — drilling-machines, blasting, derricks, stone-cutting.

(37) Write a letter describing the birds you have seen in your neighborhood.

(38) The Ways of a Dog. Describe some *one* dog.

(39) Select some game for description, — baseball, football, etc., — and give an exact but untechnical account of it.

Children's games are especially picturesque and interesting if all the features are noted.

(40) How a Boy Learns to Skate.

(41) Studies in Clouds : —

- (a) Clouds in Winter.
- (b) Forms of Thunderclouds.
- (c) Clouds at Sunset.
- (d) Moonlight Effects on Clouds.
- (e) Clouds and Mist.

Study the spray of a waterfall, the thin veil of vapor rising from ponds and lakes at evening, etc.

(42) A Fog on the Lake.

Show how the dead white mist settles down (give a specific instance), what effect it produces on objects seen through it, how it looks when disappearing.

(43) A Waterfall. Note the changes in the color of the water, the forms of the little whirlpools, etc.

(44) The Hills at Sunset. Note the colors.

(45) Describe a locomotive, a steamboat, a fire-engine.

For supplementary exercises in Description, see the Topics Based upon Reading, and the heading Description in the Index, where references to pages are given.

SECTION II.

Narration.

NARRATIVE writing includes a variety of forms of composition, — history, biography, the drama, prose

Forms of narrative writing. romance, and the whole body of narrative poetry. We shall not attempt to discuss the details of each kind of narrative, but

rather to treat the general principles that apply to all.

If the narrative deals with a single event or a single series of events, there is little or no opportunity for complication. A short item of news, an account of a single battle, a relation of the hardships of an exploring party, may call for a mere enumeration of the incidents in the order of occurrence. Narratives rapidly increase

in complexity as the number of scenes of action is multiplied, and as an attempt is made to explain events by discussing their causes. If, for example, instead of one exploring party there are five, all differently equipped and setting out from different points, but all trying to go as far north as possible, there may be difficulty in combining the five narratives into one. After a certain point the complexity may be so great that no connected story can be told. A novel with too many heroes leaves a blurred impression. A history that attempts to give the details of numerous, insignificant military campaigns perplexes rather than instructs the reader. Care must therefore be taken not to weave too many threads into the story, and not to tangle them.

In every narrative there are three essentials to be studied: (1) selection of material, (2) arrangement, (3) progressive movement.

**The
essentials
of
narrative.**

What can be told is but a small portion of what might be told. There must therefore be a selection of the facts that are most significant. In sketching a man's career we are obliged to pass lightly over the events of months and even years, and to fix attention upon what is really characteristic. Unskilful narrators are prone to regard all the facts as of equal importance. Hence their narratives have no leading thought, but move confusedly in no particular direction. The leading topics are

1. Selection.

necessarily few. In every community there are a few men who determine its policy ; and just so in every complex history there are a few events especially prominent, which stand in close relations with a great variety of other events. The discovery of America, the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, the invention of printing, of the locomotive, of the telegraph — all of these mark turning-points in history. In telling the story of a man's life we select for especial remark the leading incidents of his career — his choice of a profession, his meeting with men of influence, his election to high office, etc. In the life of such a man as Carlyle we note that his study of German made an epoch in his career and determined much of his after life.

The selection of facts is much simplified by asking the questions suggested by the older writers on rhetoric.

**Method of
selection.**

These questions we can most conveniently summarize under the words : Who? when? where? why? by what means? That is, in most narratives we are concerned to know where the scene is laid ; when the action begins, and how long it continues ; who are the leading characters ; what their ability is to carry on the action ; what their relation is to one another ; what the central thought in the story is ; by what means and in what way the action is to be developed.

Having selected the facts, we have next to arrange

them effectively. Narrative requires a plan as much as any other form of composition. The method of arrangement will depend upon the purpose which the whole is to serve. The incidents may be grouped in simple chronological succession, or according to the relations of cause and effect, or according to association of ideas. No invariable order can be prescribed, because there is no single effect that is uniformly desired. In proportion as the narrative increases in extent, the difficulty increases of determining what order to follow. But there can be no continuous narrative until all the relations are clearly perceived. Where the events are numerous and heterogeneous and of nearly equal importance, no other course is open than to group as many as possible in the same category, and to treat each group as an independent whole. At best such a narrative will be somewhat lacking in unity; for one part must be delayed until the other parts can be brought up. We cannot, even in thought, be in more than one place at once.

2. Arrangement.

In every case, then, we should definitely decide what are the most important things to tell. Then we may expand any part as we please. The method of expansion is very simple. We have only to take the various elements that make up the narrative and treat each in more detail. We therefore describe the characters, what they wear, how they act, what their personal

**Expansion
of the
outline.**

peculiarities are. We describe the places in which the action occurs. We give glimpses of sea or lake or river. We throw in bits of color. We repeat conversations. Above all, we try to keep the style natural and vivid, by avoiding vague phrases and by describing things as they actually are.

Complex narratives can be made more intelligible by the help of the law of cause and effect. Events do not occur by chance, although the determining causes may be hidden. Hence the more evident we make it appear what brings about a certain result, the more intelligible will the narrative become. But as long as each new group of facts is a new puzzle we cannot hope to tell a story that will present facts in their true relations.

The only way, then, to keep the course of events clearly before the mind is to select the principal series of transactions that are naturally connected, and to trace them out in their order, discussing minor events according to their relation to the main theme. But in all the windings of the narrative we should never lose sight of the central action which gives unity to the whole. The leading action ought to be so prominent as duly to subordinate all the other elements. We can, however, unite two stories in the same composition only by making one so prominent as to leave no doubt which one we mean to put foremost. A good example is

seen in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, where the story of Jessica runs as an undercurrent below the main action.

Unity and proportion go together. If the greater part of the space is given to the leading series of events, and these are kept skilfully in the foreground by means of hints and allusions, there will be no doubt as to which is the central topic. The amount of space to be assigned to each division is a matter of much importance. If proportion is duly observed, the parts will be, as it were, in perspective, like the parts of a well-drawn picture.

Proportion.

There should be constant progression in the narrative. Something should continually stimulate the curiosity of the reader so as to engage his attention before he is aware, and to hold it without a break. In this way the reader is constantly brought in contact with something new and attractive, and yet has it so presented that he cannot foresee the end of the story from the beginning.

3. Progression.

A narrative that lacks a guiding motive cannot well move forward. There must therefore be a clear perception of the causes which are in operation in the narrative, and which keep it from being a mere bundle of disjointed facts. Those narratives that have no plot are mere successions of incidents loosely connected. In

The thread of the story.

the various turns of the story the narrator may now and then take a glance backward to discover how near he is keeping to the main action. These retrospects should not be protracted, but only long enough to enable the reader to keep the whole in mind, and to make the story seem to grow out of what has been related. Where the new parts do not join well with what has preceded, the best plan may be to indicate plainly that there is but little connection.

A well-constructed narrative should have "a beginning, a middle, and an end." In other words, if the narrative is to be an artistic construction, it should rise progressively in interest to a climax, and then shortly come to a natural conclusion. Where the interest of the facts is great the story will hold the attention in spite of faults of construction ; but if the utmost possible is to be made out of the facts, there must be no sacrifice of effect on account of unskilful disposition of material.

The methods and style of narrative are naturally varied according to the needs of the occasion. The method and style of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* will not suit the story of an accident to a mountain-climber in the Alps. A great event demands a style somewhat in harmony with it.

In treating narrative and descriptive topics the writers should be encouraged to adopt their own

methods, and to give as free play as possible to their originality. Narration and description may therefore be freely blended.

Ten-minute exercises, to be written during the class-period, will be found especially valuable in narrative work. Single incidents may be selected from the suggested outlines, and may be told in a style appropriate to different narrators. A girl from the city will not narrate an adventure in the Adirondacks in the same way as an experienced guide would. Especially suggestive is a narrative about things with which we are familiar, if told by a stranger to whom everything is new.

The pupil will often write with more freedom if he can imagine himself as narrating his story to a personal friend in a letter. Many of the suggested topics easily lend themselves to this method of treatment. There is, of course, no necessity of folding and enclosing the exercise in an addressed envelope.

Abundant additional material for Narration is afforded in the Topics Based upon Reading. The alphabetical arrangement will enable any of the authors to be found without delay. References to the pages where the topics are found are given in the Index under Narration.

EXERCISE 58.

(1) Fill out the blanks in the following topics (ten minutes):—

My Experience with——.

Recent Progress in —.

The Story of —.

The Charity Club of —.

The Reading Club of —.

(2) Let the class suggest similar topics.

(3) Let each member of the class suggest a specific topic under the heading — An Adventure.

EXERCISE 59.

Criticise the following plans, and improve them wherever you can. Indicate how many words they would require for adequate treatment, and give your reasons:—

A TRIP TO THE MOON.

How we happened to make it.

I. The journey.

- (a) Our conveyance.
- (b) The way we went.
- (c) Things we saw on the way.

II. Our reception.

- (a) The people's hospitality.
- (b) How they fed us.
- (c) The questions they asked.

III. Way of living.

- (a) Houses.
- (b) Customs.
- (c) Families, how made up.

IV. Our return.

THE LOSS OF THE BARQUE "JANUS."

- I. The storm.
 - (a) Off Cape Horn.
 - (b) Calm of the storm.
 - (c) The sudden change.
- II. The efforts to make port.
- III. The wreck.

THE STORY OF A SOLDIER.

Who he was.

- I. What influenced him to go.
- II. The start.
- III. His arrival at camp.
 - (a) His first impressions.
- IV. His first march.
 - (a) What he thought of it.
- V. The first battle.
- VI. His camp life.
 - (a) How did it influence him?
- VII. The important battles he was in.
- VIII. The return.
 - (a) Changes in him and in his home.

ADVENTURE IN THE ADIRONDACKS.

- I. Our journey thither.
 - (a) Train.
 - (b) Coach.
- II. The hotel and surroundings.
(Incidental description.)
 - (a) The party.

III. Preparations for journey into the heart of the mountains.

(a) Difficulties on the road.

(b) Dinner.

IV. Adventure with a bear.

(a) Fate of one of the party.

(b) His fall over the precipice in the bear's embrace.

V. Return to hotel for guide and help to rescue our companion.

(a) The night search.

(b) The body not found.

(c) Trail of blood.

(d) Wolves.

(e) Our fears.

(f) We follow the trail.

(g) A light on the top of the precipice.

(h) A path up.

(i) We find our companion in a woodcutter's hut.

VI. Story of the rescue.

How much of the foregoing plan can be spared ?

EXERCISE 60.

Expand the following incomplete outlines and base narratives upon them. Pupils will select what best suits them. As in descriptive work, the length of the whole paper must be decided at the start : —

(1) My First Day at School.

Nothing to do at home, tired of playing with myself. The home discussion over schools. Preparations. Mischievous boys. My misunderstanding of rules. My first attempts to study.

(2) Our Debating Society.

Tell who started it, what objections were made, how the opposition was overcome, what questions were discussed, etc.

(3) My Experience as a Book-agent.

A long summer vacation ; my desire to see something of the world. I become agent for an illustrated book. My first call ; my last call.

(4) A Morning's Shopping.

Our preparations, the run to the train, the lost ticket. The variety of shops, the windows, the bewildering mass of goods. The crowds of people, tired clerks, the elevators. Discussions over proposed purchases. The return home.

(5) Life on a Canal Boat.

A runaway boy ; the fascination of the great canal boats. The hard life, the horses, driving at night. Canal locks. New scenery. Monotony. A second flight.

(6) How Our Steamer Went Ashore on a Rock.

The excursion, — the dancing on deck, the careless pilot, the uncharted reef, the high wind, the rescuing boats.

(7) Tell an imaginary story of some lost Arctic explorer, or let him tell it in his own words. The hope of reaching the Pole excited by an open sea. The voyage north for several days. The closing in of the ice about the ship. The sun at midnight. The escape from the ice.

(8) My Experience with a Waterspout.

The yachting party, the sudden storm, the approach of the waterspout, our escape.

(9) How the Strike Ended.

The coal-mine, the order to strike, the suffering, etc. Conferences, the propositions, compromise. (Newspaper account.)

(10) A Bicycle Race with a Mad Dog.

A country ride, sights along the road. A sudden cry, a crowd of frightened people, the sudden dash of the dog, the long chase. My escape.

(11) My Unwilling Ride on an Elephant.

The circus, staring at the animals, the fire-cracker, the frightened elephant. My part in the story.

(12) My Ride on a Camel.

A visit to the Pyramids. The unending desert, the gayly dressed Arabs. The bargaining, the humps of the camel, the camel's gait.

(13) Meddling with a Wasp's Nest.

The large gray nest that hung down from the roof of the barn. The frequent annoyance caused by the wasps. The various plans suggested for destroying the nest. The method finally pursued, and what came of it.

(14) Tell in prose the story of *Paul Revere's Ride* (Longfellow), or of some other poem.

Be careful to avoid words and constructions peculiar to poetry.

(15) My Talk with a Tramp.

His story, — how he lost his position; how he turned tramp; his methods on the road.

(16) A Conversation with Methuselah.

The old man tells how things went on some hundreds of years before the Flood.

(17) The Journey of a Drop of Water.

From the sea to a cloud, then to a mountain top, and so on to the sea again, until it returns to its old home.

(18) The Wanderings of a Dollar.

Tell how it comes fresh and bright from the mint and passes from one hand to another. If you have imagination enough to allow the dollar to tell the story, you may adopt that method.

EXERCISE 61. Finish the following incomplete narratives. Supply additional characters, if you think they are needed, and use your ingenuity in devising suitable incidents : —

(1) A Half-hour in a Street-car.

Every morning at eight I have to take a car from the corner of the street where I live to the lower part of the city. The passengers are usually about the same every morning. There is the fat man who gets on at the second corner, and the thin man at the fourth corner ; and there is a little group of giggling schoolgirls. But this morning we had a very unusual passenger. She was poorly dressed and carried a basket, but through a torn place in her glove I saw, as she handed her fare to the conductor, a ruby of a strange shape.

(2) Yesterday noon, as I was eating my dinner in a little French restaurant, I was compelled to overhear bits of a whispered conversation. Just behind me sat a singular pair.

(3) Early on a winter's morning, while the snow lay deep on the paths, an old man was struggling along with a basket. He stopped often to peer under the woollen cover, which evidently concealed something precious. At length he heard a slight sound coming from the basket. He started suddenly and ran to the nearest house.

(4) I was sitting at my window this morning, when I happened to glance out. Coming up the street were two Italians

leading a huge dancing bear, followed by a swarm of children. The beast looked harmless enough, but suddenly a mischievous boy tossed a lighted fire-cracker under the bear's nose.

(5) Just as the sun was setting, a little girl, richly dressed in red velvet, and wearing a brilliant hood of the same color, tripped along a narrow path through the woods. She had a small basket in one hand, and she was on her way to her grandmother's.

(6) Yesterday evening a dozen of us in a party were returning on our bicycles from a visit to —. We had to go through a lonely piece of woods, but as we were in high spirits we had no thought of danger.

(7) This work can be easily continued by having each member of the class begin a narrative which is to be finished by some one else.

EXERCISE 62. Ten-minute work.

Newspaper items : —

- (1) The Fire at the Post-office.
- (2) Runaway on Main Street.
- (3) The Grading of Park Street.
- (4) Progress on the River Bridge.
- (5) The Opposition to the Electric Cars on Blank Street.
- (6) The Mass Meeting Last Evening.
- (7) The New Skating-Rink.
- (8) Exciting Arrest Last Evening.
- (9) Dangerous Lightning.
- (10) An Accident on the Trolley Line.
- (11) The Concert at Union Hall.
- (12) Almost an Accident.
- (13) A Capsized Canoe.
- (14) A Dangerous Leap.

Illustrate by train, ferry-boat, trolley-car, etc. Combine narration with description.

Other items should be suggested by members of the class.

EXERCISE 63. Make plans and write narratives on the following topics :—

- (1) A Skating Party and What Came of it.
- (2) A Journey in a Balloon from New York to Boston.
- (3) My First Trip on a Locomotive.
- (4) The Ropewalker at Niagara Falls.
- (5) Tell the story of Robinson Crusoe.
- (6) Give in a letter to a friend an account of your studies and your school.
- (7) A Diary of Half an Hour. Note everything that *moves* while you are making your observations.
- (8) A Visit to a Factory.
- (9) A Week in a Town without a Railroad.
- (10) A Chapter of Accidents :—
 - (a) My Experience with a Runaway.
 - (b) My Escape from a Burning Passenger Train.
 - (c) The Open Drawbridge.
 - (d) The Fall of the Cotton Mills at —.
 - (e) The Explosion on the River Steamer.
- (11) Ten Days in the Adirondacks :—
 - (a) The Hut in the Woods.
 - (b) The Chase for a Deer.
 - (c) A Fishing Expedition.
 - (d) Shooting Rapids in a Canoe.
 - (e) A Thunderstorm in the Mountains.
 - (f) A Forest Fire.
 - (g) The Destruction of the Forests.
 - (h) A Ride on a Log Raft.
 - (i) Railways in the Adirondacks.

(*j*) People One Meets in the Adirondacks.

(*k*) } To be supplied by the class.
(*l*) }

(12) A Week in a Tent by the Sea : —

(*a*) Putting up the Tent.

(*b*) Hunting for Seaweed.

(*c*) Fishing for Crabs and Lobsters.

(*d*) An Afternoon of Bluefishing.

(*e*) The Coastguard Station. (A story by one of the guards.)

(*f*) A Storm and a Wreck.

(*g*) } To be supplied by the class.
(*h*) }

(13) Bits of Farm Life : —

(*a*) The Purchase of an Abandoned Farm.

(*b*) The Variety of Exercise on a Farm.

(*c*) Farm Work before Daylight in Winter.

(*d*) A Day with an Axe in the Woods.

(*e*) Building a Stump Fence.

(*f*) The Irrigation of an Abandoned Field.

(*g*) The Country Church.

(*h*) The Country Store.

(*i*) The Country Post-office.

(14) The Prize Kite.

(15) The Building of the Ice Palace.

(16) A Ride on an Ice-boat.

(17) My First Week in the High School.

(18) How We Organized a Hook-and-ladder Company.

(19) My First and Last Experience as a Reporter.

(20) How We Dug Our Way out of a Snowbound Train.

(21) A Month on a Whaler.

(*a*) Our First Whale.

(*b*) How We Escaped from the Icebergs.

- (22) The Improvised Circus.
- (23) The Capture of a Train-robber.
- (24) How I Tried to Raise Bees.
- (25) The Old Water Wheel, and how Joe Made it Churn for him.
- (26) A Drive to Blanktown.
- (27) A Morning's Fishing.
- (28) Write an outline of a Christmas story, introducing at least five characters.

EXERCISE 64.

Excellent narrative topics, that have been used with much success, may be worked out in the following way. Any notable person, especially one that the pupil has some acquaintance with, through books or otherwise, may be taken as a companion in any situation. For example: —

- (1) Taking Goldsmith Sightseeing.
- (2) A Day With Goldsmith.
- (3) A Journey to Japan with Goldsmith.
- (4) Goldsmith's First Trolley Ride.
- (5) Introduce other well-known people into similar situations.

SECTION III.

Exposition.

✓ AN exposition of a subject is an explanation or interpretation of it. Whatever requires explanation is therefore a theme for exposition. **Definition of exposition.** Expository writings are usually instructive, and they include treatises on science, philosophy, religion, education, art, government, as well as a great variety of discussions that cannot easily be classified. Any discussion that arranges facts according to some principle or group of principles may be called an exposition. From every such discussion we ought therefore to be able to abstract the general truths on which it rests, and to summarize them in a brief space. We may thus sometimes condense the theory of a whole treatise into a single proposition. For instance, the entire theory of balloons rests upon the principle that anything lighter than air tends to rise until it finds its own level.

The general principles underlying the entire discussion are naturally introduced at an early point, along with a clear indication of the limits of the subject. Thus a treatise on geometry begins with the definitions and the axioms or general principles on which the whole science rests.

We are here not so much concerned with the more

difficult problems of exposition as we are with the treatment of the simple topics which the young writer has to discuss. What follows is, therefore, a series of practical directions for handling the themes suggested in the exercises.

Our work in exposition.

In the development of the subject the lines of division should be so clearly drawn that one part of the subject shall not be confounded with another. The principal topic of each division should therefore be made prominent. The greater the simplicity in division, the more easily the mind follows the whole discussion.

Method of division.

Most successful where it is practicable is the method of division that allows an orderly development of the different parts, like the branches of a tree from the main trunk. For example, a treatise on physical geography begins with an introduction containing a group of definitions and a preliminary chapter on the relation of the earth to the solar system. Then follows the discussion of the subject proper, under the four divisions: The Land, The Water, The Atmosphere, Organic Life. Under each of these divisions is in turn treated a group of subdivisions. The Water, for example, is discussed under the headings: Springs, Rivers, Geographical Distribution of Rivers, Lakes, The Ocean, Oceanic Movements.

The exposition should be complete, unless it is expressly limited to a few aspects of the subject;

and the topic should be so narrowed that the whole can be adequately treated within the limits proposed.

Completeness. We must therefore in brief discussions reject subjects so indefinite as Education, Religion, Money,¹ for we cannot treat them with sufficient fulness to justify us in treating them at all. If we unfold all that is included in a general subject, we write a treatise; if we confine ourselves to a single aspect of it, we write an essay. The young writer is not often called upon to write a treatise, but rather to discuss some topic that might form a chapter or a group of paragraphs in a longer work. He may, for example, consider the effect of water on the forms of mountains.

There may often be great freedom of treatment, for there is a wide variety of ways of looking at subjects; but when the starting-point has once been chosen and the plan made, the whole must be consistently followed to the end. Nothing is so fatal to success as to treat a subject by several contradictory methods at once. There may be difference of opinion as to what should be included in a subject, and as to which of several topics should be treated first. For example, if the question is, How to Play Baseball, the writer may hesitate whether to show first how the field should be marked out or to begin with a description of the ball and the bats, and then to describe the field and the positions and duties of the various players.

¹ Compare Chapter II. on The Theme.

In every case, therefore, the writer should study his subject until he sees clearly what it involves, and what he must say if he is to make others understand it. He may do well to make a list of the things that seem to him to require explanation. He should next arrange his material as simply as he can, so as to put together things of the same sort. He may then decide upon the order in which he will present his material, always putting first whatever is important to be known before what follows can be made clear. But in any case he must try to keep prominent the most important topics in his explanation, and to expand them to the extent that is rightly theirs. Secondary matters may then be easily discussed where they most properly belong.

**Study of
the topic.**

The term Exposition may be loosely used to cover a great variety of miscellaneous topics that do not properly belong elsewhere. Many of the topics here suggested can be treated with equal success as themes for Exposition, for Argument, or for Persuasion.

**Wide
variety
of topics
covered by
the term
Exposition.**

Expositions often involve more or less description. Take, for instance, the topic, The Town Water-works. An account of them calls for some description of the reservoir, possibly of a pumping-station; a clear statement of the method of distributing the water through the large mains, the smaller pipes, etc.

**Exposition
and
description.**

EXERCISE 65.

(1) Fill out the blanks in the following topics : —

The place of — in Education.

The Effects of —.

The Result of —.

Questionable Methods in —.

The Art of —.

The Best Method of —.

Some Lessons from —.

X. Y. as a —.

The Character of —.

The Power of —.

The Relations between —.

Some Difficulties in the Way of —.

For further suggestions, see the remarks on pages 26–29.

From the following topics select those that really interest you and that you are most competent to treat. If none of the suggested topics appeals to you, try to find one based upon your personal observation or experience, or at least adapt one of the suggested topics to your own needs. Consider the person for whom your explanation is especially intended. Do not begin on so large a scale as to be unable to finish within the limits assigned.

The imperfect outlines that are suggested below should be rearranged and expanded and otherwise adapted before being used as the framework of the exposition. Free use should be made of words of

connection, so as to indicate clearly what part each element plays in the exposition.¹

EXERCISE 66.

(1) Write a letter² of inquiry to a friend in the White Mountains, and answer to the same.

(2) Write a letter of inquiry with regard to a business opening, and explain your qualifications.

(3) Write an answer indicating the possibilities of success.

(4) Write to the librarian of some city library, asking information concerning some topic.

Write the librarian's answer.

(5) Write to the editor of a magazine, asking if he would like an article on some European city you are expecting to visit.

(6) Write to a classmate in the Adirondacks, asking him to make arrangements for a camping-party.

(7) Write an answer in which the classmate explains that he is too busy to join the camping-party.

(8) Differences between High School and Grammar School Work.

Point out differences that you have noted in your own work — in the studies, the methods of treating them, etc. (Addressed to a pupil in the grammar school.)

(9) Why I Dislike Writing Compositions.

My difficulty in finding a subject. My lack of anything to say. My inability to arrange what I write. The slowness with which I work, etc.

¹ See the list of connective words and phrases, p. 65.

² For letter-forms, see Appendix II.

(10) The Value of Map-drawing in Learning Geography.

You will doubtless admit that the exact forms of a map are difficult to remember. Show how the drawing of maps is an aid to the memory and a test of accuracy. (An explanation addressed to some one who sees nothing to be learned by drawing maps.)

(11) A Plan for a School Paper.

Imagine that you wish to start such a paper, and that your plan is outlined in a prospectus.

(12) A Reading Club.

Show how one may be planned, how often it may meet, and what it may do. (A paper to be read at a meeting of a dozen or more.)

(13) Advantages of Revolving Bookcases.

Kind of books needed near at hand. Reference books not used much if inconveniently placed—how many books easily made accessible. Compactness of arrangement in revolving case, etc. (For an advertising circular.)

(14) Some Uses of Novel Reading.

a) Some people condemn novels on the ground that they are not true. Show how you have found them of value. Illustrate by reference to such as you have read.

b) Another aspect of this topic may be discussed under the title, — How to Study a Novel.

(15) The Place of Fiction in the Reading of a High School Scholar.

If you read much fiction, point out what you think it does for you. Does it help you to study better, or does

it take your mind off your work? Indicate about how much fiction you think you can read to advantage.

(16) The Value of Historical Novels.

If you have read one or two, tell what you think they did for you. Were you more or less interested in the history of the period? Do you think that a novel can be really true to history? Give your reasons.

(17) Write a letter giving your impressions of some book that you have lately read.

That is, point out what you like or dislike, and give your reasons. Do not give a mere abstract of the book.

(18) Sunday-school Story-books.

Point out what seems to you to be the character of the typical Sunday-school story-book, and comment upon it as well as you can.

(19) Five Hundred Dollars a Year for Books.

If you had this sum to expend every year on books for your own use, what sort of books would you purchase, and why?

(20) Why Did the Early Settlers of New England Persecute the Quakers?

After a brief mention of some specific instances of persecution, show what were the social and religious ideals of the early settlers, and how these were opposed to the principles maintained by the Quakers.

(21) Quaint Customs of the Olden Time in New England.

You may point out some of the things that would appear strange to you, were you to be placed suddenly in an old New England town.

(22) Manners of Children a Hundred Years Ago.

Show how formal the older usages of society were, and illustrate freely.

(23) A World Without Coal.

(24) A World Without Metals.

Try to picture the state of the world if deprived of either coal or metals, and indicate what substitutes might be used in some cases.

(25) A World without Steam or Electricity.

(26) A Country Barn on a Rainy Day.

Show what can be done in the way of amusements — an amateur circus, etc.

(27) Hints on Household Decoration.

Call attention to the fact that a variety of inexpensive additions to the beauty of houses can be easily made, — flowers, hangings, photographs, prints, books.

One might show what can be actually accomplished with a limited outlay.

(28) The Dangers of Fog at Sea.

The dangers may be appreciated by considering the care taken on ocean steamers to avoid collision. Mention the lookout, the fog-horn, the routes marked out upon charts, etc.

(29) The Work of a Letter-carrier.

Explain carefully what you conceive his duties to be. If possible, get some information from the letter-carrier himself.

(30) A Post-office at Fifty Miles an Hour. (The Fast Mail.)

If you understand the matter, give an account of the way in which mail is distributed on railway trains.

(31) Smoking as a Test of Manhood.

You may indicate the reasons that make smoking appear desirable to the average young fellow.

(32) The Importance of Chimneys.

Show what is their value for ventilation, for giving a draught to the fire, etc. Why should chimneys be made tall?

(33) The Old Fire-bucket.

This suggests the imperfect fire-extinguishing apparatus of generations ago. Describe the volunteer company; the fire alarm, how given; the line for passing buckets to the fire, etc.

(34) What are Some of the Uses of a Bank?

a) Common misunderstanding of what a bank is for. Cite instances.

b) Show what a bank does in the way of lending money, receiving money on deposit, issuing bank-notes, cashing checks, etc.

Consult, if you can, some practical business man who has frequent dealings with banks.

(35) Some of the Uses of Curiosity.

Curiosity often frowned upon. Why? Show whether all curiosity is objectionable. How do we learn anything? Trained curiosity.

(36) Benefits of the World's Fair.

(a) Its Influence on the Morals of the Country.

(b) Its Aid to Science.

(c) Its Power as a Peacemaker.

(d) Its Benefits to Trade and Commerce.

(37) A Talk (after hours) with the Motorman of a Trolley-car (or with the Engineer of a Steamer, etc.).

This topic may combine narration and exposition.

(38) Some Cautions to Beginners on the Bicycle.

(39) What is a Glacier, and How Does it Flow?

(40) Why Plants without Sunlight Die.

A very wide range of topics is involved in a discussion of methods or processes of doing something. To

Explanations treat such subjects we must observe **of how things** closely enough to have an opinion of our **are done.** own.

The methods that we attempt to describe in our school essays may not be the best ones, but any method that we clearly understand and clearly explain is quite good enough for composition purposes.

The list of topics here given should be added to by the pupils or the teacher.

EXERCISE 67.

(1) How to Play Tennis (or any other game). Do not use too many technical expressions.

(2) How to Fly a Kite.

If your kite is properly made, you may dispose of the matter in a single paragraph; if not, you may need to tell how you add weight to the tail of the kite, etc.

(3) In What Way can Football be Improved?

a) Some current objections to football.

b) Which of these objectionable features should be entirely removed, and which modified?

(4) How to Mend a Punctured Bicycle Tire.

You may discuss this as a bit of personal experience, or you may give general directions. In the latter case, you may need to describe the various kinds of punctures,

and the variety of treatment required for each. You will need to explain something about the tires and the implements for mending.

(5) *a*) How a Mason Makes Mortar.

b) How a Mason Lays Brick.

You will need to observe closely for discussing these two subjects.

(6) Learning to Row.

You must first decide what sort of boat and oars you have to deal with. Then show exactly what to do.

(7) How to Paddle a Canoe.

A tipsy craft, shape of canoe, seats, the art of balancing. Shape of Paddles. Show how you manage the canoe in swift streams.

(8) How Canal-boats are Taken Through Locks.

You will need to describe a lock, and show how the water is let in differently in case you wish to ascend or descend.

(9) How to Take Care of Books.

General carelessness in treatment of books, — bending back covers, turning down leaves, etc. The proper way to hold a book when reading, etc.

(10) How to Keep a Garden.

Show that gardening is something that requires training. Times and places for planting. Best time for watering a garden. The fight against weeds, etc.

(11) How to Take Care of a Lawn.

a) Why grass should be cut, and how often.

b) Weeds.

c) Watering of grass, — at night or in the morning?

(12) The Process of Opening a New Street.

Show what must be done in surveying, grading, laying of water-pipes, sidewalks, etc.

(13) How a Street is Macadamized.

Watch the process, if you have opportunity, and tell exactly what is done.

(14) How to Advertise.

Most people believe in advertising but have no skill in doing so. Show what one must do to attract attention, etc.

(15) Directions to a Young Book-agent.

Use your ingenuity in devising methods of approaching different classes of people.

(16) A Lesson in the Art of Interviewing.

Imagine a newspaper editor instructing a reporter in the methods to be used in getting the opinions of a noted stranger.

(17) How Children Learn to Talk.

If you can explain the method from actual observation, you will find this a suggestive subject: if not, try some other topic.

(18) How Can We Discover Public Opinion?

Begin by remarking upon the frequent importance of knowing what is the real opinion of the mass of the people. Distinguish public opinion from current gossip. Method of learning public opinion — newspapers, consulting representative men, elections, etc.

(19) How to Prepare for an Examination.

(20) How to Build a Rowboat.

(21) How to Make an Aquarium.

(22) How to Make a Fernery.

(23) How to Read a Newspaper.

What not to read — items to be rapidly glanced at, etc.
Classification of news. Use of the dictionary, the geography, the encyclopedia.

(24) My Ordinary Reading.

a) Newspapers — magazines — books.

b) When and how I formed the habit of reading.

c) My favorite time for reading.

Expand and rearrange this outline.

(25) How to Use an Encyclopedia.

Point out that an encyclopedia is a sort of library in small compass, and hence is not to be read through from first to last. Show how it may help to explain various books that you read.

(26) How Butter is Made in a Creamery.

(27) How Grape-vines Should be Pruned.

For supplementary exercises in Exposition, see the Topics Based upon Reading and the topic Exposition in the Index, where specific references to pages are given.

SECTION IV.

V

Argument.

WE may bring people to our way of thinking by an appeal to their reason or to their feelings. The appeal to the reason is called argument ; **Argument** the appeal to the feelings is called per- **and** suasion. Argument and persuasion are **persuasion**. often combined ; but for the sake of clearness we here consider them separately.