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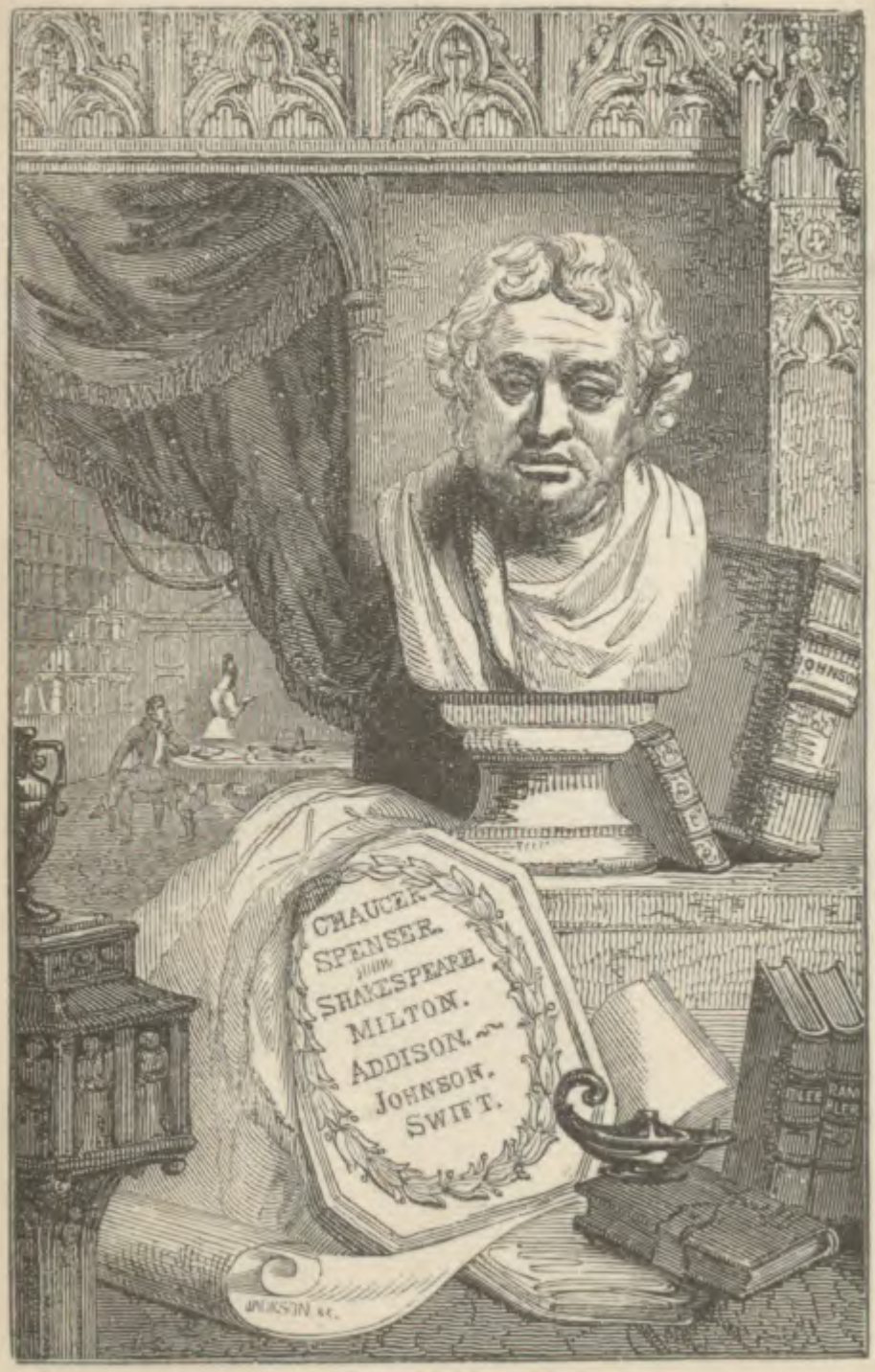
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A

CATECHISM

OF

ENGLISH COMPOSITION;

WITH

A SUCCINCT HISTORY

OF THE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ITS LITERATURE,

FROM THE EARLIEST TO THE PRESENT TIMES.

BY ROBERT CONNELL,

Author of "English Grammar," "Young Scholar's Initiatory Catechism," &c. &c.

SECOND EDITION, ENLARGED AND IMPROVED.

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PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

To be able to compose with ease and accuracy, is an attainment of the highest importance and distinction. It was for the purpose of facilitating the acquisition of this object that the present Catechism was drawn up. How far it may contribute to the end for which it was designed, it is for those who make trial of it to judge; but no pains have been spared to give it all the simplicity and interest, that a production so elementary can admit. All the leading facts and principles connected with the subject, have been studiously collected, and presented in as regular and succinct a form, as could well be done within such limits. It is hoped it will prove a useful manual to such persons as have gained a knowledge of English Grammar, but wish still farther to extend their acquaintance with language, and to give effect to their previous attainments by trying their skill in Composition.

If to compose well be an object of importance, no less so is a knowledge of the history and the character of the English language and literature. For this reason, a succinct account of both of these subjects, from the earliest to the present times, has been subjoined to what relates more immediately to the matter of Composition. All the important facts, with their causes and consequences, connected with this subject, will be found embodied in this brief detail; and the different characters of the English language and literature, at different periods, carefully pointed out.

GLASGOW, 126, *Campbell Street,*
Blythswood Hill, February 1839.

CATECHISM

OF

ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Of Language, and its Origin.

Q. By what is man chiefly distinguished from the brute creation?

A. By his powers of reflection and reason, and his great susceptibility of improvement.

Q. On what do these mainly depend?

A. On his being farther distinguished by the use of speech or language.

Q. What do you understand by speech or language?

A. Those sounds of the voice by which we express our thoughts or ideas.

Q. What is supposed to have been the origin of language?

A. It is supposed by some to be the fruit of human invention; but the more common opinion is, that it was a Divine gift, bestowed upon man at his creation.

Q. Under what different aspects may language be considered?

A. As a medium of thought, it may be regarded either as spoken or written.

Q. What is the difference between spoken and written language?

A. Spoken language constitutes the immediate signs of our ideas; while written language forms merely the signs of spoken language.

Q. In what does a knowledge of written language consist?

A. In being able to convert it into spoken language, so as to know the ideas which it is intended to represent.

Q. Is *written* of as high antiquity as *spoken* language?

A. That can hardly be supposed; as men would no doubt long enjoy the power of speech, before they would attempt giving permanency to their thoughts by means of writing.

CHAPTER II.

Of Alphabetic Writing.

Q. What is the simplest and most effectual means of preserving our thoughts?

A. The adoption of certain signs to represent the various sounds of the human voice.

Q. What name is given to this method of preserving and transmitting thought?

A. It is called alphabetic writing, and, next to reason and speech, is one of the greatest blessings that mankind possess.

Q. Is any thing known with certainty respecting the origin of alphabetic writing?

A. The remoteness of its origin has caused it to be buried in great obscurity, and many have even doubted its being a human invention.

Q. What alphabet is supposed to be the most ancient?

A. The Hebrew, or Samaritan, which is sometimes called the Phœnician.

Q. What chiefly gives rise to this supposition?

A. The circumstance of its being the earliest alphabet of which we have any certain account, as well as the source, whence almost all known alphabets have been derived.

Q. How did this alphabet find its way to other countries?

A. It was, about 1000 years before Christ, imported into Greece by one Cadmus, a Phœnician; from Greece it passed into Italy; and from Italy it has spread over the most of the civilized world.

Q. Was there ever any other mode of transmitting thought besides that of alphabetic writing?

A. Yes; there prevailed, at one time, picture and symbolic writing,—the latter called hieroglyphics.

Q. In what did picture writing consist?

A. In drawing a figure resembling the object respecting which some information was to be imparted; as two men with drawn daggers, to denote a battle.

Q. In what did symbolic writing, or hieroglyphics, consist?

A. In making one thing serve to represent another; as, an *eye* to denote *knowledge;* and a *circle* to denote *eternity.*

Q. By whom have these two methods of writing been chiefly practised?

A. Picture writing has been practised by many rude nations, but particularly by the Mexicans, prior to the discovery of America; and hieroglyphics, principally by the ancient Egyptians.

CHAPTER III.

Of the Materials anciently used in Writing, &c.

Q. What was for some time the peculiar character of writing?

A. It was for a long time a species of engraving, and was executed chiefly on pillars and tablets of stone.

Q. What substances came next into use?

A. Thin plates of the softer metals, such as lead; and then, as writing became more common, lighter substances, as the leaves and bark of certain trees, or thin boards covered with wax.

Q. What proof is there of the bark of trees having been thus used?

A. The same word which, in many languages, denotes a book, denotes also a tree, or the bark of a tree; as, the word *liber* in Latin, which means either the *bark* of a tree, or a *book.*

Q. What was the next step in the progress of writing?

A. The manufacture of a substance called papyrus,

which was prepared from a reed of the same name, that grew in great abundance on the banks of the Nile.

Q. Were not the skins of animals often used for writing upon?

A. Yes; and it is said to have been during a great scarcity of the Egyptian papyrus, that the important art of making skins into parchment was discovered.

Q. Where and about what time did this happen?

A. In Pergamus, a city in Asia Minor; but at what time is rather uncertain.

Q. How long did parchment and papyrus continue principally in use?

A. Down to about the beginning of the fourteenth century, when the superior substance of paper was invented.

Q. In what manner did some of the ancients write their characters in forming words?

A. The Assyrians, the Phœnicians, and the Hebrews, wrote from right to left, as did also the Greeks for some time.

Q. Did the Greeks abandon this plan all at once?

A. No; for, in making a change, they first adopted the plan of writing from right to left, and from left to right, alternately; and, at length, the more convenient mode, which at present prevails, of writing solely from left to right.

Q. What name was given to this mode of writing from right to left, and from left to right alternately?

A. It was called *boustrophedon*, because it resembled the turning of oxen at the end of the ridges in the operation of ploughing.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Scarcity of Books in former Times.

Q. Were books always as abundant as they are at present?

A. Far from it, for, at no very remote period, they were so scarce as to be in the hands of only the wealthy

and the noble; and a very few volumes would then have brought a price equal to the purchase of a good estate.

Q. To what was the scarcity of books in ancient times to be ascribed?

A. To the great labour and expense of copying or transcribing them, which rendered every copy almost as costly as the first.

Q. What was the consequence of this scarcity?

A. A great deficiency of learning among all except the wealthier classes of society, as no others possessed the means of purchasing books.

Q. To what is the great abundance of books now owing?

A. To the invention of printing, which happened early in the fifteenth century.

Q. Where and by whom did this take place?

A. The cities of Strasburg, Haarlem, and Mentz, have all preferred their claim to this distinguished honour: and Coster, Faustus, Schoeffer, and Guttemberg, have all been named as the inventors.

Q. What is the cause of such uncertainty?

A. It probably is, that the inventor in this case, as in many others, has been frequently confounded with the improver.

Q. What benefits has the invention of printing produced?

A. It has multiplied books, cheapened knowledge, and given an entirely new aspect to society.

CHAPTER V.

Of Composition.

Q. What do you understand by the term Composition as applied to language?

A. The clear, accurate, and forcible expression of our thoughts and opinions in writing.

Q. Is the term ever employed in any other sense?

A. It is frequently used in reference to music, painting, and architecture, or to any material mixture, as well as to writing.

Q. What is the origin and strict meaning of the word?

A. It is formed from the two Latin words, *con*, together, and *positio*, a placing, and literally meaus a placing together.

Q. How comes it from this definition to possess its present signification?

A. Because in composition we place words together for the purpose of expressing our thoughts and ideas.

Q. Is composition an important acquirement?

A. Perhaps the most so of any, as upon it mainly depend the spread of knowledge, and the enlightening of the world.

Q. Has it any other advantages?

A. It is a source of very refined pleasure, and of much mental improvement, to those who practise it.

Q. What are the chief requisites for attaining accuracy in composition?

A. A thorough knowledge of grammar, and of the signification of words, with a constant perusal of the best authors.

Q. How are these best attained?

A. By close study and application, but, particularly, by constant attention to the manner of expressing our own ideas, whether in speaking or writing.

Q. What effect has close attention to one's manner of speaking and writing upon his own mind?

A. It tends to produce close and accurate thinking, for thought and speech mutually assist each other.

Q. What are the requisites for attaining great eminence in composition?

A. Next to study, already mentioned, the greatest requisites are, genius and taste.

CHAPTER VI.

Of Genius.

Q. What do you mean by Genius?

A. Some considerable degree of mental power or superiority, or a person possessing these.

Q. Can you recollect any other signification that it has?

A. It is frequently used to denote a particular bias or bent of the mind towards any pursuit, art, or science; as, when we say, such a one has a genius for music, for painting, for mathematics, &c.

Q. But what is the strict import of the term?

A. When properly applied, it denotes that particular faculty of the mind, by which a man is enabled to invent, or discover, or at least produce, something new.

Q. Can you mention any, whom you would consider men of genius, in this sense of the term?

A. Archimedes, Newton, Franklin, and Watt, were men of this class, because they were distinguished both for their inventions and discoveries.

Q. When is it that an author may be considered a man of genius?

A. When he gives birth to new trains or combinations of thought, or produces some original piece of composition.

Q. What do you mean by original composition?

A. Composition which combines the distinguished quality of great excellence, with its not being an imitation of any previous production.

Q. Are these qualities very common?

A. Far from it; as it is only once or so in an age, that they make their appearance.

Q. Can you mention any authors whose writings entitle them to be called men of genius?

A. Homer and Virgil in ancient, and Shakspeare, Milton, Bacon, and Johnson, in modern times.

CHAPTER VII.

Of Taste.

Q. What do you mean by Taste?

A. That faculty by which we are enabled to perceive and relish the beauties of composition.

Q. What is the chief peculiarity of this faculty?

A. Its great susceptibility of improvement, when regularly and judiciously exercised.

Q. What are the chief means of improving it?

A. The study of the best authors, and attention to all the finest models and specimens of composition.

Q. What are the chief characteristics of taste?

A. Delicacy and correctness; the one, however, to a certain degree implying the other, though not precisely the same.

Q. In what does delicacy of taste chiefly consist?

A. In a quick and accurate perception of all the finer and less obvious beauties of any performance.

Q. In what does correctness consist?

A. In a ready detection of false ornament, and a due appreciation of all the more substantial qualities of a literary work.

Q. Are both attributable to the same source?

A. Delicacy of taste is chiefly founded on feeling, and is more a gift of nature; correctness depends principally upon cultivation, and is more allied to reason and judgment.

Q. Is taste ever employed upon any thing besides language?

A. Yes; it may be employed upon all sorts of objects, whether the product of nature or of art.

Q. With what sort of objects is taste chiefly conversant?

A. Those chiefly which are distinguished for their beauty or sublimity.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of Beauty and Sublimity.

Q. What do you understand by Beauty?

A. That quality possessed by such objects as may be contemplated with a high degree of satisfaction.

Q. And on what does beauty in an object chiefly depend?

A. On shape, colour, or a perception of fitness and utility.

Q. What is Sublimity?

A. That quality in objects which, when they are contemplated, excites in the mind sentiments of awe and grandeur.

Q. On what does sublimity chiefly depend?

A. On a perception of immense extent, vast magnitude, or of great power and energy.

Q. Can you give an example of objects remarkable for sublimity?

A. A cloudless or a starry sky, a troubled ocean, a majestic river, a foaming cataract, or a great and lofty mountain.

Q. What do you mean by beauty of language?

A. That polished elegance which it possesses, when it may be read or listened to with a high degree of pleasure and satisfaction.

Q. And what is sublimity in language?

A. That quality which it possesses, when it excites in the mind of the reader or hearer, grand and exalted notions of the objects described.

Q. What sort of language may be said to be most in accordance with correct taste?

A. That in which beauty and sublimity are both conspicuous, the one quality serving to shed lustre upon the other.

CHAPTER IX.

Of Style and Idiom.

Q. What do you understand by Style as applied to writing?

A. The particular manner in which a writer or speaker expresses his thoughts and sentiments by means of language.

Q. From what is the word style derived?

A. From the Latin word *stylus*, a pointed steel instrument, with which the ancients used to write upon their waxen boards and tablets.

Q. Is there much diversity of style among men?

A. Very great; as almost every writer has a style or manner peculiar to himself; though in some this is more marked and striking than in others.

Q. On what does this diversity of style depend?

A. Partly on mental constitution; partly on the nature and quality of the education, which a person may have received.

Q. Who are the men that are most distinguished by peculiarity of style?

A. Those generally of greatest genius, greatest vigour of mind, or of highest mental cultivation.

Q. Can you state the difference between style and idiom?

A. Style is characteristic of different writers; idiom of different languages: hence we speak of the style of Addison, but of the idiom of the English language.

Q. What do you consider, then, the true import of idiom?

A. That peculiarity in the mode of expression, and arrangement of words, which distinguishes one language from another.

Q. Do languages differ much in point of idiom?

A. Very considerably; modes of expression and arrangement appearing quite proper in one, which would be harsh and uncouth in another.

CHAPTER X.

Of Different Kinds of Style.

Q. Can you mention any of the different qualities of style?

A. The strong, the weak, the simple, the florid, the concise, the diffuse.

Q. What do you mean by a strong or vigorous style?

A. A style that makes a deep and powerful impression upon the mind of the hearer or reader.

Q. And what by a weak or feeble style?

A. A style that has little power of arresting the attention, or exciting the feelings of the reader or hearer.

Q. Can you express your opinion of a simple style?

A. Simple style is that in which there is little apparent labour, and no attempt at any thing but merely to be understood.

Q. And what do you mean by a florid style ?

A. Style in which there is great profusion of ornament, and an obvious desire to produce effect.

Q. What have you to say of the concise style ?

A. It is the style which a writer or speaker uses, who expresses his thoughts or ideas in very few words.

Q. And what of the diffuse ?

A. Diffuse style is that which persons employ, who express themselves very fully, and dwell long on the same thoughts or sentiments.

Q. Are there any more qualities of style ?

A. Yes; but it is impossible to enumerate them all, for they are as diversified as the characters of men's minds, and the occasions on which they require to speak or write ?

Q. What do you mean by a natural style ?

A. A style in strict accordance with the rules and principles of the language, in which a person speaks or writes, and such as one, deeply impressed with his subject, uses without apparent effort or labour.

Q. What is a bombastic style ?

A. A style in which great swelling words are employed, to express common thoughts and sentiments.

Q. When should one kind of style be used in preference to another ?

A. That depends entirely upon the nature of the subject, as well as the occasion on which a person may be called to speak or write.

CHAPTER XI.

Of Perspicuity.

Q. What do you conceive to be the greatest excellence of style to whatever class it belongs ?

A. Perspicuity, or that quality which enables us to see at once into an author's meaning, and renders it impossible for us to misunderstand it.

Q. What quality stands next to perspicuity in importance?

A. Ornament, or elegance, which, joined with perspicuity, forms the highest excellence that style can possess.

Q. What renders perspicuity so essential in style?

A. The circumstance of its being necessary that composition should be easily understood; for without this no other quality is of any value.

Q. On what does perspicuity depend?

A. Partly on the choice of words, and partly on their structure in sentences.

Q. What are the chief things to be attended to in the choice of words?

A. Purity, Propriety, and Precision.

Q. What arrangement of words, or structure of sentences, do you think best?

A. That, whatever it may be, which is best fitted to express the meaning intended to be conveyed.

CHAPTER XII.

Of Purity.

Q. What do you mean by Purity of style?

A. The use of such words and modes of expression as are perfectly English, and warranted by good authority.

Q. What do you consider a violation of purity?

A. The use of such words as are either foreign to the language, or have become antiquated by disuse.

Q. Can you give an example of the violation of purity in respect of foreign words?

A. *Fraicheur*, for coolness; *fougue*, for turbulence; *politesse*, for politeness,—are examples of French words, used instead of English.

Q. Can you give an example of the latter species of violation of purity?

A. *Behest*, for command; *erst*, for formerly; and *sith*, for since,—are now of this class, though they were once in common use.

Q. What is the standard of purity?

A. The practice and authority of the best speakers and writers.

Q. Are words much subject to change?

A. Almost as much so as any thing connected with human affairs.

Q. In what manner do they suffer these changes?

A. On some occasions they change their signification; as, *let* once signified to *hinder;* on others they drop out of use, or become obsolete; as, *strook,* which once was used instead of struck.

Q. What does purity of construction denote?

A. The arranging and placing of words in a sentence according to the English idiom, or mode of expression.

Q. Can you give any examples of the violation of this principle?

A. "He will *repent himself* of such conduct," is a French, not an English mode of expression.

Q. How would you correct this?

A. By leaving out the word *himself.*

Q. Are all writers alike restricted in the use of words?

A. All writers are restricted to a certain degree; but poets take, and are allowed, much greater liberties in this respect than prose writers.

Q. Can you give an example?

A. "The sunset of life gives me mystical *lore;*" here the word lore is an antiquated word, denoting learning, and would hardly be tolerated in any thing but poetry.

Q. Will you endeavour to correct the following violations of purity? He stroamed idly about the fields. He was certainly an extra genius. They showed too much hauteur. He is a very impopular speaker.

A. He *roamed* idly, &c. He was certainly an *uncommon* genius. They showed too much *haughtiness.* He is a very *unpopular* speaker.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of Propriety.

Q. What do you mean by Propriety as applied to style?

A. The selection of such words as are best adapted to express the meaning intended to be conveyed.

Q. What is the first rule to be observed with regard to propriety?

A. Avoid such words and expressions as are low and vulgar, or tend to excite mean conceptions; as, to see a thing with *half an eye;* to get *into a scrape;* which should be, to see a thing at a glance; to get into a difficulty.

Q. What is the second rule?

A. In writing prose, we should reject such words as belong entirely to the province of poetry; as, *morn,* for morning; *eve,* for evening; *lone,* for lonely.

Q. What is the rule next to be observed?

A. We should avoid technical terms, or terms peculiar to some particular art or profession, unless when writing to persons who understand them; as, we *tacked* to the *larboard;* we may construct the shelves without *haffets.*

Q. What is the next rule?

A. It is, not to use the same word too often, or in different senses; as, "The king communicated his intention to the minister, *who* disclosed it to the secretary, *who* made it known to the public." "His own *reason* might have suggested better *reasons.*"

Q. How would you rectify these sentences?

A. Thus; "The king communicated his intention to the minister, the minister disclosed it to the secretary, and the secretary made it known to the public." "His own judgment might have suggested better reasons."

Q. What is the next rule to be attended to?

A. All words that are necessary to complete the sense ought to be supplied; thus, instead of "This action increased his former services;" we should say, "This action increased the *merit* of his former services."

Q. What rule have you next to give?

A. Avoid all equivocal or ambiguous expressions.

Q. What do you mean by equivocal or ambiguous expressions?

A. Such expressions as are either susceptible of a double or a doubtful meaning.

Q. Can you give an example of this?

A. "I cannot find *one* of my books;" which may mean either that there is one of my books which I cannot find, or that I can find none of them at all.

Q. Have you any further rule to give?

A. One, and but one; avoid unintelligible and inconsistent words and phrases; as, "I have but an *opaque* idea of the subject."

Q. What word ought to be used instead of *opaque* in this case?

A. The word confused or indistinct, which signifies not clear, while opaque means not fit to be seen through.

Q. Can you point out the errors, and make the necesary corrections in the following sentences? I had as lief say a thing after him as after another. I need say no more concerning the drift of these letters. What is it but a sort of rack that forces men to say what they have no mind to? These persons know not what to make of themselves. Our friend does not hold long in one mind.

A. I should like as well to say a thing after him as after another. I need say no more concerning the purport of these letters. What is it but a sort of rack that forces men to say what they wish to conceal, or do not wish to communicate? These persons know not how to employ their time. Our friend does not continue long in one opinion.

CHAPTER XIV.

Of Precision.

Q. What do you mean by the term Precision?

A. The using of no more words to convey our meaning than the sense absolutely requires.

Q. To what does precision stand opposed?

A. To that looseness and vagueness of style, which arise from too great a multiplicity of words.

Q. What tends most to produce precision?

A. Clear and accurate thinking.

Q. What is the evil of employing too many words to express an idea?

A. It distracts the attention of the reader or hearer, and prevents him from forming a correct conception of the subject under discussion.

Q. Is want of precision a common error?

A. Perhaps the most so of any that can be named; as many, not content with one word to express an idea, are apt to subjoin another, which, conceiving it to be of the same import, will, they think, make the thought much plainer.

Q. What is the best rule for avoiding this error?

A. Select the word that exactly expresses the idea intended to be communicated, and use that and no other for the purpose.

Q. When is precision most apt to be violated?

A. In the use of what are called synonymous terms, or words which are considered of the same signification.

Q. Are there any words perfectly synonymous?

A. On this point there is great difference of opinion, but many are reputed synonymous which are not so in reality.

Q. Can you give an example of this?

A. *Courage* and *fortitude* are generally deemed of the same import; but the difference between them is considerable. Courage braves danger, fortitude supports pain.

Q. Is precision alike necessary in all sorts of composition?

A. In all it is important; it is the very essence of poetry; but in novels and romances it is much less necessary, than in works which inculcate truth, or teach some art or science.

Q. Can you correct the following sentences in which precision has been disregarded? James desisted from, and renounced his designs. He abhorred and detested being in debt. This lady was a pattern of piety, virtue, and religion.

A. James desisted from his designs. He detested being in debt. This lady was a pattern of piety and virtue.

CHAPTER XV.

Of Perspicuity as regards the Structure of Sentences.

Q. What do you consider the first requisite in the structure of sentences?

A. To be careful to make them neither too long nor too short; and not to have too many that are either very long, or very short, following in succession.

Q. What is generally the effect of making sentences too long?

A. It tends to confuse and fatigue the reader or hearer, and consequently prevents him from distinctly understanding, and feeling an interest in, what he hears or reads.

Q. What is the consequence of making them too short?

A. It gives an appearance of abruptness and want of connexion to the composition, and represents a subject too much in loose and detached portions.

Q. How are both extremes best avoided?

A. By a due intermixture of long and short sentences, whether in speaking or writing.

Q. What will be the effect of this?

A. It will be productive of that variety which seldom fails to please; and to be pleased is one of the first steps towards being instructed.

Q. Under what heads do the more particular rules of this subject come?

A. Under Clearness, Unity, Strength, Harmony, and a judicious use of the Figures of Speech.

Q. Do not some of these more properly rank under beauty or ornament?

A. They all do so to a certain degree, but ornament depends more particularly upon harmony and a proper use of the figures of speech.

CHAPTER XVI.

Of Clearness.

Q. What do you understand by Clearness?

A. Such an arrangement of the several words and members of a sentence, as distinctly indicates an author's meaning.

Q. When is this most apt to be overlooked?

A. In the placing or arranging of such words or clauses as are of a qualifying or restrictive nature.

Q. What class of words come chiefly under this head?

A. Those denominated adverbs, which may, by an improper position, be made to qualify a wrong word, and thus bring out a meaning totally different from that intended.

Q. Can you exemplify what you have mentioned?

A. "William has set out upon his travels, and he not only means to visit Paris, but also Rome."

Q. Where does the error lie here?

A. In the position of *not only*, which, as they stand, are made to qualify *means;* whereas the word they should qualify is Paris; as, "He means to visit, not only Paris, but Rome also."

Q. When several restrictive or qualifying clauses occur in the same sentence, how should they be disposed?

A. The best way is, not to place them too near each other, but so to disperse and arrange them, as to leave the principal words of the sentence prominent and distinct.

Q. What is faulty in the following sentence; "A great stone that I happened to find, after a long search, by the seashore, served me for an anchor?"

A. The qualifying clause, "after a long search," is improperly placed.

Q. What may the meaning of the sentence be according to the present arrangement?

A. Why, that the search was confined to the seashore, whereas, it is intended to be stated, that the stone was found on the seashore.

Q. Can you give the sentence in a corrected form?

A. "A great stone that I happened, after a long search, to find by the seashore, served me for an anchor."

Q. What is the most general rule upon the subject of arrangement?

A. Place words so as best to preserve and exhibit the proper connexion of the thoughts for which they stand, and which they are intended to convey.

Q. Is there any more specific rule?

A. Let all relative and connective words be so placed, as best to indicate at once what they connect, and to what they refer.

Q. What will be the consequence of an improper position of words in a sentence?

A. It will obscure the sense, and produce confusion in the mind of the reader or hearer.

Q. Will you endeavour to correct the following sentences? It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, by heaping up treasures, from which nothing can protect us but the good providence of God. We shall now endeavour, with clearness and precision, to describe the provinces once united under their sway. The minister who grows less by his elevation, like a little statue on a mighty pedestal, will always have his jealousy strong about him.

A. It is folly to pretend, by heaping up treasures, to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, from which nothing can protect us but the good providence of God. We shall endeavour to describe, with clearness and precision, the provinces once united under their sway. The minister who, like a little statue on a mighty pedestal, grows less by his elevation, will always have his jealousy strong about him.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of Unity.

Q. What do you mean by the Unity of a sentence?

A. Closeness and compactness of arrangement, and the restriction of the sentence to one leading idea.

Q. When is unity most apt to be violated?

A. When the sentence is long, and crowded with a number of qualifying clauses, among which there is no very close connexion.

Q. What, for the sake of unity, should there be in every sentence?

A. One principal object of thought, which should never be obscured, nor concealed from view.

Q. What is the first rule then for preserving unity?

A. Never, if possible, during the course of a sentence, to change the scene or the actor.

Q. Can you exemplify the violation of this rule?

A. "After we came to anchor, they put me on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends, who received me with the greatest kindness."

Q. What is faulty in this sentence?

A. A frequent change of subject, as *we, they, I, who,* which are all nominatives to different verbs, and therefore tend to distract the attention.

Q. Can you give it in a corrected form?

A. "After we came to anchor, I was put on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends, and received by them with the greatest kindness."

Q. What is the next rule for obtaining unity?

A. It is, never to crowd into one sentence things so unconnected, that they would bear to be divided into different sentences.

Q. Can you give an example?

A. "Virtuous men are always the most happy; but vice strows the path of her votaries with thorns."

Q. How would you correct this sentence?

A. By making each member a separate sentence; as, "Virtuous men are always the most happy. Vice strows the path of her followers with thorns."

Q. What is the next rule under this head?

A. It is to avoid all unnecessary parentheses, and all such words and members as interrupt the natural unity of thought, which a sentence should exhibit.

Q. Are parentheses always improper?

A. By no means; for they sometimes give elegance and vivacity to a sentence. They should, however, be used very sparingly; as they tend, when improperly introduced, to clog and embarrass a sentence.

Q. Are parentheses as much in use as they once were?

A. No; for by modern writers they are mostly laid aside; but old writers were in general very profuse in the use of them.

Q. How may long and awkward parentheses be avoided?

A. Either by entirely rejecting them, or, if what they contain be necessary to the sense, by putting them into a separate sentence.

Q. Can you give an example of the right use of parentheses?

A. "The bliss of man, (could pride that blessing find,)
Is not to act or think beyond mankind."

Q. Will you endeavour to correct the following sentences, in which unity has been neglected? A short time after this injury, he came to himself; and the next day they put him on board a ship which conveyed him first to Corinth, and thence to the island of Ægina. Never delay till to-morrow, (for to-morrow is not yours; and though you should live to enjoy it, you must not overload it with a burden not its own,) what reason and conscience tell you ought to be performed to-day.

A. A short time after this injury, he came to himself; and being the next day put on board a ship, he was conveyed first to Corinth, and thence to the island of Ægina. Never delay till to-morrow what reason and conscience tell you ought to be performed to-day. To-morrow is not yours; and though you should live to enjoy it, you must not overload it with a burden not its own.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of Strength.

Q. What do you mean by the Strength of a sentence?

A. The power which it possesses of making a deep impression upon the mind.

Q. What is the first requisite for obtaining strength?

A. It is, to avoid all tautology, and admit into a sen-

tence no words and members but such as the sense absolutely requires.

Q. What am I to understand by tautology?

A. The application of several words to express the same idea,—a practice which has, at all times, an enfeebling effect.

Q. Can you give an example of tautology?

A. "They returned back again to the same city from whence they came forth."

Q. What words are here redundant?

A. *Back, again, same, from,* and *forth,* the meaning of all which is implied in the other words of the sentence.

Q. What is the next rule for promoting the strength of a sentence?

A. To dispose of the principal words and members in such a manner, that they will produce the greatest possible effect upon the mind of the reader or hearer.

Q. What must we often do to accomplish this?

A. We must frequently give the words an arrangement different from that which they usually have; as, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," which gives much more spirit to the sentiment, than, "Diana of the Ephesians is great."

Q. What do you call the placing of words out of their natural order?

A. Inversion or transposition, which, when judiciously made, contributes both to the strength and elegance of a sentence.

Q. What is your next remark on the subject of strength?

A. It is, that a weaker assertion should never follow a stronger; nor a shorter member one of greater length.

Q. Can you give an illustration of this principle?

A. "When our passions have forsaken us, we flatter ourselves with the belief that we have forsaken them," is a better arrangement than, "We flatter ourselves with the belief that we have forsaken our passions, when they have forsaken us."

Q. What is your next observation on the strength of sentences?

A. It is, to avoid, if possible, concluding them with any short, trifling, or unemphatic word.

Q. What are the words which you would include in this class?

A. Some of the pronouns, several of the adverbs, and most of the prepositions.

Q. Will you exemplify what you have stated?

A. "Avarice is a crime, which wise men are often guilty of," is less forcible and dignified than "Avarice is a crime, of which wise men are often guilty."

Q. What have you further to observe on this topic?

A. When two things are contrasted with one another for the purpose of expressing either resemblance or opposition, a similar resemblance should be observed in the structure of the sentence.

Q. Upon what principle is this rule founded?

A. Upon the principle that, when we find a correspondence among objects, we naturally expect a similar correspondence among the words by which they are denoted.

Q. Will you give an example of this?

A. "The idle never make so much improvement as diligent persons," should be, "The idle never make so much improvement as the diligent."

Q. Can you correct the following sentences? It is six years ago since I paid a visit to my relations. The reason why he acted in the manner he did, was not fully and completely explained. If I mistake not, I think he is improved both in knowledge and behaviour. These two boys appear to be both equal in capacity.

A. It is six years since I paid a visit to my relations. The reason he acted in the manner he did, was never fully explained. If I mistake not, he is improved both in knowledge and behaviour. These two boys appear equal in capacity.

CHAPTER XIX.

Of Harmony.

Q. Can you mention any thing besides perspicuity, that gives peculiar grace to composition?

A. A smooth and easy flow of the words and members of sentences, and a freedom from all harshness and uncouthness of sound.

Q. What quality of style does this constitute?

A. That which is usually denominated *Harmony* or *Melody.*

Q. Do these two terms imply exactly the same idea?

A. Not precisely; melody denotes a succession of pleasing sounds; harmony, the agreement that one sound has with another.

Q. Is harmony an important quality of style?

A. It is certainly of less consequence than perspicuity; still it is a singular excellence, and affords considerable pleasure to the reader or hearer.

Q. On what does harmony of style depend?

A. Partly on the selection, partly on the arrangement of words.

Q. What words are generally most harmonious?

A. Those which contain a due proportion of liquid sounds, and have at the same time a proper mixture of vowels and consonants.

Q. Can you give any examples of this?

A. *Fortitude, contentment, subordinate,* are of this class.

Q. What words are generally most deficient in harmony?

A. Such as are derivatives from previous compounds, or crowded with consonants, the sounds of which do not readily coalesce; as, *shamefacedness, chroniclers, conventiclers.*

Q. Are there any others that are remarkably harsh?

A. Yes; such as contain either many short syllables following the seat of the accent, or a number of syllables nearly similar in sound; as, *primarily, cursorily, lovelily, farriery.*

Q. If the words be separately harmonious, will the whole sentence be so?

A. The one does not necessarily follow from the other; for the words may be separately both well chosen

and agreeable in sound, and yet, if they are badly arranged, the sentence may be destitute of harmony.

Q. Can you illustrate this by example?

A. "Office or rank may be the recompense of intrigue, versatility, or flattery," is a sentence composed of words individually melodious, and yet, in consequence of bad arrangement, it is not harmonious.

Q. What would you consider an improvement upon the arrangement?

A. "Rank or office may be the recompense of flattery, versatility, or intrigue."

Q. Can you give any general directions on this subject?

A. Too many words either uniform as to length, or the position of the accent, should never, if possible, be placed together.

Q. Can you illustrate this by example?

A. "No species *of joy can long please us;*" "James was *needy, feeble,* and *fearful;*" are less harmonious than "no species *of joy can long delight us;*" "James was *weak, timid,* and *destitute.*"

Q. What have you further to observe on this head?

A. Words resembling each other in the sound of any of their letters or syllables, as well as such as are difficult to pronounce in succession, should never stand in immediate connexion.

Q. Can you give any illustration of this?

A. A true union, an indulgent parent, a cruel destroyer, an improper impression, are far less harmonious than, *a true friendship, a kind parent, a cruel foe, a false impression.*

Q. Have you any thing further to remark?

A. That a sentence may not be harsh, and, consequently, of difficult pronunciation, the several members of which it is composed, should neither be too long, nor disproportionate to each other.

Q. In what sort of composition ought harmony to be most carefully studied?

A. In the composition of verse, one of the chief excellencies of which, consists in its being musical.

Q. What part of a sentence should we be the most careful to make harmonious?

A. The close; for it is to this part that the attention of the reader or hearer is generally most attracted.

Q. What name is commonly given to a graceful conclusion of a sentence?

A. It is commonly styled a cadence; and was by the ancients considered an essential requisite in every well-constructed sentence.

Q. What is faulty in point of harmony in the following sentence:—"And an enormous serpent lay dead on the floor?"

A. It is the circumstance of the three syllables, *and, an, en,* which are so much alike in sound, following each other, without any other word intervening.

Q. How might it be corrected?

A. Thus, "And a serpent of enormous size lay dead on the floor."

CHAPTER XX.

Of Sound as suited to the Sense.

Q. What is considered the highest species of ornament arising from harmony in composition?

A. That which consists in a correspondence of the sound to the sense.

Q. By whom is this quality of style chiefly exhibited?

A. By all our best poets; though good prose writers also abound in beauties of a similar kind; as there is generally some agreement between the flow and modulation of the language, and the nature and character of the thoughts and sentiments expressed.

Q. When can the *sound* most readily be made an *echo* to the sense?

A. In cases in which sound or motion come to be described; though calm and gentle emotions may be always expressed to most advantage by smooth and gentle language; while harsh feelings and rugged sentiments, naturally give rise to harsh and rugged diction.

Q. Can you give an example of the sound being an echo to the sense?

A. "A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
That, like a wounded snake, draws its slow length along."

"The waves behind impel the waves before,
Wide-rolling, foaming high, and tumbling on the shore."

"With many a weary step, and many a groan,
Up the h gh hill he heaves a huge round stone;
The huge round stone, resulting with a bound,
Thunders impetuous down, and smokes along the ground."

———"On a sudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,
The infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder."

Q. Is the correspondence between sense and sound always real?

A. In some cases it may be partly or wholly fanciful, and in others it depends altogether upon the manner of reading; but still the examples given are sufficient to show that such correspondence does often, and to a considerable extent, exist.

Q. Who have been most distinguished for attention to harmonious composition?

A. The Greeks and Romans among the ancients, and the Italians and French among the moderns.

Q. What tended to promote the study of harmonious composition among the ancients?

A. Partly, their own fine musical taste, and partly, the highly melodious and flexible character of their language.

Q. Has this study never been carried to excess?

A. Frequently; and it is always so, when sense is, in the least degree, sacrificed to sound.

Q. Do not strength and harmony generally go together?

A. For the most part they do; and it frequently happens, that a sentence is weak or obscure in exact proportion to its want of harmony.

Q. Can you give any example of this?

A. "This is a mystery which we firmly believe the truth of, and we humbly adore the depth of;" is neither so strong nor so harmonious as, "This is a mystery, the truth of which we firmly believe, and the depth of which we humbly adore."

CHAPTER XXI.

Of Figurative Language.

Q. What do you consider the next great requisite of a perspicuous and elegant style?

A. A judicious use of what is called Figurative Language.

Q. In how many different ways may language be employed?

A. Chiefly two; the one *literal*, the other *figurative.*

Q. What do you understand by literal language?

A. Language taken in its common and ordinary signification; as, I am fond of *sunshine;* this is a sweet *evening.*

Q. And what by figurative language?

A. Language used in such a way as to excite ideas or feelings, different from those which it would produce, if employed in its common and ordinary acceptation; as, "Reason is the *sunshine* of the soul;" "Our friend is now in the *evening* of life."

Q. What is the meaning of *sunshine* and *evening* in these examples?

A. The one implies that reason has the same effect upon the soul that sunshine has upon the earth; the other, that period when life is drawing to a close.

Q. Why is language of this kind called figurative language?

A. Because it exhibits thoughts or ideas in a form or manner different from that in which they are usually represented?

Q. On what is figurative language founded?

A. Generally on some resemblance or opposition, which one thing is supposed to bear to another.

Q. What constitutes the chief difference between literal and figurative language?

A. Literal language is the language chiefly of science and reason; figurative language, the language principally of passion and imagination.

Q. By whom is figurative language used in greatest profusion?

A. By rude and savage nations, whose stock of words is remarkably scanty; and by all persons, whether savage or civilized, who possess a quick and lively fancy.

Q. What is the most fertile source of figurative language?

A. The application of words that denote sensible objects, for the purpose of expressing the various qualities and operations of the mind.

Q. What, therefore, is the general character of language used to denote mental objects?

A. It is in general highly figurative; though to this circumstance we are so accustomed, that we often pass it without observing it to be so.

Q. Can you give examples of this?

A. A *clear* head, a *hard* heart, a *piercing* judgment; *inflamed* by passion, *puffed up* with pride, *melted* into grief, are all examples of this, and yet so common that we hardly regard them as figures of speech.

Q. What advantage does language derive from its figurative application?

A. It is rendered more varied and copious, more sprightly and energetic.

Q. How are these effects produced?

A. By a single word acquiring the power of expressing more than one thought or idea.

Q. Can you give an example of this?

A. "When we dip too deep in pleasure, we stir up a sediment that renders it impure and noxious," is a sentiment which could not be expressed either so briefly or so forcibly by any literal language that we could use.

Q. When is figurative language improper?

A. When it is either unnatural or far-fetched,—used

in too great profusion, or not calculated to deepen the impression intended to be made.

Q. Is figurative language all of one character?

A. Far from it; but, though exceedingly diversified, it may all be classed under certain heads, called the *figures of speech.*

Q. What, then, are the principal figures of speech?

A. Simile, Metaphor, Allegory, Personification Apostrophe, Metonymy, Synecdoche, Climax, Antithesis, Hyperbole, Irony, Interrogation, Exclamation, Vision, and Alliteration.

CHAPTER XXII.

Of Simile.

Q. What do you understand by Comparison or Simile?

A. That figure of speech by which we liken one thing to another, either for the purpose of informing the judgment, or of pleasing the fancy.

Q. Can you give an example of this figure?

A. "A virtuous man, slandered by evil tongues, is like a diamond obscured by smoke."

"And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

Q. What is the foundation of this figure?

A. Analogy, or resemblance, either in character or effect.

Q. From what source, then, must similes be drawn?

A. From objects of a different class from those to be explained or illustrated, but yet possessing some quality in common with them.

Q. Why do we not compare things of the same kind?

A. Because the resemblance is then too close and obvious to admit of comparison; and exhibits not likeness, but identity.

Q. Do we never compare things of the same class?

A. We compare things of the same class, for the purpose of marking their difference; but those of a

different class, with a view to point out their resemblance.

Q. What rule have you to give for the use of this figure?

A. When used for the purpose of illustration, it should always be taken from something that is better known than the thing to be explained.

Q. Can you give any example of this?

A. "As a river rolls its waters to the sea, whence its spring was supplied; so the heart of a grateful man delights to return a benefit received."

Q. What is the rule respecting similes when used for embellishment as well as illustration?

A. They ought always to be deduced from objects that are dignified and important, or such as may be contemplated with pleasure.

Q. Can you give any examples of this?

A. "As in the hollow breast of Apennine,
Beneath the shelter of encircling hills,
A myrtle rises, far from human eye,
And breathes its balmy fragrance o'er the wild;
So flourished, blooming, and unseen by all,
The sweet Lavinia."

Q. By what terms are comparisons generally introduced?

A. By the words, *like*, *thus*, *as*, *so*, *in like manner*, &c.

Q. What then do you deem a perfect simile?

A. One that both illustrates and ennobles a subject; though it cannot be said to be misapplied, should it do only the one.

Q. What sort of comparisons should we avoid?

A. Such as have no tendency either to explain or beautify; and, therefore, neither convey knowledge, nor excite new and pleasing trains of thought.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Of Metaphor.

Q. What do you understand by a Metaphor?

A. A comparison in which the words denoting the similitude are suppressed; as, "I will be to her a wall of fire;" that is, "as a wall of fire."

Q. In what respect, then, does it differ from a simile?

A. In its greater brevity and force, and in its being a much bolder and more striking figure.

Q. On what is it founded?

A. Like the simile, it is founded altogether upon resemblance, and is merely a comparison in an abridged form.

Q. Can you illustrate this difference by example?

A. When I say of a minister, "He upholds the state, like a pillar that supports an edifice," I use a comparison; but when I say, "He is the pillar of the state," I then use a metaphor.

Q. What is the first rule in the use of metaphors?

A. Do not employ them too profusely, and let them be such as accord with the natural train of the thoughts.

Q. What is the next?

A. Let the resemblance upon which the figures are founded, be clear and perspicuous, and the metaphors drawn from such objects as are easily understood.

Q. On what is this rule founded?

A. On the circumstance that, if a word is unintelligible in a literal, it must be much more so in a metaphorical sense.

Q. What is the next rule?

A. Metaphorical and literal language should never be jumbled or mixed together.

Q. Can you illustrate this by example?

A. "To thee the world its present homage pays;
The *harvest* early, but mature the *praise*,"

is a mixed metaphor; for *harvest* is figurative, but *praise* is literal, in its meaning.

Q. What would it require to be to make it accurate?

A. "The harvest early, but mature the fruit," which would probably have been the word used, had it suited the poet's rhyme.

Q. What further have you to remark respecting the use of metaphors?

A. We should neither pursue them too far, nor use, in reference to the same object, two metaphors that are inconsistent with each other.

Q. Can you give any example of the latter part of the rule?

A. "I *bridle* in my struggling muse with pain,
That longs to *launch* into a bolder strain."

Q. What is the error here?

A. The muse is first compared to a horse, held in by a bridle, that it may not launch, an action which belongs properly to a ship; and then it is to launch, not into water, but into a strain or singing, which, being literal, produces a strange jumble of figures, altogether incompatible with correct writing.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Of Allegory.

Q. What is an Allegory?

A. A sort of protracted or extended metaphor, in which one thing is made, through a series of events, to represent another, that possesses certain points of resemblance.

Q. Is there no other difference between a metaphor and an allegory, than that of their length?

A. The chief difference, besides their length is, that the metaphor being always joined with some word that explains it, is more easily understood than an allegory, which requires more thought and reflection to perceive the connexion between what is said, and what is intended.

Q. What species of writing may be included under this figure?

A. Parables and fables, in which, under certain similitudes, religious and moral instruction is often conveyed.

Q. Among whom did this style of writing most prevail?

A. Among the ancients, though many modern writers have used it with good effect; and it is a mode of inculcating truth very much resorted to even in the Scriptures.

Q. What is the chief thing to be observed in the use of this figure?

A. The great requisite is, to make it as lively and interesting as possible, and to preserve a proper distinction between the figurative expression and the literal signification.

CHAPTER XXV.

Of Personification.

Q. What do you mean by Personification?

A. That figure by which we attribute life, sex, and action, to inanimate beings.

Q. By what is this figure prompted?

A. Either by the exercise of an active imagination, or by intense feeling; and it arises from a certain proneness in the human mind, to invest all surrounding objects with life and activity.

Q. What effect has it upon style?

A. It tends both to enliven and to embellish it, being, when judiciously used, one of its greatest ornaments.

Q. Is our language favourable to the use of this figure?

A. There is none more so, and hence, in part, its peculiar fitness for poetry.

Q. To what is this to be ascribed?

A. To the circumstance of the distinction of gender in English nouns being in strict accordance with nature, which is not the case in many other languages.

Q. And what advantage does this give us?

A. While we, on ordinary occasions, speak of inanimate objects as destitute of sex, we are enabled, when the occasion requires it, to dignify them by appellations peculiar to males or females.

Q. Can the same not be done in every language?

A. No; for in most languages the gender of nouns is invariably fixed, and cannot be changed at the will of the writer.

Q. Can you illustrate what you have stated by example?

A. In speaking of the sun, on common occasions, we say, *it* rises, or *it* sets; but in cases of greater moment,

we ascribe to it the attributes of a male, and use *he*, as Thomson in his Seasons :—

"But yonder comes the powerful *king* of day,
Rejoicing in the east. The lessening cloud,
The kindling azure, and the mountain's brow,
Illumed with fluid gold, *his* near approach
Betoken glad. Lo! now, apparent all,
Aslant the dew-bright earth and coloured air,
He looks in boundless majesty abroad;
And sheds the shining day, that burnished plays
On rocks, and hills, and towers, and wandering streams,
High gleaming from afar."

Q. In what species of writing does this figure chiefly abound?

A. It is used very frequently, and always with great propriety, in the Scriptures, as well as in the works of all our best poets and orators.

Q. Will you give an example from the Scriptures?

A. "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; the sea saw it, and fled; Jordan was driven back! the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs."

Q. When may this figure be said to be abused?

A. When the actions ascribed to inanimate objects are unnatural, vulgar, or indelicate; or when the figure is so overstrained, as to be either ridiculous or unintelligible.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Of Apostrophe.

Q. What do you mean by an Apostrophe?

A. A sudden address or appeal to a dead or absent person, as if he were alive or present, and could hear, and be affected by, what is spoken.

Q. What is the character of this figure?

A. It is the boldest and most striking of all the figures, and always betokens the greatest warmth and fervour of mind.

Q. Can you give an example?

A. One of the most striking is that of David, la-

menting the death of his son Absalom:—"And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Q. Is this figure ever used in reference to inanimate objects?

A. Frequently; and when so employed, it is always blended with personification; we first personify, and then apostrophize.

Q. Can you give an example of this?

A. "Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings; for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil."

Q. When may this figure be said to be improperly applied?

A. When the object addressed is decked out in the garb of flowery language, or loaded with any sort of studied ornament.

Q. What is faulty in this?

A. It is contrary to nature; for this figure, being the product of highly-excited feeling, must never appear as the result of art or labour.

Q. Is there any other error connected with the use of this figure?

A. Yes; there is that of extending it too far, which must, on all occasions, destroy its effect, as giving it the appearance of being too studied and artificial.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Of Metonymy and Synecdoche.

Q. What do you understand by Metonymy?

A. That figure of speech by which we put the cause for the effect, or the effect for the cause; the container for the thing contained, or the sign for the thing signified.

Q. Can you give an example of each of these?

A. "I am reading Milton;" "Gray hairs should be respected;" "The kettle is boiling;" "He has at last assumed the sceptre."

Q. Can you explain the figures here used?

A. *Milton* is taken for his *works*, which is the cause for the effect; *gray hairs* for *old age*, which is the effect for the cause; the *kettle* for the *water* in it, which is the container for the thing contained; and the *sceptre*, for *kingly power*, which is the sign for the thing signified.

Q. And what do you mean by Synecdoche?

A. That figure by which we put the whole for a part, or a part for the whole; a genus for a species, or a species for a genus; or any thing less, or any thing more, for the precise object meant.

Q. Can you give examples of this?

A. "A fleet of twenty *sail;*" "All *hands* were at work;" "This *dome* protects me;" "Man gains his *bread* by the sweat of his brow."

Q. In what sense are all these terms taken?

A. *Sail* is taken for *ships; dome* for *house; hands* for *men;* and *bread* for *all the necessaries* of life; a prominent part in each case being taken for the whole thing signified.

Q. To what figure is synecdoche most allied?

A. To metonymy; being both figures of a similar kind, but founded upon different relations.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Of Climax and Enumeration.

Q. What do you mean by a Climax?

A. A series of members in a sentence, each rising in importance above the one which precedes it, from the first to the last.

Q. When may a climax be considered as best constructed?

A. When the last idea of the former member, becomes the first of the latter, and so on to the end of the series.

Q. Can you give an example of this figure?

A. "What hope is there remaining of liberty, if whatever is their pleasure, it is lawful for them to do; if what is lawful for them to do, they are able to do; if what they are able to do, they dare do; if what they dare do, they really execute; and if what they execute is no way offensive to you?"

Q. What is the character of this figure?

A. It is extremely beautiful; and, when properly managed, is calculated to make a powerful impression upon the mind of the reader or hearer.

Q. By whom is it chiefly used?

A. Chiefly by orators, though other writers also frequently avail themselves of its use.

Q. What is Enumeration?

A. A series of particulars merely, without that gradual increase in point of importance, which the climax exhibits, and necessarily implies.

Q. Can you give an example?

A. "We are all prompted by the same motives, all deceived by the same fallacies, all animated by hope, obstructed by danger, entangled by desire, and seduced by pleasure."

Q. Are not climax and enumeration often conjoined?

A. There is, in almost every series, a greater or less degree of increase of force and importance, and so far the two coincide.

Q. Can you give an example of climax and enumeration as combined?

A. "Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to shoot,
To pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind,
To breathe the enlivening spirit, and to fix
The generous purpose in the glowing breast."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Of Antithesis.

Q. What do you understand by Antithesis?

A. That opposition of meaning which words and members are made to bear to each other in a sentence.

Q. To what figure is antithesis most opposed?

A. To comparison, which is founded on resemblance; while antithesis is founded on contrast or opposition?

Q. For what purpose are objects generally contrasted?

A. For the purpose of more strongly marking their difference; as white never appears so bright as when contrasted with black.

Q. Is it a common figure?

A. Perhaps the most so of any, as all writers occasionally use it, and many very frequently.

Q. Can you give any examples of its use?

A. "Yet, at thy call, the hardy tar pursued,
Pale, but *intrepid; sad*, but *unsubdued.*"

Q. What is the chief rule for the use of this figure?

A. To introduce it but sparingly, and let the ground of the contrast be always of a solid nature, not depending upon mere whim or caprice.

Q. What effect have unnatural antitheses upon style?

A. They render it stiff and affected, and give it too much of a sententious air.

Q. Is antithesis always confined to single words?

A. No; for one sentence or one paragraph, as well as one word, may be, and often is, set in opposition to another.

CHAPTER XXX.

Of Hyperbole and Irony.

Q. What do you understand by Hyperbole?

A. The representation of a thing as either far greater, or far less, than it is in reality.

Q. On what is this figure founded?

A. On that propensity in human nature, which prompts either to extol or vilify, beyond measure, whatever excites admiration, or creates dislike.

Q. Of what then is it generally the result?

A. Either of strong passion, or of want of due discrimination.

Q. Is it a common figure of speech?

A. Very common in the conversation of passionate and ignorant people; and it is frequently to be found in the compositions of all bombastic writers.

Q. Is it then a figure always to be avoided?

A. By no means; it may be, and often is used with excellent effect, especially when it is the spontaneous result of strong feeling?

Q. Can you give an example of this kind?

A. "They were swifter than eagles; they were stronger than lions."

Q. What do you mean by Irony?

A. The expression of strong reproof or censure, under the appearance of praise.

Q. How then must the true meaning be known?

A. By the circumstances of the speaker in relation to the object that he means to censure.

Q. What end does irony serve?

A. It often gives greater poignancy to reproof, as it is generally calculated to bring ridicule upon the object to which it is applied.

Q. How is it best applied?

A. In reproving folly or vice; for, as applied to persons, it more frequently produces irritation than amendment.

Q. Can you give an example of this figure?

A. In saying of a very impudent fellow, "A person of his distinguished modesty could surely not be guilty of such a deed," would be an instance of strong irony, in which is said the very opposite of what is intended.

Q. What is the rule for the use of hyperbole and irony?

A. To use them as sparingly as possible, as a frequent or an improper use of either, is always a great blemish in composition.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Of Interrogation and Exclamation.

Q. What do you mean by Interrogation?

A. Such a form of specch as serves to put in form of a question what is meant to be strongly affirmative.

Q. Is interrogation always used figuratively?

A. It is never so used when employed to make inquiry about any thing of which one is ignorant.

Q. When may it be said to be used figuratively?

A. Only when so used, that, under the form of a question, it serves the purpose of strong declaration.

Q. Can you exemplify this?

A. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"

Q. What is implied in these questions?

A. A strong declaration that the Supreme Being is quite incomprehensible, and cannot be found out.

Q. Is this a common figure?

A. Very much so; and it is often the strongest mode of reasoning, as implying the absence of all doubt respecting the object of the interrogation.

Q. What do you understand by Exclamation?

A. A mode of expression which exhibits great emotion of mind.

Q. By what is it generally produced?

A. By the deep or lively sense which we have of the greatness or importance of any object.

Q. In what does it differ from interrogation?

A. Chiefly in its being the language of passion and emotion; while interrogation is principally that of reason and judgment.

Q. Can you give an example of this figure?

A. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Q. Is this figure ever combined with any other?

A. It is often combined with climax, as in the following example:—"What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

Of Vision and Alliteration.

Q. What do you mean by Vision?

A. That figure by which past, future, or distant objects, are described as if they were actually present to the view of the speaker or writer.

Q. To what sort of composition is this figure adapted?

A. Only to such as is highly glowing and passionate.

Q. What effect has it when properly introduced?

A. It excites deep interest in the objects contemplated, and makes us fancy we see them present before our eyes.

Q. Can you give an example of this?

A. "Lochiel! Lochiel! beware of the day
When the Lowlands shall meet thee in battle-array;
For a field of the dead rushes red on my sight,
And the clans of Culloden are scattered in fight:
They rally, they bleed, for their kingdom and crown;
Wo, wo, to the riders that trample them down!
Proud Cumberland prances, insulting the slain,
And their hoof-beaten bosoms are trod to the plain."

Q. What do you mean by Alliteration?

A. The use of such words, at certain intervals, as begin with or contain the same letter.

Q. Is this figure much in use?

A. It is very much in use by our best poets, and even sometimes by prose writers.

Q. On what is this figure founded?

A. On that pleasure which the ear feels in the recurrence of similar sounds at regular and stated distances.

Q. Can you give any examples?

A. "*R*uin seize thee, *r*uthless king."

"Up the *h*igh *h*ill *h*e *h*eaves a *h*uge round stone."

"*S*oftly *s*weet in Lydian measures,
*S*oon he *s*oothed his *s*oul to pleasures."

"To *h*igh born *H*oel's *h*arp, or soft *L*lewell*y*n's *l*ay."

Q. Is this figure always the effect of study?

A. In some instances it may be purely accidental, and on these occasions it is always most natural, and its effects are then by far the most pleasing.

Q. What is the best and most general rule for all the figures of speech?

A. It is, never to make a deliberate search after them, use them only when they rise spontaneously out of the

subject; never pursue them too far; and let them always be such as enforce and illustrate, as well as embellish a subject.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Of the more General Rules for Composition.

Q. On what, from all that has been said, do you consider accurate composition to depend?

A. On the selection and arrangement of words proper for expressing the thoughts, which we intend to communicate.

Q. On what again do these depend?

A. On a knowledge of grammar in all its branches, and an intimate acquaintance with the meaning of words.

Q. What renders these so essential?

A. The circumstance that, without the one, we cannot select, nor without the other, arrange with propriety.

Q. And how are these to be obtained?

A. Only by reading and study, combined with constant attention to the mode in which we express our thoughts, as compared with that of good writers and speakers.

Q. What is further requisite?

A. An intimate knowledge of the subject, on which we desire either to speak or write.

Q. How comes this to be so necessary?

A. Because no man, whatever be his knowledge of language, can either speak or write well on a subject, of which he is totally ignorant.

Q. How is this knowledge to be obtained?

A. To all knowledge there is but one path, and that is, constant study, and attentive observation.

Q. Is any thing further necessary?

A. Yes; for, in addition to the requisite knowledge, we must have great practice before we can compose well.

Q. What proof have you of this?

A. Men, possessing extensive information, can often speak well upon a variety of subjects, but yet, from want of practice, can write well upon none.

Q. On what subjects should a person write in order to gain this practice?

A. Such subjects as he perfectly understands; beginning with the more simple, and proceeding gradually to those of greater difficulty, according to the extent of his information.

Q. What will be the consequence of a person writing upon what he does not properly understand?

A. He will write in a stiff, affected, and unnatural style, such as no person will either hear or read with any pleasure.

Q. What are requisite for attaining eminence in composition?

A. Genius and taste; the former to prompt, the latter to correct and polish.

Q. How is ease in composition best attained?

A. By writing fearlessly and boldly; but, at the same time, guarding against every thing like extravagance either of sentiment or manner.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Of Different Kinds of Composition.

Q. What are the principal divisions belonging to literary Composition?

A. They are those of prose and poetry.

Q. What do you understand by prose composition?

A. The common and ordinary manner of expressing our thoughts, whether in speaking or writing.

Q. What do you understand by poetry?

A. Lively and striking combinations of thought, expressed in language arranged, for the sake of harmony, according to certain rules.

Q. In how many things then does poetry differ from prose?

A. In two; partly, in the nature of the thoughts themselves, and partly, in the selection and arrangement of the words.

Q. What sort of poetry may then be considered the best?

A. That which, without violating nature, differs most widely from common prose.

Q. Which kind of composition is supposed the most ancient?

A. Poetry; for, though, in refined society, few express their thoughts in verse, compared to the numbers that do so in prose, yet history informs us that the most ancient species of composition, among all rude nations, is poetry.

Q. To what is this to be ascribed?

A. To the circumstance, that the imagination, on which poetry chiefly depends, comes earlier to maturity than reason and judgment, the main sources of prose.

Q. For what purpose was the earliest poetry used?

A. Either for the promulgation of laws, the celebration of great martial achievements, or for the purpose of being set to music and sung.

Q. Under what heads may prose composition be included?

A. Under those of Letters, Dialogue, History, Essays, Philosophy, Orations, and Novels.

Q. What are the divisions of poetry as regards its structure?

A. They are those of Rhyme and Blank Verse.

Q. What are the divisions as founded upon the subjects of which it treats?

A. They are Pastoral, Descriptive, Didactic, Lyric, Epic, and Dramatic Poetry.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Of Letters and Dialogue.

Q. What is Letter-writing commonly called?

A. Epistolary correspondence.

Q. Is this an important branch of composition?

A. Perhaps the most so of any; as all persons who can write at all, require occasionally to write letters of business, of friendship, or of amusement.

Q. Is this species of composition confined to any particular subjects?

A. No; for a person may, in form of letters, discuss subjects of all sorts.

Q. But upon what occasions are letters chiefly composed?

A. Chiefly upon the common affairs or business of life.

Q. What should be the character of epistolary writing?

A. It should possess the greatest ease and simplicity, and approach more, than any other species of composition, to the nature of conversation.

Q. What do you understand by Dialogue?

A. Conversation, real or supposed, kept up by different speakers upon any subject of interest.

Q. Is it confined to any particular subject?

A. No; for, like letter-writing, it may be applied to subjects of all sorts.

Q. Is it a difficult style of writing?

A. Very much so; as the different parts of the dialogue, in order to appear natural, require to correspond with the character and sentiments of the different speakers.

Q. Is this branch of literature much in request?

A. Not nearly so much so as it once was; though there are still some very popular works of this class; as, Conversations on Natural Philosophy, Morehead's Dialogues on Natural and Revealed Religion, &c.

Q. Who are supposed to have excelled most in this kind of writing?

A. The ancients; particularly Plato, Socrates, and Cicero.

Q. What is supposed to have given rise to this particular description of composition?

A. The desire of imitating real life, or probably the conversations between ancient philosophers, who were mostly all public instructors, and their pupils.

Q. What was the particular mode of conversation pursued by Socrates called?

A. The Socratic dialogue; and consisted of a particular mode of reasoning by means of question and answer.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Of History.

Q. Do you think History an important branch of composition?

A. Exceedingly so; as upon it depends all our knowledge of events beyond our own limited circle of observation.

Q. What may all be included under the term history?

A. Annals, voyages, and travels, with the lives and memoirs of distinguished individuals.

Q. How may these, in treating of composition, be included under the term history?

A. Because they are all, though very different in other respects, an account of events and transactions that are entirely past, and therefore beyond the observation of the person who reads them.

Q. By what name is the history of individuals generally known?

A. By the term biography; while that of kingdoms is called national history, or, by way of eminence, merely history.

Q. What is the chief excellence of all these?

A. That of being a true report of what has actually taken place, without any appearance of either distortion or exaggeration.

Q. In what style should history be written?

A. The parts that relate to common events and occurrences, should be simple and perspicuous; while those which relate to great and splendid actions, may rise to the highest elevation of style.

Q. What, upon the whole, may be considered the best history?

A. That which is at once the most faithful in its details, and the most interesting to the mind of the reader.

Q. On what does fidelity in history depend?

A. Upon the writer's diligence of inquiry, and freedom from prejudice.

Q. And on what does the interest of history depend?

A. Partly on the subject, but more upon the manner in which it is treated.

Q. How do you know this?

A. By the circumstance that, in the hands of some writers, every subject acquires interest; while, in those of others, every subject becomes dull and insipid.

Q. Have we many good historians?

A. Many excellent writers of national history; as, Robertson, Gibbon, Hume, &c., but few good writers of biography.

Q. What are the most common faults in biography?

A. It generally displays either a minuteness which renders it tedious, or a partiality which excites disgust.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Of Essays and Philosophy.

Q. What sort of writing do you include under the term Essays?

A. Essays are a species of writing confined to subjects of no particular kind, though generally understood as denoting short dissertations upon topics connected with life and manners.

Q. What does the word essay properly mean?

A. A trial, or an attempt at something; and is a term often modestly applied to treatises of the greatest profundity.

Q. What is meant by the British Essayists?

A. The Tatler, Spectator, Guardian, Rambler, Idler, Adventurer, Observer, Mirror, Lounger, &c. &c., all consisting of short dissertations upon various subjects, and exhibiting some of the choicest specimens of English composition.

Q. Is there any particular style in which essays should be written?

A. Their style depends altogether upon the subject; and they may contain every species, according to the

topic discussed, from the simplest to the most sublime.

Q. What do you understand by philosophical writing?

A. All kinds of composition connected with the principles of art and science, or with the investigation of moral and physical truth.

Q. What should be the character of compositions of this kind?

A. Plainness, simplicity, and perspicuity of style, with clear, accurate, and methodical arrangement.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Of Orations.

Q. What do you understand by Orations?

A. All those displays of public speaking, denominated oratory or eloquence.

Q. Into how many species may eloquence be divided?

A. Into three; the eloquence of popular assemblies; the eloquence of the bar; and the eloquence of the pulpit: the last, a species entirely unknown to the ancients.

Q. What other names do these sometimes receive?

A. The first is called the eloquence of the senate; the second, the eloquence of the forum; and the last, which is appropriated to sacred subjects, is generally styled sermons.

Q. What is the object of all public speaking?

A. To instruct and to persuade.

Q. What are some of the chief requisites in the art of persuading?

A. Extensive knowledge, sound sense, keen sensibility, and solid judgment, with great command of language, and a correct and graceful elocution.

Q. What do you deem the next requisite?

A. Perfect sincerity, earnestness of manner, and a thorough conviction in the mind of the speaker as to the truth of what he delivers.

Q. What are the principal parts of a regular oration or discourse?

A. The Exordium, the Division, the Narration, the Confirmation, the Refutation, and the Peroration.

Q. What do you understand by the Exordium?

A. The beginning, or introduction, in which the speaker states the object he has in view, and bespeaks the favour and attention of his audience.

Q What do you mean by the Division?

A. The part in which the speaker mentions the nature of the question at issue, and lays down the plan which he means to pursue in discussing it.

Q. What do you understand by the Narration?

A. The part in which the speaker takes a view of his whole subject, and states all the facts and circumstances connected with the case.

Q. And what is the Confirmation?

A. The part in which the orator gives his own opinions, and brings forward all the proofs and arguments on which they are founded.

Q. And what is the Refutation?

A. The part in which the speaker answers the various objections and arguments, that may be brought against his opinions by an opponent.

Q. What is the Peroration?

A. The part in which the speaker, after appealing to the passions and feelings of his audience, sums up all that has been said, and brings his oration to a conclusion.

Q. Are all these parts kept perfectly distinct?

A. Not exactly so; for the one is often less or more blended with the other.

Q. What, beside talents, is necessary to make a great orator?

A. Long and unremitted application to study, and a mind thoroughly imbued with the principles of virtue, and actuated by the noble principle of independence.

Q. Is eloquence as much cultivated now as it once was?

A. Far from it; the period when eloquence chiefly

flourished was in the days when Greece and Rome were in all their splendour, and in the full enjoyment of liberty.

Q. Who were the most distinguished of ancient orators?

A. Demosthenes among the Athenians, and Cicero among the Romans; the former considered as the greatest that the world has ever seen.

Q. Have modern nations excelled much in oratory?

A. The French, the Dutch, and the Swiss, have all excelled in this art, but more particularly in pulpit eloquence; while the British have excelled in all the various kinds.

Q. Can you mention some of the most eminent of the British orators?

A. Chatham, Pitt, Fox, Burke, Sheridan, Grattan, distinguished for the eloquence of the senate; Curran, Erskine, &c. for the eloquence of the bar; and Barrow, Atterbury, and Kirwan, for the eloquence of the pulpit.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Of Novels.

Q. What do you understand by the term Novel?

A. Novel, in its literal signification, means something new; but, as denoting a branch of literature, it is generally used as the name of all fictitious compositions in prose.

Q. What may this term, in its widest sense, be made to include?

A. Allegories, fables, and stories of all kinds, whether invented for the purpose of instruction or of amusement.

Q. Where had this species of composition its origin?

A. It is commonly thought to have originated among the people of Asia, and from them to have found its way into Greece and Rome, and thence into all the other nations of Europe.

Q. What are the best known of eastern fictions?

A. The Arabian Nights' Entertainments; though

all the writings of Eastern nations possess more or less of a fictitious character.

Q. Who introduced or revived the writing of novels in more modern times?

A. A set of strolling bards or story-tellers in France, called Troubadours, who went about proclaiming the deeds of imaginary heroes, in order to prompt to acts of chivalry.

Q. In what language did they compose?

A. In a sort of Roman-French, called Romanshe, from which is derived our word romance.

Q. What is the difference between a novel and a romance?

A. A novel is a fictitious work, either founded upon the events of real life, or at least bearing some resemblance to them: while a romance is a work of a similar kind, having something wild and unnatural in it; and, if not purely imaginary, resting upon some extravagant tradition, and extending far beyond the limits of probability.

Q. When did novel-writing find its way into this country?

A. It was introduced into England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and since that time it has gradually extended, till now more novels issue from the press, than works of almost any other description.

Q. Are novels an important branch of literature?

A. On this point there is great diversity of opinion,—some extolling them as the best teachers of morals; and others condemning them as the corrupters of principle, and the contaminators of the mind.

Q. What is the character of a good novel?

A. A perfect freedom from every species of immoral tendency, together with the power of deeply interesting the feelings of the reader.

Q. What is the consequence of too great a love of novels?

A. It tends to distract the mind, and disqualify it for solid thinking, and the pursuit of useful knowledge.

Q. Is there any peculiar style adapted to novels?

A. They admit of every variety of style, according to the nature of the incidents and characters described; but that must always be the best, which is most natural and animated.

Q. What peculiar quality of mind does the writing of good novels require?

A. Great readiness of invention, with quickness in discerning, and power in describing, characters and events.

Q. Can you mention some of the most distinguished writers of novels?

A. Le Sage and Voltaire among the French, Cervantes among the Spaniards, and Cooper among the Americans, with numerous novelists of great celebrity among the Italians and Germans.

Q. Have not the English distinguished themselves in this walk of literature?

A. More so than almost any other nation; and their most eminent writers of this class are, De Foe, Swift, Goldsmith, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Miss Porter, Miss Edgeworth, Sir Walter Scott, &c., &c.

CHAPTER XL.

Of Blank Verse and Rhyme.

Q. What do you understand by Blank Verse?

A. That poetry which depends upon measure alone, without any correspondence of sound in the terminating syllables of different lines.

Q. Can you give an example?

A. "These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the *varied* God. The rolling year
Is full of thee. Forth in the pleasing spring
Thy beauty walks, thy tenderness and love.
Wide flush the fields; the softening air is balm;
Echo the mountains round; the forest smiles;
And every sense and every heart is joy."

Q. What do you mean by Rhyme?

A. Poetry in which, besides the measured arrange-

ment of the words, there is a recurrence of similar sounds at the end of certain lines.

Q. Can you exemplify this?

A. "Order is Heaven's first law; and this con*fest*,
Some are, and must be, greater than the *rest*,
More rich, more wise; but who infers from *hence*,
That such are happier, shocks all common *sense*."

Q. What do you call two successive lines rhyming together?

A. A couplet; while three, under similar circumstances, are called a triplet; as,

"Honour and shame from no condition *rise*;
Act well your part, there all the honour *lies*."

"Four limpid fountains from the cliffs distil;
And every fountain pours a several rill,
In mazy windings wandering down the hill;
Where blooms with vivid green were crown'd,
And glowing violets cast their odours round."

Q. What do you mean by imperfect rhymes?

A. Rhymes in which the sounds in certain syllables make merely an approach to each other, but are not perfectly alike; as,

"Shall only man be taken in the *gross*?
Grant but as many sorts of mind as *moss*."

Q. What do you mean by double rhymes?

A. Rhymes which occur both in the middle, and at the end of the same verse, as well as in the final syllables of different verses; as,

"You, *bustling* and *justling*,
Forget each grief and *pain*;
I, *listless* yet *restless*,
Find every prospect *vain*."

Q. What do you understand by the term stanza?

A. A certain arrangement of verses in which the rhymes do not take place in successive lines, but in such as are placed at some distance from each other: as,

"Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar!
Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime
Hath felt the influence of malignant star,

And waged with Fortune an eternal war;
Check'd by the scoff of Pride, by Envy's frown,
And Poverty's unconquerable bar,
In life's low vale remote hath pined alone,
Then dropt into the grave unpitied and unknown!"

Q. What is the shortest stanza in our language?

A. That which consists of four lines or verses, sometimes with on y the second and fourth lines forming a rhyme, and sometimes with the first and third also: as,

"O Thou Great Being! what thou art
Surpasses me to *know*;
Yet sure I am, that known to thee
Are all thy works be*low*."

"How smiling wakes the verdant *year*,
Arrayed in velvet *green*;
How glad the circling fields ap*pear*,
That bound the blooming *scene*!"

Q. What may be conceived as the origin of rhyme?

A. The pleasure which the ear feels in the recurrence of similar sounds; so that rhyme and alliteration, as well as poetry itself, have all a common origin.

Q. Are rhyme and blank verse alike adapted to all sorts of subjects?

A. Rhyme is best fitted for light and familiar subjects; blank verse for those which are of a graver and more dignified character.

Q. Do blank verse and rhyme equally prevail in all languages?

A. No; in Greek and Latin, rhyme is almost unknown; in French and Italian, there is hardly such a thing as blank verse; while in English, they are nearly alike prevalent.

CHAPTER XLI.

Of the Structure of Verse.

Q. On what does the Structure of Verse chiefly depend?

A. On a certain arrangement of words or syllables, called poetic feet.

Q. How do a certain number and variety of syllables get the name of feet?

A. Because it is chiefly by their means that the voice steps, as it were, along the verse, dividing it into distinct portions, which constitute what is called measure.

Q. Can you illustrate this by example?

A. "But Hope | can here | her moon|light vig'ils keep,
And sing | to charm | the spir|it of | the deep."

Q. On what do these poetic feet depend?

A. With us they depend principally upon accent; among the Greeks and Romans, they depended altogether upon quantity, one long syllable being equal to two short ones.

Q. In what respect, therefore, may all syllables be viewed with regard to poetry?

A. Either as long and short, or as accented and unaccented.

Q. Do accent and quantity ever coincide?

A. They always do so when the accent falls upon a vowel, which causes the syllable to be long as well as accented; as, grātefŭl, pŏlīte.

Q. How many kinds of poetic feet are there?

A. Two; those having but two syllables, and those having three.

Q. What are the feet that have each only two syllables?

A. The Trochee, the Iambus, the Spondee, and the Pyrrhic.

Q. What are those which have three each?

A. The Dactyle, the Amphibrach, the Anapaest, and the Tribrach.

Q. Can you explain the feet consisting of two syllables each?

A. The Trochee has the first syllable accented, and the second unaccented; the Iambus the first unaccented, and the second accented; the Spondee, both accented; and the Pyrrhic, both unaccented; as, bōldnĕss; dĕlīght; pāle sūns; ŏn ĭt.

Q. Can you explain the trisyllabic feet, or those which have three syllables each.

A. The Dactyle has the first syllable accented, and the second and third unaccented; the Amphibrach the first and third unaccented, and the second accented; the Anapaest the first and second unaccented, and the third accented; and the Tribrach the whole three unaccented; as, rēgŭlăr; dĕtērmĭne; cŏuntĕrvāil; measŭrăblĕ.

Q. Do these feet admit of any other division?

A. Yes; they are divided into those called principal, and those called secondary feet.

Q. What are the principal feet?

A. The Iambus, the Trochee, the Dactyle, and the Anapaest; while the Spondee, the Pyrrhic, the Amphibrach, and the Tribrach, are the secondary.

Q. Why are the former called principal feet?

A. Because that of them alone, or, at least chiefly, whole poems may be formed.

Q. Why are the others called secondary feet?

A. Because they never either wholly or chiefly form whole poems, but are merely mixed with the other feet, for the sake of varying the measure or movement of the verse.

CHAPTER XLII.

Of Varieties of Verse.

Q. How are different kinds of verse denominated?

A. According to the particular kind of feet of which it is either wholly or principally formed; as, Iambic, Trochaic, Dactylic, and Anapaestic verse.

Q. How many sorts of Iambic verse are there?

A. Chiefly four, according as it consists of two, three, four, or five feet.

Q. Can you illustrate these different kinds of iambic verse by examples?

A. 1. "Wĭth rāvĭshed eārs
Thĕ mōnărch heārs,
Ăssūmes thĕ gōd,
Ăffēcts tŏ nōd,
2. Ănd sēēms tŏ shāke thĕ sphēres."

3. "Ănd nōw whĕn būsў crōwds rĕtirē
2. Tŏ tāke thĕir ēveninng rēst,
3. Thĕ hērmĭt trĭmmed hĭs lĭttlĕ fīre,
2. Ănd chēēred hĭs pēnsĭve guēst."

4. "Yĕ friēnds tŏ trūth, yĕ stātesmĕn, whō sŭrvēy
Thĕ rĭch măn's jōys ĭncrēase, thĕ pōōr's dĕcāy,
'Tĭs yōūrs tŏ jūdge hŏw wīde thĕ lĭmĭts stānd
Bĕtwēen ă splēndĭd ānd ă hāppў lānd."

Q. What is this last species called?

A. Heroic measure, and is the most common species of verse in the English language.

Q. Does iambic verse never consist of more than five feet?

A. Occasionally it takes six, and is then called Alexandrine measure, the chief use of which is to give variety to the other species of iambic verse.

Q. When is the Alexandrine measure commonly introduced?

A. Chiefly at the close of a poem, a paragraph, or a stanza, of heroic measure; as,

"The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away!
But fixed his word, his saving power remains;
Thў rēalm fŏr ēvĕr lāsts, thў ōwn Mĕssĭăh rēigns!"

Q. What is done with iambic verse consisting of seven feet?

A. It is divided into two lines or verses, the one containing three, the other four feet; as,

"Ălās! bў sōme dĕgrēē ŏf wō,
Wĕ ēv'rў blĭss mŭst gāin;
Thĕ heărt căn nē'er ă trānspŏrt knōw,
Thăt nēvĕr knēw ă pāin."

Q. What is the next most common species of verse?

A. The Anapaestic, which may consist of two, three, or four feet; as,

1. "Ĭn mў rāge shăll bĕ sēēn
Thĕ rĕvēnge ŏf ă quēēn."

2. " Nŏt ă pīne ĭn mў grōve ĭs thĕre sēēn,
Bŭt wĭth tēndrĭls ŏf wōōdbĭne ĭs boūnd ;
Nŏt ă bēēch ĭs mŏre bēautĭfŭl grēēn,
Bŭt ă swēēt-brĭĕr ĕntwīnes ĭt ărōūnd."

3. " Măy Ĭ gōvĕrn mў pāssiŏns wĭth ābsŏlŭte swāy,
And grŏw wīsĕr ŏr bēttĕr ăs lĭfe weărs ăwāy."

Q. Is anapaestic verse a common species of poetry ?

A. Pretty common for short poems, but seldom used in poems of any great length.

Q. Is there much fine trochaic and dactylic verse ?

A. Very little ; for, though often found mixed up with iambic or anapaestic verse, neither is much used by itself.

Q. Can you give any examples of this admixture of feet of which you speak ?

A. " Sōōn wŏuld thĕ vīne hĭs woūnds dĕplōre,
And yield its purple gifts no more."

" She tells with what delight he stood
Tŏ trāce hĭs fēatŭres ĭn thĕ flōōd."

Q. Can you explain the mixture of feet to be found in these couplets ?

A. The first foot of the first verse is a trochee ; while the third in the last verse is a pyrrhic.

Q. What do you call the reducing of verses into their different feet ?

A. Scansion, an exercise which tends much to improve one's skill and taste in poetry.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Of Poetic Pauses.

Q. What do you mean by pauses as applied to poetry ?

A. Those rests of the voice which are necessary for preserving the harmony.

Q. Does poetry, in reading, admit of any pauses which prose would not ?

A. Some say it does ; but it may be safely asserted, that no pause should be made in poetry, that, in the

slightest degree, interferes with the sense, or would be altogether improper in prose.

Q. What poetry is most harmonious?

A. That which is so constructed, as to admit of pauses at something like stated and regular distances from each other, and in proper places of the verse.

Q. Is it the poet, then, or the reader, that regulates the pauses?

A. The poet principally; for, if he so constructs his verse as not to admit of pauses in their proper places without injuring the sense, no skill in reading will be able to render it harmonious.

Q. How many sorts of poetic pauses are there?

A. Two; *Final* and *Caesural.*

Q. What do you mean by the *Final* pause?

A. That which takes place at the close of the verse, or when the sense is complete.

Q. What do you mean by the *Caesural* pause?

A. That which takes place in the middle of a verse where the sense is incomplete, and which marks a mere suspension of the voice for the sake of harmony.

Q. Can you illustrate both of these?

A. "The time shall come, | when free, | as seas or wind, |
Unbounded Thames | shall flow for all mankind." |

Q. When are heroic verses generally most harmonious?

A. When so constructed, that the caesural pause takes place immediately after the fourth, fifth, or sixth syllable.

Q. Can you give any examples of this?

A. "And hence the charm | historic scenes impart;
Hence Tiber awes, | and Avon melts the heart."

"Mark yon old mansion | frowning through the trees,
Whose hollow turret | woos the whistling breeze."

"Remark each anxious toil, | each eager strife,
And watch the busy scenes | of crowded life."

Q. When is the harmony of verse impaired?

A. When the caesural pause hapens nearer the beginning than the fourth, or nearer the end than the sixth syllable.

Q. Can you give an example?

A. "As o'er the dusky furniture | I bend,
Each chair | awakes the feelings of a friend."

Q. Does a verse never admit of more than one caesural pause?

A. It oft admits of two, or even three; as,

"But hope | can here | her moonlight vigils keep,
And sing | to charm the spirit | of the deep."

"Yes; | to thy tongue | shall seraph words | be given,
And power | on earth | to plead the cause | of Heaven."

Q. Has great uniformity of pauses a pleasing effect?

A. No; for though each of the verses, if the pauses are judiciously placed, may be sufficiently harmonious in itself, yet too much sameness soon tires or even disgusts.

Q. When, therefore, are they so placed as to produce the most lasting pleasure?

A. When they are most varied, especially within that range of position most favourable to the harmony of each verse individually.

Q. Have all the verses of any of the particular species of poetry exactly the same number of syllables?

A. By no means; a verse may frequently, from the admixture of different feet, have either a syllable more, or a syllable less, than the requisite number; as,

"Hŏw flēēt | ĭs ă glānce | ŏf thĕ mīnd,
Cŏmpāred | wĭth thĕ spēēd | ŏf ĭts flīght;
Thĕ tēm | pĕst ĭtsēlf | lăgs bĕhīnd,
And thĕ swĭft- | wĭngĕd ār|rŏws ŏf līght."

CHAPTER XLIV.

Of Pastoral and Descriptive Poetry.

Q. What is the nature of Pastoral Poetry?

A. It is that poetry in which the scenes and objects of rural life are celebrated or described.

Q. What is the strict meaning of the word pastoral?

A. As coming from the Latin word *pastor,* a shepherd, in strictness of meaning, it implies only what is connected with the care of sheep; but it is generally

taken in a wider sense, to denote every thing connected with country life and occupation.

Q. Whence does the great charm of pastoral poetry arise?

A. From the tranquil scenes, and pictures of simple innocence, which it sets before the reader.

Q. Into what error are writers of pastorals apt to fall?

A. That of making the actors, in their different scenes, either too gross or too refined.

Q. What do you understand by Descriptive Poetry?

A. Poetry, the professed object of which is, to give a correct delineation of objects, whether natural or artificial.

Q Is not all poetry, to a certain extent, descriptive?

A Most poetry abounds in descriptions, and is so far entitled to the apellation; while no poetry is altogether descriptive without possessing some other characteristics; and, therefore, the term is applied to such poetry only, as has description for its chief object.

Q. What is the chief excellence of descriptive poetry?

A. Its possessing the power of exciting in the mind of the reader, a correct and vivid picture of the object described.

Q. What is requisite for the writing of descriptive poetry?

A. Acute observation, and great vividness of imagination, that we may at once observe, and be able to delineate, the most striking features of an object or a landscape.

Q. Can you mention any poem that stands very high, as belonging to the descriptive class?

A. Thomson's Seasons, a work which abounds with some of the most delightful delineations of nature.

Q. In what light may we view poetry in which past events are described?

A. As a species of descriptive poetry; and, when well executed, it possesses great power both of fascinating and pleasing the mind.

Q. Can you mention any poetry of this class?

A. The most of Sir Walter Scott's is of this sort, but particularly his Lady of the Lake, his Marmion, and his Lord of the Isles.

Q. Are not pastoral poetry and descriptive very much allied to each other?

A. They are certainly closely connected; but pastoral poetry is a display of rural life and manners; descriptive poetry, chiefly a picture of inanimate objects; though neither is exclusively confined to its own province.

CHAPTER XLV.

Of Didactic and Lyric Poetry.

Q. What do you mean by Didactic Poetry?

A. Poetry employed for the purpose of teaching some particular art or science, or other branch of knowledge, whether moral or intellectual.

Q. Is this a pleasing vehicle of knowledge?

A. If well executed, there can but be one opinion as to its pleasantness, but it may be doubted whether it be always a safe mode of acquiring accurate information.

Q. What are its chief advantages?

A. It at once pleases the fancy, and assists the memory; and an obvious truth may often be expressed with greater brevity and force in verse than in prose.

Q. What do you conceive to be its disadvantages?

A. By taking possession of the imagination, it is apt to mislead the judgment, and make us ready to acquiesce in what is said by the poet, without inquiring into its truth.

Q. Can you mention any poems of the didactic class?

A. Virgil's Georgics, Pope's Essay on Criticism, Armstrong's Poem on Health, and some of Cowper's poems, are among the best and most popular of this class.

Q. What is to be understood by Lyric Poetry?

A. All poetry intended to be set, or that might be set, to music; including chiefly songs and odes.

Q. Was its meaning always so confined?

A. No; for, in ancient times, it might be said to include poetry of all descriptions; as all poetic compositions were originally accompanied with music, either vocal or instrumental.

Q. From what is the word lyric derived?

A. From the *lyre*, an important musical instrument among the ancients; and hence the lyre is generally an emblem of all poetry.

Q. What then does a poet mean when he speaks of singing or tuning his lyre?

A. Simply the writing of poetry; and he uses these expressions in a figurative manner, in reference to the inseparable connexion which once subsisted between poetry and music.

Q. What do you understand by a song?

A. A short poem in regular stanzas, and fitted for being set to music and sung.

Q. What is the nature of the ode?

A. A poem somewhat irregular in its structure, and which may or may not be set to music; being generally a short but fervid flow of genius, displaying, in animated strains, all the various passions and feelings of the human heart.

Q Who are our principal writers of odes?

A. Dryden, Pope, Collins, Gray, and Warton.

Q. What do you mean by sonnet?

A. The word is from the Italian, and literally means a little song; but, as usually employed, it signifies a short poem, consisting generally of fourteen lines, arranged in a particular manner, and ending in some pointed thought or sentiment.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Of Epic Poetry.

Q. What rank does the Epic hold in poetry?

A. It generally occupies the first place among poetic compositions, and, if well executed, is regarded as one of the noblest displays of poetic, if not even of human, genius.

Q. What is its peculiar object?

A. To describe some great and important action or event, for the purpose of making it subservient to moral instruction.

Q. What other name does it often receive?

A. It is frequently styled heroic poetry, because, in every poem of this sort, there is a leading character called the hero.

Q. Why is he so named?

A. Because the whole course of the action, and train of the events, are made to turn upon the manner in which he performs his part.

Q. What name does the plan of such a work commonly receive?

A. It is commonly called the plot, which denotes the arranging of all the various parts into a regular whole.

Q. And in what manner is the plot carried on?

A. Partly, by the descriptions and details, which the poet himself makes; and partly, by the introduction of actors, who have all their different parts to perform.

Q. What is this selecting and arranging of the different parts called?

A. It is usually styled the machinery, which denotes the means adopted by the poet for carrying his plot to a conclusion.

Q. Does he begin and give a regular account of the whole transaction from the commencement?

A. No; he generally begins in the middle, but at some important part, of the narrative; and, after describing the state of things as then existing, he introduces different actors to explain what had led to such events.

Q. What name is given to those parts which are introduced as if for mere embellishment?

A. They are called episodes, which mean separate

incidents or stories, having an intimate, though not a necessary, connexion with the main action.

Q. How should an epic poem be arranged?

A. With such order and regularity, that all the parts may have a close dependence upon each other.

Q. What ought the sentiments and language to be?

A. Lofty and dignified, always moving with majesty, and never stooping to what is mean or trivial.

Q. What must be the character of the style?

A. It may, in point of ornament, admit of every variety of which composition is susceptible; but its leading feature ought to be sublimity.

Q. Have there been many great epic poems produced?

A. Very few, compared with the number of excellent productions in almost every other description of poetry.

Q. Can you mention the principal?

A. The Iliad and Odyssey of Homer, the Eneid of Virgil, the Jerusalem Delivered of Tasso, and the Paradise Lost of Milton.

Q. Can you mention the subjects of each of these?

A. The subject of the Iliad is the destruction of Troy; of the Odyssey, the wanderings of Ulysses; of the Eneid, the settlement of Eneas in Italy; of the Jerusalem, its deliverance from Mussulman oppression; and of Paradise Lost, the fall of man from his primitive state of innocence, and consequent expulsion from the garden of Eden.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Of Dramatic Poetry.

Q. What do you understand by Dramatic Poetry?

A. Poetry founded upon a regular plot or story, and fitted to be represented by action on the stage.

Q. In what does it differ from epic poetry?

A. In its containing no narrative on the part of the poet, being all spoken or performed by the different actors or characters, who are introduced.

Q. What is the greatest excellence of dramatic poetry?

A. Its being in accordance with nature, and making a near approach to the character of real life.

Q. What then are the chief objects of dramatic poetry?

A. Men and manners, with an exhibition of all the various passions, virtues, and vices, incident to human nature.

Q. How many sorts of dramatic poetry are there?

A. Chiefly two,—Tragedy and Comedy.

Q. What constitutes the difference between these?

A. Tragedy is founded principally upon the loftier passions, virtues, vices, successes, and distresses of mankind; comedy, on their whims, fancies, humours, vagaries, foibles, and follies.

Q. What are the passions which they chiefly awaken?

A. Terror, pity, and indignation, are the passions chiefly excited by tragedy; ridicule and contempt, those principally produced by comedy.

Q. What knowledge would the dramatic writer require particularly to possess?

A. An intimate acquaintance with life and character, as well as with all the different movements and operations of the human heart.

Q. What must be the style of dramatic poetry?

A. Its style must depend altogether upon the nature of the subject, and the character of the different actors.

Q. Who may be regarded as the best dramatic writer?

A. He who best displays the workings and effects of human passion, and gives to every character the greatest distinctness and personality.

Q. Is tragedy a very common species of composition?

A. Very much so; it prevailed greatly among the Greeks and the Romans, and has since found a place in the literature of every nation in Europe.

Q. Can you mention any of the most distinguished ancient dramatic writers?

A. Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, among

the Greeks; and Plautus and Terence, among the Romans.

Q. Who are among the most eminent of modern dramatic writers?

A. Racine and Molière among the French; and Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Dryden, Otway, and Congreve, among the English; with a few German, Italian, and Spanish names of considerable celebrity.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Of Hymns, Elegy, &c.

Q. What do you understand by a Hymn?

A. A religious poem, fit for being set to music and sung, for the purpose of awakening devotional feelings.

Q. Can you mention some of the most distinguished writers of hymns?

A. Watts, Pope, Addison, Logan, Cowper, Montgomery, Edmeston, with almost all our most distinguished modern poets.

Q. What is an Elegy?

A. A short pathetic poem, in commemoration of the dead, though it often assumes a different character, and is applied to any plaintive subject.

Q. What is a Satire?

A. A species of writing, not entirely, though chiefly, confined to poetry, and intended to correct the vices and follies of mankind, by holding them up to laughter and ridicule.

Q. Can you name any poetical satirists of note.

A. Horace, Juvenal, and Persius, among the Romans; with Dryden, Pope, Young, Churchill, and Walcot, among the British, are all famous for this description of writing.

Q. What do you mean by an Epigram?

A. A short, witty poem, containing some peculiar conceit or point of humour, usually expressed in the concluding lines.

Q. Can you give an example of an epigram?

A. The following lines from Pope may serve as a specimen :—

"Accept a miracle; instead of wit,
See two dull lines by Stanhope's pencil writ."

Q. What do you mean by an Epitaph?

A. An inscription upon a tombstone, or some public building, written sometimes in verse, sometimes in prose.

Q. Are not letters sometimes written in verse?

A. Frequently; and much excellent poetry has appeared under the character of epistles, particularly from the pen of Pope.

Q. Is the line of distinction between the different descriptions of poetry very clear?

A. Far from it; the one sort runs always less or more into the other; and all the species are, to a certain extent, entitled to the character of descriptive and didactic, as they are almost all used, in some degree, for the purpose both of describing and teaching.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Of the Sonnet.

Q. What is a Sonnet?

A. A short, pointed poem, of fourteen lines, either expressive of some strong feeling, or descriptive of some striking object; and so constructed, that the first, fourth, fifth, and eighth; the second and third; the sixth and seventh; the ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth; and the tenth, twelfth, and fourteenth lines, form rhymes with each other.

Q. Can you give an example of a sonnet?

A. The following, "To Sleep," is a very fine specimen of one from Wordsworth :—

"A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds, and seas,
Smooth fields; white sheets of water, and pure sky;
I thought of all by turns, and yet I lie
Sleepless! and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees;
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.

Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth,
So do not let me wear to-night away.
Without Thee, what is all the morning's wealth!
Come, blessed barrier between day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health."

Q. Is the sonnet a common species of poetry?

A. It is far from being common in English; but it is frequently to be met with in Italian.

Q. To what is this difference owing?

A. To the circumstance chiefly of the Italian language being better adapted to this kind of poetry, than the English.

Q. Can you mention some of the most distinguished writers of sonnets?

A. Petrarch stands at the head of the Italian sonneteers; while Shakspeare, Milton, and Wordsworth, are the most distinguished among the English.

CHAPTER L.

Of Different Languages.

Q. Is language much subject to change?

A. As much so as perhaps any thing connected with human affairs.

Q. On what do these changes depend?

A. Partly upon the political changes occasioned by war and conquest, and partly upon the progress of knowledge and of civilisation.

Q. Does each language then stand separate and distinct from every other?

A. Far from it; for many of them, being closely allied to each other, require them to be viewed in the light of families or kindred.

Q. What produces this close connexion or alliance?

A. The circumstance of their being either sprung from a common origin, or subjected to the operation of similar political changes.

Q. How would you illustrate this?

A. By a reference to the languages of France, Spain,

and Italy, among which there is an intimate connexion, as having all sprung from the Latin.

Q. How come they to be descended from the Latin?

A. Because the Romans, who spoke the Latin language, having long had full and entire possession of these countries, had succeeded in establishing in them their own language.

Q. And how came this language to be changed?

A. By these countries having, in the course of time, been overrun by rude and barbarous nations from the north of Europe; and thus their languages gradually lost their pure Latin character in consequence of being blended with those of the invaders, though they retained so much of their primitive distinction as to mark their Latin origin.

Q. Into how many classes, therefore, may languages be divided?

A. Two; such as are primitive and original; and such as are borrowed or derived from some other.

Q. But if all languages, as we have reason to believe, have descended from one origin, must there not be only one primitive language?

A. Strictly speaking there must; but as we are ignorant of what that original language was, we are accustomed to consider every language as original, which does not seem to have any close affinity with any other with which we are acquainted.

CHAPTER LI.

Of the Primitive Languages of Europe.

Q. From how many primitives are the languages of Europe supposed to be derived?

A. Chiefly from four; the Greek, the Gothic or Teutonic, the Celtic, and the Sclavonic.

Q. Do any of these, as spoken languages, still retain their original form?

A. The Celtic and the Sclavonic do so to a very great degree, but the others have become greatly changed.

Q. And where does the Sclavonic continue to be a spoken language?

A. Chiefly in Hungary, Poland, Bohemia, and Russia.

Q. In what places does the Celtic still prevail?

A. In Wales, the Highlands of Scotland, Brittany in France, and some districts of Ireland.

Q. What are the principal languages derived from the Greek?

A. The modern Greek, spoken in Greece, and some of the islands of the Archipelago, as well as the different languages of which Latin is the basis, this latter tongue being itself a derivative from the Greek.

Q. And what are these languages?

A. Most of those spoken in the south of Europe, including the French, the Italian, the Spanish, and the Portuguese.

Q. What are the languages founded chiefly on the Gothic or Teutonic?

A. The German, the Dutch, the Danish, the Swedish, and the English.

Q. Do the languages of different countries always retain their distinctive characters?

A. They do so to a certain extent, though those of adjoining tribes and nations always run less or more into each other.

CHAPTER LII.

Of the English Language.

Q. What renders English a language of so much importance?

A. The circumstances of its being spoken by so great a multitude of the human race at the present day; of its being so copious, simple, and expressive; and of its containing so rich, so varied, and so refined a literature.

Q. Has it always possessed these characteristics?

A. Far from it; for, till within these three hundred years or so, it was rude and irregular in its structure; meagre in its vocabulary, and power of expression; and

destitute of every thing deserving the name of a literature.

Q. What tended to keep it so long in this state?

A. Partly the ignorance and barbarity of the people, and partly the practice which so long prevailed among the learned, of writing almost every thing in Latin.

Q. What prompted the learned for so long a period to compose chiefly in Latin?

A. That they might, by enlarging the circle of their readers, enjoy a more extended popularity.

Q. How did writing in a dead language increase the number of their readers?

A. Because Latin at that time was the language which the learned all cultivated and understood, while the illiterate were generally so ignorant as to be unable even to read or write their own tongue.

Q. Was there no other cause that tended to perpetuate the use of Latin as a written language?

A. Yes; there was the circumstance of so much of the service of the Catholic Church being performed in Latin; and besides, our schools and universities being founded almost exclusively for the education of churchmen, the Roman tongue was honoured in these seats of learning by being made nearly the sole instrument of communicating thought.

Q. Who were the first improvers of the English language?

A. Those chiefly who wrote for the common people; and of these the poets took the lead.

Q. Supposing Latin to have been less cultivated, would the progress of the English language have been slow on any other account?

A. Yes; for, beside the unsettled state of the country, the dearth of books would have precluded every thing like learning among the great bulk of the people, and a language cannot improve rapidly till extensively used in literary compositions.

Q. How does this happen?

A. Because till such time as writers find numerous readers they cannot be expected to bestow much pains upon their compositions.

CHAPTER LIII.

Of the Early History of the English Language, &c.

Q. From whom have we the earliest accounts of Britain ?

A. From the Romans ; and more especially from the famous general and elegant writer, Julius Cæsar.

Q. What language was then spoken in the country ?

A. That known by the name Celtic, and the same as prevailed at one time in France, Spain, and Portugal.

Q. What proof have we of the Celtic having been then the common language of the country ?

A. The names of a vast number of its mountains, rivers, and lakes, and of other objects of a permanent character, are Celtic in their origin, a thing which never could have happened, had that language not been early and long the common speech of the country.

Q. Why are the names of towns not also of the same origin ?

A. Because towns being fluctuating in their nature, many of those of ancient date are now extinct, and many of those still existing have been of a date long subsequent to the pure Celtic period.

Q. What effect is the Roman conquest supposed to have had upon this language ?

A. By introducing the use of Latin among the upper classes, it caused the Celtic to become the language of the lower orders merely.

Q. Did the two languages not blend into one ?

A. No ; for those who had adopted the Latin, generally abandoned their native tongue ; and the Romans never came to settle in such numbers as to produce any material change upon the original language of the country.

Q. To what purposes was the Celtic language applied, beside the common intercourse of life ?

A. To those chiefly of eloquence and poetry.

Q. What instances have we of Celtic eloquence ?

A. The warlike harangues delivered to their followers by Caractacus, Galgacus, and Boadicea.

Q. Who were their principal poets?

A. Those among the Druids denominated bards, whose office it was to celebrate the praises of their gods and heroes.

Q. What branches of knowledge did the Druids chiefly cultivate?

A. Beside the learning peculiar to their sacerdotal office, they cultivated principally medicine, astronomy, and law.

Q. Were they acquainted with the art of writing?

A. Cæsar says they were, but that they never practised it, except for the purpose of concealing, rather than of promulgating the knowledge which they possessed.

Q. What were some of the principal changes introduced by the Roman conquest?

A. The art of writing, of agriculture, and of architecture; and while it abolished Druidism, it substituted Christianity in its room.

CHAPTER LIV.

The same Subject continued.

Q. Did the arts and improvements introduced by the Romans continue long to flourish?

A. No; they had not been long established till they were not merely checked, but entirely obliterated.

Q. By what event did this take place?

A. By that great revolution, called the Saxon conquest.

Q. What change did this produce upon the language?

A. The people having been exterminated by their invaders, rather than subdued, except among the fastnesses of Wales and the Highlands, every trace of the Celtic language became obliterated in all the other parts of the island, and the Saxon introduced in its stead.

Q. What was the character of the Saxons for learning?

A. Being a rude and savage race, whose sole occupa-

tion was war, in religion they were heathens, and in learning so deficient as not even to be acquainted with the use of letters.

Q. Did they long continue in this state?

A. No; for, having completely subjugated the country, they gradually settled down to a more regular course of life; and the re-introduction of Christianity, gave a new impulse to learning by making the people acquainted with the art of writing.

Q. In what language did the learned men continue for a time to write?

A. In the Latin; and one or two of the most distinguished of the Saxon Latin writers are Gildas, a native of Alcluyd, now Dumbarton; Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury; and the Venerable Bede, a native, and afterwards a monk, of the abbey of Wearmouth in the county of Durham.

Q. What characters did the Saxons use in writing their own tongue?

A. With the exception of a character to denote *th*, and another to denote *w*, their letters were the same as the Roman.

Q. Who were among the earliest writers in the Saxon language?

A. Two individuals called, for distinction, the one the *elder*, the other the *second* Caedmon, who were the authors of religious poetry.

Q. Of what did the Saxon literature chiefly consist?

A. Principally of poems, histories or chronicles, religious treatises, and translations from the Scriptures and from Latin authors, with some few tales or fictions.

Q. Who is one of its brightest ornaments?

A. The celebrated King Alfred, who is regarded not only as one of the wisest of monarchs, but as one of the most learned men of his day, and an ardent promoter both of religion and learning among his subjects.

Q. Did the Saxon language and literature regularly improve after Alfred's time?

A. Quite the reverse; for, first by their incursions, and then by the invasion and ultimate conquest of the

untry by the Danes, society was thrown into the ut-ost confusion, and all improvement in language, in erature, and the arts of life, was completely checked.

Q. Did the Danish conquest produce much change pon the character of the language?

A. Much less than might have been expected, for the anish, like the Saxon tongue, being of Gothic origin, as only a different dialect of the same language, and, ith the exception of checking its improvement, had ttle effect in altering the speech of the country.

CHAPTER LV.

Of the Effect of the Conquest.

Q. What was the first event that produced much ef-ct upon the Saxon language?

A. The great intercourse, which began to take place etween Britain and Normandy, in part directly, but till more indirectly, was the first thing that tended to ffect the language to any great degree.

Q. To what was this intercourse chiefly owing?

A. To the circumstance of so many of the Saxon rinces and nobility having taken refuge in that coun-ry during the period of Danish sway in Britain.

Q. What individual in particular showed great par-iality for every thing Norman?

A. Edward the Confessor, who, being descended rom Ethelred the Second, a Saxon refugee, had been rought up at the court of Normandy, and therefore ook every opportunity of testifying his attachment to is benefactors.

Q. What effect had his example upon the rest of the ountry?

A. It caused the nobility, and those possessed of wealth, to send their sons into Normandy to be edu-ated, which in time produced, in the higher classes, a trong partiality to the Norman, and a sad disregard to heir own, language.

Q. What sort of language was the Norman?

A. A language which had arisen from the admixture

of the Latin as spoken in France, and of that dialect of the Gothic which was spoken by the Northmen and other warlike tribes, who had overrun and conquered that fine country.

Q. In what respects did the new language resemble or differ from those from which it had sprung?

A. It retained a greater resemblance to the Latin in the words of which it was composed; but seemed more akin to the Gothic or Teutonic in its general structure, and in the arrangement of its words into sentences.

Q. What motive had the English nobility to prefer the Norman language to the Saxon?

A. Probably the vanity, in part, of being thus farther distinguished from the common people; though the consideration of the Norman being regarded as a more refined and cultivated language, must have had no slight influence.

Q. What was the indirect consequence to the language of this great intercourse with Normandy?

A. It paved the way for the Norman conquest, an event which happened in the year 1066, and which ultimately produced a complete revolution in the language, the literature, and the institutions of the country.

CHAPTER LVI.

Of the Effects of the Norman Conquest.

Q. To what barbarous policy had the Norman conquerors recourse, the better to strengthen their usurped power?

A. To the dire expediency of endeavouring to extirpate the very language of the people, in order that, by making them forget their Saxon lineage, they might more reconcile them to the Norman yoke.

Q. What measures were taken the better to effect this purpose?

A. All offices of honour, of trust, and of emolument, were filled by the foreigners, and the Norman tongue was enjoined as the language to be used at court, in the enactment of laws, and in all legal proceedings.

Q. Whom did the Normans easily get to obey these harsh edicts?

A. The nobility or higher classes, who had not been ejected from their estates, though of this description of persons the number was very small; and the Normans who became masters of the country had no motive to abandon their original speech.

Q. How many languages then were for a time spoken in the country?

A. Two; the Norman among all who aimed at being genteel, and the Saxon, by all the common people; while the Latin still continued to be the language of the learned, and of the church service.

Q. What was ultimately the result of this distinction?

A. For a time, these two languages kept perfectly distinct, but at last they began to coalesce, and then sprung up that noble tongue which we now call English.

Q. At what time did this result begin to take place?

A. The precise period cannot now be ascertained; but it is likely to have been early; for, as the common people could not speak the Norman, nor the higher classes the Saxon, they would soon see the propriety of compromising the matter, by each party, for the sake of being understood, adopting more or less of the language of the other.

Q. Which language ultimately prevailed over the other?

A. They were probably nearly on a par as to the number of words adopted from each; but the Saxon retained the decided ascendency as to the terminational distinctions and the grammatical construction of the words into sentences.

Q. What are the kinds of words in our language that are chiefly of Saxon origin?

A. Most of those that are short, and are used to express common objects and common events.

Q. What was the nature of those words derived from the Norman French?

A. They were chiefly those of a Latin origin, and which, being generally words of more syllables than one, are used to express less common objects and occurrences.

Q. With what two languages has this union chiefly allied the English?

A. With the original Saxon, and with the Latin through the medium of the Norman French.

Q. What peculiar characters does it receive from each?

A. From the former strength and vivacity, with sometimes considerable harshness of sound; from the latter smoothness, harmony, and greater pomp and dignity.

CHAPTER LVII.

Of the Modern History of our Language.

Q. What length of time did the Saxon and Norman French take to fuse and form themselves into the new language?

A. A period of nearly three hundred years; for, though the process was early begun, it required this long time to bring it to completion; so slow is the progress of human affairs in rude periods of society.

Q. Were there many writers during this period?

A. A considerable number, though none of any very high reputation.

Q. Of what kind were they chiefly?

A. They consisted principally of the learned, who composed mostly in Latin, and upon religious and philosophical subjects; and of chroniclers and poets called minstrels, who wrote chiefly in the popular language of the country.

Q. Do the latter exhibit much uniformity of style?

A. Far from it; for the character of their compositions seems to vary not only according to the time, but even to the part of the country, in which they lived and wrote.

Q. In whose reign might the change of language be said to have been completed?

A. In the reign of Edward the Third, which began in 1326, and ended in 1377.

Q. In what manner did he accelerate this event?

A. By making English the language of his court, and by discontinuing the Norman in all law proceedings.

Q. Who may be regarded as the earliest writer of genuine English poetry?

A. Geoffrey Chaucer, who was born in 1328, and died in 1400, leaving behind him many monuments of his noble genius, the principal of which are the Canterbury Tales.

Q. Who were the principal prose writers of that period?

A. Sir John Mandeville, a distinguished traveller; and John Wicliffe, who is often regarded as the father of the Reformation.

Q. After the great celebrity of Chaucer, did English writers succeed each other in rapid succession?

A. Very much so indeed; though none gained such high reputation as Chaucer, prior to the period of Elizabeth.

Q. What were the principal changes which took place upon the language during the 150 years from Chaucer's time?

A. It became for one thing more regular in its orthography, many of the old words were suffered to drop out of use, and new ones, chiefly from the Latin, were introduced; and altogether the language became more elegant, copious, and refined.

Q. What class of writers took the lead in this improvement?

A. The poets chiefly, and of these Scotland can boast of more than her due proportion.

Q. What event tended to secure past and promote future improvements in the language?

A. The art of printing, which was invented in Holland early in the fifteenth century, and introduced to England by William Caxton, in the year 1474.

CHAPTER LVIII.

The same Subject continued.

Q. In whose reign did the English language and literature make greatest progress?

A. In that of Elizabeth, and of her successor, James.

Q. What characters did the language then assume?

A. Those of great copiousness, flexibility, vigour, and grandeur; and it acquired further the character of a more regular orthography.

Q. To what had diversity of spelling been previously owing?

A. To the circumstance of there having been previously no fixed standard, every one spelling his words according as his own ear or fancy dictated.

Q. Who were some of the principal ornaments of English literature during these reigns?

A. Sydney, Spencer, Essex, and Raleigh; but especially Bacon, Shakspeare, and Hooker.

Q. What did the language still require to make it almost perfect as an instrument of thought?

A. Nothing but a little additional polish and refinement; a slight infusion of taste and elegance; a lopping off of redundancies and extravagances; and a greater closeness and condensation of thought.

Q. Who were among the next great improvers of our language?

A. Milton, Dryden, Butler, Clarendon, Burnet, Tillotson, Hobbes, and Locke, with many others too numerous to mention.

Q. In what were many of the writers of the times of Charles the Second, and William and Mary chiefly defective?

A. In correctness of taste, often substituting quaintness for originality, and mistaking affectation for wit.

Q. During what reigns did our language receive its highest polish?

A. During those of Queen Anne, and of the Georges, continuing down to the present day.

Q. Who have been mainly instrumental in this improvement?

A. Addison, Steele, Pope, Swift, Hawksworth, Chesterfield, Goldsmith, Johnson, Gibbon, Hume, Robertson, Blair, Beattie, together with all our distinguished writers, whether of prose or poetry, who have adorned our literature during the important period of the last half century.

Q. What may be said to be the present character of our language?

A. It is copious, elegant, and energetic, well fitted for every species of subject, abounding in all the richest stores of literature, whether designed for improvement or pleasure, and adorned alike with the treasures of religion, science, and philosophy, the effusions of fancy, the records of history, the sublime inventions of imagination, and the majestic movements of the noblest oratory.

CHAPTER LIX.

Of Periodical Literature.

Q. What do you understand by Periodical Literature?

A. Works published in detached portions, and at stated times; and devoted chiefly, if not exclusively, to literary or scientific subjects.

Q. Do not newspapers belong to this department of literature?

A. Strictly speaking they do; though, from the circumstance of their being devoted almost entirely to political topics, and a detail of the remarkable occurrences that take place in the world, they are generally ranked as a distinct class by themselves, often styled the *newspaper press.*

Q. Is periodical literature of high antiquity?

A. No; it is of comparatively recent origin, having never been apparently thought of by the ancients.

Q. How can this oversight be accounted for?

A. By the want of that important instrument, the *printing-press;* for, had all works still to be written out by the hand, this species of literature, if known at all, must have been extremely limited.

Q. Where and when did periodical literature take its rise?

A. In France, in the year 1665, when the first work of the kind, not properly political, was begun by one Dennis de Sallo, under the denomination of the *Journal des Sçavans.*

Q. From what time may we date its origin in England?

A. From February 1704, when the celebrated Daniel Defoe commenced his work called the *Review*.

Q. Did the Review continue long solitary?

A. No; for it was speedily followed by the Tatler, the Spectator, and the Guardian, which, though ranked with the British Essayists, were nevertheless periodicals.

Q. Has periodical literature extended much since that time?

A. It is now, perhaps the most extensive of all our departments of literature, and seems to command the attention of readers of all classes.

Q. At what intervals, and under what titles, do periodicals now generally appear?

A. Some are published weekly, some monthly, others quarterly, and not a few yearly; and under the various denominations of Journals, Magazines, Miscellanies, Reviews, and Annuals.

Q. In what does the principal attraction of this kind of literature consist?

A. In its containing a great variety of light, elegant, and amusing reading, with a good deal of general information, though commonly of a rather superficial character.

Q. What is supposed to be the effect of so much periodical literature upon the public mind?

A. While it induces some to read, who probably otherwise would not, it is supposed to withdraw the attention of not a few from the perusal of more regular and important works; and, by giving a mere smattering of many things rather than a thorough acquaintance with any one, to make our knowledge more superficial than solid, and more showy than useful.

THE END.

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