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USING THE KING'S ENGLISH

SOME GUIDANCE TO PRACTICE

BY
W. J. WESTON, M.A., B.Sc.



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PREFACE

THESE discussions are intended to supplement the grammar book, not to supersede it. They assume a reasonably competent knowledge of ordinary English usage. When they do deal with grammatical rules, they deal with the more debatable applications and, as will be evident, mainly in response to requests for guidance.

Doubtless, the illustrations of the various points raised will delight, even though the discussions should prove dull and heavy; for these illustrations are taken from writings that men will always rejoice to read. Still, the discussions will, one hopes, afford some help towards the producing of sound purposeful talk and of vigorous writing.

One further point of explanation is desirable. It is modern English that is our main topic. Certainly, the poet is entitled to his licence, and we need not examine very closely the exclamation, "We must be free or die that speak the tongue Which Shakespeare spake."

Well, none of us can write like Shakespeare. But ought we to seek to speak like him? Only in so far as this mode of speaking corresponds to current speech. For English is a means of communication with our contemporaries, with people living in the twentieth century, not the sixteenth: our speech and our writing should be what our contemporaries can readily interpret in the intended sense. Nor should we, by being eccentric in our writing and speech, give occasion for offence. We conform to custom when we attend a banquet. It is well, in order to free from embarrassment those with whom we talk or to whom we write, to conform to custom in our language too.

Here and there, to emphasize what is said in the text, an exercise has been introduced. In the closing pages there are suggestions, meagre or full, concerning the answers. Perhaps those that think fit to work the exercises will not look upon these suggestions as impertinences.

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The compilation of the book has gone on, however, during many years; and it may be that other sources of the matter included are entitled to grateful acknowledgement. If the author has inadvertently encroached upon another's rights he humbly apologizes, and he heartily thanks his suppliers for their labours.

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USING THE KING'S ENGLISH

CHAPTER I

THE PURPOSE OF IT ALL

To be able to write! Throughout Mr. Ogilvy's life, save when he was about one and twenty, this had seemed the great thing, and he ever approached the thought reverently, as if it were a maid of more than mortal purity. And it is, and because he knew this she let him see her face, which shall ever be hidden from those who look not for the soul, and to help him nearer to her came assistance in strange guise, the loss of loved ones, dolour unutterable; but still she was beyond his reach. Night by night, when the only light in the glen was the school-house lamp, of use at least as a landmark to solitary travellers—who miss it nowadays, for it burns no more—she hovered over him, nor did she deride his hopeless efforts, but rather as she saw him go from black to grey and from grey to white in her service, were her luminous eyes sorrowful because she was not for him, and she bent impulsively towards him, so that once or twice in a long life he touched her fingers, and a heavenly spark was lit, for he had risen higher than himself, and that is literature.

So you read in *Sentimental Tommy*. The passage is one of the ever-recurring variants in the expression of Milton's ambition: "by labour and intent study, which I take to be my portion in this life, joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die."

Your aspirations are perhaps on a lower plane. You do not

seek to produce what shall be proof against oblivion. You do, however, aspire to produce sound vigorous prose that shall carry the thoughts you have into the minds of others, that shall carry these thoughts without great loss on the journey.

There is the assumption underlying these commentaries. They are planned as helps towards the command of effective English. They will have failed dismally unless they impel you to take thought about your manner of expressing yourself, unless so taking thought you become more competent in the craftsmanship of English.

Craftsmanship in English

This craftsmanship consists in the ability to put your thoughts into such combinations of words as will be readily interpreted in the intended sense by those to whom you speak or for whom you write. "That is all very well," you say; "but what a number of implications it contains!" It does. It means that you must have at your command an adequate supply of words. It means further that you must know how those words will be interpreted by others. And it means that you must be able to arrange these words so that you give little trouble towards getting at your meaning, and—you owe this to your hearers or readers—so that you give in addition some delight in the process. Here are they that have honoured you with their attention. Have you given to them any thoughts worth the expense of attention? Have you given the thoughts without charging too much for cost of carriage?

Your Essay

Well, wherein lies the virtue of good English composition, spoken or written? What are the qualities that separate the wheat from the tares? The answer is not easy; and different ways of approach to the answer exist. You are, for instance, asked to write an essay upon a given topic, asked to put into reasonable compass what is worth saying about it.

One judge of your completed effort, having at his disposition a hundred marks, awards them as a result of his general impression. He awards high marks if the essay gives evidence that you have a number of valuable thoughts about the topic, and can use the English language as a reliable vehicle of the thoughts.

That would be one way of judging—a good way with some judges. But maybe it is dependent too much on the judge's personality. Perhaps the better scheme of marking, less subject to whim and caprice, is that of another judge who allocates marks in accordance with the various "elements" in the composition. These "elements"—*Vocabulary, Accuracy, Craftsmanship, Consistency, Completeness, Substance,* and *Quality*—are what we discuss.

Not that the production of good English is a mere mechanic art, a matter of measurement by rule. But it is well to know what to aim at. You use the English language as an indispensable tool for the journey-work of life; and skill in the use of tools comes from resolute and unremitting practice at elementary exercises.

The "Element of Vocabulary"

Consider this element of vocabulary. What is meant by "your" vocabulary? It is your range of language. It comprises on the one hand the words that you understand when you hear them or see them in print. That is your passive vocabulary. It comprises on the other hand the words that you can use fittingly in your talk and writing. That is your active vocabulary. The second is smaller, usually a good deal smaller than the first. Read this passage, for instance—

"I protest," said Pendennis, "against the wretch of a middleman whom I see between Genius and his great landlord, the Public, and who stops more than half of the labourer's earnings and fame."

"I am a prose labourer," Warrington said: "you, my boy, are a poet in a small way, and so, I suppose, consider you are authorized to be flighty. What is it you want? Do you want a body of capitalists that shall be forced to purchase the works of all authors who may present themselves manuscript in hand? Everybody who writes his epic, every driveller who can or can't spell, and produces his novel or his tragedy —are they all to come and find a bag of sovereigns in exchange for their worthless reams of paper? Who is to settle what is good or bad, saleable or otherwise? Will you give the buyer leave, in fine, to purchase or

not? Why, sir, when Johnson sate behind the screen at Saint John's Gate, and took his dinner apart, because he was too shabby and poor to join the literary bigwigs who were regaling themselves round Mr. Cave's best table cloth, the tradesman was doing him no wrong. You couldn't force the publisher to recognize the man of genius in the young man who presented himself before him, ragged, gaunt, and hungry. Rags are not a proof of genius; whereas capital is absolute, as times go, and is perforce the bargain-master."

Active and Passive Vocabularies

Now, it is tolerably certain that you can interpret in their intended senses all the words here. They are in your passive vocabulary. It is tolerably certain, though, that you do not make customary use of all—"in fine," "bigwig," "sate," "regaling," and others perhaps. They are not all part of your active vocabulary. Nor need they be. You ought, as you well know, to shrink from using a good many words that you understand perfectly well.

Your passive vocabulary should be wide-sweeping. But the good craftsman will be fastidious in his use of the words at his disposal; he will be able to reject unsuitable words as well as to select suitable words. Besides, words like garments go out of fashion. You may understand the words well enough; they were not thought strange on the tongue or from the pen of old; but you will not use them to express your thoughts to your contemporaries, any more than you will on ordinary occasions wear the ruff of the Elizabethans. Yet you can delight in the words and in the manner of their use. Here is a glorious passage from a seventeenth century writer—

Restless unquiet for the diuturnity of our memories unto present considerations seems a vanity almost out of date, and superannuated piece of folly. We cannot hope to live so long in our names, as some have done in their persons. One face of Janus holds no proportion unto the other. 'Tis too late to be ambitious. The great mutations of the world are acted, or time may be too short for our designs. To extend our

memories by monuments, whose death we daily pray for, and whose duration we cannot hope, without injury to our expectations in the advent of the last day, were a contradiction to our beliefs. We, whose generations are ordained in this setting part of time, are providentially taken off from such imaginations; and, being necessitated to eye the remaining particle of futurity, are naturally constituted unto thoughts of the next world, and cannot excusably decline the consideration of that duration, which maketh pyramids pillars of snow, and all that's past a moment.

It comes from the last chapter of Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn-burial*. You can read this again and again with delight. But what a number of words the paragraph contains which you would not dream of using in ordinary conversation, which would be quite out of place in your business life!

Enlarge Your Vocabulary

Clearly, one aim in studying English should be to enlarge both vocabularies; for you wish to receive as well as to give. You wish to understand as well as to be understood. You will enlarge your passive vocabulary by diligently reading good authors, by eagerly listening to good speakers, and by assiduous recourse to a good dictionary. You will enlarge your active vocabulary by unremitting practice in speaking and writing.

There is abundant room for extending both vocabularies, passive as well as active. However great your knowledge of words, there will be some in the English language that you neither use nor understand.[1]

[1] *Basic English*. We could very likely get along quite well without this wealth of words. Here, for example, comes "Basic English" to our notice. There has long been among men a desire to find remedy for the troubles brought by the building of the Tower of Babel. Can we not hit upon a means whereby men and women of diverse races and diverse languages may communicate freely with one another? Cannot we find or frame an international language? "Basic" English is the latest attempt; and it would appear destined to be abundantly successful. At all events a great number of men in many countries have given the system their approval. It certainly does not suffer from the many artificial devices that vitiated former systems. Its author is Mr. C. K. Ogden of the Orthological Institute—"orthology" is that part of grammar which deals with the correct use of words—of Cambridge. He has compiled a list of English words, 850 in all, that cover the greater part of man's interests; and he has shown how these words may be put in the right places. Here is a little extract from a pamphlet written in Basic

Open a good English dictionary haphazard. If you don't find on the single page half a dozen words unfamiliar, you are an exceptional person. Even while it is being printed the dictionary is becoming deficient; for new words come without intermission into the language. When scientists meet in conference we are bombarded with terms either not yet noted in our dictionaries or noted only in the latest edition of the latest. Who knows what "macrocarpa" is? One is lamenting the road-making threat to local amenities and writes, "The footpath means cutting down beautiful trees and the replacing of old fences with concrete posts, wire, and macrocarpa." And we must search to find that "macrocarpa" is the Monterey Cypress (*cupressus macrocarpa*), a quick-growing shrub. Who knows what a "bel," with the single, not the double l, is? ("The basic unit now adopted for measuring sound intensity is the bel; but for practical purposes decibels are normally used, 10 decibels being equivalent to one bel." A bel, it appears, measures a tenfold increase in sound intensity.) Or who knows what a "phon" is? ("At 60 phons," we are gravely informed, "talk can still be comfortable, at 110 virtually impossible. The 110 phons measure the loudness of a printing press room or of a pneumatic drill close by. Ninety phons is that of a room full of typewriters, or of an express train with the window open.") To enlarge one's vocabulary is desirable; but we need not despair when we do meet unknown words in English itself.

Unfamiliar Words

You get, for instance, a pamphlet issued by the Minister of Health. A glance at the list of occupations shows strange and varied ways of performing services. You have some notion of

---

English. Perhaps, unless you had been told, you would not have noted any artificial restriction about it: "The English language has come to a stage in its development and expansion at which it may be said to have the qualities most needed in a language for international use. It is the natural language or the language of the Government of over 500,000,000 persons. It is the language of trade, and in the years after the War it has been used so much in discussions between the representatives of different nations that it may well become the normal language for the international exchange of political views . . . the learning of these Basic words takes 30 hours. Two hours' work every day for a month makes it possible for anyone to get a more or less complete knowledge of the system. After 50 hours' work a night-school group in Copenhagen went 'on the air' from Radio Kalundborg last year with the approval of the Danish education authorities."

most of the callings classed as "insurable occupations." Yet they constitute a mixed lot—including rat-catchers, umpires, animal trainers, grave-diggers' assistants, charcoal burners, hot saxophonists, and so on. You know these, but other names send you to the dictionary; and not every dictionary will contain them. A "hoveller," you find, is an unlicensed boatman who in the Medway helps barges to pass the bridges. A "scribbling engineer" is not an engineer with a passion for writing; he is an engineer expert in the management of scribbling (or combing) machines in the Yorkshire woollen factories. The astonishing variety in the names of the queer callings suggests that we are not really being moulded into the one pattern.

That, you are aware, is the current complaint against factory life and mass-production. But in the factory itself the variety is bewildering to the casual observer: here are some of the labourers in an iron foundry—a rammer, a rattler, a riddler, a rocker, a rougher, a rubber-off, a rumbler, a runner-maker. All have their appropriate niche in the occupation; all are specialists in their sphere. Here, too, is the "knocker-up," the human alarm clock, who follows his disturbing calling in the industrial towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Another worker is a "sworn meter and weigher." He still survives to weigh and measure goods brought into Kingston-on-Hull; he seems to remind you of the brave days of old when "ale-conners" were public officials appointed to test the quality of the brews offered for sale, when the leather companies had their "searchers and sealers," and the Mint its "moneyers." Actually five hundred pages of the Ministry's report are needed to classify the sixteen and a half million people engaged in insurable occupations.

Now and then, too, we come upon a phrase in our newspapers that pulls us up short, not because of a strange word but of an unusual meaning. "What a peculiar expression!" we say, "How is it to be explained?" So it is with the phrase "a several fisheries." A plaintiff complained that foul water from a beet-sugar factory had killed fish in that part of the Ouse where he had an exclusive right to fish. "Several" means "separate," "individual." It is contrasted with "general," as it is in Antony's speech, "He gives, to every several man,

seventy-five drachmas," as it is, too, in the expression "The commons were enclosed and made several." And "fisheries" is here a collective noun. So we may speak of "a twain," "Bless this twain that they may prosperous be"; or of "a college eight," "Our eight was out for about an hour." The logical plural is unified into a grammatical singular, as in our sentence: "The right of action in respect of a several fisheries is for the invasion of a legal right."

Your Gains through the Enlargement

Enlargement of your passive vocabulary will provide a key for you to unlock the treasures amassed by writers of English. For—

> Who would lose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being?
> Those thoughts that wander through eternity?

In exile and in torment the rebel angel asks this question. We, too, have in our English books a heritage beyond price; we have, perpetually stored up and available for all who seek, the choicest thoughts of master minds. We marvel at the recently perfected power of transmitting sound to the ends of the earth. And, indeed, the power is marvellous; it is a striking illustration of man's growing ability to control the forces of nature. The power of the recorded word to carry thought through the ages is still more marvellous.

The thoughts are on record, though the thinker no longer lives. They are, as Milton says in his grand manner, "embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life." In face of their endurance pyramids are pillars of snow. Being committed to writing, these thoughts have become literature, words which the world will not let die; and by means of these words we may share the thoughts.

Enlargement of your active vocabulary will give you greater powers of expression. You will be able to conduct the ordinary business of life more effectively. And you, too, may be enabled to record thoughts that the world will not willingly let die. For we have in our English language an admirable vehicle for transmitting thought from mind to mind.

A Difficulty

There is some danger, to be sure, that the thoughts will be impaired on the way. When, from words heard or read, we seek to interpret another's thought, we cannot be perfectly certain that we have the identical thought. Two possibilities are present to prevent the perfect transmission. One is that the thinker may be inexpert in the use of the vehicle of thought. Like Browning in his great way, we in our small way many a time have thoughts that we cannot at the moment pin down in words—

> For me, I touched a thought, I know,
> Has tantalized me many times
> (Like turns of thread the spiders throw
> Mocking across our path) for rhymes
> To catch at, and let go.

"I knew the answer; but, I couldn't express it," says the examination candidate disconsolate over his poor performance.

The second possibility is that those who hear or read our words may interpret them in a sense unintended by us; laziness or ignorance or perversity itself leads to misunderstanding. These possibilities are incident even to a perfectly efficient vehicle of thought; and no language reaches perfection. But there are degrees in the approach to perfection; and we may congratulate ourselves on having in English a language nearer to perfection than most others.

Effective Use of Language

Only, we need skill in using the language, if we are to exploit its efficiency thoroughly. The author of the passage below, for instance, has thoughts upon the topic suggested to him. After a little mental wrestling we know what ideas he intended to convey. But how deplorable is the expression of those ideas!

"Electricity is used for driving cars and many other vehicles, and the driving of these cars are very dangerous and only experienced men are allowed to drive them. We can speak from England to United States by that wonderful patent and also use it amongst medicine. There is one great danger in working electricity if you were touching a certain wire it would kill you dead and there is also many other useful things it can be supplied to do."

Certainly, this is a peculiarly inept attempt at composition

in English. You have little difficulty in noting the glaring defects. Contrast that clumsy attempt at expression with this orderly narrative of Froude's. You see the difference at once; the faults of the first appear boldly through the contrast.

The *Pelican* sailed two feet to the *Cacafuego's* one. Drake filled his empty wine-skins with water and trailed them astern to stop his way. The chase supposed she was followed by some heavy-loaded trader, and, wishing for company on a lonely voyage, she slackened sail and waited for him to come up. At length the sun went down into the ocean, the rosy light faded from off the snows of the Andes; and when both ships had become invisible from the shore, the skins were hauled in, the night wind rose, and the water began to ripple under the *Pelican's* bows. The *Cacafuego* was swiftly overtaken, and when within a cable's length a voice hailed her to put her head into the wind. The Spanish commander, not understanding so strange an order, held on his course. A broadside brought down his mainyard, and a flight of arrows rattled on his deck. He was himself wounded. In a few minutes he was a prisoner, and the vessel and her precious freight were in the corsair's power.

Criticism of the Defective Passage

What then are the faults in the passage submitted for your criticism? Errors in grammar are there. These are probably obvious to you: in "the driving of these cars are very dangerous," the plural *cars* has attracted the verb from the appropriate *is* to the inappropriate *are*; in "there is other useful things" the singular verb *is* was forgotten when the plural noun *things* came into mind; "to which it can be applied" is compact whereas "which it can be supplied to" sprawls. Such errors in grammar are departures from the custom of educated men and women and, though we can interpret the words well enough in spite of the departure, we had better avoid the departures. There is no reason for giving gratuitous offence to those who pay us the compliment of attention, whether as our hearers or our readers.

Errors in vocabulary are perhaps more to be deplored than errors of grammar. You will also detect without difficulty those errors in the choice of words: electricity, for example, is not a "patent." It is a "power"; the machine in which it works is the patent. "In surgical operations" should replace "amongst medicine." The correct name of the great American Republic is "The United States." "Dead" is a needless appendage to "kill"; it is a tautology similar to that in "lonely isolation" or in "appeared together simultaneously." "Supplied" should be "applied." We can tolerate and enjoy departures from the customary in speech: the old drover's remark when commenting on an unusually refractory lot, "A hard thing to drive many on 'em very is a pig," would lose much of its force if we put it into the English of the grammar books. In writing, though, we had better adhere to the customary.

Order is Essential in Composition

The chief blemish of all in the passage, however, is the lack of order. The ideas are huddled together in such a way as suggests a mind flitting from one thought to another remote. The thoughts are presented together without any connecting link. It is like the inconsequent chatter of Miss Bates—

"But where could you hear it? Where could you possibly hear it, Mr. Knightley? For it is not five minutes since I received Mrs. Cole's note—no, it cannot be more than five, or at least ten, for I had got my bonnet and spencer on, just ready to come out—I was only gone down to speak to Patty again about the pork—Jane was standing in the passage, were not you, Jane?—for my mother was so afraid that we had not any salting-pan large enough. So I said I would go down and see, and Jane said, 'Shall I go down instead? for I think you have a little cold, and Patty has been washing the kitchen.' 'O my dear,' said I—well, and just then came the note. A Miss Hawkins, that's all I know—a Miss Hawkins of Bath. But Mr. Knightley, how could you possibly have heard it? for the moment Mr. Cole told Mrs. Cole of it she sat down and wrote to me."

Well now, as an exercise in putting thought into clear and orderly expression, write the electricity passage in your own words; and, for the fun of the thing, subject yourself to the little test below also.

Self-examination

Two results will follow, as they follow from all well-devised examinations: you will be encouraged to proceed with your studies in English; and you will realize that there is much yet to be learnt. Your part success will produce the first result; your part failure the second. If the examination achieves a third result—if it induces the student's proper attitude of modesty in regard to his attainments—so much the better.

Three questions are submitted to you. Will you please spend a little while in writing out the answers to them *before* you read the discussions at the end of the book?

(*a*) Here are instances of nouns or adjectives with a prepositional phrase dependent upon them. The preposition is missing. Insert the one that is appropriate: *Insensible—their suffering, unconscious —these occurrences, indifferent—praise or blame, oblivious—the cold, confidence—me, objection—your writing, a wall relieved—pictures, a man deficient—tact, an offence—good taste.*

(*b*) Explain and illustrate the meaning of the terms: *muses, plagiarism, mimicry, rehearsal, metaphor, antithesis, sentiment, prologue, parody, quixotic, Utopian.*

(*c*) How would you distinguish the meaning of the following pairs of words: *lie* and *lay*; *mayor* and *major*; *but* and *butt*; *dout* and *doubt*; *recourse* and *resource*?

[For comments see Appendix.]

CHAPTER II

NEED FOR REVISION

Several Embodiments of a Single Thought

BEFORE we examine more closely this element of vocabulary we had better consider this: there are many ways of expressing the one thought. "The answer is in the negative" is one way of saying "No." There are many other ways, too. Nor need we suppose that one way only is right and all others wrong. Because you can take a delight in a phrase like "The uncertain glory of an April day," there is no reason to scorn a phrase like "The fickle splendour of an April day." Nearly always it is better to say things in the simplest and clearest terms—"He was carried home drunk," for instance. Yet you can conceive occasions—very rare occasions—when it might be desirable to disguise the dismal fact and say, "He was conveyed to his place of residence in an intoxicated condition."

What a number of ways exists for letting your auditor know that you suspend credence concerning his statement. There is no need to say, "You lie." You may range through all Touchstone's degrees: "I did dislike the cut of a certain courtier's beard. He sent me word, if I said his beard was not well cut, he was in the mind it was. This is called the Retort Courteous. If I sent him word again 'it was not well cut,' he would send me word, he cut it to please himself. This is called the Quip Modest." And so on to the Lie Direct. Nowadays, moreover, as though the wealth of English did not supply alternatives enough, strange Americanisms obtrude themselves. A player comes late to the bowling match. He had kept friends and foes waiting an unconscionable time. He volubly explains that he has been upon errand for his wife; and it is hard to say whether "Oh, yeah!" or "Sez you!" predominates in the greetings of his explanation.

Among the various ways it is usually a question of better or worse; and a better way for one purpose may be a worse way for another, just as one dress may be better for football, another for a dinner party. An expression may be good; a variant

may be better. It may be better to put in your formal report, "Black contrives to outdo all others in quantity and excellence of production"; it may be better among intimates to modify this into, "Comrade, you've said it. That lad smugs away as though he likes it." One poet hits upon the simile, "Like angels' visits short and bright"; a second, admiring the simile and appropriating it like a conqueror, modifies it, "Like angels' visits, short and far between." A third polishes the simile into the one that has a permanent place in the language, "Like angels' visits, few and far between."

An Exercise for Your Critical Power

Which of these two versions, for example, would have the greater effect? They are alternatives of what John Shand called the "peroration" of his speech upon woman's rights, the impressive close that would drive home his argument and make it powerful for results. The first is—

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, these are the reasonable demands of every intelligent Englishwoman and I am proud to nail them to my flag. So long as I can do without embarrassing the Government, I call upon the Front Bench, sir, loyally but firmly either to accept my Bill, or to promise without delay to bring in one of their own; and if they decline to do so I solemnly warn them that, though I will not press the matter to a division just now, I will bring it forward again in the near future.

The second thought is this—

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, these are the demands of all intelligent British women, and I am proud to nail them to my flag. And I don't care how they may embarrass the Government. If the right honourable gentleman will give me his pledge to introduce a similar Bill this session I will willingly withdraw mine; but otherwise I solemnly warn him that I will press the matter now to a division.

Doubtless you have decided that the second, shorter though it is, is the stronger and much more effective version.

Revision is Usually Desirable

You agree that the second version would be a much more rousing one. It would have a greater effect upon the audience; the speaker would get results more to his liking. There is one reason for revision of your writing, quite apart from the

reason that you yourself may feel discontented with the expression of your thought. You will consider whether, though you understand your expression and though many others will, it is the most fitting for your intended readers. Writers[1] there are—and speakers too—that snatch at the first words presenting themselves. They are like Doeg, who "without knowing how or why made still a blundering kind of melody." He, so at all events his critic affirmed,

> Spurred boldly on, and dashed through thick and thin,
> Through sense and nonsense, never out nor in
> He was too warm on picking work to dwell,
> But fagotted his notions as they fell,
> And if they rhymed and rattled, all was well.

Alternative Modes of Expression

At any rate, whether you revise or not, you realize that there is usually more than one way of saying a thing. It is in fact possible, in this matter of vocabulary, to be too exacting for the ordinary purposes of life. We use English in order to communicate, in order to make a record, at times in early life in order to gain marks at examinations. If we spend too much time upon choosing words we may fail in our purpose.

You have most likely read Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy*. If you have not, there is a treat in store for you. Tommy was a wonderful writer. Yet at the essay competition he was ignominiously beaten by one far less capable in the matter of expression. Tommy did in fact make so beggarly a show that the judges thought it needless to take the essays home for a leisurely examination. Tommy had, says his creator,

> brought himself to public scorn for lack of a word. What word? they asked testily, but even now he could

[1] J'aime mieux écrire beaucoup qu'écrire bien. Enfin je n'aime pas corriger. Qui sait? Si au lieu d'écrire trente volumes j'en avais écrit trois, je serais peut-être un bon écrivain.

J'en doute du reste; et maintenant il est trop tard pour faire l'épreuve. (*Émile Faguet.*)

(I prefer to write much rather than to write well. I can't stand correcting. Who knows? If, instead of thirty I had written only three books, I might have been a fine writer. Perhaps not, though; and now it is too late to try the experiment.)

not tell. He had wanted a Scotch word that would signify how many people were in church, and it was on the tip of his tongue but would come no further. Puckle was nearly the word, but it did not mean so many people as he meant. The hour had gone by just like winking; he had forgotten all about time while searching his mind for the word.

He had scorned to use any but the exact word he wanted. Yet, if Tommy had been awarded the prize, injustice would have been done to the patient plodder who did win.

A Defence of the Impromptu

It is, indeed, at times asserted that the first sprightly runnings are the best, that study and revision take from the vigour of the expression. Cobbett's counsel was: "Never think of mending what you write. Let it go. No patching; no after-pointing. As your pen moves, bear constantly in mind that it is making strokes which are to remain for ever." Certainly, Cobbett's own prose is vigorous idiomatic English; and perhaps its effect would be weakened by any elaboration. Here is an exhilarating attack upon what he calls the "Shakespeare Hoax." Doubtless, if he had considered the point further, he would have greatly modified his attack; but doubtless, too, the attack would have been less amusing—

I have at various times and in sundry parts of my voluminous writings, expressed my contempt for those who, by enthusiastic men, or knavish traders in plays and pamphlets, have been induced to look upon the plays of this old author as *something almost divine.* The words "*immortal bard,*" applied to this man, have always appeared to me such a monstrous perversion of terms, such as insult to my understanding, that I have many times expressed my contempt of the persons making use of the appellation as thus applied.

Variations on the One Theme

Revision means that you are to apply to your own work the criticism you readily apply to the work of others. School yourself to ask constantly "Which of these expressions is the better?" Accuracy in the answer implies the possession of good

taste; and it is quite certain that you can acquire good taste. You can in other words acquire the power of discriminating between better and worse.

Look at the two versions below, for instance. They are from an entertaining address by Sir John Buchan on "Style and Journalism." He is playing variations upon a theme by Matthew Arnold.

"Every one can see that a poet ought to know life and the world before dealing with them in poetry." That is the opening sentence of Matthew Arnold's paragraph. Here is one of Sir John's variants, the resolutely picturesque one: "Before a poet dips his pen in ink he should have fleshed his sword in the battle of life; he cannot return to his singing bower save with the dust of the arena upon him." Well, which version do you prefer? If you are interested in the other variants, you will find them in the curiously-named collection of essays called *Homilies and Recreation.* The lady is painting an autumnal scene, and a little girl comes to admire. "Tell me, little one," says the lady, turning impetuously to the child, "can you, too, appreciate the profusion of old gold—the infinite variety in this, the most colourful season of the year?" And, after some bewilderment, the child's reply comes, "I get yer! Autumnal tints!" There you have the profuse and the niggardly, each in its way agreeable.

Read also these versions of a stanza that you probably know very well. They may suggest to you that on occasion the second thought is weaker than the first: it has lost in vigour. Which in your opinion is the preferable, the earlier or the later—the revised version?

This is the earlier version—

"How sweet is mortal Sovranty!"—think some:
Others—"How blest the Paradise to come!"
Ah, take the cash in hand and waive the Rest;
Oh, the brave music of a *distant* Drum!

This is the later version—

Some for the glories of this world, and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash and let the Promise go,
Nor heed the music of a distant drum.

When you come across a lively and entertaining passage, you are tempted to think that it has been produced with ease, that the right words had marshalled themselves into the right places. You will probably be wrong in thinking so. At the least much preliminary practice has been there: "The best writers," says Ben Jonson, "in their beginnings, imposed upon themselves care and industry: they did nothing rashly; they obtained first to write correctly, and then custom made it easy and a habit."

Not the Hasty Product of a Day

The power to produce clear, concise, pleasant English does not come by nature. It comes by labour and intent study. Thoughts come to one,

> Thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
> That they were born for immortality.

The fit expression of those thoughts, however, is very likely the result of effort.

The first draft is, for instance—

> A thing of beauty is a constant joy.

Is not the final form better?—

> A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

The earlier draft is—

> Charmed the wide casements opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn.

Surely you prefer the version you know better—

> Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn.

The Well-ripened Fruit of Wise Delay

Here are the approaches that Milton made to the flower passage in *Lycidas*. The first draft is—

> Bring the rathe primrose that unwedded dies
> colouring the pale cheek of unenjoyed love
> and that sad flower that strove
> to write his own woes on the vermeil grain
> next add Narcissus that still weeps in vain

the woodbine and the pansy freaked with jet
the glowing violet
the cowslip wan that hangs his pensive head
and every bud that sorrow's livery wears
let daffadillies fill their cups with tears
bid amaranthus all his beauty shed
to strew the laureat hearse where Lycid lies.

In the second draft he rejects the too fanciful "unwedded" and "colouring the pale cheek of unenjoyed love," substituting for them the very effective "forsaken." He wisely cuts out the learned allusion, "that sad flower that strove to write his own woes in the vermeil grain." He adds also the names of particular flowers—the pink, the jessamin—so that we are able to form clearer pictures in our minds—

Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies
the tufted crow-toe and pale gessamin
the white pink and the pansy freaked with jet
the glowing violet
the musk rose and the garish columbine
with cowslips wan that hang the pensive head
and every flower that sad escutcheon bears
let daffadillies fill their cups with tears
bid amaranthus all his beauties shed
to strew the laureat hearse where Lycid lies.

This is almost what we have; yet the alterations effected for the final form are worth while. "The garish columbine" becomes "the well-attired woodbine"; "sad escutcheon bears" becomes "sad embroidery wears." The weak "let" disappears and the stronger "bid" is put earlier and applies to both flowers. And the singular "beauty" of the first draft is restored instead of the plural "beauties" of the second—

Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet
The glowing violet,
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears:

Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears
To strew the laureat hearse where Lycid lies.

On Second Thoughts

Perhaps we may sum up the matter in this way. Revision must often be productive of improvement. What you wrote impetuously, when you are coolly weighing it again, appears to be too strongly put. You tone down the statement. What seemed clear at the moment presents obscurities. You throw light upon the darkness. You have omitted stops that would greatly help your prospective reader; you have used words that, now you consider them again, are not so adapted to your purpose as others are; you have made a long leap from one topic to a topic remote, and you should supply a bridge from one to the other. Here is a flight of harsh sounds. You try to smooth away the harshness. Worst of all, you have repeated yourself, and must strike out the repetitions; you have written what is not worth reading and must strike out the whole passage.

It is quite true that there are writers to whom revision is irksome. "He never blotted out a line" was meant for praise bestowed upon Shakespeare and his impetuous production. Probably it was untrue; and, at all events, regarding even Shakespeare himself, we may agree with the gruff comment of Ben Jonson, "Would he had blotted out a thousand!"

After all, it is not complimentary to his prospective readers to disdain revision, to write as Hazlitt did, "I have also time on my hands to correct my opinions and polish my periods; but the one I cannot, and the other I will not do." Elsewhere he says: "What I have once set my hand to, I take the consequences of, and have been always pretty much of the same humour in this respect. I am not like the person who, having sent off a letter to his mistress, who resided a hundred and twenty miles in the country, and disapproving, on second thoughts, of some expressions contained in it, took a post-chaise and four to follow and intercept it the next morning."

Well, we nowadays cannot recover a posted letter even if we would. We can, however, consider it with care before we do post it. The "first sprightly runnings" may not, after all, be

the best; and it is quite certain that Hazlitt would have had a happier life if he had curbed his impetuous utterances.

It may be in truth that wonderful pieces of prose or of poetry have been written with breathless speed; the pregnant thoughts have tumbled of themselves into the most fitting words. We may be quite sure, however, that this is very rare. The great passages of our literature are the product of close study as well as of ardent thought.

Yes; and when the world calls for another and yet another edition of his book, the conscientious writer will feel that he has betrayed his trust unless he considers the matter again, and modifies where he thinks modification would improve.

The Masters at Work

You all know the "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard." If you should visit Pembroke College, Cambridge, you could see Gray's manuscript of the poem. The finished manuscript itself contains alterations: and you may be quite certain that many versions preceded it. Written on the margin you will find these lines—

> Nor you, ye Proud, impute to These the fault,
> If Mem'ry o'er their Tomb no Trophies raise.

These were in place of—

> Forgive, ye Proud, th' involuntary Fault,
> If Memory to these no Trophies raise.

Doubtless you will agree that the revision makes an improvement. Opinions will differ about the omission of the lines once at the close—

> There scatter'd oft, the Earliest of the Year,
> By Hands unseen, are Showers of Violets found:
> The Red-breast loves to build and warble there,
> And little Footsteps lightly print the ground.

Gray cut this out because he considered that its inclusion made the parenthesis too long. Perhaps you agree. You may not, however, agree that he was well advised to omit the earlier stanza—

> Him have we seen the greenwood side along,
> While o'er the heath we hied, our labours done
> Oft as the woodlark piped her farewell song
> With wistful eyes pursue the setting sun.

Some minor alterations may interest you. Like many of us Gray has trouble in deciding whether a collective noun takes a singular or a plural verb: the second line originally was—

The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea;

He decides, however, that perhaps "wind" is better. In the well-known lines—

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

the first version has the singular, "The path of glory leads."

Modifying the Old Doctrine

Take further illustrations from a great book that all earnest students will read sooner or later, John Stuart Mill's *Political Economy*. Examine some of the changes he effected in succeeding editions. Thus, he reasons that with free competition wages would be higher in less attractive occupations—

If labour of different degrees of desirableness were paid alike, competitors would crowd into the more attractive employments and desert the less eligible, thus lowering wages in the first, and raising them in the second, until there would be such a difference of reward as to balance in common estimation the difference in eligibility.

There is a quite pleasant thought. But he considers the matter again; he examines a number of actual instances; and he comes to another conclusion—

The more revolting the occupation, the more certain it is to receive the minimum of remuneration, because it devolves upon the most helpless and degraded. The hardships and the earnings, instead of being directly proportional as in any just arrangements of society they would be, are generally in an inverse ratio to one another.

He wrote for the original edition—

Where men and women work at the same employment, if it be one for which they are equally fitted in point of physical fitness, it does not appear that they are in general unequally paid.

He looks at the sentence again, he decides that a more concise statement would say just as much, and "it does not appear . . .

paid" becomes "they are not always unequally paid"—six words for eleven.

In another passage Mill is contrasting the lot of the peasant farmer with that of a day labourer. Which of the two has the more anxious time? Cares and anxieties do indeed beset the peasant proprietor of Flanders; but what about the English day labourer?

> I can conceive no circumstances in which he is free from anxiety, where there is a possibility of being out of employment: unless he has access to a profuse dispensation of parish pay, and no shame or reluctance in demanding it, the day labourer has many of the anxieties which have not an invigorating effect on the mind, and none of those which have.

The vigorous and effective statement comes under revision. Perhaps the illustration is not quite in keeping with the calm scientific reasoning of the book. At all events the thoughtful reader can supply his own illustrations. So out it comes; and the later form of the passage omits all that is enclosed within the square brackets.

Instances for Your Consideration

It is not only that the thought may need revision; in a moment of aberration the author may write what he himself knows well enough cannot stand examination. "Homer himself, in a long work, may sleep," says Herrick when pleading for the complacency of "The Generous Reader." You often need this complacency. You write a sentence while your guardian genius is taking a nap. The sentence reads smoothly enough; it runs the gauntlet of revision; it eludes the vigilance of the correctors of the Press; at length it stands, unabashed and unashamed, in the published book. And lo! it is a foolish sentence, a sentence which no ingenuity can justify. You come upon it; and you marvel that it was possible to write it; or, more likely, a wide-awake reader, in sorrow, not in anger, holds up the offending sentence for inspection. "You say," he writes, "'The law of gravity makes things fall.' Does not the *law* merely state the fact, and is it not the *force* of gravity that makes things fall?" True it is; you cannot deny it.

Besides, revision may be desirable in order to fit your writing for a particular purpose. For, as we have suggested, there is more than one way, more than one good way too, of saying a thing. "And so to bed," says one. "He hit the deck," or "He slung his hammock," says another. "He retired for the night," or "He sought his chamber," or even "He made essay to woo sweet Hynos," says a third. When we speak of the originality of a writer we refer rather to the *newness of expression* than to the newness of thought. A new thought must be very rare; but there may be innumerable new ways of expression. "Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest." That is a good way, of expressing the thought. But here is Shakespeare's copious expansion—

> Time is like a fashionable host
> That slightly shakes his parting guest by th' hand,
> And with his arms outstretched, as he would fly,
> Grasps in the comer; welcome ever smiles
> And farewell goes out sighing.

That, too, is a good way. Those well-known lines of Milton are original enough—

> Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
> (That last infirmity of noble mind)
> To scorn delights, and live laborious days.

They are not the less original because Milton found the thought in the Roman historian. *Etiam sapientibus cupido gloriae novissima exuitur*, wrote Tacitus, "Even in such as are wise the desire for fame lingers when all other ambitions have departed." Our tastes in writing should be catholic; we should be prepared to see goodness in various guises.

Well, now consider these short sentences and suggest possible improvement: the sentences are discussed fully in the Appendix—

(*a*) "If any person is killed, or suffers any bodily injury, in consequence of the occupier of a factory having contravened any provision of this Act, the occupier shall be liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds."

(*b*) "I'm afraid she is not in at the moment."

(*c*) "Jack's inability to settle down to any kind of business réndered him a difficult proposition to his father."

CHAPTER III

THE PURPOSE OF LANGUAGE

The "Meaning" of Words

THE purpose of language is to carry thought from mind to mind. When language is effectively used, two minds co-operate. If we hold fast to this idea we shall guard against misleading our hearers or readers. Now, the most prolific source of misunderstanding is the use of a word in a sense other than the accepted sense. The writer has one meaning for the word. The reader has another meaning. The two minds do not come—as the lawyer says, making brave show with his very likely scant store of Latin—*ad idem*; they do not arrive at the same point.

When you communicate with your correspondent by means of a code you do, as a matter of course, take precaution that you use the code word correctly. You ascertain, too, that your correspondent attaches the same meaning to the word as you do: he uses the same edition of the same code. We cannot do quite the same when we are using ordinary words. For these have been battered and beaten about the streets and market-places; and most of them do not have a single rigid meaning. This is particularly so of our English words. Why, you could give half a dozen meanings to the syllable "bob." Still, we can do something of what the code-user does. In particular, we can make up our minds never to use in our writing a word about the correct meaning of which we have doubts. Dictionaries are available; and when we are in doubt we do foolishly not to resort to them.[1]

[1] This probably should be the doctrine to which we adhere in spite of the fact that there are writers to-day whose desire and whose aim are to evoke ideas in their readers' minds, even though the words used convey no definite thought. This, for instance is a poem—

Spring . . .
Too long . . .
Gongula . . .

Can it be that this is a condensation of the universal delight in the advent of spring after the long dreary winter? Is the strange word "Gongula" only another way of putting Nash's—

Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king;
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

Meanings near Akin

A difficulty to be overcome lies in the fact that a word may have a meaning very like that of another word. "High drifts have made the road between *X* and *Y* impossible," says the broadcast announcer. Most likely he meant "impassable."

One writes "I propose to come at 3 o'clock." Does he? Is he not rather telling me his time of coming, and is not his word "purpose"? You "propose" when you suggest a course of action, when, uncertain whether or not others will agree to your suggestion, you submit it for discussion. You "purpose," when you have actually decided upon a course of action. You "propose marriage" when there is some doubt about the other party's willingness; to "purpose marriage" to her would imply that you looked upon eager consent as certain.

Still, we must not be too peremptory. A secretary writes—

"This sentence was dictated to me, 'I propose to visit your town in July.' I altered 'propose' to 'purpose,' and the letter was sent back with 'purpose' struck out. Is not 'purpose' the correct word?" It is, in truth. But, then, in this matter of alteration of what is dictated one must walk warily.

Some employers are as touchy as the sensitive author who resents any tampering with the products of his pen. With such an author the printer's plan is "Follow copy" no matter what absurdities the following entails. The author has evidently gone wrong here, and here, and here; but we must content ourselves by a question mark in the margin.

Other employers, appreciating the delight of having a competent secretary to edit their hasty utterances are grateful for corrections—corrections that the tactful secretary makes without parade, without any ostentation. "To propose," it might be suggested, is to put forward as something for debate; the proposition is a plan that may, or may not, be put into operation. If, however, you have reached a resolution,

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Perhaps it is. But most of us probably prefer an intelligible statement. Ideas those words may excite. The writers seek to substitute suggestions for thought. To be misunderstood was once a ground of complaint; the writers who indulge in these caprices have no wish to be understood so long as they have made impressions upon their readers' minds. It may be well for us, however, still to adhere to the notion that language is intended to convey intelligible thought; we had better be with those of whom Dryden writes, "The rest to some poor meaning made pretence."

you purpose to do what you have resolved upon. And your suggestion would very likely be met by the quite sound answer that "propose" is very often nowadays used for "purpose." "Mr. Baldwin proposed to retire after the Coronation," and we may be quite certain that his resolution was fixed. "What was good enough for Mr. Baldwin is good enough for me," says the dictator. Besides, he may add, when you do purpose a thing, you may be unable to effect it. "Man proposes, God disposes," and "The best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-gley."

"Our Bridge Correspondent," again, has been greatly annoyed by the failure of his partner to respond to his earnest calls. "How aggravating," he exclaims, "to be thus baulked of a grand slam!" Is "aggravating" really the word to convey the intended meaning? It may be, indeed; but we cannot be sure. For "to aggravate" is to make something that is already a burden heavy enough, heavier still. We may say, quite correctly: "How grievously the burden of man's lot is aggravated by slovenly dates, illegible signatures, and forgetfulness that writing is something meant to be read!"

"Aggravated" does mean here "made heavier"; and that is what it should mean. Perhaps it does mean this in "Our Bridge Correspondent's" sentence: he already bears the burden of an incompetent partner; the ineptitude in calling has added to the burden. But it may be suspected that he should have used the word "annoying" or "tantalizing," or even "enraging."

The word "unique" affords another instance. If a thing is unique we cannot bring another to match it; it is the only one in being. To say, therefore, that "the service was rather unique" is to utter an absurdity. Either the service was unique or it was not; there can be no more or less in this property of uniqueness. In a sentence like "This vase, as far as we know, is unique: you will seek another in vain," the word is used with precision. Doubtless, the meaning intended in the phrase criticized was "strange." But a writer is not entitled to ask his reader to provide the right word for the wrong one used.

And what are we to think of "the unique opportunities" spoken of in the advertisements? To be sure, it is foolish to expect literary perfection in advertisements; and the advertiser might tell you, if you pointed out a slip in his English, that so long as he had made people read and note his advertisement

he was untroubled about its correct phrasing. Still, one might gently inquire, not intending to offend and impelled only by a wish to know, how he could possibly attach the word "unique" to a plural noun. If an opportunity is unique it has no fellow; he could not satisfy more than one that accepted his offer. Yet our advertiser will continue, even if he should read this paragraph, to use "unique" instead of "exceptional" or "rare" or "remarkable" or "marvellous." Perhaps from his point of view he is right in doing so; for the word does suggest wonderful things. The word "singularly" is loosely used in much the same way. It does not mean "in a high degree," though that is evidently the intended meaning in such phrases as "singularly talented," "singularly eloquent," and the like. For the adverb "singularly" we want the adverb "remarkably" or "exceptionally" or the prepositional phrase "in a high degree."

Here again is this word of rolling sound "unconscionable." It means in the first place "not guided by, or in accordance with, what conscience would dictate"; and it has a vogue through the apology of Charles the Second in being "such an unconscionable time a-dying." Now, however, we have its loose application to anything excessive; and the football reporter himself uses it, "Ryde Sports has been obliged to play an unconscionable number of preliminary matches before reaching the First Round Proper." ["Ryde Sports," you have perhaps noted, is the name of a football club, though in form a plural, is rightly looked upon as a singular, taking "has," not "have"; just as we say "'The Idylls of the King' was written by Tennyson."]

The Writer Must not Expect Much from His Readers

That the reader may out of his goodness of nature supply the word wanted is no valid excuse for the writer. The writer ought not to rely upon his reader's complacency or upon his reader's ability to rectify mistakes. Here is one instance where the reader is thus obliged to alter the word used. In his charming essay on "Oxford in the Vacation," Charles Lamb speaks of the attitude of heads of colleges towards investigators—

> Your caputs and heads of colleges care less than anybody else about these questions. Contented to

suck the milky fountains of their Alma Maters, without enquiring into the venerable gentlewomen's years, they rather hold such curiosities to be impertinent—unreverend. They have their good glebe lands *in manu*, and care not to rake into the title-deeds.

Now, "reverend" means "deserving of reverence"; it is passive. "Reverent," on the other hand, means "showing reverence"; it is active. We must, therefore, understand "unreverend" as "irreverent." While you are enjoying that sentence of Lamb's, notice the word "impertinent" and the double reading you must read into it. Your answer is "pertinent" when it does not stray from the question put to you; it is relevant—it always should be—to the matter in hand. "Impertinent" might merely be the negative of *pertinent*; your answer is "impertinent" when it is not "relevant." Since, however, by an unlucky propensity of human nature, we are apt to abuse the man who puts an inconvenient question, "impertinent" has taken the secondary meaning of "insolent," "saucy." Both its senses are suggested in Lamb's sentence.

An Exercise on Choice of Words

Replace the words in italics by the words probably intended by the writer—

(*a*) She writes *comprehensively* enough; for her letters are unequivocal applications for cash. (You comprehend a statement when you grasp its meaning: what is the adjective corresponding to the verb "comprehend"?)

(*b*) You were selected because of your ability and *trustfulness*. (A man is trustful when he is ready, perhaps too ready, to trust others: the word wanted here is one that implies justification for the trust. To be *worthy* of trust is different from to *give* trust.)

(*c*) It is experience that man ought to consult in religion, morals, *legislature*, as well as in knowledge and the arts. (The *legislature* is the law-making body. With us it is Parliament—King, Lords, and Commons concurring. The word signifying collectively the laws made is *legislation*.)

(*d*) Nothing is more *contemptuous* than cowardice. (Here again we need to turn the active into the passive sense.)

(*e*) No one knew what was *transpiring* in the inmost heart of the Chancellor. (Well, "trans" means "out" or "across": to "transplant" is to plant in another place; and "to transpire" is "to breathe out," "to come out." "To transpire," wrote Dr. Johnson, "is to escape from secrecy to notice"; it is, as we say in our less

elegant manner, "to leak out." Here, however, the Chancellor is keeping things to himself; not even his wife knows what taxes he is going to increase, what new ones to impose. You that have studied botany know that "transpiration" is the term applied to the exhalation, the breathing out, of water vapour from the surface of the leaves of plants. The mistake in the sentence arises from the use of an unfamiliar word instead of a familiar one. A thing transpires *out*, not *in*; and the word wanted is "happening" or "going on": "No one knew what was going on in the inmost heart of the Chancellor.")

(*f*) The site of the camp was *mutually* chosen by the master and the head-prefect. (There comes a variant of the stock question suggested by *Our Mutual Friend*. Should not Dickens have written "Common"? Perhaps he should; but, so great is his currency among English readers that you will hear "mutual friend" far more frequently than the correct "common friend." The original Latin word means "borrowed," "reciprocal": we come to a mutual agreement when each of us says, "Do that for me, and I will do this for you"; we form a mutual admiration society when we say "Do you extol my merits more than they deserve, and I will extol yours." If x is to y as y is to x, there is a mutual relation, but not unless. This sentence of Thackeray's, therefore, needs revision, "Surely you have heard Mrs. Toddles talking to Mrs. Doddles about their mutual maids?" Either replace "mutual" by "respective" or leave out the adjective altogether. So, in the sentence, either leave out the adverb or substitute "together": "was chosen by A and B" or "was chosen by A and B together.")

The Little Words

When you are expressing your meaning it is the little words that matter most, in English as in other languages. The big word usually has a fairly stable meaning, and, once the meaning is grasped, we can both understand it and use it in accordance with custom. It is not so with the little words—with our common prepositions and conjunctions and verbs. These are they that present almost insuperable difficulties to the learner from another country, and by no means negligible difficulties to one whose mother tongue is English. Certainly, a departure from the ordinary usage can rarely be stigmatized as an error. Perhaps, from the language point of view, it is more serious than an error. For it is a departure from idiom, from the peculiar usages of the language.

The foreign learner masters our idioms long after he is competent in other aspects of English. One asks: *Is there any difference between "a taste of the pleasures of life" and "a taste*

for the pleasures of life," between "to jump on the carpet" and "to jump on to the carpet"? Which preposition is often a matter of custom for which we can give no convincing reason. You could not give a wholly satisfactory reason for the preposition in these sentences: "I have confidence *in* him"; "There is no objection *to* your writing"; "I content myself *with* saying" "He is deficient *in* tact"; "His conduct offends *against* good taste." Yet you know that these are the prepositions needed.

The answer to the question put is perhaps easier. "Taste of" is equivalent to "a sample of", "something to test by"—"a taste of the pleasures of life" is a participation in them. "Taste for" is equivalent to "liking for", "propensity towards" —"a taste for the pleasures of life" is a desire to enjoy them. And "on the carpet" implies position; "on to the carpet" implies direction towards. In the first we see the jumper executing a series of jumps, but never leaving the carpet; in the second we see him jumping from a distance away, and landing upon the carpet. We must admit, however, that the distinction is not always observed: "He threw the coins on the table" is probably more usual than "on to the table."

Some help may at times be afforded by the prefix of the word upon which the preposition depends. "Involved" will naturally be followed by "in" ("He was involved in difficulties"); "absolve" will take "from" ("They absolved him from blame"). "Sym" indicates with, therefore "sympathy with hopes and fears."

Yet no rules are really available for the use of prepositions: constant note of the usage of good authors is the thing necessary. The prefix in fact may lead one astray: though "con" means "with" we say "the contemporaries of Shakespeare." "Dis" means "apart from," but yet we say "disagree with" though "dissent from"; though "compassion" is the Latin equivalent of the Greek "sympathy" we say "to have compassion upon"; and, though "circum" means "round" we say "under the circumstances" as well as "in the circumstances."

No wonder the visitor from the Continent asks you questions.

Idiomatic Use of Prepositions

Why say *agree with* and also *agree to*, when you only say *disagree with*? What, if you please, is the exact meaning of

with? Well, you are hard put to it to explain. Still, you try. You tell him that in their origin our prepositions expressed a relationship of place. A village was *by* the water, that is *near.* So, having this relation to place in mind, we properly speak of the nightingale's song fading away *past* the near meadow, *over* the still stream, *up* the hill-side. The prepositions now express ever so many relationships, connected, however, with the earlier use. So with this word *with. With* meant "opposite to." The original sense remains in many of our phrases. You contend *with* an enemy; you compete *with* (or *against*) a rival; you vie *with* your competitor; you *with*stand an onslaught. But the original sense has been extended. In the advice that was given to the unlucky Malvolio, "Be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants," the word implies no relation of physical position, but of the mind's attitude.

In phrases like "She had a tongue with a tang," or in Milton's line "Now glowed the firmament with living sapphires," the word denotes accompaniment. In the patriotic sentiment, "England with all thy faults, I love thee still" the word means "in spite of."

Then, too, we have phrases like—

"I sympathize with you." (We have even, without any logic for it, "I disagree with you.")

"The lady with the camellias." (That is, characterized by always carrying.)

"He writes with a fountain-pen." (That is, by means of.)

"I'll do it with pleasure." (That is, accompaniment.)

"I can do nothing with him." (That is, I am unable to influence him.)

Then you have the expressions, curious enough when you examine them—

"I have parted with my best friend."

"I can dispense with the money." (Where it means not company but separation.)

"With the best intentions he failed." (That is, in spite of possessing.)

It is this suggestion of two senses together—the device called *syllepsis*—that produces mildly humorous expressions like—

"She was washing clothes with happiness and Sunlight

Soap" and "The lady was threading beads with a Roman nose." The one word serves to indicate accompaniment and also instrument; and one meaning troubles the other. It is curious, too, that the negative of *with* is *without*: "A rose without a thorn."

A Word of Many Senses

Our French friend seeks on another occasion to trace the little word *put* through its various senses; and in the end he almost believes that the word may bear any sense its user chooses to give it. Of course, he is not correct in this. But there is a good deal of excuse for his belief; the word is indeed flexible and can be adapted to many uses. Unluckily, his dictionary has presented him with this, "a *put* is the option of delivering a specified amount of stock or produce at a certain price within a certain time." You are obliged to tell him that he has alighted upon a very unusual meaning, that this is only a Stock Exchange term, for which ordinary folk would say "option to sell." He consults the dictionary again and finds that the word is usually a verb meaning to place, push, thrust; and he may follow its varied meanings until he begins to cry "Confusion worse confounded." These are some of its various meanings in various contexts. "*Put* not your trust in princes" (*place*); "What did you *put* it at?" (estimate); "*Put* the best construction on all men's words and actions" (*attach*); "*Put* the matter to the vote" (*submit*).

The various senses with adverbs are also bewildering. To *put* off a thing is to *postpone* it; to *put* out one's shoulder is to *dislocate* it; to *put* a person down for a fool is to *consider* him as such; to *put* a sovereign on a horse is to *bet* that amount. The word enters into slang, too: "to stay *put*" is "to remain in position"; "to *put* one's oar in" is "to interfere"; "to *put* it across him" is "to beat him thoroughly"; "to be *put* on" is "to be victimized"; "to be *put* out" is "to be annoyed"; and "a *put* up job" is "a fraud."

But the English student, too, has difficulties. "I should," writes one, "be obliged if you will let me know which is correct: 'The door should be parallel *to* the track' or 'The door should be parallel *with* the track.'" Well, there is nothing wrong with either. As so often in these questions, it is not a matter of

better or worse. Perhaps the usual word when—as it is here—*parallel* is an adjective, is *to*. Thus, here is the definition of a parallel in a siege work, "A trench parallel to the general face of the works attacked, serving as a way of communication between the different siege works." But as a verb *parallel* usually takes *with*: "He parallels to-day's outcry against Ritualism with yesterday's against Methodism."

An Exercise on Idioms

(*a*) *By* originally denoted *nearness in place*. Examine the following phrases and suggest how the developed meaning of *by* is connected with the literal meaning: "I will stand by him whatever happens," "Stand by, and do not interfere," "He voted by proxy," "He came by this watch honestly," "Did you come by car?" "She is by all accounts a most triumphant lady."

(*b*) Here are a number of idiomatic expressions. Examine them and explain how each is connected with the literal sense: *to sail near the wind, to take the wind out of his sails, to put your oar in, to be in the same boat, to row against the stream, to play for a great stake, the die is cast, to turn up trumps, at one fell swoop, flying at high game.*

(*c*) Five sentences follow in which the verb *may* occurs. Write these sentences in an alternative form so as to bring out the varying meanings. (*a*) The story may be true; (*b*) Frost may occur in June; (*c*) A man may smile and smile and be a villain; (*d*) A Nonconformist clergyman may sit in Parliament; (*e*) A Government official may not send information to the Press.

[For comments see Appendix].

Examining the Expressions of Others

Our wish, to have the ability of putting the right words in the right place, should get us into the habit of examining our language closely. That is a thoroughly good habit. Through doing so, we very likely acquire the habit also of examining closely the language of others. That, too, is good so long as we keep our critical examination within bounds. Minute examinations in an eager search for faults will detract from enjoyment of both speeches and writings. Far better to be tolerant.

Quite true, precision in language is at times needed. The draftsman, who expresses in its final form the intention of Parliament, needs to be precise; looseness of language will be the prelude to much litigation. But the times calling for rigorous precision are rare; on the ordinary occasions of life,

we must reconcile ourselves to a good deal of loose use of language. After all, if the speaker or the writer enables us without very great trouble to grasp the intended meaning, it is a little ungracious to pry into blemishes. Yet we all do it; and we get some entertainment from it. Perhaps, too, we cherish the hope, always disappointed, that those whose faults we specify will be properly grateful to us.

Wisdom of Avoiding Strange Words

These faults in diction are in the main the inaccurate use of familiar words. For most of us are wise enough not to have recourse to unfamiliar words unless we make certain of their meanings. You may, indeed, in your fun state that "So-and-so has a complex of misappropriation" instead of saying that "So-and-so is a thief," or that he "dabbles in terminological inexactitudes" instead of saying that he "is a liar."

Some do seek after imposing words, simply because they are imposing. "In 1588," one writes, "the Armada was decimated, and England thereby achieved their marital pre-eminence." You can easily detect the faults in diction here. "Decimate" is perhaps an excusable extension from the first meaning, which was to kill every tenth man of a company as a penalty for cowardice or mutiny. Still, where you want to state that a very large part was destroyed, "decimate" is not the word; and it may annoy one who connects "decimate" with "decimal" and "decem" (ten) to read "The plague decimated as much as three-quarters of the population." "Their" for "its" (or possibly "her") comes from the unconscious translation of "England" into "English." "Marital" is properly an adjective meaning "belonging to marriage": the Latin word for "husband" is *maritus*. The word sought for but not found by the writer was "maritime," "belonging to the sea"; the Latin word is *maritimus*.

The writer criticized might find abundant authority for his error in current speech; but then an error is still an error though committed by many.

Skilful Use of Unusual Words

We need not hesitate to use long words when we do know their meanings well, and when, in addition, we may with some

confidence assume that our expected audience will interpret them in our intended sense. Then they may be more effective than short ones. Used by a skilful speaker the unusual words may, for instance, add greatly to the success of a speech. We need not wonder that the House of Commons fills when word goes round that "Mr. Churchill is up." For a paragraph like this below must be very attractive, to foes as well as friends. He is indulging in one of his periodic attacks upon the Government: "Anyone can see what the position is. The Government simply cannot make up their mind, or they cannot get the Prime Minister to make up his mind. So they go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent. So we go on preparing for months and years—precious, perhaps vital, to the greatness of Britain—for the locusts to eat." Maybe it doesn't mean very much; but how well it sounds.

This snip-snap style is in fact a favourite device with the speaker, and with such writers as have their readers vividly before them. It is an effective one, too. You find one word to describe your subject; you seek diligently until you find another word, contrasted with the first, that will also describe it. What matter though you do depart from fact a little, so long as the antithesis is a neat one! This appears to be the attitude adopted. The river is deep. Yes; but it is, contrary to what you anticipated, clear for all that. The river is gentle; but none can call it dull, and so on. There are merits; there are no corresponding defects—

> Though deep yet clear, though gentle yet not dull;
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing, full.

The Lord Chief Justice, who among his other voluntary duties performs those incident to the senior trustee for *The Times*, spoke of that unique paper at the International Publishers' Congress. Skilled orator as he is, he knows the device and uses it well: "Of that great newspaper it may be said without offence that it exhibits day by day infallibility without arrogance, omniscience without condescension, fastidiousness without severity, and that it is monumental without being statuesque." Perhaps the last antithesis, "monumental without

being statuesque" resembles Mr. Churchill's diatribes in that, though it doesn't mean anything much, it sounds quite well.

The great exemplar of this antithetical manner of writing is Lord Macaulay. In his earlier writings at all events, he paints in black and white with no intermediate shades. You will welcome two illustrative paragraphs from his essay on *Milton*. This is how he describes the Puritans—

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men, the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion; the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker: but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half-maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane, he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood, he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid His face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it.

The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them Stoics, had

cleared their minds from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world, like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities, insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain, not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach: and we know that, in spite of their hatred for Popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system, intolerance and extravagant austerity, that they had their anchorites and their crusaders, their Dunstans and their De Montforts, their Dominics and their Escobars. Yet, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.

You can almost resolve the passage into a succession of statements followed by a "but" or a "yet" statement contrasting with the first.

Dangers of the Antithetical Style

You could easily apply to such a description the criticism that Macaulay himself applies to *The Deserted Village.* That village you remember was at first a delight: it was—

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's ling'ring blooms delay'd.

It became a desolation—

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green.

Goldsmith we are told by the critic brings together what never existed: the village desolate and sad he had seen in Ireland; the village populous and prosperous he had seen in Kent.

Speech Perverted in Writing

A curious thing about the use of pompous words is this: one may express thoughts with animation and effect in speech; but one may, when expressing thought in writing, turn the effective speech into feeble and verbose writing. To take a pen in hand is, with a good many people, to cramp their style. That is not the method of such writers as capture your attention and oblige you to ponder their words. Their writing is talk made more effective, more enduring. "Sentimental Tommy" acquired fame throughout the glen as a wonderful writer for the country folk unable to write for themselves. You remember perhaps his favourite method of setting to work. He listened to what his client had to say; he heard the old mother lamenting that for long she had heard nothing from her daughter beyond the sea; and, without divulging what he was doing, he simply put the speaker's words into writing. And the result was an effective letter that accomplished all the speaker wished.

Too often, however, clear straightforward speech becomes laboured complicated writing. A great viceroy said "I am not clear about the causes of the frontier trouble." But he wrote, "With regard to the origin of the circumstances which have eventuated in the unrest in North-west India, I am not yet in a position to pronounce upon their material significance." Such a ponderous sentence is like a peculiarly inappropriate "Notice to Carmen": "The gradients on this hill are prohibitive to heavy vehicular traffic." And you may, less often it is true nowadays than formerly, come across business communications couched almost in a language of their own. The straightforward, and happily the more usual to-day, is "I

have your letter of the 25th November and will come as you suggest to see you about it to-morrow (Friday) at ten in the morning." The roundabout is, "We acknowledge the receipt of your esteemed favour of the 25th instant. There are, however, certain points relative to the matter about which we are not clear. We shall therefore give ourselves the pleasure of waiting upon you to-morrow the 27th for the elucidation of the several particulars."

The straightforward is "We sat on the grass and had tea." The roundabout is—

> We sitting on the grass partook
> The beverage drawn from China's fragrant herb.

The name that all know is "Cheshire cheese." The poet's extraordinary expansion is

> That which Cestria sends,
> Tenacious paste of solid milk.

The simple name is "eggs"; but Thomson speaks of the cragman in the Hebrides as one who—

> to the rocks
> Dire-clinging gathers his ovarious food.

You admire Wordsworth, admire him greatly, but you consider that "The March winds gave me a sore throat" obtained a too elaborate dressing in—

> The winds of March, smiling insidiously,
> Raised in the tender passage of the throat
> Viewless obstruction.

It is quite true that the roundabout way of expression—the circumlocution—may be a delight. The reader gets pleasure from it as he does from guessing a riddle. You do not murmur at Wordsworth for calling the robin

> The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast,

or at Keats for calling autumn

> Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!"
> Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun.

In sober prose, though, the simple and direct way is the better.

Thackeray Criticizes Pomposity

Thackeray remonstrated with a pompous writer upon the matter. He did it through Mr. Yellowplus; and this is what Mr. Yellowplus says: "It's generally best to understand puffickly what you mean yourself, and to ingspress your meaning clearly afterwards—in the simpler words the better, praps. You may, for instance, call a coronet a coronal (an 'ancestral coronal') if you like, as you might call a hat 'a swart sombrero,' 'a glossy four-and-nine,' 'a silken helm, to storm impermeable, and lightsome as the breezy gossamer'; but, in the long run, it's as well to call it a hat. It *is* a hat; and that name is quite as poetticle as another. I think it's Playto or els Harrystottle who observes that what we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Confess, now, dear Barnet, don't you long to call it a Polyanthus?"

Besides, when pompous words are used, this very often betokens a lack of consideration for one's audience. My Lord Bishop had honoured the village church by coming to preach the sermon at a Thanksgiving Service. And was the sermon impressive? It may have been; but we couldn't tell. For, while my Lord was pronouncing one sentence, we were cudgelling our brains to reach the meaning of the preceding sentence. "Nature herself," he said, "shall be the palimpsest on which Omnipotence shall inscribe the characters of a rejuvenated humanity." Here and there might have been one among us who could interpret, who knew that "palimpsest" signifies "manuscript" and that "rejuvenated" signifies "made young again," who could penetrate to the meaning even as the words came. But most of the rustic hearers could only stare and gape. The stream of words rolled on but never reached the sea, never came into the minds of the hearers.

Simplifying the Expression

Well, test yourself by making the necessary corrections in Mrs. Malaprop's scheme of education. The passage comes, you will remember, from Sheridan's *The Rivals*—

SIR ANTH. Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation now, what would you have a woman know?

MRS. MAL. Observe me, Sir Anthony. I would by

no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman; for instance, I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or algebra, or simony, or fluctions, or paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning—neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments. But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts; and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries; but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not mis-spell, and mis-pronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know; and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

SIR ANTH. Well, well, Mrs. Malaprop. I will dispute the point no further with you; though I must confess that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question. But, Mrs. Malaprop, to the more important point in debate—you say you have no objection to my proposal?

Differences in Vocabularies

There are great differences in the vocabularies of different writers, and in the vocabularies of the same writers upon different topics. Here is an example of simplicity in diction—

After this it was noised abroad, that Mr. Valiant-for-Truth was taken with a summons by the same post as the other; and had this for a token that the summons was true. "That his pitcher was broken at the fountain" (Ec. xii, 6). When he understood it, he called for his friends, and told them of it. Then said he, I am

going to my Father's, and though with great difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him that can get it. My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me, that I have fought his battles who now will be my rewarder. When the day that he must go hence was come, many accompanied him to the river side, into which as he went he said, "Death, where is thy sting?" And as he went down deeper, he said, "Grave, where is thy victory?" So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side.

(*The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II.)

Here as a contrast is a fine passage in the grand style

We are in a low vaulted room; vaulted, not with arches, but with small cupolas starred with gold, and chequered with gloomy figures: in the centre is a bronze font charged with rich bas-reliefs, a small figure of the Baptist standing above it in a single ray of light that glances across the narrow room, dying as it falls from a window high in the wall, and the first thing that it strikes, and the only thing that it strikes brightly, is a tomb. We hardly know if it be a tomb indeed; for it is like a narrow couch set beside the window, low-roofed and curtained, so that it might seem, but that it is some height above the pavement, to have been drawn towards the window, that the sleeper might be awakened early; only there are two angels who have drawn the curtain back, and are looking down upon him. Let us look also, and thank that gentle light that rests upon his forehead for ever, and dies away upon his breast.

The face is of a man in middle life, but there are two deep furrows right across the forehead, dividing it like the foundations of a tower; the height of it above is bound by the fillet of the ducal cap. The rest of the features are singularly small and delicate, the lips sharp, perhaps the sharpness of death being added

to that of the natural lines; but there is a sweet smile upon them, and a deep serenity upon the whole countenance. The roof of the canopy above has been blue, filled with stars; beneath, in the centre of the tomb on which the figure rests, is a seated figure of the Virgin, and the border of it all around is of flowers and soft leaves, growing rich and deep, as if in a field in summer.

It is the Doge Andrea Dandolo, a man early great among the great of Venice; and early lost. She chose him for her king in his 36th year; he died ten years later, leaving behind him that history to which we owe half of what we know of her former fortunes.

(Ruskin's *Stones of Venice.*)

Here is another example of plain prose, plain indeed, yet how effective! You will recognize it as an extract from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe.*

It happened one day, about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand. I stood like one thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an apparition. I listened, I looked round me, I could hear nothing, nor see anything. I went up to a rising ground, to look farther. I went up the shore, and down the shore, but it was all one; I could see no other impression but that one. I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my fancy; but there was no room for that, for there was exactly the very print of a foot—toes, heel, and every part of a foot. How it came thither I knew not, nor could in the least imagine. But after innumerable fluttering thoughts, like a man perfectly confused and out of myself, I came home to my fortification, not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on, but terrified to the last degree, looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man; nor is it possible to describe how many various shapes affrighted imagination represented

things to me in, how many wild ideas were found every moment in my fancy, and what strange unaccountable whimsies came into my thoughts, by the way.

When I came to my castle, for so I think I called it ever after this, I fled into it like one pursued. Whether I went over by the ladder, as first contrived, or went in at the hole in the rock, which I called a door, I cannot remember; no, nor could I remember the next morning, for never frighted hare fled to cover, or fox to earth, with more terror of mind than I to this retreat.

I slept none that night. The farther I was from the occasion of my fright, the greater my apprehensions were; which is something contrary to the nature of such things, and especially to the usual practice of all creatures in fear. But I was so embarrassed with my own frightful ideas of the thing, that I formed nothing but dismal imaginations to myself, even though I was now a great way off it. Sometimes I fancied it must be the devil, and reason joined in with me upon this supposition; for how should any other thing in human shape come into the place? Where was the vessel that brought them? What marks were there of any other footsteps? And how was it possible a man should come there? But then to think that Satan should take human shape upon him in such a place, where there could be no manner of occasion for it, but to leave the print of his foot behind him, and that even for no purpose too, for he could not be sure I should see it; this was an amusement the other way. I considered that the devil might have found out abundance of other ways to have terrified me than this of the single print of a foot; that as I live quite on the other side of the island, he would never have been so simple to leave a mark in a place where it was ten thousand to one whether I should ever see it or not, and in the sand too, which the first surge of the sea, upon a high wind, would have defaced entirely. All this seemed inconsistent with the thing itself, and with all the notions entertained of the subtlety of the devil.

You will, no doubt, welcome one more example of well-chosen words, prose that is attractive by the subtle adaptation of sound to sense. It consists of two paragraphs from Thackeray's *Vanity Fair.*

All our friends took their share and fought like men in the great field. All day long, whilst the women were praying ten miles away, the lines of the dauntless English infantry were receiving and repelling the furious charges of the French horsemen. Guns which were heard at Brussels were ploughing up their ranks, and comrades falling, and the resolute survivors closing in. Towards evening, the attack of the French, repeated and resisted so bravely, slackened in its fury. They had other foes besides the British to engage or were preparing for a final onset. It came at last: the columns of the Imperial Guard marched up the hill of St. Jean, at length and at once to sweep the English from the height which they had maintained all day, and spite of all: unscared by the thunder of the artillery, which hurled death from the English line—the dark rolling column pressed on and up the hill. It seemed almost to crest the eminence, when it began to wave and falter. Then it stopped, still facing the shot. Then at last the English troops rushed from the post from which no enemy had been able to dislodge them, and the Guard turned and fled.

No more firing was heard at Brussels—the pursuit rolled miles away. Darkness came down on the field and city: and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart.

CHAPTER IV

OUR WEALTH OF WORDS

Synonyms

THERE is usually, as we have suggested, more than one way of saying a thing effectively. We must emphasize this, though. It is not a matter of indifference what words you select. You are not to be content with them simply because they convey an approximation to your intended meaning. No choice does present itself with most of our words: we must use "the," "a," "is," "are," and a hundred others, when we need them. There are no substitutes for these.

For many of our words, however, so great is the abundance of the English language, a substitute does offer itself, at times several substitutes. "Gorse," for example, is interchangeable with "furze," though no doubt districts may differ in the choice of the word. But you rarely get so close a correspondence in meaning. Is your friend "silent" or "mute" or "quiet" or "taciturn" or "reticent"? Is the house "silent" or "still" or "hushed" or "dumb" or "tongue-tied" or "speechless" or "wordless"?

You feel that these words of similar meaning—these synonyms, as we call them—are not quite interchangeable. A "taciturn" person is not always "silent." You are "reticent" when you keep back many things that you might say; but that does not make you "mute" or "dumb." In the well-known sonnet beginning "Much have I travelled in the realms of gold," Keats, in order to illustrate his burst of glad surprise when he found another glorious book to read, speaks of "stout Cortez" in Panama at his first glimpse of the Pacific—

> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez—when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
> Looked at each other with a wild surprise—
> Silent upon a peak in Darien

We should lose much of the effect if we make Cortez "tongue-tied" or "speechless" instead of "silent."

Discrimination is Needed

In short, you perceive that the synonyms are applicable in different connexions. The synonyms in English may have come from different sources, and originally may have signified exactly the same thought. In time, however, they have taken to themselves differing associations. Look at a few instances; you will be able to find any number of others for yourself.

"Harvest" was the old English name for the third season of the year, the season that the Normans in their version of the French Language called "autumn." The desire to avoid the waste of having two good words for the one idea has made us reserve "harvest" for the great event of the season, and to reserve "autumn" for the season itself. Alongside the Old English names for the other seasons—*spring*, *summer*, *winter*—the old French *autumn* ranges itself. Yet in special senses you have the older word persisting: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." It is interesting to note that the American modification of English prefers, like the Old English, to use an accompaniment of the season as the name. There the autumn is "the fall."

The words, too, may be interchangeable without loss in one connexion: we may say with equal force that a word like "fine" has more than one "sense," or more than one "meaning." But we should be able to distinguish between "a speech of no meaning" and "a speech of no sense."

Even synonyms so close as *wide* and *broad* are not quite interchangeable. Each has *narrow* for its opposite; each is appropriate in phrases like *a wide range*, *a broad expanse*. Yet there are some expressions where *wide* is dictated by custom, others where *broad* is dictated; a man has *a broad back*, but *a wide mouth*. We have *broad daylight*, *a broad hint*, *broad leaves;* but *wide intervals*, *a wide ball*, *a wide-open window*. We can use *wide* (but not *broad*) as meaning "spacious": "turned adrift to the wide world," and "there the snake throws her enamelled skin, Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in." *Affect* is not interchangeable with *effect*: "His eating this will not affect his

recovery" (His eating this will have no bearing upon his recovery); "His eating this will effect his recovery" (His eating this will bring about his recovery). Custom asks us to say that our money has *run short* rather than *flown short*; that we *made merry* at the party rather than *made joyful*, that our friends *mustered strong* rather than *collected strong*.

We speak of the *discovery* of the law of gravitation, but of the *invention* of the steam-engine. For Newton drew aside (discovered) the veil that, till he came, had prevented men from perceiving the law; whereas Watt caused something that before him had no existence to come into being.

"Conservative"

It is, indeed, one of the most common faults in English composition to mistake the connexion in which a synonym is applicable. The Broadcast Announcer, for instance, wishing us to understand that he is not at all exaggerating tells us that "on a conservative estimate" there were so many thousands of people present. To be sure, we know very well what he meant. The estimate was a cautious one; of set purpose it was rather under than over the actual number..

Now, "conservative," as contrasted with "radical," does imply "moderate," does indeed indicate a desire to proceed with caution. But the word to use here and in similar connexions is "safe" or "moderate": "Reports of experts justify a forecast that the profits of the enterprise will certainly be 20 per cent." This is a "safe" or "cautious" or "moderate" (not "conservative") estimate; the likelihood is that a greater percentage will be realized. So, too, "cautious" is the word rather than "conservative" in this sentence from "Our Bridge Correspondent"; "The rule is, against conservative bidders, a conservative tendency; against shooters, bold but not fantastic bidding."

"Dilemma"

Here again is the word "dilemma." A "dilemma" is certainly a "difficulty"; yet a "difficulty" is not always a "dilemma." You put your opponent into a dilemma when you frame your argument so that he is obliged to choose one of two alternatives, both unfavourable to him; by making him choose between evils you impale him upon the "horn of a dilemma."

Bishop Morton in King Henry the Eighth's reign used a dilemma "to raise up the benevolence to higher rates." If his commissioners "met with any that were sparing, they should tell them that they must needs have because they laid up; and if they were spenders, they must needs have, because it was seen in their port and manner of living." Antony, confronted with Cæsar's slaughterers, was in such unpleasant position—

> My credit now stands on such slippery ground,
> That one of two bad ways you must conceit me,
> Either a coward or a flatterer.

He was in a dilemma; and the dilemma constituted a difficulty in reaching a decision. It is, however, not a dilemma—though it is a difficulty—when having to pay a bus fare of a penny you find that you have no money except a pound note. A difficulty presents itself in regard to a garden in that weeds grow apace; but the difficulty is not a dilemma. The English selectors were in a difficulty, in many difficulties, when selecting the cricketers for Australia. They were not, as one newspaper put it, "in a number of dilemmas." Even if the selectors felt that to choose one opening batsman meant to reject another, it would be uncomplimentary to our cricketers to represent this as a choice of evils.

"Proportion" or "Part"?

Another instance of misuse concerns "part" and "proportion." "Only a small proportion escaped," we read. Would not this be better expressed as "Only a small part escaped" or perhaps better still, "Few escaped"? To be sure, "A proportion" is "a part"; but when we use "proportion" we either express or imply a comparison. In "The punishment should be in proportion to the crime" the comparison is express. In "The rooms are large but not lofty in proportion" the comparison is implied. It is quite correct to say that "The proportion of passes to failures was greater than last year's"; it is incorrect to say "The greater proportion passed." This sentence from *The Times* can therefore be improved—"Only 43 out of every 220 have so far put down their names for examination. Of these a large proportion, although they hold British passports, owing to being resident in Spain, are Spanish by adoption."

"Dramatist" or "Playwright"?

At times, though we can make little distinction in meaning, one of two synonyms may be preferable. In the United States of America the undertaker prefers to call himself the "mortician." In this country the bookmaker sometimes hides his identity under the style of "commission agent." And it seems that in like manner some great men dislike being spoken of as "playwrights." They have written many excellent plays, yet the word "playwright" is obnoxious to them. "I am," writes Mr. Shaw, "that disreputable thing, a playwright." Does the writing of plays really entail disrepute? Mr. Shaw, however, is less sensitive upon the subject than the late Sir W. S. Gilbert was. Gilbert's comment, when the honour of knighthood was conferred upon him, was: "I found myself politely described in the official list as Mr. William Gilbert, *playwright*, suggesting that my work was analogous to that of a wheelwright, or a millwright, or a wainwright, or a shipwright, as regards the mechanical character of the process by which our respective results are achieved. There is an excellent word, 'dramatist,' which seems to fit the situation, but it is not applied until we are dead, and then we become dramatists, as oxen, sheep, and pigs are transfigured into beef, mutton, and pork after their demise. You never hear of a novel-wright of a picture-wright or a poem-wright; and why a playwright?"

EXERCISE

Insert the appropriate word from the synonyms suggested—

(*a*) When the wind was favourable, the sound of the church bells would drop down, . . . and silvery, to Will.

(*tenuous, thin, attenuated*)

(*b*) All through the summer, travelling-carriages came . . . up, or went plunging . . . downwards past the mill.

(*climbing, crawling, clambering, ascending; speedily, quickly, briskly, rapidly*)

(*c*) All the light-footed tourists, all the pedlars laden with fish-wares, were tending downward like the river that accompanied their path.

(*curious, peculiar, strange, outlandish*)

You will find the words used by Stevenson in his short tale *Will o' the Mill.*

An Attempt to Discriminate

For the ordinary purposes of life, you will agree, there may be half a dozen ways of saying a thing—

"What call you the town's name where Alexander the Pig was born?"

"Alexander the Great?'"

"Why, I pray you, is not pig great? the pig, or the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous, are all one reckonings, save the phrase is a little variations."

Yet you will rarely find expressions that are equivalent for all purposes. "Many people would have called her a fat woman, but Mr. Polly's innate sense of epithet told him that plump was the word." "You are a barber?" is the question. The protesting answer is "I follow the profession of hairdressing."

Look at this question: "*In order to avoid notoriety, the benefactor kept his name secret.*" *What alteration do you suggest here?* In the play Bully Bottom laments that "reason and love keep little company nowadays, the more the pity." Well, in like manner "notoriety" and "benefactor" are not harmonious companions. "Notoriety" has a tinge of disapproval: Barabbas was a notorious malefactor; and Macaulay writes of one who had been raised to "notoriety such as has for low and bad minds all the attractions of glory." "Better be notorious than not known at all," seems to be the guiding rule of many to-day. Probably "fame" or "publicity" is the word needed. "Fame" has its suggestion of desert. ("Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise . . . To scorn delights and live laborious days.") "Publicity" is uncoloured by praise or blame; the public character may be reviled for his wrongdoings, or revered for the benefits he has conferred. Look at the contrast implied in the description, "The celebrated, or as some may be inclined to call her, the notorious Lady Elizabeth."

In quite simple words like the prepositions *of, on, for,* discrimination may be needed. Here, for instance, comes a question. *The clerk to the insurance company asks for a report from the medical man attending a patient; which preposition—ON or OF or FOR—should fill the gap in "I should be glad to have a report . . . this patient"?* Doubtless, whichever preposition is used, the doctor will have no difficulty in interpreting the request in the manner intended; and he will, let us hope, comply with it

promptly. Still, it is well to consider which is the fittest word of the three suggested. We had better cut out "of" altogether. That may imply agency: "report of the patient" is a report compiled by the patient, an account maybe of how an accident happened; and we may assume that, though no doubt the patient's active participation is essential to an adequate report, it is the doctor that is the prime agent. We may speak of "the report of the expert upon the mine," or "the poetry of Milton"; and we read "Being warned of God in a dream." But, though, "of" may be used as equivalent to "concerning" or "relating to" ("Of Man's First Disobedience and the Fruit . . . Sing Heavenly Muse"), we had better not use it where ambiguity results.

"For" suggests "on behalf of," "in support of" ("a vote for Baldwin," "The Mayor returned thanks for his wife"). "For" may, therefore, be the preposition wanted: we seek a report for the benefit of the patient. Probably, however, "on" is called for, as being more general: the company seeks the report in order to consider the position: we speak of "an operation on a patient," "a comment on (or 'upon') the handwriting."

And is it "a report" or "the report" that I should write? The distinction is here, you note, between the general and the particular. "The report" is a definite, specific report—the one promised faithfully by the doctor but unluckily not to hand, the one that the Act of Parliament makes obligatory upon him. "A report" pins the doctor down to nothing specific; the one he writes may diverge greatly from the one expected. "A" = "some one or other"; "the" = "some special one." Probably "a report" is requisite; "the report" implies previous correspondence or talk about the matter. Look at these instances where the distinction between indefinite and definite, general and particular, appears. Hamlet exclaims, "How unworthy a thing you make of me!" (You are treating me as something or other of no worth.) Shylock rejoices, and speaks of the "wise young judge" as "a Daniel come to the judgment" (not "the Daniel" of whom we read, but one of the upright men deserving to be compared with him). "You travel at a penny a mile" (any penny for any mile). "A tower" is a fortified building; "the Tower" is where you see the Yeomen of the Guard; "a king" is a ruler, "the King" is "George the

Sixth." Many of the conspirators gave Cæsar "an unkind cut"; that of Brutus was "the unkindest cut of all." And note the alternations of *the* and *a* in—

I must go down to the sea again, to the lonely sea and the sky
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking.

Divergence of Meaning

Many groups of our words did, indeed, once have identical meanings: the words of the group were used by different peoples to express the one thing. For, during part of our history there was in the country a clashing of two speeches, Old English and Old French.

That is why our modern English has a habit of using pairs of words to express the one idea, one of the pair being of Old English origin, the other of Old French origin. We speak of "all sorts and conditions of men," though it needs considerable ingenuity to discriminate between *sorts* and *conditions*; of "will and testament," of "a full and complete account," of "the goodness and virtue of a drug." We have the pairs "without let or hindrance"; "assemble and meet together" 'requisite and necessary' 'declare and pronounce' "prayers and supplications" "bless and sanctify"; "to try and examine themselves"; confirm and strengthen." The second limb of each pair could be left out without much loss. But the pairs are sanctioned by usage, and it would be foolish to inveigh against them.

The fact that two words in the one language were doing the same work, however, enabled distinction to be made. "Harvest" and "autumn" spoken of above afford a good example. Gradually, one job was allotted to the Old English word, another to the Old French word. So we have distinctions like the following—certainly finely drawn in many cases, and probably never intended by their first authors. We are told that "acknowledge and confess" is not tautology. It is not a

using of two words where one would do; for we acknowledge what is already known, but confess what may or may not be known. Our "sins and wickedness" are not quite the same: the sins are the particular acts springing from the wickedness that prompts them. "To err and stray" merit different degrees of blame; the erring man is quite aware of his deviation from the right path; he that strays does so through ignorance.

An Exercise in Discrimination

Now try yourself to distinguish between the following pairs of words: *apprehend, comprehend; arrogant, insolent; cloak, palliate; illegible, unreadable; revenge, vengeance; simulate, dissimulate; precise, exact; vocation, avocation.*

[For comment see Appendix.]

Discrimination Among Triplets

Occasionally, three words akin in meaning are there. We have in the Litany: "Deliver us from all *sedition, privy conspiracy,* and *rebellion*; from all *false doctrine, heresy,* and *schism.*"

The *sedition* is the "sitting apart to revile the Government"; the *privy conspiracy* is the "plotting to which such talk leads"; the *rebellion* is the "outward movement against the Government." And *false doctrine* is "teaching that is untrue"; *heresy* is the "accepting of such untrue belief while yet in the body of the Church"; *schism* is the "breaking away from the Church."

Wisdom, Knowledge, Learning, akin though they are, are not interchangeable, even though carelessness or ignorance may substitute one where another is appropriate. The wise man is not of necessity the man who has great stores of knowledge. The learned man has, perhaps, read much; yet it may be that he can put his learning to little practical use. Perhaps it is difficult to discriminate between knowledge and learning; and a frequent misquotation of Pope's line, "A little learning is a dangerous thing," is of no great consequence. Cowper, for instance, in *The Task,* alternates between Learning and

Knowledge when contrasting it with Wisdom. "Here," he says, "in this still spot"

> the heart
> May give a useful lesson to the head,
> And Learning wiser grow without his books.
> Knowledge and Wisdom, far from being one,
> Have oft-times no connection. Knowledge dwells
> In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
> Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
> Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;
> Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.

Using our Wealth of Words

In some instances the divergence of meaning has gone far enough to allow one with confidence to assign a special meaning to each of the pair. There is, consequently, an added richness and flexibility in the language. *Stool*, for example, was the Old English word for a seat (the throne was the king's stool) as it still is in German (*Stuhl*). When, however, the Old French *chair* was imported, *stool* had to accept a humbler role. Yet we have recourse to the Old English term when we wish to fram proverbial expression "to fall between two stools"—indicat a failure through vacillation between two possible courses action.

There is, again, the Old English word *knowledge* (or learni wider and more comprehensive than the imported t *scholarship* (knowledge derived from books), *science* *philosophy* (special branches of knowledge), *erudition* (kr ledge that is the fruit of hard study), and *culture* (the devel ment of mind through study).

Well-known, the Old English term, is a far-reaching o The imported terms have narrower applications, *distinguished* (known well enough to be placed apart from the crowd), *notorious* (well-known through some discreditable thing), *renowned* (well-known through something glorious), *eminent* (so well-known as to stand out from others).

Old, the Old English term, enters into the meaning of many imported terms; *primeval* (so old as to belong to the first age), *antediluvian* (so old as to have existed before the Flood), *decrepit* (so old as to be falling into decay), *antique* (so old as to

appear strange), and *superannuated* (so old as to be placed upon the retired list).

Both *astronomer* and *astrologer* were Greek words that denoted the man that made a special study of the stars. They were used without distinction; and it was only after many years that one acquired a more honourable sense than the other. It adds to the wealth of our language that we may now distinguish between the man who in a scientific manner seeks to learn the truth about the movements in the heavens, and him that feigns a connexion between those movements and the fates of men. The scientist is the *astronomer*, the impostor is the *astrologer*.

These two synonyms have reached us from the one language, Greek. But think how greatly the powers of our language have been increased by the emergence of differences in groups of kindred words like *wile, trick, device, finesse, artifice, stratagem.* Without needing to employ a number of words, the skilful writer, by choosing the most fitting of the group, may express the subtlest shades of meaning. He has at his disposal, coming from six different sources by various routes, all these terms—and others like *manœuvre, ruse, feint*—with the common idea of deluding and baffling one's opponent.

He will not speak of a general's *tricks* or *wiles*, but of his *stratagems*. For *wiles* has taken to itself the sense of deceitful cunning—

> Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil;

and Milton, making a character speak with scorn of the stratagems of war, has—

> My sentence is for open war; of wiles
> More unexpert I boast not.

and *trick* seems to imply dishonourable scheming—

> I see it is a trick
> Got up betwixt you and the woman there.
> —Tennyson: *Dora.*

And he will speak of the *artifice of a flirt* but of the *finesse of a politician*

The Native Stock and the Importation

There have been importations of words though we already had the home-produced word for the idea. Sometimes both words, the home product and the imported, survive. The English *whole* persists with the Danish *hale*; but *hale*, as in the expression "hale and hearty," is restricted to one sense of good, robust and vigorous, while *whole* remains the general term. The English *thatch*, the covering of a cottage or a *stack*, accompanies the Dutch *deck*, the covering of a ship.

English *ridge*, *bridge*, and *church* are often replaced in northern dialects by Danish *rig*, *brig* (Briggate is a well-known street in Leeds), and *kirk*. The English *east*, the quarter of sunrise, is kin to the Latin *aurora*, the dawn; English *eight* to Latin *octo* (seen in October, once the eighth month); English *hundred* to Latin *cent*. The Latin *maternal* lives along with English *motherly*, *cordial* with *hearty*, *beef* with *cow*, *rectitude* with *righteousness*, *juvenile* with *young*, *longitude* with *length*, and *grain* with *corn*.

A curious feature of our language is the frequency with which we prefer the foreigner when we need to use other than the simple noun, verb, or adjective. Thus, we use the English noun *ear*, but go to the Latin for the adjective *audible* (that can be heard), *auricular* (told in the ear, secret), and *aural* (belonging to the ear), and for the noun *aurist* (an ear specialist). The English verb *sit* is replaced by its Latin cognate in the adjective *sedentary*; *two* has as its corresponding adjective *dual* and its noun *duplicity*, in both of which words we have the Latin *duo*; *foot* has *pedal* for "belonging to the foot," and we say "pedestrian" rather than "foot-goer"; the English pronoun *I* has the Latin *egoist* for the person always using *I* and the Latin *egotist* for the person always thinking about himself. It is sometimes said that the Old English element in the vocabulary gives our language vigour and vividness and its appeal to the feelings; and that the imported element, the Latin element in particular, gives our language stateliness and music and the capacity for expressing minute distinctions.

Separate Importations

There have, too, been importations of the foreign word at different times. In some instances direct contact with those

speaking the borrowed word led to the introduction. Not content with this, lovers of foreign tongues adopted the same word from books. The words brought by the first method tend to vary greatly from the original; those brought by the second method are not greatly modified. The original Latin, for example, is *abbreviatum*; the importation through writing gives us *abbreviate*, the importation through speech gives us *abridge*. From the original Latin *redemptionem* we have the written *redemption* and the spoken *ransom*. *Pauper(em)* gives *pauper* and *poor*, the one transferred by learned writers from book to book, the other among the donations of the Normans to our language.

Other pairs are *captive* and *caitiff*, *diurnal* and *journal*, *secure* and *sure*, *fragile* and *frail*, *insulate* and *isolate*, *hotel* and *hospital*. Such pairs are "doublets." Similar pairs from a Greek original are *scandal* and *slander*, *blaspheme* and *blame*, *phantasy* and *fancy*, *balsam* and *balm*, *iota* and *jot*, the first very near the original, the second modified in the course of passage.

Instances exist where more than two words from the common original persist side by side. The Greek *diskos* (the "Discobolos" is the quoit-thrower) has given us the learned *disc* (a round plate), *dais* (the raised floor in a hall), *desk* (a sloping table), and *dish* (a platter)—the various things resembling one another in little more than having a flat surface. *Dame*, *dam*, *donna*, and *duenna* all diverge from the Latin *domina*, as *sir*, *sire*, *senior*, *seignior*, *senor*, and *signor* do from the Latin *senior*. *Leal*, *loyal*, *legal*; *card*, *chart*, *carte*; *ration*, *ratio*, *reason*; *plan*, *plane*, *plain*, are other groups from a common original.

Extension of Application

With this introductions of new words there has been a constant extension of the meaning of old ones. Has the word "jack" in "steeplejack" anything to do with the name "Jack"? Certainly; it is the same word. This most common of all pet-names for a boy or man was long ago applied to a man of the common people; and, since most people need to work for their living, it came to mean a worker, a labourer. "Every man jack" is "every single man"; "A good Jack makes a good Jill" is a crystallization of the thought that a good husband is pretty certain to have a good wife. The "steeple-jack" is the

"jack," the worker, employed about the high chimneys; a "jack of all trades" is the man who does all sorts of odd jobs; the "jack tar" was the worker who dabbled in tar and pitch and whom Kate, in Trinculo's song, disliked—

> For she had a tongue with a tang,
> Would cry to a sailor, "Go hang":
> She loved not the savour of tar and of pitch.

From the worker, "jack" was applied to the machine or the tool that did the work and spared the worker. The "screw-jack" is a labour-saving device; so is the "boot-jack." "Jenny," the feminine counterpart of "Jack," has developed in much the same way. From being the familiar pet-name of Jane, it was applied to the woman-worker in general, and then to things like the "spinning-jenny" that did woman's work.

It is, indeed, the extension of application that is the chief factor in enlarging our wealth of words. Look at the way in which the verb "run" has developed. The first meaning is, as our dictionaries tell us, "to progress by advancing each foot alternately, both feet never being on the ground at once." The transfer from the primary meaning is obvious enough in *a running fight*, the retreating ship continues to fire on the pursuers; in *running up to town*, though the train is the actual agent; in the *fount ran dry* (when it ceased to flow); in *your life runs smoothly* (our lot is cast in pleasant places). Less obvious are the extensions like *The King's Writ did not run in Alsatia* (was treated there with scant respect, did not go about freely); *the play ran a hundred nights* (kept the stage); *he hit the ball six times running* (in succession); *he who runs may read* (the matter is easily intelligible); *he ran brandy* (he smuggled brandy dodging the Customs); and *he also ran* (he was one of the failures). Then we have such expressions as to *run the blockade* (to evade ships that are trying to prevent access to a port); *to run the gauntlet* (to pass through rows of assailants); *to run risks*; *to run an account*. And, in combination with other words, we have *a runaway marriage* (an elopement); *to run into* (attain; "the book ran into six editions"); *to run over* (review or read); *run down a person* (to detract from his character), and several others. Perhaps "run it," in the sense "I manage the business," "I run the show," is not yet a literary term, still slang that has not yet proceeded to idiom.

So with the noun: the one word serves for ever so many allied meanings: you apply it to a successful passage from one popping-crease to another in cricket, to a riding after hounds, to a sailing between ports, to an excursion, to a stream, a ripple of notes in music, a spell of fortune, a period on the stage. You have a "run for your money" when you get some sort of satisfaction out of your expenditure; and Addison tells us that "In the common run of mankind, for one that is wise and good you find ten of a contrary character."

It would be an intolerable burden, if, for every shade of meaning we had to express, we were obliged to remember a separate word. The genius of our language manages much better. Most of our ideas are expressed by words that belong to other ideas, at times only remotely akin to the first ideas. Some real or fancied likeness, some association of time or place, some connexion or other between the ideas, brings about this economy in the use of words.

Thus "wrong" (connected as it is with "wring") in the first place meant "something twisted" (as its parallel Norman-French "tort" is also connected with "torture" and "tortuous"). It is extended to all kinds of deviations from the straight: a scamp is "a wrong 'un"; a watch may be twenty minutes wrong; seeking money, you may go to the "wrong shop"; and dozens of others. That is why, as a rule, we cannot interpret a word in isolation. To determine its full meaning we must see the word in its context: *the fleet in being*, and *the fleet foot of time*, summon up different interpretations of *fleet*. A common element there is: both the ships and the time *float* away. But the two call up different ideas.

Usage Changes

Time effects changes. What was once incorrect is now quite correct; what writers and speakers used with propriety a hundred years ago is now among the improprieties. A mistake at the outset may in process of time become sanctioned by usage. We then invite misunderstanding if we use the term in its original—and formerly correct—sense. Look at that word "help-meet," sometimes written "helpmate." The Bible words are "an help meet for him," *meet* here being an adjective meaning *fit, suitable* (as in the phrase "It is very meet, right, and our

bounden duty to give thanks"). The words were mistakenly taken to be a compound equivalent to "partner in life." *Help* was supposed to be a verb. It is even said that there are people who interpret the word as "one who helps to make ends meet." At all events, when we do use the word, we had better confine ourselves to the modern sense of "helpmate," even though the *Oxford English Dictionary* informs us that this is "a compound absurdly formed by taking the two words *help meet* in Gen. ii. 18, 20, as one word."

See, too, how a general mistake of *premises* has brought about the modern meaning attached to the word. In a legal document the word still retains its original meaning: it is simply a useful summary for "all those things mentioned before." In Lloyd's Policy of Insurance the word has its original meaning: "We the Assurers are contented and do hereby promise and bind ourselves for the true Performance of the Premises." Legal documents do indeed abound in words. But the lawyer himself gets a little tired of lengthy repetitions, and avails himself of "the aforesaid" or "the premises" in order to avoid the repetitions. "The premises" would recur time after time in the document conveying the property in a house and land from one owner to another. "Premises" came, therefore, to be understood as "the house and its surroundings"; and now phrases like "Licensed to sell wines to be drunk on the premises" are common among us.

In such a sentence as "His conclusion is by no means justified by his premises" the word still has its early meaning. The "premises" are here the statements from which the reasoner has deduced his conclusion. Thus in this claim of reasoning: "We shall encourage earnest students; John Smith is an earnest student; therefore we should encourage John Smith"—the first two sentences are the premises, the third is the conclusion.

Here, too, is the word "crisis," the word that we hear on every platform and read in every newspaper nowadays. A Chancellor of the Exchequer speaks of the present very difficult times through which the country is passing. There is the consequent need of an election whereby the Government shall have the expressed approval of the country behind it, and he asks the question, "Who can be sure that we are not at the beginning of a long crisis?"

He was there using the word in its now current sense of "a time of anxiety"—a time that might be, but also might not be, speedily passing. The earlier meaning of the word is a turning-point, a sharp decisive alteration in the trend of affairs. Just so, the "critic" (a word connected with "crisis") was the judge differentiating the bad from the good, drawing a clear line between them. We should be foolish, however, if we said that the Chancellor used the word incorrectly when in fact he simply conformed to custom.

Again, you could hardly without inviting misunderstanding use "silly" as a complimentary adjective. It was so used in its early history when it implied innocent, quiet: so Milton has—

> Perhaps their loves or else their sheep
> Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

It was perhaps a perverse view of human nature that transferred *innocent* into *foolish*, a transfer suggesting that when one is endowed with intelligence he is apt to lose his innocence. Indeed, we may sometimes, when custom uses a word in an incorrect sense, shrink from using a word in its correct sense. We may fear to invite misconception and we discard the word. *Nice* is an instance. Which of us nowadays dare use it in its former sense of *minute* or *punctilious*? In *Julius Cæsar* Cassius declares—

> In such a time as this it is not meet
> That every nice offence should bear his comment.

(In this time of confusion it is not fitting that every tiny wrongdoing should be noticed and commented upon.) "A nice offence" is evidently one that only a scrupulously exact man would note. But the modern loose use of *nice* has overwhelmed the primary meaning.

Words from Abroad

The advice often proffered to a writer is sound: be sparing in the use of adornment and in particular of foreign terms. The journalists themselves, who are currently considered to make a too elaborate use of foreign embellishments, mock at the practice. A pretended examination of an aspirant for honours in Fleet Street is proceeding—

"Question Two: *'Pabulum,' 'Cela va sans dire,' 'Par ex-*

cellence,' 'Ne plus ultra.' What are these? Are there any more of them?"

"They are scholarship," replied Rob, "and there are two more, namely, *'tour de force,'* and *'terra firma'*."

(*Sir James Barrie's "When a Man's Single."*)

The English stock of words is ample. We have, however, naturalized many words from abroad; and even such words as we underline or italicize in order to indicate their foreign origin may be real and useful parts of our language. "Thus, an *ad hoc* committee" is a convenient and acceptable shortening for a committee selected for one special purpose; "a personnel manager" is now the recognized name for the manager entrusted with the duties of engaging and managing the staff.

Such foreign terms can hardly be regarded as needless adornings. For a special purpose they are actually preferable to the native-born term. Though we write them in italics and though we pronounce them as we think they are pronounced abroad, they are part of the English language. A *pied-à-terre* says more than a *foot on the ground;* a person's *bête noire* is more than his *black-beast*; to give one *carte blanche* means more than to give him a *white card*; *dilettante* indicates one who toys with many arts, concentrating on none. Though attempts are made to preserve the Italian spelling and sound, the last word is a useful constituent of the English language. "Evening dress is required by etiquette" is not so good as "Evening dress is *de rigueur*."

Some Importations are Indispensable

Without these importations of early times we should be in many connexions at a loss to express ourselves. Here, for example, are the Italian words that will persist as evidence of where we learnt music and painting: *opera, piano, tremulo, prima donna, gamut, intermezzo, fresco, intaglio, studio,* and others. To devise English equivalents would be wasted labour. The lawyer's terms, too, relating to law, government, property, are all of Old French origin: *court, assize, judge, jury, prison, gaol, chattel, money, rent, tax, council, parliament, bill, act,* and the like. You have all read the illuminative passage in *Ivanhoe.*

"Gurth, I advise thee to call off Fangs and leave the herd to their destiny, which, whether they meet with bands of travelling soldiers, or of outlaws, or of wandering pilgrims, can be little else than to be converted into Normans before morning, to thy no small ease and comfort."

"The swine turned Normans to my comfort!" quoth Gurth; "expound that to me, Wamba, for my brain is too dull, and my mind too vexed, to read riddles."

"Why, what call you, those grunting brutes running about on their four legs?" demanded Wamba.

"Swine, fool, swine," said the herd; "every fool knows that."

"And swine is good Saxon," said the jester. "But how call you the sow when she is flayed, and drawn, and quartered, and hung up by the heels like a traitor?"

"Pork," answered the shepherd.

"I am very glad every fool knows that too," said Wamba; "and pork, I think, is good Norman-French; and so when the brute lives, and is in charge of a Saxon slave, she goes by her Saxon name; but becomes a Norman and is called 'pork,' when she is carried to the castle-hall to feast among the nobles. What dost thou think of this, friend Gurth, ha?"

"It is too true doctrine, friend Wamba, however it got into thy fool's pate."

"Nay I can tell you more," said Wamba, in the same tone.

"There is old Alderman Ox continues to hold his Saxon epithet while he is under the charge of serfs and bondsmen such as thou, but becomes Beef, a fiery French gallant, when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are destined to consume him. Mynheer Calf, too, becomes Monsieur de Veau in the like manner; he is Saxon when he required tendance, and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter of enjoyment."

The distinction remains; the French *bœuf* is the living animal, the English *beef* is meat for the eating; the French *mouton* is the sheep, the English *mutton* is its flesh.

Foreign Words of Good Service

Here are some other words with which we could ill dispense. *Laissez-faire* is a concise expression of the individualist's creed, let Government maintain law and order; but let Government leave trade and industry to themselves. *Prima facie*, on first impression, has actually crept into an Act of Parliament—

The receipt by a person of a share of the profits of a business is *prima facie* evidence that he is a partner in the business.

In Bentham's comment upon what he called "the incognoscibility of the law and its extreme uncertainty" we could hardly dispense with *alias*—

On the question what the law is, so long as the rule of action is kept in the state of common, *alias* unwritten, *alias* imaginary law, authority is everything. The question is what, on a given occasion, A (the judge) is likely to think. Wait until your fortune has been spent in the enquiry and you will know. But forasmuch as it is naturally a man's wish to be able to give a guess on what the result will eventually be before he has spent his fortune, he applies through the medium of B (an attorney) for his opinion to C (a counsel) who, considering what D (a former judge) has said or been supposed to say, deduces therefore his guess as to what, when the time comes, judge A, he thinks, will say.

Italics will still remain, largely as a fashion, for words like *tête-à-tête*, an intimate talk, *ennui*, mental weariness, *esprit de corps*, a keenness to further the interests of the body to which one belongs, *chaperon*, the married lady in charge of a girl on social occasions. Despite the alien sounds and the italics, however, the words are now part of the English language. It would, in fact, be affectation if we sought to replace *chargé d'affaires* by "deputy ambassador," *aide-de-camp* by "officer helping the general by carrying his messages," *chauffeur* by "motor-car driver," or *hors d'œuvre* by "extra dish served as a relish at the beginning of the meal." *Billet-doux, bulletin, commissionaire, coupon, employée, liqueur, restaurant*, all have their use among us. And the often repeated—and often ignored—request *répondez s'il vous plaît* (R.S.V.P.) will persist because "Answer, please" is considered too peremptory.

Terms Relating to Argument

During the conduct of a debate an expressive Latin phrase is apt to slip in, on occasion even a Greek phrase. They are not invariably used fitly; and perhaps you will not think a note on them to be an impertinence.

Cui bono is a Latin phrase meaning "to whose good will this contribute?" (not "what's the good of it?"): find out to whom this proposed course will be a benefit, and you have evidence pointing to its author.

Onus probandi is a Law Latin phrase to denote "the burden of proving."

A fortiori, "from yet firmer ground," a Latin phrase used to introduce a statement that, provided a previous statement is accepted as true, must be still more readily accepted. Thus—

Even a 10 per cent duty on imported hops would not help the Kent grower, *a fortiori* a 5 per cent duty is useless.

A posteriori, "from the later (to the earlier)," a reasoning by induction, from the particular to the general. Thus—

No man willingly pays twopence when he can get what he wants for a penny. That is, men scheme to achieve their aims by the easiest means.

A priori, "from the earlier (to the later)," from causes to effect, a reasoning by deduction, from general to particular. Thus—

People resent being under compulsion; they will, therefore, evade a law when they can do so with impunity.

Argumentum ad hominen, an argument likely to appeal to the one addressed, even though it may not stand the test of impartial reason. Thus—

You lost heavily on your loan when the French Government decreed a less gold equivalent of the franc. You will agree, therefore, that the value of money should be stable.

Argumentum ad populum, an argument, like that of Mark Antony's devised to rouse popular passion rather than to convince.

Petitio principii (begging the question), "assumption of the

basis" (of an argument)—assuming in the course of the argument the very point that you seek to prove. Thus—

Gulliver's Travels is a true account. For the book is an autobiography written by the traveller himself, who must have known the facts; and we know that the book is an autobiography because it says so.

Hysteron proteron, "the later earlier," a Greek phrase equivalent to our "putting the cart before the horse"—

It is proved already that you are little better than false knaves, and it will go near to be thought so shortly. Dogberry in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Reductio ad absurdum, "leading to absurdity," a Latin phrase to indicate a method of proving the truth of a statement by showing that its untruth would lead to absurdities.

Suggestio falsi, "suggestion of the false," a Latin term applied to a statement that is literally true but that implies what is untrue. If I say "He had not been drunk for a whole week" the statement may be quite correct. But its implication may be a slander.

Suppressio veri, "suppression of the truth," a Latin term applied to a statement no part of which is untrue, but that gives a misleading impression. Thus, a company prospectus, by the intentional withholding of facts, may render a director liable to criminal proceedings.

Tu quoque, "thou also" (the Latin equivalent of English "you're another"), a term indicating the method of meeting an accusation, not by denying it, but by asserting that the accuser, too, falls within the accusation.

Exceptio probat regulam, "the exception proves the rule," an elliptical expression the full form of which is "every exception that can be accounted for by the rule helps to confirm the rule." Thus, the law of gravity makes things fall. But a balloon rises. True, it rises because the heavier air, elbowing the lighter balloon aside, forces it upward. The exception, in other words, is only apparent; it is a special case of the general rule.

Nemine contradicente (or *dissentiente*), with the abbreviations *nem. con.*, *nem. dis.*, "none saying a word against", "none being opposed to the proposal," that is, unanimously.

Pace (pronounced pas-si): an oblique case of *pax*, peace,

used when expressing a contrary opinion. Thus "*pace tua*," "with all deference to you and your opinion."

Sic: a Latin adverb meaning "*so*." It often occurs in brackets (*sic*) when a quotation has been made and the quoter wishes to disclaim responsibility for the unusual spelling or other peculiarity of the quotation. The quoter would have you know—

"The mistake, if mistake it is, must not be attributed to me, but to my author."

The risks attendant upon the use of foreign words are obvious: the writer may be ignorant of their exact meaning, the reader may know it. Ambiguity results. More likely, perhaps, the use convicts the writer of affectation, of straining after effect at the cost of the discomfort or the obscurity of the reader. Perhaps the writer with a wealth of knowledge of foreign terms would do well to imitate Fuller's *Good Schoolmaster*—

Out of his school he is no way pedantic in carriage or discourse; contenting himself to be rich in Latin, though he doth not jingle it in every company wherein he comes.

Language Lives and Grows

However recent the dictionary, it is never complete. For new words are for ever finding a place in the language; and, more important, old words are ever being used in new senses. Here, for instance, is an announcement that would have meant nothing to people living fifty years ago, "Scenes from *The Tiger* were televised yesterday afternoon." Well, we now have the new verb "to televise"; and you will need to wait for a dictionary containing it.

Sir Samuel Hoare, when explaining why he had resigned his office as Foreign Secretary, made a dignified and affecting speech. In one report a significant sentence occurs: "Not a ship, nor an airplane, not a man has been moved by any other member state." Now, "airplane" is not yet in common use in this country for "aeroplane," you will probably not find it in your dictionary. In the United States it is the word always used. Perhaps Sir Samual Hoare anticipated that we shall shortly hear it without surprise. For "airplane" is in the natural line of development. A new thing comes into being.

We need a new name for it, and we often go to Athens or Rome or Paris for the new name. In course of time the word loses its foreign garb and becomes modified so as to keep company without being conspicuous among English words. These lawyer's terms, for instance, which once revealed at a glance their Old French origin, nowadays look as English as any other words, *court, judge, jury, prison, gaol, money, bill, rent.*

Lord Ponsonby writes an entertaining letter to *The Times* on the matter—

Sir,—The gradual encroachment into our language of new words cannot of course be checked; and indeed some, no doubt, from time to time are needed. Certain words also suddenly become popular, but by constant use they seem to get worn out. Such a one was "psychology," generally incorrectly used, but greatly favoured by speakers during the last 20 years. Now we have got "ideology." No political speaker considers his speech is complete unless he uses it.

But I desire to protest, not as a pedant but as a lover of the English language, against an ugly new compound word (it is not in the dictionary) which has crept in and is used with a slight touch of unctuous sentimentality which makes it still further objectionable. It is the word "carefree." "Careless," yes, is much needed. "Caretaker," certainly, is indispensable. But for goodness' sake let us drop "carefree" before it is too late. It is not as if we had not got the right word to convey the required meaning. What is wrong with the beautiful word "happy"? Yours, &c.,

PONSONBY OF SHULBREDE.

And the ingenious leader-writer puts up a stout defence for the newcomer—

'It is no good pretending that "happy" is an equivalent for "carefree." If we say that Snooks (J.) played a carefree innings we mean one thing; if we say that Snooks (J.) played a careless innings we mean another thing; and if we say that Snooks (J.) played a happy innings we mean practically nothing. The fact of the matter is that the fate of "careless," which has come to mean—well, careless instead of "free from care," has created a

demand for "carefree." The word to revile is not the newcomer, from which the lexicographers withhold *de jure* recognition, but the original adjective, which has been seduced into betraying its true meaning. The newcomer, as a matter of fact, does not seem to most of us as ugly as it does to LORD PONSONBY. It certainly does not deserve to be in the same tumbril as the two other examples of jargon which he cites. It is not—to go farther afield—so pretentious as "thought-forms," so arch as "awareness," or so nauseating as "folkways." In any case we ought all, including LORD PONSONBY, to be thankful that "carefree" appeared when it did, before the psychologists came mouthing over the frontiers of our vocabulary, with (to select a few words from a recent publication) Schizophrenic, Cyclothermic, Perceptual, Psychasthenic, Old Uncle Tom Complex and all. The compound "carefree" may be the child of an etymologically illicit union; but if it had not been born we should have been lucky if we had got off with "aphobe." And that (though better than "decompulsionated") is no sort of a word to have about the place.'

Here a writer in *The Economist* deals with the trade between Britain and Argentina: "Argentine meat," he writes, "comes from British-bred cattle on British-financed estancias. It is carried to port on British-owned railways, chilled by British frigorificos, transported in British ships and financed by British bankers." The Spanish word "estancia" is not yet widely current; but it will make way. The manufactured word "frigorifico" is not yet in the ordinary dictionaries, but it is bound to find a place soon. On another page is the sentence, "The trend of events is by no means to leave an open field to the jingoes of Japan." The strange word "jingo" comes pat with "Japan": when in 1878 there were many blustering patriots "jingo" was a meaningless expression in a popular song; now it is current for anyone who supports a warlike policy.

The Word "Item" also Illustrates How New Words Arise

You learnt a little Latin at school; you still remember enough to know that "item" is the Latin adverb meaning "in like manner." When the accountants of old made up their debits and credits they introduced each added entry by the

Latin word, probably decorated with elaborate curves; for those were leisurely days. In time the word was used as the name of the entry, just as you may say "They sang the Te Deum," using the first two words to denote the whole song of praise. So Olivia promises: "I will give out divers schedules of my beauty: it shall be inventoried: as *item*, two lips, indifferent red; *item*, two grey eyes, with lids to them." Others of the old accountants' words are no longer familiar to us. There is *ob.*—the old way of writing a halfpenny. The actor reads out the items of Falstaff's tavern bill: Item—Sack, two gallons, 5s. 8d.; Item—Bread, *ob.* ("O monstrous! but one halfpennyworth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack.") But he reads *ob.* not in its Latin expansion but as "halfpenny" —as indeed he does not read *d.* in its Latin expansion but as "penny."

So do "Money" and "Admonition"

The coins that run about among us to settle our transactions are called *money*, and are made at the *Royal Mint.* We *admonish* a person when we give him good counsel. Have these two words, "money" and "admonish," any connexion? Only an accidental one. The goddess to whom the Romans turned for guidance in their perplexities was Juno Moneta—Juno endowed with wisdom and foresight and therefore well able to act as monitress, as counsellor. It was in her temple that the Romans struck their coins; her temple was their Mint, and the coins that came out were their money. Her name is perpetuated in the English *money*, the French *monnaie*, the German *Münze*, even in the Portuguese *moidores* (money of gold, *moeda d'ouro*). To give out admonition and to give out money are alike in being attributes of the bountiful goddess; and perhaps you should welcome the first as heartily as you welcome the second.

A Passing Popularity

The course of events may cause a learned word to be current among all, whether learned or not. It virtually becomes a new and useful adjunct to the common vocabulary. "Moratorium" is an instance. Till the troubles incident upon war came thick and fast the word—a convenient term for the temporary failure to meet one's obligations—could not be regarded as a real part

of the language. It was noted in the dictionaries; it did not enter into speech. Now we can all without the least hesitation interpret the sentence, "Resuming payments after the 1931 Hoover moratorium, Italy defaulted in common with other States, Britain included, in her debt to the United States in 1933." So it was with the word "morganatic." The adjective is applied to a marriage between a man of exalted rank and a woman of lower station in which it is arranged that neither the wife nor her children shall share the husband's dignities. The word is rare at ordinary times; it was on every tongue during the period that preceded King Edward's abdication.

The revival of an old word is something of an innovation; and in its revived sense the word may again come into vogue. Look at the verb "reluct." The noun "reluctance" you know well; it signifies an unwillingness, a struggle against. "To reluct" signifying "to make opposition against" is much less known, so that it comes upon you in Lamb's Essay on "New Year's Eve" almost as a coined word would: "I care not to be carried with the tide that smoothly bears human life to eternity; and I reluct at the inevitable course of destiny."

Here again is a writer in *The Times* commenting upon the doggerel verse that you read upon Christmas cards or extract from Christmas crackers. "Is there," he asks, "some remote tradition which decrees that these islands shall be inundated, at an annual season of rejoicing, with a spate of the worst poetry in the world?" He is referring to couplets like "If you love me and I love you, Who else so happy as we two?" Well, *spate* is a river-flood and it carries on the metaphor of *inundated*, which itself means to cover with the waves. We understand the word. It has long been in the language in the primary sense of a river-flood. Now it is quite a favourite expression for any sudden outburst—of books, of treaties, of conferences.

Inventing Words

In another sentence the same writer condoles with himself at the prospect that the spate will come again and yet again. "Unpardonably inept, inordinately saccharine, and composed by none can say whom, verse of a seasonable kind will continue to be one of the minor drawbacks of Christmas—if only because Christmas would not be the same without it." It was in the

days when sugar and a good many other things were hard to get in this country, the dismal days when we were put upon rations, that we became familiar with *saccharine* as a noun denoting the then acceptable coal-tar product, the chemically composed substitute for sugar. The word came into the language from the special vocabulary of the chemist. The inventor of the new substance named it in 1885 "saccharine" although, we are gravely told, "it is not related to the class of sugars but is a derivation of benzoic acid; and its true scientific name is benzoylsulphimide." Perhaps we had better, however, sacrifice correctness in this instance and adhere to the ordinary word. New as it is, this word is now available for whatever writer or speaker wishes to blame the excessive sweetness of a thing.

In an adjoining column a writer discusses the project to establish food reserves in the country. How much food should be stored? And he gives the answer: "The attitude adopted should lie somewhere between the hopelessly defeatist and the impossibly sanguine. Reserves can never be enough to relieve the Navy and the Air Force of all except military duties, but they should be enough to ease the enormous burden of those duties." We must recognize, in other words, that if we wholly lost command of the sea routes no reserves, however large, could stave off inevitable defeat; but then, on the other hand, we might well provide against a temporary interruption of supplies from abroad.

Of the contrasted adjectives, *defeatist* and *sanguine*, one has long been in the language, *sanguine*, meaning in the first place "blood-red." It means this in Milton's line, "Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe." The old idea that, where the blood runs free through the body, despondency and melancholy fly away, made it signify the temperament in which confidence reigns, and one expects things to go well. The word in both senses was already in the language for Chaucer to use it in describing that jovial farmer so fond of good cheer; "It snowed in his house of meat and drink"; and we think it quite fitting that "Of his complexion he was sanguine."

Defeatist is, however, a newcomer. It is not in the great Oxford Dictionary, though it is in the supplement of 1933. There it is allied with the companion new word *pacifist* (which should properly be *pacificist*). Perhaps the advent is a little

ominous: for "defeatist" suggests that, in a repetition of the disaster of war, civilization will perish. The word seems to have begun its career as a nickname for those members of the Irish Convention of 1918 who voted for a policy of moderation.

Sources of New Words

The new words come from many quarters and in many manners. A name may, for one reason or another, become current on everyone's tongue. A jester makes a verb from the name; the verb takes the fancy of the people and finds a permanent place in the language. Mafeking after a long siege was relieved. Uproarious rejoicing greeted the news. And now we have "to maffick," meaning to indulge in noisy demonstrations of joy. One prolific source of new words nowadays is the American republic, which sends its peculiar terms in company with its pictures. We hear the terms; we become familiar with them; they seem to serve a purpose, or they please us with their defiance of what is correct; we begin to use them. And in a surprisingly short time their strangeness vanishes.

The peculiarity resides, you note, more often in a new turn of meaning of an old word than in a new word. We already talk about "striking a balance" when we find the difference between a debit and the credit side of an account; but we are now imitating America and using "balance" to signify "remainder." "He spent the balance of his life travelling." "Cotton" we know is made up into many delightful fabrics; we can understand that when people "cotton up" they agree with one another. But it is something of a shock when we find in *The Times* itself, "The country in general may cotton to the idea." "To bank on" something, to put your trust in it, is another expression becoming quite common among us. When the bank manager does approve of your project, when he promises the help of the bank to finance it, you can go ahead with confidence. It is a quite natural extension to apply the term to anything, even though unconnected with finance, that justifies your reliance. So it is that you bank on hard work for passing your examination, you bank on Hammond for saving the game.

Less familiar here than in their birthplace are phrases like "get the drop on" (where we say "take at a disadvantage"). In the American version one sinister instance is made to serve

for the whole class: you have the chance to shoot before your enemy can use his weapon. So with the phrases, more or less familiar to you by this time, "to be shy of" (where we say "to be short of"), "to stay put" (where we say "remain as placed"), "have no use for" (which denotes far more than indifference, denotes indeed actual dislike). For some of the differences no ready explanation presents itself: why should our "common sense" be known as "horse sense" in America, why the "bonnet of the motor car" be known as "the hood of the automobile," why our "non-alcoholic drinks" be known as "soft drinks"? But then, you will yourself be able to supply any number of phrases that have either already made a secure footing in our language or are well on the way to do so.

Slang and Idiom

Many of our new words come from a perversion of language, from slang. When does the newcomer cease to be slang? It is a question incessantly presenting itself. Here is, for instance, a sentence from *The English Tradition of Education*, written by the Headmaster of Harrow; "Some of the syllabuses of religious instruction published as being in use are so much eye-wash, and some of the best teachers of the past have not been bound by a syllabus at all." To be sure, *eye* does enter into a good many of what you might call "border-line cases," expressions that we cannot, with assurance, allot to the category of slang or of standard English. "Mind your eye," for "take care," is one; "all my eye," for "all humbug" is another; "make eyes at" yet another. Well, may we now, after that august authority, regard *eye-wash* as entitled to inclusion in our dictionaries of standard English? We all know its meaning; for even those of us who have not been in the army, are yet quite aware of the devices designed to cope with the general's inspection. Perhaps, though, we had better keep the word out of our serious writings; perhaps, too, we may hope that the thing itself will gradually vanish from us.

Here again is "peter away." When a rebellion becomes a success, we cease to call it a rebellion. When a slang word becomes an accredited member of the very mixed family of English words, we cease to call it slang. There will be a time, however, when the word is in the transition stage: we cannot

yet tell whether it has arrived. Such a word at present is "peter." We all know that "to peter out" means "to come to an end." Your irate partner may find fault with you because you failed to notice that, by playing a high card and then a low one, he had "petered out" of a particular suit. We have the idea, though, that the phrase is only a playful substitute for "exhausted." But now we see "peter" pushing its way into a sober history. In Mr. Trevelyan's *History of England* is the sentence, "Beyond the city walls Roman civilization petered away by degrees, through regions of Romano-British 'villadom,' into regions of mere Celtic tribalism." Is "peter" now among the best society?

Judicial Notice

When a word or a phrase can be used in Court without reproof from the presiding Judge and without his asking, "What is a fake?" or some such question, we may assume that the word is now recognized as English. It has ceased to be slang and has become cleared of all blemish as "a mere colloquialism." So it has come about with "fake" and "faked." All now understand "fake" as a sham or pretence; *The Times* itself has a headline "Faked Robbery Charge," under which heading is detailed an ingenious plan, happily unsuccessful, to defraud insurers. Yet a few years ago "fake" would have been rigorously excluded from the better class of papers. The word, indeed, has no pedigree: all that the *Oxford Dictionary* can do is to suggest that it may originate from the German *fegen*, "sweep." It does not seem to be connected with *fakir*, the word for a religious mendicant. Indeed, the pronunciation of this word—*fakeer*—precludes the connexion. The word used in the United States to signify pretenders is actually at times spelled *fakirs* as well as *fakers*: "They find the patent-medicine fakir on his motor-trunk still holding a considerable crowd." But American usage is no conclusive authority for an English word.

The slang use of "chronic" is distressing in that it almost deprives us of the use of an expressive word in the correct sense. We are constantly warned not to use imposing words unless we are well aware of their meanings; and just as constantly the warnings are as little effectual as "Wait till the

train stops" is. The proper meaning of "chronic" is "lasting over a long time, not speedily passing"; a serious illness may, to be sure, be also a chronic illness. But it is reprehensible slang to use "chronic" as an alternative to "serious." In talk, the substitution is a bad one. Here, much worse, it has invaded the printed page: "At that moment," writes the culprit, "there was chronic distress among the farmers."

Slang Perverts Language

It would almost seem that in some connexions the perversion of language has reached its farthest point. Slang has submerged real language. A new mode of expression has been evolved—a new mode intelligible within a very limited area and destined to speedy extinction and replacement. For the appetite productive of slang is ever craving new manifestations of perversion. The better newspapers in this country do make something of a stand for pure English; but here is a newspaper headline from across the Atlantic—

Midway Signs Limey Prof to Dope Yank Talk.

"Signs" we know, and "talk" we know, or think we know; "to" appears to be the ordinary particle of the infinite. But what of "midway" and "limey"? Well, after due examination of the paragraph ushered in by the headline, after some inquiries from assiduous picture patrons, we find the interpretation. The Chicago University (the half-way house across the Continent) has invited an Oxford Professor (who, being an Oxford Professor, drinks, as the British men-of-war who are also "limeys" do, no stronger drink than lime-juice) to revise (dope) its Dictionary of the American Language. And, when we have reached the meaning, we ask—as the boy did when he had mastered the alphabet—"Was it worth while to go through so much in order to learn so little"?

Abbreviations

Alongside slang we must consider the shortenings of words.

A bishop had been annoyed; he enters a protest against the use of abbreviations puzzling to one's correspondent. He begs for indulgence, complains that now and then he is given puzzles he cannot solve. And, quite unconsciously, he supplies

an illustration of his lesson: "The habit," he writes, "of using initial letters to signify societies or institutions is becoming a serious nuisance. Familiar abbreviations, such as K.G., M.P., F.R.S., S.P.G., and C.M.S., are tolerable; but most readers of the newspapers and even of certain books must find themselves puzzled at times by accumulations of letters which convey little or no meaning to unsophisticated minds. A circular referring to the C.P.A. fell into the hands of a well-known cotton spinner in Manchester. But the only C.P.A. which he recognized was the Calico Printers' Association; and, as the appeal was made to him in the prosperous days of the cotton industry, he strongly resented the supposition that the Calico Printers' Association stood, or could stand, at that time, in need of eleemosynary support." Now, doubtless, a good many of us would have failed to connect C.P.A.—"those well-known initials," the bishop calls them—with the Church Pastoral Aid Society. But should we all find the initials adduced by the bishop "familiar"? The safe rule is to use no shortened form unless you are certain of its being interpreted in the intended sense.

To be sure we are all apt to use the shortened forms with our intimates; they give an air of common interest. "The multitude," we seem to say, "may not know that our 'Peggy' was christened 'Margaret,' our 'Betty' is our 'Elizabeth.' We do know." So, then, the fourteen syllables *Oxford University Dramatic Society* became *O.U.D.S.* of four syllables and now *Ouds* of one. This tendency, to make a new word from the initials of a well-known phrase, is illustrated by our saying, "It's a question of £ s. d." ("el-es-dee," not "pounds, shillings, and pence," "He's an M.P." ("em-pee," not "Member of Parliament"), "So the B.B.C. announces" (the "bee-bee-cee," not the "British Broadcasting Corporation").

So long as the shorthand form is neither a trap nor an obscurity, it is a natural development of language; for it conveys thought with great economy. There seems to be no valid objection to shortenings like "phone" for "telephone" or "photo" for "photograph." You may, indeed, resent the curtailment and stand out against it for a while; in the end you will find yourself conforming to custom. It is when the shortening conceals a trap that valid objection can be taken. Such a

shortening is *viz.* You meet it, you read it "namely"; and the question presents itself "Why, then, not write 'namely'?" For not everyone knows that the full Latin form is *videlicet* (with pronunciation vĭdĕ-lĭcĕt), a verb meaning "one may see." Nor does everyone know that the *z* is the symbol used by the old scribes for *et*; though written in the same form, it is not the last letter of our alphabet. To pronounce *viz.* as "namely" does at all events guard from the error of mispronouncing this *z* symbol. But why invite the error?

The great point is that we are all well advised in the matter of language—which concerns others as well as ourselves—to conform to custom. We make ourselves slightly ridiculous when we insist on "consolidated annuities" when all around us say "consols," or "cinematograph" when others say "cinema," or "costermonger" when others are saying "coster." "Coon" has replaced "racoon"; "curio" is heard more frequently than "curiosity" for the things sold in an antique shop. "Dynamo" for "dynamo-electric machine" and "magneto" for "magneto-electric machine" are well understood; "gym" and "zoo" are useful variants for "gymnasium" and "Zoological Gardens." "Pram" for "perambulator," "quad" for "quadrangle," "stylo" for "stylographic pen," "sub" for "subaltern" or "substitute," "mob" for "mobile vulgus" (the fickle multitude), "piano" for "pianoforte," "pros and cons" for "pros and contras," "viva" for "viva voce," "super" for "supernumerary," "cab" for "cabriolet," "van" for "avant guard"—these and many others are all by this time reputable members of the English language.

Over other clippings we may hesitate. The sensible rule is that inculcated in the Army: when in doubt, use the full form "Abbreviations will be used when there can be no doubt as to their meaning. The writer of an order, report, or message is responsible that any abbreviations he may use are such as will be understood by the intended recipient."

For confusion is easily possible, particularly when the one shortening has more than one expansion. Thus *i.e.* (*id est*, that is) introduces an explanation; *e.g.* (*exempli gratia*, by way of example) introduces an illustration. The two are at times confused. The correct use is illustrated in sentences such as: "We have words from two dialects of Old French; e.g. from

Norman-French come *catch, warden*; from the dialect of Central France come the doublets *chase, guardian.*" "We can improve our composition by revision; i.e. we can make it more intelligible or more interesting or more persuasive." A headline in a commercial journal reads: "The L.C.C. meeting." But we must read further before we realize that the meeting is not a London County Council meeting, nor a meeting of the London Chamber of Commerce; it is the meeting of the Lancashire Cotton Corporation. So M.P. to most of us denotes Member of Parliament. But M.P. on a brassard is Military Police. N.S. may be the annoying intimation that funds in the bank are not sufficient to meet the cheque; it may also mean the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. P.C. may be Privy Councillor or Police Constable; it may in some contexts be Petty Cash. *Deb.* which most of us would construe as *debenture*, is really (it appears from a doleful letter written by "A London Magistrate" to the Editor of *The Times*) the unceremonious shortening of *débutante*—

Listening to a fellow-member bewailing his financial obligations as to a deb., I supposed that he referred to a *debenture* in his business, and not to a *débutante* in his home.

Doubtless you will greatly enjoy this comment upon "The Charm of Initials": it is part of a delightful leader in *The Times*—

It is when the names of institutions are abbreviated that their study becomes interesting. L.M.S., for instance, is an admirable name for a railway; the train pulls in on the first two letters and lets out steam with a complacent hiss. L.N.E.R. gallops to the right rhythm; but G.W.R. is hopeless and does not sound like a railway at all. T.S.F. (if you pronounce it as the French do) is a felicitously onomatopœic label for what the English, inaccurate as well as illogical, prefer to call the wireless. The B.B.C., on the other hand, has an unsuitably frivolous ring, and is further liable to be confused with that pugilistic oligarchy, the B.B.B.C.

D.O.R.A. was inspired, and remains a classic. The G.P.U. (Gay Pay Oo to 170,000,000 potential victims) sounds subtly sinister, and moreover provides an ex-

cellent alternative for the trisyllabic ending of "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" a refrain which is said by travellers to be very popular in Russia this year. The less intimidating G.P.O. is as brisk, cheerful, and efficient as a postman's knock; and the L.P.T.B. has the hurried, bumpy cadence that we should expect. But what of our latest attack of initialitis? What of N.D.C.? This, it is generally admitted, has little to recommend it beyond the fact that you can make it stand for Neville Doesn't Care.

Inventing a New Term

When a new thing comes into the knowledge of men, when a new idea needs to be expressed, it is very desirable to use a word or a phrase never used before. We may, indeed, wrest an old term to the new service. But then this is to invite misunderstanding.[1] Those familiar with the word in the old sense find it hard to attach the new sense to the old word. Professor Houseman explained the matter to us in this way. He is animadverting upon the manner in which the chemists have turned the word "salt" to their special purpose.

"Salt," he said, "is a crystalline substance recognized by its taste; its name is as old as the English language and is the possession of the English people, who know what it means: it is not the private property of a science less than three hundred years old, which, being in want of a term to embody a new conception, 'an acid having the whole or part of its hydrogen replaced by a metal,' has lazily helped itself to the old and unsuitable word 'salt,' instead of excogitating a new and therefore to that extent an apt one. The right model for imitation is that chemist who, when he encountered, or thought he had encountered, a hitherto nameless form of matter, did not purloin for it the name of something else, but invented out of his own head a name which should be proper to it, and enriched the vocabulary of modern man with the useful word *gas*."

[1] Until at any rate the old meaning has been submerged by the later one. Thus "sullen" to Shakespeare and Milton meant "solemn": the sonnet has—

> No longer mourn for me when I am dead
> Than you shall hear the surly, sullen bell
> Give warning to the world that I am fled;

and *Il Penseroso* speaks of—

> The far-off curfew sound
> Over some wide-watered shore,
> Swinging slow with sullen roar.

The sense of glumness, of moroseness, now overlies the sense of solemnity.

Choosing a Name

To choose a name for the new book or the new play is always difficult. The name should be like the address on a letter, and bring the book or the play to those who will welcome its contents. But how light upon such a name? *Treasure Island*—will that do? Yes; it suggests pirates and buried riches, adventure under sunny skies, matters far away from the humdrum office. It is concise and it is expressive. *Vanity Fair*—what about that? Well, we are told that Thackeray jumped for joy when that name suggested itself to him; and it does, in fact, adequately describe the contents. At times, an author actually seems to relinquish the task of finding an appropriate title. He contents himself by calling his book by the name of a leading character: it is *David Copperfield* or *Lorna Doone* or *Jane Eyre*. And Shakespeare, saying to himself "The play's the thing," gives it a name that has hardly any relation to the characters or to the tale they present. It is *Twelfth Night* or *What You Will*: you have paid your money, call it what you choose. Or it is *As You Like It*; see the play first, then you're at liberty to give your own name to it.

This series of four books, for instance, deals with one great topic, the manner in which people earn a living; what shall be the collective title? "The Community Series"? "Community" inevitably brings singing to mind; and, though one is not precluded from enjoyment in one's work, it is in fact work *for* the community, not singing *with* the community, that we envisage. Would "Co-operation" do? "Co-operation" is a name so elastic in meaning that for our special purpose it is too vague. We do indeed earn our living by co-operating with our fellows, and we would suggest this; but then "Co-operation," without further guidance hardly does this. "Serving One Another"—how about that? Or "Getting and Spending"; or "We Produce to Consume"; or simply "Working for One Another."

To choose a name for the new baby is less difficult. For the path to the appropriate name is usually blazed by the names of predecessors. Even so there is room for dissension, and the final choice may not satisfy all—possibly including the baby later on: "Sally," wrote Jane Austen, "or rather Sarah (for what young lady of common gentility will reach the age of sixteen without altering her name as far as she can?), must

from situation be at this time the intimate friend and confidante of her sister."

Trade Names are Property

To choose a name for a new commodity is also difficult. But we do well to spend time and thought upon it. For it is a matter upon which profits may depend.

Nor is the choice of a trade name unrestricted. The Japanese, it seems, have re-named one of their villages Macclesfield. They may now, without blushing, sell silk goods as Macclesfield silk: they were made in Japan; they were made in Macclesfield, too. It is an ingenious device; for there is no process by which our English Court could prevent such an appellation. Besides, the Japanese may lay hand on heart and declare that they are only following precedent: they are honouring the Cheshire Macclesfield, the ancient home of the silk industry, by giving its name to the new entrant into the silk industry. The trouble, from the English makers' view, is that buyers may be unable to discriminate between the home and the foreign product. If the competitor were denizened on British soil, there would be no difficulty for the Macclesfield manufacturers: they would state their case to the Court of Chancery; and that Court, being convinced of the equity of the plea, would issue to the assumer of the appellation an injunction bidding him either to give it up or to use it "with a difference."

So the Court did in the Stone Ale case with which every commercial student is, or ought to be, quite conversant. Stone is a Staffordshire town. It is not large according to modern standards, for it has only 6000 inhabitants. But it has, say the brewers and their chemists, a supply of water admirably suited for brewing excellent beer. At any rate Stone was famous for its ale which, till the events leading to the case, had all emanated from the plaintiff's brewery. For a century the brewery had flourished there; the reputation of "Stone Ale" was due to the seekers of the injunction and to their predecessors in the brewery business.

Now comes upon the scene the proprietor of hotels and public houses in Liverpool. In his trade he, too, had dealt much in Stone Ale and he well knew its virtues. But now he would, following the modern method of integration, unite the maker

with the dealer; he would set up as a brewer himself. Where should he set up his brewery? What better place than Stone; and what more natural, being settled there, than to call his brewery "Stone Brewery" and his ales "Stone Ales"? In the action against him, however, he failed to persuade the various Courts—for the case ran the full course from High Court to the House of Lords—that his choice of site had been dictated by the peculiar virtue, the chemical properties, of Stone water. The Courts decided that he had gone to Stone solely with the object of taking to himself part of the plaintiff's trade. He wanted to come rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him, though he had not sown.

A sentence or two from the final judgment will be welcome—

I do not see my way to alter the injunction at all, except by making it more stringent and more severe. And that would hardly be fair to the appellant on his appeal. It would have been impossible for the appellant to have called his ales "Stone Ales," and to have distinguished them from those of the plaintiff. Any attempt to distinguish the two, even if honestly meant, would have been perfectly idle. Thirsty folk want beer, not explanations. If the public get the thing they want, or something near it, and get it under the old name—the name with which they are familiar—they are likely to be supremely indifferent to the character and conduct of the brewer, and the equitable rights of rival traders. I agree that the appeal must be dismissed.

CHAPTER V

DISCRIMINATING AMONG WORDS

Wisdom in Using Names Correctly

To give an appropriate name is difficult; to use the name given should be easy. And in such correct use lies one of the little courtesies of life. These courtesies may not be of surpassing importance. Often, however, they affect people more than the important things do.

The efficient secretary, whose efficiency indeed is measured by her ability to establish communication without giving rise to unnecessary irritation, knows this, knows that it is wisdom to be certain that the name is spelt as its owner spells it. If the correspondent prefers "Smythe" to "Smith," we must defer to his wishes. It is also wisdom to make certain about initials of the Christian names; to select letters more or less at a venture, or worse still to address a man as "Smith Esq.," suggests to the recipient of your letter that his personality has made less than its proper impression upon you. Better a general address "To the Occupier" than an address so maltreated.

The fact that the correspondent has invited your mistake through his ill-written signature palliates the mistake; it does not cancel the irritation. The recipient of a letter bearing his name misspelt may, indeed, resolve that he will give no further excuse for error; he will have the name typed under his signature or, a more sweeping confession of illegibility, he will add in block capitals the letters of his name. Most of us, though, happily for our correspondents, do try to produce easily legible characters. At all events we no longer "count it a baseness to write fair."

The recipient may—rarely however and even then he is a little cross—derive some amusement from the perversion of what, being well known to himself, he erroneously supposes is well known to his correspondents. Perhaps "Mr. Adalbert Talbot" was delighted rather than distressed when a letter came to "Mr. Halibut Turbot." But we miscalculate if we suppose that all to whom we write have this saving grace of

humour; and, probably more to be lamented than the giving of needless irritation, there is the possibility of our letters going astray through our failure to find the correct name of our correspondent.

Overworked Words

Though we have so great a wealth of words, we are apt to overwork some of them.

Delegates from thirty nations assembled in London for the International Parliamentary Conference; and many of these delegates had desperate tussles with the English language. A few were over mistakes in meaning. A visiting typist noted that "The Conference passed many impotent resolutions." She may have been in fact correct; for a good many resolutions produce no effect whatever. But one may assume that she intended "important." Most of the tussles, however, consisted in the efforts to grasp the many meanings of a single word. One delegate expressed his amazement that one word could mean so many things. He journeyed to a meeting on a London tram and, like many of us, he chafed at the slowness of movement. "What is causing the delay?" he asked; and the conductor replied, "Because the tram in front is all behind." No wonder the delegate said "I never will master the English language." Was this really what he intended to say? Should he not have said "I never shall master the English language"?

We do in fact work some of our words hard. It might appear often enough that we have a beggarly vocabulary. Here is this word *right*. It has its own job to do in the language; but many of us make it a maid of all work and oblige it to do the jobs of a dozen words. We say the word and hope that our hearers will interpret it in the sense we intend. "Right O," one says; and we understand, after a little thought, that he has granted our request. "I'll do it right away" or perhaps "right now"; and we hope he will do it directly. "I'll get there all right," without mishap that is. "How do I get to Trafalgar Square?" "Go right along, take the first turn to the right, and you're right there." "Right?" "Right." "Right!"

So it was with Charles in Barrie's play, "Rosalind."

Whatever you, as his host, ask him to do, he says he would like to awfully if you don't mind his being a priceless duffer at it; his

vocabulary is scanty and in his engaging mouth "priceless" sums up all that is to be known of good or ill in our varied existence; at a pinch it would suffice him for most of his simple wants, just as one may traverse the Continent with *Combien*?

Our Most Overworked Word

Here, too, is the word "nice." "How nice this is!" There, if you like, is a much overworked word. We are all inclined to use "nice" as a thought-saving device; some of us consider it to be a convenient substitute for whatever adjective is applicable to a thing desirable. It conveys to the reader nothing definite, only a vague kind of agreeableness. This letter, for instance, has the word in three successive lines: "We have had a nice holiday. Aunt has cooked a nice lunch, and they invited us to a nice party." You see what a burden is placed upon the reader? He it is who must supply the appropriate adjective: he must interpret *nice* as "pleasant" or "restful" or "exciting" for the *holiday*, as "tender" or "tasty" or "abundantly satisfying" for the *lunch*, as "enjoyable" or "glorious" or "delightful" for the party. It is all a matter of chance whether he gets the intended meaning.

This is not economizing the reader's attention. The correct use of the word is seen in such a sentence as the one introducing Cowley's Essay, "It is a hard and nice subject for a man to write of himself; it grates his own heart to say anything of disparagement, and the reader's ears to hear anything of praise for him." Doubtless we ask too much in asking that the word shall be used only in that correct sense of "fastidious," "dainty,' "scrupulous about little things," the sense it has in "O Kate, nice customs curtsy to great kings" (the excuse put forward by the Fifth Henry in his curious wooing), or in such phrases as "the nice distinctions of lawyers." But we are not exorbitant in asking that the writer shall help the reader towards understanding; and we may lament that "nice," the universal slang word, has in its sphere levelled the nice distinctions that language has built up. You will be interested in reading an early protest about the indiscriminate use of "nice": it comes from *Northanger Abbey*—

"I am sure," said Catherine, "I did not mean to say anything wrong; but it *is* a nice book, and why should

not I call it so?" "Very true," said Henry, "and this is a very nice day; and we are taking a very nice walk; and you are two very nice young ladies. Oh! it is a very nice word, indeed! it does for everything. Originally, perhaps, it was applied only to express neatness, propriety, delicacy, or refinement; people were nice in their dress, in their sentiments, or their choice. But now every commendation on every object is comprised in that one word."

The Name Matters

The appropriate name is at times a matter of practical importance. Call a spade an agricultural implement, and it is still the same tool for digging and cutting ground, the tool with its sharp-edged blade and its wooden handle used with both hands. Yes; but call the same spade a shovel, and there is a difference, in one respect at any rate. Half a dozen lawyers, with advantage to their purses and a little added prosperity to the sellers of dictionaries, gravely discussed at Omaha, before the official bearing the grand name "President of the Board of the United States General Appraisers," the question whether or not a shovel is a spade. There came such an array of dictionaries, of "lexicons," as they were elegantly named, as would have delighted Doctor Johnson, greatest of all the lexicographers; there was much throwing about of brains, much display of erudition, in order to determine the question. For if a shovel is a spade it enters the United States free of duty. If, however, a shovel is not a spade, the importer must pay a duty of something like 25 per cent upon it: the shovel is then an industrial implement, seeking to enter the United States in order to deprive honest manufacturers there of part of their hard-earned livelihood.

We do in fact find in the law reports a double judicial decision concerning tomatoes: are they "fruit" or "vegetables"? It is that of the Supreme Court in *Nix* v. *Heddon*, 1893, affirming the judgment of the lower Court: "The passages cited from the dictionaries define the word 'fruit' as the seed of plants, or that part of plants which contains the seed, and especially the juicy, pulpy products of certain plants, covering and containing the seed. These definitions have no tendency to

show that tomatoes are 'fruit,' as distinguished from 'vegetables,' in common speech, or within the meaning of the Tariff Act.

There being no evidence that the words 'fruit' and 'vegetables' have acquired any special meaning in trade or commerce, they must receive their ordinary meaning. Of that meaning the Court is bound to take judicial notice, as it does in regard to all words in our tongue; and upon such a question dictionaries are admitted, not as evidence, but only as aids to the memory and understanding of the Court.

Botanically speaking, tomatoes are the fruit of a vine, just as are cucumbers, squashes, beans, and peas. But in the common language of the people, whether sellers or consumers of provisions, all these are vegetables, which are grown in kitchen gardens, and which, whether eaten cooked or raw, are like potatoes, carrots, parsnips, turnips, beets, cauliflower, cabbage, celery and lettuce, usually served at dinner, in, with, or after the soup, fish or meats which constitute the principal part of the repast, and not, like fruits generally, as dessert.

The attempt to class tomatoes with fruit is not unlike a recent attempt to class beans as seeds, of which Mr. Justice Bradley, speaking for this Court, said: 'We do not see why they should be classified as seeds, any more than walnuts should be so classified. Both are seeds in the language of botany or natural history, but not in commerce nor in common parlance. On the other hand, in speaking generally of provisions, beans may well be included under the term 'vegetables.' As an article of food on our tables, whether baked or boiled, or forming the basis of soup, they are used as a vegetable, as well when ripe as when green. This is the principal use to which they are put. Beyond the common knowledge which we have on this subject, very little evidence is necessary, or can be produced.' "

It almost reads like one of the cases of "Uncommon Law" omitted by Mr. Herbert. So, too, we are informed with due gravity that cigars are not "drugs" or "medicine." "Cigars are manufactured articles familiar to everybody. The materials of which they are composed are carefully prepared and put into form, until they lose their original character as mere materials, and become articles of commerce, known by a new name and

adapted to a particular use. We are of the opinion that cigars sold by a tobacconist in the ordinary way are not drugs or medicines, within the meaning of these words as used in the statute." (*Com.* v. *Marzynski*, 1889.)

Ready-made Phrases

Much of the vocabulary we use consists not of single words but of ready-made phrases. These are of all kinds and come from all quarters. They come in swarms from the Authorized Version and the English Liturgy, from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, from Shakespeare's plays. You could not better, for their particular purpose, phrases like these from the Bible, "highways and hedges," "smote him hip and thigh," "lick the dust," "a thorn in the flesh," "a broken reed," "the root of all evil," "to be weighed and found wanting," "a soft answer," "a word in season," "how are the mighty fallen!" and any number of others that will spring to your mind.

They come, too, from the song that has a passing vogue, from a speech that takes the public fancy, even from the hoardings where advertisements clamour for attention. They have become household words and there is no reason to shrink from their use. For often, indeed, those phrases are peculiarly apt; they express the idea we have in mind far better than a newly wrought phrase would. The Western Union Service of the United States actually provides, for the convenience of the clients using its facilities, ready-made telegrams. The assumption is that the added ease, the "wiring without worrying," will be an incentive to fuller use of the facilities. You were a guest. Well, here is the thank-you message: "That was certainly a wonderful party. We had the time of our lives. When is the next one?" You remember someone's birthday. Here you are, then, "Another mile-post along life's highway, and with it my wish for a happy birthday." There is actually a message suggested as fitting for a child to its mother, "I'm only a little tot just starting out in life, and sending best of wishes to my dear daddy's wife." Moreover, as a birthday gift to all its clients—for the Western Union Service celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary—the word "Love" may be added free of charge to all messages.

It may be, though, that we should be sparing in our use of

ready-made phrases. For the phrase, torn from its context, may lose its primary force; and it may have become so battered and bruised with hard usage that it annoys our hearers or our readers. Too much repetition may turn liking into loathing.

True, it would be absurd to proscribe any particular phrase. For, though hackneyed, the phrase may be harmless enough; and it may appear sprightly to some hearers or readers, even though the majority should disdain it. There are in fact writers who make their own pet phrase so that it becomes a kind of trade-mark.

Identifying Phrases

Have you any favourite expressions—expressions whereby one familiar with your manner of writing can identify you? Very likely we all have. Either of set purpose or quite unwittingly we become habituated to express a particular thought in our own way; and a discriminating reader recognizes our handiwork by the peculiarity. In *The Apple Cart* one of the characters declares "I can spot his fist out of fifty columns." Apparently the writer's trade-mark is "Singularly enough." And the King retorts: "I have noticed, for instance, that in a certain newspaper which loses no opportunity of disparaging the throne, the last sentence of the leading article almost invariably begins with the words 'Once for all.' Whose trade-mark is that?" There is no reason to be distressed about having these distinctive marks, these pet phrases; they may, indeed, add to your reader's pleasure in your writing. "Every schoolboy knows" is Lord Macaulay's way of ushering in a piece of information far removed, we may be quite certain, from all but the very exceptional schoolboy. "And so to bed" is the diarist's conclusion of the day's entry. "But that's another story" is how Kipling teases you after whetting your curiosity.

The Hackneyed Phrase

This problem of the hackneyed phrase is, indeed, a curious one. What appears bright and vigorous to the readers who come upon it for the first time is tarnished and weak to one who has repeatedly met it. The phrase in its first use is a product of creative art; it is adopted by others, loses its freshness, and

becomes trite and commonplace. Shakespeare speaks of "cool reason"; and his adjective is apt. For he is contrasting the boiling imagination of the lunatic (and the lover) with the placid mental processes of men in their senses—

> Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
> Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
> More than cool reason ever comprehends.

Now we have the adjunct *cool*—often *cold*—with *reason* whenever called for or not: "the verdict of cold reason" is "the verdict of reason." The spectator of Cleopatra's triumphant progress to captivate Antony gave a lavish description of her environment. Gorgeous, as it was, he could find terms adequate. As for the great queen herself, his powers were bankrupt—

> But for her person, it beggared all description.

How far the phrase "beggar description" has fallen from its first splendour! So, too, when Shylock compares his inexplicable loathing of Antonio with some people's dislike of a "harmless, necessary cat" the descriptive words were peculiarly appropriate. The use in such a connexion is not ample justification for use in connexions quite different. Some of us, when we hear that a thing is strange, is "wondrous strange," can hardly resist "There are more things in heaven and earth"—and so on.

There is another nuisance, too, about these too much repeated phrases. They trouble us when we read the original and detract a little from our enjoyment of them. He who sees *Hamlet* played before he had read it might well think it a succession of quotations—trite quotations, too, may of them—

Something rotten in the state of Denmark.
Frailty, thy name is woman.
Sweets to the sweet.
A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
A custom more honoured in the breach than the observance.
'Twas caviare to the general.
Speak by the card.
Hoist with one's own petard.
Metal more attractive.

—they come thick and fast.

There is no great harm in showing one's admiration by copying these and other such phrases. Some, though, might well be given rest for a while. An ingenious writer in *Punch* gets a great deal of enjoyment from bringing together in abundance these ready-made phrases. He attacks the Government—

Now that we have seen all the fine feathers and borrowed plumes of these men of straw end in smoke; now that we see them robbing Peter to pay Paul, while heaping Ossa on Pelion to cover up their tracks and burning the candle at both ends to grease the palm of the electorate; now that they are attempting to gild the economic pill with soft sawder and crocodile tears; now that, having gone through fire and water to keep their powder dry, they are moving heaven and earth to throw dust in our eyes and put a good face on the skeleton in their cupboard; now—for what citizen whose judgment is not warped by bats in the belfry can fail to observe that these men who rode the high horse into office on the undertaking that they would make a silk purse out of a sow's ear have let the cat out of the bag to see which way it will jump, and admit that, by barking up the wrong tree, they have got the wrong sow by the ear?—now, I say, surely it is the duty of every right-thinking citizen to put his best foot foremost, throw his weight into the scales (which have at last fallen from his eyes), and kick the beam no less than the bucket, so that this Government may be forced to recognize that it has been weighed in the balance up to the hilt and proved to be a mere flash in the pan.

CHAPTER VI

SPELLING OF ENGLISH WORDS

The Element of Accuracy

You will have attained what we have labelled "accuracy" in your writing when you conform to fashion in spelling, in punctuation, and in formal grammar. Consider these topics for a while; and first the convention of spelling. We nowadays have the idea, absent from the minds of our forefathers, that spelling must be consistent and uniform. The convention has been imposed upon us by the printer; it is not a convention of outstanding merit; yet we must conform to it at our peril.

For in these days one cannot with success call in the example of writers of former days to justify an unusual spelling; and we should take into account that a good many people agree with Major Pendennis—

"I will see her," said Arthur. "I'll ask her to marry me, once more. I will. No one shall prevent me."

"What, a woman who spells affection with one f? Nonsense, sir. Be a man, and remember that your mother is a lady."

Only very prominent people, in fact, may without heavy penalty perpetrate errors in spelling.

Uniformity in Spelling a Modern Fashion

"There are two m's in accommodate," says the principal to his secretary. He says it sadly, resignedly; for how many a time he has seen the distasteful curtailment! To be sure the spelling of words is only a fashion, only a convention. Moreover, the convention is a quite modern one. Look, for instance, at the earliest presentation in print of the seventeenth century "Song: To my Inconstant Mistress." It was written by Thomas Carew, who died in 1639—

When thou, poore excommunicate
From all the joyes of love, shalt see
The full reward, and glorious fate,
Which my strong faith shall purchase me,
Then curse thine own inconstancy.

A fayrer hand then thine, shall cure
That heart, which thy false oathes did wound;
And to my soule, a soule more pure
Than thine, shall by Loves hand be bound,
And both with equall glory crown'd.

Then shalt thou weepe, entreat, complaine
To Love, as I did once to thee;
When all thy teares shall be as vaine
As mine were then, for thou shalt bee
Damn'd for thy false Apostasie.

Carew, or his printer, you note, was very fond of a final silent *e*. He has it not only where we still retain it (*fate, thine, cure, false, pure, love, once*) but in other words where we reject it (*poore, joyes, oathes, soule, weepe, complaine, teares, vaine*). You note, too, the double *l* in *equall* and the absence of our very modern apostrophe in *Loves hand*. *Then* ("then thine") for our "than" is also noteworthy; but "than thine" also occurs.

Look, too, at the impressive opening of the second book of Milton's *Paradise Lost*—

High on a Throne of Royal State, which far
Outshon the wealth of *Ormus* and of *Ind*,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Showrs on her Kings *Barbaric* Pearl & Gold
Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd
To that bad eminence; and from despair
Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspired
Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
Vain Warr with Heav'n, and by success untaught
His proud imaginations thus displaid.

In particular, you will note what is characteristic of the printed works in Milton's time, the fondness for the capital letter. You note, too, the intrusion of & for *and* into the text: we reserve the sign for a few commercial usages. This sign—"ampersand" is its name—was once a part of the alphabet. "And *per se* = and." That is the sign & followed "X, Y, Z."

Best to Follow Fashion

Uniformity is now the fashion; and your comfort will be greater if you conform to it. You might find it easier, more

satisfying, too, to eat peas with your knife; but you do wisely to follow fashion and eat them with your fork. In spelling, at all events, unless we wish to be looked upon either as eccentrics or as ignoramuses, we had better adhere to the customary.

It is not to the purpose to say that spelling in itself is of no consequence so long as the intended word is adequately indicated. Nor is it to the purpose to say that spelling was once different, and will quite likely be different in the time to come. It is only a flimsy support for an unusual spelling to adduce similar spellings from former writers: a jovial hunter, a hundred years ago, tells how heartily he enjoyed, after an arduous morning's hunt, "a very fine Hare rosted and Rasberry puffs"; but you had better have the *a* in *roasted* and the *p* in *raspberry*.

Possible Variants

Fashion our modern spelling is, and most writers—on both sides of the Atlantic—follow its dictates. There are, it is true, some inconsistencies still in our spelling; and the American version of English is not yet uniform with our own version in the matter. The question may, for instance, arise: which is the better spelling, "gaol" or "jail"? However you spell the word you pronounce it in the one way, making it rhyme with "gale" and "pale" and "fail." *Ao* is certainly a strange way of indicating the long *a* sound: and the soft sound of *g* is a rarity before *a*. The form "gaol," in fact, is a reminder of history. It is the Norman-French term; it appears in the Acts of Parliament from the earliest times; and we may anticipate that it will long remain in official documents. The spelling "jail" is, however, much more sensible; even slow-moving officialism will in the end be obliged to conform to "jail."

"Gypsy" and "gipsy" are also alternatives clamouring for recognition. If we are anxious to retain some indication of the origin of the word, we should write "gypsy"; for the word to denote the strange race of people is really "Egyptian." ("This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me," says Antony; and a little later "This grave charm . . . like a right gypsy, hath, at fast and loose, Beguiled me to the very heart of loss.") The tendency, however, is to discard the *y* for the *i*; as it is in *pigmy*, though there, too, *pygmy* is the more reminiscent of the origin.

On the other hand, in words like *silvan, siphon, tire, tiro,* the *i* is the preferable alternative as being nearer the origin.

Alternatives that are, we say, "allowable" comprise: *judgement* and *judgment; enquire, enquiry* and *inquire, inquiry; organize* and *organise* (together with a great number of verbs with the suffix *-ize*); *rhyme* and *rime; axe* and *ax; leveled* and *levelled; biased* and *biassed; silvan, tire, tiro* and *sylvan, tyre, tyro.*

We find the variations in the least expected places, in our statute-book itself. One draftsman of a Bill writes "cor tion," another "connexion"; one "wagon," another "wagg one "authorise," another "authorize"; one "a dependent," another "a dependant." You actually have, suggesting that several hands have contributed to the final embodiment, in the one Act, both "cognisance" and "cognizance," both "misdemeanor" and "misdemeanour."

To Become Good Spellers

Well, how can we become "good" spellers? Careful note of the words printed will bring about accuracy. It is not very helpful to search for readily applicable rules that will keep you from errors. For exceptions to the rules are ever ready to trip you up. English spelling is far from being phonetic, far from being consistent. Yet many people, including some examiners in English, regard a compliance with the present fashion as a matter of the utmost importance. A divergence from the customary spelling is visited by quite inordinate penalties. From some curious examiners Shakespeare himself would have obtained low marks because of his "disgraceful spelling." For re is his (or his printer's) punctuation and spelling of the sage you know well—

I have neither the schollers melancholy, which is emulation: nor the musitians, *which* is fantasticall; nor the *courtiers,* which is proud: nor the *souldiers,* which is ambitious: nor the *Lawiers,* which is politick: not the *ladies, which* is nice: nor the *louers, which* is all these.

It would seem that the one way of making ourselves good spellers is to observe carefully when we read, and when an error in our writing has been indicated, to write the correct form several times, to compile a list of the correct forms, and

to read this list at intervals. The list that you make yourself, out of your own unlucky experiences, will be far better than any the books can supply. Rules of spelling are of some service; but departures from the rules detract from their usefulness. Thus "*i*" before "*e*" except after "*c*," is a quite serviceable rule. It accounts for most syllables with the long *e* sound, *irretrievable, believe, relief, thief, niece, siege,* on the one hand; *receive, perceive, deceit,* on the other. But then comes *seize* to upset our rule. And, when you come to decide between the verb endings *-cede* and *-ceed,* careful observation alone is the safeguard. For a multitude with *-cede* (*cede, concede, precede, recede*) are faced by an equal multitude with *-ceed* (*exceed, proceed, succeed*).

Inconsistencies in English Spelling

English spelling is far from being consistent. The one symbol may be represented by several different sounds; the one sound may be represented by several different symbols. The one combination of letters *ei,* asks to be pronounced as long *i* in *either, neither, sleight* ("sleight-of-hand tricks"), *height*; as long *e* in *seize, perceive, receipt, receive*; as long *a* in *vein, heinous* (a heinous crime is a specially hateful one), *rein, weight.* And the one sound is represented in several ways: in this little song—

Take, O take those lips away
That so sweetly were foresworn
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn,
But my kisses bring again,
    Bring again:
Seals of love but sealed in vain.
    Sealed in vain.

you have long *a* in *take, away, break, day, again, vain,* four different ways of indicating it. You have long *e* in *sweet, lead, seal,* two different ways.

The inconsistencies are fewer with consonants. But they exist. The *k* sound is at times represented by *cq* as in *acquiesce* (agree quietly), *acquire, acquaintance*; at other times (in combination with *s*) by *x* as in *axle, waxen, vixen*; at other times by

q as in *aqueduct, aquatic.* How many *k* sounds do you find in these lines?—

The gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream.

And *c* may serve for the *s* sound (*deceive, conceive*) as well as for the *k* sound (*compact, conscience*). In *cinema,* indeed, there is no general agreement about the sound; some soften the word to *sinema*; others prefer to retain the Greek *k* and say *kinema.*

Other Vagaries

You have, again, the prefix *arch.* In compounds—*archbishop, archduchess, archenemy*—it rhymes with *march.* In words that are not compounds—*archipelago, architect*—it rhymes with *ark.* You think you have a reliable rule till *archangel* (ark) comes to upset the rule on the one side, and *archer* (rhyming with *marcher*) on the other.

There is again, this prefix *anti,* meaning "against." We distinguish it from *ante,* meaning "in front of." We therefore write *antidote* ("a drug against poison") and *antipathy* ("a feeling against"), but *antedate* ("to affix a date before the time of writing") and *anteroom* ("a room leading into another"). We think we are safe. But now comes *anticipate* where the *e* of the prefix has been assimilated to the *i* of the following syllable; and with it comes *anticipation.*

Can you distinguish between *feign, fain, fane*; between *sign* and *sine*; between *bough* and *bow*?

Much trouble comes from the fact that you have not, as you have in your shorthand, separate symbols for the three different sounds represented by the combination *th.* This combination does duty for the separate letter *t-h* as in *masthead.* It does duty for the Old English ƿ, heard in *thing* and *thank, oath, teeth, death.* It does duty also for the Old English ð, heard in *that, feather, clothes, heathen, worthy, bathe, teething.* The Greek letters φ (*phi*), ρ (*rho*), and χ (*kai*) present difficulties of a different kind. In some words, usually learned words introduced by writers, we keep the Greek symbol in the form of *ph* (*phenomenon, diphtheria, diphthong*); *rh* (*rheumatism, rhododendron, diarrhoea*); and *ch* (*chasm, archaic*). In other words the English symbol appears; thus *phantasy* is a doublet of *fancy.*

Silent Letters

Another difficulty—and this affects pronunciation as well as spelling—comes from the fact that a letter may be seen, though not heard. We have *knowledge* (nŏlĭj), *knight* (nīt), *knead* (nēd, to work up the moist flour into dough), *forehead* (rhyming with *horrid*), *knock*; we have *gnash* (năsh), *gnaw*, *gnome* (the spirit guarding the hidden treasure); we have *psalm* (*sahm*), *psychic* (the "psychic bid" is due to intuition rather than reason); we have *debt* and *debtor* and *receipt*; we have the species of grouse called *ptarmigan* (tărmigan) and the species of poisoning called *ptomaine* (tōman); we have *kiln* with the same sound as *kill*.

Doubling the Consonant

The most frequent source of error in spelling is an unlucky decision to write a single consonant where fashion dictates a double consonant, and a double one where fashion dictates a single consonant. Here are a few words liable to error from that cause: *abbreviation*, *all right* (notice the distinction, too, between "They came all together" and "It is altogether wrong to do this"), *battalion*, *believe*, *disappear*, *disappoint*, *unparalleled*, *accommodate*, *committee*, *camellia*, *desiccated* (dried for preservation), *moccasins*, *exaggerate*, *woollen* (not the American *woolen*), *skilful*, *fulfil*, *businesses*, *until*. Persuade a friend to dictate the list to you, and test yourself in the matter.

Doubling Letters

Sound gives little guidance in this matter of doubling letters. For you have *committee* and *comity* (the comity of nations implies a courteous recognition of each other's laws); you have *levelling* and *paralleled*; *Britain* and *Brittany*.

The rule in relation to doubling consonants, subject to its many exceptions, is this: where you add an inflexion, like *ed* or *est*, you double the final consonant in these events—

(*a*) When the original is a single syllable: *pot* becomes *potted*, *knot* becomes *knotted*.

(*b*) When the final syllable is accented: *regrét* becomes *regrétted*, *demúr* becomes *demurred* and *demurrage*.

(*c*) When the final letter is *l*, preceded by a single vowel:

level becomes *levelled*, *control* becomes *controllable*, *travel* becomes *travelling*, *jewel* becomes *jewellery*.

The consonant remains single in *failure*, when the *l* is preceded by a double vowel, and in *boiling*. American usage, we may note, sweeps away this distinction, *travel* becomes *traveler*, and so on; and our usage is approaching that of our cousins. We already drop the second *l* in *almighty*, *almost*, *already*, *always*, *wilful*.

Some Distinctions

Note the following: *council* is the gathering of *councillors* (who are also *counsellors*); *counsel* is the advice that the gathering gives; *counsel* is also the collective noun for one's legal advisers, "Junior counsel are paid in proportion to the fees of senior counsel." We *ring* bells; we *wring* our hands. We spell the word *scull* when we mean an oar, *skull* when we mean the head bones. We spell the word *rapt* when we mean lost in thought, *wrapped* when we mean "covered with." *Gauge* is a measure; *gage*, a pledge. *Gate* is an opening; *gait* is a mode of walking. *Sent* is a verb; *scent* is the noun. *Cue* is for the billiard room; *queue* is for the theatre door. A *draughtsman* draws plans; a *draftsman* writes out a document for consideration.

Spelling and Pronunication

We must tread delicately here, for there is no supreme court to decide upon the proper pronunciation of words. Your way of sounding a given array of letters may differ from that suggested here; and we should be very foolish to regard the difference as a proof of your being in the wrong. Still, there is something like agreement upon the matters that follow.

Our Language is in the Main Phonetic

Exceptions are, goodness knows, in abundance; but on the whole the letters used give reliable guidance to the sounds. In most words we need have no doubt about the sounds that must be attached to the letters. In other words doubt enters. You know the collection, "Though the tough cough and hiccough plough me through," a collection manufactured in order to show the various sounds that are, in our English words,

attached to the combination *ough*. Here are actually six sounds for the one symbol: *ō, ŭff, ŏff, ŭp, ow, oo*. Words like *biscuits* (kĭts), *circuit* (sĕrkĕt), *salmon* (samn), *fissure* (fĭsher), *leopard* (lĕp), *yeoman* (yō), all present difficulties.

So do these that follow. The difficulty in these, however, usually arises from the careless utterance of the speaker: *candidate, despair, disease, February, library, mischievous, generally, government, laboratory, prevalent, separate, surprise, grammar, gramophone*. Let the speaker sound these words correctly—let him give three not four syllables to *mischievous*, let him give due weight to the *r*'s in *February* and *library*, and the *n* in *government*; and the difficulties disappear.

The Silent t

Ough is the greatest deceiver when you are to assign sound to symbol. The words into which it enters clamour for modification, and quite often get it—in the American version of English especially. But a multitude of other words afford argument for the spelling reformer.

Thus, from the noun *nestling*, where the *t* is usually sounded, we have the verb "*to nestle*" where the *t* is silent. When "nestle" was a word of two syllables, the *t* of *nest* could be easily uttered; when it became a word of one syllable the *t* sound vanished. And now we have a number of words, like *nestle*, all written with a silent *t*: *bristle, castle, hostler, Christmas, wrestle, apostle, bustle* (rhyming with *muscle*), and *waltz* (which should rhyme with *false*, though the sight of the spelling sometimes brings in its train the sound of the *t*). So it is in words like *fasten*: two syllables are telescoped into one and the *t* disappears: *hasten, glisten, listen, christen, chestnut*, and so on. Nor should we, as some do, show our knowledge of the spelling by giving a value to the *t*.

The *t* has vanished because the word has been more easily uttered without it. The economy is like that of the sailor's "Ay! ay! capn," or his contraction, now common to all, of "boatswain" into "bosn."

Spelling Affects Pronunciation

The spelling of a word is almost bound in time to affect its pronunciation. No one who has listened to wireless talks can

doubt this. The talks are from a carefully composed, carefully edited manuscript; and usually there is evident a too obvious effort at precision. What in our free talk we stress lightly or not at all becomes in these formal talks irritatingly obvious: we hear *ressearch, soldyer, fortyune*; we hear *level* and *picture* with a clearly uttered *el* and *ure*; and recently one speaker treated us to six syllables in *extraordinary* instead of four. Even the *t* in *often* and in *postpone* may now be heard.

Apparently this submission of sound to spelling has gone further in the United States than it has here. *Derby* is still, with most of us at any rate, *darbi*; there it is *derbi*. *Clerk* here is still *clark*; there it is *clerk*. *Knowledge* is here *nŏlĭg*; there it is *nŏlĕg*. *Fossil* has one syllable for us (*fŏsl*), two for the Americans (*fossil*). Our *waistcoat* still retains the short vowels *wĕskŭt*, in spite of the spelling; there both syllables have long vowels, *wāstcōt*.

The Dropping of Letters

Other words containing letters that in modern speech have no corresponding sounds are: *high, light, bright, sigh, straight, bough, laughter* (rhyming with *after*: "What is youth, 'tis not hereafter: Present mirth hath present laughter"), *draught* (rhyming with *craft*), *daughter, calm, balm, palm, comb, solemn, deign, reign, feign, sigh, resign, campaign.*

We have, too, a silent *h* in the words below; though we may discern a growing tendency to sound the *h*. This tendency, too, is due to the sight of the spelling and to the quite curious importance ascribed by some people to the sounding of the *h*. This sounding of the usually silent *h* is very like the intrusion of the *h* sound, even when the spelling does not call for it: "'This is the hend, is it?' continued Miss Squeers, who being excited aspirated her *h*'s very strongly."

Sound your *h*'s, of course; but it is a species of affectation to sound then as though calling attention to the fact that you are sounding them. How many *h* sounds do you distinguish in "Hunt has hurt his head"? Three at most very likely,—in *Hunt, hurt, head.* And you could hardly sound the *h* in words like *exhaust, exhibit, exhibition.* In rapid speech the *h* constantly disappears—"I've come by train" ("I have"). It is also silent in *heiress, heir, honest, honour, hostler, hour.* The practice with

humour and *hotel* varies. But since the *h* in *humorous* and *humorist* is nearly always sounded, doubtless the *h* in *humour* will also in a short time be sounded as well as seen.

Representing Vowel Sounds

The variety in representation of vowel sounds is great indeed. Here is a group of words containing long *i*: *blīthe, slīght* (meaning "slender, frail-looking"), and *sleight* (meaning "dexterity, cunningness of hand"), *height, dye, cry, guise* (meaning "outward appearance"). And here is a group containing long *e*: *beacon, eager, peace, piece, conceit, female, complete, phœnix, niece, people.*

Can you distinguish between these pairs of words, sounded alike but with two different representations of the vowel sound; *beach* and *beech, bean* and *been, creak* and *creek, hear* and *here* ("I hear lake water lapping" but "Here and here did England help me"), *peace* and *piece, mien* and *mean, peak* and *pique?* Here is a group containing long *o*: *toe, no, soap, rope, loathe, holy* (six ways of representation). Lastly, here is a group containing long *a*: *day, maiden, eight, neighbour, grey, survey, convey* (four ways of representation).

Something of a Mnemonic

Our French friend wrestles valiantly with vagaries of English spelling. He gets much amusement, and so does his teacher, from the glaring inconsistencies in the sound of our letters. The letters deceive; they are full of duplicity. He comes in time to look upon the vagaries as quite in keeping with our want of logic. So it is that he learns without much surprise that "put" rhymes with "foot," but not with "root"; that, though "shoe" rhymes with "glue," it does not with "toe." He even learns after many days that, different as the endings look, all these words close with the one sound—*ago, dough, low, woe.* "Yes," he cries eagerly, "I will learn that verse; it will ever remind me." And he delights himself with the description of the "Agéd man a-sitting on a gate"—

> And now, if e'er by chance I put
> My fingers into glue.
> Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot
> Into a left-hand shoe,

Or if I drop upon my toe
  A very heavy weight,
I weep, for it reminds me so
Of that old man I used to know—
Whose look was mild, whose speech was slow,
Whose hair was whiter than the snow,
Whose face was very like a crow,
With eyes, like cinders, all aglow,
Who seemed distracted with his woe,
Who rocked his body to and fro,
And muttered mumblingly and low,
As if his mouth were full of dough,
Who snorted like a buffalo—
That summer evening long ago,
  A-sitting on a gate.

EXERCISE

Well, assuming that you are not already wearied by this survey of our spelling difficulties, have these lines dictated to you. Each line contains at least one difficult spelling; and you may write yourself down as a good speller if you make no errors—

(*a*) A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by.
(*b*) Where the wind's like a whetted knife.
(*c*) The night we went to Bannockburn by way of Brighton Pier.
(*d*) Under the bludgeonings of chance.
(*e*) We fashion an empire's glory.
(*f*) Under a dark red fruited yew-tree's shade.
(*g*) Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
  Still clutching the inviolable shade.

Ask your friend to dictate to you these twelve words also. If you have ten correct you should congratulate yourself. *Solemness, enforceable, urging, mileage, gauge* (meaning a measure), *precede, proceed, antidote, antedate, anticipate, victualler* (pronounced vitler), *sieve* (rhyming with *give*).

Purposed Alteration in Spelling

A difficulty in English spelling comes from what you may describe as the pedantry of scholars. Proud of their knowledge of origins, they show that knowledge by making the modern English word assume a form like that of the ancient Latin or Greek word that is its remote ancestor. Many of our words came from these languages by way of France and became greatly changed in their transit. Some writers have lamented this and have tried to remedy it.

There is one reason for many of our silent letters. The reformers have, for instance, thrust a silent *b* into *debt* and *debtor* to bring them into line with *debit* and to show the connexion with the Latin *debitum*. They have succeeded in establishing a silent *p* in *receipt* to show its connexion with *receptacle* and *recipient*; yet *deceit*, though connected with *deception*, declines the intruder. *Palm* (of the hand) now has *l* (absent in earlier times, still absent from the French *paume*) to show its origin in the Latin *palma*. An intrusive *h* makes *school* resemble the Latin *schola*, though Chaucer wrote *scole*: the Prioress spoke French, indeed, spoke it fairly well; but it was "After the scole of Stratford-atte-Bow." We pronounce *victuals* as *vittles*: we must spell it with a *c* to indicate its Latin origin, *victus*.

A Misplaced Zeal

The pedantry at times actually misleads. Thus, there is no reason why *could* should have the intrusive *l*. There may be some justification for the *l* in *should* or *would*; for these words are linked with *shall* and *will*. The *l* may serve to remind us of the fact. *Could* is, however, linked with *can*; the *l* is not only useless but misleading. It hides, not discloses, the derivation.

Delight, also, is a misspelling that usage condones. The word has nothing to do with *light*, either with the light that enables you to see, or the light that signifies *of little weight*. *Delight* is linked with words like *delectable* and *delicious*. A quite uncalled-for difficulty has, by the intrusion of the *gh*, been imparted to the spelling. The *c* in *scent* is another error. The word is not connected with *science*. It is from the French *sentir* (to feel), and is connected with these words from which the *c* is absent—*sense*, *resent*, *consent*, and *sensual*.

Homonyms

This purposed alteration of spelling may, very rarely though, be counted a merit. For we have in our modern English a mingling of many languages; and, quite often, one group of sounds represents two different words. Though like in sound they differ in origin and meaning. Some of these not only sound alike but look alike: such are sometimes called

"homonymns." The verb "rose" ("The Sun now rose upon the right: Out of the sea came he") and the noun "rose" ("The bride hath paced into the hall, Red as a rose is she") are homonyms. They are sounded and they are spelled alike. But the verb, the past tense of "rise," is an Old English word. The noun, the name of a flower, was indeed in Old English. But it came from the Latin *rosa*, which is perhaps the Greek *rhōdon* (which we see in rhododendron).

Bay is at one and the same time a shrub (the leaves of the bay make the conqueror's wreath), an arm of the sea (Massachusetts is the Bay-state), a recess (the bay window thrusts itself out from the wall line), the barking of dogs (to be brought to bay is to be at close quarters with the pursuing dogs), a reddish-brown horse. That is, five quite different words are represented by the one sound and the one group of letters. You will be able to supply any number of other illustrations: *hue* (a colour and an outcry), *smart* (a smart boy is often wanted: this will make him smart), *sole* (different words in "Not on thy sole but on thy soul, harsh Jew," "She was the sole survivor," and "He ate a Dover sole").

Further instances that you might care to look up in your dictionary are *fell* (the noun meaning "mountain" as in "Sca Fell"), and *fell* (the verb meaning "to strike down"); *ground* (the noun) and *ground* (the past participle of the verb "to grind"); *saw* (the carpenter's tool) and *saw* (the past tense of "to see").

A Collection of Homophones

The identity may be in sound only. Then it is that the differing spelling may serve the useful purpose of distinguishing by sight, though we cannot by sound. Hear *seas* and *seize*: you cannot discriminate. See the words in print and you can. The radio announces, "Halifax Town, too, won beating Tranmere Rovers." Read the words aloud and doubt arises: was it *two, one,* or *too, won?* These words, like in sound but different in spelling, are sometimes called "homophones." They provide abundant material for the maker of puns—"waging harmless war with words"—

> His death, which happened in his berth,
> At forty-odd befell;

They went and told the sexton
And the sexton tolled the bell.

"That's the reason they're called lessons," the Gryphon remarked: "because they lessen from day to day."

They provide also capital exercises for you to work: explain the distinction between these pairs and triplets, and you will greatly amplify your power over words. Here they are then: *feign, fain, fane; bough, bow; guilt, gilt; cent, scent, sent; limb, limn; lesson, lessen; pray, prey; sword, soared; mail, male; yolk, yoke; mien, mean; tier, tear; pique, peak.* And if your appetite is not yet satisfied here is a further batch: *knight, night; need, knead; dew, due; bald, bawled; cellar, seller; ail* ("O! what can ail thee, knight-at-arms?"), *ale* ("In his sinister hand, instead of ball, He placed a mighty mug of potent ale"); *all, awl; vain, vein, vane; ware* ("Said Simple Simon to the pieman, 'Let me taste your ware'"), *wear* ("Motley's the only wear"); *maid, made; choler, collar; wreck, reck; wrest, rest; write, rite, right; through, threw; plum* ("He put in his thumb, And pulled out a plum"), *plumb* ("The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea"); *heart, hart;* ("O World! thou wast the forest to this hart, And this, indeed, O world! the heart of thee").

Spelling of Plurals

Notice the spelling of the plurals below.

In such a word as *calf* we automatically transfer to the *f* some of the hissing sound of the plural sign *s*, and so turn the *f* into *v*. So we have the plurals: *calves, knives, loaves, sheaves.* In other words, we retain *f*—*chiefs, briefs, roofs, fifes* (*fives* has a different meaning), *hoofs.*

The single vowel *y* unites with *e* to make *ie*: so *ladies* (*lady*), *rubies* (*ruby*), *soliloquies* (*soliloquy*, where the *u* belongs to *q*, making the sound *kw*, and *y* is a single vowel).

In words like *key* the *y* is not a single vowel, but forms part of the double vowel (or *diphthong*), *ey, oy, ay*: we have, therefore, as plurals—*keys* (*key*), *donkeys* (contrast this with *ponies*), *boys, days* (*day*).

There are remnants of old forms, as well as new arrivals, in modern English. *Men, feet, mice, children, oxen,* all bear

traces of their Old English origin; *radii* (*radius*), *maxima* (*maximum*) [*maximums* will displace the foreigner], *strata* (*stratum*), *species* (singular also *species*), *theses* (singular, *thesis*), *bases* (singular, *basis*), *opera* (singular *opus*) are Latin plurals; *ellipses* (*ellipsis*), *analyses* (*analysis*), *phenomena* (*phenomenon*), are Greek plurals; we occasionally see even the French plurals *beaux, messieurs* (*monsieur*), the Italian *banditti, libretti* (for *book of words*), and the Hebrew *cherubim* and *seraphim* (but mostly *cherubs* and *seraphs*); and *stigma* has its foreign form *stigmata,* but also *stigmas.*

Some curious plurals are—

Irides, the plural of *iris,* meaning "an appearance like the rainbow"; and, like the plural, we have a describing word, *iridescent,* meaning "gaily coloured."

Miasmata the plural of *miasma,* meaning "infectious and polluting matter in the air."

Dilettanti, the plural of *dilettante,* an Italian word that signifies one who dabbles in art, who loves painting or music, but gives no serious study to them.

Genera, the plural of *genus,* the Latin word that means "a group of similar things that may again be divided into smaller groups called *species.*"

Corps used for both singular and plural. In writing we make no distinction. In speaking we do: we sound the *s* in the plural (*kors*), we do not in the singular (*kor*).

Hiatus (pronounced *hī-āt-us*) is properly the succession of two vowel sounds without an intervening consonant—as in "no others"—and by transference a gap in a series: the Latin plural is *hiatus* (the *u* being long); but *hiatuses* is found.

Octopus, a Greek word signifying *of eight arms* (*or legs*): its plural is properly *octopodes* (though *octopuses* will doubtless prevail).

A Spelling Test

Here are three lines as first printed of Shakespeare's song—

> Freize, freize, thou bitter skie,
> That does not bight so nigh
> As benefitts forgot.

Write the lines in modern fashion.

Insert the words needed: *missal, missile, missive.*

(*a*) The gun threw the —— over ten miles.
(*b*) A —— contains the service of Mass for the year.
(*c*) The sovereign sends a letter —— to the electing body instructing them to elect a named man as bishop.

Rays, raze, raise: insert the required form.

(*a*) Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
—— out the written troubles of the brain.
(*b*) I can —— no money by vile means.
(*c*) The sun whose —— are all ablaze
With ever-living glory
Does not deny his majesty
He scorns to tell a story.

Insert the word needed: *might, mite.*

(*a*) Let me offer my —— of comfort.
(*b*) He exerted himself with —— and main.

Add the words needed: *whither, wither.*

(*a*) Age cannot —— her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety.
(*b*) —— is fled the visionary gleam
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Complete the words: *scrip, script.*

(*a*) Scr— is a shortening of subscription: the term is loosely applied to share certificates in general.
(*b*) Scr— is a shortening of manuscript: the term is loosely applied to any form of writing.

Complete the two words.

Who were these squires and lawyers in the House of Commons, with their talk about "pr–v–l–g–" and "pr–c–d–nts"?

Write the words meaning—

(*a*) An elaborate praising (pan——g——c).
(*b*) One of a pair of light oars (s——l).
(*c*) The head bones (s——l).

Finish the words.

An unfavourable opinion formed in advance of actual knowledge is a pre——; a favourable opinion formed in advance of actual knowledge is a pre——.

Complete the two words.

(*a*) A ven——l person is willing to sacrifice honour for gain.
(*b*) A ven——l fault is one that is not beyond forgiveness.

Insert the word needed: *creditable, credible.*

(*a*) "So 'tis reported, sir," "Nay, 'tis most ——; we here receive it a certainty."
(*b*) "Clive made a —— use of his riches."

Supply the words: *escapement, escarpment.*

(*a*) An —— is a mechanical device to secure regularity of movement.
(*b*) An —— is a steep slope to a height.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHOICE OF WORDS

The Expression to Use

IF you try to convey your thought into the mind of a Frenchman who knows no English, you call upon your more or less adequate store of French expressions. You would be foolish to speak in English. For, however good your English, it would fail in the intended purpose. It would not convey thought. When you speak or write to those that do understand English you need to discriminate, too. What is admirable in one audience becomes deplorable in another. Very sensibly, and very naturally, you use words to your young brother different from those you use to those in authority over you. You consider your audience. You will not be merry at a funeral, nor morose at a banquet.

This quality of fitness, of propriety, is placed by competent critics very high among the desirable qualities of writing. A great orator comments upon his art: "Whatever his theme the orator will speak as becomes it; neither meagrely where it is copious, nor meanly where it is ample, nor in *this* way when it demands *that*. He will keep his speech level with the actual subject and adequate to it." He will, that is, choose words suitable to his topic, and suitable also to his hearers.

You will do well, then, to examine various expressions of the one thought and to consider which is better for your particular purpose. A choice presents itself, for instance, between easy, common words and difficult, unusual words. Do you prefer *Proverbs*?—

> Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler provideth her meat in summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

Or Doctor Samuel Johnson?

Turn on the prudent Ant thy heedless eyes,
Observe her labours, Sluggard, and be wise;
No stern command, no monitory voice,
Prescribes her duties, or directs her choice;
Yet timely provident, she hastes away
To snatch the blessings of a plenteous day;
When fruitful Summer loads the teeming plain,
She crops the harvest, and she stores the grain.
How long shall sloth usurp thy useless hours
Unnerve thy vigour, and enchain thy powers?
While artful shades thy downy couch enclose,
And soft solicitation courts repose,
Amidst the drowsy charms of dull delight,
Year chases year with unremitted flight,
Till Want now following, fraudulent and slow,
Shall spring to seize thee, like an ambushed foe.

Shall we write "oyster" or "succulent bivalve"? Shall we write "Lectures suitable for boys and girls" or "Lectures adapted to a juvenile auditory"? Shall we write, "The hearers liked the Viceroy's speech" or "The Viceroy's speech made an excellent impression upon his audience"? Shall we write "He was fond of fishing" or "He was an ardent devotee of the piscatorial art"?

Nearly always the simpler is the better. For we thereby make the less demand upon those that seek our meaning. Simplicity implies consideration for your audience. But the difficult words, too, have their use; in some connexions "the canine species" may be more suitable than "dogs," "Draconian legislation" more suitable than "severe laws."

Journalese

People call the use of pretentious words and elaborate expressions "journalese." But, though many of them do indulge now and again in "journalese," the journalists themselves mock at it. Sir James Barrie wrote a charming romance of Fleet Street, *When a Man's Single*. In it he describes how the newcomer into London journalism is being put through his paces. "Suppose yourself up for an examination in journalism.

Question one: 'The house was soon on fire; much sympathy is expressed with the sufferers.' Can you translate that into newspaper English?" How would this do: "In a moment the edifice was enveloped in shooting tongues of flame: the appalling catastrophe has plunged the whole street into the gloom of night"?

You will readily find many instances where the translation has been made, not always for the better, from the direct and simple to the involved and difficult. Read aloud the sentences below. The first of each pair is how you would express the thought in talk; the second is how *The Times* expresses the thought. Perhaps you will agree that the first is after all the better.

"The strike is bound to have ill effects" *becomes* "The strike is bound to have disastrous repercussions."

"The leaders on both sides have said that they will not give way in the slightest" *becomes* "The leaders both of the employers and of the employees have committed themselves to irreconcilable positions, from which it is difficult for them to recede."

"Since the leaders know that so much will be lost and so little gained, we think that there will be no strike" *becomes* "It is difficult to believe that the responsible leaders of Labour and Capital will now jeopardize a recovery which has brought them both so much benefit by plunging into a conflict from which neither is likely to derive any advantage comparable with the inevitable sacrifices."

Prefer the Concrete to the Abstract

Here are two little passages each saying much the same thing. Notice how the writer of the first prefers the concrete noun to the abstract ("The Turk" to "the despotisms of the East"), and the particular to the general ("Egypt" to "part of the empire")—

(*a*) In large bodies the circulation of power must be less vigorous at the extremities. Nature has said it. The Turk cannot govern Egypt and Arabia and Curdistan as he governs Thrace; nor has he the same dominion in Crimea and Algiers which he has at Brusa and Smyrna. Despotism itself is obliged to truck and huckster. The Sultan gets such obedience as he can. He governs with a loose rein, that he may govern at all; and the whole of the force and

vigour of his authority in his centre is derived from a prudent relaxation in all his borders.

(*b*) In all the despotisms of the East, it has been observed that the farther any part of the empire is removed from the capital, the more do its inhabitants enjoy some sort of rights and privileges: the more inefficacious is the power of the monarch; and the more feeble and easily decayed is the organization of the government.

Which of the two do you prefer? Surely the first?

The Home Office has issued a Memorandum on Air Raid Precautions. Could you suggest simpler and more intelligible phrases for "decontamination of personnel" (would "cleansing of persons" be better?), "cases be evacuated from hospital" (what is wrong with "moved" or "transferred"?), "ultra light aeroplanes"?

Getting the Right Word

In *Julius Cæsar* Cassius, intent upon persuading Brutus to band himself with the other conspirators against Cæsar, makes some curious comments upon the names—

"Brutus" and "Cæsar"! What should be in that "Cæsar"?
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
Write them together, yours is as fair a name;
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;
Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em.
"Brutus" will start a spirit as soon as "Cæsar."

And we have in another play the exclamation—

What's in a name? a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.

Shakespeare was the king of words; and he knew better than anyone that all this was moonshine. Words *do* matter. The opinions of the characters summoned to the stage are not of necessity the opinion of the playwright. Shakespeare would not be the greatest of all writers unless, for one thing, he chose words with supreme skill. In his exultant moments he held "that vile as this world is, and worms as we are, you have but to invest all this vileness with a magical garment of words to transfigure us and uplift our souls till earth flowers into a million heavens." So Mr. Bernard Shaw represents him as saying in "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets."

Any of his plays or poems will furnish you with copious examples of his exquisite skill. Who would venture, for example, to change a word in the wonderful passage where Prospero comments upon the vanished spirits that had played their parts before the young lovers?—

Our revels now are ended: these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

Synonyms not Usually Interchangeable

One word is not just as good as another, even though it has much the same meaning. A careful writer will always seek to discriminate. He will thereby greatly gain in clearness; for, though similar, the words are seldom identical in meaning. He will not write "beautiful" when "pretty" or "grand" or "handsome" is the word needed; he will not call a man "bold" when "hardy" or "reckless" or "audacious" is the word. Is there any difference between "stop" and "stay"? Well, which should fill the blank in this sentence? "Your —— in London has been a short one"; which in this sentence, "The coach made a —— at Reading"? You have most likely decided upon "stay" for the first, "stop" for the second; and that is correct. Evidently "stop" suggests a mere temporary postponement of the journey; "stay" does suggest a sojourn, if only for a while. A stop is a short, perhaps sudden, halt; a stay is something more lasting. We speak of a "stay-at-home," of "staying power" when we mean endurance (not of "stopping power," as we might do of a great centre-half), of a runner not being able to "stay the pace." But we say "Go on reading; do not stop," "You ought to put a stop to these expenses."

Yet it must be admitted that the distinction between these

synonyms is not always observed. People ask "Where are you stopping?" when "staying" is the better word, "Won't you stop for dinner?" when "stay" would suggest a more leisurely meal.

As for "remain" it is nearly always used as a substitute for "stay": "let it remain as it is." So it is in the ending of letters, "I remain, yours truly."

One word, too, may call up associations that a substitute cannot. An alteration in name may destroy all the delightful associations that have gathered round the discarded name. Call a man Tom Tickle and you handicap him as a candidate for high honours. Call a "rose" an "onion." It does give off the same perfume; it does have the same look. But what a wealth of delightful associations we have cut away by the substitution. The substitution would poison our pleasure in—

> Gather ye rosebuds while ye may
> Old Time is still a-flying;
> And this same flower that smiles to-day
> To-morrow will be dying,

and in many other passages in which the rose represents the glory and sweetness of summer.

It may be that Mr. Shandy attached undue weight to names. His baby had, by inadvertence, been christened *Tristam*, instead of the father's choice, *Trismegistus*. Was that a matter of importance? Uncle Toby discusses the question with his man, Trim—

"—For my part, *Trim*, though I can see little or no difference betwixt my nephew's being called *Tristam* or *Trismegistus*—yet as the thing sits so near my brother's heart, *Trim*—I would freely have given a hundred pounds rather than it should have happened. —A hundred pounds, an' please your honour! replied *Trim*.—I would not give a cherry-stone to boot.—Nor would I, *Trim*, upon my own account, quoth my uncle *Toby*,—but my brother, whom there is no arguing with in this case—maintains that a great deal more depends, *Trim*, upon christian-names, than what ignorant people imagine—for he says there never was

a great or heroic action performed since the world began by one called *Tristam*—nay he will have it, *Trim*, that a man can neither be learned, or wise, or brave,—'Tis all fancy, an' please your honour—I fought as well, replied the corporal, when the regiment called me *Trim*, as when they called me *James Butler*. —And for my own part, said my uncle *Toby*, though I should blush to boast of myself, *Trim*—yet had my name been *Alexander*, I could have done no more at *Namur* than my duty.—Bless your honour! cried *Trim*, advancing three steps as he spoke, does a man think of his christian name when he goes upon the attack?— Or when he stands in the trench, *Trim*? cried my uncle *Toby*, looking firm.—Or when he enters a breach? said *Trim*, pushing in between two chairs.—Or forces the lines? cried my uncle, rising up, and pushing his crutch like a pike.—Or facing a platoon? cried *Trim*, presenting his stick like a fire-lock.—Or when he marches up the glacis? cried my uncle *Toby*, looking warm and setting his foot upon his stool."

Alternatives to Hors d'œuvre

So, too, it may be that the American hotel-keepers are worrying themselves needlessly about the names attached to their dishes. For, as the entertaining note in *The Times* relates, in Chicago—

a select committee of hotel officials has been deliberating on what name can best be substituted for that awkward and un-American term "*hors d'œuvre.*" This, as one of their number is reported to have stated, is "a very, very serious thing." It is indeed. And there will be little surprise among gastronomes or etymologists that, so far, the committee has been stumped. Even an appeal to the consuming classes to suggest a palatable synonym has failed. "Cavanchocees" was rejected, and "exdiores" likewise; and so were 986 other ingenuities, at the nature of which it is only possible fearfully to guess.

And very, very difficult, the whole matter is. Dictionaries waver weakly. "Side-dishes," say some

vaguely; "relishes," say others; "appetizers," conjecture other lexicographers, who can seldom have put the matter to the test. But they should not lightly be blamed. He will be a prince among neologists who can contrive a neat, euphonious, comprehensive term for tit-bits so diverse as smoked eel and caviare, Ardennes ham and marinaded *cèpes*, rillettes and York cones, radishes and tunny cream, *kilkis* and the proudly inevitable sardine. . . . If one restaurateur boasts of the four-and-forty varieties of his *hors d'œuvre*, be sure that his rival will within the week have discovered eleven more species of salty fungi or astringent fish, and be proclaiming his fifty-five. It is credibly reported that some restaurants can easily outbid such figures as these, displaying serried rows of dishes that look more like a five-hour plan than a five-minute toy. This misguided virtuosity, surely, can be achieved only by stretching the term to breaking-point, and it is time that a clear line was drawn before the *hors d'œuvre* proper is allowed to drift into the mere *olla-podrida* or *salmagundi*.

Fastidiousness in Choice

It is not a matter of indifference what word you use. The truth is far other. At times it is a matter of great moment; and this the sensible business man testifies to by his actions. For his important writings—those that will bring him into legal relations with his fellows—he chooses his words with anxious care. He is not content to trust to luck for the fitting word. Milton wrote in *Lycidas*—

> So may some gentle muse
> With lucky words favour my destined urn.

But we know that, in his poetry at all events, he chose his words with scrupulous care.

The business man imitates the poet in this matter. When a document of more than ordinary consequence is in preparation, he considers a draft to be necessary; he weighs his expressions; he considers whether a meaning unintended by him can possibly be attached to them; he thinks his time well-spent if in

the end he writes what will carry his meaning unimpaired into his correspondent's mind. Indeed, for his most important writings, for the drawing up of a partnership agreement, for the framing of his will, it may be that he enlists the help of an expert draftsman. He distrusts his own power to produce clear and adequate expressions.

Methods of Choosing

Well, how are we to decide which is the right word for our particular purpose? It is not vain reiteration to say that it is important to be certain that we ourselves know the meaning of the word we purpose using, and that it is of equal importance to be certain that those to whom we speak or for whom we write will interpret the word in the required sense. How shall we obtain the requisite supply of such words? We shall obtain a store of words by examining the usage of good speakers and good writers, of those whom common consent acknowledges to be patterns worth imitation. Ask yourself why certain expressions of a particular thought are treasured by all lovers of excellent style. Study the expressions closely. Learn them by heart, and you will be on the way to be proficient yourself.

Examine your present store of words a little. You can do so by comparing the word you would employ with the one used in the sentences studied. Take your favourite poem for examination. We take here instances from Robert Browning's *Fra Lippo Lippi*, a poem in which a monk who never should have become a monk is seized at midnight by the watch. What word would you use for the sudden thrusting of torches before the astonished wanderer? Would *thrust* do, or *push*, or *present*? You want to suggest something of a shock, and the poet's word is *clap*—

> You need not clap your torches to my face.

The monk is diverted from his labours by hearing the sounds of carnival in the streets. What is an expressive word for bits of songs borne in at the window? You reject *bits* as being too commonplace and general; you think of *snatches*, *parts*, *passages*. Did you think of *whifts*? "A sweep of lute strings, laughs, and whifts of song." Probably not; Browning played many pranks with language; and you will not find "whifts" in an ordinary dictionary.

One of the watch had caught the monk by the throat; and the monk indignantly remonstrates. What is an effective term for "a hold of the throat"? Is it *grasp*, or *grip*? Well, Browning uses *gripe*—

> Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
> How you affected such a gullet's-gripe.

What is the word for "going cautiously," what for "catching by surprise"? Do you approve of *stealing* and of *snap*—

> And so I was stealing back again
> To get to bed and have a bit of sleep.
> You snap me of a sudden.

But the whole poem is crammed with instances of aptly chosen words and you will greatly enjoy its reading. You will begin to appreciate what R. L. Stevenson, himself a great artist in words, meant when he wrote—

> Bright is the ring of words
> When the right man rings them;
> Fair is the fall of song
> When the singer sings them.
> Still they are carolled and said,
> On wings they are carried
> After the singer is dead,
> And the maker buried.

Usually a Question of Better or Worse

In this matter of choice of words, as indeed in all matters connected with the style of our writing, we are not to be dogmatic. Where questions of usage are in debate, we are not to state in peremptory manner that this usage alone is right and all other wrong. Usually it is not "Which word is right, which wrong?" but "Which is the better of these two quite correct words?" Time itself effects changes. What was once incorrect is now quite correct; what writers and speakers used with propriety a hundred years ago is now among the improprieties.

Phrases near Akin

See, for instance, how the addition of a preposition alters the meaning of a verb. You consult a solicitor; you seek his advice. You consult with your friends; you consider the matter in their company, and with their help. You attend

school: you have made an attendance. You attend to your lesson: you give your attention. You lecture to an appreciative audience, and your words are welcome; you lecture a lazy student, and your words may not be so welcome. You witness an accident, when you see it; you witness to a man's honesty, when you give testimony of it. You own a book; it is your property. You own to a fault; you acknowledge it. You swear fidelity, when you make a promise for the future; you swear to an occurrence that you have seen in the past. You have finished your paper, when you have done what you can with it; you have finished with the paper, when you have read all you want to read in it.

Adjectives or Adverbs?

Confusion between the adjective and the adverb is not at all uncommon. Thus *cold* is the adjective ("Cold blows the blast across the moor"); *coldly* is the adverb ("Pale primroses look coldly from the brink"). The mistake at times made is the placing of the adverb form instead of the adjective form after a joining verb. Clearly there is a difference between "You look cold" and "You look coldly"; "Come to the fire; you look cold", "You look coldly upon the plan." *Cold* is a descriptive adjective; *coldly* is a modifying adverb. "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." *Uneasy* is the adjective; to substitute the adverb *uneasily* would weaken the sentence considerably. We interpret "That which we call a rose By any other name would smell as sweet" as "would be as sweet when smelled." To substitute "sweetly" would make the statement an anticipation of Wordsworth's "And 'tis my faith that every flower Enjoys the air it breathes"; it would suggest that the rose actively exercises its senses. "He rose sad" says something different from "He rose sadly"; *sadder* not *more sadly* is quite correct in—

A sadder and a wiser man
He rose the morrow morn.

Think out the distinctions between the following pairs, the first in each pair giving the adjective forms, the second the adverb form—

1. "He married young and died poor"; "He married early and died in poverty."

2. "The snow was falling thick"; "The snow was falling thickly."

3. "He looked anxious"; "He looked anxiously."

"If" or "Whether"

There ought to be a distinction between the conjunction *if* and the conjunction *whether*. The honourable member gives notice that he will ask the minister "if the facts are as stated in the report." Probably it would be better to substitute *whether*. For in the natural tendency of language to make use of its variants, we have come to use *if* in order to introduce a condition: "I will agree if you, too, agree." It is true that there is abundant authority for the use of *if* even where *whether* sounds better to our ears. At the choosing of the caskets in *The Merchant of Venice* the anxious suitor asks the natural question, "How shall I know if I do choose right?" Modern usage prefers "whether." Quite likely, when you do use one word for another similar in meaning, carelessness rather than lack of knowledge is the cause. And it must be acknowledged that the English language has many traps for the careless speaker or writer.

Selecting the Appropriate Word

Confronted with the express task to discriminate, you will probably have little difficulty; it is when you are more occupied with your thought than with the words in which you will embody it that confusion is likely to occur. Not that you are at all wrong in considering the matter of your speech rather than the manner of its expression, rather *what* than *how* to speak or write. For, as Burton said long ago, "When you see a fellow careful about his words and neat in his speech, know this for a certainty that man's mind is busied with toys, there's no solidity in him. As he said of a nightingale, *vox es, praeterea nihil*, a voice thou art and nothing else." Still, it should be within our powers to regard method as well as matter.

Here, for instance, is an examination exercise asking you to show the difference between *recourse, resource; effect, affect; voracious, veracious; septic, sceptic; vestige, vestment.* Some of these pairs should present no difficulty as soon as you examine them carefully. *Vestige*, meaning a trace or sign, could not,

unless through a careless slip, be mistaken for *vestment*, meaning a garment, particularly an official garment. The *voracious* man, he who eats all that is set before him, may indeed be also *veracious*, ever disposed to speak the truth; but you would use the descriptive words in different connexions. *Septic*, describing a wound that festers, would hardly be confused with *sceptic*, describing a person inclined to doubt the truth of statements made to him.

Recourse for *resource* and *effect* for *affect* are, however, quite likely to appear. *Recourse* is used, in accordance with the practice of good writers, to indicate a source of help to which one may resort at times of need: "In his perplexity he foolishly had recourse to the whisky-bottle." *Resource* is rather the means of supplying a want than the actual thing supplied: the ingenious man is "full of resources," fertile in devising ways of meeting difficulties. Both *effect* and *affect* can be used as verbs: "Close confinement will seriously affect health; a holiday in the open air will, however, effect your recovery." *Affect* here implies "have an effect upon"; *effect* implies "bring about," "result in." *Effect* may also, as you note, be used as a noun signifying what is brought about; *affect* would not in modern English be so used.

"Slow," "Halt," "Stop"

The Act of Parliament makes an order; the subject breaks the order; the ingenious defence is that the words of the order are in fact compatible with the subject's action. Those words are so vague and ambiguous that a quite intelligent person could mistake their meaning. The words are "Halt at major road ahead." The motorist sees the words. He reduces his speed to walking pace, looks in both directions, and proceeds; and now he is summoned for not stopping. But then, the contention is, "the halting man" is the man who limps, who walks hesitatingly, and this in effect the motorist did. He, too, went with slowness and trepidation. The sign meant "Go slowly" not "Come to a standstill." The argument does credit to the ingenuity of counsel; it—perhaps—solaces counsel's client for having to pay; it is, however, brushed away by the sturdy common sense of the Bench. "Halt" is "stop"; and the one reason why the two words are used is this: "Stop" is

used when at a suitable moment there is a corresponding direction "Go." "Halt" is used to signify an order to bring the car to a standstill only in order that there should be a momentary pause: "bring to a halt" is "bring to a stop."

Reasons for Choosing or Rejecting

You will, for the most part, select your words without consciously reasoning about them. They will come to you, and you will rarely consider an alternative. Intuition rather than reason will tell you that they are best for your purpose. Where reason does rule, the causes of rejection and of selection are many.

Thus, you may feel that some words, beautiful and effective in their setting, are old-fashioned, and that, since you are addressing your contemporaries of the twentieth century, they would be out of place in your writing. You read these verses, and you rejoice in the words so familiar to you—

And some there be, which have no memorial; who are perished, as though they had never been; and are become as though they never had been born; and their children after them.

But these were merciful men, whose righteousness hath not been forgotten.

With their seed shall continually remain a good inheritance, and their children are within the covenant.

Their seed standeth fast, and their children for their sakes.

Their seed shall remain for ever, and their glory shall not be blotted out.

Their bodies are buried in peace; but their name liveth for evermore.

All these words are known to you: they are in your passive vocabulary. But some of them—like *be* where we use *are*, *standeth* where we use *stands*—you would not think of using, except on quite extraordinary occasions.

Consider Your Audience

Again, you may know that particular words and phrases are peculiar to a particular place or a particular class of people. You are, for instance, writing for readers in Britain: you

therefore reject many of the words you hear when you go to the pictures. For these have reference to things American. You select *sweets* instead of *candies*, *sweet shop* instead of *candy store*; you talk about *luggage* for the train, not *baggage*, of *carriage*, not *car*, of *guard*, not *conductor*. You speak of the policeman's *beat*, not his *patrol*, of the *prison van*, or even the *Black Maria*, not the *patrol wagon*.

Again, you may adopt the sensible attitude that the simplest words that will express your meaning are the best. For these are they that will be most readily interpreted by your readers. You reject, therefore, difficult and obscure words. You do not, as some are prone to do, hunt out imposing words in order to impress. "Heaven never sends mouths, but it sends meat" is excellently expressed, though you may demur about its truth. It is at all events preferable to the alternative "There is a providential adaptation of the fecundity of the human species to the exigencies of society."

You will rightly consider, too, that words, known to you and maybe used in your talk with your intimates, are not yet naturalized. They remain slang. As such they are not for general use. Many of these come from abroad; and, like our visitors, most of them make no permanent abode among us. They come mainly from the great English-speaking community in the United States of America. It is a great delight to talk with these visitors. The delight is doubtless reciprocal; they, too, get a great deal of amusement from hearing our talk. For the visitors come bringing their own way of speaking with them, and that way diverges from our way. We may be inclined to smile when a visitor, pronouncing his words as he finds them spelled in our curious manner, asks the way to Grosvenor Square. He may likewise be amused when he hears "grōvner," two syllables only as the pronunciation of the imposing name. These overseas visitors speak English. We and they find little difficulty in understanding one another. For English is the mother tongue common to us: we are all, as Carlyle says, "subjects of King Shakespeare." For all that, the Londoner's language differs from the Canadian's, and that from the Australian's. The "corn crop" in England is wheat; in Scotland it is oats; in the United States it is maize. The prose word in England for a period of continuous dry weather is "drought"

(drowt); it is only in poetry that we find the smoother "drouth." The Americans prefer the smoother form of pronunciation and the simpler spelling.

Variety not Sameness

The differences are not so wide that we must regard the dialect, as different languages. In all likelihood, indeed, now that the talking pictures supplement the printed page in making the whole world kin, they never will be different languages. Still, a few entertaining talks—with a fine fellow from Sydney, with a charming and vivacious lady from New York, with a sturdy farmer from his ranch in Rhodesia—convince you that it is vain to seek for a standard English. In speech there are bound to be differences; and, soon or late, the differences in speech will affect the written language, too. We can maintain a standard of length or of weight: the yard-stick in Melbourne measures the same length of calico as it does in London, measures the same length this year as it did ten years ago. A living language, however, constantly changes, constantly adapts itself to the new needs of its users; and, when those users are in differing surroundings, then the adaptations are different. In a single country itself, as we very well know, variety, not uniformity rules. You can, without getting any help from the colours they wear, tell the man from Manchester or the man from Sheffield "up for the Cup" in London. His speech proclaims him.

Some Comparisons with French

The changes are not confined to the spoken language. The written language also may, in one region or among one set of people, develop otherwise than in another region or among another set of people. The differences in the course of time may be so great that we are forced to speak of different languages. French and Italian and Spanish are separate languages now, though all are the children of Latin. Many French words, you may say, are altogether different from the Latin words that express the same ideas. That is quite true. The French word, nevertheless, may be the Latin word diverted from its first use. The Latin for *head* is *caput*; the French for *head* is *tête*. Not much resemblance between *caput* and *tête*.

Nor in fact is there any connexion; for *tête* is one of the many instances of successful slang. The Roman legionary's jest has become the literary word. *Tête* is the descendant of a Latin word, the word *testa*, meaning a piece of broken crockery. In your irritation or your fun you call your companion's head all sorts of things; the Roman soldier preceded you in referring to his comrade's head as a piece of pot, a *testa*. In modern French the slang word has become the recognized literary word, so much so that, when the Frenchman talks colloquially, he deserts *tête* and adopts *boule*.

One more instance of deviation will perhaps suffice. In your French lessons you have often been reminded that it is not always safe to render a French word by the English word resembling it closely. The French *éditeur* is the publisher, not the editor. The word "edit" implies to give out, to publish to the world; and the French verb *éditer* keeps this sense. Among us there has been a division of labour: the publisher (*éditeur*) gives the book to the world; the editor (*redacteur*) makes the book fit to go out. The French sometimes say, not seriously perhaps, that our slowness of wit makes it needful for us to have many words for varying shades of meaning. Their nimbleness of wit enables them to interpret one word in many senses. The Latin prefix *ad* (French *à*) is the English *to*: both denote direction to a point. The nimble French mind follows *à* into all sorts of similarities; the English mind demands different prepositions. *Aller à Londres* is "to go to London." But *être à Londres* is "to be in London"; *travailler à la lumiere d'une lampe* is "to work by lamplight"; *courir à toute force* is "to run with all speed"; *se battre à l'épée* is "to fight with swords." *À* becomes *to, in, by, with.*

Choice is Possible

In this matter of composing English you cannot declare that one way of saying a thing is right and all others wrong. Two opponents enter the lists. They are at one in their purpose: like many of us they lament the marring of the beauty of the country-side. They differ about the name to be given to this marring. "Spoliation of the country-side," says one. "No!" says the other. "'Spoliation' with its long *o* has a definite technical sense; it implies the plundering of another's property.

As a legal term it means the mutilation of a document to p vent its being used as evidence. The proper word is 'd figurement.'" "No!" is the rejoinder. "'Disfigure' means t 'deface' rather than to 'deform.'"

Perhaps the word doesn't matter very much here. The thin against which both struggle is what matters; and we all u stand what is intended, whether "spoliation" or "disf ment" is used.

Yet the choice of the appropriate word is in some conne of the first importance. Coleridge wrote—

> A damsel with a dulcimer
> In a vision once I saw
> Singing of Mount Abora,

and we feel that "damsel with a dulcimer" is the exact expression wanted. Any alternative—"a girl with a guitar," "a maiden with a mandolin," "a female with a fiddle," "a woman with a whistle"—would be distasteful. In the ordinary affairs of life, however, we need not be over-fastidious.

The Test to Apply

When weighing two expressions against one another, the question to put to ourselves is, "Which expression is the better for my purpose?" It is not often "Which expression is right, which wrong?" You may feel that a particular way is, for one reason or another, more effective than another: we shall, indeed, have much to say about this in the sequel. Most of us, however, should be happy and content when we have so selected our words and arranged them in such fashion that two results follow. In the first place the words express our thoughts without ambiguity and without obscurity. In the second place our hearers or our readers can, without more trouble than is justified, interpret our words in the intended sense.

We need not be intolerant. And we must recognize that custom changes: a word looked upon as a vulgarism in one age often becomes a dignified member of the society of words in a subsequent age. In the great writers you will find passages of which you are reluctant to change a word. The words seem so much a product of the thought that any others would be felt

an intrusion. No one would lightly alter a word in such passages as that of the dying Hamlet to his friend—

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.

But the great writers, too, have passages that can be improved. We feel, for instance, that the second version of Wordsworth's lines is the better for his purpose. The 1798 version was—

And, though he has but one eye left,
His cheek is like a cherry.

After his revision the lines became—

And still the centre of his cheek
Is red as a ripe cherry.

Our own compositions will without doubt be susceptible of improvement. Yet if we have chosen our words so that they express our meaning intelligibly, perhaps agreeably, we have achieved much.

No Definite Directions Available

Beyond this general statement no very definite rules about the choice of words can be laid down: we have so copious a stock of words that a dozen eligible ways of expression present themselves. Earl Baldwin, for instance, urges upon the students over whom he presides as Chancellor the duty of hard work. By toying with its mode of expression he whimsically and very effectively plays upon the thought. "I suppose," he said, "it is natural that, when an elderly man attempts to point out the road to those who come after, he is apt to urge on them the practice of those virtues in which he himself is most conscious of his own deficiency. The essential virtue, if you are to make anything of your life, is diligence; it does not matter what word you choose if you understand what you mean by it. 'Concentration,' 'industry,' 'hard work,' are all synonymous; or if you would like to draw on the vocabulary of the street, 'plugging' or 'sticking it' will give you the essential meaning, with less elegance but more vigour.

Diligence seems so commonplace that when we see a great accomplishment of learning, of discovery, in statesmanship, in

what you will, we are always inclined to attribute it to genius to good fortune, to anything and everything except that very power of concentration and continuous work which is its very foundation."

Still, though no cut-and-dried rules are available, we can get a good deal of guidance from considering the real nature of words. It is not greatly helpful to say that we should use simple words rather than difficult ones, short words rather than long ones, English-born words rather than imported ones. That does not lead us far. You will agree, though, upon this: If you are to choose the words that most nearly and most pleasantly express your thoughts, you must have an adequate supply to choose from. You determine that you will, both incidentally and of set purpose, increase your vocabulary. You do this incidentally by listening to good speakers and by careful reading of good writers. You do this of set purpose by noting in your reference books unfamiliar words, and by consulting your dictionary for their exact meaning.

The increase will at first be in your passive vocabulary. You learn to recognize a greater number of words and to appreciate their meanings. Such an increase is desirable, for it enables you to enter more fully into the thoughts of others. It is desirable, too, because it is bound to add to your active vocabulary: you gradually and almost without notice use more and more words. Thereby you are better able to convey your own thoughts unimpaired.

Simplicity is a Virtue

There have been, as one might expect having regard to the importance of the topic, tremendous controversies among writers concerning the kind of words appropriate for particular purposes. Thus Dr. Johnson pokes fun at Gray for his use of language far removed from common use. Gray has, in fact, some extraordinary expressions. They are not in that universal favourite, the *Elegy;* they are in his *Odes.*[1]

[1] "These odes," writes the Doctor, "are marked by glittering accumulations of ingraceful ornaments; they strike rather than please; the images are magnified by affectation; the language is laboured into harshness. The mind of the writer seems to work with unnatural violence. 'Double, double, toil and trouble.' He has a kind of strutting dignity, and is tall by walking on tiptoe. His art and his struggle are too visible, and there is too little appearance of ease and nature."

After wrestling with these expressions we can no doubt penetrate to their meaning. We understand, after a struggle, for instance, that in "The Progress of Poesy" Gray is here addressing Shakespeare—

Far from the sun and summer-gale
In thy green lap was Nature's Darling laid,
What time, where lucid Avon stray'd,
To him the mighty mother did unveil
Her awful face: the dauntless Child
Stretch'd forth his little arms, and smiled.
This pencil take (she said), whose colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year:
Thine, too, these golden keys, immortal Boy!
This can unlock the gates of Joy;
Of Horror that, and thrilling Fears,
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic Tears.

We fathom the meaning, but not readily; and we may be tempted, when we have fathomed it, to wonder whether it is worth while going through so much to gain so little. We realize what Doctor Johnson had in mind when he wrote: "Gray thought his language more poetical as it was more remote from common use: finding in Dryden *honey redolent of spring*, an expression that reaches the utmost limits of our language, Gray drives it a little more beyond apprehension, by making *gales to be redolent of joy and youth*."

A Contrast to Pretension

Contrast with these far-fetched terms the simple and direct words in the famous speech delivered by President Lincoln at the dedication of Gettysburg. Simple and direct the words are; yet how effective they are!

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great

battle-field of that war. We have come to dedic a portion of that field as a final resting-place for tho who here gave their lives that that nation might live It is altogether fitting and proper that we should d this.

But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Language in Common Use

The writer is not to ask from his reader more exertion of thought than is needed. "To economize the reader's attention" is a sound rule. Wordsworth stoutly held that the "language really used by men" is the "proper vehicle of thought"; and it is a fact that in many of his weaker passages his words are those of the market-place, those in colloquial use. But neither in his prose nor in his poetry does he adhere to his rule. Nor, indeed, could he; the written language is bound to deviate from the spoken language.

Your words should be such as will give your audience the minimum of trouble with the maximum of profit. Certainly they should; but what in truth does that imply? One tells us that it means, "Think like a philosopher, but speak like the man in the street." ("Like the man on the top of the Clapham omnibus" is the judge's version.) Wordsworth also said something like that: "These poems were written chiefly with a

few to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes poetic pleasure."

Well, listen to a little of the disjointed utterances of the man in the street, try to interpret the dots and dashes that serve him as conversation, and you say that this cannot be done. The Covent Garden porter recounts the mishap that caused him to lose the boxing bout. "I wasn't 'arf mad," he says. His hearer sympathizes, also in negatives, "Not 'arf, you wasn't"; and this, being interpreted, is, "Of course you were; anyone would have been most annoyed by the unfortunate happening." The embryo sentences of the market place serve well enough for their particular purpose. But you cannot so transmit thought unimpaired. Our language must be other than these shreds and patches. Wordsworth himself in his best poetry makes no scruple of departing from his theory. His words are hardly the words of current conversation. He writes of Venice—

> Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee,
> And was the safeguard of the West; the worth
> Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
> Venice, the eldest child of Liberty.

This would be strange language to hear on the top of the Clapham omnibus. If the dictum had said, "Understood by the man in the street," we should accept it wholeheartedly. For, to be sure, the passive vocabulary—that which a man interprets correctly—is a good deal wider than the active vocabulary—that which a man uses himself.

Some Directions for Speech

What then is to be our aim as we speak or write? Our words should be clear. So, also, they should be clearly pronounced; and, as we all realize when we listen to others, clearness is distinct from noise: "Her voice was ever soft, gentle, and low —An excellent thing in woman." It is an excellent thing in a man too. Speak in a quiet, pleasant voice; see to it that your words are not muffled in your throat. Then you will be using the English language as a reliable carrier of thought from mind to mind.

Yes; and the additional suggestion is needed—"Speak u Often, very often, the harassed reporter would like to say to the speaker. Not without cause; for the importance clear, audible utterance is not widely realized. Could you hav a better illustration than in this deplorable mis-reporting of the Home Secretary's words? He was telling Parliament what plans the Government had for the provision of protectors against air-raids. Not the newspapers only, but the official report also, gave his statement that gas-masks and guards against fire would be distributed to the local authorities "in time." Thereupon many people, not all timorous, jumped to the conclusion that air-raids were imminent, that there was a race against time: can we possibly provide the requisite precautions before the bombers arrive? Now comes the correction. What the Home Secretary said was that the requisites would be distributed "in kind." The Government would not make money grants; it would itself see to the provision of what was needed. We may, therefore, now go about our business unperturbed. It is a pity, though, that the correction was called for.

We are to Avoid Obscurity

Justice Swallow was not very wise. Yet he could give wise counsel at times. "If, sir," he says to mouthing Pistol, "you come with news from the Court, I take it there's but two ways, either to utter them or to conceal them." To use the swelling terms with which Pistol larded his speech was the next way to concealment. His tongue was given to him, the English language was available for him, so that he might like a man of this world deliver his news in plain and intelligible terms.

We may, indeed, get—and give—a good deal of fun through the use of unnatural language. In general, though, we had better say plain things in a plain way. This duty you owe to your reader: you are under an obligation to make your meaning easily accessible.

Writers there are, no doubt, learned scientists perhaps, who have delved farther than most into the secrets of Nature, whose message is difficult to grasp. No amount of care over language in which the message is conveyed would make it easy. It must, however, be sheer perversity that makes one who is dealing

With the ordinary facts of life write a series of conundrums. At times we may be in a mood to wrestle with the conundrums. Then it is that we tackle one of Robert Browning's obscurities. Mostly, however, we ask for an easy path to the meaning intended. That is why we are indignant with Browning's *Sordello*; we are anxious to fathom its meaning, and we resent the obstacles presented to us. Of this poem Tennyson, with an exaggeration that was pardonable, said that he could understand two lines only—the first, "Who will, may hear Sordello's story told," and the last, "Who would has heard Sordello's story told." Moreover, he said, these lines are both lies.

Admirers of Ambiguity

It must be admitted, however, that this has not been the prevailing idea among all writers at all periods. There was a period when the majority of writers thought it desirable to use words vaguely suggestive of many meanings, words rich in association. They have their successors still. The fact that the greater number of readers would fail to summon up all the intended associations was a matter of little moment. That was the reader's fault, not the writer's. It was then actually looked upon as an advantage to the English language that it contained so many words with a double, or even a treble sense. "Homonyms" we sometimes call these; *pray* and *prey*, for instance. "Your petitioners shall ever pray" is a traditional ending of a petition to King or Parliament; "Who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey, This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned," comes from Gray's "Elegy." *Pray* and *prey*, the same in sound and once indistinguishable in spelling, have in these two sentences not only different senses, but different parts of speech.

Playing with Words

Carew, some of whose delightful verses you very likely know, praised English because it permitted of "the juggling feat of two-edged words." "So significant," he writes, "are our words, that amongst them sundry single ones serve to express divers things; as by Bill are meant a weapon, a scroll, and a bird's beak; by Grave, sober, a tomb, and to carve." Shakespeare

does in fact, very often produce a fine effect by sugges meanings beyond the obvious. So do other writers in th period of bold experiment with language. Thus *Brave* synonymous with *bold, courageous*; it is also applied to *finely dressed, resplendent.* In Miranda's outburst, "How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, that hath such people in't!" we have passed away from these simple meanings, and we get a vague intimation of excitement, delightful and stimulating.

So, too, Herrick often uses words of which we cannot tell precisely the meaning, but which give us a vague idea of beauty and significance. "Ask me why I send you here This sweet Infanta of the year?" accompanying his gift of primroses. The Infanta was the daughter of the King of Spain. But Herrick hardly wished to compare his primroses with her; he used the word to summon up dim ideas of beauty.

Natural Language rather than Bombast

It is quite true that we may derive much delight from seeing how we, or others for us, can make one meaning melt into another. But, after all, language is first and foremost a means of communication; and that means is best which achieves its purpose most swiftly and with least loss. Our talk and our writing should, in other words, be simple and natural.

It diverges from the natural when we indulge in rant—which Dr. Johnson defines as "a declamatory way of speaking," which is, indeed, as its origin implies, a kind of raving. Such a way is almost bound to be insincere. When Hamlet, emulating the extravagant talk of Laertes, exclaims—

> . . . let them throw
> Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
> Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
> Make Ossa like a wart!

he is quite aware that such talk is mere madness. "Nay," he says, "An thou'lt mouth, I'll rant as well as thou." Intensely disliking ostentation he met it with ostentation: "The bravery of his grief did put me into a towering passion." Language diverges from the natural, too, when it is affected, when the speaker seems to shrink from calling a spade a spade.

What, for instance, does the word "Protestant" mean in Herrick's famous song?—

Bid me to live, and I will live,
Thy Protestant to be;
Or bid me love and I will give,
A loving heart to thee.

Avoidance of Slang

We dress outselves in workaday garb for the serious business of life; we put on gay garments for festivals. So with our language. There is a choice between the plain and the ornamental. Should you say "The King of Italy has been proclaimed Emperor of Abyssinia," or say "Once again the pride of an imperial title hovers over the seven hills of the Eternal City"? Should you say "The lieutenant liked the ladies," or say "The lieutenant had a penchant for the fair sex"? Should you say "The debate ended with Mr. Churchill's attack on the Prime Minister's leadership," or say, "The tail of the debate contained a waspish sting in the shape of a ferocious attack on the P.M. by Mr. Churchill for what he described as lamentable leadership"?

Doubtless, in differing environments either method, the plain for one the coloured for another, is fitting. You will therefore be unable to furnish a conclusive answer to any of these questions. But surely you will be able to answer this last question propounded. Should you, in a response to an invitation to dinner followed by the theatre say, "How unlucky! I promised to drive father to town in the car," or should you pervert the English language and say, "What too foul luck! I promised to whizz Dad up to the Metrop. in the crate"? We have no right to pervert our language even on the strongest provocation. Perhaps we have good reason to understand the meaning of the extraordinary words many among us use; but we should make something of a stand for tolerably good English.

Plain Prose is the Better

You will have no difficulty in deciding that for certain purposes the plain not the coloured variety of English is appropriate. You write a letter of application for a post. It

would be foolish to dress your letter in festive attire. Yo purpose is to state clearly your qualifications for the post th you seek: the plainer the language the better. Your lette will run, therefore, something like this: "Would you kindly consider my application for the position of shorthand-typist in your firm? The following are the particulars relating to me—

Age.....

School Career.....

Speed in Shorthand.....

Speed in Typing..... and so on.

You very likely allow yourself a sentence such as "In the event of your appointing me, I should do my utmost to perform my duties to your satisfaction." You would certainly not indulge in flowery phrases. Your business documents will suffer when you allow your quite natural pleasure in using language as a plaything to intrude. Figures of speech, the ornaments and the playthings of language, are quite out of place in formal documents.

Making Dull Things Interesting

On the other hand, a playful use of language is often delightful for speaker and hearer, writer and reader. It may commend an otherwise repellent subject; it may impel us to consider a very unattractive topic. Here, for instance, is this dreary subject of the relation between gold and current money. The story of the attempt of the French Government to keep their money based upon gold could be told in a deplorably dull way. You probably read the story with interest when there is the added attraction of picturesque language.

Here is one episode of the story for your examination. The title of the episode is "A Respite for the Franc": the monetary unit is presented to you as a live person, desperately struggling against an imminent sentence; and your sympathetic interest is aroused. You read on, therefore: "Though the flight of capital from France has by no means ceased, the monetary crisis which it threatened to precipitate a week ago has, for the moment at least, been successfully averted." You wish to know how it has been averted. You are reminded, incidentally

d by clever suggestion, of a ship in peril at sea, anchored leed but subject to ever-growing strain upon the cable by hich it clings to safety.

The words, too, of the account suggest comparisons. "Precipitate" calls to mind the steep mountain-side down which the avalanche sweeps with destructive force. "Averted" is a similar metaphor; the threatening avalanche has been turned aside. Perhaps in the last sentence of the paragraph there has been a too rapid transference to another comparison. We were watching a ship tugging at its moorings; we are suddenly transported to a beleaguered city beating off its assailants. It is not, perhaps, quite fair to speak of this disconcerting transfer as a mixed metaphor; but it is very near it. Here is the passage—

Though the flight of capital from France has by no means ceased, the monetary crisis which it threatened to precipitate a week ago has, for the moment at least, been successfully averted. During the latter part of last week the selling pressure on the franc slackened considerably, and the exchange rates recovered sufficiently to reduce the outflow of gold to a mere trickle. Ably and courageously supported by the French authorities, the franc has thus once again confounded the prophets of disaster and ridden out the worst storm to strike it since its stabilization in 1927. The struggle, however, has been a costly one, and it does not require an unfriendly critic to ask whether the franc could survive many more such victories without casting adrift from its present mooring. For more than a year the franc has suffered from periodic attacks each of which has only been beaten off at the cost of a considerable loss of gold, with the result that during the past fifteen months the gold reserve of the Bank of France has declined by 24 per cent.

Look, too, at a little of the letter, in which Burke makes merry at the expense of the noble lord that had opposed his pension. Here are three sentences. On page 153 you have the passage from which they are taken—

The Duke of Bedford is the leviathan among all the creatures of the Crown. He tumbles about his unwieldy bulk; he plays and frolics in the ocean of the royal bounty. Huge as he is, and whilst "he lies floating many a rood," he is still a creature. . . .

Meaning First, Then Expression

"What do you read, my lord?" asks the old courtier in the play. "Words, words, words," answers Hamlet. Yes; but

"What is the matter, my lord?" What are the thoug placed upon record by means of those black marks upon wh paper, thoughts placed upon record so that others may sha them? It is the latter that is the thing of greater importance The words are but the means to an end; they are the elements that we place together so as to render our thoughts accessible to others. Clearly, however, the words themselves are of importance, too. Upon our apt choosing depends on the one hand the accuracy of the record, and on the other hand the readiness and the pleasure with which others interpret the words.

Coleridge tells us about his visit to the Falls of Clyde. He tells, indeed, this little incident in more than one version; and we may, therefore, assume that it made much impression upon him. He watched the falling water for a while. Then he asked himself what adjective would best convey his feelings. "Sublime" was his conclusion. He was much delighted therefore when he overheard another visitor say to his wife, after admiring the spectacle, "It is sublime." He was less delighted with the wife's answer, "Yes, it is the prettiest thing I ever saw."

But, after all, he need not have been greatly irritated by the lady's choice of an adjective. For she has among us many like her, with little sense of discrimination: this lady makes, for instance, a great impression upon you; is she handsome, or stately, or beautiful, or pretty, or charming? He who has a critical sense will consider before he decides. He who has not, will choose at haphazard. Like Kirker in the novel, he will think it doesn't really matter much. The chief reporter was denouncing John Milton for not being able to tell him how to spell "deceive." "What is the use of you," he asked indignantly, "if you can't do a simple thing like that?" "Say 'cheat'," suggested Umbrage. So Kirker wrote "Cheat." The great wealth of words at our disposal forces us, ever and again, to ask the question: "When a dozen words present themselves and are more or less applicable, which is best for our purpose?" Usually, no doubt, we make our choice without hesitation, instinctively. We feel that this is the exact word to express our meaning, that this is the word most readily interpreted by hearers or readers.

Deliberate Choice

At times, though, the choice calls for consideration: it needs a sense of discrimination. What name are you to give, for instance, to this particular sound of which you wish to speak? Are you to be content with the general word *sound* or *noise*? Or are you to suggest ugliness or beauty or what not? Is it the "lisp of leaves" or the "ripple of rain" or "murmur of the rills" or "the fountain to spout and splash"? Are words in a *whisper* or a *shout* or a *mumble* or a *cry*? Could you get nearly as good a word as "lapping" in the lines?

> I will arise and go now, for always night and day
> I hear lake-water lapping, with low sounds by the shore;
> While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavement grey,
> I hear it in the deep heart's core.

When we do require to make a choice, how set about it? As we have suggested, no very satisfactory answer is available. Here, as in other aspects of English writing, the comprehensive rule is this: see how great writers have dealt with the problem. Some points, however, may be made.

A Difficulty

One is that different hearers, or different readers, may attach different meanings to the one group of sounds.

How, for instance, do you interpret "(Cheers)," the parenthesis that is now and then sprinkled over the reports of debates in Parliament? We are told that "in reports of Parliamentary debates 'cheers' indicates that approval was shown by emphatic utterances of 'hear, hear.'" But this "hear, hear" may be an expression of sympathy or of regret rather than of enthusiasm. An amusing discussion of the point is in this leader of *The Times*.

> (CHEERS)
>
> There is some truth in the contention that the word (cheers) insufficiently conveys the niceties of difference in Parliamentary feelings, and may represent anything from a somnolent grunt to the sonorous tide of "Hear, hear," which always introduces and sometimes terminates the speech of a recognized leader. In self-defence, however, it must be recalled that our

Parliamentary reports make some attempt to distinguish between the conventional and the emotional. The key noun is sometimes accompanied by the adjective "Ministerial," "ironical," or "loud" and expanded by the addition "and laughter" or "Cries of Oh!" In cases where there is a real demonstration of feeling a complete and dignified sentence describes it.

Our reports indeed seem positively temperamental when compared with the frigid reticence of Hansard, in whose august columns the explosion of a bomb would appear merely as (interruption), and the death of a member from inarticulate rage would probably be described as "Mr. So-and-So indicated dissent." These reticences, like our own, are merely a reflection of the fact that what is being reported is the functioning of a venerable and (*pace* our embryo dictators) living organism, not the temporary aberrations of its cells. It follows that Parliamentary reports are not the proper place for what are known as "word pictures." If some legislator, a prey to nervous incoherence, fails to attain the usual high level of Parliamentary oratory, it is really better to say "Mr. So-and-So continued the debate," than "Mr. So-and-So, looking like a débutante accepting her first proposal, maundered a few remarks which were mercifully inaudible in the Press Gallery." Similarly it is better to express any sort of approving noise by the single word "cheers" than to qualify what is usually a compound of repercussions with some adjective like "uneasy," "elated," "resigned," or "full-throated." These frills are the perquisite of a descriptive writer in another column, to whose account the attention of our correspondent is hereby directed. It is his business to sniff the smoke of battle as it floats up to the Press Gallery; to judge whether members are feeling recalcitrant, alarmed, enthusiastic, amused, exhilarated, or merely liverish; and to correct any impression that the House of Commons has behaved like an assembly of dancing dervishes, unless, of course, it actually has. (Cheers and cries of "Oh!")

Custom Makes Language

The Lancashire speaker, who, coming into the warm room out of the winter cold, declares "I am starving" is not clamorous for food but for warmth; the Londoner who made the same declaration would be asserting his intense hunger for food. As we might anticipate, the differences are much greater when the one original language has had two subsequent histories.

We are not justified in speaking, as some do, of "the American language." The sounds may differ as when our *futile, fertile, agile* come to be pronounced with the short *i*, when our "temporarily" and "primarily" have the accent on *ar* instead of on the first syllable, and when "leisure" rhymes with "seizure" not "pleasure." But the language of the United States is still English; we have little difficulty in understanding it when we read American magazines or when we see American films. Some divergences there are, however. These are often very interesting—instructive, too.

Many of the differences illustrate the truth that people make their own language. To wage war against a custom that is sweeping over the country is as futile as Canute's injunction against the incoming tide. The head master himself after listening to the *Hill-Billies* on the wireless says to his astonished wife—

"Guess I'll be headin' for bed now, Old-Timer."

There is, for instance, this phrase "different than." In this country, in the serious writing of the Americans, too, there is a stand for "different from." In the United States, though, as one scholar laments, "Within a few years the abominable phrase 'different than' has spread through the country like a pestilence. In my own Indiana, where the wells of English undefiled are jealously guarded, the infection has awakened general alarm."

"General alarm" is a picturesque exaggeration: so long as they can make themselves understood without difficulty, the vast majority of people are not in the least troubled over the niceties of language. The shrewd comment of the *New York Sun* upon the protest only exaggerates the other way: "The excellent tribe of grammarians, the precisians and all others

who strive to be correct and correctors, have as much power to prohibit a single word or phrase as a grey squirrel has to put out Orion with a flick of its tail." Surely, though, the English teacher likes to think, the grammarian has a little more power than that.

A Passing Embarrassment

We see how developments have occurred. Our word "can" is restricted to a tin vessel for holding liquids; "can" in America has a much wider sense and is applied to any container, especially such as is used for preserving foods. We already speak of the "canning industry": and we know what is meant by "Much of the garden produce of the colony is canned at a near-by cannery," and also by the remark of the lady who, being asked what the growers did with their bounteous fruit crops, said, "We eat what we can, and we can what we can't." It strikes one as a little odd, though, that preserves in glass bottles are also "canned goods." "Are you through?" asks the American; "Have you finished?" asks the Englishman. "Say!" exclaims the American when he wishes to draw your attention; "I say," exclaims the Englishman. A curious development, perversion rather, is illustrated by this sentence—

> An Indian inspector suggested the thumb-print in addition to the mark, and all new Indian deeds bear this imprint. The result is that Lo is given to understand that no amount of false swearing will serve to disprove his signature as witnessed by the unerring thumb print.

Why should "'Lo" be a substitute for "Indian"? Some jester or other read Pope's lines—

> Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutored mind
> Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind,

and straightway interpreted the exclamation "Lo" as the proper name. His jest is now for ever with the language, just as the Latin scholar's jest is about "tandem," the Latin adverb meaning "at length." There you see one horse coming round the corner; wait long enough and at length, "tandem," you will see another. And now no other word is applicable to two horses in harness, one behind the other.

Differences in Connotation

To be sure we may be, temporarily at any rate, in a difficulty. The "candy store" does not immediately call into mind the "sweet shop." We know the comparison "as sweet as sugar candy." Perhaps, too, we know that Shakespeare used "candied" with the sense of "sweet," "flattering": Hamlet says to his friend Horatio—

> Nay, do not think I flatter . . .
> No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
> And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
> Where thrift may follow fawning.

"Candy" with us, however, is the piece of crystallized sugar, made by several boilings and slow evaporation. In America the word extends over the whole range of confectionery containing sugar, and is used in the plural as often as in the singular: "The simple candies of yore—peppermint sticks gum drops, candy hearts inscribed with sentimental mottoes—are supplemented by bread confectionery." So with other words there may be a passing doubt: "phonograph" for our "gramophone," "fruit pie" for our "fruit tart," "collar button" for our "collar stud," "cookie" or "cracker" for our "biscuit," "muffin" for our "scone" or "tea-cake," "suspenders" for our "braces," "bill" ("a dime makes as much noise on a collection plate as a quarter, and both make more noise than a bill. If you don't want your left hand to know what your right hand doeth, put in a bill") for our "bank-note," "automobile" for our "motor car," and "commuters" for our "season-ticket holders." Being in New York you ask for "Christmas snappers." Ask for "crackers" and you get our "biscuits"; for "biscuits" and you get "muffins"; for "muffins," and you get "scones." And if you should wish to have "punctures mended," you must find a garage that announces "flats fixed."

Occasionally, indeed, though not very often, we are certain to attach to the words a meaning different from the one that will be attached to them by the American hearer. We hear "billion" and we interpret it as a million millions, the square of a million, that is; the American interprets it as a thousand millions, what we call a "milliard." Here at any rate we have

one thing bigger in England than in America; though perhaps neither here nor there does the hearer give any definite meaning to the word. "Precinct" is with us a word suggestive of peace and order and thoughts of times long past; we hear it, and we think of the cathedral in its quiet enclosure. In America "precinct" is a subdivision, for election and police purposes, of a city ward; it would suggest noise and bustle and confusion. "Penny" in America is the one-cent piece; when the London bus-conductor asks for a "penny" the visitor from New York is surprised that he must give the equivalent of two cents.

A Fable from America

Yet the differences are not very material, certainly not enough to justify our talking of different languages. It is the one language still, though in different versions. You have no trouble in reading books and magazines meant in the first place for our American cousins. The little peculiarities you meet with do not repel; they add piquancy to the reading. Thus, you enjoy reading this sprightly passage of American prose. It is one of George Ade's *American Fables*, and it illustrates what we have been discussing—

One day a lowly Steam-Fitter who received only Seventy Cents an Hour for filling his Pipe, was sent to do a Job of Repairing in the Palatial Residence of a Syndicate Mogul.

While he was hammering merrily at his Task, trying to work out an eight-hour Day, the Lady of the House came and watched him. Her Heart was touched with great Pity for any Man who still had his Appendix and whose Picture had never appeared in the Sunday Papers. So she had the Butler bring some Charlotte Russe for the Humble Toiler. After which he borrowed one of her gold-tip Cigarettes and gave her a few Minutes of his Time, in spite of the Fact that she did not belong to the Union.

"This is a swell Joint you've got here, Lady," said the Steam-Fitter. "The only thing that makes me sore is to think that all of this Hot Dog you're throwing in comes out of the Pockets of poor, hard-working Guys, such as me."

"You wrong us," said the great Lady, in a Tone of Gentle Sadness. "My Husband never flimflams the poor Laborer. All that he has he made by shifting the Cut on the small Stockholders. We are much interested in the Working Classes and wish to establish a free Lecture Course, so that the Poor may learn all about Anthropology. Very often I go and sing Solos at Mission Entertainments, but in spite of this my poor Husband is pictured as a hungry Octopus who has taken a death-grip on the Consumer."

Some Don'ts

There are some negative rules regarding our choice of words. One relates to spelling. A word has a spelling, a sound, and—most important of all—a sense. In determining which word is best for our purpose the first ought to have nothing to do with the matter. The assumption is that of a certainty we know the spelling and are concerned only with sound and sense. The assumption is not invariably borne out in fact. Still, it is a heresy to suppose that we have variants at our disposal so that we may shirk difficult spellings, that because we feel a doubt about *gauge* we had better write *measure*.

Many words that we hear often enough, perhaps see now and then, are to be used rarely and only under very extenuating circumstances. Slang has its place, perhaps; you can understand the wish of its user to display his oddity or his perverted humour. You may be amused by a mingling of refined language with the base coin of language: "They say," is the lady's comment, "he died of influenzah; but I believe," she adds with a rush, "they done 'im in." You can understand, too, the wish of its user to disguise the reality of things by applying strange names to them. "Snooping a book" seems less deserving of blame than "stealing a book." But the place of slang is not in our formal writing or our formal speech. Very likely acceptable among intimates, it may be as meaningless as an unknown language to strangers. Who among us, for instance, knows what really happened in the baseball game after reading this description?

With one down, Murphy was up. He singled through second. Terry fouled off two, Johnson muffing the second. Then he sacrificed,

Quinn making a wonderful assist on his bunt. Every fan was rooting frantically when the mighty Lang strode to the plate. He took two balls, let a good one go by, bunted one foul—and whiffed on the next. And the pennant was gone!

Quite likely those who use the peculiar terms—the "fans who root"—regard them as an integral part of the language; as indeed the terms may in time become so. *Tout obéit au succès, même la grammaire*: if a rebellion is successful it becomes a revolution; if slang is successful in maintaining its footing it becomes a respectable and respected part of the language. And it is hard with some words to tell when they have become this. *Phiz, chap, cab, mob*; these are what were once slang shortenings of *physionomy, chapman* (dealer), *cabriolet, mobile vulgus* (the fickle crowd). Have they yet lived down their origin? Certainly *cab* and *mob* have; but not perhaps the other two.

Look at the noun "dodge," as another instance. It is current among us; no one hesitates about using it. Yet Thackeray thought fit to apologize for its use. He segregates it from its more reputable companions by the quotation marks—

> The honest *habitués* of the Hall, amongst the lower rank of students who have a taste for good living, have many harmless arts by which they improve their banquet, and innocent "dodges" (if we may be permitted to use an excellent phrase that has become vernacular since the appearance of the last dictionaries) by which they strive to attain for themselves more delicate food than the common every-day roast beef of the students' table.
>
> *Pendennis.*

To be sure, "dodge" was in the language far earlier than Thackeray supposed. Perhaps it was Sam Weller that helped to make it popular: "It was all false, of course?" "All sir," replied Mr. Weller, "reg'lar do, sir; artful dodge"; and we all know "the Artful Dodger."

There is no need to be fastidious in our choice. What you call slang may, quite reasonably, be by another called idiom. "The chief," writes a lady, "said jokingly to me, when I remonstrated that an expression used by him was slang,

'Not at all, Miss X, it's good idiomatic English.'" And she asks for a method whereby she can discriminate between slang and idiom. There comes a question that is unanswerable. Slang and idiom merge into one another by imperceptible degrees, much as night merges into morning. What is to-day slang, restricted in its use, understood perhaps only among intimates connected with a particular occupation or a particular sport, may become adopted by people in general, may become the recognized way of expressing a particular thought, so that the dictionary makers must take note of it.

For a time these dictionary makers will warn us that the expression is "colloquial"; but, after an interval during which the expression is in current use, the disparaging adjective will disappear. The slang has then graduated into idiom. But there has been no graduation ceremony, no moment when you could say "Before it was slang, now it is idiom."

An Instance from "The Spectator"

Look, for an illustration, at a passage from *The Spectator's* account of Sir Roger—

> The squire, observing the preciseness of their dress, began to imagine this was a nest of sectaries; for he had often heard that the town was full of them. He was confirmed in this opinion upon seeing a conjuror, whom he guessed to be the holder-forth. However, to satisfy himself he asked a porter, who stood next him, what religion these people were of. The porter replied, "They are of no religion; it is a masquerade." "Upon that," says my friend, "I began to smoke that they were a party of mummers"; and being himself one of the quorum in his own county, could not but wonder that none of the Middlesex justices took care to lay some of them by the heels."

Well, would you call the squire's "began to smoke"—meaning "began to find out," to trace as one does by the smoke rising from an encampment—idiom or slang? Slang, perhaps; for this expression is no longer a part of the current language. Like so many of the colloquial expressions that have their little day and cease to be, it has been replaced by other expressions.

We must not think that, because a word was once in good repute and readily intelligible, it still remains the word for our purpose. It may have become old-fashioned, perhaps quite obsolete. Joseph Addison was long regarded as the model for English writers; we can, in fact, learn a great deal from him yet. But to take him as an authority for present practice would be foolish.

The squire's "Lay them by the heels," however, is certainly idiom. Originally it meant to put in the stocks; its first application to arrest in general was a picturesque slang term; the term caught on, and the phrase is now good English idiom. The essence of the matter seems to be this: slang is on the way towards idiom; but before, in most instances long before, slang reaches the company of accredited expressions, it has gone from among us. And the practical rule is: if you wish to avoid slang and are in doubt whether an expression is slang or idiom, choose an alternative expression.

EXERCISE

(*a*) Here is a little fancied interview, where the topic of discussion is this choice of words. It is between Dr. Johnson and Coleridge. Fill in the spaces with the appropriate word from those suggested—

Johnson. Why, yes, sir: Wordsworth has certainly —(*a*)— of that, and he has —(*b*)— to persuade me that there is no difference between the proper language of poetry and the —(*c*)— speech of the rudest and meanest of mankind. Am I to understand, sir, that the —(*d*)— of your Romantic Movement was to substitute the —(*e*)— of Giles and Hodge for the high discourse in which the poet has in all ages sought to express himself? What is the —(*f*)— discovery of the new school that he should aim at a style of diction as much below that of a cultivated reader as he has hitherto striven to rise above it?

Coleridge. Give me leave to explain, Dr. Johnson. The —(*g*)— of the Romantic Revival proposed to themselves a —(*h*)— aim. They sought at once to —(*i*)— the language of the poetry and to renew its spirit. They not only called on the poet to free himself from the —(*j*)— of a frigid and conventional vocabulary, but they invited him to come closer to Nature, and to —(*k*)— her with his own enkindled eye instead of through the dim and —(*l*)— glass which an outworn poetical —(*m*)— had too long interposed between the human vision and its objects.

The words from which you will choose are—

(*a*) discoursed, spoken; (*b*) tried, attempted, endeavoured; (*c*) ordinary, usual, common; (*d*) purpose, object, aim; (*e*) talk, dialect, jargon; (*f*) wonderful, noteworthy, notable; (*g*) advocates, promoters; (*h*) twofold, dual, double; (*i*) improve, better, reform; (*j*) fetters, shackles, trammels; (*k*) view, observe; (*l*) confusing, distorting; (*m*) fashion, convention, tradition.

(*b*) Select from the passage below instances of words effectively used—

The grants to the House of Russell were so enormous as not only to outrage economy, but even to stagger credibility. The Duke of Bedford is the leviathan among all the creatures of the Crown. He tumbles about his unwieldy bulk; he plays and frolics in the ocean of the royal bounty. Huge as he is, and whilst "he lies floating many a rood," he is still a creature. His ribs, his fins, his whalebone, his blubber, the very spiracles through which he spouts a torrent of brine against his origin and covers me all over with the spray, everything of him is from the throne. Is it for *him* to question the dispensation of the royal favour?

In private life I have not at all the honour of acquaintance with the noble Duke; but I ought to presume, and it costs me nothing to do so, that he abundantly deserves the esteem and love of all who live with him. But as to public service, why, truly, it would not be more ridiculous for me to compare myself, in rank, in fortune, in splendid descent, in youth, in strength, or figure, with the Duke of Bedford, than to make a parallel between his services and my attempts to be useful to my country. It would not be gross adulation, but uncivil irony to say that he has any public merit of his own to keep alive the idea of the services by which his vast landed pensions were obtained. My merits, whatever they are, are original and personal: his are derivative. It is his ancestor, the original pensioner, that has laid up this inexhaustible fund of merit which makes his Grace so very delicate and exceptious about the merit of all other grantees of the Crown. Had he permitted me to remain in quiet, I should have said, " 'Tis his estate: that's enough. It is his by law: what have I to do with it or its history?" He would naturally have said, on his side, " 'Tis this man's fortune. He is as good now as my ancestor was two hundred and fifty years ago. I am a young man with very old pensions; he is an old man with very young pensions: that's all."

[You will find in the Appendix the words actually used.]

CHAPTER VIII

POINTS OF GRAMMAR

Studying Grammar

QUESTIONS of grammar are usually dry as dust; and there is excuse for disregarding them. Yet we are obliged to consider them on occasion. We have, it is true, long given up the notion that English grammar is the art of speaking and writing the English language with propriety. We know that formal grammar, laborious parsing and analysing unrelated to practice, will not achieve this desirable end. But perplexities present themselves; and we may now and again resolve them only by considerations of grammar.

The question is, *Must I study grammar in order to write good English*? And the answer is, Certainly. If you are to be a competent craftsman in English you must have, besides your adequate supply of words, a knowledge of how the words are placed together in English. Then, provided that you also have something worth saying, you have the requisite equipment for a writer. We are studying grammar in these pages of ours. We are considering the forms of words and their relations towards one another. And that is grammar. Only, we are studying our grammar by looking at the language in actual use; we are not troubling a great deal about cut and dried rules. We look, for instance, at this sentence: "He said he would not be the first Chancellor of the Exchequer to give away the Budget secrets before the proper time." That is the newspaper report of the Chancellor's declaration, "I shall not be."

Is any thing wrong with the report? *Would* is no doubt possible as a report. If the Chancellor had been indignant at the question and had said with emphasis "I will not be," then *would* is the appropriate word. As it is, however, the correct report is "He said he should not be." So we reach the rule: to report *shall* in the past tense, use *should*; to report *will*, use *would*. A writer, for example, speaks about childish delusions of the past; and adds, "But let no one feel confident that he should have escaped the delusion if he had lived at the time

when it prevailed." There is the correct report of "I should have escaped."

In our talk, indeed, we do sometimes prefer ease to accuracy, as Tweeny does in the play—

Tweeney (*anxiously*): Have I offended of your feelings again, sir?

Crichton: A little.

Tweeney (*in a despairing outburst*): I'm full o' vulgar words and ways; and though I may keep them in holes when you are by, as soon as I'm by myself they comes in a rush like beetles when the house is dark. I says them gloating-like, in my head—"Blooming," I says, and "All my eye" and "Ginger" and "Nothink"; and all the time we was being wrecked I was praying to myself, "please the Lord it may be an island as it's natural to be vulgar in."

In our writing, however, we had better conform to the fashion of those entitled to be regarded as patterns. That is, we had better regard grammar. For this means conforming to fashion: it is custom that dictates the rules of writing and of speech. The study of this custom is, however, an exasperating study.

Nor, strive as you may, will you ever reach perfection in the use of English. A great writer in his moments of exultation now and then glories in his achievement. Shakespeare laments that Time conquers most precious things of life—

Nativity once in the main of light
Crawls to maturity wherewith being crowned,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his beauty fight
And Time which gave doth now his gift confound.

He consoles himself and his correspondent, however, with this—

And yet to times unborn my verse shall stand
Praising thy worth despite Time's cruel hand.

But even the greatest do not often have these moments of content with their work. They come short of their aspirations. They dream of achieving—

Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do.
And fail in doing.

It is an exasperating study. Yet what a glorious study! For it introduces you to, makes you appreciate, the best that has ever been known and thought in the world. You will never grow weary of it. English is like Cleopatra in this: closer acquaintance only serves to strengthen attraction,

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety.

Still, this is getting away from our discussion of points of grammar; and we had better consider by what means we shall become acquainted with the educated custom that we call "correct English."

Custom Makes Grammar

For "Regardless of grammar they all cried 'That's him.'" Custom is not more constant in language, the dress of thoughts, than it is in the dress of the body. We can at times trace the changes. The special form of the subjunctive, for instance, now remains only in formal writings, and in a few isolated phrases like "If I were you." We do say "If it were done" rather than "If it was done"; but that is very likely because Macbeth's exclamation, "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly," is a part of the language. Apart from such expressions the use of the subjunctive now seems affectation. Hamlet says in relation to the gagging of the clowns, "Now this, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve." The modern version would be "though it makes the unskilful laugh." Notice what an old-fashioned savour the subjunctives *take* and *be* lend to this passage of Jane Austen.

> I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom, so common with novel writers, of degrading, by their contemptuous censure, the very performances to the number of which they are themselves adding: joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! if the heroine

of one novel be not patronised by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard?

In words, as in constructions, change comes. *Bandits* is more frequent now than the older foreign *banditti*, *plateaus* more frequent than *plateaux*, *sanatoriums* than *sanatoria*.

The American Version

Where the language is transplanted the changes are, as one might expect, accelerated. Altered conditions bring about altered expressions. Here, for instance, comes a question: *In an American magazine, giving an account of a football match, I found the sentence, "On the bleachers the fans were rooting wildly." I know what "fans" are; and "rooting," I suppose, means "cheering"; but whatever are "bleachers"?* Certainly, in spite of the cow-boy songs and the films, we are on occasion nonplussed. This word "bleachers" supplies an illustration. In America "bleachers" are the cheaper, roofless seats upon which spectators crowd to watch the baseball or football game; the spectators are, by an easy transference, also called "bleachers"—much as we say "The shilling stand was wroth with the referee." In this country when a laundry informs us that it has "good bleaching grounds," we think of open spaces upon which the clothes are spread and are whitened by exposure to the sun. Only rarely at Lord's, and never in the football grounds, does the sun glare down upon the spectators. One might have supposed that "tanners" would have been better than "bleachers" for these seats bare to the elements; but so things are. The "bleachers" here turn things white ("When shepherds pipe on oaten straws, And merry larks are ploughman's clocks, When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws, And maidens bleach their summer smocks"—"this is Ver, the Spring"). The "bleachers" in America turn men dark.

An Idiom

It often happens that we can give no very convincing reason for a particular custom of language. The custom is a peculiarity, an idiom that is sometimes in rank rebellion against a grammar rule. Idioms are the peculiarities of a language. They are

those modes of expression that perhaps even more than words differentiate one language from another. We can learn the vocabulary of a foreign language sooner than we can master its idioms. Yet when they become customs, they become also grammar. The idiom may well have originated in the wish of its user to distinguish himself by oddity. Yet the rebellion, being successful, is a revolution. The idiom becomes grammar.

The foreigner learning English is quite often in despair about these idioms. A teacher, for example, reproves a scholar for an offence, trifling indeed in itself but indicative of contempt for rule. The teacher uses idiom. Could you possibly explain to the Frenchman the meaning of the comment? "Of course," says the teacher, "the thing in itself is a very small thing; it is the thing behind the thing which is really the thing, you know." Yet the English listener understands the meaning well enough. We could not give a logical reason for the negatives in "There isn't a single pencil with a point in this house, I don't believe." Yet it is good English idiom in spite of the fact that the speaker really meant "I do believe." Or what would the Frenchman make of this: "The London lifts afford many chances to thieves, so that if you want to keep your watch you must keep a good watch." And, when you tell him that the conjunction *but* may mean *that* ("I do not doubt but it is true") and that *but* may also mean *that not* ("No one doubts but he will succeed"), he begins to distrust his power of learning the language.

"There'll be a bob-a-nob taxi at the station," you say to your French friend, who is anxious about getting to Epsom Downs to see an English crowd in holiday mood. The unlucky emission of "bob-a-nob" will entail an elaborate explanation; for, though your friend may have read widely in English, he has not before encountered the expressive term. And indeed, whether you call it an English idiom or dismiss it brusquely as slang, "bob-a-nob" does call for elucidation. "Two-a-penny, hot-cross buns" we know; *a* is there the idiomatic representative of the formal "for one." Why "bob" should mean a shilling, however, we don't know; and all we can tell our French inquirer is that it means a shilling because people understand "bob" as a shilling—an explanation which is no other than "it does because it does." But "bob" is an easy,

delightful, unmistakable word to say; and maybe that is why we apply it to such a number of things. "Nob" is more tractable than "bob," at any rate so far as explanation goes. "One for his nob" is the gratuity to the player holding the knave's head that goes with the upturned card; and "knob" is the head of the stick. So our "bob-a-nob taxi" is one that goes crammed with passengers, who pay a shilling each from the station to the races.

Other Instances

We may not be able to justify our peculiar usage by reason. English idiom, for instance, calls for "I doubt whether it ever happened," though you would be at a loss to show why the conjunction *whether* should be used instead of the conjunction *that*. We do say "I am unconvinced that it ever happened"; but then we cannot banish peculiarities by showing phrases that are opposed to the idiom. In the negative "I do not doubt" implies "I am quite sure"; and the conjunction must be *that*: "I do not doubt that he has come."

Perhaps all that we can advance to justify idiom is that one feels it to be more English than its alternatives: we feel that it is more in accordance with English custom to say "I regard him as an honourable man," rather than to say "I regard him an honourable man," more English to say "I aim at passing the test," than to say "I aim to pass the test." Yet "I consider him an honourable man" is excellent English; and so is "I design to pass the test."

Grammar and Idiom Not Synonymous

Often, as we noted, an idiom is a rebel against grammar. The word *bitter*, for instance, is an adjective, the corresponding adverb being *bitterly*; yet "It is bitter cold" rings more true than "It is bitterly cold." "A hard won victory" is more English than "A hardly won victory" (perhaps the possibility of interpreting *hardly* as *scarcely* makes for the prevalence of this idiom). "You are mighty kind" is more English than "You are mightily kind." And "Sure enough he was there" is more English than "Surely enough he was there."

Consider, too, our curious use of the present tense of the verb where we intend, and are understood to intend, the future. We

speak of the future as though it were already accomplished with us: as Lady Macbeth did, we assume that the thing wished for or expected is already accomplished—

> Thy letters have transported me beyond
> This ignorant present, and I feel now
> The future in the instant.

So it is that we have "Duncan comes here to-night," though he is still upon the road; and "When goes hence?" though the speaker is determined that this present shall never come.

"Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die" is a well-known example of this idiom. When, as often, the main sentence clearly refers to the future, the use of the present tense in the subordinate sentence seems to be customary. So Falstaff asks: "I prithee, sweet wag, shall there be gallows standing in England when thou art king?"

It would be against idiom to write "shall receive" instead of "receive" in such sentences as "By the time you receive this I shall be well on my way"; and "Wait till the rain stops" is more idiomatic than "Wait till the rain shall stop." We say, without fearing rebuke "He won't do more than he can help," when we really mean "He won't do more than he cannot help." We say "I don't think it will rain," when we mean, and our auditors know we mean, "I think it will not rain." We could not defend such an expression; yet custom has almost justified it.

So, too, much of the talk we hear around us makes the past into the present. The speaker recalls so vividly what took place that it seems to be actually occurring at the time—

"And I sez to 'er, I sez, 'You oughter be ashamed of yerself,' I sez, 'wicked creature,' I sez, 'teachin' my boy such things and 'im only a kid,' I sez; and what do you think she sez to me? 'Teach '*im*,' she sez, '*I* couldn't teach 'im nothin,' she sez, 'and no more could no-one else.' "

In a sermon or a speech the idiom is often most effective. In a description it adds liveliness to the narrative. Carlyle is very fond of this "historic present." Look, for instance, at this vigorous passage from the *Past and Present*—

Accordingly our Prior assembles us in Chapter; and, we adjuring him before God to do justly, nominates,

not by our selection, yet with our assent, Twelve Monks, moderately satisfactory. Of whom are Hugo Third Prior, Brother Dennis a venerable man, Walter the *Medicus*, Samson *Subsacrista*, and other esteemed characters, though Wilhelmus *Sacrista*, of the red nose, too, is one. These shall proceed straightway to Waltham; and there elect the Abbot as they may and can. Monks are sworn to obedience; must not speak too loud, under penalty of foot-gyves, limbo, and bread and water: yet monks too would know what it is they are obeying. The St. Edmundsbury Community has no hustings, ballot-box, indeed no open voting: yet by various vague manipulations, pulse-feelings, we struggle to ascertain what its virtual aim is, and succeed better or worse.

This question, however, rises; alas, a quite preliminary question: Will the *Dominus Rex* allow us to choose freely? It is to be hoped! Well, if so, we agree to choose one of our own Convent. If not, if the *Dominus Rex* will force a stranger on us, we decide on demurring, the Prior and his Twelve shall demur: we can appeal, plead, remonstrate; appeal even to the Pope, but trust it will not be necessary. Then there is this other question, raised by Brother Samson: What if the Thirteen should not themselves be able to agree? Brother Samson *Subsacrista*, one remarks, is ready oftenest with some question, some suggestion, that has wisdom in it. Though a servant of servants, and saying little, his words all tell, having sense in them; it seems by his light mainly that we steer ourselves in this great dimness.

Place of the Preposition

One peculiarity of English is freedom in choosing the position of the preposition. Often this occurs at or near the end of a sentence—"What do you take me for?" "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Yet, perhaps because "preposition" suggests "position before," there exists a notion that a sentence ending in a preposition is inelegant. Against the instinct of the language those

having this notion would change "Where are you going to, my pretty maid?" into "To where are you going, my pretty maid?"; they would change "This is the book I got it from" into "This is the book from which I got it," and "Those were the men I was negotiating with" into "Those are the men with whom I was negotiating." Is it really worth while, in deference to a prejudice, to shuffle the words of the last sentence in C. E. Montague's paragraph?

> The world seemed clear that night; such a lovely unreason of optimist faith was astir in us all,
>
> We felt for that time ravish'd above earth
> And possess'd joys not promised at our birth.
>
> It seems hardly credible now, in this soured and quarrelsome country and time, that so many men of different classes and kinds, thrown together at random, should ever have been so simply and happily friendly, trustful and keen. But they were, and they imagined that all their betters were too. That was the paradise that the bottom fell out of.

Usually, no doubt, we do well to place the preposition before the noun or pronoun that it governs. Often indeed no other place is possible: "I grew weary *of* the *sea*, and intended to stay *at home with* my *wife* and family." Where, however, it appears natural to postpone the preposition we need have no scruple in doing so. There is abundant authority for it. In current talk the preposition is thrown into all positions.

Mr. Kibitzer comments upon the piano-accordion: "There, boy. Harmony is what that makes for richness of, all right." "There he goes again, ending his sentences with split prepositions," said one of the sticklers for grammar.

Position of Words Matters

To be sure, since in English we have no elaborate endings to show how words are to be related to one another, position is a matter of importance. Words out of position are a frequent cause of ambiguity. *Only* is a great offender in this respect: "He only read one side of the paper," would be less liable to misunderstanding as "He read only one side of the paper."

We must not rely upon the reader's eager co-operation in grouping our words. Better give no cause for misinterpretation: say "A man of unquestioned genius" instead of "An unquestioned man of genius"; say "My coat badly wants mending" instead of "My coat wants mending badly." And here is the notice—"Visitors are kindly requested not to touch the exhibits." We may assume that "kindly" should be with "not to touch."

Is anything wrong in the sentence, "Here is a fresh basket of eggs"? You know what the intended meaning is. The sentence, therefore, does not fail in its purpose of giving information. Still, very likely, the adjective "fresh" does belong to "eggs"; and in sober prose we should no doubt have the adjective alongside its own noun. "Here is a basket of fresh eggs." But the transfer of an epithet is quite often found in our literature. We have, indeed, a technical name for the transfer; it is called "hypallage," a word borrowed from Greek and meaning "interchange." "Is the kettle boiling?" you ask; and your hearer understands you perfectly, though, of course, it is about the water that you make inquiry. So, too, in the lines that are most likely familiar to you—

Lo! some we loved, the loveliest and best,
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage pressed,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before.
And one by one crept silently to Rest.

"cup" is readily interpreted as its contents. In the question, "What tributaries follow him to Rome, To grace in captive bonds his chariot wheels?" you have a similar transfer: "captive" is in reality applicable to the wearers of the bonds, not to the bonds themselves. We must not, however, be overexigent in our demand for correctness. Ingenuity can often find ambiguity in the clearest sentences: "Too many cooks spoil the broth," says one. "Yes," says the other, "far too many."

Ease in Speech

Well now, what about those rules laid down in the grammar books?

First it may be desirable to reiterate that people are not so

exacting where familiar speech is concerned as where writing is concerned. They would be foolish if they were.

When we talk familiarly we do not worry much about correctness in grammar. Or, rather, we should be ill-advised if we did worry. For then we should be over-precise in our talk; we should irritate our hearers just as the over-precise talkers on the wireless do.

There is, or ought to be, in conversation, or in the writing that imitates conversation, an agreeable easiness. This would vanish, and with it much of the delight of talk, if we sought to speak scrupulously in accordance with the grammar books. Doctor Johnson once felt that there was a divergence between what he had written as a suitable epitaph and what would have been a more accurate summary of the deceased's virtues. He excused himself by declaring that a man is "not upon oath in lapidary inscriptions." There are occasions when we may be economical with truth. So, too, there are occasions when we need not adhere to rigid rules of grammar.

Freedom of Colloquial Speech

People that draw attention to solecisms in speech hardly seem to appreciate this. Not for them the freedom of colloquial speech. They would have us always speak by the card. It is a laudable attitude; but we may be too scrupulous. One severe critic finds faults (and so there are if formality is to rule) in this entertaining passage—

"Who did you pass on the road?" the King went on, holding his hand to the Messenger for some more hay.

"Nobody," said the Messenger.

"Quite right," said the King, "this young lady saw him, too. So of course Nobody walks slower than you."

"I do my best," the Messenger said in a sulky tone. "I'm sure nobody walks much faster than I do."

"He can't do that," said the King, "or else he'd have been here first."

The stickler for correctness would inform the King that *whom* not *who*, is the objective case of the interrogative pronoun, that his question should therefore be couched "Whom did

you pass on the road?"; that *slower* is an adjective, the corresponding adverb being *more slowly*; and that *or else* is a colloquialism, better replaced by *for then*. Besides, if Alice or the Messenger had answered the question in formal manner and said, "I did not meet anyone on the road," the King would not have been able to make play with "Nobody." To be sure, this was a perverse misinterpretation of the King's. But then without this perversity we should not have had the fun; and with the formal correctness much of the naturalness of the passage would have gone.

"Nobody" is, quite true, sometimes used in a peculiar sense: it then signifies a person of little importance. "She vowed that it was a delightful ball: that there was everybody that everyone knew, and only a *very* few nobodies in the whole room." So Thackeray speaks of Becky at the Brussels ball, adding, however, for your guidance that this was "genteel jargon." "It is a fact, that in a fortnight, and after three dinners in general society, this young woman had got up the genteel jargon so well, that a native could not speak it better." *Nobody* is, however, in familiar talk usually the equivalent of *no one*; it is the negative of *somebody*. So we have the proverbial expression, "What's everybody's business is nobody's business."

Who or Whom?

Teachers of grammar do try to maintain in talk, no less than in writing, the distinction between *who* and *whom*. Their task is difficult indeed. Consider a little. *Who*, you will agree is both correct and natural in sentences like, "Who is here so base that would be a bondman?" or in "Be good, sweet maid, and let who can be clever." The objective *whom* could hardly be superseded by *who* in the prepositional phrase: "My real name, as well as that of another person to whom I hope to present you before long, you will gratify me by not asking," or—

> I must have liberty
> Withal, as large a charter as the wind
> To blow on whom I please.

Whom is also in accordance with the grammar books in such sentences as "Whom the gods love die young" and "This is a

fellow who has long eluded me, but whom I now have tightly by the heels."

There is a tendency, however, to use *who* for the objective as well as for the nominative. The tendency is, as you might expect, much more noticeable in talk. Instances of the use in writing are not hard to find, however, especially where the pronoun, as in our passage, comes at the beginning of the sentence. Still, *who* for the objective does not conform to formal grammar.

Few English Inflexions

The trouble is that in English—different in this respect from a highly-inflected language like ancient Latin or modern French—there are very few words having different forms for nominative and objective.[1] With such forms as do occur, *who* and *whom* for instance, people are as a result apt to make mistakes; for they need to discriminate only rarely.

However, it is worth while to get clear ideas about the distinction. Look at these two sentences from *The Tempest*—

(*a*) he is drowned
Whom thus we stray to find; and the sea mocks
Our frustrate search on land.

(*b*) And in these fits I leave them, whilst I visit
Young Ferdinand,—whom they suppose is drowned—
And his and my loved darling.

In (*a*) *whom* is objective—"we stray to find whom"—and is therefore in accordance with our grammar books. In (*b*), however, the parenthesis might be re-arranged, "who is drowned, they suppose." The pronoun is nominative, and *whom* is not in accordance with grammar. Whether our knowledge of the distinction should impel us in our talk to say "Whom did you give it to?" or "To whom did you give it?" rather than the colloquial "Who did you give it to?" is debatable.

Function of the Relative

The relative serves as a conjunction as well as a noun-substitute. This is occasionally overlooked. So comes a

[1] Our one adjective *beautiful* has, for instance, to do duty for the French adjectives, varying in accordance with the number and gender of the nouns upon which they attend, *beau, bel, belle, beaux,* and *belles.*

question from one who had encountered it in an examination paper. *"What is wrong in the following sentence? 'That is a good book and which will please you very much.'"* "Wrong" is more abusive than the sentence deserves; "unusual" is perhaps a better word. Evidently the examiner looked for a comment upon the phrase "and which." "Which" in itself acts as a conjunction: it is equivalent to "and it." The conjunction "and" is, therefore, superfluous. We must admit, however, that the construction is often seen and more often heard, especially in London; and in French it is quite regular. Here, for instance, is a sentence from *Vanity Fair*, "During their interview Pitt Crawley made a great stroke, and one which showed that, had his diplomatic career not been blighted by early neglect, he might have risen to a high rank in his profession."

The conjunction with the relative is requisite where more than one qualifying sentence comes. The "and" is quite rightly placed before "under which" in Burke's sentence: "It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil by losing all its grossness." Indeed, we may feel at times that a single adjective is a concentrated sentence so that the "and which" may be in keeping. It is so in this other sentence of Burke's: "It is a compliment due, and which I willingly pay, to those who administer our affairs." "Due" might well be "which is due." However, since modern English prefers the single relative clause without the conjunction, we had better conform. Admire Sam Weller we may; but we had better not imitate his talk.

Adverb or Adjective

As regards *slower* the King was correct. *Slower* may be an adverb as well as an adjective. "Go slow" is a quite common expression. We must remember that, though *ly* is the usual ending for an adverb, there are many adverbs without the ending. You give the command, "Hit him hard," "Work hard," and so on, where *hard* is certainly an adverb. In the passage, *faster* is certainly an adverb—"nobody walks much faster."

The fact is that many of our words are the same whether used as adverbs or as adjectives: in "He travelled by the fast train," *fast* is an adjective; in "Fast bind, safe find," *fast* is an adverb. In Wordsworth's lines—

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears

the word *deep* is an adverb; in Denham's series of antitheses *deep* is an adjective—

O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

Look at these instances, and the distinction between adverb and adjective will be clearer—

(i) He married young, and he died poor. (Both *young* and *poor* are adjectives, the sentence being an idiomatic expression of "He was young when he married, and he was poor when he died.")

(ii) He looked happy; he seemed young; he remained silent. (*Happy, young,* and *silent* are all adjectives linked with the pronoun *he* by the verbs *looked, seemed, remained.*)

(iii) They went hungry to bed. (*Hungry* is an adjective: "They were hungry when they went to bed." Notice the contrast in meaning when the adverb is used, "They looked hungrily at the dishes.")

(iv) "If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm."

(In both instances *warm* is an adjective. Contrast with such a sentence as "She was warmly clad.")

(v) "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." (*Sweet* is an adjective: the construction is similar to "The meat cuts tough" and "The weather grows cold," where both *tough* and *cold* are adjectives.)

The Easy is Usually the Correct

It is no doubt desirable to have the ability of recognizing an error in English when you come across it. This is certainly so

if you are an examination candidate. Not that there is of necessity a clash between what is easy and what is accurate. The truth is quite other. An English sentence is usually accurate when it runs easily, when it comes naturally from lip or pen. An English sentence is usually inaccurate when it limps, when it puts a constraint upon speaker or writer.

There are, however, rare occasions when you know that what is easy is not in accordance with the strict rules of grammar. Well, when you are obliged to choose, where lies your choice? Which of the two following would you choose?—*What a lot of fools there are in the world!* the easy and probably the more common, or *What a lot of fools there is in the world!* the correct and stilted. Surely the first.

Adjective or Adverb?

In the sentence, "Speak ill of none," are we to call "ill" an adverb or an adjective? It is not easy at times to discriminate between adjective and adverb. Nor, so long as we select the right word to use, does it matter greatly whether we call that word an adjective or an adverb. But we may put the difference in this way. When the verb has a full meaning without the addition, then the added word which modifies is an adverb or its equivalent. In the sentence "He cuts the meat," *cuts* gives you an idea in itself. If you add the word *badly*, you have an adverb indicating the manner of cutting. In this, however, "The meat cuts," you have no complete idea; you need the addition of a word like *tender* or *tough*. These words are adjectives. "The meat cuts tough" is equivalent to "The meat appears tough as it is cut." Contrast "She is well" (where *well* is an adjective) with "She sings well" (where *well* is an adverb).

In the sentence above, *ill* is, you will agree, an adverb. Yet in some old-fashioned expressions, *ill* is without doubt an adjective: "It is an ill wind that blows nobody good," "ill weeds grow apace," and in compounds like *ill-luck, ill-health, ill-will.* Modern usage makes *ill* usually an adverb—

> Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

Difficulty of Distinguishing

The difficulty of discriminating often arises from the fact that the one word serves as adverb and as adjective. *Hard* is an instance. In the sentence "How hard it is for women to keep counsel!" *hard* is the adjective. So it is in "Hard times, come again no more." In the sentence "We worked hard, lodged hard, and fared hard," *hard* is the adverb. It would be quite against idiom to add the usual adverb ending *-ly* and write "We worked hardly." It is true that *hardly* may be used in the sense of *scarcely*. "He hardly earned enough to keep himself." We should, however, give rise to misunderstanding if we substituted *hardly* for *hard* in such a sentence as "Brazil is hardly hit by the fall in the price of coffee." Most of us know that coffee is one main source of income to Brazil, so that without hesitation we interpret *hardly* as *severely*. One without such knowledge might easily interpret *hardly* as *scarcely*. If you say "He spent foolishly his hard-earned wages," you say what is quite without ambiguity. If you say "He spent foolishly his hardly earned wages," you do permit of two interpretations. Does the sentence imply "He squandered the wages resulting from his severe and exhausting toil," or does it imp "Easy come, easy go," "He squandered what he got witho really deserving it"? Look, too, at the words *much, fast*: i "Much cry, little wool," *much* is the adjective; in "I am muc obliged," *much* is the adverb. In "The fast train starts a ten," *fast* is the adjective; in "fast bind, safe find," *fast* is the adverb.

The Adverbial Ending -ly

We must not, that is, suppose that because *-ly* is the common way of distinguishing the adverb from the adjective—*true* becomes *truly, scarce* becomes *scarcely, pretty* becomes *prettily*, and so on—the adverb always ends in *-ly*. Compare the sentences below. In the first of each pair you have an adjective; in the second you have the corresponding adverb; "The fields look rough with hoary dew"; "He roughly brushed the idea aside"; "You know how little while we have to stay" (*little*, the adjective); "But little he'll reck if they let him sleep on In the grave where a Briton has laid him" (*little*, the adverb). Now and again, indeed, we find a sentence where it would have

been better to have the adverb form instead of the adjective. In this, for instance, "The Education Committee instituted proceedings against the parents for not sending the children to school regular," the adverb *regularly* is obviously the word needed. So in this, "It would be well to prohibit strikes if we could do so consistent with the principles of liberty," we need *consistently*, the adverb. The adjective would be appropriate if we said "Can we make the prohibition consistent with the principles of liberty?" for here *consistent* is an adjective describing *prohibition.*

Adjectives with Copulative Verbs

Consider the sentences, however, "He married young"; "It proved true"; "The snow fell thick"; "The course of true love never did run smooth." Though *young, true, thick, smooth* follow the verbs, they are adjectives, not adverbs. The verbs here, *married, proved, fell, run* have no doubt an independent meaning. But they can also be looked on as links, as alternatives to the verb *be*; "He was young when he married," "It turned out upon proof to be true"; "The snow was thick as it fell." You could distinguish between the ideas expressed in the sentences "He looked angry" and "He looked angrily around"; between "He appeared happy" and "He appeared happily placed"; between "He stood silent" and "He stood silently." Similarly in the sentences following, the word in italics is an adjective, not an adverb: "*Uneasy* lies the head that wears a crown" (*uneasily* would give a different meaning); 'Time hangs *heavy* on my hands."

The Double Comparative

We find these in our language. An indignant lady writes—

"*The following sentence was dictated to me, 'The Directors are of the opinion that they would like to pay a much less dividend this year than they paid last year. I changed 'less' to 'lesser,' and have been told that it is very bad English. Would you please tell me what is wrong with it?*" What people dictate may very well be susceptible of improvement; what people say in their speeches nearly always gains by the reporter's amendments. And every writer has cause to be grateful for being preserved by the vigilance of others from deplorable mistakes. Here,

however, the amendment is an excess of zeal. To call the amended version "very bad English" is undeserved. "Lesser" as an alternative to "smaller" is found quite often: "the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night." The double comparative is in fact often found as a contrast to "greater": "the Greater Bear and the Lesser Bear."

We find it alone, though. Tennyson, with scant courtesy and little foundation, declares, "Woman is the lesser man"; and we have names like the "lesser celandine"—

There is a Flower, the lesser Celandine,
That shrinks like many more from cold and rain,
And the first moment that the sun may shine,
Bright as the sun himself, 'tis out again.

Still, the double comparative begins now to have an old-fashioned look; and "much less" is preferable to "much lesser." We are not justified in calling "lesser" wrong; it is only that the custom of language is leaving it on one side. Indeed "less" itself is being restricted to "smaller in quantity" rather than "smaller in quality"; and in the very sentence submitted, "a much smaller dividend" would sound better. We talk about "less butter on your bread" but "a smaller loaf." Doubtless this instinctive feeling, that "less" was not quite the fitting word, prompted the change. The alternative is, however, not "lesser" but "smaller."

A Little Practice

Now get a relief from that troublesome and tedious discussion by examining closely the passage following. Study it well and then give a list of the adjectives and another list of the adverbs in it—

At length, in the spring of 1669, a great and daring innovation was attempted. It was announced that a vehicle, described as the Flying Coach, would perform the whole journey between sunrise and sunset. This spirited undertaking was solemnly considered and sanctioned by the Heads of the University, and appears to have excited the same sort of interest which is excited in our own time by the opening of a new railway. The Vice-chancellor, by a notice affixed in all

public places, prescribed the hour and place of departure. The success of the experiment was complete. At six in the morning the carriage began to move from before the ancient front of All Souls College; and at seven in the evening the adventurous gentlemen who had run the first risk were safely deposited at their inn in London. (Macaulay.)

CHAPTER IX

FURTHER POINTS OF GRAMMAR

"Each other" and "One Another"

Is there a distinction between "each other" and "one another"?

Here, for example, is the statement that "each other" is used where two are in mind—"They loved each other dearly"—but that, when more than two are in mind, "one another" is the phrase—"How these Christians love one another!" "Bear ye one another's burden."

When, however, you seek, as you should seek, confirmation of the rule by the study of good authors, you find almost as many instances where the "rule" is ignored as where it is observed. "Other" does, indeed, like *either, neither, whether*, properly refer to two. In origin all these are duals. In the House of Commons "the other place" is the House of Lords; but members habitually speak of what has happened "in another place."

So with "each other" there is no constancy. Ophelia describes the distraught Hamlet—

> with his doublet all unbraced;
> No hat upon his head; his stockings fouled,
> Ungartered, and down-gyved to his ankle;
> Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other.

where the rule is observed. But then we have *Slender* in his maudlin talk: "I will marry her, sir, at your request; but if there be no great love in the beginning, yet heaven may decrease it upon better acquaintance, when we are married and have more occasion to know one another."

Varied Functions of English Words

One reason for the uncertainties is the freedom with which English varies the work of a word. That adds to your perplexity at times when considering what expression to use: not only do many words play much the same part, but one word may—often does—play many parts. A word is a noun in one

expression. Yet we shall not invariably find that word to be a noun in other expressions. See with what great effect Shakespeare makes "medicine," nearly always a noun, into a verb—

> Not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou owd'st yesterday.

Therein consists one difficulty—one delight, too—in the English language. Those that lament the lack of consistency are quite right in saying that we play fast and loose with our language. They are perhaps quite wrong in regarding the freedom as a blemish. Does the freedom not rather add to the vigour and adaptability of English? One has for instance been supporting a quite hopeless contention with a friend. He asserts that, because "before" is a conjunction in "He came before I did," it is also a conjunction in "He came before me"; and that therefore "me" should be replaced by "I." The assumption is that we automatically supply a following verb.

Various Senses of "Before"

This contention cannot be maintained. "Before" in the second sentence is a preposition; the objective pronoun "me" is therefore the required form. Examine these three quotations—

(*a*) "Daffodils that come before the swallow dares, and take the winds of March with beauty";
(*b*) "The singers go before; the minstrels follow after";
(*c*) "With his white hair unbonneted, the stout old sheriff comes; Behind him march the halbardiers; before him sound the drums."

In (*a*) "before" is clearly a conjunction: it links together and expresses the relation between the statements "the daffodils come" and "the swallow dares to come." In (*b*) "before" is just as clearly an adverb. It gives us the notion of position; it is equivalent to the prepositional phrase "in front." So it is in the Spartan question of Old Seward, when he learnt of the death of his son, "Had he his hurts before?" "Before" is an adverb also when it signifies preceding in time, in Stephano's declaration, for instance, "When the butt is out, we will drink water; not a drop before." In (*c*) we have the two phrases

contrasted "before him" and "behind him": we can hardly doubt that "before" is here a preposition.

The Uses of "But"

Look at this word "but" as another instance. We must regard it as a preposition in such a sentence as "All but one passed the test." It is, you note, here synonymous with "except"; and the curiosity is that either of the prepositions, "but" or "except," may govern a sentence. Thus, "I should gladly buy it but that I am short of money."

It is noteworthy too that, in such phrases as "all but right," "but" as a preposition governs as adjective. Consider this, though. Where, as so often, we have two statements placed in contrast, the natural connexion is "but," which obviously is then a conjunction—

> Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high
> He sought the storms; but, for a calm unfit,
> Would steer too nigh the sands, to boast his wit.

Then we have "but" serving to give emphasis to another word: "If you but thought, you would not do it so." "But" might here be replaced by "only," and is an adverb. "But" is a negative pronoun (equivalent to "who . . . not") in such sentences as "There is no man but honours you" or in Stevenson's, "If you choose to make capital out of this accident," said he, "I am naturally helpless. No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene. Name your figure." Here "No gentleman but wishes" is a concise way of expressing "There is no gentleman who would not wish." So we have "but" as preposition, conjunction, adverb, relative pronoun. Indeed, Shakespeare, like a conqueror wresting the language to his service, actually makes *but* into a verb and a noun: "But me no buts," says the impatient king to the objector.[1]

[1] It is at times a matter of debate how we are to interpret "but." Macbeth is reluctant to go forward with the plot to kill Duncan. "If we should fail?" he asks. Lady Macbeth's words are: "We fail but screw your courage . . ." How should this be punctuated? If we write, as is usual—

> We fail!
> But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
> And we'll not fail.

then we interpret "but" as "only"; and Lady Macbeth's "We fail!" is an exclamation of incredulity.

If we write "We fail. But . . ." then we interpret "but" as, "however." Lady Macbeth's "We fail," is a grim acceptance of the consequences of failure; and "but" takes up the argument again.

Danger of Misunderstandings

The possibility of more than one interpretation has, indeed, the obvious drawback that the speaker may have one sense in his mind while the hearer has another. You may in fact now and then get a good deal of fun from wilfully misinterpreting a word or phrase. Language is a co-operation. One uses the word, the other construes it; and that other may be perverse. He is, you protest, not playing the game. We know well enough, for instance, what the writer means in "A new roof has been built on the large members' stand and refreshment rooms constructed under the small members' stand": we know that "large" and "small" refer to "stand," not to "members." Yet it gives a little amusement to link *large* and *small* with *members*, and to ask innocently whether the refreshment rooms are designed to convert "small" into "large." "Members' large stand" would have prevented the ambiguity; but then this is a rather awkward expression.

Alice is Misunderstood

Look at these delightful perversions—

"Would you—be good enough—" Alice panted out, after running a little further, "to stop a minute—just to get one's breath again?"

"I'm *good* enough," the King said, "only I'm not *strong* enough. You might as well try to stop a Bandersnatch."

Alice as you note is using "stop" as an intransitive verb equivalent to "stay," "wait"; the King wilfully misinterprets her, and uses "stop" as a transitive verb equivalent to "prevent its going away," "bring to rest." Perhaps Alice should have said "Stay a minute"; we ought really to ask "Won't you stay for dinner?" not "Stop for dinner." But this again is carrying correctness too far.

Then there is this instance of a wrong interpretation, an instance of which the orators who deplore their sad lot make great use—

"Twopence a week, and jam every other day" were the terms offered to Alice, who declined, "I don't want

you to hire *me*—and I don't care for jam." "It's very good jam," said the Queen. "Well, I don't want any *to-day*, at any rate." "You couldn't have it if you *did* want it," the Queen said. "The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday—but never jam *to-day*." "It must come sometimes to 'jam to-day,'" Alice objected. "No, it can't," said the Queen. "It's jam every *other day*; to-day isn't any *other* day, you know."

EXERCISE

This little exercise will perhaps help to show that the hearer or the reader, as well as the speaker or the writer, is called upon for exertion. The word "that" in the quotations below is (i) a relative pronoun introducing a descriptive clause, (ii) a demonstrative adjective, (iii) a conjunction almost synonymous with "because," (iv) a conjunction introducing a sentence as a name, (v) an adverb emphasizing another word, (vi) a demonstrative pronoun. Specify which. (Perhaps we should notice this: the pronunciation of the word as a conjunction differs from its pronunciation as a pronoun or a demonstrative adjective)—

(*a*) Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind
That from this nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind,
To war and arms I fly.

(*b*) I heard a thousand blended notes
While in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

(*c*) Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

(*d*) O World! O Life! O Time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more.

(*e*) To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

(*f*) I was that upset by his story.

(The answers are to be found in the Appendix.)

A Pronoun for Either Gender

You have as a Christmas present—as one of many—a Shakespeare calendar. The opening date bears the wish, a pleasant wish for New Year's Day (or any other day) from *Much Ado About Nothing*, "God send every one their heart's desire." "Is it not incorrect," asks one, "to have the plural *their* as a pronoun for the singular *one*?" Perhaps it is. Strict grammar would have "his" or "her"; but the substitution would turn a sprightly remark into a stiff formality. Or we might have "God send every one one's heart's desire." But what an awkward repetition that would present. The difficulty is, you see, that in English we have no pronoun of the common gender, no single word to stand for *he-or-she*, *his-or-her*, *him-or-her*, unless, as is suggested below, we take "one" and "one's" as suitable for the purpose. The French, too, have nothing to represent *he-or-she*; but they have "*son*" to represent *his-or-her*, and "*soi*" to represent *him-or-her*.

When, therefore, as in Shakespeare's sentence, a pronoun of the common gender is called for, we are obliged to choose between a stilted correctness and an easy, natural incorrectness. Faced with the choice, Shakespeare, as one might expect of a dramatist who knew his job thoroughly, says, by his practice, "Choose the easy and natural, even though it does give shock to a pedant here and there." This does not—you say, and rightly say—quite conclude the matter. For the dialogue of the play imitates, and ought to imitate, the language of the street and market-place; and such language stands on no ceremony. We should be disappointed if we expected strict propriety of speech in the talk that goes on around us. We are very unusual people, too, if we are never included among the rule-breakers. We shall not depart wholly from convention; we shall not imitate the taxi-driver's idiom: "I'll find it, lady, right enough. I've never bin anywhere but wot I 'aven't bin able to find it." Still, our deference to convention need not be reverential.

In writing, however, not meant "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature," are we not entitled to expect an adherence to grammar? Well, as so often, it is a matter of taste, of propriety, too. We shall find "his or her" in a formal announcement: "This ticket is not transferable, and the passenger's

luggage is carried at his or her own risk"; but not in writing that imitates talk.

Avoiding the Need to Choose

When you are conscious that the correct is also the awkward, there is always the possibility of recasting your sentence. Here, for instance, is the sentence "If every one minded their own business, the world would be happier." Probably this colloquial expression is preferable to "If every one minded his or her own business."

For—we have statutory authority in the Interpretation Act—we are to take the masculine as including the feminine. It is at times forgotten that this rule exists. For example, the original version of the lines in a well-known hymn was "Soon will you and I be lying, Each within his narrow bed." *His* must be interpreted as *his-or-her*. But the editors of the modern version, whether resenting the cool assumption of the statute or feeling that *his* cannot with propriety stand for *her*, have altered *his* to *our*; "each within our," a singular with a plural. Or, returning to our awkward sentence, you could say "If every one minded one's own business."

Custom is Mistress

In truth, custom has brought it about that many constructions once condemned as incorrect in grammar must be regarded as now quite correct. They are correct because they are customary. "None," for instance, is a telescoping of "no-one," and is in strictness singular in number. It, quite naturally, takes the singular verb in a sentence like Browning's—

> Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
> Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how.

But then the word gives us a sense of plurality; and we can find a good many instances of its use with the plural verb. In *Macbeth* we have "and none serve with him but constrained things," and in *Ivanhoe* "We shall meet again when there are none to separate us." Indeed, we shall find that modern usage prefers to treat "none" as a plural, reserving the pronouns

"no one" or "nobody" to do duty as singulars. Probably "were" would have been better than "was" in the broadcast announcement "None of the injured passengers was British": we should not hesitate to write "No children were injured."

The words *either* and *neither* when used as pronouns are probably, however, better regarded as singulars, even though there are many instances of their use as plurals: "Theresites' body is as good as Ajax,' When neither are alive" (*Cymbeline*); "Neither belong to his Saxon's company" (*Ivanhoe*). For we all ought, in our speech as well as in our writing, to aim at greater precision. It is a waste of material when, having two words that could very well be relegated to different functions, we use them as though they are interchangeable. The *Queen Mary* has speeded across the Atlantic to New York; she has speeded back to Southampton. She has accomplished both passages in less time than that taken by any other vessel. And the broadcast announcer's voice is resonant with pride as he says, "This means that she has beaten the record in either direction." Now, being properly applied, "either" means "one of a pair," either Southampton to New York or New York to Southampton. To be sure the announcer may say, "Well, what's the trouble?; you pay your money and you take your choice; if both passages are record passages, then either is." He may, too, advance Tennyson's precedent—

> On either side the river lie
> Long fields of barley and of rye.

Still, we might maintain a plea for "both," and announce the mighty achievement, "This means that she has broken the record in both directions." Or perhaps, "This means that she has broken the record in each direction."

Examination of Defects

We are unwise to spend much time in considering faults, even when we seek to know what to avoid. Far better consider the patterns to imitate. Yet a little examination of defective sentences may do good. Through that examination we become keenly aware that the awkward or the inaccurate expression of thought is bound to give much avoidable trouble to those who

are called upon to interpret our words. Becoming so aware, we make the stronger resolution to frame sentences that will be interpreted in the desired sense, and interpreted without an undue expense of mental strain.

Examine, then, a few defective sentences. Take, for instance, those presented for criticism to the candidates for appointment to the Major Establishment of the London County Council. You will find that, like all defective sentences, they fail to carry thought easily and surely.

After a good deal of wrestling, you reach the intended meaning—not a very valuable meaning it may be. You think, and quite rightly think, that the writers or the speakers might have spared you trouble. You feel inclined to advise, and you say: "You have in mind what is worth communication. Very well; communicate it in such a way as will make the least call upon your hearer's attention. Be concise if you can: there is no need to use many words when few say enough. But above all, be clear."

Here is one sentence—

Those people had done their best to degrade the tone of public life to as low a level as it has sunk to in these days when corruption with decadence and dishonesty have perverted every fibre of the body politic.

There is an outburst for you. The indignant phrases break out impetuously. Read the sentence aloud and you will feel how distressing it is. Could you possibly explain how the words in that dismal flight of monosyllables "as it has sunk to in these days" are related to one another? Could you discriminate between *corruption* and *dishonesty*, and has *decadence* any meaning at all here? The speaker probably had no clear ideas as he uttered these woolly words. But they were pompous terms of insult, and out they came. You will all have noted the plural verb *have* with the singular nominative *corruption*. On occasion, no doubt, a good writer may forget that he has used *with*. He goes on as though he had used *and*; so Shakespeare writes, "Don Alophons with other gentlemen of good esteem are journeying." But we cannot excuse ourselves by invoking defects of others. The sentence wavers, too, between a report and an attempt to express the actual words of

the speaker. Would not the thoughts be better expressed thus?—

These people have done their best to degrade the tone of public life to a level the lowest to which it has sunk, even in these days when corruption and decadence and dishonesty have perverted every fibre of the body politic.

A Collection of Solecisms

Number two is also a choice collection of awkward expressions—

Looking through his diary, it was obvious that he had never attempted to fully investigate the circumstances, instead of which he had been contented to accept data, which, under the circumstances, was evidently not averse to the theories he had conceived.

Here is the unattached participle *looking*; here is in all its splendour the split infinitive, *to fully investigate*; here is the relative *which* without anything precedent. ("You have," said the magistrate, "received a good education, instead of which you go about stealing ducks"); here is *data*, the plural looked upon as a singular; here also is a clashing of tenses; and the adjective *averse* appears instead of *adverse*. ("To be averse" is to dislike, "What female heart can gold despise? What Cat's averse to Fish?")

Far better make two sentences—

As we look through his diary, it becomes obvious to us that he never attempted to investigate the circumstances fully. Instead of doing so, he was content to accept data that were not adverse to the theories he had conceived.

Affectation Leads to Error

Number three is a deplorable result, an eloquent warning too, of talking down to people, of trying to put things in an easy, sprightly style—

Now isn't that nicer and more life-like than saying that the art of acting is becoming more and more less every day, and bids fair to disappear entirely as Mr. M. does.

We have here the adjective-of-all-work, *nicer*, to which the reader is required to attach his own meaning; we have the curious *more and more less*, instead of *smaller and smaller*; we have *does* and we are tempted to interpret it as *disappears*; and,

although the sentence is couched as a question, we have the full stop instead of the mark of interrogation. Better write the sentence in this way—

Now isn't that better, more life-like, than to say, as Mr. M. does, that the art of acting is becoming scarcer every day and bids fair to disappear entirely?

Number four exhibits an astonishing perversity in the choice of pronouns. Here it is —

Having given the present jointly to you and I, it cannot be returned to the giver without we both give our reasons for not accepting it; even though we have only had it for a day or two its value and the trouble he has gone to is enough to justify us returning it as soon as possible.

The nominative *I* appears instead of objective *me*; the objective *us* appears instead of possessive *our*. We have again the unattached participle *having*; we have the preposition *without* instead of the conjunction *unless*; and we have the singular *is* for the plural *are*; *to the giver* is implied in *returned*; and that pestilent, *only*, is again out of place. Better put the statement in this way—

The present having been given jointly to you and me, it cannot be returned unless we both state our reasons for not accepting it. Even though we have had it for a day or two only, its value and the trouble he took are enough to justify our returning it as soon as possible.

Here for your own criticism are a few more sentences capable of improvement. (1) Despite of this fact he will agree to our proposal. (Evidently there has been mental confusion between *in spite of* and *despite*.) (2) I told him to come as soon as he can. (Notice the sequence of tenses, *told* is past, *can* is present: you tell him to do what he can; but you told him to do what he could.) (3) He found that he had too little room in which to stand in. (There is a superfluous word here.) (4) When on the top of the ridge, the distant mountains could easily be seen. (Far better expand the shortened introduction and say, "When we were on the top of the ridge," or, perhaps better because more compact, "When on the top of the ridge, we could easily see the distant mountains.")

"Justify" Rather than "Correct"

Some years ago a favourite type of examination question in English was the "correct or justify" type. You will on occasion still meet it. The examiner submits sentences that at first sight conflict with a rule of grammar; perhaps they are, in fact, alien from English usage. As examinee you explain the apparent awkwardness of the first kind; you remove the real awkwardness of the second kind.

We may perhaps be allowed to say that, when you do examine sentences from writers of repute, the safer assumption is that the sentences are correct. There is a satisfactory explanation of what may at first sight appear to be an error. Not invariably, indeed; but that should be our assumption. The question arises, for instance: *Should not "like her" be "as she" in the lines?—*

"And when like her, O Saki, you shall pass
Among the Guests star-scattered on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!"

The answer is no: "like her" is what we want. In these lines that you all know, the poet likens the server of wine to the wandering moon; it is *"you, like her."* The word "like" is here the adjective and takes the objective case of the pronoun "her."

If the emphasis had been put upon the action; if it had been "the Moon shall wander as you do," then the conjunction "as" with the nominative "she" would have been in keeping. Yet it must be confessed that, now and again, you find a carelessness in writers about "as" and "like." In these lines, for instance, Herrick does not seem to mind much whether he uses the conjunction or the adjective—

We have short time to stay, as you
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or any thing.
We die

As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the Summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew
Ne'er to be found again.

Still, though you will find instances to the contrary, you should keep "as" for the conjunction and "like" for the adjective: "Quiet and rural *as* it was, the road was a high thoroughfare between the extended societies," and "Will thought he had never heard anything *like* this."

Look, again, at the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, which you know and love. You are asked to "correct or justify" the lines—

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour:
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Well, now, this appears to clash with the rule that, when two nominatives in the singular are joined and have a common verb, the verb is plural: *awaits* should therefore be *await*. But closer examination convinces you that this is not so. The nominative is *hour*, not *boast* and *pomp* and the rest. It is the inevitable hour that awaits the pomp and the beauty and the wealth.

Gray was fond of turning his sentences about, of placing the parts in unexpected positions. This turning about—this inversion—of sentences is often a quite effective device for making the sentence more telling. Burke's exclamation, "Never lighted on this orb a more delightful vision," rouses you more than the humdrum statement would, "A more delightful vision never lighted on this orb." But we employ inversion at the risk of being misinterpreted. In Latin there would be no risk; the various inflexions would sufficiently indicate subject and object. The Latin *Puer puellam amat* can be interpreted in one way only, "The boy loves the girl"; the English "The boy the girl loves" is, however, ambiguous. Now, Gray was very fond of Latin. That, maybe, is why he is fond

of inversion, though it does lead to misunderstanding. It does in his lines—

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight
And all the air a solemn stillness holds.

We do not at once realize that "Stillness holds—occupies—the air" is the intended meaning.

Justifying a Sentence

May we "justify" the oft-quoted lines from the same poem?

And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

Surely we may. The apparent awkwardness is the plural verb "teach." Should not this be "teaches"? For the pronoun "that" is a substitute for "many a holy text"; and this is in the singular number. Still, "many a" does give you the idea of plurality, and "many holy texts" would be no improvement.

Here is a problem of another kind. A student comes with the statement that he has unearthed a mistake, a glaring and elementary mistake, in Milton's *Lycidas*. Milton has, he says, forgotten that when two singular nouns are joined to form the subject, the verb should be in the plural. Milton has—

Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
Compels me to disturb your season due.

Should not, the student asks, *compels* be *compel*? But look at the lines again. Certainly the verb should be plural when two or more singular nouns constitute the subject; it is "The lion and the lizard keep the courts" (not "keeps"). But, when the two nouns form one conception, the verb is in the singular. We say "Mr. Brown, the secretary and treasurer, attends to all business" (not "attend"). "The secretary and the treasurer" are two men; "the secretary and treasurer" is one man. So in Milton's lines: the "bitter constraint" *is* "the sad occasion dear," and "compels" is the correct form of the verb.

So, too, you have, in that famous passage where Milton comments upon his blindness—

Not to me returns Day . . .
But cloud instead and ever-during dark
Surrounds me

The cloud of his blindness *is* the ever-enduring dark; and the singular verb is the fitting one. Other examples are "Accuracy and precision is a more important quality of language than abundance," "There, top-laden, and with four swift horses, rolls in the country Baron and his household" (not *roll*). "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt." (Note *doth* rather than *do*.) "Time and the hour runs through the roughest day. (*Runs* rather than *run*.)

In Milton's prose, indeed, you need not look far before you find any number of mistakes. In his vigorous polemics, Milton's thoughts were "winged with red lightning and impetuous rage." They were poured out with such haste that he could not spare time to attend to the structure of his sentences; and many of these sprawl across the page in disordered heaps. His poetry is another matter. There he weighed and considered and revised. We know he did; for such of his manuscripts as we still have show how painstaking he was.

Some Debatable Points

Look at some questions upon which doubts may well be present. Here is one. Shall we say "Mr. Smith's murder" or "The murder of Mr. Smith"? Well, the old grammar books made a distinction between what they called the subjective genitive and the objective genitive. If Mr. Smith had committed the murder the apostrophe would be used, as it would be in "Mr. Smith's house" or pen or hand. The genitive here is subjective.

If, however, Mr. Smith was not active but passive in the matter, the *of* construction would be used: in "The murder of Mr. Smith" the genitive is objective; for Mr. Smith is the victim not the aggressor. "Pride's purge," to you who know history means the summary dismissal of members of the Long Parliament by Colonel Pride; to others it might be a matter of doubt whether the purge was effected *by* Pride or *on* Pride. Nowadays the distinction between subjective and objective genitive is rarely marked; though at times it might add to clearness to mark it.

Shall we write "woman's college" or "women's college"? Logically, no doubt, "women's college" is the required phrase;

for *college* (which implies a gathering of those whose minds may be expected to clash upon and develop one another) is not consistent with *woman*. The singular *woman* is quite logical in such expressions as Rosalind's—

> Were it not better
> Because that I am more than common tall,
> That I did suit me all points like a man?
> A gallant curtle-axe upon my thigh,
> A boar-spear in my hand; and,—in my heart
> Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will,—
> We'll have a swashing and a martial outside.

"Woman's fear" is the fear that is natural to *a* woman. So, too, *women* is logical in King Lear's outburst—

> Tough me with noble anger
> And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
> Stain my man's cheeks.

The tears are the weapons that are used with devastating effect by women in general.

Here again as so often, however, we must admit that custom and logic clash; and, so far as English usage is concerned, it is logic that must give way. It may be, as an ingenious writer suggests, that the sound of the words has a bearing upon our preference for the illogical. We prefer euphony to logic. "Many," he writes, "hate the plural form *women*, as being weak and whimpering, whereas *woman* connotes for them ideas of strength and nobility. It is for this reason perhaps that *woman's building, woman's college, woman's club*, and the like have supplanted in popular speech *women's building, etc.* It is noteworthy also that in the titles of magazines and names of women's clubs the singular in most instances has displaced the more logical plural." We do, indeed, see a periodical called *Men's Wear*; but the women's periodicals are *Modern Woman, Woman's Journal*, and so on. Yet we still have the sturdily logical "University Women's Club" and "City Women's Club."

CHAPTER X

FURTHER POINTS OF GRAMMAR

Some Problems about Plurals

In truth we must be prepared to be tolerant when interpreting another's words: if we can without excessive strain penetrate to his meaning, we must ask for little more. Puzzles there are; and your solution of the puzzles that are incident to the use of language might be unacceptable to many readers. What, for instance, is the plural of "a stone's throw" as a measure of distance? Thackeray makes it "stones' throw"—"Rebecca and her husband were but a few stones' throw of the lodgings." We interpret the phrase readily enough, though obviously you cannot throw a few stones farther than you can throw one. The logical plural would be "a few stone-throws."

These names of sciences, names like *economics*, *physics*, *politics*, also are a little confusing. Ending in *s* they appear to array themselves alongside our plurals; but some of them, at all events, are often used as singulars. Here is Browning's, "You know physics, something of geology, mathematics are your pastime." A curious pastime, you think, perhaps. But the point is that "mathematics" is here looked upon as a plural noun, taking therefore the plural verb "are." But we find sentences like "Economics studies the relation of man towards wealth," or "Acoustics deals with the laws of sound," or "Ethics is the science of conduct." In these the name of the science is regarded as a singular noun. The plural, too, is found as in the passage quoted. We may, however, discern a tendency to treat the names when used to designate a branch of study as singular nouns. So Carlyle writes, "Gullible, by fit apparatus, all publics are; and gulled with the most surprising profit. But towards anything like a *statistics* of imposture little as yet has been done." "*A* statistics," you note.

What, again, is the plural of "a printer's error"? Is it "printers' errors" or "printer's errors"? Here logic would have us write "printer's errors" when one printer only is the culprit, and have us say "printers' errors" when several printers are

involved. Usually, however, "printers' errors" is found, whether one printer or many printers are interested. Or what is the plural of the painter's "still life"? Clearly, we must treat "still life" here as a new word and make the plural in the ordinary way as "still lifes."

The Dual Number

There still remain in English, words applicable to *two*. *Both*, as a pronoun invariably implies two, though as a conjunction it may be used with more than two ("Both favour, savour, hue, and qualities, Whereat the impartial gazer late did wonder, Are on the sudden wasted, thawed and done, As mountain-snow melts with the midday sun"). A number of words ending in -ther—*either*, *neither*, *whether*—are also strictly applicable to one of two. Thus we have the question, "Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" We should say "*Any* of the angles of a triangle is less than two right angles" (but often you hear *either*). Being applicable to *one* of two, these words should take a singular verb: write "He asked whether either of the ladies *was* at home" (not *were*); and write "Neither search nor labour *is* necessary" (not *are*).

Singular and Plural

Apart from these remnants of the dual number, however, there are two numbers only in English, the singular and the plural. Your grammar books will show how in general the plural is distinguished from the singular: in this note we shall deal with what may present difficulties. Quite often, when an *s* is added to signify the plural, there occurs also a change in the sound of the word: the medial *s* in *houses* has a different sound from the *s* in *house*, the *ths* in *paths* has a different sound from the *th* in *path*, the *o* in *women* (wĭmĭn) has a different sound from the *o* in *woman* (wumn). At times the change in sound is accompanied by a change in spelling: look, for instance, at the pairs *wife*, *wives*; *staff*, *staves*; *life*, *lives*. In *fife* with its plural *fifes*, however, the *f* is retained in the plural in order to avoid confusion with *fives*, the name of the game.

In the superscription of our business letters, if we should need the plural of *Sir*, the difficulty presents itself that *Sirs* by itself is no longer used: we write, therefore *Dear Sirs*, or, if we

wish to retain the formality of *Sir*, we write as our plural, *Gentlemen*. The distinguishing by a move of the apostrophe between *lady's* and *ladies'*, *prince's* and *princes'* is a recent device. It is a useful device, however, and we should help our readers by following it. Notice such plural possessives as *wives'*, *men's*, *children's*.

Notice the distinction, often unnoticed, between the singular adjectives *this* and *that*, and the plurals *these* and *those*. Write "I like this kind of chocolates" (not *these*). We must remember, however, that at times an apparent plural is used in a singular sense: "this three weeks" is "this period of three weeks," "this eleven" is "this team of eleven."

Plurals of Compound Nouns

In general when a word is composed of two or more elements, the plural sign appears on the last element only: we have *girl clerks*, *boy messengers*, *bookcases*, *coach-houses*, *apple trees*. Yet we find instances where both elements take the sign. This appears to be invariable when *man* or *woman* is the first element: contrast *men-servants* and *women-servants* with *maid servants*.

When the compound noun consists of two titles there seems to be a tendency to add the plural sign to both elements: *lords lieutenants*, *lords justices*, *knights templars*, and so on. We cannot say, however, that the rule is observed universally, *Lord Chancellors* is found with *Lords Chancellor* and *Lords Chancellors*. Nor is there uniformity where a noun consists of a title and name. Thus, the plural of *Miss Brown* is usually written *The Miss Browns*; but, where it is desirable to retain the old formality, as in lists of guests, and so on, *The Misses Brown* is still found. Perhaps the modern preference of *The Miss Browns* for *The Misses Brown* is that *Misses* may easily be confused with *Mrs.* In our commercial writings, at any rate, we write the plural of *Mr.* as *Messrs.*

When the compound word—as in *letter-patent*, *court-martial*, *knight-errant*, *heir apparent*, *attorney-general*, *account-current*—consists of a noun and its attendant adjective, the general rule is to place the plural sign with the noun. In the examples given, you will have noted that the adjective conforms to French fashion and follows its noun. The two words, though, may be so

welded together that we cannot but look upon them as a unit. Then the plural sign is added to the whole word. *Court-martials* is, for instance, the ordinary plural though in more formal writing *courts-martial* is still found. *Governor Generals* is perhaps more frequent than *Governors General.*

Which is better to write, "handfuls" or "hands full"; "bagfuls" or "bags full"? As so very often the answer must begin by "It all depends." If we use the term as a vague measure of quantity—"Add two handfuls of flour"—then the first is the better. If, however, we are using "hands" as the noun and qualifying it by the adjective "full," then the second is the correct form: "He came with his hands full of coins." But you may object, and ask, "How would you write the answer to the question that we have all, some time or other, addressed to the black sheep? 'Have you any wool?' Is it 'three bagfuls' or 'three bags full'?" There you do write "bags full," but only because you are repeating the old nursery rhyme. The old construction was noun followed by adjective and then followed by the preposition "of." So you have in the verse, "They did eat and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full." The modern way, however, when the expression is meant as a measure—"whole boxfuls of pills," "yond same cloud cannot choose but fall by pailfuls" —the noun and adjective are made into a compound noun. We write, therefore, for the *measure* "basketfuls" and "bagfuls"; we keep the noun separate when no measure is intended, "He brought a basket full of grapes."

Plurals of Phrases

A letter or word or phrase is occasionally put into the plural. The plural sign then is usually an *s* preceded by the apostrophe: "There are three *but's* in this sentence"; "He had given a number of IOU's."

It is a curiosity of English that the plural is at times unchanged from the singular. Thus "four year old," "a twelvemonth" (but in other constructions *months*), "six foot high," "Full fathom five thy father lies," "sixty mile an hour", "price six pound," "He weighs five stone," "The foot were divided into three regiments."

Lastly, note how in a good many of our nouns the meaning

of the plural has deviated in one application from the meaning of the singular. Notice the difference in meaning in these sentences: "He gave me sound advice" and "My advices are to this effect"; "Every flower enjoys the air it breathes" and "She gives herself airs"; "Give me your attention" and "He paid attentions to her"; "This is his manner of work" and "He has no manners"; "He took silk" and "She sells silks" "This is a sorry spectacle" and "You need to wear spectacles" "His writing is atrocious" and "His writings are admirable" "He has a noble bearing" and "We had better take our bearings"; "It is a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance" and "He paid the customs without demur"; "In the number of the elect" and "I lisped in numbers"; "I am a part of all that I have seen" and "A man of parts" (i.e. of talents).

Possessives

Another question concerns possessives of nouns already ending in the *s* sound: are we to add an apostrophe and another *s*? Our modern custom in regard to these troublesome possessives has given a preference to uniformity rather than to euphony. Formerly when a noun ended in an *s* sound, the possessive had the same number of syllables as the nominative. The apostrophe was added, but not another *s*: we have, for instance, "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said 'Ye men of Athens . . .'" Now the custom is to add both the apostrophe and the *s* to proper nouns: we have "Mrs. Jones's daughters"; "From being the Führer's Ambassador at Large, Herr von Ribbentrop is to be Ambassador at the Court of St. James's." We still, however, decline to increase the number of syllables when we turn common nouns like *conscience* and *goodness*, into possessives; we still say "for conscience' sake" and "for goodness' sake."

A Collective Noun

As frequent a perplexity as any is this of the collective noun: should we regard it as a singular or as a plural? An Education Minister says, "There is a quite respectable army of teachers abroad." There is more than one difficulty in his statement. Is *respectable* to be taken in a quantitative or in a qualitative

sense; does it apply to the size of the army or to the character of its constituents? Both, we may perhaps be allowed to assume. And should the verb be *is* or *are*? Probably, seeing that he was regarding the whole mighty array of teachers, his verb is appropriate; and, since *army* is singular, having as its plural *armies*, the singular verb is logically correct.

But now look at these two sentences of Matthew Arnold's. They come from his *Essays in Criticism*—

In our race are thousands of readers, presently there will be millions, who know not a word of Greek or Latin, and will never learn these languages. If this host of readers are ever to gain any sense of the power and charm of the great poets of antiquity, their way to gain it is not through translations of the ancients but through the original power of Milton, who has the like power and charm, because he has the like great style.

Host is a collective noun. Should it be singular or plural? Perhaps it is immaterial which; the question "Are the police after you?" may quite well be also "Is the police after you?" Here, too, is Professor Trevelyan's sentence, "A whole chain of universities, from Cracow to St. Andrews, were established between 1340 and 1410." *Chain* is in logic singular; and the article *a* treats it as a singular. The collective idea, however, the many included in the one, justifies the plural *were*. But we ought to be consistent in the one sentence. We are not consistent if we say "During their four years in office the Government has committed many blunders"; for *their* is plural, *has* is singular. In the sentence considered, too, *this host* treats the noun as a singular, *are* treats it as a plural. It would be better, perhaps, to write "this host is" and to change "their" to "the," or to write "the host are."

The collective noun denotes a gathering of many into a particular group: *a library* is *a gathering together of books, a forest* is *a gathering together of trees, a crew* is *a gathering together of sailors*. We have the single thing, the unit, made up of many. But, though in strict grammar the name of the group is a singular, the speaker or the writer may have the idea of the constituent individuals prominent in his mind. He thinks of them as many, not as one. He slides, therefore, into the plural

when he uses the verb or the pronoun. In modern English the plural occurs even more frequently than the logical singular. "The Committee are agreed upon their findings" (not *is* or *its*). Nor is this tendency confined to English: the Frenchman will say *la plupart disent.* We should note, however, that we never find the plural with collectives like *plenty* or *library* or *train*; you have "A plenty of candles lights up this chapel, and this scene of age and youth, and early memories and pompous death" (never *light*).

We find the plural only with collectives denoting living beings. Examine a few instances. Here are some where the noun is regarded, as in strict logic it should be, as singular: "The nation holds it no sin to tarre them on to controversy" was the account given to Hamlet of the contest between the child-players and the adults; "Is all your family within?" was the question put to Desdemona's father. "The relieved guard strolled round the main bastion on its way to the swimming-bath" (*guard* and *its*, not *their*). Here are instances of what we more often find in modern English, the collective regarded as a plural: "The Senate, Coriolanus, are well pleased to make thee Consul" (senate *are*, not *is*); "The vast majority had never known a time when Queen Victoria had not been reigning over them" (*majority* and *them*, not *it*); "All the jungle fear Bagheera" (all *fear*, not *fears*). And here are two consecutive sentences—they are from Macaulay's *Essay on Clive*—where one collective noun, *mob*, has the singular verb *was*, and a second, *band*, has the plural *were*: "No mob attacked by regular soldiers was ever more completely routed. The little band of Frenchmen, who alone ventured to confront the English, were swept down the stream of fugitives."

Plural Regarded as Singular

The collective noun is in strict logic singular; but it may be looked upon as a plural. The converse is the logical plural looked upon as a singular: we have "The eight has been awarded blues," "He hit a six and a four," "Two is company, three is none," "O that we now had here, But one ten thousand of those men in England, That do no work this day." The plural is conceived of as a unity: it is *a* boat crew, *a* hit counting six, *a* group of two. At times we have become so accustomed to

look upon the unity that the essential plurality hardly comes to mind: we say "a fortnight," and rarely think of "fourteen nights"; we say "The United States is the chief factor to be considered." Here lies the explanation of the idiom seen in such expressions as "Twice two makes four" (not *make*); "Three times six makes eighteen." Those who use the singular verb look upon *two* or *six* as a single group: "This group thrice repeated makes eighteen." Those who prefer *make*—and apparently there is no great difference between the numbers who use *makes* and those who use *make*—regard *two* or *six* as a plural. So, also, the large branched candlestick is the Latin *candelabrum*, and its proper plural is *candelabra*. Long ago it would have caused a shudder to see "candelabra" used as a singular noun. But this was before Latin had fallen to its low estate among us. It is not so now. We must resign ourselves to seeing the double plural "candelabras." And now *The Times*, usually scrupulous about such things, presents us with a like perversion. *Insignia*, is properly a plural denoting the badges, the distinguishing marks, of an honour. The announcement was, however, "The Insignia was conferred upon . . ." The various signs were, we must assume, looked upon as a single collection. In the phrase familiar in our examination papers we may "justify" the word as a collective noun. As such it may take the singular verb. "Insignia" may take its place alongside "nation" (a collection of people); with "library" (a collection of books); with "government" (a collection of rulers). "The government is resolved to go forward with the scheme"; and the like. We should notice also that the singular frequently comes where strict grammar calls for the plural. In the verse "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity," some would have "abide." In Portia's submission "My self and what is mine, to you and yours Is now converted," the strict grammar would have "are" for "is."

Moreover, just as two subjects joined by *and* are in logic one idea and are, quite naturally, used with a singular, two subjects with *or* are in logic plural and take a plural verb. "Snuff or the fan supply each pause of chat" (not *supplies*), writes Pope. It seems absurd to call such an idiom an error.

We have also in speech—in writing, too, on occasion—an

attraction of the verb to the number of that part of the subject nearest to it: "There are eleven days' journey from Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea." Strict grammar would have, "There is a journey." The plural "days" has, however, pulled the verb also into the plural. You have a similar attraction in Shakespeare's song, "Sigh, no more, ladies": the burden of the song is—

> The fraud of men were ever so
> Since summer first was leavy.

"The fraud of men" is equivalent to "fraudulent men."

Which of the following expressions is the correct one: "One hundred tons of scrap material has been ordered" or "One hundred tons of scrap material have been ordered"? The singular verb "has" is probably to be preferred to the plural "have." For "one hundred tons" is only an apparent plural, not a real one. We must understand it as "a quantity amounting to one hundred tons." The plurality is looked upon as a unity. Suppose you were asked "How many yards shall I want for the dress?" you would answer something like, "Oh, three yards is enough." Wouldn't "are" sound awkward? This unification of plurals is a peculiarity of English; but it is an idiom we often hear. The bounteous goddess in *The Tempest* calls on her companions to "Bless this twain, that they may prosperous be." The singular "this" accompanies "twain," not the plural "these." So, too, you have, "What is six winters? they are quickly gone," the not very convincing comfort offered to the banished Bolingbroke. You would say "Fifteen shillings a week is not much of a wage." In all these instances the plural idea is looked upon as a single whole, just as we have "The United States gives its powerful aid to the cause of peace."

Which is the better: "The Engineering Department has availed itself of this information," or "The Engineering Department have availed themselves of this information"? This companion question gives rise to much the same considerations. Here also you have, grouped into a unity under the comprehensive term "Engineering Department," a number of workers co-ordinating their efforts so that the work of the department shall be a great success. As such a co-operation, many hands working to the one result, the department is a unity: "Engineering Department" is a collective noun, and the first of the alter-

natives is the better. The collective noun itself can, you note, have a plural. We could say "The Engineering Departments of the two firms have been studying the problems." It is only when the mind rests upon the individuals making up the collection that a plural is appropriate; and, clearly, that is not so here. We should very likely say "The Engineering Department have all left the works"; for we should then be thinking of the separate individuals making up the department. A good example is in Milton's description of the coming of evening. He uses "beast" as a collective noun to include the whole beast-creation, and "bird" to include the whole bird-creation. But he thinks of both beasts and birds as going off separately to rest. Therefore he uses the plural—

> Now came still Evening on, and Twilight grey
> Had in her sober livery all things clad;
> Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
> They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
> Were slunk: all, but the wakeful nightingale.

Notice *beast* with *they* and *their*; and *bird* with *these* and *their*.

A Double Possessive

There is apparently a double possessive in such a sentence as "He's always poking that nose of his into other people's business" and in the opening sentence of *Antony and Cleopatra*, "Nay, but this dotage of our general's O'erflows the measure." What is the explanation? The explanation of an idiom is usually not very satisfactory; for the idiom is a rebel against grammar and logic. It is often a very attractive peculiarity of the language, yet it may distress one here and there in attempting to justify it.

This particular idiom need not, though. It is both well authorized and it is useful in enabling us to distinguish between allied ideas. The phrase "an impartial judgment of him" would signify a judgment about him; the phrase "an impartial judgment of his" would signify a judgment by him. "a friend of Tom's" would be one whom Tom liked; "a friend of Tom" would be one who liked Tom, whether or not Tom felt friendliness in return. "A picture of the king" is his likeness; "a

picture of the king's" is one belonging to him. And we should note that the picture may be the only one he has.

The popular explanation of the construction, that it is an ellipsis for "a picture of the king's pictures," that is, one from among several pictures, is hardly correct. The explanation might apply to such a phrase as "a play of Shakespeare's"; it could hardly apply to "that tongue of his" ("Ay! and that tongue of his that bade the Romans mark him and write his speeches in their books. Alas! it cried 'Give me some drink Titinius'"). *Of* cannot be here used as denoting a part; for he has but one tongue. A similar comment applies to "of thine" in Milton's lines—

> It was that fatal and perfidious bark . . .
> That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Nor can the explanation apply to a phrase like "an enemy of ours." This certainly cannot be construed "an enemy of our enemies"; *he* presumably would be a friend of ours. The fact is that *of* in such phrases introduces a parallel expression, a noun or pronoun in apposition. "The Island of Cyprus" is "The Island, Cyprus" or "The Island, which is Cyprus." "The City of York" is "The City, named York." "This son of mine" is an effective way of saying "This, my son."

It is quite true that the possessive is often used in such a way as to call for our supplying a noun. The sheriff comes in search of Falstaff and explains to the Prince, "One of them is well known, my gracious lord, A gross fat man"; and the comment is "This oily rascal is known as well as Paul's." Clearly, we are to supply *church* or *cathedral*. So "The Australians came to Lord's with high hopes" is much more natural without *cricket-ground*; "Meet me forthwith at the notary's" is the more natural expression, "at the notary's office" the less natural. Indeed, at times we even use the possessive without the possessive sign and ask that it should be expanded. Strictly we should say "I ought to go to the dentist's" (that is *to his operating room*). But *sts* is a difficult combination of letters to pronounce; and we content ourselves with "I ought to go to the dentist."

Of as a preposition does, indeed, indicate ever so many relations. It may indicate a point of time—"of late," for

instance ("I have of late lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercise"). It denotes separation from: "He stripped the tree of fruit." (This is the curious idiom for "He stripped fruit from the tree.") *Of* denotes origin in "Swift was born of English parents"; it denotes a part in sentences like "Of sixty magistrates only seven had given favourable answers"; it denotes the author or agent in expressions like "It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf then" or "The Iliad of Homer." As the opening words of *Paradise Lost* "of" indicates the subject-matter—

> Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree.

EXERCISE

You will perhaps be interested in assigning its significance to *of* in these sentences:

(*a*) Sir Andrew: "Will you make an ass o' me?"
(*b*) He is beloved of all that behold him.
(*c*) I saw him hold Lord Percy at the point,
With lustier maintenance than I did look for
Of such an ungrown warrior.
(*d*) There was one child of the marriage.
(*e*) They sighted land within a week of sailing.

(Suggested answers are in the Appendix.)

The Little Word "A"

Is there any difference between "marriage" and "a marriage"? A good deal. When the Wills Act was passed in 1837 it was considered that, since the marriage of a man or woman created new obligations, new rights and duties, a will made before the marriage no longer expressed the intentions of the testator. It was, therefore, enacted, by Section 18 of the Wills Act, that the marriage of a testator automatically revokes all previous wills and codicils. Yet it might well be that a man, or a woman, actually made the will because he, or she, was about to be married; the automatic revocation was just the reverse of the real intention. This possible hardship has been removed by the Law of Property Act, 1925. This Act, in Section 177, declares that "a will expressed to be made in contemplation of a marriage shall not be revoked by the solemnization of the marriage."

But it has now been laid down by the Probate Judge (in *Sallis* v. *Jones*, 1936), that the section must be strictly interpreted. It is not enough, in order to preserve a will from automatic revocation, to make a reference to "marriage." The will, of which the Judge refused to admit the probate, ended with the statement, "And I hereby declare that this will is made in contemplation of marriage." The testator did, in fact, marry four months after he had executed the will. But, apparently, the lady he married had been only one of several possible wives when the testator made his will. He had contemplated marriage; but with which lady was at the moment in the lap of Fate. The man or the woman contemplated in the Act must be definite, not one of a class. In Pilate's question "What is truth?" the word "truth" has a meaning other than the meaning of "a truth" in such a sentence as "He told me a home truth." So, too, "marriage" is distinct from "a marriage": the first is the abstract institution; the second is the concrete act.

"A" or "An"?

If the choice between "an unit automatic exchange" and "a unit automatic exchange" presents itself, you had better choose the second. The rule is this: *a* is replaced by *an* before a vowel *sound*—"An oak is more hardy than a beech." This includes words beginning with a silent *h*. ("But," said Mr. Squeers, "when the *h* is sounded, the *a* only is to be used, as a 'and, a 'art, a 'ighway.") The sound, you note, may vary though the same letter represents it: we say "an urn" but "a unique specimen"; we say "an hour" but "a house," we say "an unusual occurrence," but "a usual thing" (for *usual* begins with a *y* sound). Better write "a usurer" and "a unit" even though Ruskin writes, "I know myself to be an usurer as long as I take any interest on any money" and Browning writes—

> That low man goes on adding one to one,
> His hundred's soon hit:
> This high man, aiming at a million,
> Misses an unit.

The doubt about *a* or *an* results from the fact that in their

speech people play all manner of pranks with their language. The *n* was originally always present. It was often ignored when another consonant sound followed it: *an year* became *a year*. We have frequent instances where forms with and without *n* survive, *my* and *mine*, *eve* and *even*, *maid* and *maiden*. Moreover, we have curious results of this playing with *n*. *Adder*, *apron*, *umpire*, have all lost an initial *n*: they were once *a nadder*, *a naperon*, *a nompere*. *Newt* and *nickname*, on the other hand, have captured from the preceding *an* the lost *n*: the words were *an ewt*, *an ekename*. So you may hear one describing Cleopatra's Needle as "a old ainshent noblyish"; and so, too, you have the pet names *Nan* for "mine Ann," *Ned* for "mine Edward," and *Nell* for "mine Ellen." Nowadays the choice between *a* and *an* is fixed in the rule: write *an* before words beginning with a vowel sound, including such as begin with a silent *h*. And so we use *a* in *a history*, *a ewe*, *a European*, *a unique vase*, but *an* in *an honour*, *an urn*, *an hour*.

The Relative to Use

Here is a difficulty: we often refer to things other than persons as *he* or *she*; is *who* or *which* the appropriate relative pronoun? This question is not an easy one to answer; but the main points about it are clear. We use *who* when the antecedent is a human being; we use *which* when the antecedent is the name of a creature or a thing not a human being. We use *that* for either *who* or *which* when the relative clause is meant to define.

This rule is subject to some quite easily understandable exceptions. When we wish, for instance in strongly emotional prose or verse, to personify a thing—when we wish to endow that thing with human qualities—we use *who* as the relative. Thus Wordsworth in his well-known Ode invokes Duty in the words—

> Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!
> O Duty! if that name thou love,
> Who art a light to guide, a rod
> To check the erring, and reprove.

As a rule, though, even though the personal pronoun should

be *he* or *she*, the relative, when the antecedent is not the name of a human being, is *which* (or *that*). So, to take another example from Wordsworth, we have his fine sonnet "On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic." In it, when he uses the personal pronoun instead of the noun *Venice*, it is *she* or *her*—

Once did she hold the gorgeous East in fee
And was the safeguard of the West; the worth
Of Venice did not fall beneath her birth.

The relative which he uses at the end of the sonnet, however, is *which*—

Men are we and must grieve when even the shade
Of that which once was great has passed away.

For the relative *who* in the nominative, we have *whom* in the objective, and *whose* in the possessive. Look at the objective relative in this sentence: "On our first day out, I asked leave to speak for myself, whom I regarded as the captain of a great ship, which might carry persons of much greater importance than the commander who sits at the head of his cabin table." Here *myself* (that is Thackeray, writing as the first editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*) is the antecedent to *whom*, governed in the objective case by the transitive verb *regarded*. We have also the nominative relative *who*, with its antecedent *commander* and its verb *sits*. Now look at the possessive relative in this sentence: "There might have been seen, at a certain hour, somebody in a certain cloak and bonnet, whose image has flickered in that pool." Here *somebody* is the antecedent, and *whose* is the possessive relative belonging to it. You notice that *which* has, unlike *who*, no separate form for the objective. In that first Thackeray sentence, *which* is the nominative relative with its antecedent *ship* and its verb *carry*. In this sentence it is the objective relative, "governed," we say, by the preposition *from*: "The kindly Christmas tree, from which I trust every gentle reader has pulled a bonbon or two, is yet all aflame whilst I am writing, and sparkles with the sweet fruits of its season." Yet we do at times find *whose* as the possessive when the antecedent is not a human being. "The sun, whose rays are all ablaze with ever-living glory, Does not deny his majesty," and "Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof That they were born for immortality."

The Defining Relative

In former times writers would use *that* for the relative used in a defining clause ("Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise") and *who* or *which* for the relative in a non-defining clause ("I met a traveller from an antique land, who said, 'Two vast and trunkless legs of stone stand in the desert'"). The *that* clause supplies the answer to the question: "Which particular spur do you mean?" The *who* clause continues the narrative: "I met a traveller *and he* said." A belated struggler here and there still strives to keep up the distinction.

For the most part, however, the distinction is ignored. You still retain the defining relative in old sayings like "This is the house that Jack built." *Which* is now used whether we wish to define or to add a fresh fact. And look at these sentences from *The Times* article on "Law and the Submarine." The article is a commentary upon the signing, by the United States, France, Italy, Japan, and the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, of an agreement to accept certain rules about submarine warfare. "The present signatories have been in full agreement on the subject for twenty years, and so far as is known there is no Power to-day which does not share their agreement." (*Which* introduces a defining clause, and would once have been *that*.) "The delay has been due solely to endeavours to obtain assent to other proposals, which were still controversial." (*Which* introduces a continuative clause.) "If the Washington Treaty of 1922, which embodied these agreements, had consisted solely of these rules, it would long ere now have been accepted by the rest of the world." (The clause in parenthesis is again a continuative, not a defining clause.) "But, as it contained also certain provisions which did not then command general acceptance, it never came into force even between its original signatories." (*Which* defines.) "There is no obstacle to its general acceptance by all maritime powers, which is to be invited forthwith." (*Which = and this acceptance:* the clause is continuative.) One other sentence may not leave you unduly exhausted: "The debate next week will give full scope to those who suspect that re-armament still lacks organization and dispatch." (*Who suspect* is here also a defining clause.)

A Curiosity

It is curious to note that R. L. Stevenson often has *who* or *which* where the rule would have *that*, and *that* where the rule would have *who* or *which*.

> Mr. Utterson the lawyer was a man of a rugged countenance, that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary, and yet somehow lovable. At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eye; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face, but more often and loudly in the acts of his life.

(The rule of the grammar books would transpose *that* and *which*.) So, too, in the sentence, "His friends were those of his own blood, or those whom he had known the longest." The objective relative *whom* would formerly have been *that*.

A Hopeless Attempt

The attempt to maintain the distinction is maybe a lost cause. Yet it added to clearness, perhaps to ease. But so it is. The speaker or the writer that—or shall we say who?—tries to maintain the distinction is like Mrs. Partington of Sidmouth. She, excellent woman, when a great storm drove the Atlantic waves into her house, was seen with mop and broom vigorously sweeping the water back. But the Atlantic beat her. In language, too, when a new custom becomes adopted, we make ourselves a little ridiculous in asserting that the old custom is the better.

The thing that matters is "How do people express this thought?" not "How did people express it?" nor even "How should people express it?" And a diligent search through half a dozen leading articles of *The Times*, which we may take as providing good instances of existing usage, has failed to unearth a single defining *that*. The distinction that we must notice now is rather between *who* and *which* as defining relatives, and *who* and *which* as continuative relatives; and the only difference in the writing of them is that the defining relative *is not* and the

non-defining relative *is* separated from its antecedent by a comma. Consider these examples: they are from *Man and Superman*. (*a*) "The young men will scorn me as one who has sold out: to the women I, who have always been an enigma and a possibility, shall be merely somebody else's property." (The first *who* is defining, the second *who* non-defining.) (*b*) "I am well aware that the ordinary man—even the ordinary brigand, who can scarcely be called an ordinary man—is not a philosopher." (*Who* introduces an afterthought, a parenthesis, and is a non-defining relative.) (*c*) "We intercept that wealth. We restore it to circulation among the class that produced it and that chiefly needs it—the working class." (Which "class"? *that* produces and *that* needs. The relatives are defining.)

Each sentence below contains a relative pronoun. Classify the relatives as defining and non-defining—

(*a*) A movement which is confined to philosophers and honest men can never exercise any real political influence: there are too few of them.

[Ask yourself whether, if the clause "which is confined . . . men" were absent, you would know what movement is meant. Your answer No! would indicate that the relative is a defining one.]

(*b*) She recommended me to marry an accursed barmaid named Rebecca-Lazarus, whom I loathed.

[Ask yourself whether "whom" introduces a new fact. Your answer Yes! would indicate that the relative is a non-defining one.]

(*c*) Let me read you some lines that I have written about her myself.

(*d*) I ran my sword through an old man who was trying to run his through me.

(*e*) He who can does. He who cannot teaches.

(*f*) There's a young American gentleman, who is driving Mr. Robinson down.

(*g*) The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown,
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth when sick for home.
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in fairy land forlorn.

The Pronoun "I"

There is sometimes a reluctance to use the first personal pronoun in the singular. Instead of "I" and "me" and "my" there are thinly veiled disguises. The question is put, "Why do newspapers object to the use of the first personal pronoun I?" Most of our great daily papers do in fact show a reluctance to use "I," and they avoid it by means of various devices. There is the "editorial we"; the leader-writer is anonymous and writes as a representative of those upholding the policy of the paper. And, where there is clearly an individual impression to be recorded, still the "I" must be disguised. *The Times* sends special correspondents to gather news about the Spanish War. We may be pretty certain that "This morning I was allowed to visit the front-line trenches" was the message received. But this is too personal, and it is edited. Or it may be that the correspondent adopts the style of the paper, and we read "This morning your special correspondent was allowed to visit the front-line trenches." For the single letter "I" you have the twenty-four letter circumlocution, "your special correspondent." So greatly is the anonymity of the newspaper contributor protected that, well-known as he may be, a veil must cover his face. Egotism is not for him. He must be impersonal.

But you can understand the unwillingness to obtrude oneself and one's own opinion. When you yourself write an essay, you hesitate to use *I* and *me* and *mine*. In conversation, and in the letter that is a substitute for conversation, you use these first personal pronouns quite freely; when you write for the world at large, diffidence comes upon you. Modesty forbids the rather pompous "I." In the days when the newspapers were in fact news-letters, the "I" was natural; the news-letter was a communication between intimates. At any rate, that was the assumption. It is not so now. The newspaper has grown; its audience has grown even more; the idea of intimate talk is no longer possible.

This is how *The Times* in its birthday number explained the matter—

The homely style of direct confidential address to the reader, in an appeal to his unfailing sense of justice and excellent reasonableness, has gone the way of many polite conventions. It served its

good purpose in the days when the powerful but abstract referendary called Public Opinion was in the process of being made. He is fully developed now. The present impersonal style of writing for his information and entertainment is not a mode of stylistic choice, but is imposed by his authority as the court of final appeal, at once too large and too instructed to be called "gentle," too important to be flattered, too wise to be deceived for long.

It is this modesty that leads at times to a person's speaking of himself in the third person. The trouble is that the first person is inclined to break in. Is anything wrong with this sentence? —"*Nowadays one is inclined to feel that people have taken the 'nots' out of the Commandments and put them into the Creed; but then one remembers that that was said by a very witty lady who died many years before I was born.*" Nothing serious; it is only that the speaker—it was uttered in a broadcast address by Lord Grey—forgot, when he spoke the second part of the sentence, how he had built up the first part. He used the impersonal "one" in the first part; he finishes the sentence on the personal note "I." Perhaps it would have been better to have had the "I" throughout; Lord Grey, at any rate, need not have felt any diffidence about putting forward his personal opinions.

"One" is an excellent pronoun to use; it is the only word, in such a sentence as "One of the prisoners escaped." It is also good in such a sentence as "I felt as one who had been walking below the sea, and treading amidst the bones of shipwrecks." The thing to avoid is a mixture of the personal and the impersonal. Consider this, for instance, "When we see these gifts squandered one is shocked." The very sound of the sentence tells us that we should write either "When we see these gifts squandered we are shocked" or "When one sees these gifts squandered one is shocked." An instance, you note, of similar inconsistency is in what Cassius says of himself. He begins on the third person, he ends on the first person—

> Cassius is aweary of the world;
> Hated by one he loves; braved by his brother;
> Checked like a bondman; all his faults observed,
> Set in a note-book, learned and conned by rote,
> To cast into my teeth.—*Julius Cæsar*, Act IV, S. 3

CHAPTER XI

FURTHER POINTS OF GRAMMAR

The "Shall" and "Will" Difficulty

THE many, dismayed by the multiplicity of rules about *shall* and *will*, may comfort themselves by saying that the "rules" are broken by all sorts of people, good speakers and good writers, too. One learned professor speaks of the difficulty as "the great bugaboo of the English language." A clever young Scotsman has just been appointed by the editor of a great newspaper as a leader writer. The Scotsman, as his manner is, receives the news with apparent equanimity; and the editor proceeds: "By the way, you are Scotch, I think." "Yes,' said Rob. "I only asked," the editor explained, "because of the shall and will difficulty. Have you got over that yet?" "No," Rob said sadly, "and never will." "I shall warn the proof-readers to be on the alert," Mr. Rowbottom said, laughing, though Rob did not see what at.

You doubtless see what the editor was laughing at: the Londoner would have said, "No; and I never shall"; "Meanwhile, I know where difficulties lie I could not, cannot solve, nor ever shall." The Londoner uses *shall* and *should* for the first person of the future; he uses *will* and *would* for the second and third persons. But this general rule does not conclude the matter. He may wish to express certainty or compulsion or obligation in the second and third person. Then he uses *shall* and *should*. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"; "Sit down and all shall happen as you wish"; "He shall come whatever his resistance." The Londoner may wish to express determination. Then he uses *will* for the first person. Thus here are *will* with the first person and *shall* with the third: "I will see her," said Arthur. "I'll ask her to marry me once more. I *will*. No one shall prevent me."

Other modifications there are. We must remember that *will* and *would* occasionally retain their early sense of *wish*. Falstaff says, "I'll no pullet-sperm in my brewage." And Pendennis says, "I told Florac that we should remain, if he willed it for

a little longer." Notice, too, the distinction between *will* and *shall* in this talk of the ladies—

"Come, lay aside your stitchery; I must have you play the idle huswife with me this afternoon."
"No, good madam; I will not out of doors."
"Not out of doors!"
"She shall, she shall."
"Indeed no, by your patience. I'll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars."

And see how Master Robert Shallow, intent on retaining his very undesirable guest, rings the changes on *will* and *shall*—

"By cock and pie, sir, you shall not away to-night."
"You must excuse me," says Falstaff.
"I will not excuse you; you shall not be excused; excuses shall not be admitted; there is no excuse shall serve; you shall not be excused."

The distinction between *should* and *would* follows closely the distinction between *shall* and *will*.

I *should* is the expression of the conditional mood of the verb—

I *should* be in time if I took a taxi;

I *would* adds to I *should* the idea of wish or intention—

I *would* injure no man, and (so I) *should* provoke no resentment.

I *would* injure no man,
i.e. under those conditions I *shall wish* to injure no man;
I *should* provoke,
i.e. under those conditions I shall provoke no resentment.

So in Browning's lines: "If you would sit thus by me every night, I should work better, do you comprehend?"

Consider these: "If we would know science, we must learn to observe" (would = wish to). "He said that he would go." Here you have the reported form of "He said, 'I will go.'" "He said that he should go." Here you have the reported form of "He said, 'I shall go.'"

"I would have you think me great enough to grant me a boon" (would = should like); "Pistol is below and would

speak with you" (would = wishes to). And examine this comment from one who is distressed at the growing tendency to neglect the distinction—

"In particular I would protest against the common mistake that so many, even the announcers of the B.B.C., frequently make of saying 'I would like to say,' when they mean 'I would say' or 'I should like to say.' 'I would' means 'I should like.' 'I would like to say' means, therefore, 'I should like to like to say' or 'I wish I liked saying,' which is clearly not what they would say, and therefore not what they *should* say, as they obviously enjoy having their say. Quite recently a distinguished critic from Ireland, in taking us English men to task for our mispronunciation of our language, asked, 'Would we understand Shakespeare if we had a record of his voice and could produce it in a gramophone?' Of course we would if we could; but the question is whether we should."

An Illustrative Paragraph

You will enjoy reading this passage. It comes from Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*—

(Catherine says): "Now I shall never be ashamed of liking *Udolpho* myself. But I really thought before, young men despised novels amazingly."

(Henry says: for even when Jane Austen wrote there were those who protested against perversions of language):

"It is *amazingly*; it may well suggest *amazement* if they do. I shall soon leave you far behind."

(There is the simple future and the *shall* for the I. Now note the *will*'s and *shall*'s in the passage.)

"Do you know, there are two odious young men who have been staring at me this half hour. They really put me quite out of countenance. Let us go and look at the arrivals. They will hardly follow us there."

Away they walked to the book; and, while Isabella examined the names, it was Catherine's employment to watch the proceedings of these alarming young men.

"They are not coming this way, are they? I hope they are not so impertinent as to follow us. Pray let me know if they are coming. I am determined I will not look up."

In a few moments Catherine, with unaffected

pleasure, assured her that she need be no longer uneasy, as the gentlemen had just left the Pump-room.

"And which way are they gone?" said Isabella, turning hastily round. "One was a very good-looking young man."

"They went towards the churchyard."

"Well, I am amazingly glad I have got rid of them. And now, what say you to going to Edgar Buildings with me, and looking at my new hat? You said you should like to see it."

Catherine readily agreed. "Only," she added, "perhaps we may overtake the two young men."

"Oh! never mind that. If we make haste, we shall pass by them presently, and I am dying to show you my hat."

"But if we only wait a few minutes, there will be no danger of our seeing them at all."

"I shall not pay them any such compliment, I assure you. I have no motion of treating men with such respect. *That* is the way to spoil them."

(Catherine had said, "I should like"; Isabella reports it retaining the *should*. Compare the sentence: "Let no one feel confident that he should have escaped the delusion if he had lived at the time when it prevailed.")

Customs Change

When the teacher of English fights, as he or she so often must, against a growing habit of speech, then the teacher fights a losing battle. The teacher is even now engaged in a hopeless struggle against the American invasion of English. Some of these American invaders have in so short a time become so familiar that none now regards them as intruders. In 1931, for instance, all sorts of cuttings down of expenses were practised; and the expressive noun "cut" came to be used. To-day we all know both the thing and its new meaning. A veteran in the House of Commons declares that: "Every time the House meets we hear things that would have shocked and baffled Mr. Gladstone. Yesterday, Mr. Baldwin, one of the few authorities on the King's English in the House, used in his speech the

expressions *backslider*, *best-seller*, and *party dog-fight*. I have heard him use *to deliver the goods*. The House is becoming Americanized. I have heard *whoopee* and *debunked* (to clear away the bunkum that is) in the debating chamber, and *oh, yeah*! and *you're telling me*! in the Lobby. *To pass the buck* is a well-known House expression." Who nowadays calls the police on motor-cycles "mobile police"? A bishop was charged with dangerous driving. It was an entertainment for the magistrates, though perhaps not for the bishop, when a policeman testified that, being overhauled, the bishop inquired "Are you a speed-cop?" Certainly the protest was that "I am not sufficiently colloquial to have used it." Nevertheless the magistrates fined him and endorsed his licence. And we are all quite familiar with such verbs as *to make good, to feature, to fall for*, and such names as a *key-man*, a *close call*, a *fan*, a *hold-up*, a *joy-ride*. The grammar teacher must, too, bear with equanimity neglect of the distinction between *shall* and *will* to which he adheres.

The Changing Usage

It is little to the point to invoke the giants of old, Shakespeare and Milton and all the rest, as allies. General usage wins: and what was once a rule of speech lingers only in the grammar books. Still, it is well to examine the old rules if only to understand more clearly the treasures we have in our literature. Very well; let us have yet another struggle with *shall* and *will* as auxiliaries of the future tense.

Consider a few sentences from Stevenson who, though not to the manner born, carefully observed the distinction between the auxiliaries, "Before I go, I shall introduce myself," said the midnight visitor to Will o' the Mill; and a little later, "I will have nobody positive by myself, not one." There is a good example of the rule: in the first sentence where the visitor is making a simple statement of the future he uses *shall*. This is in acordance with the rule: the future tense auxiliary is *shall* for the first person, *will* (*wilt*) for the second and third. Thus, "I shall be immensely happy as his wife, and he will be immensely happy as my husband." In the second Stevenson sentence, however, "I will" expresses resolution. So you have it in Markheim's expression: "Markheim could not refrain

from smiling, with a kind of bitter triumph. 'No,' said he, 'I will take nothing at your hands; if I were dying of thirst, and it was your hand that put the pitcher to my lips, I should find the courage to refuse. I will do nothing to commit myself to evil.'" *Will* is here more than the future; you are required to read into it "Of that you may be quite certain."

Note the distinction between the simple statement, "I shall see them to-morrow, when they will tell me the facts," and the implied threat, "I will see them to-morrow, when they shall tell me the facts."

"Shall" in Second and Third Persons

Where we have *shall* with the second and third persons we likewise indicate something more than futurity. We make a silent prediction, "I have still my hatred of evil; and from that, to your galling disappointment, you shall see that I can draw both energy and courage." Probably this use of *shall* will long persist through the influence of biblical language, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." Notice the contrast between *will*, the simple statement, and *shall*, the emphatic prediction. The writer is deploring the kind of education given in school: "You will toil, but you shall not learn one single thing of all those you will most want to know. You will in all probability go into business; but you shall not know where any article of commerce is produced. You will very likely get into the House of Commons, you will have to take your share in making laws. But you shall not hear one word respecting the political organization of your own country."

Perhaps all this looks to you like verbal quibble; and indeed it is little regarded, in speech especially, nowadays. Besides, we are more and more coming to express the future not by *shall* or *will* but by the termination *'ll*, the interpretation of which we leave to our hearers. "I'll go no more a-roving with you, fair maid": will she treat this as a simple statement, "I shall, as at present advised, though doubtless things may alter, go no more" or "I will, of that I am firmly resolved, go no more"? Other ways of expressing the future, too, operate to blur the distinction: "I am about to go" and also "He is about to go" and so on. It almost seems as though, very shortly, the distinction will cease to be of importance except for the examinee.

An Exercise

Now test yourself by inserting the auxiliary (*shall* or *will*) used by the writer of the sentences below; and do not lament loudly if you should fail. For customs in languages are not eternal.

(*a*) "I —— never finish that ballade," he thought to himself.
(*b*) "You —— pardon me if I go in first."
(*c*) "I was born in a garret, and I —— not improbably die upon the gallows."
(*d*) "The element itself, till seven years' heat,
—— not behold her face at ample view."
(*e*) "It —— become thee well to act my woes;
She —— attend it better in thy youth."
(*f*) "O, sir, I —— not be so hard-hearted; I —— give out divers schedules of my beauty; it —— be inventoried and every particle and utensil labelled."
(*g*) I —— deliver his challenge by word of mouth; set upon Ague-cheek a notable report of valour; and drive the gentleman, as I know his youth —— aptly receive it, into a most hideous opinion of his rage . . .

(The words of the original sentences are given in the Appendix.)

The Unattached Participle

What is meant by an unattached participle? Well, here is an example from where it occurs deplorably often, the beginning of a letter: "Being a regular reader of your most interesting publication would you kindly explain how I may obtain exemption from service on a jury?" *Being* is a participle. To what person does *being* refer? That person is obviously not *you*: we cannot interpret the sentence as "Would you, being a regular reader, etc.?" For though the person questioned is in fact a regular reader, we gather that the participle refers to the questioner, not the questioned. We do, that is, understand well enough what is meant. Still, the sentence would be more in accordance with recognized English idiom as: "Would you kindly explain to me, being a regular reader of your most interesting publication, how . . .?"

Look at this opening of a letter to *The Times*: "*While endorsing Dr. Lyttelton's plea for family prayers, it must not be forgotten that in one sense family prayers have already come back to many homes through the daily service from the B.B.C.*" Would

it not be better to replace the participle by a finite verb? "I endorse Dr. Lyttelton's plea for family prayers; but it must . . ." The frequency of this departure from King's English is hardly an excuse. The error—assuming it to be an error—arises from the fact that the writer has not kept the one point of view throughout his sentence.

Look at this sentence, where there is a similar dangling clause, "When four years old, his grandmother died." The writer in the second part of the sentence has turned his mind from the grandson to the grandmother. Better write: "When he was four years old, his grandmother died." Compare these sentences in which the participle does have its point of reference—

(1) "Six of the crew, of whom I was one, having let down the boat into the sea, made a shift to get clear of the ship."

(In this simple sentence the subject is "Six (of the crew)" and "having . . . sea" is its enlargement).

(2) For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

Here "breaking" has its noun "waves"; and "making" and "flooding" have their noun "main."

In this sentence, too, the hearer is put to the trouble of supplying a good deal that we might have expected from the speaker: "Stopping to talk so much, the dinner was late." There again we have the unattached (or unrelated) participle. True, it does not entail much mental strife to supply the omission—"Through her stopping to talk so much, the dinner was late," or possibly "Through cook's stopping . . ." But, if we are to follow the sound rule of sparing our hearer's attention, we shall not use this unrelated participle.

Possible Ambiguity

On occasion this dangling participle gives a passing feeling of absurdity. We must, for instance, supply "by a workman" in the sentence below in order to get rid of this feeling: "The skeleton was found while digging out the foundations for the new bank." In "Wishing to please every one, the playground was left open all day" we are to supply "the head master" and we had better turn the passive into the active: "Wishing

to please every one, the head master left the playground open all day." In "Ruined in business and almost in health, the war offered a fresh chance" we had better revise: "The war offered him, ruined in business and almost in health, a new chance." In "Judging from the time recorded the race was rowed quicker than in all previous years" we had better avoid the suggestion that it is the race that judges: "If we are to judge from the time recorded the race was rowed quicker than in previous years." Perhaps this, too, needs a little re-arrangement, "Being members of the Civil Service, it behoved us to keep our mouths shut." Better write: "It behoved us, being members of the Civil Service, to keep our mouths shut."

Nominative Absolute

We must not confuse this unrelated participle with what is sometimes called the Nominative Absolute. Examine, for instance, this sentence, a quite idiomatic one, "Smoking being prohibited, the rooms are much cleaner." The phrase, "Smoking being prohibited," is equivalent to the sentence "Since smoking is prohibited." The participle here does duty for the finite verb. So in sentences like "The clock having struck ten, we shook hands and left," and "These solemn proceedings having been satisfactorily concluded, Mr. Grummer was ignominiously ordered out." We may by devising a nominative absolute often retain the original structure of a sentence, and in this way avoid the unrelated participle. Thus "Being a cold day I wore my overcoat" needs revision. "The day being cold, I wore my overcoat" is much better.

We must, besides, remember that participles like *considering*, *notwithstanding*, have developed into prepositions. In "Considering all things you may go" and "Notwithstanding the rain we enjoyed ourselves." Compare "Everything considered, to play bridge well needs much thought," where we have the absolute construction, with "Considering everything, to play bridge well needs much thought," where the participle has developed into a preposition.

Verbal Nouns in "ing"

We must also remember that a word ending in *ing* may be a noun, not a participle. *Singing* is a noun in "He does not like

my singing," and, since it is a noun, we need the possessive pronoun *my*, not *me*. Contrast with that sentence such a one as "He heard me singing," where *singing* is the participle relating to the objective *me*. In "I dislike his going there alone," *going* is a noun and the appropriate pronoun is *his*, not *him*. Contrast with this such a sentence as "I saw him going there alone" where *going* is the participle. Note the sentences: "You may rely upon my doing whatever I can for you" (the possessive pronoun *my*, not the objective *me*); "Nothing can prevent its coming out" (*its* not *it*); "Their principles prevent their supporting the movement" (*their* not *them*).

We see, therefore that this clumsy sentence needs much editing: "The police seized the dog, on account of it not only being dangerous, but also unmuzzled according to law." *Being dangerous* and *being unmuzzled* are both nouns followed by adjectives; and we need *its*, not *it*. That, you will have noticed, is not the only improvement possible: the phrases *not only* and *according to law* should be moved to a place where their connexion is clear. Our final draft would then be: "The police seized the dog not only on account of its being dangerous but also on account of its not being muzzled according to law."

Is there anything wrong with this sentence, "We do not like him going so often to the river"? The mistake here is common enough, so common that we may almost call it sanctioned by custom. Almost, but not quite; and we should strive to avoid it. "Going" is here a noun; it names an action. The proper pronoun for it, therefore, is the possessive "his," not the objective "him"; it is "his going to the river" that we "dislike." How would you fill the blank in the sentence, "They rejoiced at —— coming"? Surely by "his" not "him." It is "his coming," his advent.

There should not be great difficulty in deciding whether the word is a participle or a noun. To say "We saw him going to the river" may be quite correct; it is equivalent to "We saw him as he was going to the river." But "We saw his going" may also be correct, and would mean "We saw the manner of his going." Here is the word "smuggling." In the sentence, "An injudicious tax offers a great temptation to smuggling" it is clearly a noun. It denotes a particular form of breaking the law, and it would have the possessive of the pronoun, "our

smuggling," "their smuggling," and so on In the sentence, "The coast-guard found —— smuggling," "smuggling" is the participle, and the appropriate pronoun for the blank is "us" or "them." Consider these further examples: "He wanted to see my drawing" (in order to point out the defects in it), but "He wanted to see me drawing" (in order to discover why I was producing so deplorable results); "Excuse *my* being late" (that is, "my late coming," "my tardiness"), but "Excuse me, lamenting my fault as I do."

EXERCISE

Pick out the participles in these extracts and say to which noun or pronoun each relates.

(*a*) Steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection.

(*b*) Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern; then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

(*c*) I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in; glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour and joy.

The Split Infinitive

The teacher indicated the "split infinitive"; the scholar blushed and looked confused. But was it after all such an enormity? Certainly there is a widespread prejudice against the insertion of a word or words between *to* and its attendant verb. The preference is for "It is time once again to voice the general discontent" rather than "It is time to once again voice the general discontent."

Quite likely this prejudice is due to the influence that the impressive speech of the Liturgy has had upon the English language. In the Liturgy there is an almost ostentatious avoidance of what enrages many good people among us: we are exhorted "humbly to acknowledge"; we are "diligently to live after Thy commandments." But much of our modern writing ignores the tradition. A very "temperamental" lady is dismissed without notice. The letter of dismissal contains this explanation: "Your hysteria so continually breaking out

back stage on any request being made of you makes it impossible for the other members of the Company to any longer tolerate this childishness." It would be more in keeping with good English to write "any longer to tolerate."

As so often we are faced with a choice between better and worse. If we accept the position that the practice of good writers is the standard of correctness, then we could bring abundant authority for the construction so obnoxious to many. In an Act of Parliament itself (s. 35 of the Partnership Act) we have actually statutory authority for the divided infinitive —"to prejudicially affect the partnership" is the phrase.

Still, we do well to avoid it.

The Verb and Its Nominative

A verb agrees with its nominative in number and person. Yes; but the agreement suffers occasional discord; and the rule must be interpreted a little loosely. Its application is usually quite clear. Look at a few instances. "The room is harbouring Mr. Shand's ladies' committee, who sit with pens and foolscap round the large table, awaiting the advent of their leader." This sentence—some of you will recognize its source in the delightful play *What Every Woman Knows*—contains several interesting points.

The collective noun "committee" (in form a singular, for we have a plural "committees") is looked upon as a plural; for "sit round the table" obliges us to think of many. The relative pronoun "who" is therefore in the plural; its verb is the plural *sit*, not the singular *sits*; and its possessive pronoun the plural "their," not the singular "its." That is to say, we are by the very form of the sentence transported from the impersonal "committee" to the ladies of which it consists.

Now look at this instance. The interrogative pronoun "who" may be either singular or plural, we may have either "who is?" or "who are?" If the complement is singular, then we use *is*; if the complement is plural, then we use are: "Who is the master, who are the servants?"; "Who are those two young things?" There is the rule. The departures from it are real as well as apparent. "The life of the community needs the service of persons and of their property; and neither instinct nor direct interest impel to the service." Should we not replace the plural

verb *impel* by the singular *impels*? For, when we use the conjunction *nor* we invite a consideration of each alternative separately: *instinct impels not, interest impels not.*

The question is a natural one; its answer is not easy. We may in fact justify the plural *impel* by the fact that *nor* does in fact unite the alternative. Cæsar exclaims, "Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace to-night" (*have* not *has*). For it is an easy transition to the thought, "Both heaven and earth have been restless to-night." The singular is correct; but the plural is explainable in that the two singulars are joined, not separated, by *nor*. Strictly, we should write, "Neither the man nor his wife was saved." We are apt to write "were saved" because our statement implies, "Both the man and his wife were lost." So we may explain the plural *are* instead of the singular *is* in Mill's sentence: "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of the different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question." The plural is understandable; it is justifiable in logic; but perhaps we should not imitate it.

Where the verb precedes its nominative we quite often get a modification of our rule. We may suppose that the writer has but one thing in mind when he writes the verb; his thought becomes modified as he writes. This is often so when "There is" ushers in the nominative. Consider, for instance, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three." A title again, of a poem or play or novel, may be a plural. In general, we look upon such a title as a quotation and use the singular verb: "'The Lays of Ancient Rome' was written by Macaulay" (*was* not *were*); "*The Three Musketeers* is Dumas' most famous novel" (*is* not *are*). In like manner we may regard any plural as a quotation and use the singular verb with it. It is perfectly correct to say "Twice four is eight" as well as "Twice four are eight"; it is perfectly correct to say "'Dogmatic people' means such people as lay down the law in an arrogant manner." A sentence like that does, however, you agree, sound awkward, and we do well to avoid it. We can easily reconstruct the sentence and say "Dogmatic people are such people as lay the law down in an arrogant manner."

Yet we may wish to regard the title of a book as an ordinary

noun, not a quotation; and we then naturally use the plural verb when the nominative is plural. When you say "The Canterbury Tales portray the better-off persons of Chaucer's day," you are thinking of "The Canterbury Tales" as many writings, not as a single title.

Some of our pronouns may similarly be looked upon either as singular or as plural—*who, either, any, more.* The verb will then be singular when we are thinking of an individual, a unit; it will be plural when we think of many individuals. Examine this sentence, "If there be any in this assembly, any dear friend of Cæsar's, to him I say that Brutus' love to Cæsar was no less than his." Here Brutus speaks to each single hearer; the verb *be* is in the singular, the pronouns the singular *him* and *his.* So, too, Brutus uses the singular in his rhetorical questions, "Who is here so base that would be a bondman? Who is here so vile that will not love his country?" But we have *any* and *who* regarded as plurals: "Were any of the candidates at a loss?"; "Who are the successful applicants?"

Exercise

Now examine these sentences all of which would benefit by revision. Write out your version and compare it with the one suggested in the Appendix.

(*a*) There is a door and three windows on the front of the house.

(*b*) Observation together with experience of life help us to realize facts.

(*c*) All the grandeur of the days of chivalry breathe on his pages.

(*d*) I learnt that he is one of the few writers who has dealt with this subject.

(*e*) Neither she nor her brother are strong.

(*f*) The best thing about the book were the quotations.

The Subjunctive Mood

In a language that lives and develops, as English does, we shall have not only changes in vocabulary but also changes in the grammar itself. New words come, some old ones go out of use; new constructions come that would have been alien to old custom. It is so with what we call the subjunctive mood, that form of the verb used in a conditional clause. *Make* is here, for instance, in the subjunctive mood, "Now this, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve." Nowadays, though, the special form is rapidly dying out.

Yet some still cling to its use. "Should not 'was'," one asks, "be replaced by 'were' in the sentence, 'Matters would be rather complicated if the cash was passed through our Petty Cash Book'?" Here, as so often in matters of English, we have a clash between two alternatives, each of which can be amply supported by the practice of good writers. The choice between the alternatives is a question of taste. Many good writers and speakers still use the subjunctive "were" in such a sentence. It may be that the quite exceptional tenacity of "were" is due to the fact that we all know Macbeth's soliloquy, "If it were done when 'tis done."

In nearly all other verbs the subjunctive is wellnigh dead; we use the indicative even when doubt is expressed. A critic once took the great Dr. Samuel Johnson to task for writing these sentences, "If he thinks his own judgment not sufficiently enlightened, he may rectify his opinion" and "Follow solid argument wherever it leads you." "Think" was the verb suggested in the first sentence, "lead" in the second; and certainly these are correct if we are to retain the subjunctive. The substitution would, however, not be in accordance with modern usage. You know Ben Jonson's lines—

It is not growing like a tree
  In bulk, doth make Man better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
    A lily of a day
    Is fairer far in May,
  Although it fall and die that night—
  It was the plant and flower of Light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures life may perfect be.

The subjunctives "fall" and "die" would very likely in modern writing, almost certainly in modern speech, be replaced by the indicatives "falls" and "dies." We do hear on occasion, from the pulpit or the judicial bench, subjunctives in plenty; but they tend to give a pompous and affected sound to the speech. Better write "was" and conform to custom, than "were" and range yourself with the over-correct.

A Superfluity of Negatives

It has been so also with the double negatives: in modern English this is equivalent to an affirmative. Look at this sentence, "*X is a fine fellow whose modesty is in inverse ratio to his sporting achievements.*" Is there anything amiss here? The suggestion in that sentence is, you notice, that though *X* has accomplished great things in the world of athletics he is not at all a boaster. Like another famous character, "He is a lion in the fight, A lamb when the battle is won." The writer has, however, in his wish to have an expression out of the ordinary, selected the wrong word. Clearly he had in mind "direct ratio": his modesty was, like his achievements, great. The sentence declares it to be small. Quite true, that meaning may have been intended. But such a meaning would hardly be consistent with the opening of the sentence.

For "modest" implies "not boastful." These words that imply negatives often cause a careless speaker to say the opposite of what he intends. "No one yields to me in loyalty to the Crown," says the ardent upholder of royalty. Now analyse that sentence. "Yields" implies "has less," "is not so staunch"; but evidently our enthusiast would have said "has more," "is so staunch." It is either "Everyone yields to me in loyalty to the Crown" or "I yield to no one in loyalty to the Crown."

The double negative did in our old literature, as it does in modern French, serve to emphasize an affirmative. Chaucer wrote of his "very perfect knight"—

> He never yet no vilanie ne sayde,
> In all his life unto no manere wight.

The double negative still persists in colloquial speech as a way of making the negative more emphatic: "I didn't tell him nothing" is usually equivalent to "You may be assured that I told him nothing."

In modern literary English, however, the double negative is usually a strong affirmative: here, for instance, are Milton's lines about the fallen angels—

> Nor did they not perceive the evil plight
> In which they were, or the fierce pains not feel.

That is "they really did perceive." "I am a citizen of no mean city" is a proud assertion, "I am a citizen of a very great city." And modern English usage would change the conjunction *nor* into the conjunction *and* in—

> The man that hath no music in himself,
> Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
> Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils.

EXERCISE

Here are three questions submitted. You will find in the Appendix some comments upon them—

(*a*) "That is all that need be said on the matter." Should not "need" be replaced by "needs"? For the relative "that" is singular.

(*b*) "Our Bowls correspondent" writes to *The Times*, "England's team is the best for several years, and if they continue their form there are bright prospects of them winning the trophy." Should not "them" be replaced by "their"?

(*c*) The American guide-book has "If pressed for time in making a tour of England, Cambridge may be omitted." Comment upon this sentence.

CHAPTER XII

HELPING THE READER: PUNCTUATION

Mechanical Helps Towards Understanding

THE trouble about these words, these black marks on white paper, is that they must be interpreted. You write them; another reads them. And being read aloud they may be read otherwise than you intended. The difficulty is this. In speaking we use sounds that appeal to the ear; in writing we use signs that appeal to the eye. We cannot make signs the exact equivalent of sounds. For the work that a word does is signified not only by the word and its position in the sentence, but also by the emphasis placed upon it.

Writing fails to show the intended emphasis. Punctuation marks serve as something of a guard against this danger of misinterpretation. You write "Hammond has scored another century?" The use of the question mark signifies that you wish it to be equivalent to "Has Hammond scored another century?" You write "Hammond has scored another century!" The use of the exclamation mark signifies that you wish that the statement shall be read as an expression of jubilation, an expression of delighted amazement or of dismay. You write "Hammond has scored another century." Your use of the full stop signifies that you wish your words to be taken as a matter-of-fact statement; it says that what we might have expected to happen has in fact happened.

Marks Indicative of Tone

The signs in the Hammond sentence indicate with what tone you wish your sentence to be read; and this is often a matter of importance. How do you read these eight words? In particular, how do you read the last four?—"Let there be light. And there was light." How often do you hear this mauled by an emphasis placed on *was* instead of on *light*? Surely the real meaning of the sentence is blurred by the misplaced emphasis. The amazing thing, the thing that deserved embodiment in enduring literary form, was the light newly come upon the

darkness of chaos. That is what merits emphasis. Look, too, at the debatable expression in *Macbeth*. Lady Macbeth listens with impatience to her husband's doubts. "If we should fail?" he says. A great actress, rightly and with a thrilling effect upon the audience, makes Lady Macbeth's response a grim acceptance of the consequences of failure. Less skilful speakers make the response into an expression of incredulity, and the dramatic effect of Lady Macbeth's determination is lessened. "We fail. But screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we'll not fail." To give emphasis on *we*, "*We* fail!" seems to involve a misreading of the whole utterance. That is to say, *but* should be interpreted *however*, not *only*.

In other languages more use is made of signs to indicate tone than in English. "Mr. Eden's speech," reports *The Times* correspondent, "in the House of Commons has been badly received in Germany. This was clear even in the morning papers, which, before the official inspiration had got to work, indicated their displeasure indirectly by freely scattering question marks and single, double, and even treble exclamation marks in brackets through their reports from London."

In speech, the different voices, the changes in the single voice, the pauses made, all help towards understanding. You could, for example, utter the words "Come now" so that they are a peremptory command: you do so when you utter them with a rising emphasis, making *now* the emphatic word. You could utter them so that they will be more or less a gentle remonstrance: you do so when you utter them with a falling emphasis, making *come* the emphatic word. "Sir?" with a rising tone is a polite way of asking a question, often for the repetition of an instruction. "Sir!" emphasized and with a falling tone is a way of expressing resentment or dismay or astonishment. "Sir," is a respectful mode of address.

The stops are, it is quite true, not perfect substitutes for the graduations of voice. They help, however. He who reads what we write has no help from our gestures or our intonations. Punctuation can compensate in some measure for these aids to understanding: we see "cock's comb," and we read it so that it is understood as "comb of a cock"; "cockscomb" and we read it as "the fool's cap"; "coxcomb," and we read it as "a fop."

The Grouping of Words

Besides, how your words are to be grouped is a matter of importance; and the grouping is not always clear. To be sure, a little thought will usually suffice. Probably, even if you wrote without troubling about stops, your reader would in the end be able to place into proper groups these words—

Ill tell you how I came to think of it said the Knight you see I said to myself the only difficulty is with the feet the head is high enough already now first I put my head on the top of the gate then the heads high enough then I stand on my head then the feet are high enough you see then Im over you see

Yes I suppose youd be over when that was done Alice said thoughtfully but dont you think it would be rather hard

I havent tried it yet the Knight said gravely so I cant tell for certain but Im afraid it would be a little hard

The devices of the printer in order to economize the reader's attention enable the reader to group the words, and so to grasp the intended meaning, much more speedily—

"I'll tell you how I came to think of it," said the Knight. "You see, I said to myself, 'The only difficulty is with the feet: the head is high enough already.' Now, first I put my head on the top of the gate—then the head's high enough—then I stand on my head—then the feet are high enough, you see—then I'm over, you see."

"Yes, I suppose, you'd be over when it was done," Alice said thoughtfully; "but don't you think it would be rather hard?"

"I haven't tried it yet," the Knight said gravely: "so I can't tell for certain—but I'm afraid it *would* be a little hard."

Our Readers Expect Help Towards Understanding

Readers expect help; we shall be disappointed if we make great demands upon their willingness to ponder over our writings. You have looked with curiosity and wonder at an old manuscript, and the thought has come to you that the readers had need of abundant patience in order to make out the words and the intended grouping of them. For the guides devised by the printer are absent.

The modern reader is treated with indulgence; and he has come to expect copious help towards the intended interpretation of the writer's words. He would not care to have words written solid as in some old manuscripts—

Takecareofthesenseandthesoundswilltakecareofthemselves.

Words are written separately now. Moreover, and much to the reader's ease, various signs show him how the words are to be grouped.

This sentence, for instance, asks for guides towards the intended groups of words—

Unquestionably as a general proposition when an offer is made it is necessary in order to make a binding contract not only that it should be accepted but that the acceptance should be notified

With patience you grasp the meaning. The stops enable you to grasp the meaning much more speedily—

Unquestionably, as a general proposition, when an offer is made, it is necessary, in order to make a binding contract, not only that it should be accepted, but that the acceptance should be notified.

We call the various marks devised by the printer in order to help readers "stops." They usually conform to this name, but they serve more functions than the one of indicating when the reader is to pause in his reading. They serve also, as has been pointed out, to give some indication of tone. This is particularly true of the exclamation mark. The epitaph, for example, is—

Entombed within this vault a lawyer lies;
Who, Fame assureth us, was just and wise!

Such a mark would seem to be an anticipation of your question, "Can such things be?"

Clearly, punctuation is a useful thought-and-time-saving device; and it is wisdom to make ourselves adepts in the matter, well able to give our readers the expected help towards understanding. Where possibility of misunderstanding exists, give your reader such help as stops[1] can afford. You mark off, for example, *indeed* by commas in the first sentence; you omit the stops in the second—

He was, indeed, a worthy man;
He was indeed a worthy man.

[1] The stops that we use were adapted mostly from Greek writings. The Greek sign denoting a question became, however, our semicolon. We, needing a mark to indicate that a question is intended, use one originating in the Latin word *Quaestio*. The lawyer, if he should report a decision that seems to be opposed to other, perhaps better, authorities, indicates his doubt by adding *sed quaere* ("But you had better look further into the matter"). So the Latin writer would write at the end of a question the letters Q, the initial and final letters of *Quaestio*. In time the letters became merged into the sign ?.

The first *indeed* is a way of saying "though you would hardly have thought so"; the second is the adverb emphasizing "a worthy man."

Meaning Should Be Independent of Punctuation

This does not at all imply that the clearness of our meaning depends upon the use of stops. You will not, however vigorous your gestures, make a confused utterance into an intelligible one. You will not, however many and varied the stops you use, make a sentence that is the product of muddled thought into an orderly one. Still, correct punctuation is a matter of importance, of more importance probably than correct spelling is.

One further preliminary note is necessary before we examine in some detail the use of the stops.

You have doubtless noticed that, as you do with some of your typewriter signs, the printer employs the one sign for two purposes. He uses, for instance, the comma sign when he indicates that a letter has been turned away.[1] ("Apostrophe" is the Greek name for this.) He also uses the comma sign, single or double, in the ordinary way or upside down, to mark off quotations.

Indicating Quotations

Thus, look at " 'Tis so," said the Duchess; "and the moral of it is 'Oh! 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round!'" The comma in front of *'tis* indicates the omission of *i* belonging to the pronoun *it*. The double inverted commas usher in the Duchess's speech; the double commas printed in the usual way close the speech.

The quotation that the Duchess herself makes is similarly marked off by single commas. Really we should have a full stop after the group of signs!'". For the exclamation mark

[1] *Strŏphĕ*, a word of two syllables, is the Greek prefix meaning *aside* or *away*. The word of four syllables (apŏstrŏfĕ) is properly applied to an exclamatory address to a particular person. The speaker interrupts the course of the speech in order to invoke a dead or an absent person. Antony apostrophizes when he interrupts his speech with the exclamation—

Judge, O ye gods, how dearly Cæsar loved him.

The word when used of the sign that indicates omission of letters is properly one of three syllables (*apŏstrŏf*). The tendency, however, is nowadays to pronounce both as four-syllable words.

belongs to the Duchess's quotation, and the comma signs indicate quotation. But the printer would strike against this and declare that, though logic demands a full stop, there is already ample indication that the sentence is closed.

A writer may use quotation marks to indicate that a word or a phrase is used in a peculiar or a technical sense. He thereby gives you warning of the modified meaning. The writer of the sentence that follows was maybe a little afraid that you would fail to note his ingenuity in playing upon the origin of the word "cardinal." To make sure that you do take notice he uses the signposts—

To the world he was a great Cardinal, a strong "hinge" of the Church.

So also benevolence is a pleasant thing; "benevolence," being used of the exaction of Henry VII and his imitators, was an unpleasant thing in its perverted sense. The quotation marks tell us that we are to understand the term in that disagreeable sense—

The reign of Henry VII and the early years of his son were not a great Parliamentary period; the Houses were occasionally summoned, but there was little popular interest in Parliament, no resentment at its abeyance for half a dozen years on end, no competition for seats even when it met, and no constitutional resistance to Henry VII's exaction of unauthorized "benevolences" from the wealthy.

The Sign for the Possessive

The use of the comma sign to indicate the possessive case of the noun merits more attention than most people give it. First, we should note that the insistence upon the sign is quite modern. Look at these lines from the first presentation to the world of *L'Allegro*. The possessive sign appears on rare occasions, and it seems quite by hazard; but for the most part it is missing. We have two instances of the use, in—

> Nods, and Becks, and Wreathed Smiles
> Such as hang on Hebe's cheek.

> Then lies him down the Lubbar Fend,
> And stretch'd out all the chimney's length
> Basks at the fire his hairy strength.

All the other possessives are without the sign—

> And he by Friars Lanthorn led,
>
> Then to the well-trod stage anon,
> If Jonsons learned Sock be on,
> Or sweetest Shakespear fancies childe,
> Warble his native wood-notes wilde.

Now, however, consistency in its use is demanded.

The old termination to mark the possessive was "es": the modern representative of this is *'s*. The apostrophe stands for the omitted vowel. The sign was once used in plurals also; it is still used in instances like the following, where its omission might lead to misunderstanding—

> There are too many *and's* in the sentence.
> Dot your *i's* and cross your *t's*.

The mark denotes omission also in words like *can't* (for *cannot*), *don't* (for *do not*).

The Comma

The grammar books give many rules concerning the use of stops. The rules are derived from the practice of writers; and it may well be that you would become able to punctuate properly rather by observing that practice than by learning rules. You study a passage with care and ask yourself the reason for the insertion of each stop.

Consider, for example, the work of the comma as a stop.

In "Lady Castlewood had been in talk above with Dean Atterbury, the pious creature's almoner and director," the comma indicates the pause between the name and the name in apposition. When you think a longer pause necessary you replace the comma by a semicolon. In this sentence from *Alice in Wonderland*, you have commas marking off and indicating the pause after the adverbs "first" and "second"; but you have the semicolon indicating the pause between the two clauses. The Footman explains why it is lost labour for Alice to knock at the door—

"First, because I am on the same side of the door as you are; secondly, because they're making such a noise inside, no one could possibly hear you."

Notice, too, the contrast afforded by the two sentences following. In the first the two parts of the antithesis are separated by the semicolon; in the second the commas are enough to mark the slighter pauses in the hurried narrative—

After a week so trying the Spanish crews would have been glad of a Sunday's rest if they could have had it; but the rough handling which they had gone through had thrown everything into disorder. The sick and wounded had to be cared for, torn rigging looked to, splintered timbers mended, decks scoured and guns and arms cleaned up and put to rights.

The Comma in Enumerations

A difficulty about the comma exists where the subject of a sentence consists of many words. Certainly, we ought not lightly to separate the subject from its predicate. But certainly, too, the sense in which the writer intends us to take his words becomes clearer when we know where the subject ends and predicate begins. Thus consider Lord Morley's sentence—

To try to write his life to-day, is to push temerity still further.

The comma prevents us from taking *to-day* with *is* instead of with *try*; and, though it does intervene between subject and predicate, it is justified. So, too, in Professor Trevelyan's sentence—

To regard "enclosure" of open land by permanent walls and hedges as a thing invariably or even usually bad in itself, would be to misinterpret the whole history of British agriculture.

The comma gives the reader an easier access to the writer's meaning: it analyses for him the sentence into subject and predicate.

When your subject consists of an enumeration, too, you add to clearness when you place a comma after the last item of the enumeration. That a break occurs between subject and predicate offends, perhaps, against custom; and maybe the comma is wrongly called a "stop." But the greater comfort to the reader excuses the comma. Thus—

Gradually the distinction between the able-bodied who would not work, the aged and feeble who could not work, and the unfortunate who could not find work, became clear to Tudor society and took its place in the Poor Law.

No dogmatic answer, therefore, can be given to such a question as—

Should there not be a comma after "leaf" in the sentence, "The song of birds, the run of water, the flowers in bloom and the woods in leaf gave those country-dwellers a joy of which they were fully conscious"?

Here the compound subject is "The song of birds, the run of water, the flowers in bloom and the woods in leaf." To place a comma after "leaf" does, however, give the reader help towards the intended grouping of the words; and this consideration often impels the writer to supply the comma, or—anxious not to offend against grammar—to introduce a summing-up word. Thus, "The song . . . leaf, all these gave." Formal grammar forbids the comma: Professor Trevelyan, from whose *History of England* the sentence has come, avoids it.

On the other hand, convenience and comfort ask for the comma. Lord Morley in *The Life of Gladstone* regularly supplies it. Here is a double subject marked off by the comma from its following predicate: "The intensity of his mind, and the length of years through which he held presiding office, enabled him to impress for good in all the departments of government his own severe standard of public duty."

Some writers, you note, would omit the comma before "and" also; but you will doubtless agree that both the commas give us very acceptable help towards the intended grouping of the words. Contrast these two sentences from Trevelyan: "Although warmth, clothing and food were more available in the Elizabethan village than in the medieval manor, they were more often lacking than in our day," and "The aged, the sick, the debtor, and all who fell foul of the law suffered martyrdoms which were regarded as an inevitable part of human fate and fortune." The practice of *The Times*—and you may take this to be an admirable guide to modern usage—is to omit the comma before the predicate, and to use it in enumerations even before "and." Thus: "To-day, to-morrow, and on Thursday, Australian, New Zealand, and South African troops will continue the innovation begun yesterday by the Canadians."

The Grouping of Words

The comma serves also to show how the words used are to be grouped. Notice, for instance, how the comma guards against the common error when interpreting the opening lines of the carol, "God rest you merry, gentlemen." Many singers render "merry gentlemen" as the name of the persons addressed. But this takes all meaning from the line. The comma should be after *merry*, not after *you*; for the line means "May God enable you to continue to be merry, gentlemen."

Commas are found, too, with a parenthesis. You often insert into a sentence a word, or a phrase, or a sentence, in order to qualify your statement or to carry the mind of your reader from one thought to the succeeding thought. In this sentence, "Her eyes were quite dry; nor did Esmond ever see them otherwise, save once, in respect to that grief," the phrase "save once," marked off by commas, qualifies a little the adverb "ever." The phrase is a parenthesis; the commas might be (and are when it is desirable to have a longer break between the main sentence and the parenthesis) replaced by dashes or by brackets. Look at these instances of the parenthesis—

(*a*) The *Pelican*, or *Golden Hind*, belonged to Drake himself.

(*b*) The immense booty fell all into Drake's hands—gold, jewels, silver bars—and got with much ease, as Prince Hal said at Gadshill.

(*c*) Drake's force was absurdly small: a sloop of a hundred tons, which he called the *Dragon* (perhaps playing with his own name), and two small pinnaces.

Marking Off a Parenthesis

In (*a*) the alternative name is the insertion, and is marked off by the less weighty commas. Here are other instances where the parenthesis is marked off by commas: "'Thank you, brother,' she said, in a low voice, and with a simplicity more touching than tears, 'all you have said is true and kind.'" (Commas mark off "brother," the nominative of address; they mark off also the interjection "she said" with its attendant phrases.) Similar to this "nominative of address" is the phrase in "apposition." This, too, is usually marked off by commas. Thus, look at this sentence—

Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.

You have the explanatory parenthesis marked off by commas. "Kings, very likely, lost their chances." (The commas mark off the modifying adverbs "very likely.") "We, who watched her after the disaster, could not but respect the indomitable courage and majestic calm with which she bore it." (The commas mark off the inserted sentence.) "She, too, had passed the night wakefully, no doubt." (The adverb, "too," making you link the statement with a preceding one, is marked off by commas.)

In (*b*) the parenthesis, enumerating the booty, is marked off by the more weighty dashes. It is as though the writer asks you to make impressive pauses, of eager expectancy before the recital, of wonder after the recital. Other instances of such an insertion marked off by dashes are in this statement of Alice's to the Caterpillar: "When you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will some day, you know—and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll find it a little queer"; and in her recital of "You are old, Father William" where the device is again used—

"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks,
"I kept all my limbs very supple
By the use of this ointment—one shilling the box—
Allow me to sell you a couple."

In (*c*) the parenthesis, a statement by the way, a statement digressing from the narrative in progress, is marked off by brackets. Other instances are: "This question the Dodo could not answer without a great deal of thought, and it sat for a long time with one finger pressed upon its forehead (the position in which you usually see Shakespeare in the pictures of him), while the rest waited in silence"; and this: "In despair she put her hand in her pocket, and pulled out a box of comfits (luckily the salt water had not got into it), and handed them round as prizes." You notice that a comma follows the second bracket. If you left out the parenthesis you would need this comma to denote the pause between the two sentences. You may to be sure expand a sentence to enormous length by such insertions. It is, however, well not to have the predicate far away from its subject.

Consideration of the Parenthesis

Very rarely, it is to be noted, the writer thinks his parenthesis to be so remote from his narrative that he is not content with one stop. Examine these two sentences—

For a minute or two she stood looking at the house, and wondering what to do next, then suddenly a footman in livery came running out of the wood—(she considered him to be a footman because he was in livery: otherwise, judging by his face only, she would have called him a fish)—and rapped loudly at the door with his knuckles. It was opened by another footman in livery, with a round face and large eyes like a frog; and both footmen, Alice noticed, had powdered hair that curled all over their heads.

In the first the long parenthesis has both the dash and the bracket; in the second sentence the parenthesis, "Alice noticed," is sufficiently marked off by commas.

The danger attending the use of the parenthesis comes from the fact that it interrupts the even flow of the narrative. The reader is diverted from the main sentence, and before he reaches the end of the parenthesis he has lost the thread. It may be, for instance, that the insertion into Lord Morley's sentence is too drawn out—

I am well aware that to try to write Mr. Gladstone's life at all—the life of a man who held an imposing place in many high national transactions, whose character and career may be regarded in such various lights, whose interests were so manifold, and whose years bridged so long a span of time—is a stroke of temerity.

Would it not have been better to make of this two separate sentences?—"I am well aware that to try to write Mr. Gladstone's life at all is a stroke of temerity. For it is the life of a man . . . time."

The Exclamation Mark

This, as its name indicates, is fitting when the words uttered are a kind of cry—a shout of exultation, a wail of despair, an

expression of deep emotion. In the fine passage below you have illustrations of how to use the mark. The passage comes from Thackeray's *Henry Esmond*—

Esmond came to this spot in one sunny evening in spring, and saw, amidst a thousand black crosses, casting their shadows across the grassy mounds, that particular one which marked his mother's resting-place. Many more of those poor creatures that lay there had adopted that same name, with which sorrow had rebaptized her, and which fondly seemed to hint their individual story of love and grief. He fancied her, in tears and darkness, kneeling at the foot of her cross, under which her cares were buried. Surely he knelt down, and said his own prayers there, not in sorrow so much as in awe (for even his memory had no recollection of her), and in pity for the pangs which the gentle soul in life had been made to suffer. To this cross she had brought them; for this heavenly bridegroom she exchanged the husband who had wooed her, the traitor who had left her. A thousand such hillocks lay round about, the gentle daisies springing out of the grass over them, and each bearing its cross and requiescat. A nun, veiled in black, was kneeling hard by, at a sleeping sister's bed-side (so fresh made, that the spring had scarce had time to spin a coverlid for it); beyond the cemetery walls you had glimpses of life and the world, and the spires and gables of the city. A bird came down from a roof opposite, and lit first on a cross, and then on the grass below it, whence it flew away presently with a leaf in its mouth: then came a sound as of chanting, from the chapel of the sisters hard by: others had long since filled the place which poor Mary Magdaleine once had there, were kneeling at the same stall, and hearing the same hymns and prayers in which her stricken heart had found consolation. Might she sleep in peace—might she sleep in peace; and we, too, when our struggles and pains are over! But the earth is the Lord's, as the heaven is; we are alike His creatures, here and yonder. I took a little flower off the hillock, and kissed it, and went

my way, like the bird that had just lighted on the cross by me, back into the world again. Silent receptacle of death! tranquil depth of calm, out of reach of tempest and trouble! I felt as one who had been walking below the sea, and treading amidst the bones of shipwrecks.

Use of Semicolon

The semicolon is the appropriate stop when independent sentences are placed together. Thus, in the epigram, "Give a man the secure possession of a bleak rock, and he will turn it into a garden; give him a nine years' lease of a garden, and he will convert it into a desert."

Note the use of the semicolon to separate the co-ordinate sentences in this capital passage. Lord Morley is describing the receptacle that Mr. Gladstone was obliged to have built in order to store some of the many letters that reached him—

All the riddles of the great public are there—why one man becomes prime minister, while another who ran him close at school and college ends with a pension from the civil list; why the same stable and same pedigree produce a Derby winner and the poor cab hack; why one falls back almost from the start, while another runs famously till the corner, and then his vaulting ambition dwindles to any place of "moderate work and decent emolument"; how new competitors swim into the field of vision; how suns rise and set with no return, and vanish as if they had never been suns but only ghosts or bubbles; how in these time-worn papers successive generations of active men run chequered courses, group following group, names blazing into the fame of a day, then like the spangles of a rocket expiring.

Odds and Ends

Now and again, especially in a familiar letter, a writer will throw out thoughts pell-mell, letting an occasional dash do most of the work of punctuation. This is, for instance, how *Corporal Trim* stood—

He stood—for I repeat it, to take the picture of him in at one view—with his body swayed, and somewhat bent forwards,—his right leg from under him, sustaining seven-eighths of his whole weight,—the foot of his left leg, the defect of which was no disadvantage to his attitude, advanced a little,—not laterally, nor forwards, but in a line betwixt them;—his knee bent, but that not violently,—but so as to fall within the limits of the line of beauty,—and I add, of the line of science too;—for consider, it had one-eighth part of his body to bear up;—so that in this case the position of the leg is determined,—because the foot could be no farther advanced, or the knee more bent, than what would allow him mechanically to receive an eighth part of his whole weight under it, and to carry it too.

Perhaps we had better give our readers more help than Sterne does in that passage.

The asterisk, *, is used for a number of odd jobs. It may call particular attention to a word or a phrase. A row of them, *****, may indicate that a long passage had been omitted from a quotation. Prudence or prudery has prompted the omission. "Leaders"—a row of full stops . . .—indicate that a few words only are left out.

The printer uses the full stop sign in order to indicate abbreviations. In such phrases as "the B.B.C." and "an M.P." though we do not pronounce what is omitted, we supply it mentally. In other phrases, "25th Dec.", "Mr. Baldwin," we supply the part omitted both in our voice and in our mind.

The Question Mark

This matter of punctuation is not, indeed, a simple one. Far from it. The printer has devised helps for the reader in a haphazard manner. The matter is complicated, too, by the fact that on many practices there is no consistency among good writers. Still, careful observation will enable us to make our punctuation agree with general convention. Some of the points that present difficulties follow.

Here is a question, for instance, "Who said so?" This is correctly followed by the question mark. When, however, we

make the question indirect, the full stop, not the question mark, is the correct stop: "Ask him who said so." The direct question is "What was in his mind?" the reported question "I knew what was in his mind." At times the words, though in the form of a question, are in reality a request or a command. Nevertheless, the question mark should follow: "Will you please consider me as an applicant for the post?" The words "Will you please close the door?" may in truth, according to the manner of speaking, range from a gentle reminder to a peremptory command.

On occasion, too, the manner of uttering the words makes a statement into a question. "He did it" with a *falling* inflection is a statement, correctly followed by a full stop. With a *rising* inflection it is a question, correctly followed by a question mark. Look, for example, at this little passage from Stevenson—

With these words he fell into a vein of musing. From this he was recalled by Mr. Utterson asking rather suddenly: "And you don't know if the drawer of the cheque lives there?"

"A likely place, isn't it?" returned Mr. Enfield. "But I happen to have noticed his address; he lives in some square or other."

"And you never asked about—the place with the door?" said Mr. Utterson.

Here both Mr. Utterson's questions are in the form of statements. Note, too, the difference between, "How often does a presidential election take place?" where, since we seek information, the question mark is appropriate, and "How happy could I be with either, Were t'other dear charmer away!" which is not a question but an expression of regret at an embarrassment of good things.

Quotation Marks

Similar to this difficulty in regard to the question mark is the difficulty regarding quotation marks. These are appropriate only when the quotation, question or not, is a direct one. Note the actual words of the doctor in—

I observed the doctor sniffing and sniffing, like some one tasting a bad egg.

"I don't know about treasure," he said, "but I'll stake my wig there's fever here."

Now note them in the report—

The doctor said that he didn't know about treasure, but he'd stake his wig there was fever there.

It may be desirable to add that the fashion is apparently growing to use single quotation marks, reserving the double marks for interior quotations. The usual practice, however, is still to use the double marks for the main quotation. And we had better adhere to this. Thus—

Mr. Eden said to the League Assembly, "I would not have you believe that, because we proclaim less than others our faith in democracy, we think the less of it and are not prepared to make sacrifices in its defence. For us no system could be acceptable if it brought in its train the suppression of our liberties and the destruction of our tradition."

Examination of Instances

Examine a few passages with particular reference to this matter of punctuation. Read this passage from Tennyson's fine poem *Ulysses*—

I am become a name
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known.

How do you interpret it? You are deprived for the moment of the help given by the punctuation; and as a result there are at least two interpretations of the passage. The first may be expressed thus: "People look upon me as the very type of a wanderer, insatiable in the pursuit of knowledge." We should then punctuate the passage—

I am become a name
For always roaming with a hungry heart.
Much have I seen and known.

The second interpretation, the intended one, may be expressed thus: "I have become widely known. For, since I have ever been a wanderer, I have seen and known much."

Tennyson's punctuation shows this to be the intended interpretation—

I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known.

His punctuation gives help to readers, so that they attach to his words the appropriate sense. He would have given more help if he had marked off the participial phrase, "always roaming with a hungry heart," by commas. But most writers shrink from over-stopping their writings. Quite rightly, they expect their readers to have the willingness and the skill to place the words together in the appropriate groups.

Now look at these two passages, the first from *The History of Mr. Polly* by H. G. Wells, the second from a pamphlet *On the Educational Value of the Natural History Sciences* by Professor Huxley. Again you are deprived of the help given by punctuation; again you are asked to supply such punctuation as is needed to facilitate ready interpretation; and again you are asked to compare your punctuation with that of the authors—

(*a*) Who says steak and kidney pie bawled Mr. Voules who says steak and kidney pie you ave a drop of old Tommy Martha thats what you want to steady you

sit down everyone and dont all speak at once who says steak and kidney pie

vocificerations whispered Mr Polly convivial vocificerations

bit of am with it shouted Mr Voules poising a slice of ham on his knife any one ave a bit of am with it wont that little man of yours Mrs. Punt wont e ave a bit of am

and now ladies and gentlemen said Mr Voules still standing and dominating the crammed roomful now you got your plates filled and something I can warrant you good in your glasses wot about drinking the ealth of the bride

(*b*) Science is I believe nothing but trained and organized common sense differing from the latter only as a veteran may differ from a raw recruit and its methods differ from those of common sense only

so far as the guardsman's cut and thrust differ from the manner in which a savage wields his club the primary power is the same in each case and perhaps the untutored savage has the more brawny arm of the two the real advantage lies in the point and p/ish of the swordsmans weapon in the trained eye quick to spy out the weakness of the adversary in the ready hand prompt to follow it on the instant but after all the sword exercise is only the hewing and poking of the clubman developed and perfected so the vast results obtained by science are won by no mystical faculties by no mental processes other than those which are practised by every one of us in the humblest and meanest affairs of life a detective policeman discovers a burglar from the marks made by his shoe by a mental process identical with that by which Cuvier restored the extinct animals of Montmartre from fragments of their bones nor does that process of induction and deduction by which a lady finding a stain of a peculiar kind upon her dress concludes that somebody has upset the inkstand thereon differ in any way in kind from that by which Adams and Leverrier discovered a new planet
the man of science in fact simply uses with scrupulous exactness the methods which we all habitually and at every moment use carelessly and the man of business must as much avail himself of the scientific method must be as truly a man of science as the veriest bookworm of us all though I have no doubt that the man of business will find himself out to be a philosopher with as much surprise as M Jourdain exhibited when he discovered that he had been all his life talking prose

This is how Mr. Wells punctuates the first passage. You notice the way in which he asks you to understand that Mr. Voules troubles very little about initial h's. Where on the contrary Thackeray wants you to understand that an even too great emphasis is being put upon the ill-used letter, he indicates it in this way: "You do me Hhonour" where the speaker,

misled by the spelling of the word, sounds *h* where it should be mute—

"Who says steak-and-kidney pie?" bawled Mr. Voules. "Who says steak-and-kidney pie? You 'ave a drop of old Tommy, Martha. That's what you want to steady you . . .

"Sit down, everyone, and don't all speak at once. Who says steak-and-kidney pie?" . . .

"Vocificerations," whispered Mr. Polly. "Convivial vocificerations."

"Bit of 'am with it," shouted Mr. Voules, poising a slice of ham on his knife. "Any one 'have a bit of 'am with it? Won't that little man of yours, Mrs. Punt—won't 'e 'ave a bit of 'am?" . . .

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," said Mr. Voules, still standing and dominating the crammed roomful, "now you got your plates filled, and something I can warrant you good in your glasses, wot about drinking the 'ealth of the bride?"

And this is Professor Huxley's punctuation—

Science is, I believe, nothing but *trained and organized common sense*, differing from the latter only as a veteran may differ from a raw recruit: and its methods differ from those of common sense only so far as the guardsman's cut and thrust differ from the manner in which a savage wields his club. The primary power is the same in each case, and perhaps the untutored savage has the more brawny arm of the two. The *real* advantage lies in the point and polish of the swordman's weapon; in the trained eye quick to spy out the weakness of the adversary; in the ready hand prompt to follow it on the instant. But, after all, the sword exercise is only the hewing and poking of the clubman developed and perfected.

So, the vast results obtained by science are won by no mystical faculties, by no mental processes, other than those which are practised by every one of us, in the humblest and meanest affairs of life. A detective

policeman discovers a burglar, from the marks made by his shoe, by a mental process identical with that by which Cuvier restored the extinct animals of Montmartre from fragments of their bones. Nor does that process of induction and deduction by which a lady, finding a stain of a peculiar kind upon her dress, concludes that somebody has upset the inkstand thereon, differ in any way, in kind, from that by which Adams and Leferrier discovered a new planet.

The man of science, in fact, simply uses with scrupulous exactness the methods which we all, habitually and at every moment, use carelessly; and the man of business must as much avail himself of the scientific method—must be as truly a man of science—as the veriest bookworm of us all; though I have no doubt that the man of business will find himself out to be a philosopher with as much surprise as M. Jourdain exhibited, when he discovered that he had been all his life talking prose.

Marking Off an Insertion

You know the striking close of Keats's sonnet beginning "Much have I travelled in the realms of gold." Keats has lighted upon new and bounteous treasures. He had often lamented that he could not read Greek, could read Homer only in translation. At length he reads Chapman. This he thinks is the translation that in Homer's manner gives him what Homer wrote. He wishes to express his delighted amazement; and he compares himself first to the eager student, next to the daring explorer—

> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific and all his men
> Looked at each other with a wild surmise
> Silent upon a peak in Darien.

Now, how is that passage to be punctuated? The point of importance, a point missed by careless readers of the sonnet, is the marking of the parenthesis in the last four lines. We

lose much of the effect of the close unless we emphasize "stout Cortez—silent, upon a peak in Darien." The interjected accompaniments are to be subordinated to this impressive figure. So the punctuation indicates—

> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez—when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
> Look at each other with a wild surmise—
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

The Grouping of Words

Here are a few vigorous lines of Professor Housman's—

> Now hollow fires burn out to black,
> And lights are guttering low,
> Square your shoulders, lift your pack,
> And leave your friends, and go.

The first and second lines are straightforward statements, simple sentences separated by a comma. The sentences are, you note, closely connected. The comma stop is therefore enough for the requisite pause. Where a more impressive pause is wanted we have the semicolon. Thus, the moody Virginian, arrived at rank and fortune, yet laments his lot: dull care sits with the baronet as well as with the knight. Notice the abrupt break in the first sentence, a break marked by the colon; notice the less abrupt breaks in the last sentence, marked off by semicolons—

> As regards money I was put out of trouble by the inheritance I made: but does not *Atra Cura* sit behind baronets as well as *equites*? My friends in London used to congratulate me on my happiness. Who would not like to be master of a good house and a good estate? But can Gumbo shut the hall-door upon blue devils, or lay them always in a red sea of claret? Does a man sleep the better who has four-and-twenty hours to doze in? Do his intellects brighten after a sermon from the dull old vicar; a ten minutes' cackle and

flattery from the village apothecary; or the conversation of Sir John and Sir Thomas with their ladies, who come ten moonlight muddy miles to eat a haunch and play a rubber?

The third and fourth lines of the poetry are made up of imperatives so closely connected that commas suffice for separating them.

In the fifth line of the poem notice how the impressive slowness is emphasized by the colon—

O never fear, man: nought's to dread
Look not left nor right:
In all the endless road you tread
There's nothing but the night.

Punctuation may Preserve from Ambiguity

A result, more serious than lack of ease, of negligence in the case of stops is actual misunderstanding. In speech, the sentence below hardly permits of ambiguity; for there will be a perceptible pause after "room" or after "slowly" in accordance with the intended interpretation—

He left the room very slowly repeating his determination not to obey.

In writing, we need the guidance of a comma. To place the comma after "slowly" will make the phrase "very slowly" indicate the manner of leaving the room; placing the comma after "room" will make the phrase indicate the manner of repeating. So with the sentence—

There were few passengers, who escaped without serious injury.

Omission of the comma would make the sentence mean "nearly all the passengers suffered." In the sentence "Tom, the piper's son, stole a pig," the placing of the commas helps to determine the meaning that the thief was certainly called *Tom*. In "Tom the piper's son stole a pig," he may not have been. And note the different meanings of "The mayor says the inspector is a fool" and "The mayor," says the inspector, "is a fool."

The Use of Capitals

Consider the use of capital letters and of the hyphen. These are matters relating rather to the presentation of our composition than to the composition itself. Still, they are of some importance. Writers were once lavish in the use of capitals. Look at the form in which the printer first presented a famous passage of Addison's to the public—

When I am in serious Humour, I very often walk by myself in Westminster Abbey; where the Gloominess of the Place, and the Use to which it is applied, with the Solemnity of the Building, and the Condition of the People who lie in it, are apt to fill the Mind with a kind of Melancholy, or rather Thoughtfulness, that is not disagreeable.

For my own part, though I am always serious, I do not know what it is to be melancholy; and can therefore take a View of Nature in her deep and solemn Scenes, with the same Pleasure as in her most gay and delightful ones. By this means I can improve myself with those Objects, which others consider with Terror. When I look upon the Tombs of the Great, every Emotion of Envy dies in me; when I read the Epitaphs of the Beautiful, every inordinate Desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of Parents upon a Tomb-stone, my Heart melts with Compassion; when I see the Tomb of the Parents themselves, I consider the Vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow: When I see Kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival Wits placed Side by Side, or the holy Men that divided the World with their Contests and Disputes, I reflect with Sorrow and Astonishment on the little Competitions, Factions, and Debates of Mankind. When I read the several Dates of the Tombs, of some that died Yesterday, and some six hundred Years ago, I consider that great Day when we shall all of us be Contemporaries, and make our Appearance together.

Nearly every noun, you note is capitalized. In modern English we reserve the capital for proper nouns.

And this is how Milton presented his *L'Allegro*—

> Haste thee nymph, and bring with thee
> Jest and youthful Jollity,
> Quips and cranks, and wanton Wiles,
> Nods, and Becks, and Wreathed Smiles,
> Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
> And love to live in dimple sleek;
> Sport that wrinkled care derides,
> And Laughter holding both her sides.

Modern Usage of Capitals

Modern writers are sparing in the use of the capital. The guiding rule for the printer to-day is, it seems, "When in doubt use lower-case"; use a small letter unless there is a clear reason for using a capital letter. Such a clear reason exists in these instances—

(*a*) for the initial word of the sentence to help out the full stop in marking out the sentence, and for the initial word of each line of poetry;

(*b*) when the word is a proper name, or is an adjective closely connected in one's mind with that name. The proper noun *Britain* and its corresponding adjective *British* are illustrations.

When, however, the origin of the adjective does not at once come into mind, the small letter is more usual: we write "saturnine" and do not think of Saturn, "jovial" and do not think of Jove. In this connexion we should note these three usages—

(1) the proper noun attracts to the accompanying common noun the capital letter: "London is on the River Thames."

(2) the common noun being used of one particular individual of its species becomes in a sense a proper noun and takes the capital letter: "During the troubled years of the seventeenth century the *Long Parliament* lasted for an unprecedented period."

You have the converse process when a proper name comes to be applied to a type of person or thing, a type of which the name-giver is a striking instance. To say "a Judas" and "a

Crœsus" is a picturesque way of saying "a traitor" and "a very rich person." The common noun then takes the capital letter, unless indeed its original application has gone into the background: we write "a gamp" and "a hansom" without calling up Mrs. Gamp, the character in fiction, or of Mr. Hansom, the patentee in fact.

(3) In a title, the custom is to put a capital letter for all the important words. Write *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; *The Taming of the Shrew*; *The Shorter Poems of Shelley*; *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; and so on.

The convention regarding capitals in the opening and closing of letters is this: for the opening capitalize each word, "My Dear Sir"; for the close capitalize the first and the last words, "Your obedient Servant."

Hyphens or Not?

Whether or not a compound word should be written with a hyphen is at times hard to determine. Are we to write a solid word, *diningroom*, or a hyphenated word, *dining-room*, or two words, *dining room*? The difficulty comes in the main from the fact that the practice of printers and of writers is inconsistent. Some prefer to make solid words, *airport*, *airtight*, *airway*, even *masthead*. Others prefer to use hyphens.

Perhaps if we remember these rules, we shall at all events be consistent in our own usage—

(1) The hyphen is a symbol whereby, for a particular purpose, two words are made into one: *apple-tree* (the first word indicating a particular kind), *grass-green* (green like the grass), *penny-wise* (wise in relation to pennies), and *pound-foolish*, *father-in-law*, *man-of-war*.

(2) When the novelty of the compound has gone, we may well omit the hyphen, unless (as in *father-in-law*) the resulting word would be too cumbrous. Write *blackbird*, *downfall*, *whitewash*, *overcome*, *barefoot*, *scarecrow*, *spendthrift*, *outlive*. So, too, where there is no present consciousness that the word is a compound we shall not find the hyphen. Thus a hyphen is usually uncalled for in *gospel* (*good-tidings*), *daisy* (*day's eye*), *holiday*, (*holy-day*), *Christmas* (*Christ's-mass*).

Yet we may wish to mark separation. We shall then use

the hyphen, or even write the constituents of the compound apart; thus, we write *Easter Sunday is a holy day* (when we wish to give an accent to *day*); we write—*Each holy-day has its special lessons* (when *holy* is the accented word, and the compound is closer); we write—*Easter Monday is a bank holiday*, with a modification of the spelling (when the origin of the word is in the background). For his special purpose, too, a writer may again separate the elements that we usually see compounded. Thus, Professor Trevelyan has—

In the primeval Saxon forest, hunting had been the duty of the thegn; it was now the pass-time of the unoccupied knight.

Where the compound is new we have the hyphen. Look at the instances in this paragraph of Carlyle's—

Language is called the Garment of Thought: however, it should rather be, Language is the Flesh-Garment, the Body, of Thought. I said that Imagination wove the Flesh-Garment; and does not she? Metaphors are her stuff: examine Language; what, if you except some few primitive elements (of natural sound), what is it all but Metaphors, recognised as such, or no longer recognised; still fluid and florid, or now solid-grown and colourless? If these same primitive elements are the osseous fixtures in the Flesh-Garment, Language,—then are Metaphors its muscles and tissues and living integuments. An unmetaphorical style you shall in vain seek for: is not your very *Attention*, a *Stretching-to*? The difference lies here: some styles are lean, adust, wiry, the muscle itself seems osseous; some are even quite pallid, hunger-bitten, and dead-looking; while others again glow in the flush of health and vigorous self-growth, sometimes (as in my own case) not without an apoplectic tendency.—*Sartor Resartus.*

Look, too, at the examples of compounds in Browning's lines—

Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears.

One method often used of making new compounds is by the prefixing or appending of modifying particles. The Greek prefix *anti* (against), for instance, is very much alive, and serves to make words like *anti-vivisection.* Here, again, when the resulting word has been long in the language, it will be written without the hyphen: *anticlimax, antidote, antipathy, antimacassar.*

(3) Omit the hyphen when the words may stand independent. Write "*The Major General,*" but "*Major-General Dawkins.*" Write "*The Solicitor General,*" but "*The Solicitor-General's contentions*"; for we could hardly place the *'s* at the end of the separated adjective. Write "*The Court Martial was convened,*" but "*The Court-Martial's decision will be promulgated.*"

(4) Write *waterpot* (where there is a single accent and on the first syllable), *downfall, breakfast, whitewash, spendthrift, barefoot, makeshift, masterpiece, spellbound.* Contrast these with *grass-grown, purse-proud, penny-wise, long-haired, kill-joy, man-of-war, half-an-hour, coach-house.*

Some Difficulties over Hyphens

Some temporary misunderstanding may result through clumsiness in the use of the hyphen. It would, for instance, be well to place a hyphen between *light* and *house* in—

She was a light house keeper's daughter.

and a hyphen between *short* and *legs* in—

J. Parks, with his three short legs, came on in place of Tate.

"*A superfluous-hair remover*" is what a lady welcomes, "*a superfluous hair-remover*" is one that nobody wants. "*Irish bacon-tax*" would be "*a tax imposed in Ireland on bacon*"; "*Irish-bacon tax*" is the proper name for "*a tax on Irish bacon.*" "*A violent anti-trade-unionist*" is the right name for one bitterly antagonistic to trade-unions; "*a violent anti-trade unionist*" would describe a unionist much opposed to trade. "*A waste-paper basket*" is a receptacle for papers you do not want; "*a waste paper basket*" would seem to be a basket made of paper and unwanted.

Here are a few examples of hyphenated words: the sentences are from *The Times*—

"Restoration of the Crystal Palace would fail to re-establish an authentic link with the Great Exhibition." (The hyphen of *re-establish* helps towards the pronunciation.)

"The dream of the might-have-been, if the fire had occurred ten years earlier, and there had then arisen the conception of a *Cité Universitaire*, must remain a dream." (From the earliest times the English language has been free in making all sorts of phrases into compounds. Look at Shakespeare's "Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you" and "Then come kiss me, Sweet-and-Twenty, Youth's a stuff will not endure." The making of a new noun, *might-have-been*, is in the line of tradition.)

"Parliamentary reporters are frequent victims of the mumblers. The limit of revenge that the poor things can permit themselves is to say that Mr. So-and-So was indistinctly heard, rather as if the defect were in them and not in him." (Note the double capital in *So-and-So*.)

"A painfully precise and obviously self-conscious enunciation is sheer affectation." (The prefixing of *self* to a word may indicate the reflexive object, as in *self-accuser*; or "by itself," as in *self-sufficing*; or "from oneself" as in *self-command, self-contempt*.)

Exercises

I. These sentences from Charles Lamb's essay, "The Superannuated Man," contain instances of hyphens and of capitals. Explain the reason in each instance—

(*a*) I have visited my old desk-fellow—my co-brethren of the quill—that I had left below in the state militant.

(*b*) What is gone of Black Monday? I can interrupt the man of much occupation when he is busiest. I can insult over him with an invitation to take a day's pleasure with me to Windsor this fine May morning.

(*c*) Farewell, old cronies, yet not for long, for again and again I will come among ye, if I shall have your leave. Farewell, Ch—, dry, sarcastic and friendly! Do—, mild, slow to move, and gentlemanly! Pl—, officious to do, and to volunteer, good services!—and thou, thou dreary pile, fit mansion for a Gresham or a Whittington of old, stately House of Merchants; with thy labyrinthine passages, and light-excluding, pent-up offices, where candles for one half the year supplied the place of the sun's light; unhealthy contributor

to my weal, stern fosterer of my living, farewell! In thee remain, and not in the obscure collection of some wandering bookseller, my "works"! There let them rest, as I do from my labours, piled on thy massy shelves, more MSS. in folio than ever Aquinas left, and full as useful! My mantle I bequeath among ye.

II. Place the appropriate stops in the passage below: you will find the passage rewritten in the Appendix—

Yes said the dealer our windfalls are of various kinds some customers are ignorant and then I touch a dividend of my superior knowledge some are dishonest and here he held up the candle so that the light fell strongly on his visitor and in that case he continued I profit by my virtue.

Markheim had but just entered from the daylight streets and his eyes had not yet grown familiar with the mingled shine and darkness in the shop at these pointed words and before the near presence of the flame he blinked painfully and looked aside.

III. Try to give Macaulay's punctuation of this paragraph—

On occasions which required set speeches Pym generally took the lead Hampden very seldom rose till late in a debate his speaking was of that kind which has in every age been held in highest estimation by English Parliaments ready weighty perspicuous condensed his perception of the feelings of the house was exquisite his temper unalterably placid his manner eminently courteous and gentlemanlike his talents for business were as remarkable as his talents for debate he was says Clarendon of an industry and vigilance not to be tired out or wearied by the most laborious and of parts not to be imposed upon by the most subtle and sharp yet it was rather to his moral than to his intellectual qualities that he was indebted for the vast influence which he possessed when this Parliament began we again quote Clarendon the eyes of all men were fixed upon him as the pilot that must steer the vessel through the tempests and rocks which threatened it and I am persuaded his power and interest at that time were greater to do good or hurt than any means in the kingdom or than any man of his rank hath had in any time.

(The punctuation adopted by Macaulay is in the Appendix).

CHAPTER XIII

SPEAKING AND READING ENGLISH

DOUBTLESS, whether or not you can give an account of how Beethoven achieves his effects, you enjoy listening to his music. It may be that you would have greater enjoyment if you really did appreciate his mastery of the technique of music. So with your study of English. You read a fine passage of prose or of poetry, and you rejoice in it. Your delight in it will not be diminished though you do look into it closely, though you do dissect it so as to understand how it is built up.

Here are some particular words arranged in a particular order; why do they differ in their effect upon you from ordinary talk or ordinary writing? Why do these simple words of one syllable make so stirring an appeal?—"To give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest." You approach the correct answer as you read the words aloud and listen to the sounds of them. After all, "language" is something meant for the tongue rather than the eye.

Or read this of Byron. He is lamenting his kinsman, killed at Waterloo. Do not the slow-moving single syllable words of the last line impress upon your mind the feeling of sadness?—

There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,
And mine were nothing had I such to give;
But when I stood beneath the fresh green tree,
Which living waves where thou didst cease to live,
And saw around me the wide fields revive
With fruits and fertile promise, and the Spring
Come forth her work of gladness to contrive,
With all her reckless birds upon the wing,
I turned from all she brought to those she could not bring.

If you wish to get a full measure of the delight that the English language can give, you will not consider time ill-spent on the close study of the sounds of English. To *appreciate* as well as enjoy is impossible without such study.

The Sound of Words

Your study of shorthand will have helped you enormously in this effort to understand how a great writer is able to stir our feelings as he does. For you will have learned how to value sounds, and to record them; and, in poetry at all events, sound is a thing that matters much—matters more than anything else, some people contend.[1]

That is why you will enjoy poetry more by reading it aloud, or by hearing it read, than by simply looking at a number of black marks upon white paper. Nor is this at all confined to poetry; it applies to a good prose passage, too.

Read these three sentences aloud, for instance. You know the passage well already; but it is abundantly worthy of closer study than very likely you have yet given it—

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Now ask yourself why this passage rouses and stimulates: is not one reason the iteration in various connexions of the long vowel *i*? We have it in *arise, shine, thy, Gentile, light, bright.* It rings through the first sentence, calling with clarion note. It is absent from the second sentence: "For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people"—a contrast in both idea and sound. There the long *o* and the *r* dominate. The key-note is heard again in the third sentence; through this it rings with triumph to the close.

[1] We must not, however, attach so much weight to sound that we undervalue sense. So Pope tells us: " 'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence. The sound must seem an echo to the sense." We are not to suppose that, because a passage reads smooth, it is right; that because it reads rough, it is wrong—

> But most by numbers judge a poet's song;
> And smooth or rough with them is right or wrong:
> In the bright muse though thousand charms conspire,
> Her voice in all these tuneful fools admire;
> Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,
> Not mend their minds; as some to Church repair,
> Not for the doctrine, but the music there.

Assonance

We all delight in the sounds of words skilfully used. The meaning of our words matters a great deal; the meaning is the most important property of a word. But the sound of the words matters, too. You have been in a hollow among the hills. You have shouted so that your words may reverberate once, twice, thrice—

Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echo flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

"Assonance" is the term widely applied to this echoing of sounds in the words of our prose or verse. Children delight in the recurring sounds of rhymes like "Dickory, dickory, dock; The mouse ran up the clock"; and the greatest writers add to our enjoyment by the apt use of these echoes. It is true that Milton ushers in his *Paradise Lost* by a note pouring scorn upon "the jingling sound of like endings—a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory." Yet, as you very well know, he has himself left us delightful poems like *L'Allegro* in which rhyme adds greatly to our enjoyment.

With clumsy writers the repetition of sound may be disagreeable. Here, for instance, are two sentences from a single letter, "There can be no doubt about the identity" and "The claims can be just as easily adjusted after as before." Do not the phrases, "doubt about" and "just as easily adjusted," annoy you? Such combinations would be impossible to one with a sensitive ear.

Musical Sounds in English

Read aloud these lines again. For the moment don't trouble about the meaning; attend only to the sounds—

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

Don't you thoroughly enjoy the sounds of the combinations "Kubla Khan", "pleasure-dome decree", "sacred river ran",

"measureless to man", "a sunless sea"; the repeated vowels in "Xanadu" and "Kubla Khan"; the haunting melody of the whole? The whole poem of Coleridge's is full of these verbal felicities.

Now go to another lover of music. As we might expect, Milton's lines are full of these partial resemblances; we can imagine him in his blindness dictating to his daughter, testing again and again the harmony of his verse.

Examine three lines as examples. What is noteworthy about the sounds in this line?

Now to the moon in wavering Morris move

Is it not that the long *o* in "moon," the *m* of "moon" and "Morris", the *v* of "wavering", are all echoed in "move"? Perhaps you have noticed that Milton's choice of names often depends upon the sounds of the words: in the line

And Tiresias and Phineas, prophets old,

notice how in "prophets" you have the *t*, *r*, *s*, *ph*, of the proper names; and notice the echoing of the vowels (in inverse order) in "Aspramont" and "Montalban", "Jousted in Aspramont and Montalban."

Occasionally the term "assonance" is used in a narrow sense to indicate the echoing of vowels, the consonant sounds being different. In this narrow sense *comet* and *foster* are assonances. The writers of the old ballads sometimes contented themselves with such a vowel echo in place of a full rhyme. Thus, note *deep* and *feet* in these lines—

Half ouer, half ouer to Aberdour,
It's fifty fathoms deep,
And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens
Wi' the Scots lord at his feet.

Some Consonants

Consider for a while the effects wrought by consonant sounds. The presence of the throat letter *g*, the guttural, makes us realize how appropriate the following words are for the senses they are meant to convey: *gurgle, gargle, struggle, wriggle.* The gushing *f* sound is similarly appropriate in words

like *foam, froth, fount.* See how Wordsworth brings these two sounds together in the lines—

> And from the turf a fountain broke
> And gurgled at our feet.

Notice, again, how the sound *m*—the sound of the wave, something like the drawing of a wave, too—comes into words signifying a low, drawn-out sound; *murmur, hum, moan, melodies.* The letter *l* trills in words like *lisp, lone, level*; the letter *r* in words like *ring, drive, river, strife, destroy.*

Well, here are a few examples where you may study the manner in which the great writers use the sounds. You all know Tennyson's *The Lotos Eaters*: it is a beautiful poem, which will rejoice you when reading it again.

Tennyson was keenly anxious about the sounds of his words. "I had rather," he said, "lose a thought than get two s's together." And yet his lines give little sign of labour. In *The Lotos Eaters* he wishes to give you, by the very sounds of the words he uses, the idea of drowsiness, of care-soothing sleep. How languidly each line of this passage dies away in an *m* or an *n*! Do not the sounds of the words in themselves convey the idea? Coupled with the gentle rhythm of the lines it almost lulls you to rest; you feel that you can hardly reach the end of the long twelve-syllabled line that ends the stanza—

> All round the coast the languid air did swoon
> Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
> Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
> And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
> Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

Or read aloud these lines from another of Tennyson's poems. The aged Ulysses cannot rest from travel. He hears the compelling call of the sea; and again he rouses up the men who had shared his exploits—

> The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
> The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
> Moans sound with many voices

Note the expressive and apt words, *twinkle, wanes, moans, voices.* But the whole poem is admirable in this matter.

Study once again this sonnet of Shelley's. You find much to note in it, much cunning use of sounds. One point in particular you will not fail to miss: after the description of the desolation of the desert, the last line, with its repeated *l* and *s* and its long syllables *lone, stretch, away*, cannot but suggest the sands going on and on to the farthest bounds of sight—

OZYMANDIAS OF EGYPT

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

This charming little song of Shakespeare's will provide you with an exercise in vowel sounds. Select from it *nine* words containing long ā (indicated in four different ways), and *five* words containing long ē—

Take, O take those lips away
  That so sweetly were foresworn,
And those eyes, the break of day,
  Lights that do mislead the morn:
But by my kisses bring again,
    Bring again,—
Seals of love, but seal'd in vain,
    Sealed in vain!

[*For solutions see Appendix*]

Our Purpose when Reading

When reading, we do indeed put something of ourselves into the printed words; and our success as readers will depend in some measure upon that something. You turn the writing into talking; and in talk expression does much. The law itself admits the possibility of making a bargain, though you use no words, either spoken or written. The law's attitude is a reasonable attitude. So long as an action, a gesture, even a look, can be interpreted by another, it fulfils the purpose of language; it communicates thought.

The song, for instance, goes: "Drink to me only with thine eyes, And I will pledge with mine." That communication of thought by means of the eyes was conversation—effective conversation, too; perhaps words would have been less effective. Eyes can express as well as tongues. We actually have in our law books records of slander actions based upon an opprobrious gesture and an inarticulate sound. Nor need we be surprised; for gesture and sound can hold a person up to hatred and contempt. You wink—rarely, one hopes—at your friend. You merely drop an eyelid. He sees it drop, though the others do not; and he is at once initiated into a whole train of your thoughts. "You and I," you tell him, "see something in all this—something that is very funny—that is hidden, and that we must keep hidden from the duller folk around us. We shall laugh over it hereafter."

The great actor knows well these helps towards understanding; he does not content himself with speaking the words—

> And how did *Garrick* speak the soliloquy last night?—Oh, against all rule, my lord,—most ungrammatically! betwixt the substantive and the adjective, which should agree together in *number*, *case*, and *gender*, he made a breach thus,—stopping, as if the first wanted setting;—and betwixt the nominative case, which your lordship knows should govern the verb, he suspended his voice, in the epilogue a dozen times three seconds and three-fifths by a stop-watch, my lord, each time.—Admirable grammarian!—But in suspending his voice—was the sense suspended likewise? Did no expression of attitude or countenance fill up the

chasm?—Was the eye silent? Did you narrowly look —I looked only at the stop-watch, my lord.—Excellen observer!

Precautions when Reading

In your reading aloud—as indeed in your speaking—you will follow the precept "Speak Out; Speak Clearly." Only so will you be effective. To utter one's words so that they can be heard and interpreted without trouble is both wisdom and courtesy. That is why a teacher is for ever reiterating the precept. Unluckily, this injunction of the teacher's is, like many another, ignored as often as it is followed—more often, indeed; and many people pass through life giving incessant trouble and irritation to their hearers. They mumble rather than speak.

To be sure, teachers of to-day are less vigorous than Monsieur Paul in their onslaught upon indistinct utterance—

When I re-entered the schoolroom, behold M. Paul raging like a pestilence! Some pupil had not spoken audibly or distinctly enough to suit his ear and taste, and now she and others were weeping, and he was raving from his estrade, almost livid. Curious to mention, as I appeared he fell on me.

Was I the mistress of these girls? Did I profess to teach them the conduct befitting ladies? And did I permit, and, he doubted not, encourage them to strangle their mother-tongue in their throats, to mince and mash it between their teeth, as if they had some base cause to be ashamed of the words they uttered? Was this modesty? He knew better. It was a vile pseudo-sentiment, the offspring or the forerunner of evil. Rather than submit to this mopping and mowing, this mincing and grimacing, this grinding of a noble tongue, this general affectation and sickening stubbornness of the pupils of the first class, he would throw them up for a set of insupportable *petites maitresses*, and confine himself to teaching the ABC to the third division.—(*Villette.*) CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

Vox Humana

Teachers, and every one else, dislike the mumbling as much as the fiery Frenchman did. You will enjoy what *The Times* says regarding the use of the human voice, *Vox Humana* its leader writer prefers to call it—

A recent extract from *The Times* of a hundred years ago contained a pleasant reminder that it is sometimes expedient to temper godliness with worldliness. A clergyman, wishing to hire a chapel, thoughtfully announced, not only that his religious opinions were sound, but also that he had a strong voice. He was wise in his generation. A gospel that cannot be heard is not likely to bring conviction or comfort. The dumb oracle cannot hope to compete with its rival's "hideous hum." Nothing is more irritating than to believe that something good is being said and yet not to be able to hear a word. It is the great tragedy of deafness. Parliamentary reporters, and other reporters too, are frequent victims of the mumbler. The limit of revenge that the poor things can permit themselves is to say that Mr. So-and-So was indistinctly heard, rather as if the defect were in them and not in him. At the other extreme come the lungs of leather and the throat of brass, bewildering and confounding by the sheer violence of vocal impact. They are perhaps somewhat unfairly prejudiced by the comparatively widespread ability to translate "Vox et praeterea nihil." It is by no means always safe to assume that there is nothing behind the resounding voice. Achilles was terrific when he shouted from the wall, but he was even more deadly in the field. The politician is on record who reminded his interrupters that he had one signal advantage over them in discussing the question at issue. "A voice like a foghorn," came the ready interjection. But Stentor had his wits as well as words. "That makes two," he retorted, and blandly explained that the other was knowledge of the subject.

There is a moving quality in the human voice that defies analysis. In speaking, and even more in singing,

its effect can be overwhelming. A beautiful voice is one of the most precious natural gifts. It is quite possible to fall in love with a disembodied voice. Many of us know telephone voices which we delight in hearing. Wireless announcers could probably tell great stories of the fascination which may be exercised by the voice of one unseen and unknown. Radio transmission now enables even the humblest of us to be moved to ecstasy or tears by the voices of world-famous speakers and singers. Science is taking more and more attention to the supreme need for clear audition. Many a beautiful old church, many a noble hall, is marred by bad acoustics. The orator who tries to overcome the handicap by raising his voice only awakens louder and more confusing echoes. The artful speaker tries to find the pillar of the wall to which he can direct his ordinary voice with the best chance of being generally heard. These difficulties and the determination of modern architecture to triumph over them have their moral for private life and the ordinary man. Indistinctness of utterance, due not to physical defect but to mere carelessness or sloth, is as much of a discourtesy to one's fellows as every other form of selfishness. A painfully precise and obviously self-conscious enunciation would of course be sheer affectation, and would rightly incur parody and ridicule. The golden mean, if not quite the golden voice of the incorporeal Tim, can be found if the guiding thought is always to say what we have to say in such a manner as to give a minimum of trouble to those who hear us.

Speak Clearly

We may, therefore, hope for pardon though we do dwell upon the matter.

"Her voice was ever soft, gentle and low," says Shakespeare; and he adds, "An excellent thing in woman." Some of us overlook the fact that we may speak softly and yet clearly. We can give due weight to the various syllables; we can place the accents in their proper place; we can avoid running the words

into one another as the bus conductor does when he calls out "Ipako" upon reaching "Hyde Park Corner."

To be sure, we are not to go to the other extreme and affect a more exact pronunciation than that of those about us: it is a little absurd to say for *knowledge, nō-lej* when others say *nŏlej*, to say for *picture, piktūr* when others say *pikcher*, to say for *often, of-ten*, two syllables, when others say *ofn*, one syllable.

This affectation is almost as absurd as the similar one of pronouncing silent letters out of fear lest people should think us ignorant of spelling—to say for *hour, hour* when others say *our*, or for *medicine, medĭcĭn* where others say *medcn*. "Speak the speech I pray you," says Hamlet, "as I pronounce it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines."

Nor are we wise to display erudition by showing that, though others pay no attention to the original sound of the word, we know the original and conform to it. Better go with the crowd and pronounce *cinema* as *sĭn-em-a*, even though we still retain the *k* sound and the long *i* in the less-used word, the adjective *kīnetic*. To pronounce *cocaine* as *kŏkan* instead of *kok-āin* is "vulgar," says the Oxford Dictionary. Vulgar it may be; but it is general, and therefore correct for the purposes of intercourse.

Deficit (*dĕfisit*), with the short *e*, is the more frequent, even though the Latin would suggest long *e*. We say *āgent* and *ālien* where the Latin *a* is short; we say *ĕditor* where the Latin is *ēditor*; we say *cŏmic, ĕcho*, and *ĕthics*, where the Greek vowels *ō* and *ē* (as in Milton's *Cōmus*) is long; we call the questioner of old *Sŏcratēs*, though he called himself *Sōcratēs*; many people speak of the *Ĭdylls of the King*, though *īdyll* is consistent with the original Greek; in the Latin lesson the schoolboy will say *mĭnor*, he will say *mīnor* when he speaks English.

The Reign of Custom

You will try to speak in accordance with the custom of those entitled to be looked upon as good speakers. This is all very well, you may say; but who are so entitled? And indeed there are difficulties. One is this, that upon many words the dictionaries themselves are at variance. For instance, *Is the accent*

we say *house-hold* but *re-ceive*; we say *op-por-tun-it-y* and *mel-an-chol-y* and *a-rith-metic*. In many of our words, though, the accent varies as the work of the word changes. Look, for instance, at the word we have just used, the word *accent*. Used as a noun—"The accent in English words is usually at the beginning of the word"—we pronounce it *ac-cent*. Used as a verb—"We often accent the verb differently from the noun"—we pronounce it as *ac-cent*. We talk of "*a com-pound*" but "*to compound* a felony"; we "give a testimony of good *con-duct*," we "*con-duct* operations"; we notice a *decrease* in the number of births, we *decrease* the number of errors in our spelling; we make an *extract* of a favourite passage, we ask the dentist to *extract* an aching tooth; we compose a *di-gest* of a number of documents, we *di-gest* the information we gather. So with *pro-duce* (noun), *pro-duce* (verb); *essay* (noun), *es-say* (verb); *in-sult* (noun), *in-sult* (verb).

Another way that the instinct of our language has devised to distinguish noun from verb is the altering of the sound of a letter: *use* as a noun rhymes with *loose*, *use* as a verb rhymes with *muse*. That is, the noun has the *s* sound, the verb the *z* sound. Compare *abuse*, the noun, rhyming with *truce*, and *abuse*, the verb, rhyming with *fuse*.

Noun and Adjective

Occasionally, when the same letters represent both noun and adjective, we get a similar change in accent. The accent falls on the first syllable in the noun, on a later syllable in the adjective. We have the noun *August*, the name of the month, and the adjective, *august*, meaning "majestic" or "venerable"; we have the noun *compact* (an agreement), ("The compact between the parties was scrupulously observed"), and the

adjective *compact*, knit closely together; we have the noun *expert* ("The expert gave evidence"), and the adjective *expert* ("You are now an expert writer"); we have the noun *minute* ("Sixty minutes make an hour"), and the adjective *minute*, the change of accent being here accompanied by a change in the vowel sound ("Minute additions in course of time mean much"); we have the noun *invalid* and the adjective *invalid* ("An invalid contract will not be enforced").

Exercise

Now test yourself. Indicate where the accent falls in the words: *triumph, triumphal; colony, colonial; commerce, commercial; advertise, advertisement; admire, admirable; reveal, revelation; photograph, photography; impious, acumen, circuitous, chagrin, furore, heinous, puisne, municipal, flaccid, forum, feline, kiosk, irrefragable, inimitable, assiduity, impetus, indissoluble, irreparable, marchioness, recognizance.*

Two Pronunciation Tests

(1) Indicate the pronunciation of *dishevel, laboratory, apparatus, precedence, decadent, vagary, abdomen, despicable, subsidence, exigency.*

(You will find a comment in the Appendix.)

(2) Indicate the pronunciation of the following words. Mark the syllable accented with /, and mark the length of vowels by placing – over a long vowel, and ˘ over a short vowel—

abject: absinthe: abstract (as adjective): acacia: accessory (i.e. a not indispensable accompaniment): acoustic: adult: advertisement: aerial: again: aged: ally: alternate (as adjective): alternative: amenable: amenities: apparatus: apparent: aroma: aspirant: attorney: ay (*or* aye): banal: boatswain: bow: bravado: canine: cinema: clematis: communal: contrary: conjure: decadence: decade: deficit: diphtheria: doctrinal: enervate: extempore: finale: finance: financier: forecastle: garrulous: genuine: gibber: glacier: gratis: grimace: heinous: idyll: impious: lamentable: legend: literature: nought: opponent: pageant: patriot: patron: petal: precedence: precedent: quay: ration: revolt: sacrifice: subtle: tortious: tribunal: vagary: wrath: zoology.

(The accepted pronunciations are shown in the Appendix.)

CHAPTER XIV

ON RHYTHM

You do not in your talk, unless indeed you are a very peculiar person, keep on the one tone: it would be dreadfully monotonous if you did. It would be unnatural, too. Even when you speak of the sound of a clock you make "Tick" different from "Tock," though it is quite certain that the clock itself makes no distinction as it beats out the time. Your tone rises and falls.

Prose itself, yours and mine, has we say its rhythm, its cadence, whether designed or not. It is true that we apply the adjective "rhythmical" to such sentences as are specially to be noted for their skilful arrangement of stresses. The sentence that we call rhythmical falls naturally, as you read it aloud, into groups of sound; and the groups are well suited to keep one another company.

A majestic rhythm that of some prose is. No wonder Dryden speaks of "the other harmony of prose." Look again at this sentence of Milton's. Read it aloud paying particular attention to the sounds, noting as you do its cadence—noting, that is, how the sound rises and falls—

I cánnot praíse / a fúgitive and clóistered vírtue, / unexércised and unbréathed / that néver sállies out and seéks her advérsary / but slínks out of the rácе / where that immórtal gárland / is to be rún for /, nót without dúst and héat /.

The placing of the accents in prose is a precarious task, and there is usually much scope for difference of opinion. But doubtless you will agree that the crests of the successive waves of sounds are where the accent mark is placed.

Stevenson, who like Milton was a conscious artist in his prose as in his verse, greatly admired this sentence. He points out, too, that in the phrase that ends the sentence, "not without dust and heat," every word ends with a dental, all but one

with *t*; and he comments, "The singular dignity of the first clause, and this hammer-stroke of the last, go far to make the charm of this exquisite sentence."

Here is another wonderful sentence. It comes from the chapter to which the extract on page 4 belongs—

But the iníquity of oblívion blíndly scattereth her póppy, and deáls with the mémory of mén without distínction to mérit of pérpetúity.

Read this aloud several times, and you will realize what prose rhythm means.

Prose with a Pleasing Rhythm

Here, as an excellent example of more recent prose and for your great delight, is a paragraph from *Far From the Madding Crowd*. In it Thomas Hardy is describing the sensation of a lonely watcher on a hill at midnight. Read the paragraph aloud, and mark the cadence, as we did in the Milton sentence—

To persons standing alone on a hill during a clear midnight such as this, the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable movement. The sensation may be caused by the panoramic glide of the stars past earthly objects, which is perceptible in a few minutes of stillness, or by the better outlook upon space that a hill affords, or by the wind, or by the solitude; but whatever be its origin the impression of riding along is vivid and abiding. The poetry of motion is a phrase much in use, and to enjoy the epic form of that gratification it is necessary to stand on a hill at a small hour of the night, and, having first expanded with a sense of difference and disregardful of all such proceedings at this time, long and quietly watch your stately progress through the stars. After such a nocturnal reconnoitre it is hard to get back to earth, and to believe that the consciousness of such majestic speeding is derived from a tiny human frame.

How very effective, again, is the dying close of this fine passage from Froude's *History of England*! He was writing concerning the close of the Middle Ages—

For, indeed, a change was coming upon the world, the meaning and direction of which even still is hidden from us, a change from era to era. The paths trodden by the footsteps of ages were broken up; old things were passing away, and the faith and the life of ten centuries were dissolving like a dream. Chivalry was dying; the abbey and the castle were soon together to crumble into ruins; and all the forms, desires, beliefs, convictions of the old world were passing away, never to return. A new continent had risen up beyond the western sea. The floor of heaven, inlaid with stars, had sunk back into an infinite abyss of immeasurable space; and the firm earth itself, unfixed from its foundations, was seen to be but a small atom in the awful vastness of the universe. In the fabric of habit which they had so laboriously built for themselves, mankind were to remain no longer.

And now it is all gone—like an unsubstantial pageant faded; and between us and the old English there lies a gulf of mystery which the prose of the historian will never adequately bridge. They cannot come to us, and our imagination can but feebly penetrate to them. Only among the aisles of our cathedrals, only as we gaze upon their silent figures sleeping on their tombs, some faint conceptions float before us of what these men were when they were alive; and perhaps in the sound of church bells, that peculiar creation of mediaeval age, which falls upon the ear like the echo of a vanished world.

On occasion the rhythm of prose becomes so insistent that it approximates to the regular beat of poetry. The rhythm becomes metre. Perhaps this excessive regularity irritates a sensitive ear. Perhaps, though, the regularity will rejoice rather than irritate. Test yourself by reading this piece of metrical prose: it is from *The Old Curiosity Shop*—

And now the bell—the bell she had so often heard

by night and day, and listened to with solemn pleasure, almost as a living voice—rung its remorseless toll, for her, so young, so beautiful, so good. Decrepit age, and vigorous life, and blooming youth, and helpless infancy, poured forth—on crutches, in the pride of strength and health, in the full blush of promise, in the mere dawn of life—to gather round her tomb.

Regular Rhythm of Poetry

The cadence of the prose passage will not be—should not be—one of equal and regular waves. We go to poetry for this regularity, to poetry where the rhythmic beat can be easily fitted to music. Here is one of Shakespeare's lines, "In maiden meditation, fancy free." It occurs, as you know, in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, and is doubtless intended as a compliment to Queen Elizabeth. You note the regularity with which, throughout the ten syllables, a strong accent follows a weak accent: ŭ In maid-ĕn med-ĭ-tă-tĭŏn, // făn-cy frēe: in the early plays you find that most of the lines have this regular rhythm.[1] In the later plays many slight divergencies from the regular beat serve to give variety where there might be a danger of monotony.

Thus, in Macbeth's moralizing—

> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more: it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
> Signifying nothing.

you may find many departures from the regular rhythm.

The Iambic Group

It is this group, of a lightly accented syllable followed by a strongly accented syllable—*iambus* is the technical name—

[1] In Latin verse the length of syllables, rather than the stress put upon them, gave the rhythm. Here, for instance, is the line—

> Tĕndĕ/bantquĕ mănŭs || rĭp/ae ŭlterĭ/oris ă/more
> (And they reached out their hands in longing for the farther shore.)

Length matters, with us too; but we make the greater use of stress.

that is by far the most common in English verse. You may have five groups to the line, "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day." Or four, "Through caverns measureless to man." Or three, "The ice was all around." Or, rarely, six, "And like a wounded snake drags its slow length along."

Herrick, who delighted in poetical novelties, sometimes combines lines of varied feet. Here is his "Ode for Ben Jonson"—

Ah Ben!
Say how or when
Shall we thy guests,
Meet at those lyric feasts,
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tun;
Where we such clusters had,
As made us nobly wild, not mad?
And yet each verse of thine
Out-did the meat, out-did the frolic wine.

My Ben!
Or come again
Or send to us
Thy wit's great overplus;
But teach us yet
Wisely to husband it,
Lest we that talent spend;
And having once brought to an end
That precious stock,—the store
Of such a wit; the world should have no more.

Rising and Falling Rhythms

Contrast with these rising rhythms, a falling rhythm, in which a strong accent precedes a weak accent—

Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful jollity,
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles.

So the verse dances along "On the light fantastic toe." The technical name for this group, consisting of a syllable strongly accented followed by one weakly accented, is *trochee*.

Other groups there are, though much less frequent than the two-syllable groups, where two unaccented syllables are combined with one accented syllable. Here is a rising rhythm, each foot of three syllables, from Byron—

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold,
And the sheen of their spears was like stars in the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

You get the falling rhythm in Hood's "Bridge of Sighs"—

Touch her not scornfully
Think of her mournfully.

It is true that you will not always find perfect regularity in the lines. You would very likely soon be wearied if you did; you certainly will not find a long succession of the lines of Shakespeare or of Milton with a regular weak-strong accent throughout. Try, for instance, these three lines of Cleopatra's—

Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have
Immortal longings in me; now no more
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.

Or this verse paragraph, the opening lines of Book II of *Paradise Lost*—

High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand,
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
Satan exalted sat, by merit raised
To that bad eminence; and from despair
Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
Vain war with Heaven.

The iambic foundation is kept; but an occasional trochee gives a desirable variation.

A Regular Cadence

Pope is more regular than most poets. A too severe critic said, indeed, that Pope had turned poetry into "a mere mechanic art," and that "every warbler had his tune by heart." But the regular beats of the rhythm were admirable for his clever lines, his little poisoned arrows against Addison, for instance—

> Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
> Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike,

and for his lively wit. Here are the lines that were aimed at Addison, looked upon in his day as the great ruler of the literary world—

> And were there one whose fires
> True genius kindles and fair fame inspires,
> Blest with each talent and each art to please,
> And born to write, converse, and live with ease;
> Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
> Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne;
> View him with scornful yet with jealous eyes,
> And hate, for arts that caused himself to rise;
> Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
> And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
> Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
> Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
> Alike reserved to blame as to commend
> A timorous foe and a suspicious friend:
> Dreading even fools, by flatterers besieged,
> And so obliging that he ne'er obliged:
> Like Cato give his little senate laws,
> And sit attentive to his own applause;
> While wits and templars every sentence raise,
> And wonder with a foolish face of praise;
> Who but must laugh if such a man there be,
> Who would not weep if Atticus were he?[1]

[1] "I sent the verses to Mr. Addison," said Pope, "and he used me very civilly ever after." Of course he did; it was not prudent to invite a second flight of such hornet's stings.

EXERCISE

The exercise you are invited to work consists of a little of Pope's *Iliad*.

Hector's mother is beseeching him not to stay and meet Achilles on the plain but to retire within the walls of Troy. Write out the passage, supplying words suitable in meaning and scansion to fill the blank spaces—

"Have mercy on me, O my son! revere
The words of age; attend a parent's prayer!
If ever thee in these fond arms I press'd,
Or still'd thy —— clamours at this ——;
Ah do not thus our helpless years forego,
But, by our walls secured, repel the ——
Against his rage if singly thou ——
Should'st thou (but heaven —— it) should'st thou bleed,
Nor must thy —— lie honour'd on the bier,
Nor ——, nor mother, grace thee with a tear!
Far from our pious rites those dear remains
Must feast the —— on the —— plains."

(The missing words are in the Appendix.)

A Contrast

Perhaps you have noticed—it is indeed quite noticeable—that in Milton's lines the sound-scheme is carried beyond the single line or the couplet. In the lines of Pope and Dryden each couplet, as a rule, is a complete composition. Read these two passages and note the contrast; read them aloud if you would get full realization of the difference. The first is a little from Book II of *Paradise Lost*; the second is the famous description of the Duke of Buckingham, son of the Duke that we read of in *The Three Musketeers*.

1. Such applause was heard
As Mammon ended, and his sentence pleased,
Advising peace; for such another field
They dreaded worse than Hell; so much the fear
Of thunder and the sword of Michael
Wrought still within them; and no less desire
To found this nether empire, which might rise,
By policy, and long process of time,
In emulation opposite to Heaven.
Which when Beelzebub perceived, than whom,

Satan except, none higher sat, with grave
Aspect he rose, and in his rising seemed
A pillar of state. Deep on his front engraven
Deliberation sat and public care;
And princely counsel in his face yet shone,
Majestic though in ruin. Sage he stood,
With Atlantean shoulders fit to bear
The weight of mightiest monarchies; his look
Drew audience and attention still as night
Or summer's noontide air, while thus he spake.

2. Some of their chiefs were princes of the land;
In the first rank of these did Zimri stand;
A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome:
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong;
Was everything by starts, and nothing long;
But, in the course of one revolving moon,
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon:
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
Blest madman, who could every hour employ,
With something new to wish, or to enjoy!
Railing and praising were his usual themes;
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes:
So over violent, or over civil,
That every man with him was God or Devil.
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art:
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.
Beggared by fools, whom still he found too late:
He had his jest, and they had his estate.

Long Vowels and Short

As you note, much more enters into the matter than the accent. The accents may come in the same order yet the completed lines may sound very different from one another. Here is an example from Coleridge's *Christabel*. The long words of the first group and the short vowels of the second group are

effective echoes of the sense. Read the passage aloud, and note the distinction—

She stole along, and nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And nought was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Much of our enduring writing—our literature, that is—consists of such playing with language. Pope's lines upon the topic are well known—

'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence:
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.
Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows
And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar;
When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
The line, too, labours and the words move slow;
Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,
Flies o'er the unbending corn and skims along the main.

His own line "Up the high hill he heaves the huge round stone," impressing upon our minds the sense of effort, illustrates what he means. Read the lines in *Lycidas* where Milton describes the unsatisfying lessons of those who were intruders into the Church—

Their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw.

Note the harsh sounds—*gr*, *sr*, *wr*, *str*—dominating the line. Or read aloud the lines in which he speaks of the opening of the gates of Satan's prison—

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

Note how the growling of the *r* sound is the dominant note. Contrast this with such a line as this one describing the song of the nightingale—

> She all night long her amorous descant sung.

In the full verse paragraph see how the poet brings out the continuity of the song by means of the broken lines before and after—

> Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray
> Had in her sober livery all things clad.
> Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
> They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
> Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale.
> She all night long her amorous descant sung:
> Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
> With living fires, Hesperus, that led
> The starry host, rose brightest till the Moon,
> Rising in clouded majesty at length,
> Imperial Queen, unveiled her peerless light,
> And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

Linking Sound to Sense

This suiting of sound to sense, this echoism, is the power that the Greeks called *onomatopœia*, name-making, that is. A noise or what produces it creates in a manner its own name, and a speaker adopts the sound. Echo words they may be called, words like *bang*, *cackle*, *fizz*, *gibber*, *giggle*, *hiss*, *rumble*, *cuckoo*. Read aloud these instances—

> The lisp of leaves and the ripple of rain.
>
> SWINBURNE.

Who hath not seen Thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

KEATS.

Why! the last lines give the very sound of the juice oozing from the apples under press.

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height;
. . . the children call, and I,
Thy shepherd, pipe, and sweet is every sound—
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet:
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

TENNYSON.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent Sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea.

COLERIDGE.

None can overlook the wonderful imitative effect of the *r*'s and the *l*'s giving us the ripple of the water; the *f*'s giving the speeding of the vessel; and the whole of the first stanza full of rush and movement. None can miss the contrast afforded by the heavy syllables of the second stanza.

This toying with the sounds of words, this delightful pastime of playing with the language, is of many kinds. The toying may be in excess, or at any rate it may not suit all tastes. "Some," says a severe critic of old, "use overmuch repetition of one letter as, 'Pitiful poverty prayeth for a penny, but puffed presumption payeth not a point." Is this sentence from Trevelyan's *History of England*, for example, with its "learning, licence, liberty and religion," one that uses "overmuch repetition of a letter"?

In Simon's day it was still possible for youth to be the sectary at once of learning, licence, liberty and religion, and to feel no contradiction.

Some of you may rejoice in such a string of alliterations as in this list of old Burton's. "Beauty passes," he says. Yes: "Tyrant time turns Venus to a Fury. One grows too fat, another too lean; modest Matilda, pretty, pleasing Peg, sweet-singing Susan, mincing, merry Moll, dainty dancing Doll, neat Nancy, jolly Jean, nimble Nell, kissing Kate, bouncing Bess with black eyes, fair Phyllis with fine white hands, fiddling Frank, tall Tib, slender Sib, will quickly lose their grace and grow out of fashion." Others may dislike the passage, and think the alliteration in excess. *Chacun à son goût*—every-one to his taste.

You may even, at times, delight in Browning's ingenious and grotesque rhymes, in these lines, for example—

While, treading down rose and ranunculus,
You *Tommy-make-room-for-your-Uncle* us!
Troop, all of you—man or homunculus,
Quick march! for Xanthippe, my housemaid,
If once on your pates she a souse made
With what, pan or pot, bowl or *skoramis*
First comes to her hand—things were more amiss!

or these better known ones—

An hour they sat in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence:
"For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,
I wish I were a mile hence!"

Yet we must feel on occasion that the playing is a little foolish. Here is Campbell's fine poem "Ye Mariners of England." Don't you resent in it the meaningless lines?

> "The meteor flag of England
> Shall yet terrific burn"

And these lines, too?

> "With thunders from her native oak
> She quells the floods below"

What in fact do they mean? Would not the gunners think the lines a censure upon their skill?

CHAPTER XV

LEARNING THE ART OF PRODUCTION

How are we to set about the deliberate study of English? The teacher is tempted to answer that there is no method. For the teacher has often asked himself, "Can you really teach English of set purpose?" "The teaching of English," writes one who gave much thought to it: "perpetually trembles on the verge of absurdity: it is not that the teaching of English is in itself more absurd than the teaching of any other literature, but the absurdity is more easily detected." Well, the English teacher does have a more difficult task than that of his fellows, as also he has the greater responsibility for the training of the scholars. One difficulty is that his scholars are inevitably, in regard to English, of the most varied degree of competency; for in English most of the training is outside the classroom. The teacher of typewriting may treat all his new class as beginners: probably he is wise to do so. Not so the teacher of English; no *tabula rasa* presents itself for him to write upon. Another difficulty consists in this, that what the teacher considers—and rightly considers—to be trash may be the heralding of great achievements in the future.

Read "Fra Lippo Lippi" again, and see how poor brother Lippo was hindered and fettered by the authorities' insistence on the traditional: "Paint all out, try at it a second time." The unsophisticated admired; those steeped in the learning of the time disapproved—

> I painted all, then cried " 'Tis ask and have—
> Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
> And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
> The Monks closed in a circle and praised loud
> Till checked,—taught what to see and not to see
> Being simple bodies,—"That's the very man!
> Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
> That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
> To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
> But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;

Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time.

It was ever "Art made tongue-tied by authority." The conscientious teacher of English will, it is pretty certain, at times repress where he ought to encourage, will throw cold water upon what may be sparks of real worth, even of genius.

"Do not embroider upon the facts," the teacher says. Yet this is what the great writers—novelists, historians, biographers—all do—

How did you contrive to grasp
The thread which led you through this labyrinth?
How build such solid fabric out of air?
How on such slight foundation found this tale,
Biography, narrative? or in other words,
How many lies did it require to make
The portly truth you here present us with?

The teacher of English would, for instance, have been obliged to reprove Dryden for the bathos in his description of the Great Fire—

The Eternal heard, and from the heavenly quire
Chose out the cherub with the flaming sword,
And bade him swiftly drive the approaching fire
From where our naval magazines were stored.

When Wordsworth solemnly puts forward lines such as—

A household tub, like one of those
Which women use to wash their clothes,

the attempt to cultivate taste in the ordinary boy or girl would seem to be wellnigh hopeless. Yet the teacher must persevere; and he may find abundant reward in awakening powers that but for him would have remained asleep.

Stevenson's Method

Stevenson's is the method of imitation. He played the sedulous ape to the writers he admired. He was for ever describing what he encountered, and he wrote his diaries; but,

above all, he wrote and wrote again imitations of the passages that struck him as noteworthy.

If only the teacher of English could get his scholars to write and to keep on writing upon every kind of subject all would be well; but unluckily, not all—or many—of his scholars have Stevenson's resolution to become abundantly proficient in the writing of English. "Whenever," he tells us, "I read a book or passage that particularly pleased me, in which a thing was said or an effect rendered with propriety, in which there was either some conspicuous force or some happy distinction in the style, I must sit down at once and set myself to ape that quality. I was unsuccessful, and I knew it; and tried again, and again was unsuccessful; but, at least, in these vain bouts I got some practice in rhythm, in construction, and in the co-ordination of parts."

The teacher of English will rarely be able to create such enthusiasm in his scholars. Yet, unless he does impel them to activity, unless he does make them think and plan and write themselves, he cannot expect much. And in this method of learning by imitation, the teacher's function stands out clearly. He must show his scholars what patterns are worthy of imitation. For to study the defective is to foster defects in oneself. He must, too, be able to explain why one pattern is unworthy. He will, that is, help his scholars to discriminate and to love what is really good. His aim is to make the scholar self-dependent, to render himself easily dispensable; and the best way to do this is to stimulate the taste for reading good books. These will be ever more efficient teachers long after the teacher's voice is no longer heard.

"Rules" for Production of Good English

But are there not *rules* whereby we can produce good English? Certainly, and we do well to observe them. For these rules are nothing but statements of what good writers practise. The writers who deserve to be imitated do this: you had better do it, too. For when you look closely into the rules you will find good reason why they should be followed.

It is by following the rules that we write correct English. But we shall follow them the surer by observing them in the good writers than by learning them when isolated and placed

in a grammar book. No doubt the collection into a grammar book is useful, much as a collection of pressed flowers and plants is useful to one studying botany. But the collection is to little purpose unless it is accompanied by study of the living practice: the botanist must study growing plants as well as their representatives in his specimen book.

Besides, the grammar book is greatly concerned with warnings about mistakes. This is very likely necessary; but it does not lead us far. The main defect of many a textbook, of many a teacher, too, is this propensity to say "Don't do." Here, for instance, is a book on English composition. But your quest is vain for directions on how to write good English; the writer has conceived his duty to be that of showing how to avoid bad English. He does this well. But then avoidance of errors goes but little way towards positive achievement; (we may all avoid errors in writing English—by not writing at all.)

The effective teacher of English follows a different method. He prefers to say: "Let us examine this piece of capital prose, and this, and this. Here is Stevenson's description of a snowstorm: it ushers in that gem of a short story 'A Lodging for the Night.' This is how Froude makes his narrative of the *Pelican's* exploits an intensely exciting one. This is how really good writers of to-day express such and such things. Copy these."

Study the Good

He concerns himself with the good, well knowing that his scholars will imitate what they are familiar with. Even in the minor matters of securing conformity with customary spelling a wise teacher will be reluctant to obtrude the spellings conflicting with custom. To examine atrocities, even for the purpose of correcting them, is a very roundabout way to the production of what is sound. The prohibition—the "don't do this"—may actually suggest doing. As our advertisers know, it often does. You meet a sandwich-man whose board bears the injunction "Don't look at my back." It is an unusual person who follows the instruction. The very prohibition conduces to the doing: "Don't nail his ears to the pump," says the leader to his ruffians; and the captive hears with a well-justified trepidation.

Grammar is Recognized Custom

The rules of good English are in fact nothing but recognized customs. You may assert that the custom is against logic. That is not in the least to the purpose. We say "I go on Monday next," joining the present tense of the verb with a future time. We say "You are" using the plural when strict logic would have us say "Thou art." Nor is it to the purpose that present custom diverges from former custom. What was good English in Queen Elizabeth's time may not be good English now. Many a word or phrase or even sentence is interpreted in a different sense from that intended by its first author. The sentence "A friend in need is a friend indeed" was when first uttered—by a friend of Dr. Johnson's—a cynical remark. It implied "A needy friend is a friend with a vengeance": we don't want many such friends. It is now a quite sentimental remark implying "The friend that helps you in your need is the real friend." "A friend in need" was the friend *in want* of your help; "a friend in need" is—so modern custom dictates—a friend whose help *you want*. We should, clearly, invite misunderstanding if we insisted on using the sentence in its first sense. We should mean one thing; our hearers would understand another thing.

When we feel that ambiguity may result, we had better not use the phrase. "The exception proves the rule" perhaps illustrates this. "Prove" here means properly "tests." So we say, "This trial puts a man to the proof." The rule is tested by being applied to particular instances. Nine times out of ten when the statement is made, however, it has either no meaning at all or an absurd one. Here is a rule: "He is always punctual." Here is an exception: "He is half an hour late." What matter? "The exception proves the rule." Well, it does; it shows that the rule is no rule.

The rules of good English are, as you have so often found, not rigid like the rules of mathematics. There is only one correct answer to the question "What are three fours?"; there may be half a dozen correct answers to the question, "How shall I express this thought?" Because one way of saying a thing is correct is no reason at all for concluding that another way is incorrect. Both may be perfectly correct in their place or in regard to the emphasis placed upon them by the writer or speaker.

One asks, for instance, "Should we write 'The name and address is' or 'The name and address are'?" In ordinary use, doubtless, the first is preferable. For name-and-address is a composite; it is *a* means of identifying your correspondent. A brandy-and-soda is one thing, not two. Yet, just as we may wish to consider the ingredients as units—"Brandy and soda are mixed for this drink"—so we may wish to separate the constituents of name-and-address. Thus "The name and address are entered in this record."

Durability of Good Writing

A preliminary difficulty consists in this: how can we know whether a passage is good or bad English? One way is this. The astonishing fact about a worthy poem or a worthy piece of prose is this: we shall always find something new to admire in it. Read it a hundred times and it does not weary you. It may be that we really appreciate the passage only when we have known it many years. Astonishing it is. But when we consider that the passage is the best that a great mind has produced, we understand why it does endure.

As Milton says in his sky-aspiring way, "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a Life beyond Life." We ought to study the writings of which this could be said, and most carefully. That is why you are advised to base your studies in English upon an examination of passages that ought to live in your memory, rather than upon an examination of atrocities.

An Example

Cardinal Newman, in a paragraph which you will treasure for itself, which is itself an example of such passages, comments upon the fact in this way—

Let us consider too, how differently young and old are affected by the words of some classic author, such as Homer or Horace. Passages which to a boy are but rhetorical commonplaces, neither better nor worse than a hundred others which any clever writer might supply; which he gets by heart and thinks very fine, and imitates, as he thinks, successfully, in his own

flowing versification, at length come home to him, when long years have passed, and he has had experience of life, and pierce him as if he had never before known them, with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness. Then he comes to understand how it is that lines, the birth of some chance morning or evening at an Ionian festival, or among the Sabine hills, have lasted generation after generation for thousands of years, with a power over the mind and a charm, which the current literature of his own day with all its obvious advantages is utterly unable to rival. Perhaps this is the reason of the mediaeval opinion about Virgil, as a prophet or a magician; his single words and phrases, his pathetic half lines, giving utterance, as the voice of Nature herself, to that pain and weariness, yet hope of better things, which is the experience of her children in every time.

Passages for Examination

We know, most of us, in these days, little Latin and less Greek. Homer and Horace are, therefore, strangers to us. But we need not lament. Our own literature is not lacking in passages that can, unabashed, stand comparison with the best in any literature, ancient or modern. Nor are these worthy passages all of one kind. The variety of them is, indeed, bewildering. Examine the three below. You could—you will in your wisdom—study them in a good many ways. Here is one way; read them carefully and apply to the appropriate passage the descriptive adjectives, *rhetorical, colloquial, ornate.*

Three Differing Passages

These are epithets applied to the style of a passage. "Rhetorical" implies impressive speaking, speaking such as a counsel indulges in when he would persuade a jury. Perhaps, too, it suggests something of exaggeration, even of insincerity—of "speaking with tongue in cheek"—at times. "Colloquial" implies familiar and unstudied, as contrasted with formal and studied language. It is the talk of intimate friends. "Ornate" implies a liberal—perhaps too liberal—sprinkling of adornments. It suggests, too, that the adornments, instead of growing

naturally as they should do out of the writing itself, are introduced with little sense of fitness—introduced for effect only and not for enlightenment. Here are the passages for your consideration—

(*a*) Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and therefore is contrary to that attention which presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and unconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of its wings; till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over. Then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from an angel as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministries here below. So is the prayer of a good man.

(*b*) It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in—glittering like the morning-star, full of life and splendour and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what a heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fall upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour, and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from

their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone.

(*c*) Then I saw in my Dream, that When they were got out of the Wilderness, they presently saw a Town before them, and the name of that Town is Vanity; and at the Town there is a Fair kept, called Vanity-Fair. It is kept all the Year long: it beareth the name of Vanity-Fair, because the Town where it is kept, is lighter than Vanity; and also, because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither, is Vanity. As is the saying of the wise, *All that cometh is Vanity.*

A Criticism

Doubtless you have applied the adjective "ornate" to passage (*a*). You may have recognized it as a paragraph from Jeremy Taylor, the very florid writer of *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*. Perhaps you may think the style too florid. You may agree with Robert South, a contemporary of Jeremy Taylor, and a brother clergyman. Whether you do or not you will enjoy the vigorous prose in which South advocates economy in the use of ornament. He would have a speaker, a preacher in particular, speak plainly—

For there is a certain majesty in plainness; as the proclamation of a prince never frisks it in tropes or fine conceits, in numerous and well turned periods, but commands in sober natural expressions.

A substantial beauty, as it comes out of the hands of nature, needs neither paint nor patch; things never made to adorn, but to cover something that would be hid. It is with expression and the clothing of a man's conceptions as with the clothing of a man's body. All dress and ornament supposes imperfection, as designed only to supply the body with something from without, which it wanted, but had not of its own. Gaudery is a pitiful and mean thing, not extending farther than the surface of the body; nor is the highest gallantry considerable to any but to those who would hardly be considered without it; for in that case indeed

there may be great need of an outside, when there is little or nothing within.

And thus also it is with the most necessary and important truths; to adorn and clothe them is to cover them, and that to obscure them. The eternal salvation and damnation of souls are not things to be treated of with jests and witticisms. And he who thinks to furnish himself out of plays and romances with language for the pulpit, shows himself much fitter to act a part in the revels, than for the cure of souls.

"I speak the words of soberness," said Saint Paul, "and I preach the gospel not with the enticing words of man's wisdom." This was the way of the apostles' discoursing of things sacred. Nothing here of "the fringes of the north star"; nothing of "nature's becoming unnatural"; nothing of the "down of angels' wings," or "the beautiful locks of cherubims"; no starched similitudes introduced with a "Thus have I seen a cloud rolling in its airy mansion," and the like. No, these were sublimities above the rise of the apostolic spirit. For the apostles, poor mortals, were content to take lower steps, and to tell the world in plain terms, that "he who believed should be saved, and that he who believed not should be damned." And this was the dialect which pierced the conscience, and made the hearers cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It tickled not the ear, but sunk into the heart; and when men came from such sermons, they never commended the preacher for his taking voice or gesture; for the fineness of such a simile, or the quaintness of such a sentence; but they spoke like men conquered with the overpowering force and evidence of the most concerning truths.

The Rhetorical Passage

"Rhetorical" is the word for passage (*b*), a part of Edmund Burke's well-known lament over the misfortunes that overtook *the French royal family. It is not indeed in a speech, but is in his Reflections on the French Revolution. But then it is hard to* discriminate between Burke's speeches and his writings. *His*

speeches were treatises, carefully composed and committed to memory; and probably the Members of Parliament to whom they were delivered thought that they were intended for reading rather than for hearing. For, as his friend Goldsmith suggests, the audience melted away as Burke spoke—

> Who, too deep for his hearers, still went on refining
> And thought of convincing while they thought of dining.

This is what a later orator, Lord Rosebery, says of speeches, and of Burke's treatises in the form of speeches—

No one reads old speeches any more than old sermons. The industrious historian is compelled to explore them for the purposes of political history, but it is a dreary and reluctant pilgrimage. The more brilliant and telling they were at the time, the more dolorous the quest. The lights are extinguished; the flowers faded: the voice seems cracked across the empty space of years, it sounds like a message from a remote telephone; one wonders if that can really be the scene that fascinated and inspired. Was this the passage we thought so thrilling, this the epigram that seemed to tingle, this the peroration that provoked such a storm of cheers? It all seems as flat as decanted champagne. Of course, in the case of speeches that are treatises, like those of Burke, treatises clothed in a literary form and carefully prepared for publication as pamphlets, the remark does not apply. But then these are not speeches at all, or at any rate not successful speeches. Their triumph was literary and philosophical, not that of the arena and the moment. Genuine political speeches that win the instant laurels of debate soon lose their savour. All the accompaniments have disappeared—the heat, the audience, the interruptions, and the applause; and what remains seems cold and flabby.

Plain Prose

You have recognized passage (*c*) as a little of Bunyan, and have applied the term "plain" to it. "Plain" though the

language of *The Pilgrim's Progress* is, it is most effective. Here is what Lord Macaulay says of that language—

The style of Bunyan is delightful to every reader, and invaluable as a study to every person who wishes to obtain a wide command over the English language. The vocabulary is the vocabulary of the common people. There is not an expression, if we except a few technical terms of theology, which would puzzle the rudest peasant. We have observed several pages which do not contain a single word of more than two syllables. Yet no writer has said more exactly what he meant to say. For magnificence, for pathos, for vehement exhortation, for subtle disquisition, for every purpose of the poet, the orator, and the divine, this homely dialect, the dialect of plain working men, was perfectly sufficient. There is no book in our literature on which we would so readily stake the fame of the old unpolluted English language, no book which shows so well how rich that language is in its own proper wealth, and how little it has been improved by all that it has borrowed.

A Contrast

You will very likely say that, admire Bunyan's style though he did, Macaulay was far from being a close imitator of it. Read the paragraph below. You will be delighted with the contrast between the vocabulary of Macaulay, heavily laden with long words from Latin—*prosecution, partiality, precipitancy, rancour, preliminary*, and so on—with the vocabulary so highly praised.

One of the most remarkable passages in the *Pilgrim's Progress* is that in which the proceedings against Faithful are described. It is impossible to doubt that Bunyan intended to satirise the mode in which state trials were conducted under Charles the Second. The licence given to the witnesses for the prosecution, the shameless partiality and ferocious insolence of the judge, the precipitancy and the blind rancour of the jury, remind us of those odious mummeries which, from the Restoration to the Revolution, were merely

forms preliminary to hanging, drawing, and quartering. Lord Hategood performs the office of counsel for the prisoners as well as Scroggs himself could have performed it.

"*Judge.* Thou runagate, heretic, and traitor, hast thou heard what these honest gentlemen have witnessed against thee?

"*Faithful.* May I speak a few words in my own defence?

"*Judge.* Sirrah, sirrah! thou deservest to live no longer, but to be slain immediately upon the place; yet, that all men may see our gentleness to thee, let us hear what thou, vile runagate, hast to say."

No person who knows the state trials can be at a loss for parallel cases. Indeed, write what Bunyan would, the baseness and cruelty of the lawyers of those times "sinned up to it still," and even went beyond it. The imaginary trial of Faithful, before a jury composed of personified vices, was just and merciful, when compared with the real trial of Alice Lisle before that tribunal where all the vices sat in the person of Jefferies.

Effective Exposition

Consider for a while the manner in which an effective speaker or writer goes to work. Here, as the first illustration, is a passage dealing with a repellent subject, with the pestilent results of an inflation of the currency. Most of those who deal with the subject bore you intensely. There is, you think, vaguely, something in what they say or write; but they clothe their thoughts in strange terms, they disdain to give helps to understanding, and attention wanders far and swiftly.

Well now, see how Mr. Keynes tackles the problem. He is anxious to explain the matter not to the expert only but to the man in the street. Does he not do it with success? There is the personal touch, the true or what-might-have-been-true anecdote about Lenin, the words carefully selected to achieve the desired effect, the sentences varied and impressive. The passage comes in his *Economic Consequences of the Peace*—

Lenin is said to have declared that the best way to destroy the Capitalist System was to debauch the cur-

rency. By a continuing process of inflation, governments can confiscate, secretly and unobserved, an important part of the wealth of their citizens. By this method they not only confiscate, but they confiscate *arbitrarily*; and, while the process impoverishes many, it actually enriches some. The sight of this arbitrary rearrangement of riches strikes not only at security, but at confidence in the equity of the existing distribution of wealth. Those to whom the system brings windfalls, beyond their deserts and even beyond their expectations or desires become "profiteers," who are the object of the hatred of the bourgeoisie, whom the inflationism has impoverished, not less than of the proletariat. As the inflation proceeds and the real value of the currency fluctuates wildly from month to month, all permanent relations between debtors and creditors, which form the ultimate foundation of capitalism, become so utterly disordered as to be almost meaningless; and the process of wealth-getting degenerates into a gamble and a lottery.

Lenin was certainly right. There is no subtler, no surer means of overturning the existing basis of society than to debauch the currency. The process engages all the hidden forces of economic law on the side of destruction, and does it in a manner which not one man in a million is able to diagnose.

In the later stages of the war all the belligerent governments practised, from necessity or incompetence, what a Bolshevist might have done from design. Even now, when the war is over, most of them continue out of weakness the same malpractices. But further, the Governments of Europe, being many of them at this moment reckless in their methods as well as weak, seek to direct on to a class known as "profiteers" the popular indignation against the more obvious consequences of their vicious methods. These "profiteers" are, broadly speaking, the entrepreneur class of capitalists, that is to say, the active and constructive element in the whole capitalist society, who in a period of rapidly rising prices cannot but get rich quick whether they

wish it or desire it or not. If prices are continually rising, every trader who has purchased for stock or owns property and plant inevitably makes profits. By directing hatred against this class, therefore, the European Governments are carrying a step further the fatal process which the subtle mind of Lenin had consciously conceived. The profiteers are a consequence and not a cause of rising prices. By combining a popular hatred of the class of entrepreneurs with the blow already given to social security by the violent and arbitrary disturbance of contract and of the established equilibrium of wealth which is the inevitable result of inflation, these governments are fast rendering impossible a continuance of the social and economic order of the nineteenth century. But they have no plan for replacing it.

Seeking for Examples

Where shall we find most conveniently, the choicest examples of correct English prose, the best fitted for the everyday needs of people? In Parliamentary debates? in platform speeches? in popular plays and novels? in the flood of books on economics and kindred subjects? Well, we do upon occasion find in all these capital examples of what English prose should be.

But we cannot go to these with any certainty of finding what we want. We can, however, go to our best newspapers and magazines with some confidence. In these, too—in the newspapers abundantly—we shall find much very poor prose. This is inevitable. For much of it must be produced at impetuous speed; he that would give without delay accounts of sport, of battle, of political vicissitudes, has little time for consideration, no time at all for revision. He must hit or miss without delay.

In the leading articles, however, whether these are stately discussions of policy, or thoughtful commentaries on a project to be initiated, or playful dissertations upon some strange vagary of human behaviour, we almost invariably find wholly admirable prose. No wonder. The man able to express his views through the medium of a great newspaper has an enviable power; and we may well suppose that none but the ablest will be entrusted with the writings of leaders.

There is another thing. When a man takes upon himself to write to a widely read paper, when he does not shrink from signing his name and so offering himself to all manner of counter-attacks, we may safely assume two things. The first is that he will give much study both to the thoughts that he presents and to the expression of those thoughts. The second is that the Editor, rightly zealous that nothing shall appear in his paper except the best, will be reluctant to admit halting English into his columns. The result is that "Letters to the Editor" are often models of clear vigorous English.

A Little Exposition

Consider a paragraph from a leading article. One of the useful offices performed by prose is that of exposition; it can teach with effectiveness. He that uses prose for exposition will strive to arrange his statements so that the reader easily grasps the knowledge intended to be conveyed. Thus, the writer wishes you to know what efforts are being made in Scotland to achieve beauty in housing—

The SECRETARY OF STATE for SCOTLAND has written to the Provosts of the cities and to the larger burghs, asking them to set up local advisory committees to ensure that municipal housing schemes are not æsthetically offensive in themselves and do not result in the destruction of beautiful or interesting buildings. This reminder of the powers conferred by last year's Scottish Housing Act is timely, and part of an effort of long standing to see that the public eye is not outraged by the housing developments which Scotland requires as badly as any other part of the British Isles. The Department of Health for Scotland some time ago appointed an eminent architect as a consultant available for the assistance of Local Authorities in preparing their housing schemes. These schemes have been of varying architectural quality, but on the whole Local Authorities in Scotland and elsewhere have maintained a better observance of this essential requirement of good housing than the speculative builder. Some even of the smaller Scottish burghs have had the good sense to employ recognized experts in the preparation of their plans.

The idea here is to give information, and, in giving it, to suggest that the project discussed is a desirable one. Doubtless you will agree that the writer has achieved his purpose.

An Exposition

The English language is admirably fitted for such clear exposition. Illustrations present themselves in abundance. See how effective is this quiet dissection of the conduct of fraudulent directors. It is from Lord Macnaghten's judgment in *Gluckstein* v. *Barnes* (Appeal Court, 1900)—

These gentlemen set about forming a company to pay them a handsome sum for taking off their hands a property which they had contracted to buy with that end in view. They bring the company into existence by means of the usual machinery. They appoint themselves sole guardians and protectors of this creature of theirs, half-fledged and just struggling into life, bound hand and foot, while yet unborn, by contracts tending to their private advantage, and so fashioned by its makers that it could only act by their hands and only see through their eyes. They issue a prospectus representing that they had agreed to purchase the property for a sum largely in excess of the amount which they had, in fact, to pay. On the faith of this prospectus they collect subscriptions from a confiding and credulous public. And then comes the last act. Secretly, and therefore dishonestly, they put into their pockets the difference between the real and the pretended price. After a brief career the company is ordered to be wound up. In the course of the liquidation the trick is discovered. Mr. Gluckstein is called upon to make good a portion of the sum which he and his associates had misappropriated. He complains that he may have difficulty in recovering from his co-directors their share of the spoil, and he asks that the official liquidator may proceed against his associates before calling upon him to make good the whole amount with which he has been charged. My Lords, there may be occasions in which that would be the proper course to take. But I cannot think that this is a case in which any indulgence ought to be shown to Mr. Gluckstein. He may or may not be able to recover a contribution from those who joined with him in defrauding the company. He can bring an action at law if he likes. If he hesitates to take that course or takes it and fails, then his only remedy lies in appeal to that sense of honour which is popularly supposed to exist among robbers of a humbler type.

When, in this manner, we use our English to convey information, we use it as a tool rather than a toy. Such a use, for exposition purposes, is indeed most valuable. The seeker after truth, the great scientist, the earnest student of social problems, asks for a means of giving a clear explanation. In his writing there will be no straining after effect, no attempt to display ingenuity in the production of new word combinations. His

one aim will be the effective communication of thought. Adam Smith wants you, for instance, to understand why metals became the medium of exchange. He enables you to understand; and you get no headache in the process—

In all countries men seem at last to have been determined by irresistible reasons to give the preference for this employment to metals above every other commodity. Metals can not only be kept with as little loss as any other commodity, scarce anything being less perishable than they are, but they can likewise, without any loss, be divided into any number of parts, as by fusion those parts can easily be re-united again; a quality which no other equally durable commodities possess, and which more than any other quality renders them fit to be the instruments of commerce and circulation. The man who wanted to buy salt, for example, and had nothing but cattle to give in exchange for it, must have been obliged to buy salt to the value of a whole ox, or a whole sheep at a time. He could seldom buy less than this, because what he was to give for it could seldom be divided without loss; and if he had a mind to buy more, he must, for the same reason, have been obliged to buy double or triple the quantity, the value, to wit, of two or three oxen, or of two or three sheep. If, on the contrary, instead of sheep or oxen, he had metals to give in exchange for it, he could easily proportion the quantity of the metal to the precise quantity of the commodity which he had immediate occasion for.

Grace in Exposition

Nevertheless, as indeed you will have gathered from this paragraph, the giving of information need not shut out the graces of writing. It certainly does not in such a passage as this in which Mr. Lytton Strachey writes of the passing of a great queen—

When, two days previously, the news of the approaching end had been made public, astonished grief had swept over the country. It appeared as if some monstrous reversal of the course of nature was about to take place. The vast majority of her subjects had never known a time when Queen Victoria had not been reigning over them. She had become an indissoluble part of the whole scheme of things, and that they were about to lose her appeared a scarcely possible thought. She herself, as she lay blind and silent, seemed to those who watched her to be divested of all thinking—to have glided already, unawares, into oblivion.

Yet, perhaps, in the secret chambers of consciousness, she had her thoughts, too. Perhaps her fading mind called up once more the shadows of the past to float before it, and retraced, for the last time, the vanished visions of that long history—passing back and back, through the cloud of years, to older and ever older memories—to the spring woods at Osborne, so full of primroses for Lord Beaconsfield—to Lord Palmerston's queer clothes and high demeanour, and Albert's first stag at Balmoral, and Albert in his blue and silver uniform, and the Baron coming in through a door-way, and Lord M. dreaming at Windsor with the rooks cawing in the elm trees, and the Archbishop of Canterbury on his knees in the dawn, and the old King's turkey-cock ejaculations, and Uncle Leopold's soft voice at Claremont, and Lehzen with the globes, and her mother's feathers sweeping down towards her, and a great old repeater-watch of her father's in its tortoise-shell case, and a yellow rug, and some friendly flounces of sprigged muslin, and the trees and the grass at Kensington.

CHAPTER XVI

ABOUT SENTENCES

A Sentence Defined

You do at times manage to convey thought by means of a single sound, by a single written word. Usually, though, your words will be in a connected series. Your thoughts will be expressed in sentences. Well, in your cultivation of the art of producing good English, you will get much benefit from a study of the structure of sentences put together by able writers. You will get much pleasure, too.

"Sentence," it should be noted, is like so many words used in English grammar in this: in varied associations it has varied meanings. The origin—the Latin word *sententia*—implies an opinion, a judgment, a formal statement. We have that early meaning in Milton's line—

> My sentence is for open war. Of wiles
> More unexpert I boast not,

and in expressions like "the sentence of the Court", "serving a sentence," and "A heavy sentence, my most sovereign liege."

In our older language the word meant also "meaning" or "interpretation." It does in the sly mis-translation that Chaucer gives for the benefit of the lady pilgrims who knew no Latin—

> *Mulier est hominis confusio:*
> Madame, the sentence of this latyn is,
> Womman is mannes Joye and al his blis.

We take permission, for the purpose of this chapter, to use "sentence" rather loosely as being the portion of a composition from one full stop to another. More often than not this coincides with the stricter definition of a sentence as being a series of words in connected speech or writing, forming the grammatically complete expression of a single thought.

Of sentences, in the stricter sense, our grammar books speak of three classes. The *simple sentence* is the verbal expression

of a statement, of a question, of a command, or of a request; and it contains one subject and one predicate. The *complex sentence* contains one or more dependent clauses. The *compound sentence* contains more than one subject or predicate.

The Simple Sentence

Examine the structure of a simple sentence. Here are half a dozen for your inspection—

1. Many hands make light work.
2. Too many cooks spoil the broth.
3. Beneath the caravan all is dry and bare.
4. Far in advance is the semblance of refreshing water.
5. They were toiling through sand.
6. The carpenter at Greenwich may receive ten shillings a day.

The first two are instances of the proverbs current among us, of those pithy sayings in which the wisdom of ages is concentrated. The others are from the Macaulay paragraph that you will find on page 308.

All these sentences agree in this: they make a single statement about a single subject. In the first sentence *Many hands* is the subject; *make light work* is the predicate, the statement made about the subject. He who first put the proverb into words had noted that co-operation lessened labour. Here were the many hands working towards the same end. What was the striking fact about this combination of effort. Whether designed or spontaneous it lightened toil. Perhaps the thought had floated vaguely in his mind for some time; he pins it down; he expresses it in words that give the thought permanence.

When an examination syllabus asks that the structure of simple sentences should be studied, it invites you to note the manner in which a well-built sentence is put together. You analyse it, separate it into its different parts; you consider how those parts are related to one another; perhaps you put the parts together in other ways, and consider whether the new method of building is the better method. The compilers of the syllabus think, quite rightly, that such examination will help you in your own efforts to build up good sentences.

Subject and Predicate are the essential parts of a sentence. If either is absent there is no sentence. "Referring to my letter of the fourteenth" is not a sentence, for it makes no statement;

you hear the words, or read them, and you wait and wonder. Your mind is never at a stay as it would be if, for instance, you read "Referring to my letter of the fourteenth, I now give the information promised."

The Topic Sentence

The simple sentence is often quite effective. A good writer or an eloquent speaker will now and then gather into a short, crisp statement much of what he has already said. He interjects what is called "a topic sentence." The simple sentence will linger in the mind of reader or hearer when the more elaborate sentences have faded from consciousness. You will be able to find instances in any good speech; and in all good writing the mind will be able for a while to rest upon the simple sentence. How very effective, for instance, is the second sentence in this paragraph of Ruskin's—

In the handful of shingle which you gather from the sea-beach, which the indiscriminate sea, with equality of fraternal foam, has only educated to be, every one, round, you will see little difference between the noble and mean stones. But the jeweller's trenchant education of them will tell you another story. Even the meanest will be better for it, but the noblest so much better that you can class the two together no more. The fair veins and colours are all clear now; and so stern is Nature's intent regarding this, that not only will the polish show which is best, but the best will take most polish. You will not merely see they have more virtue than the others, but see that more of virtue more clearly: and the less virtue there is, the more dimly you shall see what there is of it.

Note again how this paragraph is grouped around the topic sentence in italics—

You wish to gain knowledge of the character, the modes of thought, of another people. A reading of their newspapers or their novels will give you little help. For these are, quite naturally, of exceptional aspects of life: no one could know what life in England is by reading accounts of murder trials and of divorces, or even other items of "news" that stud the

newspapers. *A more reliable way of entering into the mind of the people is to study one of their dictionaries.* In these, quite unwittingly but none the less effectively, the compilers reveal what does in reality take place. They define a word; they give examples of its use, not from literature, but from the street and market place—from current speech, that is. Here is an American dictionary. The words are English, to be sure; but many a subtle difference from our mode of thought is apparent. "Altercation," we are told, is a "quarrel, dispute, wrangle"; and the spontaneous illustration comes as, "the baseball pitcher had an altercation with the umpire." Well, now, could you put as a substitute "the wicket-keeper had an altercation with the umpire"? Of course not; the wicket-keeper may think a great deal when the umpire dismisses his appeal for a catch, but he doesn't wrangle. We might have an altercation between the goalkeeper and the referee; but that would be only momentary, otherwise the goal-keeper would be sent off the field.

In the paragraph the first sentences introduce the topic. The concluding sentences explain it, and emphasize it by means of an illustration.

A Succession of Short Sentences

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times, when the speaker or the writer wishes to give an sion of hurry, he gives you a quick succession of short, sentences. The device in the hands of a skilful writer its purpose admirably. But it is a difficult task to one from growing weary, unless a longer, more com- sentence comes now and then. You will, therefore, id that the short simple sentence occurs amid longer,

In tr
which m

plicated ones. Look at the Macaulay paragraph from llustrative sentences were taken—

Beneath
advance a
freshing w
find nothing
seen a lake.

we are under a deception similar to that eads the traveller in the Arabian desert. e caravan all is dry and bare; but far in l far in the rear, is the semblance of re- ers. The pilgrims hasten forward and ut sand where, an hour before, they had hey turn their eyes and see a lake where,

an hour before, they were toiling through sand. A similar illusion seems to haunt nations through every stage of the long progress from poverty and barbarism to the highest degrees of opulence and civilization. We too shall, in our turn, be outstripped and in our turn be envied. It may well be, in the twentieth century, that the peasant of Dorsetshire may think himself miserably paid with twenty shillings a week; that the carpenter at Greenwich may receive ten shillings a day; that labouring men may be as little used to dine without meat as they now are to eat rye bread; that sanitary police and medical discoveries may have added several more years to the average length of human life; that numerous comforts and luxuries which are now unknown, or confined to a few, may be within the reach of every diligent and thrifty working man. And yet it may be the mode to assert that the increase of wealth and the progress of science have benefited the few at the expense of the many, and to talk of the reign of Queen Victoria as the time when England was truly Merry England, when all classes were bound together by brotherly sympathy, when the rich did not grind the faces of the poor, and when the poor did not envy the splendour of the rich.

In the first sentence we have a statement—"We are under a deception"—that might have stood as a simple sentence. But Macaulay wishes to make his statement more interesting and he does it by introducing another sentence describing the deception: he places the adjective *similar* with *deception*; and he expands *similar* into *to that which misleads the traveller in the Arabian desert.* This sentence, hanging as it does on *deception*, is called an adjectival sentence (or clause); and the whole sentence is turned from a simple sentence into a complex sentence.

In the second sentence, "Beneath the caravan all is dry and bare; but far in advance, and far in the rear, is the semblance of refreshing waters," Macaulay has joined two simple sentences together. He had made a contrast, an antithesis. This you will remember is his favourite device for brightening his prose. The

third sentence, "The pilgrims hasten forward and find nothing but sand where, an hour before, they had seen a lake," is another complex sentence. If Macaulay had written "The pilgrims hasten forward and find nothing but sand there," he would have combined two simple sentences, "The pilgrims hasten forward" and "The pilgrims find." As it is, he had expanded the adverb *there* into *where, an hour before, they had seen a lake.* This sentence, dependent upon the verb saw, is called an adverbial sentence. You will notice that *but* in this sentence might be replaced by *except*: it is a preposition not, like the *but* in the preceding sentence, a conjunction.

Wilful Misunderstanding

It is hard at times, after you have given much thought to the framing of your sentence, to be told that it lacks meaning, or that it really means something not intended. You are on occasion inclined to blame your reader for his perversity or for his want of power to interpret. That was Doctor Johnson's inclination: to an auditor who professed inability to understand an argument, he said, "I have found you a reason; I am not obliged to find you an understanding, too." You may in like manner wish to say, "I have found a form of words from which rational and obliging people would understand one thing. You, in your eagerness to find faults, perversely interpret it as a quite different thing."

So it has been with sentences like these below: we know the intended meaning, even though the sentences may be interpreted in quite another way than that intended. In the sentence: "She had her eye on the corner seat, but a man came and sat on it," would any one, unless eager to ferret out faults, interpret *it* as *eye*? "Being in a test-tube, I could watch the crystals grow": here again a perverse interpreter may discover ambiguity. The possibility of such perverse interpretation is often present. Our lighter periodicals thrive upon such possibility: "The soya bean will not grow anywhere" is the statement, and the humorist asks, "Then why bother about it?" "Mr. XY, the president, was in the chair, and seating accommodation was overtaxed" is the report; and the suggestion is that an apology to the president seems desirable.

It is part of the perversity of human nature. People do, out of sheer mischief, misinterpret a speaker's words. They know very well that he means one thing; they make his words mean another. And the English language gives many opportunities for such mischievous misinterpretations. Often and often a speaker's eloquent periods have been spoiled by his overlooking a trap. Chief Justice Coleridge was speaking in praise of Oxford and its multiplied charms, of Oxford "spreading her gardens to the moonlight and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Ages." He comes to his peroration, to the conclusion that is to impress what he has said: "And when I speak of Oxford, I speak not of this college or of that college, but of Oxford as a whole; and, gentlemen, what a whole Oxford is."

The Short and Long

Dean Swift in his terrible account of the deathless men and women relates that, among the losses that old age brings with it, there is the loss of power of reading. The minds of these poor immortals cannot keep the first part of the sentence till the end is reached: "They never can amuse themselves with reading, because their memory will not serve to carry them from the beginning of a sentence to the end; and, by this defect, they are deprived of the only entertainment whereof they might otherwise be capable."

A later Dean had been lecturing to the Historical Association, and had presented before it such sentences as would have made those immortals stare and gasp—such sentences as you yourselves will not understand without strenuous mental exertion. He lamented that history had secularized religion. Well—"The remedy, I think, is a return to the great tradition in philosophy, which leaves to history the limited, but surely quite adequate, task of tracing the life, habits, beliefs, and aspirations of the species to which we happen to belong during a few thousand years when, after a long period of stagnation or very slow modification, it has undergone the most surprising developments, and may, so far as we can guess, be only near the beginning of a career which has no parallel in this world, and may even be a rare exception to the whole boundless universe." The sentence is clear enough when you have wrestled with it

for a while. But its author would have been merciful in condescending to break up the heap.

A Too Complex Sentence

The too conscientious at times fails in his composition of sentences. He is so anxious to tell the whole truth that his sentences become complicated masses, quite impossible of rapid assimilation. He inserts parenthesis into parenthesis till his hearers quite lose the thread of the discourse. For example, here is the phrase *Securus judicat orbis terrarum* (i.e. we are probably wise to go with the crowd). In other words, we had better subordinate our individual judgment to that of the world at large; we had better suppose that those whose name and memory the whole world delights to honour are worthy of our admiration. Time shows whether honour is deserved or undeserved; time shows that undeservers quietly pass into oblivion. For solid worth alone endures.

Ruskin teaches this in a sentence. But how many of us grasped its meaning at the first reading? It stands at the opening of *Modern Painters*. It is a sentence perfect in build; and its author spent much time and thought in its composition. But on a first reading its meaning evades us. Perhaps it does on a second reading; and many would refuse it a third reading. They would be wrong, no doubt; but so it is in these quick-moving times. The fashion sets towards the short sentence.

The type is rather *Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves* than *The proverbial oracles of our parsimonious ancestors have informed us that the fatal waste of fortune is by small expenses, by the profusion of sums too little singly to alarm our caution, and which we never suffer ourselves to consider together.* A writer sure of his audience may indulge in such sentence heaps: not so the generality.

Well, here is Ruskin's sentence—

If it be true, and it can scarcely be disputed, that no truly great reputation has for centuries been consecrated by public admiration, without possessing in a high degree some kind of sterling excellence, it is not because the average intellect and feeling of the majority of the public are competent in any way to distinguish

what is really excellent, but because all erroneous opinion is inconsistent, and all ungrounded opinion transitory; or that while the fancies and feelings which deny deserved honour, and award what is undue have neither root nor strength sufficient to maintain consistent testimony for a length of time, the opinions formed by those few who are in reality competent judges, being necessarily stable, communicate themselves gradually from mind to mind, descending lower as they extend wider, until they leaven the whole lump, and rule by absolute authority, even where the grounds and reasons for them cannot be understood.

The Measured, Balanced Sentence: (le style soutenu)

You will understand that the Ruskin sentence is of quite unusual length even for the old stately style (*le style soutenu*). It certainly is wholly unfitted for the work of conveying thought speedily and without loss. The carefully-balanced sentence is, however, often very delightful. In Gibbon, for one example, the stately period is in keeping with his great subject. See how he describes the roads of Rome driven direct from the imperial city to the farthest bounds of empire—

All these cities were connected with each other, and with the capital, by the public highways, which, issuing from the Forum of Rome, traversed Italy, pervaded the provinces, and were terminated only by the frontiers of the empire. If we carefully trace the distance from the wall of Antoninus to Rome, and from thence to Jerusalem, it will be found that the great chain of communication, from the north-west to the south-east point of the empire, was drawn out to the length of four thousand and eighty Roman miles. The public roads were accurately divided by milestones, and ran in a direct line from one city to another, with very little respect for the obstacles either of nature or private property. Mountains were perforated, and bold arches thrown over the broadest and most rapid streams. The middle part of the road was raised into a terrace which commanded the adjacent country, consisted of several strata of sand, gravel, and cement,

and was paved with large stones, or, in some places near the capital, with granite. Such was the solid construction of the Roman highways, whose firmness has not entirely yielded to the effort of fifteen generations. They united the subjects of the most distant provinces by an easy and familiar intercourse; but their primary object had been to facilitate the marches of the legions; nor was any country considered as completely subdued, till it had been rendered, in all its parts, pervious to the arms and authority of the conqueror. The advantage of receiving the earliest intelligence, and of conveying their orders with celerity, induced the emperors to establish throughout their extensive dominions the regular institution of posts. Houses were everywhere erected at the distance of only five or six miles; each of them was constantly provided with forty horses, and by the help of these relays it was easy to travel a hundred miles in a day along the Roman roads. The use of posts was allowed to those who claimed it by an imperial mandate; but although originally intended for the public service, it was sometimes indulged to the business or conveniency of private citizens. Nor was the communication of the Roman empire less free and open by sea than it was by land. The provinces surrounded and enclosed the Mediterranean: and Italy, in the shape of an immense promontory, advanced into the midst of that great lake. The coasts of Italy are, in general, destitute of safe harbours; but human industry had corrected the deficiencies of nature; and the artificial port of Ostia, in particular, situate at the mouth of the Tiber, and formed by the Emperor Claudius, was a useful monument of the Roman greatness. From the port, which was only sixteen miles from the capital, a favourable breeze frequently carried vessels in seven days to the Columns of Hercules, and in nine or ten to Alexandria in Egypt.

The danger of this kind of sentence is that it may make the writing appear heavy, so that it calls for much effort in the reading.

The Short Compact Sentence: (le style coupé)

What a contrast to these measured periods, to which an occasional short sentence gives agreeable variety, is provided by the short crisp sentences of Froude in this breathless narrative of the chase after the treasure ship! We have already considered a little of the passage. [See page 10.]

Drake began to realize that he was now really alone, and had only himself and his own crew to depend on. There was nothing to do but to go through with it, danger adding to the interest. Arica was the next point visited. Half a hundred blocks of silver were picked up at Arica. After Arica came Lima, the chief depot of all, where the grandest haul was looked for. At Lima, alas! they were just too late. Twelve great hulks lay anchored there. The sails were unbent, the men were ashore. They contained *nothing* but some chests of reals and a few bales of silk and linen. But a thirteenth, called the *Cacafuego*, had sailed a few days before for the Isthmus, with the whole produce of the Lima mines for the season. Her ballast was silver, her cargo gold and emerald and rubies.

Drake deliberately cut the cables of the ships in the Roads, that they might drive ashore and be unable to follow him. The *Pelican* spread her wings, every feather of them, and sped away in pursuit. He would know the *Cacafuego*, so he learnt at Lima, by the peculiar cut of her sails. The first man who caught sight of her was promised a gold chain for his reward. A sail was seen on the second day. It was not the chase, but it was worth stopping for. Eighty pounds' weight of gold was found, and a great gold crucifix, set with emeralds said to be large as pigeon's eggs. They took the kernel. They left the shell. Still on and on. We learn from the Spanish accounts that the Viceroy of Lima, as soon as he recovered from his astonishment, dispatched ships in pursuit. They came up with the last plundered vessel, heard terrible tales of the rovers' strength, and went back for a larger force. The *Pelican* meanwhile went along upon her

course for 800 miles. At length, when in the latitude of Quito and close upon the shore, the *Cacafuego's* peculiar sails were sighted, and the gold chain was claimed. There she was, freighted with the fruit of Aladdin's garden, going lazily along a few miles ahead. Care was needed in approaching her. If she guessed the *Pelican's* character, she would run in upon the land and they would lose her. It was afternoon. The sun was still above the horizon, and Drake meant to wait till night, when the breeze would be off the shore, as in the tropics it always is.

The *Pelican* sailed two feet to the *Cacafuego's* one. Drake filled his empty wine-skins with water and trailed them astern to stop his way. The chase supposed that she was followed by some heavy-loaded trader, and wishing for company on a lonely voyage, she slackened sail and waited for him to come up. At length the sun went down into the ocean, the rosy light faded from off the snow of the Andes; and, when both ships had become invisible from the shore, the skins were hauled in, the night wind rose, and the water began to ripple under the *Pelican's* bows. The *Cacafuego* was swiftly overtaken, and when within a cable's length a voice hailed her to put her head into the wind. The Spanish commander, not understanding so strange an order, held on his course. A broadside brought down his mainyard, and a few flights of arrows rattled on his deck. He was himself wounded. In a few minutes he was a prisoner, and the ship and her precious freight were in the corsair's power. The wreck was cut away; the ship was cleared; a prize crew was put on board. Both vessels turned their heads to the sea. At daybreak no land was to be seen, and the examination of the prize began. The full value was never acknowledged. The invoice, if there was one, was destroyed. The accurate figures were known only to Drake and Queen Elizabeth. A published schedule acknowledged to twenty tons of silver bullion, thirteen chests of silver coins, and a hundredweight of gold, but there were gold nuggets besides in indefinite quantity,

and "a great store" of pearls, emeralds, and diamonds. The Spanish Government proved a loss of a million and a half of ducats, excluding what belonged to private persons. The total capture was immeasurably greater.

The danger of this kind of sentence is that it may—used by unskilful writers it invariably does—give a sense of choppiness. The mind is too rapidly hurried from fact to fact and is called upon to provide the necessary connections among those facts.

The Periodic Sentence

We have spoken of simple, complex, and compound sentences. You may group sentences in other ways, too; you may classify them as long or short, simple or involved, easy or difficult. One instructive way is to separate them into periodic and loose sentences. You compose a periodic sentence when the whole is so girt together that the sense is suspended till the end. Here is a periodic sentence: "It was at Rome, on the 10th October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind." The sentence becomes complete, in sense and in grammar, with the emphatic predicate "first started to my mind."

You notice that the dependent phrases and clauses, "at Rome", "on the 10th October, 1764", "as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while . . . Jupiter" precede the main subject "the idea." They are not strung loosely, so that there exist several possible endings of the sentence. "The idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind at Rome, on the 10th October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter." In the sentence so written the mind finds many resting places; the writer gives the reader the added task of piecing the fragments together.

The Loose Sentence

Here are some "loose" sentences for your inspection. *The king fell from his horse and died two hours after, which was*

occasioned by the horse's stumbling on a mole-hill, while he was on his return from reviewing his troops.

The objection to such a sentence is that the reader's mind comes to rest at *fell,* then is jerked into attention again to *hill,* and after another disappointment comes finally to rest at *troops.* Yet we may very willingly continue to attend to the added phrases as they run out, in such a sentence as this, for instance: *Having got thus far, Mr. Stiggins looked about him, and sighed grievously; with that, he walked softly into the bar, and presently returning with a tumbler half full of pineapple-rum, advanced to the kettle which was singing gaily on the hob, mixed his grog, stirred it, sipped it, sat down, and taking a long and hearty pull at the rum and water, stopped for breath.*

The loose sentence may in fact be very delightful. It is when a writer like Thackeray uses it. For he does not allow it to sprawl unduly; he does not forget the beginning of the sentence before he reaches the end. Read again, for instance, the quite admirable paragraph—

The sun was shining though 'twas November; he had seen the market-carts rolling into London, the guard relieved at the Palace, the labourers trudging to their work in the gardens between Kensington and the City—the wandering merchants and hawkers filling the air with their cries. The world was going to its business again, although dukes lay dead and ladies mourned for them; and kings, very likely, lost their chances. So night and day pass away, and to-morrow comes, and our place knows us not. Esmond thought of the courier, now galloping on the north road to inform him, who was Earl of Arran yesterday, that he was Duke of Hamilton to-day, and of a thousand great schemes, hopes, ambitions, that were alive in the gallant heart, beating a few hours since, and now in a little dust quiescent.

In modern writers the loose sentence predominates. It will predominate in your writing, too. Nevertheless, if you practise yourself in the effort to reserve the important words to the end of the sentence, you will avoid a prevalent fault. You will have your goal in mind from the start of the sentence; you will not

be obliged to add a number of qualifying phrases. You get thereby some safeguard against incoherence.

Balanced Periods

Often in the prose writing of Doctor Johnson's day one periodic sentence is balanced against another. Each thought is presented in much the same way. It is as though one is weighed against another, compared with it, contrasted with it. Examine this balanced sentence—

Yet, when I speak thus slightingly of dramatic rules, I cannot but recollect how much wit and learning may be produced against me; and, when I estimate the fame and the strength of those that maintain the contrary opinion, I am ready to sink down in reverential silence.

The first half of this carefully balanced sentence contains twenty-three words, the second half twenty-five. It is similarity of structure, however, that will interest you most. In both, after the connecting words *yet, and,* there is an insertion of an adverbial clause; in both the structure is well-girt to the end. "In reverential silence" balances the closing "produced against me."

Now, we may be quite certain that the great Doctor never in his life bowed before any human being "in reverential silence." But the phrase was a good one for rounding off the sentence; and we may allow to a prose writer something of the licence we allow to a poet. The poet we are told often hits upon a thought in seeking after an expression—

> Those that write in rhyme still make
> The one verse for the other's sake.

The prose writer may do this, too. The search after a word results in the discovery of a thought, even of a valuable thought.

Examine, as other instances of carefully balanced, periodic sentences, these others of Doctor Johnson's—

Far from me, and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us, indifferent and unmoved, over any ground which has been dignified by

wisdom, bravery, or virtue. The man is little to be envied whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona.

In the first sentence, you notice, *such* impels us to wait for *as*, *any* impels us to wait for *which*. In the second sentence *patriotism* seems to clamour for a companion; and your mind must continue active till *piety* supplies the want.

A Good Sentence

The questions you put to yourself, when determining upon the construction of a sentence, are these: "Does it sound well?" "Does it give, without admitting of misinterpretation, the intended meaning?" A third question presents itself on occasion, "Could I, by varying the order of the words, give more weight to what I think more important?"

Words in an unusual and unexpected position attract particular attention. Inversion is therefore a useful device for emphasizing what the writer or speaker thinks worthy of special notice. A Law Lord is dismayed at being obliged to give a decision in accordance with a previous decision, and he expresses fears about the effects of the publishing of "Unreported House of Lords' cases"—

> The results might be somewhat unexpected; but the decisions themselves all Courts, your Lordships' House included, would be bound to follow.

"The decisions, however curious, even foolish," were what he wished to emphasize; and he puts "the decisions themselves" in the front of his sentence.

If we may thereby obtain a better-sounding sentence, or give emphasis to words needing emphasis, there is no need to shrink from inversion. We must, however, note that inversion may very well lead to misunderstanding. There is no ambiguity in such a line as—

> Her mirth the world required;

We take it at once as the poetic variant of—

> The world required her mirth

(part of the predicate being placed before the subject). But in Gray's line—

And all the air a solemn stillness holds,

we need to exercise some thought before we realize that it is an inversion of the prose order, "a solemn stillness holds all the air."

Exercising Yourself

One of the best exercises you can get for the achieving of flexibility and ease in your own writing is to juggle with the sentences of others. Analyse—take to pieces—the sentences and try to decide why the writers gave the particular order to the words, gave it in all probability without deliberate thought. Then express their thoughts in alternative ways. Turn their periodic sentences into loose ones, their loose ones into periodic ones, and ask yourself whether anything has been lost or gained.

Would this periodic sentence, for instance—

He has, we are glad to say, avoided both these extremes.

be better as a loose sentence?

He has avoided both these extremes, we are glad to say.

Would this loose sentence,

The burglar's must be a bewitching trade, if we may judge by the trespasser's unskilled labour.

be better as a periodic sentence?

You will, most likely, determine that the writer's choice, whether of loose or of periodic sentence, is the better for his purposes. Still, the exercise will not be wasted labour. Here is one such exercise—

(1) Rewrite this passage of Swift in periodic sentences—

The Empire of Blefuscu is an Island situated to the North-North-East side of Lilliput, from Thence it is parted only by a Channel of eight hundred Yards wide. I had not seen it, and upon this Notice of an Intended Invasion, I avoided appearing on that side of the Coast, for fear of being discovered by some of the Enemy's Ships, who had received no Intelligence of me, all Intercourse between the two Empires having been strictly forbidden during the War, upon pain of Death, and an Embargo laid by our Emperor upon all Vessels whatsoever. I communicated to his Majesty a Project

I had formed of seizing the Enemy's whole Fleet; which, as our Scouts assured us, lay at Anchor in the Harbour ready to sail with the first fair Wind.

(2) Rewrite these periodic sentences more loosely—

It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last line of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden.

If ambition be wanting, hardly anything will bring a man's mind into full activity.

Active and Passive

"I have been advised to prefer in my writing the active to the passive. Is there any reason for this advice?" So writes a student. No very strong reason perhaps. Look at the distinction for a while. A verb is in the "active voice," you note, when the actor is the subject of the sentence. In "With my cross-bow I shot the albatross," the verb *shot* is in the active voice; the agent *I*, is the subject of the sentence. If we should turn the object, *albatross*, into the subject, we turn the active voice into the passive, "The albatross was shot by me with my crossbow."

The active voice certainly makes a narrative more lively. For when we use the active voice we present to our hearers or readers a series of pictures in which people are doing things; there is the animation of things happening. See how Antony moves the populace—

"You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Cæsar put it on;
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii;
Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
See what a rent the envious Casca made:
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Cæsar follow'd it."

How much less telling this would be in the passive: "This mantle is well known to you; it is within my memory when it was first put on by Cæsar. It was on that day when the Nervii were overcome" . . . and so on.

That is why the writer, anxious to enable you to have a

scene in your mind, resorts to narrative. For description by words is a difficult task. The painter who can show parts in relation to one another and to the whole, who can display form and colour, has in this matter an advantage over the writer. The writer is handicapped by having to take item by item. Even so, he can only suggest a description, trusting that his reader's imagination will fill out the slight sketches he makes.

Language, however, is well adapted to show movement; and the most effective makers of word-pictures make their descriptions a narrative, an account of something happening rather than of a fixed appearance. Read, for instance, Ruskin's description of the Roman Campagna, a region of death and desolation. But the words he uses denote movement and life, not the stillness of the wilderness. From these words the imaginative reader forms in his mind a vivid picture of the silent scene—

Perhaps there is no more impressive scene on earth than the solitary extent of the Campagna of Rome under evening light. Let the reader imagine himself for a moment withdrawn from the sounds and motion of the living world, and sent forth alone into this wild and wasted plain. The earth yields and crumples beneath his foot, tread he never so lightly; for its substance is white, hollow, and carious, like the dusty wreck of the bones of men. The long knotted grass waves and tosses feebly in the evening wind, and the shadows of its motion shake feverishly along the banks of ruin that lift themselves to the sunlight. Hillocks of mouldering earth heave around him, as if the dead beneath were struggling in their sleep; scattered blocks of black stone, four square, remnants of mighty edifices, not one left upon another, lie upon them to keep them down. A dull, purple, poisonous haze stretches level along the desert, veiling its spectral wrecks of massy ruins, on whose rents the red light rests, like dying fire on defiled altars. The blue ridge of the Alban Mount lifts itself against a solemn space of green, clear, quiet, sky. Watch-towers of dark clouds stand steadfastly along the promontories of the Apennines. From the plain to the mountains, the

scattered aqueducts, pier beyond pier, melt into the darkness, like shadowy and countless troops of funeral mourners, passing from a nation's grave.

When we use the passive voice we present the results of actions. Our presentation becomes a series of still-life pictures. Nevertheless, we may wish to emphasize the results of actions rather than the actions themselves. Then it is that the passive voice is preferable. So Froude describes the desperate plight of the *Revenge*. "Her powder was now spent, all her pikes were broken, forty out of her hundred men were killed, and a great number of the rest wounded." This expressed in the active voice—"They had spent all the powder" and so on—would be much less effective.

Habitual Actions

Besides, when habitual actions are spoken of, the passive seems to be the natural manner of expression. It sounds better to say, "I am called every day at six," using the passive, than to devise an action by employing an indefinite pronoun "They call me every morning at six."

On occasion, too, we need to express the result of an action without mentioning the performer. Thus: "All his property is mortgaged," "Was the pistol loaded?", "When was she married?"

"The willows and the hazel copses green
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays."

"The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed." (Here *sheep* is first the subject of *look up*, and then of the passive *are not fed*.)

Formation of the Passive

The passive voice is formed, as you see from these instances, by the combining of a past participle (*mortgaged, married, seen* and so on), with the appropriate part of the verb "to be" (*is, was, shall be* and so on). We must, however, notice that *be* with the participle is also used to supply a description. Thus—

For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.

Be sunk here is hardly a passive; the participle here is more of an adjective than a verb. So you may say "to be shut" meaning the opposite of "to be opened": "When we reached the town the gate was shut, but when it was shut I don't know." (The first *was shut* is an instance of the adjectival use of the participle; the second of the use to make the passive.) You have Shakespeare making use of the possible ambiguity in this perhaps not very brilliant jest: "When are you married madam?" "Why every day, to-morrow." (*Much Ado About Nothing*, III, 2.) (I shall be married by the priest; then for ever more I shall be a married lady.)

Experimenting with Sentences

Here is a passage of excellent prose. It contains sentences with verbs in the active voice (*plant, had, laid, put, will require, noticed*) and sentences with verbs in the passive voice (*had been cleared, should be filled, had been filled.*) Take the passage and write it again, changing the active to passive and the passive to active. You will be greatly dissatisfied with the result; for the original is by Thomas Hardy—"The Woodlanders." But your dissatisfaction is all to the good; and you will have given close study to the passage—

There were a thousand young fir trees to be planted in a neighbouring spot which had been cleared by the woodcutters, and he had arranged to plant them with his own hands. He had a marvellous power of making trees grow. . . . The holes were already dug, and they set to work. Winterborne's fingers were endowed with a gentle conjurer's touch in spreading the roots of each little tree, resulting in a sort of caress under which the delicate fibres all laid themselves out in their proper directions for growth. He put most of these roots towards the south-west; for, he said, in forty years' time, when some great gale is blowing from that quarter, the trees will require the strongest holdfast on that side to stand against it and not fall.

"How they sigh directly we put 'em upright, though while they are lying down they don't sigh at all," said Marty.

"Do they?" said Giles. "I've never noticed it."

She erected one of the young pines into its hole, and held up her fingers; the soft musical breathing instantly set in which was not to cease night or day till long after the two planters had been felled themselves.

Connecting Your Sentences

Your sentences will be well constructed. If you are to give easy access to your meaning, they will also be linked to one another in such a manner as will enable your reader to follow the workings of your mind. There will be a natural flow from one thought to another. Read this paragraph from Stevenson's *The Amateur Emigrant*, and you will realize very clearly what this means. Stevenson is expanding the topic that people are apt to judge by outward appearances—

Here on shipboard the matter was put to a more complete test; for, even with the addition of speech and manner, I passed among the ladies for precisely the average man of the steerage. It was one afternoon that I saw this demonstrated. A very plainly dressed woman was taken ill on deck. I think I had the luck to be present at every sudden seizure during all the passage; and on this occasion found myself in the place of importance, supporting the sufferer. There was not only a large crowd immediately around us, but a considerable knot of saloon passengers leaning over our heads from the hurricane-deck. One of these, an elderly managing woman, hailed me with counsels. Of course I had to reply; and as the talk went on, I began to discover that the whole group took me for the husband. I looked upon my new wife, poor creature, with mingled feelings; and I must own that she had not even the appearance of the poorest class of city servant-maids, but looked more like a country wench who should have been employed in a roadside inn. Now was the time for me to go and study the brass plate.

You will agree that there are no inexplicable breaks here.

The mind of the reader passes easily from the presentation of one thought to the presentation of the next. When you have finished reading the paragraph you think "Of course it must have happened so." The paragraph, you say, has *coherence*; it forms a unity. Moreover, the unity is a logical reasoned unity; there is an orderly development of the topic.

We can, indeed, find delight in the display of incoherence. There is no dullness when Mrs. Quickly is on the stage, none when Jane Austen presents us with speeches that we may perhaps parallel from among our acquaintances—

At one time, Patty came to say she thought the kitchen chimney wanted sweeping, "Oh," said I, "Patty, do not come with your bad news to me. Here is the rivet of your mistress's spectacles out." Then the baked apples came home; Mrs. Wallis sent them by her boy; they are extremely civil and obliging to us, the Wallises, always. I have heard some people say that Mrs. Wallis can be uncivil, and give a very rude answer; but we have never known anything but the greatest attention from them. And it cannot be for the value of our custom now, for what is our consumption of bread, you know? only three of us. Besides, dear Jane, at present—and she really eats nothing—makes such a shocking breakfast, you would be quite frightened if you saw it.

That is from *Emma*. There is to be sure a continuity of thought here, too, some connexion of one thought to another. You could not call the connexion a logical one. What a contrast is afforded by this little description of "A Sunrise"; it occurs in one of Gray's letters—

I must not close my letter without giving you one principal event of my history; which was, that (in the course of my late tour) I set out one morning before five o'clock, the moon shining through a dark and misty autumnal air, and got to the sea-coast time enough to be at the Sun's Levee. I saw the clouds and dark vapours open gradually to right and left, rolling over one another in great smoky wreathes, and the

tide (as it flowed gently in upon the sands) first whitening, then slightly tinged with gold and blue; and all at once a little line of insufferable brightness that (before I can write these five words) was grown to half an orb, and now to a whole one, too glorious to be distinctly seen. It is very odd it makes no figure on paper; yet I shall remember it, as long as the sun, or at least as long as I endure. I wonder whether anybody ever saw it before? I hardly believe it.

Obtaining Continuity

Your writing should have *continuity*. Your reader, that is, should be enabled to follow the train of your thoughts. Well, when you have written one sentence—expressed one thought in words—how are you to join with it the sentence that follows? Look at any good paragraph and you will find that the writer has skilfully contrived to knit his thoughts into a fabric. You will have words like "moreover" and "further," when similar matter is added; or words like "therefore" and "accordingly," when a conclusion is being drawn; you will have words like "but" and "however," when something different is being added. Objection is at times taken to the placing of a conjunction at the beginning of a sentence. Perhaps the objection is not a very reasonable one.

It would certainly become very monotonous if "and" or "but" were to open every sentence: variety adds to interest. There is no valid reason, however, why a conjunction should not come now and again. We must have some way of linking our sentences.

Look at the opening of the sentences in the passage—

Charity never faileth. But whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass,

darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

For, but, when, for, and are all conjunctions linking their sentences on to the one preceding.

Here, too, in the closing paragraph of *David Copperfield*, the first three sentences open with conjunctions—

And now, as I close my task, subduing my desire to linger yet, these faces fade away. But one face, shining on me like a heavenly light, by which I see all other objects, is above them and beyond them all. And that remains. I turn my head and see it, in its beautiful serenity, beside me. My lamp burns low, and I have written far into the night; but the dear presence, without which I were nothing, bears me company. O Agnes, O my soul, so may thy face be near me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me pointing upward!

CHAPTER XVII

THE MANNER OF YOUR WRITING

WHETHER you are aware of it or not, you probably have a distinctive manner of writing. It may not be a particularly good manner. Still, it is yours; and one may recognize you by it. "It is most true, *stylus virum arguit*, our style betrays us." The way you handle your pen is your own; the words you use and the way you use them also go far to prevent any anonymity.

Consider for a while the qualities that go to make up a distinctive style. Some of the relevant questions are these: Is the style diffuse or brief? Is the style clear or obscure? Is the style weak or strong? Is the style simple or ornate?

Examine these passages. They are bits of capital English and you will enjoy them all. But even a cursory reading will convince you that they are the products of different writers; and when you look closely into them you will be able to allot two passages to each of three different authors. Look at the kind of words used. Look at the way the sentences are built up, and then write down your answer—

(*a*) So the chatter was all on her side. There is a loquacity that tells nothing, which was Bathsheba's; and there is a silence which says much: that was Gabriel's.

(*b*) Think for a little while of that scene and the meaning of all its small formality, mixed with its serene sublimity. Estimate its secluded, continuous, drowsy felicities, and its evidence of the sense and steady performance of such duties as can be regulated by the cathedral clock.

(*c*) It happened one day, about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand. I stood like one thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an apparition.

(*d*) The St. Mark's porches are full of doves that nestle among the marble foliage and mingle the soft

iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion, with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years.

(*e*) It was still the beaming time of evening, though night was stealthily making itself visible low down upon the ground, the western lines of light raking the earth without alighting upon it to any extent, or illuminating the dead levels at all.

(*f*) Now I began to take courage, and to peep abroad again, for I had not stirred out of my castle for three days and nights, so that I began to starve for provision; for I had little or nothing within doors but some barley-cakes and water.

[*After a little examination you have no doubt linked together* (*a*) *and* (*e*); (*b*) *and* (*d*); (*c*) *and* (*f*).]

An Exercise in Discrimination

Here is another little test of your discriminating power.

Jane Austen wrote two of the passages below, the first and another; Thackeray wrote two, the second and another; Charles Lamb wrote two, the third and another. Assign the others to their authors—

(*a*) But there certainly are not so many men of large fortune in the world, as there are pretty women to deserve them. Miss Ward, at the end of half a dozen years, found herself obliged to be attached to the Rev. Mr. Norris, a friend of her brother-in-law, with scarcely any private fortune, and Miss Francis fared yet worse. Miss Ward's match, indeed, when it came to the point, was not contemptible, Sir Thomas being happily able to give his friend an income in the living of Mansfield, and Mr. and Mrs. Norris began their career of conjugal felicity with very little less than a thousand a year. But Miss Frances married, in the common phrase, to disoblige her family, and by fixing on a Lieutenant of Marines, without education, fortune, or connections, did it very thoroughly. She could hardly have made a more untoward choice.

(*b*) A sheet or two of the verses lay already on the table beside our bottles and glasses, and Dick having plentifully refreshed himself from the latter, took up the pages of manuscript, writ out with scarce a blot or correction, in the author's slim, neat handwriting, and began to read therefrom with great emphasis and volubility. At pauses of the verse the enthusiastick reader stopped and fired off a great salvo of applause.

Esmond smiled at the enthusiasm of Addison's friend. "You are like the German Burghers," says he, "and the Princes on the Mozelle; when our army came to a halt, they always sent a deputation to compliment the chief, and fired a salute with all their artillery from their walls."

(*c*) I must touch upon the foibles of my kinswoman with a gentle hand, for Bridget does not like to be told of her faults, She hath an awkward trick (to say no worse of it) of reading in company; at which times she will answer *yes* or *no* to a question, without fully understanding its purport—which is provoking, and derogatory in the highest degree to the dignity of the putter of the said question. Her presence of mind is equal to the most pressing trials of life, but will sometimes desert her upon trifling occasions. When the purpose requires it, and is a thing of moment, she can speak to it greatly; but in matters which are not stuff of the conscience, she hath been known sometimes to let slip a word less seasonably.

(*d*) Children love to listen to stories about their elders, when *they* were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle, or granddame, whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk (a hundred times bigger than that in which they and papa lived) which had been the scene—so at least it was generally believed in that part of the country—of the tragic

incidents which they had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the "Children in the Wood." Certain it is that the whole story of the children and their cruel uncle was to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimney-piece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin Redbreasts; till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead, with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding.

(*e*) How well I remember the delight, and wonder, and pleasure with which I read *Jane Eyre*, sent to me by an author whose name and sex were then alike unknown to me; the strange fascination of the book; and how with my own work pressing upon me, I could not, having taken the volumes up, lay them down until they were read through! Hundreds of those who, like myself, recognised and admired the master-work of a great genius, will look with a mournful interest and regard and curiosity upon the last fragmentary sketch from the noble hand which wrote *Jane Eyre*.

(*f*) "What an excellent father you have, girls!" said she, when the door was shut. "I do not know how you will ever make him amends for his kindness; or me either, for that matter. At our time of life it is not so pleasant, I can tell you, to be making new acquaintance every day; but for your sakes, we would do anything, Lydia, my love, though you *are* the youngest, I dare say Mr. Bingley will dance with you at the next ball."

"Oh!" said Lydia stoutly, "I am not afraid; for though I *am* the youngest, I'm the tallest."

The rest of the evening was spent in conjecturing how soon he would return Mr. Bennet's visit, and determining when they should ask him to dinner.

Poverty of Words and Profusion

An obvious difference between styles is afforded by the contrast between poverty of words and profusion of words.

"'Tis brief, my lord." "As woman's love." So Hamlet slanders woman; and indeed brevity is not invariably a virtue. In our writing, however, pruning is usually for the better. It may well be even in the poem below, that strength is gained by cutting. Probably you will think that the second version of Fletcher's lines is the more effective. You admire the first version; you think the shorter form the better. Here is the first version—

> Once a poor song-bird that had lost her way
> Sang down in hell upon upon a blackened bough,
> Till all the lazy ghosts remembered how
> The forest trees stood up against the day.

And here is the second—

> A linnet who had lost her way
> Sang on a blackened bough in Hell,
> Till all the ghosts remembered well
> The trees, the wind, the golden day.

Yet in our laudable search after conciseness—after the achievement of what people call "succinct paragraphs"—we are not to neglect the graces of writing, nor the courtesy we owe to our correspondent. And we certainly are not to allow our brevity to detract from the chief virtue of all writing, its lucidity. Language fails of its purpose when it cannot with any confidence be interpreted in the intended manner. Brevity is good; but it is not the best. The best is that our writing imposes no great strain upon our reader: he grasps our meaning with a minimum of trouble.

A Multiplicity of Words

We certainly do wrong to judge the value of a writing, or of a speech, by the number of words in it. We do find on occasion that the addition of many phrases, devised so that there may be no doubt about the intended meaning, has actually made the meaning more difficult to reach.

A striking instance is in the paragraph below: it is a subsection from the Finance Act of 1936. The clause offered for your inspection is not, indeed, ambiguous; after much study you can fathom its meaning. You must, it is true, be like

Browning's Grammarian, who "Left play for work and grappled" till he had "mastered learning's crabbed text." Still, if you do this long enough, you will reach the meaning. It is there all right, though hidden in the mist of clauses and provisos and guarding expressions.

Section 21, you may remember, made settlements upon infant children of no effect as a means of evading income tax. The income settled upon the child remains, *for tax purposes*, the income of the settlor. The question is: "Does subsection (3) give any hope to the tax-payer?" For it says that where the settlement is made—

(*b*) Any sum whatsoever paid thereafter by virtue or in consequence of the settlement, or any enactment relating thereto, to or for the benefit of a child of the settlor, being a child who at the commencement of the year of assessment in which the sum is paid is an infant and unmarried shall be deemed for the purposes of subsection (1) of the section to be paid as income, unless and except to the extent that the sum so paid (whether to that child or to any other child who, at the commencement of the year of assessment in which that other sum was so paid, was an infant and unmarried) exceeds the aggregate amount of the income which by virtue or in consequence of the settlement has been paid to or for the benefit of a child of the settlor, or dealt with as mentioned in subsection (2) of this section, since the date when the settlement took effect or the date when it became irrevocable, whichever is the later.

There is the clause to which you are invited to find an interpretation. "I have read it forwards," said one; "I have read it backwards; I have even tried it sideways. And it baffles me." Does it baffle you? For a while, no doubt, unless you have before studied it carefully. But by patience and perseverance, by temporarily excluding the various explanatory phrases that seem to have dropped in haphazard from heaven, you succeed. Then you realize that it applies to what is paid to the infant beyond the amount settled. This amount is not to be "treated for all the purposes of the Income Tax Acts as the income of the settlor." It is the infant's income: if by this addition the infant's income is swollen so that he comes above the sur-tax limit, then the infant pays tax upon it. Yet, though it is the infant's income, it is also part of the settlor's income for the year of assessment. You think—quite rightly think—that this might have been left to be inferred, and that it was an absurd excess of caution to add the proviso.

likely to involve us in unanticipated obligations. The historian embroiders and expands almost as much as the poet and the novelist do. But how much credence can be attached to any of their embroideries? Isn't it all largely a matter of guesswork?

Cut Out Superfluities

Perhaps you will not think it impertinent that we allude to quite plain instances of needless words. These uncalled-for words constitute the tautology or verbosity or whatever else you care to call a superfluity of words. You may excuse the journalist, hard put to it for matter to fill a vacant column, when instead of "He was not there," he writes, "He was conspicuous by his absence," and when instead of "The Sale realized about £250," he writes "The amount realized by the Sale was in the neighbourhood of £250."

It is fun, too, when time is of little account, to express things in a roundabout way, to call "tea" "The beverage drawn from China's fragrant herb"; to say "prominent feature" instead of "nose"—

> Mark him of shoulders curved, of stature tall,
> Black hair and vivid eye and meagre cheek,
> His prominent feature like an eagle's beak.

But we may easily go to excesses in such fun. Some there are that think even Dickens too prone to it. They would rather "Then we sang together 'Auld Lang Syne'" than "Then Mrs. Micawber and myself had the honour of uniting our voices to yours in the well-known strain of the immortal bard nurtured beyond the Tweed." Very likely most of us enjoy it.

How irritating it is, though, when you hear and especially when you read expressions that have long lost whatever force they had, expressions like "Silence reigned supreme" and "To own the soft impeachment." Far better say "All was quiet" and "To own up." In our business writings conciseness is most desirable; for the concise is usually also the precise. "The handwriting in the case of both boys and girls was not beyond reproach" is far better put as "The handwriting of both boys and girls was poor." When two words are used for the one thought, it seems to suggest that the user has no vivid idea of

the meaning of the words he uses. *Lonely* is implied in *isolation*: *lonely* is therefore superfluous in "He has not budged from his position of lonely isolation." *Surrounding* is implied in *circumstances*: it is therefore superfluous in "Counsel submitted that his contention was borne out by the surrounding circumstances."

Making a Summary

To be sure, we delight in a skilful writer's expression of a particular topic. It is well, however, to be able to put matters into small compass. That is why you do well to exercise yourself in making summaries. The summary enables you to concentrate upon the really important points of your study; the making of it, too, impels you to examine yourself constantly about what you are reading. The thing that fights most against the student—the wandering of attention—is then quite impossible.

You doubtless have enough of your severe books upon which to exercise yourself; and you will prefer to look at this admirable little story and to try upon it your powers of condensing. It comes from Burton's *Anatomy*.

But, to your farther content, I'll tell you a tale. In Moronia pia, or Moronia felix, I know not whether, nor how long since, nor in what cathedral church, a fat prebend fell void. The carcase scarce cold, many suitors were up in an instant. The first had rich friends, a good purse; and he was resolved to outbid any man before he would lose it; every man supposed he should carry it. The second was my Lord Bishop's chaplain (in whose gift it was); and he thought it his due to have it. The third was nobly born; and he meant to get it by his great parents, patrons, and allies. The fourth stood upon his worth; he had newly found out strange mysteries in chemistry, and other rare inventions, which he would detect to the public good. The fifth was a painful preacher; and he was commended by the whole parish where he dwelt; he had all their hands to his certificate. The sixth was the prebendary's son lately deceased; his father died in debt (for it, as they say), and left a wife and many

poor children. The seventh stood upon fair promises, which to him and his noble friends had been formerly made for the next place in his lordship's gift. The eighth pretended great losses, and what he had suffered for the church, what pains he had taken at home and abroad; and besides he brought noblemen's letters. The ninth had married a kinswoman, and he sent his wife to sue for him. The tenth was a foreign doctor, a late convert, and wanted means. The eleventh would exchange for another; he did not like the former's site, could not agree with his neighbours and fellows upon any terms; he would be gone. The twelfth and last was a suitor in conceit, a right honest, civil, sober man, an excellent scholar, and such a one as lived private in the university; but he had neither means nor money to compass it; besides he hated all such courses; he could not speak for himself, neither had he any friends to solicit his cause, and therefore made no suit, could not expect, neither did he hope for, or look after it. The good bishop, amongst a jury of competitors, thus perplexed, and not yet resolved what to do, or on whom to bestow it, at the last, of his own accord, mere motion, and bountiful nature, gave it freely to the university student, altogether unknown to him but by fame; and, to be brief, the academical scholar had the prebend sent him for a present. The news was no sooner published abroad, but all good students rejoiced, and were much cheered up with it, though some would not believe it; others, as men amazed, said it was a miracle; but one amongst the rest thanked God for it, and said, "A delight it is in these happier days to devote ourselves to study and to serve God with a single mind." You have heard my tale; but alas! it is but a tale, a mere fiction; 'twas never so, never like to be; and so let it rest.

Expansion Desirable at Times

At times we welcome expansion of a theme. In a speech a gaunt conciseness is probably a blemish. Some superfluous words are restful for the speaker; the thought-saving phrases—

"depend upon it", "no thinking man would for a moment believe", "I venture to observe", and "I would ask any member of this large and intelligent gathering", and the like—give a little respite from mental strain. Perhaps the blank spaces are welcome to the hearers also, enabling them to concentrate thought upon what is worthy of thought. A speech entirely in the manner of a statute would be impossible of mental digestion.

Thus, the draftsman defines for the purpose of the Sale of Goods Act the "necessaries" for which an infant's property is liable. He rightly does this in general terms; there are no illustrations as pleasant resting places for the mind, nothing but the stark explanation.

Necessaries in this section mean goods suitable to the condition of life of such infant and to his actual requirements at the time of the sale and delivery.

We all welcome the judge's exposition in specific terms—

Suppose the jury ask what is the meaning of necessaries. Does it mean in law, as in strictness, something indispensable? The answer must be no. When they ask what is the meaning and it is expounded to them as being something reasonably required for the nourishment, clothing, lodging, education, and decent behaviour and appearance according to the station, how can such an explanation include these articles? [The question was about a Gold Drinking Cup and a pair of Solitaires price £25.] But I may fairly be asked what is the rule? It seems to me to be this. There are some things which cannot be necessaries—ear-rings for a male, a wild animal, and all things which are useless except for amusement or where utility is the subordinate consideration, and the ornament the principal. On the other hand, there are some things certainly necessaries, bread, meat, vegetables, water. There are also things which may or may not be, and which give rise to questions for a jury. For instance, an infant orders an expensive coat; but it appears his trade or calling is of the nature that such a coat is necessary for his health; or it is shown that a coat at half the price would not last half the time. Or if he ordered a broadcloth coat, and it is said he should have contented himself with fustian, evidence may be given as to his position and as to how people dress in that class in that neighbourhood, and then the question is for the jury.

The Niggard and the Profuse

Shakespeare must often have been concerned over the rival merits of brevity and profusion. He makes Polonius in the

play, by subtle suggestion as well as by direct statement, inculcate the merits of conciseness—Polonius, the long-winded, the garrulous, of whom the Queen seeks "more matter with less art." Yet none can deny that Shakespeare was "copious," too, whenever many words were called for.

Well, shall there be profusion or niggardliness in our writing? Both are good in their proper place. You would not be diffuse in your writing of a telegram: you would not stint your words in the letter to the friend longing to hear from you. Your difficulty, everyone's difficulty, is to know when one has said enough. Are we to be laconic like the writer of this message in *The Times* "Agony Column"?—"S.S.D.—So esy., and you demand the so dfficlt. Will try agn. Mst. end Mesgs." Are we to be voluble, rotund, as in this message in the following day's issue?—"K.A.—Nothing warrants your suggestion; repudiate entirely base insinuation."

It is a difficulty that presents itself in different ways at different periods. When Shakespeare was writing, the aim of all writers was to be "copious." They left no room for doubt about their intended meaning and often writings are full of repetitions—repetitions that delight, no doubt, but still repetitions. Analyse, for example, one of Shakespeare's most beautiful sonnets. Its theme is "my verse shall stand praising thy worth, despite Time's cruel hand." The sonnet is an expression in varied forms of the one thought—

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore
So do our minutes hasten to their end;

Time passes (a comparison)

Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forward do contend.

Time passes (an explanation)

Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave, doth now his gift confound.

Time passes (it brings to perfection then to decay)

Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow;
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow;

Time passes (it brings wrinkles)

And yet, to times in hope, my verse shall stand
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

Time passes (but my verse endures)

The nineteenth century was like the times of Shakespeare in that respect. Many of the great poems of Victoria's days are much longer than we care for nowadays. For now, in our prompt, businesslike attitude, we attach greater weight to conciseness than to copiousness. Once a thing is said effectively, we think, we had better stop. Sometimes, indeed, we do no more than announce the text: we leave the sermon to be worked out by the reader or the hearer.

The Copious and the Restrained

Would you care to study two very interesting examples of what is meant? Both have a Greek origin. The first is the beautiful and musical "Heraclitus" of W. J. Cory (who died in 1892)—

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
I wept as I remember'd how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

And now that you are lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales,[1] awake;
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

[1] It may be desirable to note that Homer called the nightingale by a name that also meant the poet and his poetry; and that, in Greek literature, the songs that the poet sings are "his nightingales."

This is Dr. Mackail's translation of the Greek original—

One told me of thy fate, Heraclitus, and wrung me to tears, and I remembered how often both of us let the sun sink as we talked; but thou methinks, O friend from Halicarnassus, art ashes long and long ago; yet thy nightingale-notes live, whereon Hades the ravisher of all things shall not lay his hand.

The single "one told me" of the prose becomes in the verse the twice repeated "they told me" and also "they brought me news." "Wrung me to tears" becomes "bitter tears to shed" and also "I wept." "Let the sun sink" becomes "had tired the sun" and also "sent him down the sky." And "ashes" have the addition "grey" and "a handful." The prose version is sparing, economical in its expressions; it asks the reader to give a good deal of active co-operation for the full understanding of the thoughts. The verse version is profuse; it will not let the reader go until it is convinced that ample help has been given and that, if not in one way then in another, the intended thoughts have been transferred from mind to mind.

The second, the example of twentieth century conciseness, is taken from the *Dublin Days* of L. A. G. Strong. It cleverly utilizes another of Dr. Mackail's translations—

I Dionysius of Tarsus lie here at sixty, having never married and I would that my father had not.

Here is the modern version—

Bill Jupp lies 'ere, aged sixty year:
From Tavistock 'e came.
Single 'e bided, and 'e wished
'Is father done the same.

The diffuse, as you will have noticed from the sonnet and from "Heraclitus," may be very delightful; you might very well resent any curtailing of it. Indeed, you must be diffuse if, for example, you are making a speech or teaching a lesson. For you must be very effective and very lucky in either if you are to impart half a dozen new ideas; and you are obliged to present these ideas in a good many forms.

The teacher learns from the skilful orator not to fear repeti-

tions in his talk. "What I tell you at least three times is true," seems to be the working rule of the best speakers—and the best teachers. They prepare the ground, they arouse curiosity, they prompt questionings; by imparting a new idea they satisfy the curiosity that they have excited; they then drive the idea home by illustration and example. It is what the teacher reads in his method book. There is, says the book, the *Preparation*, "I am about to say something of the greatest importance"; there is the *Presentation*, "I say it"; there is the *Recapitulation*, "I tell you that I have said it." It is the story-teller's art, too. First "Attend all ye who list to hear," then "This is the story," finally, "So they lived happily ever after." The concise, too, has its virtues; you cannot but admire the statement that gives the essence of a matter, strips it of all redundancies, and presents it so that all may see it in the clearest light.

Some Illustrations and an Exercise

Now examine these instances of the concise and the expansive; and then spend a while on the exercise suggested. Here is the summary expression—

We need a unit for comparing values. We need it particularly when bargains for deferred payments are common. The unit becomes at once a means of settlement and a measure of debt, a money of account; and it serves its purposes well to the extent that it retains stability in power.

And here is the expansion—

Some common unit of value in terms of which transactions can be expressed is necessary, if only as a satisfactory measure for comparing the value of one thing with that of another. With the growth of contractual obligations, involving the conception of deferred payments, a time element was imported into transactions which rendered it even more essential to have a common unit of value as the basis on which to fix the amount of payments to be made at a postponed date. When a community, in order to meet this requirement, selects a particular commodity such as gold to serve as its common denominator of value, or, in other words, as its money, that commodity is used not only for the actual settlement of debts but is also naturally adopted as the unit for the measurement of those debts. It becomes what is termed the money of account, e.g. the pound, the dollar, the franc. But the person entitled to a future payment fixed in terms of the money of account may find, if there

is instability in the purchasing power of money due to fluctuations of prices, that the value of his contractual right has substantially changed when he comes to receive payment. The importance of stability in the value of money, that is, in its purchasing power, thus becomes at once apparent if transactions are to be entered into with any degree of confidence.

It is a thankless and distasteful task to maul a delightful writing in order to exhibit its dry bones. Still, the task is worth while; it obliges you to study the passage closely and perhaps to realize more keenly its goodness. Well, here is a little of G. L. Dickinson's *Letters from John Chinaman*. You are asked to read it carefully and then give its gist in about thirty words—

In China, letters are respected not merely to a degree, but in a sense which must seem, I think, to you unintelligible and overstrained. But there is a reason for it. Our poets and literary men have taught their successors, for long generations, to look for good not in wealth, not in power, not in miscellaneous activity, but in a trained, a choice, and exquisite appreciation of the most simple and universal relations of life. To feel, and in order to feel to express, or at least to understand the expression of all that is lovely in Nature, of all that is poignant and sensitive in man, is to us in itself a sufficient end. A rose in a moonlight garden, the shadow of trees on turf, almond blossom, scent of pine, the wine-cup and the guitar; these and the pathos of life and death, the long embrace, the hand stretched out in vain, the moment that glides for ever away, with its freight of music and light, into the shadow and hush of the haunted past, all that we have, all that eludes us, a bird on the wing, a perfume escaped on the gale—to all these things we are trained to respond, and the response is what we call literature.

Here is a very delightful instance, coupled with an explanation, of the diffuse: it is one of the many charming letters that, happily, we have of Cowper's—

My Dear Friend,

You like to hear from me: this a very good reason

why I should write. But I have nothing to say: this seems equally a good reason why I should not. Yet if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me—"Mr. Cowper, you have not spoken since I came in; have you resolved, never to speak again?" it would be but a poor reply, if in answer to the summons I should plead inability as my best and only excuse. And this, by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand, that a letter may be written upon anything or nothing, just as that anything or nothing happens to occur. A man that has a journey before him, twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate and doubt whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it: for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it. So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case. A letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed; not by preconcerted or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before, but merely by maintaining a progress; and resolving, as a postillion does, having once set out, never to stop till we reach the appointed end. If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say—"Why good sir, a man has no right to do either." But it is to be hoped that the present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last; and so good Sir Launcelot, or Sir Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture-frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns in the meantime to think when we can, and to write whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead as you are.

You must yourself provide the links among the weighty thoughts. There is no illustration to smooth the way of the reader towards understanding, nor any adornment to make the way more attractive. The passage demands, as of course it deserves, strenuous grappling to pull out the meaning.

The second passage is from the Essay *On Adversity*—

Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth the greater benediction and the clearer evidence of God's favour. Yet, even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see in needle-works and embroideries it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground. Judge therefore of the pleasure of the heart by the pleasure of the eye. Certainly, virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue.

The reader has here an easier, more pleasant approach to the thoughts than he has in the first gaunt passage.

CHAPTER XVIII

CRAFTSMANSHIP IN WRITING ENGLISH

Clearness of Thought

WHAT are to be considered as the chief merits of a speech or of a writing? It is not an easy question to answer. For good writing—poetry or prose—has many merits. Consider first the merit of *clearness*. Perhaps we should regard this as the great merit of prose. Some—many maybe—will not agree: they will contend that grandeur, power of kindling imagination, eloquence, one or other of a number of qualities comes before clearness.

"I shall be censured, I doubt not," said wise old Burton, "for to say truth, *nihil morosius hominum judiciis*, there is nought so peevish as men's judgments; yet this is some comfort, *ut palata, sic judicia*, our censures are as various as our palates. Our writings are as so many dishes, our readers guests, our books like beauty: that which one admires another rejects. So are we approved as men's fancies are inclined. Luck determines how our books shall fare with the reader. That which is most pleasing to one is *amaracum sui*, most harsh to another. *Quot homines, tot sententiae*, so many men, so many minds; that which thou condemnest he commends. He respects matter, thou art wholly for words; he loves a loose and free style, thou art all for neat composition, strong lines, hyperboles, allegories. That which one admires, another explodes as most absurd and ridiculous."

Clearness is only one of several merits of good writing. Still all will agree that clearness matters, matters very much. We ask the reader's attention; but we should not make an exorbitant demand upon that attention. That is no more than politeness: *clarté est politesse*. Besides, if we do make an excessive demand, our demand will be denied. This is the more certain in these days when so much good matter may be heard

as well as read. Whether or not clearness or perspicuity is the chief merit of poetry, we need not discuss at the moment. Poetry itself, however, should have a meaning; and we should be able to grasp that meaning without such an expenditure of thought as far exceeds the worth of the meaning we extract. Sound is not enough. Sense enters into the matter, too.

Words are used to Express Thought

Unless we had numberless instances to the contrary, we might take it for granted that a writer (or indeed a speaker) has a definite thought to express when he writes (or speaks). He uses words in order to put thought into bodily form, in order that another may have the same thought; or maybe in order that he himself may consider the thought, may modify it, and make it more consistent with truth.

It is not so always. Some people go on talking—talking delightfully, too—and no clear thought is behind the words. Writers themselves, though time for deliberation is available, present us with strings of words wellnigh devoid of meaning; and these also often enough please their readers. The words are there; they sound impressive; a trickle of sense seems to run through them. If thoughts had once been behind the words, they have eluded the thinker; they have become "Fancies that broke through language and escaped." Either we, as readers, lack skill to interpret the words, or the writer has lacked skill in choosing his words. Doubtless, in our humility, we had better assume—even when faced with one of the more terrifying passages of Browning—that the first alternative is the truth. A more determined effort to penetrate to the intended meaning will succeed. It may be, too, that we ought to be amply satisfied when a writer presents us with beautifully composed sentences, sentences pleasant to read and to hear. Are we exacting when we ask for meaning also? Perhaps not.

Cross-examination of a Passage

However, examine closely a passage or two. Here are melodious lines from Matthew Arnold's *Memorial Verses*. He writes of Wordsworth, whom he so greatly admired—

> And Wordsworth! Ah, pale Ghosts, rejoice!
> For never has such soothing voice

Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.

You read and enjoy. Then you examine yourself and the passage. What is it all about? "Pale Ghosts," you say. Do ghosts have changes of countenance? "Can a ghost laugh, or shake his gaunt sides, when you are pleasant with him?" asks Charles Lamb. Might we not be trusted to know that the "shades" must live in a "shadowy world," and that "gloom" cannot be other than "mournful"? And will a "soothing voice" have the same effect as the "clear song"? And when does morning break in Hades? Is the interjected "at morn" only to eke out the verse?

Thought Clear, Diction Distorted

The clearness we are considering at the moment, you will note, is clearness of thought. Clearness of expression is another matter. To be sure, the two usually meet one another; the expression is clear because the thought is clear. If your thoughts are clear, you do not fail to express them adequately. But there may be clearness of thought, though the language gives a good deal of trouble. Through perversity, or in accordance with a theory that would avoid the commonplace, the writer has invented a language of his own.

We know very well what Pope means, for example, when he recounts how Clarissa helps the lover to the obtaining of a lock of Belinda's hair. His language is not, however, by any means what Wordsworth insists it should be, "the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society." You will not in current talk hear the scissors spoken of as "a two-edged weapon," as "the little engine" or "the fatal engine," as "the shears," as "the meeting points."

Just then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace
A two-edged weapon from her shining case:
So Ladies in Romance assist their Knight,
Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.
He takes the gift with reverence, and extends
The little engine on his fingers' ends;

This just behind Belinda's neck he spread,
As o'er the fragrant streams she bent her head.
Swift to the Lock a thousand Sprites repair,
A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair;
And thrice they twitched the diamond in her ear;
Thrice she looked back and thrice the foe drew near.
Even then before the fatal engine closed,
A wretched Sylph too fondly interposed;
Fate urged the shears, and cut the Sylph in twain
(But airy substance soon unites again);
The meeting points the sacred hair dissever
From the fair head, for ever and for ever!

So, too, the thought expressed in the Milton passage below is definite enough. Still, the passage asks—as it deserves—much study before you penetrate to the full meaning—

Good and evil we know in the field of this World grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed upon *Psyche* as an incessant labour to cull out and sort asunder were not more intermixed. It was from out the rind of one apple tasted that the knowledge of good and evil as of two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the World. And perhaps this is that doom which *Adam* fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say of knowing good by evil. As therefore the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear, without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true war-faring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we

bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary.

The Preference Should be Towards Plainness

Say things plainly. You have thereby the greater chance of being effective. "Mr. Cleeve," wrote George Eliot, "has the wonderful art of preaching sermons which the wheelwright and the blacksmith can understand; not because he talks condescending twaddle, but because he can call a spade a spade and knows how to disencumber ideas of their wordy frippery."

Instead, therefore, of commending "habits of cleanliness" and dilating upon "the necessity of regular ablution" we had better say "Plenty of soap and water has a healthy bracing effect upon the body, and so benefits the mind also." Is there anyone who prefers to "A rolling stone gathers no moss" the circumlocution, "A petrified body of rotary movement has no affinity for graminous matter"? Though the roundabout way may on occasion be appropriate, the simple "No" is, in the main, preferable to "The answer is in the negative."

You offend against the canon of clarity when your words either have no real meaning or have alternative meanings. At times, indeed, there is a deliberate intention of thus perverting the use of language. The oracles of Delphi and all their successors down to our latest astrologers have sought to make their prophecies true by couching them in terms applicable to several events; and Ministers of the Crown at times copy the device. These latter, too, are adepts at saying things without meaning.

Evading a Question

The Minister rises to answer a question that should never have been asked. To answer it directly would be foolish, maybe disastrous. He talks round it, therefore; his words stream out and seem to bear a meaning. But there is in reality even less in them than the two grains of wheat in a bushel of chaff. The Minister's device may on occasions, very rare occasions, be legitimate and laudable. For at times the naked truth is unpresentable; and courtesy asks that it should be clothed. "I have no wish to see you" is a message too crushing to send to an

unwelcome caller. "She is not at home," says all that is necessary; and it saves a good deal of mental distress.

Quite true, the recipient of the latter message may mistake its purport: "Mamie is out," says her little sister to the persistent caller; "Well Susie, tell her I called," says he; "I have," says Susie. Most of us, however, understand such a message.

In that category of make-believe are "printers' errors." Most of us know that these errors should more often than not be called "authors' errors." The printer, hidden behind his anonymity, patiently bears another's blame. Perhaps authors are less grateful than they should be for this vicarious sacrifice. Some, like Herrick, ask for even plenary absolution at the printer's cost—

> For these Transgressions which thou here dost see,
> Condemn the Printer, Reader, and not me:
> Who gave him forth good grain, though he mistook
> The Seed; so sowed these Tares throughout my Book.

Whether the device is laudable when it merely evades a difficulty is another matter. The administer, being asked "What is an archdeacon?" might have given more real information than he did in answering "An archdeacon is a man who performs archidiaconal functions." So might the lecturer on "The Sublime," who, being asked to define "The Sublime," answered "The Sublime is everything that is or will be so called by those who have employed or shall employ the term." It does not augment our store of knowledge much to be told that cheese is cheese.

Ambiguities

The fact that two interpretations of a word or of a sentence are possible is one of the major problems connected with the use of language. Even a statement like "Marry in haste, and repent at leisure" may, by wilfully perverse hearers, be diverted from its intended sense. This intended sense is to be sure: "Be prudent in your choice and you will have no cause to rue."

he perversion is to take the statement as an imperative. 'Marry in haste" is made equivalent to Herrick's

> Then be not coy but use your time
> And while ye may, go marry;
> For having spent but once your prime
> You may for ever tarry.

"Repent at leisure" is made equivalent to "When you have embarked upon a course from which there is no retreat, you are wise to make the best of it." And what is the meaning of this other commonplace, "Feed a cold and starve a fever"? Does it mean "Don't be so foolish as to eat heartily when you have a cold or you will be obliged to starve when you have a fever"?

The ambiguity that lurks in quite familiar words does strange service at times. In the *Life of Labouchere* we learn how that superbly impertinent jester was gravely embarrassed when, arriving with his Henrietta at a Prussian town, he found the hotel full. Labby summoned the landlord and informed him, "I am an elector of Middlesex." To the Prussian landlord "elector" was a word connoting much power and high place; and he hastened to place the best bedroom at Labby's disposal.

It is not easy to avoid ambiguity. It is very difficult to avoid ambiguity when it is to the interest of the reader to interpret the words in other than the intended meaning. "Have you ever suffered loss by fire?' was one question on the insurance policy proposal form. The question was addressed to a partnership and was answered on its behalf "Yes, £5, Sea," referring to a loss to the extent of £5 paid by the Sea Insurance Company. Was not this, as the judge put it, "a considerable economy of the truth"? For in reality one of the two partners at a previous date had incurred a very serious loss by fire. Still "you" is really plural, the question had not the alternative "or either of you," so that "you" collectively, as a partnership, that is, had not suffered loss. So the arbitrator found, subject to the opinion of the Court: "The answer was not untrue or inaccurate and the answer was true as concerned the partnership, and the form of the question was ambiguous." The opinion of the

Court was pretty clearly expressed: "It is a very arguable point whether the answer given was justified." But, since the Court decided in favour of the Insurance Company on another ground, it was not necessary to upset formally the arbitrator's finding.

Adding a Little Condiment

Yet, though the presumption should be towards plainness, it is not a conclusive presumption. Few speakers, and far fewer writers, are willing to restrict themselves to the bare minimum. They add a little flavouring, a little sauce; and they do this, even though they profess otherwise. Antony would have his hearers regard him as a "plain blunt man" who used no arts, but only "spoke right on"; but his marvellously effective speech is packed with oratorical devices. Othello would not be thought a skilful pleader: "Rude am I in my speech," he says, "And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace"; and his undertaking is, "I will a round unvarnished tale deliver Of my whole course of love." But what an artistic account he gives! No wonder poor Desdemona had been enraptured—

> My story being done,
> She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:
> She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange,
> 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful.

No wonder the Duke commented, "I think this tale would win my daughter too."

It is, in fact, natural to embellish or otherwise relieve the heavy going of language. The poets are great praisers of sweet simplicity—

> Give me a look, give me a face
> That make simplicity a grace;
> Robes loosely flowing, hair as free;
> Such sweet neglect more taketh me
> Than all th' adulteries of art;
> They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

They praise simplicity; but they usually marry the lady richly adorned, the lady who seeks—

> Still to be neat, still to be dressed,
> As you were going to a feast;
> Still to be powdered, still perfumed.

So it is that, as we have seen, Macaulay praises, praises highly, Bunyan's simplicity of style. But Macaulay does not copy Bunyan's style.

Objecting to Rhetorical Devices

It may be that you are right to dislike an excess of ornament. You are certainly wrong to object to its presence. Here, for instance, is what our composition books call a "rhetorical question," a question to which the questioner neither desires nor expects an answer. Long ago you learnt of Euclid's axioms, that they are truths neither needing proof, nor capable of proof. And these rhetorical questions—"O mighty Cæsar! dost thou lie so low?"—neither need an answer, nor in general are capable of one. A truculent critic may object "Then why ask the questions?" He would not be appeased by the explanation that it was a more striking way of stating a fact. This is Gray's rhetorical question—

> Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
> Full many a sprightly race
> Disporting on thy margent green
> The paths of pleasure trace,
> Who foremost now delight to cleave
> With pliant arm thy glassy wave?
> The captive linnet which enthrall?
> What idle progeny succeed
> To chase the rolling circle's speed,
> Or urge the flying ball?

In short, "Who swims, who trundles a hoop, who plays cricket and football?" And here is the comment of Doctor Johnson, who did not like Gray much and who greatly disliked Gray's affectations: "His supplication to Father Thames, to tell him who drives the hoop or tosses the ball, is useless and

puerile. Father Thames has no better means of knowing than himself."

Close Analysis Not Often Called For

We must give some indulgence to those who use language for our pleasure or our profit, and must not ask for a rigid adherence to gaunt truth. The Bishop, disliking hypocrisy, had been animadverting upon signatures that are insincere. His experience seems to have been unfortunate. He wrote—

> A correspondent who signs himself, "Yours affectionately," at all events after a short acquaintance, is pretty sure not to show much affection, if it costs him anything, and a correspondent, especially a clerical correspondent, who signs himself, "Yours obediently," is pretty sure not to obey.

But, to be sure, we all realize that, in the vast majority of the letters we sign, the mode of subscription is a formality—a convention to which little meaning is to be attached. When a Minister of the Crown, or an Income-tax Inspector, signs himself "Your obedient Servant," you are unwise to put the adjective to rigorous test. Now and again the subscription is intended to have a real meaning, and the recipient knows it; we all have written letters, received letters, too, where this is so. But we are not on oath when we sign "Yours faithfully" or "Yours sincerely" or even "Yours"; and simply to sign one's name, in order to avoid writing what is not in all strictness true, appears to be close to affectation.

On Comparisons

The attempt to detail all the devices used by skilful speakers and writers in order that their language shall be more effective, or more out of the ordinary, would be a failure. Still, we may well discuss the chief of these devices. The simile, or comparison, must from the earliest use of language have been a favourite form of playing with language.

> For Hudibras, he could not ope
> His mouth but out there flew a trope.

Now a *trope* is a turning: the Tropic of Cancer is the line marking on a globe where the sun turns back from his northward

journey. Applied to language, "trope" is a turning of a word from its earlier meaning to a new meaning. You indulge in a trope when you say that "The kettle boils," or when you say 'He likes his glass"; and, though there is a trope, your auditor is not misled. He knows that you mean water in the first statement, and a drink that is not water in the second. One name is employed for another.

So Hudibras was accustomed to speak of one thing under the name of another connected somehow or other with the first. He compared and he contrasted. He dealt in metaphors, in figurative language. He does not say "Morning dawned," or "Daylight came." That would be far too plain, far too cut-and-dried for Hudibras—and for his creator. The statement becomes—

> The sun had long since in the lap
> Of Thetis taken out his nap,
> And, like a lobster boiled, the morn
> From black to red began to turn.

A Natural Propensity

It is natural with all of us to compare in order to make our meaning clear, or to make our statement more emphatic, or to make it more likely to win admiration. It is natural; and we should welcome and be grateful for the illustrations that really do relieve humdrum talk. Look at this simile: "A woman's preaching," said Doctor Johnson, "is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all." This—probably unjust—comparison, or simile, makes the statement much more effective. We rejoice in it even while we refuse to believe it. And look at this: "The paths," wrote Froude "trodden by footsteps of ages were broken up; old things were passing away, and the faith and the life of ten centuries were dissolving like a dream." The years do not, in truth, walk away along paths, whether well ordered or broken up; nor do the conditions of life disappear, like sugar in hot water, in a solvent. But the metaphors—the implied similes—make the passage a memorable one. It means no more than "Conditions were changing rapidly"; but then how beautifully this meagre statement is expanded.

Latent Meanings

Language is full of these metaphors. We use metaphors from war when we speak of "woman's weapons, water-drops," when we are telling of a man "surrendering" his claim, when we "overcome" an obstacle, when we confess that a problem has "defeated" us. We use metaphors from man's age-long struggle against wind and wave. Political parties know what the "turning of the tide" is; they hope their fortunes are "at the lowest ebb"; they trust that their success will soon be "at the height" and that they can "tide over" their present difficulties. We sail "in troubled waters" when things are going badly for us; we are "at sea" in a rudderless barque when we are perplexed and without plan; we console ourselves for loss by the reflection "there are just as good fish in the sea"; we may foolishly try to "drown our sorrows" at the "shipwreck of our hopes" and may become "half seas over." We "take in sails" when we moderate our ambitions; then it may be "our ship will come home" and we shall reach "the haven where we fain would be." Crowds of our expressions witness to the influence of the seasons upon our life. The great natural occurrences, the seasons and the alternation of day and night, are obviously good illustrations for explaining our meaning. That is why we speak of the "dawn of hope," of the "evening of life," or of the "autumn of our days." That is why Shakespeare writes—

> Now is the winter of our discontent
> Made glorious summer by this sun of York.

Huddled Metaphors

A danger incident to the use of metaphor is that, before the reader has had time enough to savour the first image summoned up by the writer, another is presented. The speed of the writer's thought has hurried him to a new aspect without his having taken care to adjust the comparison he has used—

> But now my oat proceeds,
> And listens to the herald of the sea,

writes Milton; and the reader may lag behind in thought, the image of the oaten pipe in his mind while the writer has hastened to the sentient being.

When the clash between the images is great we speak of "mixed metaphor." It may be only that the reader's mind—or the hearer's—is less agile than the writer's, less capable of leaping with impetuous speed from image to image. Some see mixed metaphor even in passages like—

> to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles.

Some metaphors we recognize at once; others have become so common in use that we think of the first meaning only by an effort of mind, at times only when it is pointed out to us. Look again at a little of Froude's exciting account of the *Pelican's* exploits—

> The *Pelican* spread her wings, every feather of them, and sped away in pursuit. He would know the *Cacafuego,* so he learnt at Lima, by the peculiar cut of her sails. The first man who caught sight of her was promised a gold chain for his reward. A sail was seen on the second day. It was not the chase, but it was worth stopping for. Eighty pounds' worth of gold was found, and a great gold crucifix, set with emeralds said to be as large as pigeon's eggs. They took the kernel. They left the shell.

Figurative Language

Now, you at once perceive that much of this is figurative, metaphorical language: "spread her wings, every feather of them" for "hoisted all sails," "kernel" for "the eagerly wanted cargo," "shell" for "the ship that contained it." Perhaps you overlook the figurative character of some other phrases. It is natural that you should. It is, indeed, desirable; for you want to attend to the present ideas implied by the words, not to the original ones. You read "sped away"; and you do not think how "speed" and "success" were once much the same. "More haste, less speed," says the proverb; and this means, "More haste, less success." And, indeed, the man quick to seize his chances may well hope for success. "Peculiar" means to you and me "strange," "out of the ordinary"; long

ago it was applied to things of private property. It was akin to *pecus*, or *cattle*; the *peculium* was that small part of the flock reserved as the slave's private property. It was set apart from the others; it was "strange." And "a sail" includes more than "her sails"; for the first term intends the whole ship, sails and everything else.

Example of Effective Simile

Recognition of likeness or of difference is the first step towards a trope or metaphor. And, very likely, before the complete merging of the ideas so that one word represents both, the comparison or contrast is explicit. It is ushered in by *like* or *as* or *different from*. You want to make sure that your hearer understands your meaning. You aid him by directing his attention to an illustrative picture. Thus Milton, describes how Satan calls to his followers, who before had lain "abject and lost"—

> They heard and were abashed, and up they sprang
> Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch,
> On duty sleeping found by whom they dread,
> Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.

A speaker or a writer, engaged in the exposition of his doctrine, instinctively seeks for such illustrations in order to make his meanings clear. Mill wishes, for instance, to explain the work of money. He first makes his clear statement. Then he further impresses the statement by comparisons (similes) that we are all able to appreciate—

Money, as money, satisfies no want: its worth to anyone consists in its being a convenient shape in which to receive his incomings of all sorts, which incomings he afterwards, at the times which suit him best, converts into the forms in which they can be useful to him. Great as the difference would be between a country with money and a country altogether without it, it would be only one of convenience; a saving of time and trouble, like grinding by water power instead of by hand, or like the benefit derived from roads; and to mistake money for wealth is the

same sort of error as to mistake the highway which may be the easiest way of getting to your house or lands, for the house and lands themselves.

Or he wishes to make clear the idea of "diminishing returns" —the idea that, usually, a second helping of pudding is not quite so enjoyable as the first. He does it by an admirably chosen comparison—

The limitation to production from the properties of the soil, is not like the obstacle opposed by a wall, which stands immovable in one particular spot and offers no hindrance to motion short of stopping it entirely. We may rather compare it to a highly elastic and extensible band, which is hardly ever so violently stretched that it could not possibly be stretched any more, yet the pressure of which is felt long before the final limit is reached, and felt more severely the nearer that limit is approached.

An obstacle there is, he says, and this is its nature: it is not like one thing, not like a wall; it is like another thing, like an elastic band.

Here, again, is what might well be a dull and depressing topic: "Can we prevent a slump from following a boom?" Most readers will embark upon a study of theory only with reluctance; and they will speedily weary of it. "Very well," *The Times* leader says to himself, "I must try to enliven the discussions by analogy and metaphor." Nor does he disdain verbal play: "peace is precarious without prosperity." So he produces a readable column a little of which you will enjoy—

The call is urgent, for modern civilization can no more afford a new depression than it can afford a new war. It would collapse as inevitably under the one as under the other, to say nothing of the fact that peace must always be precarious without prosperity. Hitherto the world has apathetically accepted the ebb and flow of business activity as beyond the power of man to control, a necessary feature of the working of economic law; just as the inhabitants of Egypt, before they learned how to canalize the Nile, to build dams, and to construct drainage systems, accepted it that their crops should be drowned one year and parched the next, as an inevitable consequence of the working of natural laws.

In these modern times the alternation of the cycle has become so

violent, so devastating in its effects, that the old fatalistic attitude is no longer possible. Whether we like it or not we are compelled to work out a science of economic engineering and economic irrigation to maintain a steady flow of the river of business activity, protecting industry from alternate floods and droughts.

So Macaulay, wishing to impress upon you how delightful *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are, says in his stamping manner—

It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others as attar of roses differs from ordinary rose-water, the close-packed essence from the thin diluted mixture.

Adorning Your Writing

Or, it may be, you add an illustration, a simile, not solely or mainly, for the sake of making your meaning clearer; you add it so as to give an ornament to your writing. Well, there is no harm in this, provided that the ornament is not overdone. And it is overdone when you are forced far from the main topic, so that it needs a rude wrench to bring you back to it. Perhaps some of Matthew Arnold's elaborate comparisons err in this matter. Thus, in describing how the Scholar Gipsy, "Still nursing the unconquerable hope, still clutching the inviolable shade," flees from intruders, he introduces the comparison which is a poem in itself. We cannot say it is irrelevant; yet it is, you will acknowledge, too long drawn out—

As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
  Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
    Among the Aegean isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
  Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
  Green bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine;
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves;
  And snatched his rudder, and shook out more sail,
    And day and night held on indignantly
  O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,

Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits, and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

So too, in Milton's lines describing the fallen angels the various illustrations are, we may assume, intended not so much to make clear as to suggest a great, a wellnigh inconceivable disaster. We are hurried from one comparison to another so that the mind is vaguely affected; and this probably is the poet's intention—

His legions, Angels forms, who lay entranced,
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades
High over-arched embower; or scattered sedge
Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion armed
Hath vexed the Red-Sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew
Busiris and his Memphian chivalry,
While with perfidious hatred they pursued
The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
From the safe shore their floating carcases
And broken-chariot wheels: so thick bestrown,
Abject and lost, lay these, covering the flood,
Under amazement of their hideous change.

Poor Wolsey illustrates his rapid rise to power and his sudden and complete fall by a sustained comparison—

This is the state of man; to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope; to-morrow blossoms
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And,—when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening—nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do.

Simile and Metaphor

Where the comparison is explicit, introduced as a rule by *like* or *as*, we have a simile—

> Day after day, day after day,
> We struck, nor breath nor motion,
> As idle as a painted ship
> Upon a painted Ocean.

Here is Wordsworth devising comparisons for the daisy—

> Oft on the dappled turf at ease
> I sit and play with similes,
> Loose types of things through all degrees,
> Thoughts of thy raising;
> And many a fond and idle name
> I give to thee, for praise or blame
> As is the humour of the game,
> While I am gazing.

And here are some of the comparisons that occur to him—

> A nun demure, of lowly port;
> Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court,
> In thy simplicity the sport
> Of all temptations;
> A queen in crown of rubies drest;
> A starveling in a scanty vest;
> Are all, as seems to suit thee best,
> Thy appellations.
>
> A little Cyclops, with one eye
> Staring to threaten and defy,
> That thought comes next—and instantly
> The freak is over,
> The shape will vanish, and behold!
> A silver shield with boss of gold
> That spreads itself, some fairy bold
> In fight to cover.

Metaphors: Transference of Name

Where the comparison is implicit, where we are given one name and are called upon to summon into mind something

with another name, we have a metaphor. Thus we have "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life."

Many of our common proverbs are such implicit comparisons, or metaphors: "Too many cooks spoil the broth," therefore do not have a multiplicity of people giving directions; "A rolling stone gathers no moss," therefore stick to your job till you find a better one; "It is foolish to buy a pig in a poke," therefore ascertain the facts thoroughly before you conclude a bargain.

You are able, having an imagination powerful enough, to make the required transference. Yet it is possible that among us there are prosaic minds incapable of appreciating a metaphor, people like the German commentator who turned—

> And this our life, exempt from public haunt
> Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

into—

> Finds leaves on trees, stones in the running brooks,
> Sermons in books, and good in everything.

It may be, too, that there are those who, as Charles Lamb complained of the Scotsman, resent figurative language: "He stops a metaphor like a suspected person in an enemy's country." "I have a print," wrote Lamb, "of a graceful female after Leonardo da Vinci, which I was showing off to Mr. . . . After he had examined it minutely I ventured to ask him how he liked MY BEAUTY (a foolish name it goes by among my friends), when he very gravely assured me that he had considerable respect for my character and talents (so he was pleased to say), but had not given himself much thought about the degree of my personal pretensions." But, one never can tell. The Scot may have been enjoying himself at his host's expense; and the misconception was perhaps a deliberate one.

Care in Comparing

If you do use a comparison it will be well to consider whether it is a fitting one—in harmony, that is, with its context. You will, too, be careful to let the effect of one comparison exhaust itself before you introduce another. You will not mix your metaphors. We know, for instance, what is meant in "The

chairman nipped his torrent of eloquence in the bud"; but the two comparisons together are incongruous. The chairman could nip the bud, but he would be obliged to dam the torrent. When you do have two comparisons that clash with one another, you have what your grammar books call "a mixed metaphor." Poor Mrs. Nickleby, upset and flurried, made a mixed metaphor when she said, "It came upon me like a flash of fire, and almost froze my blood!" That was a little of Dickens' fun. Sometimes, though, a writer with an imagination far more active than that of his readers will combine two comparisons and thereby unintentionally cause much distress to his admirers. Someone pointed out to Coleridge that Milton makes a "heart of rock" shed tears. Milton (in *Paradise Lost*) is describing a harrowing sight; and he writes—

> Sight so deform what heart of rock could long
> Dry-eyed behold?

The thought of the combination so upset Coleridge that all night he lay awake thinking of it. This is how Doctor Johnson dealt with the lines of Addison—

> I bridle in my struggling Muse with pain,
> That longs to launch into a bolder strain.

"*To bridle a goddess*," says the Doctor, "is no very delicate idea; but why must she be *bridled*?—because she *longs to launch*, an act which was never hindered by a *bridle*; and whither will she *launch*?—into a *nobler strain*. She is in the first line a *horse*, in the second a *boat*; and the care of the poet is to keep his *horse* or his *boat* from *sinking*."

We must admit that, in general, the plain way of saying a thing is the better way. It is better to speak of "eyes dropping tears" rather than of "Two walking baths, two weeping motions, Portable and compendious oceans." It is better to speak of "the cricket-ball" rather than of "the five-ounce fetish"—

> The stalwart teams, capped with contrasted blue,
> Exert their skill; adorning the arena
> With modest, manly, muscular demeanour,—
> And (while the five-ounce fetish they pursue)
> Admired by gloved and virginal gentility.

We all know this; yet we all have an instinct to say things in a new, an unexpected way. That is why, for a brief period, slang expressions sweep over the language; and then disappear as though they had never been. The difficulty always present to the writer—to the speaker too—is how far he should indulge this instinct to be different. There is no reason why he should not indulge it in some measure; most of us prefer the coloured to the plain, and we are grateful to those that provide the coloured. We thank the man who described our fondness for games by telling us that "A civil war should be impossible in this country; for both sides would have to break off to see a cup-tie." Only, we must keep our instinct to adorn within moderate bounds. The Mayor, for instance, was resolute to be picturesque; and indeed it was an occasion for flowery language. Some of you may think though, that his sentence contains a superfluity of comparisons. At all events the newspaper report does, "Moving the resolution, the Mayor described Alderman . . . as 'a diamond in the rough, blunt and straight, with a heart of gold.'"

Too Much Adornment

We can heartily admire the adorning of English, whether the adornment consists in witty comparison or beauty of sound. It must, for instance, be great fun for the writer or the speaker to bring from afar unexpected similes; and he wins applause by doing so. Yet sometimes we must feel that a plea for great simplicity is needed. We grow a little weary of the ingenious comparisons. Look at that hymn you all know, the one beginning, "Oh God, our Help in Ages past." It was written by Isaac Watts in the eighteenth century and is still a favourite to express the thought indicated in its title, "Man frail, and God eternal." It is packed with apt similes—

Time, like an ever rolling stream,
  Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
  Dies at the opening day.

Like flowery fields the nations stand
  Pleased with the morning light;
The flowers beneath the mower's hand
  Lie withering e'er 'tis night.

Don't you think that those who print the hymn in our collections are wise to cut down the similes? They do in fact omit the second stanza above.

Roundabout Expressions

The writings of the period when this hymn-writer wrote, the period of Dryden and Pope, are delightful in many ways. Yet we may in our grumbling moods think that there is too much cumbrous self-admiring about the writings. Both poet and prose-writer seem to say, "Look how clever I am. Isn't this an ingenious way of expressing the idea?" And we get a little impatient. Dryden, for example, took Chaucer in hand, and turned "some of the Canterbury Tales into our language as it is now refined." He begged leave, however, "to add somewhat of my own where I thought my author was deficient, and had not given his thoughts their true lustre, for want of words in the beginning of our language." So he takes the line, "The smiler with the knife under the cloak," which you cannot help thinking a wonderfully expressive line; and he expands it into three,

> Next stood Hypocrisy, with holy leer,
> Soft smiling and demurely looking down,
> But hid the dagger underneath the gown.

Surely you prefer the simple single line? Look at an instance or two from Pope. The hunter goes after game. He takes aim; you hear a shot; and down come lapwings and larks. Well, this is what the thought becomes—

> He lifts the tube, and levels with his eye;
> Strait a short thunder breaks the frozen sky.
> Oft, as in airy rings they skim the heath,
> The clamorous lapwings feel the leaden death:
> Oft, as the mounting larks their notes prepare,
> They fall, and leave their little life in air.

Perhaps you will enjoy the translating of these roundabout expressions into simple ones. They are all from Pope. The lady decorates herself; and here are two of the weapons in her armoury, "All Arabia breathes from yonder box"; "The Tortoise here and Elephant unite." It is at the time when,

her trivialities being dispatched, the nymphs and heroes sten to cards, the serious business of the day—

> Meanwhile declining from the noon of day,
> The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray;
> The hungry Judges soon the sentence sign,
> And wretches hang that Jurymen may dine.

An admirer cuts off the lady's curls; and the lament is—

> Was it for this you took such constant care
> The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare?
> For this your locks in paper durance bound?
> For this with torturing irons wreathed around?
> For this with fillets strain'd your tender head,
> And bravely bore the double loads of lead?

New Applications of Old Words—Transference of Meaning

The natural tendency to compare and to contrast in order to make our meaning clearer, or in order to make our expression of that meaning more effective, leads on occasion to a transference of meaning. A word conveys to us nowadays a meaning different from the intended meaning in other days or in other places. Often, indeed, we use the word and rarely think—rarely have cause to think—of the earlier meaning. *Quaker* as the name of a very worthy community among us calls into mind no idea of quaking fear; yet this idea, that though they faced man with equanimity they were in awe of their Creator, was what dictated the name. Nor is modification of meaning connected with time only. Transference of meaning is an interesting topic—instructive, too. It will not be lost labour to consider it further.

A speaker or a writer sees a resemblance—a real or a fancied resemblance—between two things or two ideas. He points out the resemblances to others. "This life of ours," said the Saxon king's adviser, "is like a sparrow darting through your hall where you are feasting at night during a winter storm. It comes from the dark and passes into the dark; but whence it came and whither it goes we know not." The nineteenth century poet has the similar thought, that "Heaven's light for ever

shines, Earth's shadows fly"; and his expression of the comparison is—

> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
> Until Death tramples it to fragments.

Look at a few instances where the earlier meaning has been almost submerged in the derived meaning. Your *salary*, it is hoped, buys you much more than salt. Yet *salary* was the Roman soldier's slang for "salt-money"; and our expression "to be worth his salt" is no other than "to be worth his salary." Perhaps the legionary looked ruefully at his meagre pay; perhaps he grumbled that it would not stretch far beyond salt. The same feeling lies behind the name "pin-money"; the allowance will suffice for some few oddments, but is pitiably small in comparison with all the finery desired.

We are all fond of making a plaything of language. We get tired of using it only as a useful tool; we shuffle words and meanings, and now and again the word almost forgets its old connexion. *Desire* has now taken to itself the wide meaning of "long for." It once had the narrow meaning of "to miss at the roll-call." The soldier missing was "desired": "Call for Enobarbus: He shall not hear thee or from Cæsar's camp say, 'I am none of thine.'" *Pay* has gone in the opposite direction: it has taken to itself a narrower meaning. Yet at first it was but one way to *pacify*. The man, indignant that his dues were not forthcoming, the man who took his debtor by the throat and said "Pay me that thou owest," would be soothed by payment. We rarely connect the two words; but how natural the transference is. The rule of English law is that a debtor must seek out his creditor and pay him as soon as the debt is due. Clearly, such promptitude will greatly mollify wrath. The transference of meaning is a commentary on the law. To pay is to pacify; and the early aim of law, to prevent quarrels, is thereby achieved.

"Parts of Speech" Transferred

The transfer may actually result in changing a word from a noun into another kind of word, a preposition, for instance. *Adown* was at the first a phrase meaning "from the down"

(or hill); its signification was "direction towards the valley." The omission of the prefix gives us "*down* in the valley" without any sense of incongruity; and, though "downs" are really "ups," we contrast "the ups and downs of life."

A writer like Milton will now and then use his words so as to suggest both the original and the transferred meaning. The words become charged with double meaning. This word *horrid*, for instance, implied "bristling with points"—"like quills upon the fretful porpentine." The transferred meaning was "terrifying"—

> And now
> Advanced in view they stand—a horrid front
> Of dreadful length and dazzling arms, in guise
> Of warriors old.

Ruin, again, signified "the falling down of a building"; the transferred sense is the shattering of all one's plans. We have both ideas in the word used in these lines—

> Him the Almighty Power
> Hurled headlong, flaming from the ethereal sky,
> With hideous ruin and combustion, down
> To bottomless perdition.

EXERCISE

Look up in your dictionary the first meanings of the words below, and indicate the connexion between that first meaning and the common meaning nowadays: *rivals* (has this word any relation to "river"?); *condign*, *infant* (in what manner is the legal meaning connected with the original meaning?); *attention* (how is this word connected with words like "tent" and "tense"?).

The Device of Contrast: Light and Shade

England played Scotland; and, much as you wished to do so, you were unable to see the match at Ibrox Park. Still, you can read about it. Here is A's account and also B's account. You read both and, being in a mood for criticism, you compare the accounts. Certainly, each has given much the same information in much the same sequence: each tells how and when and by whom the goals were scored. Yet you prefer A's account to B's. It is, you say, much more interesting. It keeps your attention, so that you almost forget your surroundings. For

a happy while you are one of the hundred thousand or so that eagerly watched the players' every movement.

Well, what does raise one piece of writing above another? Why does one writer produce "a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner," while another writer, whose raw materials are the same facts, bores you insufferably? Doubtless you can suggest many reasons, some of which we discuss later. The device of contrast is our concern at present. Look at this paragraph—

The young spirit has awakened out of Eternity, and knows not what we mean by Time. As yet Time is no fast-hurrying stream, but a sportful sunlit ocean. Years to the child are ages. As children we taste, what afterwards in this quick-whirling universe is forever denied us, the balm of Rest. Sleep on, thou fair child, for thy long rough journey is at hand! A little while, and thou too shalt sleep no more, but thy very dreams shall be mimic battles.

There is a little of Carlyle's beautiful description of childhood. It comes from that strange book *Sartor Resartus*. Now, yo will have noted that one of the reasons why that passage pleases is the admirable use of the device of contrast. Carlyle places *Eternity* against *Time*, *years* against *ages*, *rest* against the *rough journey*; he impresses the idea of one thing by summoning into your mind its opposite.

The Antithesis

We all use this device, unconsciously as well as consciously, when we wish to express our meaning in such a manner as will arouse interest. We put our thought into an Antithesis: *black* suggests *white*; the "still small voice" gains in emphasis by contrast with the crash of thunder and the roar of the tempest. Many of our common proverbs illustrate how prevalent is the device of antithesis: "More haste, less speed," "Penny-wise, pound-foolish," "Every cloud has a silver lining," and any number of others, which you will readily call to mind.

Poet and prose-writer alike make extensive use of the device; and, skilfully used, it gives great delight.

It is quite true, as we note below, that the use of the device may be excessive; in moderation, however, contrast is most effective. Does not this clarion call gain greatly through the contrasts suggested?

The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

Perhaps the device is most successful when the contrasts, instead of being expressly pointed out, are subtly suggested. Look at these sentences from that very remarkable book, the *Hydriotaphia* of Sir Thomas Browne. The unearthing of urns containing human bones prompts him to a moralizing over the vanity of ambition. He writes—

Now since these dead bones have out-lasted the living ones of Methuselah and, in a yard under ground and thin walls of clay, out-worn all the strong and specious buildings above it, and quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests: what prince can promise such diuturnity unto his relics?

The contrasts here are implied rather than expressed—the dead and the living, the splendid tombs and the humble urns, the clamour of conquest and the quiet of the grave. They are perhaps more effective for that.

Much of the delight of Herrick, too, lies in this quick transition from gay to grave. Look at his lines "To Dianeme"—

Sweet, be not proud of those two eyes
Which starlike sparkle in their skies;
Nor be you proud, that you can see
All hearts your captives; yours yet free:
Be you not proud of that rich hair
Which wantons with the lovesick air;
Whenas that ruby which you wear,
Sunk from the tip of your soft ear,
Will last to be a precious stone
When all your world of beauty's gone.

Contrasted Pictures

Now examine two prose paragraphs from a charming essay published in *The Times*. It is another version of "Home

Thoughts from Abroad," and it was written by a Highlander, sweltering in the summer heats of Cairo. He, too, had the thought, "Oh to be in Scotland now that April's there!"

Here is the picture of Upper Egypt when June ushers in the really hot weather—

The season is over and Cairo, with a hot sigh, settles down uneasily to face the prickly heat and leaden skies of the hot weather. In barracks the Mess is a twilight of darkened shutters and closed windows. At the doorway the *Khamsin* strikes like a blast from a furnace; its hot breath raises little cyclones of dust that lick across the square and swirl among the arches of the old buildings. The land of Egypt slowly scorches into half-tones of grey and brown, the tender green of winter wheat in the Delta has long since changed from the waving gold of rich harvest to buffalo-ploughed stubble. Horses droop between the shafts of the gharries with hanging heads and aching joints. Their drivers sprawl on the pavement, following the sun's shadow round the cabs; a haze dances over the tarmac. The kites alone of living things seem to disregard the heat as they hang and sway over the hushed city, quartering the hot air currents in search of offal.

Don't the deft little touches bring vividly to mind the most sultry day you have ever experienced? You read; you almost feel the physical discomfort; you long for a cooling breeze, for a bathe in the exhilarating sea, for a quiet reading under the trees. This is how the exile calls up the contrast—

Daydreams bring back other memories. At home the country will be looking its loveliest. Spring comes late and grudgingly to the Highlands, but every year the same thing happens. One morning towards the end of May the world wakes up to find summer has arrived, with all its warmth and flowers and black-faced lambs and nesting birds, as by a magic birth after long winter travail. To-day the braes are bright with yellow broom, the bluebells a thick carpet between uncurling brackens, and "warbling birds wanton

through every flowery thorn." In the glens the sandpipers call in the shingle beside poppling waters, and the air is fragrant with thyme and bog myrtle. Summer will have touched but lightly in the high hills, yet I know a loch in a western forest where the ice has broken and big trout rise at every heather moth that touches water.

The Epigram

The device of contrast enables a speaker to give point to his remarks; and writers who deal in satire know how useful the device is. They polish up their epigrams, and we may well suppose that their opponents squirm as they read. Here, as a few specimens, are some of the lines that Dryden writes about his rival Shadwell. Dryden pretends that a very dull poet, "absolute monarch of nonsense," wonders who will reign next. The "aged prince" thinks long, at length he decides—

Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender years.

For, he declares—

The rest to some faint meaning make pretence
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.

Shadwell is his rightful heir—

Like mine, thy gentle numbers feebly creep;
Thy tragic muse gives smiles, thy comic sleep.

Shadwell, moreover, looks the part—

Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
Strike through, and make a lucid interval;
But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
His rising fogs prevail upon the day.
Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye,
And seems designed for thoughtless majesty;
Thoughtless as monarch oaks that shade the plain
And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.

You take delight, a malicious delight maybe, in the sharp contrasts presented; but you know even as you read that the

picture is imaginary. You will not find in real life a man like Dryden's *Achitophel*—

In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace;
A fiery soul, which working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy-body to decay,
And o'er informed the tenement of clay.
A daring pilot in extremity;
Pleased with the danger when the waves went high,
He sought the storm; but, for a clam unfit,
Would steer too nigh the sands, to boast his wit.
Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide;
Else why should he, with wealth and honour blest,
Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?
Punish a body which he could not please;
Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?

The epigram has some truth behind it perhaps; and, by giving its reader a momentary shock, it draws greater attention to that truth.

The Reverse of the Picture

The historian, the novelist, and the playwright are fond of this device of contrast. For they know how effective it is. You will enjoy reading again the contrasted pictures that Froude draws of Anne Boleyn, of her going to her coronation and of her going to her execution—

In an open space behind the constable there was seen approaching "a white chariot," drawn by two palfreys in white damask which swept the ground, a golden canopy borne above it making music with silver bells: grudgingly the chariot sat the observed of all the observers, thing beautiful occasion of all this glittering homage; for the plaything of the hour, the Queen of England—queen at last—borne along upon the waves of this sea of glory, breathing the perfumed incense of greatness which she had risked her fair name, her delicacy, her honour, her self-respect, to win; and she had won it.

There she sate, dressed in white tissue robes, her fair hair flowing loose over her shoulder, and her temples circled with a light coronet of gold and diamonds—most beautiful—loveliest—most favoured perhaps, as she seemed at that hour, of all England's daughters. Alas! "within the hollow round" of that coronet—

> Kept death his court, and there the antick sate,
> Scoffing her state and grinning at her pomp.
> Allowing her a breath, a little scene
> To monarchise, be feared, and kill with looks,
> Infusing her with self and vain conceit,
> As if the flesh which walled about her life
> Were brass impregnable; and humoured thus,
> Bored through her castle walls; and farewell, Queen.

Fatal greatness! So dangerous ever! so more than dangerous in those tremendous times when the fountains are broken loose of the great deeps of thought; and nations are in the throes of revolution; when ancient order and law and tradition are splitting in the social earthquake; and as the opposing forces wrestle to and fro, those unhappy ones who stand out above the crowd become the symbols of the struggle, and fall the victims of its alternating fortunes. And what if, into an unsteady heart and brain, intoxicated with splendour, the outward chaos should find its way, converting the poor silly soul into an image of the same confusion,—if Conscience should be deposed from her high place, and the Pandora box be broken loose of passions and sensualities and follies; and at length there be nothing left of all which man and woman ought to value, save hope of God's forgiveness.

Three short years have yet to pass, and again, on a summer morning, Queen Anne Boleyn will leave the Tower of London—not radiant then with beauty on a gay errand of coronation, but a poor wandering ghost, on a sad tragic errand, from which she will never more return, passing away, out of an earth, where she may stay no longer, into a presence where, nevertheless, we

know that all is well—for all of us—and therefore for her.

Beatrix in Her Beauty

Read, too, the moving paragraph when Thackeray speaks of Beatrix in old age. What a contrast with Beatrix in her beauty!

Here is what Esmond sees on his return from the Spanish War—

This laughing colloquy took place in the hall of Walcote House: in the midst of which is a staircase that leads from an open gallery, where are the doors of the sleeping chambers: and from one of these, a wax candle in her hand, and illuminating her, came Mistress Beatrix—the light falling indeed upon the scarlet ribbon which she wore, and upon the most brilliant white neck in the world.

Esmond had left her a child, and found a woman, grown beyond the common height; and arrived at such dazzling completeness of beauty, that his eyes might well show surprise and delight at beholding her. In hers there was a brightness so lustrous and melting, that I have seen a whole assembly follow her as if by an attraction irresistible: and that night the great Duke was at the playhouse after Ramillies, every soul turned and looked (she chanced to enter at the opposite side of the theatre at the same moment) at her, and not at him. She was a brown beauty: that is, her eyes, hair and eyebrows and eyelashes, were dark: her hair curling with rich undulations, and waving over her shoulders; but her complexion was as dazzling white as snow in sunshine; except her cheeks, which were a bright red, and her lips, which were of a still deeper crimson. Her mouth and chin, they said, were too large and full, and so they might be for a goddess in marble, but not for a woman whose eyes were fire, whose look was love, whose voice was the sweetest low song, whose shape was perfect symmetry, health, decision, activity, whose foot as it planted itself on the ground was firm but flexible, and whose motion,

lofty as a queen—now melting, now imperious, now sarcastick, there was no single movement of hers but was beautiful. As he thinks of her, he who writes feels young again, and remembers a paragon.

Beatrix Grown Old

And this is how Esmond's grandson, the Virginian, describes the last scene—

'Tis needless to relate the progress and termination of her malady, or watch the expiring flame of life as it gasps and flickers. Her senses would remain with her for a while (and then she was never satisfied unless Theo was by her bedside), or again her mind would wander, and the poor decrepit creature, lying upon her bed, would imagine herself young again, and speak incoherently of the scenes and incidents of her early days. Then she would address me as Henry again, and call upon me to revenge some insult or slight, of which (whatever my suspicions might be) the only record lay in her insane memory. "They have always been so," she would murmur: "they never loved man or woman but they forsook them. Je me vengerai, oh oui, je me vengerai! I know them all: I know them all: and I will go to my Lord Stair with the list. Don't tell me! His religion can't be the right one. I will go back to my mother's, though she does not love me. She never did. Why don't you, mother? Is it because I am too wicked? Ah! pitié! pitié! O mon père! I will make my confession!"—and here the unhappy paralysed lady made as if she would move in her bed.

Let us draw the curtain round it. I think with awe still of those rapid words, uttered in the shadow of her ıopy, as my pallid wife sits by, her Prayer-book ɔn her knee; as the attendants move to and fro noiselessly; as the clock ticks without, and strikes the fleeting hours; as the sun falls upon the Kneller picture ɒf Beatrix in her beauty, with the flushing cheeks, the smiling lips, the waving auburn tresses, and the eyes ʏhich seem to look towards the dim figure moaning the bed.

Avoidance of Monotony

It comes to this. Monotony is distasteful. Those who wish to delight others will avoid wearisome sameness. The artist in food seeks to give a pleasing variety of dishes. The painter has his light and shade; the musician his succession of contrasted sounds, in volume, in pitch, in duration. The teacher seeks to impress one idea by comparison with its opposite: whiteness becomes the more glaring when in conjunction with dense blackness. So in writing. That is why the contrast—or *antithesis*—has always been a favourite device; the fairy tale gains in interest because Jack is so little and the vanquished giant so big. Perhaps Stevenson puts the point too strongly. "The one rule," he declares, "is to be infinitely various." We cannot, however, overlook the importance of the rule.

Here is a writer who wants you to realize how much greater care people take of their own property than of others': why, for instance, you will see the park seats cut, but not the dining-room chairs. "The magic of property," he writes, "turns sands into gold"; and the antithesis follows, "Give a man the secure possession of a bleak rock, and he will turn it into a garden; give him a nine years' lease of a garden, and he will convert it into a desert." The antithesis often, as you know, makes a too great distinction between the things contrasted. You feel that as you read it; you make due allowance for the writer's wish to be effective and striking in his statements.

The wisdom enshrined in our proverbs affords instances. "More haste, less speed" must not be accepted too readily; for so it might excuse the one who is foolishly dilatory and who needs to be reminded that "Time and tide wait for no man." Nor must we push too far the contrast between small economies and great savings, "Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves"; for our counsel might well be countered by the contradictory counsel, "Penny-wise, pound-foolish."

Many of Shakespeare's wonderful little passages owe something to the contrast, expressed or suggested.

> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well

is Duncan's epitaph.

> 'Twas pretty, though a plague
> To see him every hour

shows us Helena's heart. And we have such a moving passage as this that follows.

It is Othello's, when he has seen his heaven fall—

I have seen the day,
That, with this little arm and this good sword,
I have made my way through more impediments
Than twenty times your stop: but, O vain boast!
Who can control his fate? 'tis not so now.
Be not afraid though you see me weaponed
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.

There is the counterpart to the earlier—

My soul hath her content so absolute
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate

Use of Antithesis

The playwright, anxious to maintain the interest of his audience, knows the powerful interest of contrast. The quick alternations—the dramatic changes—between prosperity and adversity are mirrored in the dialogue. Cæsar is killed at the moment of triumph and Antony stresses this fact in his lament.

O mighty Cæsar! does thou lie so low?
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,
Shrunk to this little measure?

Look at this paragraph from *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Does not its effectiveness reside much in the contrasts put before your eyes?

They went down to the camp in black, but they came back to the town in white; they went down to the camp in ropes, they came back in chains of gold; they went down to the camp with their feet in fetters, but came back with their steps enlarged under them; they went also to the camp looking for death, but they came back from thence with assurance of life; they went down to the camp with heavy hearts, but came

back again with pipe and tabor playing before them. So, as soon as they were come to Eyegate, the poor and tottering town of Mansoul adventured to give a shout, and they gave such a shout as made the captains in the Prince's army leap at the sound thereof.

Here in another vein is the explanation that Gray gives of his reason for declining the appointment to the office of Poet Laureate—

Though I very well know the bland, emollient, saponaceous qualities both of the sack and the silver, yet if any great man would say to me, "I will make you rat-catcher to His Majesty, with a salary of £300 a year and two butts of the best Malaga; and though it has been usual to catch a mouse or two, for form's sake, in public once a year, yet to you, sir, we should not stand upon these things," I cannot say I should jump at it; nay, if they would drop the very name of the office and call me Sinecure to the King's Majesty, I should still feel a little awkward, and think everybody I saw smelt a rat about me.

The Device of Irony

Irony, where one thing is said and something different from the obvious meaning is intended, also relies for its effect mainly upon contrast. Those who penetrate to the intended meaning behind the expressed words—who, we say, "read between the lines"—are struck by the clash between what should be and what is. Irony is, however, a dangerous device. For the hearers may fail to penetrate to the real thoughts of the speaker.

Irony is safe when its author is quite sure of both audiences—the audience that understands the plain sense of the words, the audience that understands the further intent. Perhaps, too, we should add that, even so, the user of irony must be able to control its effects. It may well have been, for instance, that Mr. Justice Maule's irony was a more forcible assault upon the divorce law of his day than a direct attack would have been.

A prisoner at the Warwick Assizes had been found guilty of bigamy: he must be sentenced, and in measured tone His Lordship addresses the convicted man—

Prisoner, you have been convicted upon clear evidence; you have intermarried with another woman, your lawful wife being still alive. You have committed the crime of bigamy. You tell me, and indeed the evidence has shown, that your first wife left her home and her young children to live in adultery with another man. You say this prosecution is an instrument of extortion on the part of the adulterer.

Be it so. I am bound to tell you that these are circumstances which the law does not in your case take notice of. You had no right to take the law into your own hands. Every Englishman is bound to know that when a wrong is done, the law, or perhaps I should rather say the constitution, affords a remedy. Now, listen to me, and I will tell you what you ought to have done. Immediately you heard of your wife's adultery you should have gone to the attorney and directed him to bring an action against the seducer of your wife. You should have prepared your evidence, instructed counsel, and proved the case in court; and recollect that it was imperative that you should recover—I do not mean actually obtain—substantial damages.

Having proceeded thus far, you should have employed a proctor and instituted a suit in the Ecclesiastical Courts for a divorce *a mensa et thoro*. Your case is a very clear one, and I doubt not you would have obtained your divorce. After this step your course was quite plain; you had only to obtain a private Act of Parliament to dissolve your marriage. This you would get as a matter of course upon payment of the proper fees and proof of the facts; you might then have lawfully married again. I perceive, prisoner, that you appear scarcely to understand what I am saying to you. But let me assure you these steps are constantly being taken by persons who are desirous to dissolve an unhappy marriage; it is true, for the wise man has said it, that, "a hated woman, when she is married, is a thing that the earth cannot bear," and that "a bad wife is to her husband as rottenness to his bones." You, however, must bear this great evil, or must adopt the remedy prescribed by the constitution of your country.

I see you would tell me that these proceedings would cost you £1000, and that your small stock-in-trade is not worth £100. Perhaps it may be so. The law has nothing to say to that; if you had taken these proceedings you would have been free from your present wife, and the woman whom you have secondly married would have been a respectable matron. As you have not done so, you stand there a convicted culprit, and it is my duty to pass sentence upon you—you will be imprisoned for one day.

Sameness of Sound

We seek to avoid monotony not of thought only but also of sound in our writing. This is how Milton criticizes these lines that clumsily echo the sound "each"—

Teach each hollow grove to sound his love
Wearying each echo with one changeless word:

"And so he might," said Milton, "and all his auditory beside, with his *teach each.*" Indeed, the conjunction of these two words is unlucky; and perhaps they do weary a sensitive ear. Would not you avoid the echoing *of* in the phrase "After the manner of the author of the immortal speeches of Pericles"? And, actually in a book dealing with style, we are invited to sound a triple *in*: "The fact is, the rules of emphasis come in, in interruption of the supposed law of position."

Are these sentences incorrect: *"We live in an enlightened age"* and *"Lazy people seldom gather riches"*? "I have been asked," writes a correspondent, "to correct these sentences; but I find no fault in them." There is certainly no error in grammar, no false concord or awkward placing of the words. The fault consists in the sound of the sentences. Read them aloud and you will agree that they can be much improved in that respect. You have in the first, like the crackling of thorns, the succession "in an en"; you have in the second, quite in keeping with the humdrum sentiment, the dull repetition of two-syllable words. Does this sound better, "We live in enlightened days"? Or this, "A lazy man seldom gets rich"?

It is quite true that we do not always read aloud what we write. But the subconscious ear should prevent us from clumsy collections of sounds—from jingles like "As he was fearing the winter was nearing and the birds disappearing," from flights of short unaccented syllables like "on an over" in "By allowing money on an overdraft a bank creates a credit in its books." Nothing is wrong in these sentences. They would hardly be penalized by loss of marks in an examination. Still, you could make them sound better.

Repetition with a Difference

But repetition need not be monotony. For it can be repetition with a difference. You can with confidence go to Milton,

our great master of style, for examples. Read these lines aloud, and note the cunningly repeated sounds—

So spake the Seraph Abdiel, faithful found,
Among the faithless faithful only he.

Or this—

But what more apt, in nations grown corrupt;
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty.

This is Eve's submission to her lot—

Now lead on,
In me is no delay; with thee to go
Is to stay here; without thee here to stay
Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me
Art all things under heaven, all places thou,
Who for my wilful crime art banished hence.

And here is a more elaborate repetition, the passage in which Eve expresses her joy in Adam—

With thee conversing, I forget all time:
All seasons and their change: all please alike:
Sweet is the breath of Morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds, pleasant the sun
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams, on herbs, tree, fruit and flower,
Glist'ring with dew; fragrant the fertile earth
After soft showers; and sweet the coming on
Of grateful evening mild; then silent Night
With this her solemn bird and this fair moon,
And these the gems of heaven, her starry train:
But neither breath of morn when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds, nor rising sun
On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, flower
Glist'ring with dew, nor fragrance after showers,
Nor grateful evening mild, nor silent Night
With this her solemn bird, nor walk by moon,
Or glittering starlight, without thee is sweet.

This use of repetition, in order to emphasize his leading thought, is a favourite device of Matthew Arnold. He inveighs against those he calls "the Philistines"—"those persons deficient in liberal culture and enlightenment and whose interests are confined to material and common-place things"; and he counsels them to pursue "sweetness and light"—

The pursuit of perfection is the pursuit of sweetness and light. He who works for sweetness and light works to make reason and the will of God prevail. He who works for machinery, he who works for hatred, works only for confusion. Culture hates hatred: culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one passion yet greater—the passion for making them *prevail.* It is not satisfied until *all* come to a perfect man: it knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with the sweetness and light.

Such repetition may well make a lasting impression. Clearly, though, it may easily become irksome and distasteful. For, in a quite understandable way, people are annoyed at being told the one thing again and again. Doubt is thereby being thrown upon their capacity to learn speedily. The writer who wishes to teach effectively will therefore dress his repetition in varied forms.

Effective Repetition

The burden of the chapter which you all know, for instance, is "charity," love for our fellows. See how the word is repeated in varied connexions till we come to the climax: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity; these three: but the greatest of these is charity."

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up.

Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.

But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Nor is there any sense of sameness in the repetition of the obnoxious word "tax" in this notable paragraph. The burden of taxation must, declared Sidney Smith, be lightened; it is intolerable that there should be—

Taxes upon every article which enters the mouth or covers the back or is placed under the foot—taxes upon everything which it is pleasant to see, hear, smell or taste. Taxes upon warmth, light, locomotion, taxes on everything on earth, and in the waters under the earth, on everything that comes from abroad or is grown at home—taxes on the raw material—taxes on every fresh value that is added to it by the industry of man—taxes on the sauce which pampers a man's appetite and the drug that restores him to health, on

the ermine which decorates the judge and the rope which hangs the criminal, on the poor man's salt and the rich man's spice, on the brass nails of the coffin and the ribands of the bride. At bed or board, couchant or levant, we must pay. The schoolboy whips his taxed top, the beardless youth manages his taxed horse with a taxed bridle on a taxed road, and the dying Englishman pouring his medicine which has paid 7 per cent into the spoon that has paid 15 per cent, flings himself back upon his chintz bed which has paid 22 per cent, makes his will on an £8 stamp and expires in the arms of an apothecary who has paid a licence of £100 for the privilege of putting him to death. His whole property is then immediately taxed from 2 to 10 per cent. Besides the probate, large fees are demanded for burying him in the chancel. His virtues are handed down to posterity on taxed marble, and he then be gathered to his fathers to be taxed no more.

CHAPTER XIX

BORROWING FROM OTHERS

Quotations and Allusions

You may dislike Dr. Inge's opinions, or some of them. You are bound to admire his expression of them. For he writes beautiful English, clear and idiomatic. We cannot, without being very perverse, mistake his meaning. Now and again, however, you may think that he has been over-lavish of ornaments. Here is a sentence from his delightful *Vale*—

> The curiosity of the public about the private lives of men and women is so great that the man with two talents as well as the man with five has reason to fear that his imaginary merits may be disclosed, and his frailties dragged from their dread abode to tickle the ears of the groundlings, when he is no longer there to defend himself.

Well, we need not grumble that his allusions are far-fetched. For we all know the parable of the talents; most of us have many a time said that last stanza of Gray's *Elegy*—

> No farther seek his merits to disclose,
> Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
> (There they alike in trembling hope repose)
> The bosom of his Father and his God;

and few among us have not heard Hamlet's speech: "It offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings." Still, three allusions in a single sentence seem excessive.

Will Your Audience Understand?

The points to be considered when deciding whether or not to make allusions seem to be these. We keep, as we always should keep, our expected readers in mind. Will they understand the allusion? Will they understand it without difficulty and with

some delight. We are to use it, in other words, not to display our cleverness or our great erudition, certainly not to mystify our readers. We ought to hope that our allusion will at once summon into our reader's mind a lively picture.

Our hope may not be realized. Then it is that allusion irritates. The reader has the uneasy feeling that something is intended by the unusual turn of phrase; he is a little indignant at being kept out of the secret. Probably, therefore, the wise course for the writer is not to take too much for granted. You may assume perhaps that *Benedick*, as a sprightly variant of the *married man*, is understood: in a sentence like "At his marriage the whole community wished the veteran joy on his entrance into the band of Benedicks," the use is apt. For Benedick was he who, having been resolute to remain unmarried, excused his action in marrying by asserting, "When I said I would die a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married." We may assume that a character of Shakespeare's will call up memories.

Cryptic Allusions

You cannot, however, assume that everyone is familiar with *Sir Charles Grandison*; and an allusion to the immaculate and rather pompous young gentleman described in Richardson's novel may do nothing but annoy. Does the adjective add any force in the sentence, "In all his conduct a Grandisonian style of magnanimity, both in substance and manner, was visible"? Will everyone understand the allusion to Gallio[1] in the sentence of Professor Trevelyan, "Palmerston was Whig aristocrat in his attitude of Gallio towards religion and the Church"?

Very likely more understand his allusion in "Burke had scotched the snake of Parliamentary corruption with his Economic Bill, but neither he nor his Tory adversaries wished to kill it by reducing the number of rotten boroughs. The magnificent reptile had still a long and honoured life before it." Macbeth's exclamation, "We have scotched the snake, not killed it," has become a part of the language. Does Dickens

[1] Gallio was the governor who declined to give judgment where judgment was hazardous. "If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you. But, if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters." (*The Acts*, Ch. 18.)

come into mind as you read, "Shaftesbury and his enemies had introduced the astonishing custom of the Eatanswill election, with all its noise, expense, anger and fun—a peculiar and valuable national heritage, because it fostered that interest in the conduct and result of elections for want of which the Parliamentary system had withered and wilted in more than one continental country in our own day"?

Be Sparing of Classical Allusion

Classical allusion, nowadays, may certainly be in excess. For education is no longer mainly, is often not at all, concerned with Latin or Greek. In the eighteenth-century House of Commons a Latin quotation would be appreciated, even its pronunciation criticized. "For God's sake, *vectīgal*, Mr. Burke," protested the Prime Minister, when Burke unluckily gave a short quantity to *i*. A Latin quotation in the twentieth-century House of Commons would be greeted with cries of "Translate."

For there is a fashion in allusions as in other things; and fashion is fickle. There has come about a change in the quotation or allusion with which the statesman or the judge graces his speech or illustrates his meaning. It was once a Latin tag, understood by the hearers and so a subtle flattering of their vanity. It is now a reference to English literature. For the study of English is now, rightly and wisely, looked upon as an ample provision of the cultural requirements of education. Thus in Mr. Gladstone's Budget speeches many an apt Latin quotation rounds off an eloquent period. In Mr. Chamberlain's Budget speeches, however, Latin is absent; doubtless the audience would resent its appearance. One Budget is typified as being the end of "Bleak House" and the dawn of "Great Expectations"; the next Budget, framed when the "Great Expectations" had been disappointed, was excused on the ground that the rapidly changing foreign outlook is "Like the uncertain glory of an April day." So, too, the Lord Chief Justice, castigating a Bench of Justices for an unjust conviction, quoted Pope's line, "A little learning is a dangerous thing."

An Excess of Allusions

A great critic, eagerly praising Milton's *Comus*, asserts that certain passages "would be the most beautiful where all is

beautiful, if the unapproachable 'Sabrina fair' did not come later." Possibly he is right. Some among us, though, find the mythology an impediment to our pleasure; for the deities that the poet introduces are not now familiar as household words. And we have not always a classical dictionary at hand—

> Listen and appear to us,
> In name of great Oceanus,
> By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
> And Tethys' grave majestic pace;
> By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,
> And the Carpathian Wizard's hook;
> By scaly Triton's winding shell,
> And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell;
> By Leucothea's lovely hands,
> And her son that rules the strands;
> By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,
> And the songs of Sirens sweet.

The sounds delight, indeed, and perhaps we need not worry much about who Thetis was, or who Leucothea. Still, one likes to know.

Obsolete Meanings

What applies to classical allusion applies even more forcibly to the using of English words, either in their primary sense or with a suggestion of that sense, when to most of us the word conveys a different sense. The scholar will no doubt appreciate and enjoy the skilful suggestion of the old meaning; others are merely puzzled.

Milton, for instance, often uses a word borrowed from Latin in its Latin sense, from which its English sense has diverged. *Prevent* in the "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity" is an example. "Go before" is the Latin meaning; and one may go before to prepare the way, to help as well as to hinder—"Prevent us in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour" is the petition of the Collect. And in the Ode we have the uncoloured sense of "anticipate"—

> See how from afar, upon the eastern road,
> The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:

O run, prevent them with thy humble ode
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet.

Some will have their delight in the verses enhanced by the exceptional meaning of the word; most will have their delight lessened. So with words like "exercise" (used in the literal Latin sense of "harass" or "torment") in—

Where pain of unextinguishable fire
Must exercise us without hope of end.

The Use of Quotations

The matter is not greatly different when you use quotation: the taking of another's words in order to enhance the appeal of your own will please one reader and maybe irritate another. You should note particularly that your reader is likely to resent your quotation when he knows that you have garbled it.

The injunction "Verify your quotations" is a very wise one. But, in truth, this matter of quotation presents more difficulties than this. Some misquotations have in ordinary talk so completely ousted the originals that it is almost affectation to quote correctly. It is the mutilation that has become a part of our machinery of expression. Thus the curse, or it may have been the blessing, of Adam was "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." This is, more often than not, quoted "Sweat of the brow." The verse is, "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest"; in quotation the archaic "be" is almost always replaced by "are." One curious misquotation actually perverts the sense. The verse is, "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it": the reader may, that is, take the warning speedily to heart. The misquotation is, "he that runs may read": the writing is in such characters as enable even the speedy passer-by to read them. The verse is, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." This is often compressed into "Pride goeth before a fall." The verse is, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." The misquotation is, "No rest for the wicked." We do well to quote correctly. Yet we are foolish if, in the pride of knowledge, we hasten to correct the misquoter.

How Perversion Arises

We can easily understand how perversion comes about. When the quotations have become "Familiar in their mouths as household words," people trust to memory. But memory is apt to betray them and a modification appears. Two quotations from Lycidas illustrate this. Milton wrote—

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights and live laborious days;

The middle line is often quoted as "The last infirmity of noble minds." Milton ends his poem with—

At last he rose and twitched his mantle blue
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

"Fresh woods" often becomes "fresh fields," alliteration being achieved at the expense of needless repetition.

It is doubtless a compliment to Shakespeare that he is subject to an immense amount of quotation and consequently of misquotation. His expressions have become part of the stock of our language, and have in the course of time become a little battered in usage. The very names of his plays at times suffer: *Love's Labour's Lost* becomes "Love's Labour Lost," the omission of the verb *'s* making the title less effective; *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* becomes "A Midsummer's Night's Dream," which again is no improvement. Still, though we can understand how the misquotations arise, though we can excuse them, it may be desirable at times to compare them with the authentic words. Thus Macbeth shrinks from carrying out the plan that he and Lady Macbeth had devised; and Lady Macbeth encourages him—

But screw your courage to the sticking-place
And we'll not fail.

Place often becomes *point*. Later in the play Macbeth determines, in spite of the reassurance of the witches, to remove another of the obstacles to his power—

Then live, Macduff! what need I fear of thee?
But yet I'll make assurance double sure,
And take a bond of Fate! thou shalt not live.

Double is apt to become *doubly*.

Using Quotations

Many times, indeed, we cannot say where quotations end and the original matter begins; one merges insensibly into the other. In *As You Like It* one of the banished Duke's companions speaks of "the melancholy Jacques"—

> To-day my Lord of Amiens and myself
> Did steal behind him as he lay along
> Under an oak whose antique root peeps out
> Upon the brook that brawls along this wood.

In Gray's *Elegy* the oak has become a beech, and the brawl has softened into a babble—

> There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
> That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
> His listless length at noontide would he stretch
> And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

A good writer will now and again weave very delightfully into his own composition the words of another. We cannot call it actually quotation; but we feel that the later writer knew and loved the earlier. Go again to *Macbeth* and read the lines—

> Duncan is in his grave;
> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;
> Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison,
> Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
> Can touch him further.

Now read this beautiful little description of the great Preacher, Cardinal Newman—

Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with the words and thoughts which were a religious music—subtle, sweet, mournful? I seem to hear him still, saying: "After the fever of life, after weariness and sicknesses, fightings and despondings, languor and fretfulness, struggling and succeeding; after all the changes and chances of this troubled, unhealthy state

—at length comes death, at length the white throne of God, at length the beatific vision."

Can you doubt that the preacher had many a time read the play?

Adapting Quotations

The essayist Hazlitt, who was a great quoter, made few scruples about adapting a quotation to his particular needs. So did Lamb. It would be absurd to call their adaptations misquotations. Many of them do, in fact, delight all of us, except those who think that to adapt a quotation is to treat it with disrespect. "What, shall I not take mine ease in mine inn but I shall have my pocket picked?" Falstaff asks indignantly in *Henry IV*. "How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at the approach of nightfall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to 'take one's ease at one's inn'!" writes Hazlitt. And look how Coleridge weaves into his verse the words of his friend's *Journals*—

One only leaf upon the top of a tree—the sole remaining leaf—danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind

is what Dorothy Wordsworth records; and this is how Coleridge sets the record to music—

There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light and hanging so high
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Chaucer ushers in his *Canterbury Tales* with the famous lines—

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote....
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.

The modern writer, constrained to write his essay on "Suggestion for a Pilgrimage," dismembers the passage in order to

grace his opening: "Though this winter seems determined never to end, it is only four weeks to April with its shoures soote, and therefore none too early for men to begin dreaming about the pilgrimages on which they then longen to goon." Most of us will welcome the reminder, and will admire the skill with which old and new are blended.

Here and there, though, will be one who is savage at what he calls the desecration. Yet the writer might claim that the adaptation has in fact made the passage his own. He has built a new structure from the old material. That is Tennyson's way in his "Idylls of the King." He takes the tales of Malory, the old prose, and turns it into the modern verse. This is the prose manner of describing the disappearance of Arthur—

And so they rowed from the land, and Sir Bedwere cried: Ah my lord Arthur, what shall be come of me, now ye go from and leave me here alone among mine enemies? Comfort thyself, said the king, and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in; for I will into the vale of Avalon to heal me of my grievous wound: and if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul. But ever the queen and ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedwere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest; and so he went all that night, and in the morning he was ware betwixt two holts hoar, of a chapel and an hermitage.

And this is the verse manner—

"But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avalon;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."
So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full breasted swan

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

Plutarch and Shakespeare

It is Shakespeare's way, too, in many of his plays. He pillages like a conqueror: he takes Plutarch's narrative—

For, first of all, when Cæsar's testament was openly read among them, whereby it appeared that he bequeathed unto every citizen of Rome 75 drachmas a man, and that he left his gardens and arbours unto the people, which he had on this side of the river Tiber, in the place where now the Temple of Fortune is built, the people then loved him, and were marvellous sorry for him. Afterwards, when Cæsar's body was brought into the market-place, Antonius making his funeral oration in praise of the dead, according to the ancient custom of Rome, and perceiving that his words moved the common people to compassion, he framed his eloquence to make their hearts yearn the more; and taking Cæsar's gown all bloody in his hand, he laid it open to the sight of them all, showing what a number of cuts and holes it had upon it; therewithal the people fell presently into such a rage and mutiny, that there was no more order kept amongst the common people, for some of them cried out, Kill the murtherers; others plucked up forms, tables, and stalls about the market-place, as they had done before at the funerals of Clodius, and, having laid them all on a heap together, they set them on fire, and thereupon did put the body of Cæsar, and burnt it in the midst of the most holy place. And, furthermore, when the fire was thoroughly kindled, some here, some there, took burning firebrands, and ran with them to the murtherers' houses that killed him to set them on fire. Howbeit, the conspirators, foreseeing the danger before, had wisely provided for themselves, and fled.

He turns this, already full of movement, into the wonderfully dramatic scene you all know. You have it in Act III of *Julius Cæsar*. See how he adds liveliness to the bald statement, "Taking Cæsar's gown all bloody in his hand, he laid it open to the sight of them all, showing what a number of cuts and holes it had upon it." This becomes in the play—

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.
You all do know this mantle: I remember
The first time ever Cæsar put it on;
'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,
That day he overcame the Nervii:
Look! in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:
See, what a rent the envious Casca made;
Through this, the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;
And, as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Cæsar follow'd it,
As rushing out of doors, to be resolv'd
If Brutus so unkindly knock'd, or no;
For Brutus, as you know, was Cæsar's angel:
Judge, O you gods, how dearly Cæsar loved him!
This was the most unkindest cut of all:
For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,
Even at the base of Pompey's statua.
Which all the while ran blood, great Cæsar fell.
O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,
Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.
O, now you weep; and, I perceive, you feel
The dint of pity: these are gracious drops.
Kind souls, what weep you, when you but behold
Our Cæsar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

So also he takes a piece of description, itself an interesting and effective description. It recounts the meeting of Antony and Cleopatra—

The manner how he fell in love with her was this:

Antonius, going to make war with the Parthians, sent to command Cleopatra to appear personally before him. So she furnished herself with a world of gifts, store of gold and silver, and of riches and other sumptuous ornaments, as is credible enough she might bring from so great a house and from so wealthy and rich a realm as Egypt was. But yet she carried nothing with her wherein she trusted more than in herself, and in the charms and enchantment of her passing beauty and grace. Therefore, when she was sent unto by divers letters, both from Antonius himself and also from his friends, she made so light of it, and mocked Antonius so much, that she disdained to set forward otherwise but to take her barge in the river of Cydnus; the poop whereof was gold, the sails of purple, and the oars of silver, which kept stroke in rowing after the sound of the music of flutes, hautboys, citterns, vials, and such other instruments as they played upon in the barge. And now for the person of herself, she was laid upon a pavilion of cloth of gold of tissue, apparelled and attired like the goddess Venus, commonly drawn in picture; and hard by her, on either hand of her, pretty fair boys apparelled as painters do set forth god Cupid, with little fans in their hand, with the which they fanned wind upon her. Her ladies and gentlewoman also, the fairest of them were apparelled like the Nymphs Nereides (which are the mermaids of the waters) and like the Graces; some steering the helm, others tending the tackle and ropes of the barge, out of the which came a wonderful passing sweet savour of perfumes, that perfumed the wharf's side, pestered with innumerable multitudes of people. Some of them followed the barge all along the river-side; others also ran out of the city to see her coming in: so that in the end there ran such multitudes of people one after another to see her, that Antonius was left post alone in the market-place, in his imperial seat, to give audience; and there went a rumour in the people's mouths that the goddess Venus was come to play with the god Bacchus for the general good of all

Asia. When Cleopatra landed, Antonius sent to invite her to supper with him. But she sent him word again he should do better rather to come and sup with her. Antonius, therefore, to show himself courteous unto her at her arrival, was content to obey, and went to supper to her, where he found such passing sumptuous fare that no tongue can express it.

Shakespeare makes the description into a picture that lives again before us—

When she first met Mark Antony, she pursed up his heart, upon the river of Cydnus.

There she appeared indeed; or my reporter devised well for her.

I will tell you:
The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,
Burnt on the water: the poop was beaten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The winds were love-sick with them: the oars were silver;
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water, which they beat, to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,
It beggar'd description: she did lie
In her pavilion (cloth of gold, of tissue),
O'er-picturing that Venus, where we see
The fancy outwork nature: on each side her
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,
And what they undid, did!

O, rare for Antony!

Her gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
So many mermaids, tended her i' the eyes,
And made their bends adornings: at the helm
A seeming mermaid steers; the silken tackle
Swell with the touches of those flower-soft hands,
That yarely frame the office. From the barge

A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast
Her people out upon her; and Antony,
Enthron'd in the market-place, did sit alone,
Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,
And made a gap in nature.

Rare Egyptian!

Upon her landing, Antony sent to her,
Invited her to to supper: she replied,
It should be better he became her guest;
Which she entreated. Our courteous Antony,
Whom n'er the word of "No" woman heard speak,
Being barber'd ten times o'er, goes to the feast;
And, for his ordinary, pays his heart,
For what his eyes eat only.

The Parody

The pillager may treat his materials with scant reverence: he gives his readers something of a malicious amusement by a parody. We are constantly reminded of the original; but the words and phrases are applied to new matter.

Isaac Watts admonishes the sluggard—

'Tis the voice of the sluggard; I heard him complain
"You have waked me too soon; I must slumber again";
As the door on its hinges, so he on his bed,
Turns his sides, and his shoulders, and his heavy head.

And so on. The relator of "Alice's Adventures" turns this into the lines that you know perhaps better than the original—

'Tis the voice of the Lobster; I heard him declare
"You have baked me too brown, I must sugar my hair."
As a duck with its eyelids, so he with his nose
Trims his belt and his buttons, and turns out his toes.

Here are a few lines from *The Brook*—

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And this is how Calverley, describing the travelling tinker, perverts them—

"I loiter down by thorp and town,
For any job I'm willing;
Take here and there a dusty brown,
And here and there a shilling.

"I deal in every ware in turn,
I've rings for buddin' Sally
That sparkle like those eyes of her'n;
I've liquor for the valet.

"I steal from th' parson's strawberry-plots,
I hide by th' squire's covers;
I teach the sweet young housemaids what's
The art of trapping lovers.

"The things I've done 'neath moon and stars
Have got me into messes:
I've seen the sky through prison bars,
I've torn up prison dresses:

"I've sat, I've sigh'd, I've gloom'd, I glanced
With envy at the swallows
That through the window slid, and danced
(Quite happy) round the gallows;

"But out again I come, and show
My face nor care a stiver;
For trades are brisk and trades are slow,
But mine goes on for ever."

Later Version no Improvement

The later version may give pain rather than pleasure. Here are the musical verses familiar to you—

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

You would not relinquish these for the commonplace—

Learn a lesson from the wild lilies. Watch their growth. They neither toil nor spin, and yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his magnificence could array himself like one of these.

Nor for the poetical version—

Observe the rising lily's snowy grace,
Observe the various vegetable race;
They neither toil, nor spin, but careless grow,
Yet see how warm they blush! how bright they glow!
What regal vestments can with them compare!
What king so shining! or what queen so fair!

One other danger incident to quotation is the danger that the beauty or the vigour of the quotation may throw a cruel

and vivid light over the poverty of its context. In *The Critic* we have Sneer's report—

In short, even the finest passages you steal are of no service to you; for the poverty of your own language prevents their assimilating; so that they lie on the surface like lumps of marl on a barren moor, encumbering what it is not in their power to fertilise.

And Sterne, who plundered much and without either compunction or acknowledgment, preaches to the same effect—

I'm to preach at court next Sunday, said *Homenas*—run over my notes—so I humm'd over the doctor *Homenas's* notes—the modulation's very well—'twill do, *Homenas*, if it holds on at this rate—so on I humm'd—and a tolerable tune I thought it was; and to this hour, may it please your reverences, had never found out how low, how flat, how spiritless and jejune it was, but that all of a sudden, up started an air in the middle of it, so fine, so rich, so heavenly,—it carried my soul up with it into the other world; now had I (as *Montaigne* complained in a parallel accident)—had I found the delivery easy, or the ascent accessible—certes I had been outwitted.—Your notes, *Homenas*, I should have said, are good notes;—but it was so perpendicular a precipice—so wholly cut off from the rest of the work, and by the first note I humm'd I found myself flying into the other world, and from thence discovered the vale from whence I came, so deep, so low, and dismal, that I shall never have the heart to descend into it again.

A dwarf who brings a standard along with him to measure his own size—take my word, is a dwarf in more articles than one.

CHAPTER XX

A LITTLE ABOUT COPYRIGHT

Author: "Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee."
Critic: Haven't I heard that line before?
Author: No, I fancy not,—where pray?
Critic: I think there is something like it in *Othello.*
Author: Gad! now you put me in mind on't, I believe there is—but that's of no consequence; all that can be said is, that two people happened to hit on the same thought—and Shakespeare made use of it first, that's all.

That is, however, not the way in which Copyright Law looks at the matter. It is not enough to hit upon the same thought. There must be an embodiment of the thought in words; and a double coincidence, of thought and of expression, is hardly likely.

As soon as men could think, for example, the thought must often have presented itself forcibly that delay may be dangerous or at all events to your disadvantage. The thought is in fact embodied in our proverbs "A stitch in time saves nine" and "Time and tide wait for no man." It is the Roman poet's *carpe diem.*

Yet the authors of these versions of the thought could all have asserted copyright in their words: Shakespeare, Bacon, Herrick, Dryden. Here are the versions—

There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves
Or lose our ventures.

That is Shakespeare's in *Julius Cæsar.*

Occasion presenteth a bald noddle after she has presented her locks in front and no hold taken,

That is Bacon's in his *Essays*.

> Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
> Old Time is still aflying;
> And this same flower that smiles to-day
> To-morrow will be dying.

That is Herrick's.

> Believe me, royal youth, thy fruit must be
> Or gathered ripe, or rot upon the tree.
> Heaven has to all allotted, soon or late,
> Some lucky revolution of their fate:
> Whose motions if we watch and guide with skill,
> (For human good depends on human will),
> Our fortune rolls as from a smooth descent,
> And from the first impression takes the bent:
> But, if unseized, she glides away like wind,
> And leaves repenting folly far behind.

And that is Dryden's in his *Absalom and Achitophel*.

A Species of Property

After much mental labour and as the result of happy chance, you put a thought into a form of words. Then is it that the law regards the form of words as a species of property, and it tries to protect that property for you. You have what we call a copyright.

Thus, there is the age-old theme—

> Golden lads and girls all must
> As chimney sweepers come to dust.

All of us have hit upon that thought, but we have not created from it any particular form of words. A poet like Landor puts the thought into his own words, and thereby creates for himself property. You know the lines—

> Ah, what avails the sceptred race:
> Ah, what the form divine;
> What every virtue, every grace,
> Rose Aylmer, all were thine.

Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and of sighs
I consecrate to thee.

The thoughts, the matter, may be another's, may in fact be the common heritage; but, if the method is your own you have that intangible property called "copyright": *"nihil dictum quod non dictum prius, methodus sola artificem ostendit,* we can say nothing but what hath been said, the composition and method is ours only, and shows a scholar."

Protection of Copyright is Justifiable

It is highly desirable that copyright should be regarded as property to be protected. There is no property more entitled to protection than work that is the direct result of the labour, and the talent or genius, of the author or composer that has given it to the world. The copyright given to him is not in derogation of the right of any other person. It is not like the right of the landowner, for instance. It is merely the right to prevent other people from copying and appropriating that which is the true property and the true invention of the author or composer. The plagiarist was always subject to censure; mainly as a result of the Copyright Act, 1911, the pirate is placed under liability to pay damages.

Meaning of Copyright

This copyright means the exclusive right of multiplying copies of an original work or composition. By analogy it includes the exclusive right of performing a work in public. The right obviously implies the right of preventing other people from doing so, a right that can be made effective by means of an injunction. The statutory definition, that of the 1911 Act, is in fact, "Copyright means the sole right of reproducing in any material form whatsoever, or performing, or, in the case of a lecture, of delivering, the work or any substantial part thereof in public; if the work is unpublished, it means the exclusive right to publish the work or any substantial part of it."

The particular property of copyright is, in deed, the creature of statute. It could hardly be said to exist in Queen Elizabeth's days.

Foundation of Copyright

Copyright is property founded on labour and invention. If I take and make valuable what no one else wants or has thought about, it seems only fair that I should enjoy rights over what, without me, would not have existed as property. In this respect there may be copyright even in an original advertisement. The test is always: Does this order of words indicate a substantial effort and material result of imaginative power? Has the work called for skill in composition?

The protection afforded goes far. Thus, a compilation even of unoriginal matter—a selection of poems, a broadcasting programme, a directory—is entitled to copyright when it means original effort. It has been decided that actually an engraving or a photograph of a picture is protected.

The originals, as in the passages below, might themselves be products of literary skill, themselves therefore be entitled to such protection as is given by the Copyright Act. But the copies, too, might be so entitled. It is quite certain, for instance, that if the copyright Act had existed in Elizabeth's days, both original and copy of these versions would have enjoyed protection. The first passage in each pair is from North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*; the second is the blank verse of Shakespeare's plays—

If we held our peace (my son) and determined not to speak, the state of our poor bodies, and present sight of our raiment, would easily bewray to thee what life we have led at home, since thy exile and abode abroad. But think now with thyself, how much more unfortunate than all the women living we are come hither.

Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment
And state of bodies would bewray what life
We have led since thy exile. Think with thyself
How more unfortunate than all living women
Are we come hither.—*Coriolanus.*

And when some of his friends did counsel him to have guard for the safety of his person, and also some did offer themselves to serve him, he would never consent to it, but said, it was better to die once, than always to be afraid of death.

Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once;
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear;
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.—*Julius Cæsar.*

Another time, when Cæsar's friend complained unto him of Antonius and Dolabella, that they pretended some mischief towards him: he answered them again, "As for those fat men and smooth-combed heads," quoth he, "I never reckon of them: but these pale-visage and carrion lean people, I fear them most"; meaning Brutus and Cassius.

Let me have men about me that are fat:
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights.
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.
—*Julius Cæsar.*

Shakespeare was no plagiarist, though he did pillage North's *Plutarch* and get his ideas from that translation. It is when the ideas have been embodied, in words or marble or colour, that they become such property as is protected by the Act.

No Copyright in Ideas

There is, however, no copyright in ideas; the protection of an idea falls within the patent law and is available only when the idea is embodied in manufacture.

To take an idea from a book or even to adopt its "plot," is no infringement, if the idea is clothed in original literary or artistic form. True, if there is a close resemblance in the "situations" and incidents, the copying can hardly be negatived. But resemblance is by no means conclusive as to infringements. "A copy," it has been judicially defined, "is that which comes

so near the original as to suggest the original to the mind of every person seeing the copy and knowing the original." The claim is to the order of words, the order having a marked identity and a permanent endurance.

Moreover, we are told from the seat of judgment: "That part of the work of an author is found in another, is not of itself piracy, or sufficient to support an action. A man may fairly adopt part of the work of another; he may so make use of another's labours for the promotion of science and the benefit of the public. But the question will always be: was the matter so taken used fairly and without the *animus furandi* (the intention of thieving)?"

Extent of the Protection

The protection afforded may be less than we imagined. For when Parliament passes an Act, it may be long before we know how far the Act applies. So it has been with the Copyright Act. Parliament passed it in 1911 in order to protect the works in which the artist had expressed himself. We had to wait till 1936 to learn that the Act does not protect the dress designer. You may, if you care to do so and if your ability stretches so far, copy even what was described as "a three dimensional dress from a two dimensional design." For this, said Mr. Justice Clauson, is craftsman's, not artist's work.

The dress being worn might, indeed, answer to the requirement of art; it might "gratify the æsthetic emotions by perfection of execution, whether in creation or representation." But it was the whole—the *tout ensemble* of the lady wearing the frock—that gratified the æsthetic emotions of the Court and enlivened its proceedings. The design was an idea, and there can be no copyright in ideas. Perhaps the dress designer was unlucky in not having a woman as presiding judge.

Who is the First Author?

Usually there can be no doubt about the identity of the first author. In exceptional circumstances the Court may be called upon to decide. Thus, in *Cummins* v. *Bond* (1926), the plaintiff sought a declaration that she was the owner of the copyright of the "Chronicle of Cleophas," written by her as a medium under influence, as she declared, of an external psychic

agent. The defendant, who had transcribed and annotated the writing, claimed to be joint author. He based his claim also on the assertion that his presence was necessary before the psychic being would manifest himself.

Mr. Justice Eve gave the plaintiff what she sought—

So far as this world is concerned there can be no doubt who is the author here, for the plaintiff has written every word of this script. But the plaintiff and the defendant are of opinion that the true originator is some being, no longer inhabiting this world, and who has been out of it long enough to hope that he has no reasons for wishing to return to it. It would seem as though the individual who has been dead and buried for some 1900 years and the plaintiff ought to be regarded as the joint authors and owners of the copyright. But, inasmuch as I do not feel myself competent to make any declaration in his favour, and recognizing as I do that I have no jurisdiction extending to the sphere in which he moves, I think I ought to confine myself, when inquiring who is the author, to individuals who were alive when the book first came into existence, and to conditions which the legislature of 1911 may reasonably be presumed to have contemplated. The defendant invites me to declare that the authorship and copyright rest with someone already domiciled on the other side of the inevitable river. But I can only look upon the matter as a terrestrial one, of the earth earthy, and I deal with it on that footing. The plaintiff has made out her case, and the copyright rests with her.

Limitation of Right

The right of copyright exists for the life of the author and for fifty years after his death. Where two writers have collaborated, the term is fifty years after the death of the author who dies first or during the life of the longer liver, whichever period is longer. Where the work is not in publication during the author's lifetime, copyright exists until the publication or the performance in public, and for fifty years after such publication. For photographs, records, perforated rolls, and the like, the term of copyright is fifty years from the making of the negative or the plate.

After twenty-five years from the author's death any person may reproduce a work on payment to the owner of the copyright of a 10 per cent royalty on the published price. Moreover, the Privy Council has power to grant a licence to reproduce a work after the author's death, if it should be proved that the work is withheld from the public by the owner of the copyright.

Right Statute Barred

When there has been an invasion of an author's copyright, the aggrieved person must take action upon it within three years.

If he does not, his right to obtain damages is barred by the Statute that conferred the right. This does not mean that a successful plagiarism, not having been noted by the copyright owner for three years, destroys the property in the original copyrighted. It only means that for that one invasion no legal remedy exists; if a second edition of the plagiarism appears then the right again arises to sue for breach of copyright.

Modification of Literary Work

The "first author," quite rightly, has property in the products of his brain once those products have become embodied in a form of words. The "first author," even of an ordinary private letter, has by so embodying his thoughts produced "an original literary work"; and the law gives ample protection to the property. But suppose the property is altered. Does it still retain the right to protection? In particular, if an editor to whom you have sent your letter or your article, alters your version, are you or he the "first author"?

Yes; and another question presents itself. Has the editor any right at all to alter your contribution? The answer to this second question is easy enough to give. You may, being enamoured of your own version, enter into a special contract that your version, if published at all, shall be published without alteration. You are probably unwise to make such a contract; but at all events you can make it. Apart from this special contract, the contributor of an unsigned article is assumed to accept the ordinary, and very salutary, custom that an editor may make such alterations as he thinks desirable.

The answer to the first question is more difficult. What amount of change constitutes a new work? The case of *Springfield* v. *Thame* is a most interesting comment upon the question. Springfield was a journalist, a free-lance who had tracked something of news-value. Dr. Hardy, then—it was in 1903—a distinguished ophthalmologist, had narrowly escaped drowning. Springfield, writing the event up into a manuscript of eighty-three lines, sent his version to the *Daily Mail*. The payment

must have been adequate, if not lavish; for we hear no complaint upon that score. But now comes the *Evening Standard* lifting the *Daily Mail* paragraph and publishing it with a few slight alterations. Springfield sought payment, and the *Evening Standard* tendered 2s. 6d. This he regarded as inadequate; and so the action began.

The defence, which ultimately prevailed, was that not the plaintiff but the editor of the *Daily Mail* was the author of the paragraph. For there is no copyright in news, though the B.B.C. does insist day by day that copyright is reserved. "Arsenal four, Sunderland one" may be copyright by the B.B.C. and the others enumerated: to state that "Arsenal beat Sunderland by four goals to one" does not infringe the copyright.

A passage from the Springfield judgment is entertaining—

> If I considered the plaintiff entitled to any relief at all I should not allow him any costs; for I think that the 2s. 6d. was ample compensation for any damage done to him if he had any copyright. But he had none. For the paragraph "touched up in blue-pencil" was a different statement of the facts. And, whether or not there was any literary merit in the original composition, there is none in the paragraph in the *Daily Mail*. In my opinion if the original composition had been published *verbatim et litteratim* in the *Daily Mail*, the paragraph in the *Evening Standard* would still have been no infringement of copyright. For there is no copyright in news, but only in the manner of expressing it. The plaintiff is not in the legal sense the author of the paragraph.

Yet all are Borrowers

There is, to be sure, no reason why we should refuse help from whatever quarter we can procure it. All great writers, all famous speakers, are eager to acknowledge that others have helped. In Lord Rosebery's charming account of his friend, Lord Randolph Churchill, he says—

> I do not doubt that the Fourth Party and other friends often co-operated in the production of his more elaborate speeches. This does not in any way detract from their merits. The faculty of borrowing intellectually from others is a subtle one: it is an art in itself, that few can employ successfully. Sheridan would take the arm of a friend down to the House of Commons in friendly chat, and presently the friend would hear with admiring surprise his own ideas translated by Sheridan into a glowing and eloquent

speech. The friend could not have done it, Sheridan could; had it not been for Sheridan the friend's ideas would have been altogether lost; so that all parties gained by the process.

It may then be taken for granted that Randolph's friends perceived with satisfaction their ideas appearing in Randolph's popular and ingenious language amid the rattling applause of his teeming audiences. And after all, no speeches are wholly original. No one can tell what unconscious forces of reading, conversation, and memory go to produce a great speech. An original speech—one in which all arguments and illustrations were absolutely novel and wholly beyond previous conception would in all probability be a failure. Its originality would be fatal to it; it would be regarded as an eccentric intellectual trick and nothing more. There are of course in most speeches novel arguments and still more novel illustrations, but a speech of which all the arguments and illustrations are new has yet to be heard.

It is no plagiarism if you put a great deal of yourself into your borrowings, if you can point to some originality, some independent development. It is no infringement of copyright, either.

Burton's Explanation of His Method

One of the greatest borrowers in our literature, a man who seems to have pillaged whole libraries to furnish forth his book, excuses his borrowings in this way—

'Tis all mine, yet none mine (*Omne meum, Nihil meum*). As a good housewife out of divers fleeces weaves one piece of cloth, as a bee gathers wax and honey out of many flowers, I have laboriously collected out of divers writers and that without wrong. I give every man his own. I cite and quote mine authors (which, howsoever some illiterate scribblers account pedantical, I must and will use). The matter is theirs most part, and yet mine own. We can say nothing but what hath been said, the composition and method is ours only and shows a scholar. "A dwarf standing on the shoulders of a giant may see farther than a giant himself." I may likely add, alter, and see farther than my predecessors.

CHAPTER XXI

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE ART: SPEECHES

IT is said—but then it is also denied—that one great singer advised another great singer, about to go on tour, "Sing 'em muck." For appreciation of the best—in wine, in art, in music—is an acquired faculty; and the great majority never do acquire it. The advice to the singer, *mutatis mutandis* say the logicians, is applicable to the speaker who would be greatly popular. It is but lost labour that he polishes his periods, that he devises flawless arguments, that he achieves sentences of perfect structure. It is worse than lost labour. For, if he does so elaborate, people will not listen to him. Indeed they cannot listen to him. Here is Macaulay's judgment on the matter—

It is not by accuracy or profundity that men become the masters of great assemblies. And why be at the charge of providing logic of the best quality, when a very inferior article will be equally acceptable? Why go as deep into a question as Burke did, only in order to be, like Burke, coughed down, or left speaking to green benches and red boxes?

An Admirable Little Speech

The speeches that Macaulay refers to here were the formal speeches that would serve as pamphlets. His comment does not apply to such an admirable little speech as this that comes below. It is Edmund Burke's magnanimous speech to the electors of Bristol when, in 1780, he declined the poll. Those were the days, you will remember, when the hustings accompanied a contested election, and when therefore the scenes of Dickens's *Eatanswill* were to be expected: to decline an election was to save a town from a fortnight or so of disorder—

Gentlemen,

I decline the election. It has ever been my rule through life to observe a proportion between my efforts and my objects. I have never been remarkable

for a bold, active, and sanguine pursuit of advantages that are personal to myself.

I have not canvassed the whole of this city in form. But I have taken such a view of it as satisfies my own mind that your choice will not ultimately fall on me. Your city, Gentlemen, is in a state of miserable distraction; and I am resolved to withdraw whatever share my pretensions may have had in its unhappy divisions. I have not been in haste; I have tried all prudent means; I have waited for the effect of all contingencies. If I were fond of a contest, by the partiality of my numerous friends (whom you know to be among the most weighty and respectable people of the city), I have the means of a sharp one in my hands. But I thought it far better with my strength unspent, and my reputation unimpaired, to do, early and from foresight, that which I might be obliged to do from necessity at last.

I am not in the least surprised, not in the least angry, at this view of things. I have read the book of life for a long time, and I have read other books a little. Nothing has happened to me but what has happened to men much better than I, and in times and in nations full as good as the age and country that we live in. To say that I am no way concerned, would be neither decent nor true. The representation of *Bristol* was an object on many accounts dear to me; and I certainly should very far prefer it to any other in the Kingdom. My habits are made to it; and it is in general more unpleasant to be rejected after long trial, than not to be chosen at all.

But, Gentlemen, I will see nothing except your former kindness, and I will give way to no other sentiments than those of gratitude. From the bottom of my heart I thank you for what you have done for me. You have given me a long term, which is now expired. I have performed the conditions, and enjoyed all the profits to the full; and I now surrender your estate into your hands, without being in a single tile or a single stone impaired or wasted by my use. I have

served the public for fifteen years. I have served you in particular for six. What is passed is well stored. It is safe, and out of the power of fortune. What is to come is in wiser hands than ours: and He, in whose hands it is, best knows whether it is best for you and me that I should be in Parliament, or even in the world.

Gentlemen, the melancholy event of yesterday reads to us an awful lesson against being too much troubled about any of the objects of ordinary ambition. The worthy Gentleman, who has been snatched from us at the moment of the election and in the middle of the contest, whilst his desires were as warm and his hopes as eager as ours, has feelingly told us what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue.

It has been usual for a candidate who declines, to take his leave by a letter to the sheriffs; but I received your trust in the face of day: and in the face of day I accept your dismission. I am not,—I am not at all ashamed to look upon you; nor can my presence discompose the order of business here. I humbly and respectfully take my leave of the sheriffs, the candidates, and the electors, wishing heartily that the choice may be for the best at a time which calls, if ever time did call, for service that is not nominal. It is no plaything you are about. I tremble when I consider the trust I have presumed to ask. I confided perhaps too much in my intentions. They were really fair and upright; and I am bold to say that I ask no ill thing for you, when on parting from this place I pray that whomever you choose to succeed me, he may resemble me exactly in all things, except in my abilities to serve and my fortune to please you.

Distinction between Hearing and Reading

The speech may have abundant success when it appears as a writing; for time is under the control of the reader. It is true that neither speaker nor writer should make an exacting demand upon attention. If either does, the demand will remain unsupplied. Yet people may be prepared to grapple with

difficult pieces of writing until the intended meaning is wrested from them. People cannot do so with speeches. A speech must achieve success at the moment or not at all.

Well, what does make for effectiveness in speeches? First, if it does not maintain attention it must be, in greater or less measure, a failure. The successful orator, therefore, is readily intelligible in his statements. He considers his audience and fits his words to that audience.

You cannot but admire the speaker who adapts his language to his hearers, who knows—by unerring intuition it would seem—when to be simple, when profound; when to be brief, bright, and brotherly, and when to be diffuse. That orator has an enviable gift who can speak with equal success to an assembly of statesmen and to a gathering of schoolchildren. He knows well that what would suit one audience would be distasteful or unintelligible to another, and he has the power to act in accordance with his knowledge. Even in the ordinary intercourse of life propriety of diction has its place.

The skilled speaker is intelligible. He is also attractive in his statements. His dread is that he should weary his audience. His happiness is in hearing it said of him (as was said of the great Lord Bacon)—

"The fear of every man that heard him was lest he should make an end."

Maintaining the Attention

That is why a skilful speaker is anxious to maintain interest, to make it rise rather than die away. He seeks to close his speech on a climax. Look, for instance, at the end—the "peroration," we sometimes call it—of Burke's impeachment of Warren Hastings—

I impeach him in the name of the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, whose parliamentary trust he has betrayed. I impeach him in the name of all the Commons of Great Britain, whose national character he has dishonoured. I impeach him in the name of the people of India, whose laws, rights, and liberties he has subverted, whose properties he has destroyed, whose country he has laid waste and

desolate. I impeach him in the name and by the virtue of those eternal laws of justice which he has violated. I impeach him in the name of human nature itself, which he has cruelly outraged, injured, and oppressed, in both sexes, in every age, rank, situation, and condition of life.

Speeches there are, one knows, that will repay study long after the speaker's voice is silent. But the goodness of a speech, considered simply as such, depends upon the judgment of the hearers, not that of patient readers. The writer may hope that his words will be studied, that the reader coming upon an idea new to him will stop, will consider, will refuse to go on until he has mastered the idea in all its bearings. The speaker knows that any such dealing with his utterances would make the speech a failure. *Vox perit, litera scripta manet,* he says: the sound of the voice dies away and may leave little impression, the written word may remain as a permanent record. Very well, he reconciles himself to the thought that he can get only a very few new ideas into his hearers' minds. The most stupid audience would resent his repeating the idea in identical terms. He varies it, therefore, until it is permanently beaten into their slow-changing minds.

Amplification

The polite name for this repeating of the one idea is "amplification." This does not mean such a repetition as was animadverted upon by the weary Judge: "You have already read that section four times, Mr. ——; it's iteration; it's —— I use no epithet; it is iteration." "Amplification" is repetition with a difference. Here for instance is Burke's theme, "A large empire is unwieldy"; and here is the amplification—

The last cause of this disobedient spirit in the Colonies is hardly less powerful than the rest, as it is not merely moral, but laid deep in the natural constitution of things. Three thousand miles of ocean lie between you and them. No contrivance can prevent the effect of this distance in weakening Government. Seas roll, and months pass, between the order and the execution; and the want of a speedy explanation of a

single point is enough to defeat a whole system. You have, indeed, winged ministers of vengeance, who carry your bolts in their pounces to the remotest verge of the seas. But there a power steps in, that limits the arrogance of raging passions and furious elements, and says, *So far shalt thou go, and no farther.* Who are you, that you should fret and rage, and bite the chains of Nature? Nothing worse happens to you than does to all nations who have extensive Empire: and it happens in all the forms into which Empire can be thrown. In large bodies, the circulation of power must be less vigorous at the extremities. Nature has said it. The Turk cannot govern Egypt, and Arabia, and Kurdistan as he governs Thrace; nor has he the same dominion in Crimea and Algiers, which he has in Brusa and Smyrna. Despotism itself is obliged to truck and huckster. The Sultan gets such obedience as he can. He governs with a loose rein that he may govern at all; and the whole of the force and vigour of his authority in his centre is derived from a prudent relaxation in all his borders. Spain, in her provinces, is perhaps not so well obeyed as you are in yours. She complies too; she submits; she watches times. This is the immutable condition, the eternal law, of an extensive and detached Empire.

For another capital instance of this amplification, look at the taxes paragraph on page 391.

An Effective Oration

How effective the iteration—the amplification of the one gaunt idea—must have been in President Roosevelt's inauguration speech! Can you wonder that men and women crowd to hear him speak? Here are a few paragraphs. He declares his policy and gives his pledge as a leader of the people—of democracy. For, he said—

The Constitution of 1787 did not make our democracy impotent. In fact during the past four years the exercise of power has been made more democratic: we have begun to bring private autocratic powers into

their proper subordination to the public's Government. Heedless self-interest is not only bad morals but bad economics. Shall we pause now? Comfort says "Tarry awhile"; opportunism says "This is a good spot"; timidity asks, "How difficult is the road ahead?"

We have come far from the days of despair. Great possibilities are ours: I see a great nation upon a great continent blessed with great wealth of natural resources. Its 130,000,000 people are at peace among themselves; they are making their country a good neighbour among the nations. I see a United States which can demonstrate that under democratic methods of government national wealth can be translated into a spreading volume of human comforts hitherto unknown—and the lowest standard of living can be raised far above the level of mere subsistence.

But much must be done. I see tens of millions of its citizens—a substantial part of its whole population—who at this very moment are denied the greater part of what the very lowest standards of to-day call the necessities of life. I see millions of families trying to live on incomes so meagre that the pall of family disaster hangs over them day by day. I see millions whose daily lives in city and on farm continue under conditions labelled indecent by a so-called polite society half a century ago. I see millions denied education, recreation, and the opportunity to better their lot and the lot of their children. I see millions lacking the means to buy the products of farm and factory, and by their poverty denying work and productiveness to many other millions. I see one-third of the nation ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished.

I paint the picture not in despair but in hope. For the nation, seeing and understanding the injustice of it, purposes to paint it out. The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

To-day we reconsecrate our country to long-cherished ideals in a suddenly changed civilization; and I

as President assume the solemn obligation of leading the American people forward along the road over which they have chosen to advance.

The Concrete is More Effective than the Abstract

You have probably noticed, too, that the speaker shuns, so far as he can, abstract terms. He deals in the concrete. He does what the experienced teacher does. Efforts are fruitless unless you can capture and keep attention. "Maintaining interest" is an alternative way of expressing this; and the successful orator or playwright shows us how to do this. We hear, for example, the quite irreproachable sentiment, "Contentment breeds Happiness." We acquiesce with unruffled mind; we are little affected. We hear, though—

> Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers!
> O sweet content!
> Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexed
> O punishment!

and we respond eagerly.

Teach the general through the particular, speak of things that you can touch and see rather than of abstractions. That is the sound advice to be deduced from the practice of those who have influenced the minds of others. It may well be that success or failure as a speaker—preacher, or teacher, or politician—resides in this more than in any other single direction.

The speaker who gets his ideas across is, in truth, something of a poet. He gives to airy abstractions a local habitation and a name. In his modest sphere he copies Shakespeare. Like him, the skilful speaker prefers the concrete to the abstract, the particular to the general, the definite to the vague. The Duke in *Twelfth Night* asks Viola the question, "And what's her history?"—

> *Viola:* A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek; she pined in
> thought
> And with a green and yellow melancholy
> She sat like Patience on a monument
> Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?

"Observe," writes Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, "how, when Shakespeare *has* to use the abstract noun 'concealment' on an instant it turns into a visible worm 'feeding' on the visible rose; how, having to use a second abstract word 'patience,' at once he solidifies it in tangible stone."

Preparation of the Speech

Are we under any obligation to the hearers who will honour us, we hope, with their attention? Are we to prepare with diligence our speech, or are we to trust to the inspiration of the moment?

In a very delightful debate in the House of Lords, when a motion was before the House that "the growing practice of reading speeches is to be deprecated," the point was put in this way—

> The peers come in with a speech prepared; they do not, naturally refer to the speech which has gone before; they do not expect the speaker who follows to refer to their speeches; and as soon as they have delivered themselves they withdraw. This is not debating. One advantage that this House has is that votes are affected by the speeches delivered; but one does not pay so much attention to essays written the day before and often irrelevant to the subject of the debate as it develops.
>
> There is a queer fallacy on the matter—the idea that a speech written and read is necessarily more fully prepared than one which is not read. This is a complete fallacy. I never address the House without notes. So far as I am concerned they are necessary to ensure that my facts are properly marshalled and that my argument is in proper sequence, but I may have been 20 minutes or 20 years in mastering the subject-matter on which I speak. So far from its being true that the speaker who, like myself, relies upon a few headings of notes has prepared less than the speaker who reads his speech, I am pretty certain that people who read their speeches do so because they have not mastered the subject-matter of their addresses.
>
> A friend of mine told me the other day that he was shy of speaking in this House without typewritten notes; his phrasing, he said, did not come right. But this does not really much matter; for we can always rely on the reporters to correct our prose. It is well understood and quite proper that they should do so.

In short, do not write out your speech; if you have mastered your subject, the words to express your thoughts will surely come.

The Written Speech

The opposite point of view, that we do wisely when we consider carefully what we should say, that we write it out, consider it, modify it, was thus expressed—

> There is no good speaking without preparation, and also, if possible, meditation. There are those who feel able to trust to the inspiration of the moment and who sometimes succeed. They believe in the injunction "It shall be given to you in that hour when ye shall speak." Unfortunately, it is not always evident that the gift has been received. There are great natural speakers who are able on almost any subject at short notice to present an impressive and well-phrased speech to your lordships; but those who have to rely on a painful and ragged eloquence need to prepare beforehand.
>
> There seems to be no doubt that Burke's immortal speeches were either read or memorized. That is true, I think, of many other speeches. A friend of mine went one morning to see Lord Morley, and he is not without a sense of form in debate. The noble lord said: "You see me very laboriously preparing my impromptu remarks for this afternoon in the House of Lords."
>
> Part of the difficulty belongs to this House itself. It is a trying experience for anybody but a very seasoned offender to address your lordships' House. I have had fifty years' experience of public speaking, and your lordships' House is by far the most difficult assembly which I have had to address. It is not exactly that one speaks to a dead wall of countenances, but that one speaks to an audience which is bored and resigned to the inevitable. What disturbs the speaker is not opposition, because that stimulates and brings out reserves of power; it is the silent resentment evident on your lordships' faces. When one speaks in the House and hears the sound of one's own voice one feels almost like brawling in church.

Preparation does seem to be the safer plan; it is in fact something of an affront to your possible hearers that you have declined to revise and, so far as lies in you, to improve your mode of expression. At all events you had better have something written against the possibility of such a happening as occurred to Charles Lamb. Like many another he disliked set speeches, disliked in particular lectures prepared and read. Well, look at this. He is writing in 1818—from the East India House and quite likely during office hours—to Mrs. Wordsworth; and he gives news of what is happening in London. You will, no doubt, enjoy reading the postscript—which is probably longer than most of the letters you write. [W. H. is

William Hazlitt; W. W. is William Wordsworth; and S. T. C. is Samuel Taylor Coleridge.]

W. H. goes on lecturing against W. W. and making copious use of quotations from said W. W. to give a zest to said lectures. S. T. C. is lecturing with success. I have not heard either of him or H., but dined with S. T. C. at Gillman's a Sunday or two since, and he was well and in good spirits. I mean to hear some of the course; but lectures are not much to my taste, whatever the lecturer may be. If *read*, they are dismal flat, and you can't think why you are brought together to hear a man read his works, which you could read so much better at leisure yourself. If delivered extempore I am always in pain lest the gift of utterance should suddenly fail the orator in the middle, as it did me at the dinner given in honour of me at the London tavern. "Gentlemen," said I, and there I stopped; the rest my feelings were under the necessity of supplying. Mrs. Wordsworth *will* go on, kindly haunting us with visions of seeing the lakes once more, which never can be realised. Between us there is a great gulf, not of inexplicable moral antipathies and distances, I hope, as there seemed to be between me and that gentleman concerned in the Stamp Office, that I so strangely recoiled from at Haydon's. I think I had an instinct that he was the head of an office. I hate all such people—accountants' deputy-accountants. The dear abstract notion of the East India Company, as long as she is unseen, is pretty, rather poetical; but as she makes herself manifest by the persons of such beasts, I loathe and detest her as the scarlet what-do-you-call-her of Babylon. I thought, after abridging us of all our red-letter days, they had done their worst; but I was deceived in the length to which heads of offices, those true liberty-haters, can go. They are the tyrants; not Ferdinand, nor Nero. By a decree passed this week they have abridged us of the immemorially-observed custom of going at one o'clock of a Saturday, the little shadow of a holiday left us. Dear W. W., be thankful for liberty.

An Effective Speech

You heard, very likely, the wholly admirable speech broadcast by the Archbishop of Canterbury during the troubled days of December, 1936, when King Edward abdicated and King George the Sixth took up the burden of kingship. Here for your closer study is part of the speech; you could not have a better model—

During the last ten days we have seen strange things. Very rarely in the long course of its history has this nation passed through a week of such bewilderment, suspense, anxiety. Within twenty-four hours one King went

and another King came. Yet there has been no confusion, no strife, no clash of parties. Truly it has been a wonderful proof of the strength and stability of the Throne. It has been an even more striking proof of the steadiness of the people in this country and throughout the Empire. It seems as if some strong tide of instinct rather than of reasoned thought, flowing deep beneath the surface eddies of excitement, has borne them through the rapids of the crisis. It is right to be proud of the way in which the nation has stood the test. Yet let there be no boasting in your pride. Rather let it pass into humble and reverent thankfulness for this renewed token of the guidance of the nation's life by the over-ruling Providence of our God.

What pathos, nay what tragedy, surrounds the central figure of these swiftly moving scenes! On the 11th day of December, 248 years ago, King James II fled from Whitehall. By a strange coincidence, on the 11th day of December last week, King Edward VIII, after speaking his last words to his people, left Windsor Castle, the centre of all the splendid traditions of his ancestors and his Throne, and went out an exile. In the darkness he left these shores.

Seldom, if ever, has any British Sovereign come to the Throne with greater natural gifts for his Kingship. Seldom, if ever, has any Sovereign been welcomed by a more enthusiastic loyalty. From God he had received a high and sacred trust. Yet by his own will he has abdicated—he has surrendered the trust. With characteristic frankness he has told us his motive. It was a craving for private happiness. Strange and sad it must be that for such a motive, however strongly it pressed upon his heart, he should have disappointed hopes so high and abandoned a trust so great.

Yet for one who has known him since his childhood, who has felt his charm and admired his gifts, these words cannot be the last. How can we forget the high hopes and promise of his youth; his most genuine care for the poor, the suffering, the unemployed; his years of eager service both at home and across the seas?

It is the remembrance of these things that wrings from our heart the cry—"the pity of it. Oh, the pity of it!" To the infinite mercy and the protecting care of God we commit him now, wherever he may be.

So much for the past, and now the future. The darkness of an anxious time is over. A new morning has dawned. A new reign has begun. George VI is King. You can readily imagine what it means to him to be summoned so suddenly, so unexpectedly in circumstances so painful to himself—for he was bound to his brother by ties of closest affection—to face the immense responsibilities of Kingship. Sympathy with him there must be, deep and real and personal. But it passes into loyalty, a loyalty all the more eager, strong, and resolute because it rises from this heart of sympathy. It is this wholehearted loyalty which with one heart and voice the peoples of this Realm and Empire offer him to-day. He will prove worthy of it.

No passage in the last message of the Duke of Windsor, as we must now learn to call our late King, was more touching than that in which he spoke of his brother's "matchless blessing—a happy home with wife and children." King George will have at his side the gentle strength and quiet wisdom of a wife who has already endeared herself to all by her grace, her charm, her bright and eager kindliness of heart. As for her dear children, I will only say that they are as delightful and fascinating as she was in her own childhood as I remember it over 30 years ago. Truly it is good to think that among all the homes of the Empire —the homes from which all that is best within it springs —none can be more happy and united than the home of our King and Queen.

A King has gone. God be with him. A King has come. God bless him, keep him, guide him now and ever.

Reports

This is a report—

Sir Richard seeing that it was past hope, having fought for fifteen hours, and having by estimation

eight hundred shot of great artillery through the *Revenge*, commanded the master gunner, whom he knew to be a most resolute man, to split and sink the ship, that thereby nothing might remain of glory or victory to the Spaniards; seeing in so many hours they were not able to take her, having had above ten thousand men, and fifty-three men-of-war to perform it withal; and persuaded the company, or as many as he could induce, to yield themselves unto God and to the mercy of none else: but as they had, like valiant resolute men, repulsed so many enemies, they should not now shorten the honour of their nation by prolonging their own lives for a few hours or a few days.

It is from the records compiled by Richard Hakluyt of the exploits of the seamen of Elizabeth's days: this particular record concerns Sir Richard Grenville.

Now, can you deduce from that report the exact words this old hero used? Not of a certainty. For, quite apart from the fact that record or memory might have been at fault, there is more than one way of reporting a speech. The version of Tennyson is, no doubt, something like those exact words; but we can be quite sure that the truculent sailor would not have run his thoughts into melodious numbers—

But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
"We have fought such a fight for a day and night
As may never be fought again!
We have won great glory, my men!
And a day less or more
At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when?
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her in twain!
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain!"

The imagination of the poet has been at work upon the raw material furnished by the prose report; his command over language has made Sir Richard's words into memorable writing. We are, however, deprived of the actual words used.

An Easy Transition from Indirect to Direct Speech

The transition from direct to reported speech, and from reported speech to direct, is at times quite easy. The report is—

Lord Justice Atkins said that there were agreements between parties which did not result in contracts within the meaning of that term in English law. One of the most usual forms of agreement which did not constitute a contract appeared to him to be the agreements which were made between husband and wife. Agreements such as those were outside the realm of contracts altogether. The common law did not regulate the form of agreements between spouses. Their promises were not sealed with seals and sealing wax. The consideration that really obtained for them was that natural love and affection which counted for so little in those cold Courts.

We may be pretty certain of Lord Atkin's exact words. We turn past tenses—*were, did, appeared, obtained, counted*—into present tenses—*are, do, appear, obtain, count.* We turn the third personal pronoun *him* into the first personal pronoun *me. Those* becomes *these*; *in English law* becomes *in our law.* So we have—

There are agreements between parties which do not result in contracts within the meaning of that term in our law. One of the most usual forms of agreement which does not constitute a contract appears to me to be the arrangements which are made between husband and wife. Agreements such as these are outside the realm of contracts altogether. The common law does not regulate the form of agreements between spouses. Their promises are not sealed with seals and sealing wax. The consideration that really obtains for them is that natural love and affection which counts for so little in these cold Courts.

Recording the Actual Words

We do find verbatim reports. Those of the Law Courts are full and accurate; they preserve in durable form, along with valuable and admirable passages of excellent prose, a mass of worthless matter, rambling, inconsistent, often quite irrelevant to the point at issue. So, too, in the ceaseless stream of "Hansard's" the actual words spoken by Members in Parliament are for ever recorded. This is possible. For now we have at our service Pitman's Shorthand, able to cope with the utterance of however facile a speaker.

Speeches have been delivered in times past. We have records of many of these, too. But, unless they had been committed to writing before delivery, and had been delivered without deviation from what was penned, we cannot be certain that we have what was actually spoken. Verbatim reports are modern. The speeches in our books doubtless resemble those delivered. Doubtless, too, they read better than an accurate rendering would; but they are not the very speeches made. We see the orator darkly—or, you may prefer to say, brightly —through the reporter.

Look at the famous retort of William Pitt, for instance, in his reply to an attack upon his youthfulness. The report was by Doctor Johnson, who wrote from rough notes made by himself or others. Pitt begins—

> Sir, the atrocious crime of being a young man, which the honourable gentleman has with such spirit and decency charged upon me, I shall neither attempt to palliate or deny, but content myself with wishing that I may be one of those whose follies may cease with their youth, and not of that number who are ignorant in spite of experience.

No doubt William Pitt said something like this. But could any one in an impromptu speech frame a sentence so involved yet so well-girt? It is, we may be tolerably certain, Pitt edited by Johnson.

Reluctance to Read

There is less anxiety in these days to make a report of the actual words. *The Times* itself in the main contents itself, though not always the speakers reported, by a summary or a sketch of what was said. Still, Hansard remains; each morning every Member of Parliament receives a verbatim report of what was said on the previous day. This verbatim may put a different complexion upon the newspaper sketch.

The reporter, in other words, is more than an echo, more than the mocking bird of the speaker. We have in fact a decision of our Supreme Court that his report is "an original production," entitled therefore to the protection of the Copyright

Act, 1911. So it was held in *Walter* v. *Lane* (A.C., 1900), where the Lord Chancellor said—

> I should very much regret it, if I were compelled to come to the conclusion that the law permitted one man to make profit by appropriating to himself the labour, skill, and capital of another. Those who preserve the memory of spoken words that are assumed to be of value to the public are entitled to protection. The proof of piracy may be difficult, but that has no bearing upon the existence of piracy.

A Well-merited Protection

When you consider the matter, you agree. You are reporting by means of your shorthand. The speaker utters transitory sounds. You make enduring signs. He has the prominent part; you have probably the more exacting part. The speech, true, may already be in manuscript. We are told that an orator, distinguished in his generation, wrote out and learned by heart his speeches before delivering them. When, his biographer records, he "delivered his three speeches in Edinburgh—what he sportively called his trilogy—he left the manuscripts of all three speeches, with the dates on which they were to be delivered in charge of a London editor. He consequently enjoyed another triple sequence—of sleepless nights, in agony lest the wrong speech should be published on the wrong day. This painful experience made him determine to abandon the practice; but I am not sure that he did."

Where the report diverges from the original, where the reporter has quite clearly put much of his own constructive thought into the production, the case for protection is irresistible. Much of our literature is in fact the report of a report of a report. Browning takes the letter of James Howell, who died in Charles the Second's reign, and turns it into the poem all know. Doubtless Howell had already enlarged upon the account given to him—"He'll remember, with advantages what feats he did that day"—and Browning enlarges still further. Here is the letter in Howell's spelling; you very likely have the poem at hand—

Sir,

I saw such prodigious things daily don these few years, that I had resolv'd with myself to give over

wondering at anything: yet a passage happen'd this week, that forc'd me to wonder once more, because it is without parallel. It was, that som odd fellows went skulking up and down London streets, and with figs and reasons allur'd little children, and so pourloyn'd them away from their parents, and carried them a ship-board for beyond sea, where, by cutting their hair, and other divises, they so disguis'd them, that their parents could not know them.

This made me think upon that miraculous passage in Hamelen, a town in Germany, which I hop'd to have pass'd through, when I was in Hamburg, had we return'd by Holland; which was thus (nor would I relate it unto you, were not there som ground of truth for it). The said Town of Hamelen was annoyed with rats and mice; and it chanc'd that a pied-coated piper came thither, who covenanted with the chief burgers for such reward if he could free them quite from the said vermin, nor would he demand it, till a twelve-month and a day after: The agreement being made, he began to play on his pipes, and all the rats, and the mice, followed him to a great lough hard by, where they all perish'd; so the town was infested no more. At the end of the year, the pied piper return'd for his reward, the burgers put him off with slightings, and neglect, offring him som small matter which he refusing, and staying som dayes in the town, one Sunday morning at high-masse, when most people were at church, he fell to play on his pipes, and all the children up and down follow'd him out of the town, to a great hill not far off, which rent in two, and open'd, and let him and the children in, and so closed up again; this happen'd a matter of two hundred and fifty years since; and in that town, they date their bills and bonds, and other instruments in law, to this day the yeer of the going out of their children: besides ther is a great piller of stone at the foot of the said hill, whereon this story is engraven.

No more now, for this is enough in conscience for one time; So I am your most affectionate servitor, J. H.

[The unusual spelling has perhaps bothered you. "Reasons" is certainly a curious way of spelling "raisins." The letter was written in 1643; so that these reported happenings in Hamelyn Town took place in 1393.]

Editing a Speech

When the speech or the lecture is in writing, and the public audition is simply the hearing of words already chosen and arranged in their places, the reporter's task is easy. When the speech is not already in manuscript, there is first of all the problem of faithfully recording what the speaker says. That was once almost the whole problem. For, thirty years ago, the verbatim man wellnigh monopolized a journal. There was but a trickle of editorial comment into the Amazon of reported speeches. The verbatim reporter has less scope for his gifts now. For the habit of reading has in great measure been killed by the too bounteous entertainment provided by the B.B.C. The result is that nowadays people had rather listen to half a dozen columns than read one.

Part of the problem in the report of a speech is, accordingly, what to reject. Must the shorthand-writer when making his transcription give the very words—the *ipsissima verba*—of the speaker? It would often be cruel to do so; and speakers are usually grateful to the reporter for the little emendations he has made, for the completing of sentences left in the air, for the needed connexion of disjointed periods. To what extent, though, are you entitled and indeed expected to edit the speeches? You have impaled the speaker's words as they fly. In what form are you to reproduce them? There is the delicate question that calls for much tact and judgment in the answer.

At times no alteration, even the least, is permissible—or is desired. The law-reporter must give the witness's words, however halting and confused the utterances are. The secretary, too, will rarely presume to edit. When he quotes in his minutes he quotes the very words used. And, even when we are obliged to cut our reports, we are bound to take care not to distort, much less to misrepresent the speaker. The reporter's own view upon the matter must not colour his report. If he is reporting a dull speaker and a dull speech, he will subordinate his anxiety to be graphic and lively to his anxiety to be

accurate; if he should introduce comments of his own, he will see to it that they can be discerned for what they are.

This is not everyone's method even to-day. It certainly was not Dr. Samuel Johnson's method. Cave, an enterprising bookseller, enlisted him to report Parliamentary Debates. That was in the days when publication of members' speeches constituted a breach of privilege, so that the reports had to be disguised as those of "Debates in the Senate of Lilliput." Dr. Johnson evidently allowed himself much latitude: "I took care," he declared, "that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it"; and his biographer recounts that often there were no materials available, and that the Debates were "the mere coinage of his own imagination."

Even when material was available it could not have been quite satisfactory: "Cave," explained the Doctor, "had interest with the door-keeper. He, and the persons employed under him, gained admittance: they brought away the subject of discussion, the names of the speakers, the side they took, and the order in which they rose, together with notes on the arguments advanced in the course of the debate. The whole was afterwards communicated to me, and I composed the speeches." Perhaps that is why the speeches read a deal better than most of those we hear nowadays. For the modern reporter feels it incumbent upon him to stick closer to copy.

Some Problems in Reporting

Consider a few instances where problems of practice present themselves. The introductory words of the report need some thought. A member asks a question in Parliament; the answer is a reluctant acknowledgment that the question is based upon fact. "Admitted" is the word we want. Thus: "Mr. Eden admitted that British Red Cross units had flown the Union Jack as well as the Red Cross without deterrent effect upon the Italian bombers." The Chancellor of the Exchequer tells why he has imposed a tax. Perhaps "stated" or "made a statement" is what we want. "The Chancellor stated that he had purposely increased the tea-tax because he felt that the burden of extra defence should be borne by every class."

You may report one as "contributing to the debate" or as "putting it to the House" or as "making it clear" or as

"announcing" or as "pointing out." So you may have, "Mr. Silverman contributed a pleasant little speech in praise of tea, which he said produced a calm and equable spirit and enabled its consumers to think widely and deeply about things. And Mr. Chamberlain, who knows a mountain from a molehill, put it to the House that 9s. per year per household, a fair estimate of what the tax would cost, could hardly be described as crushing."

The clash of pronouns at times causes difficulties. "I am going to see him" is the direct statement. There is no ambiguity here. To alter this into "John said that he was going to see him" does give rise to ambiguity. *He* and *him* are each capable of two interpretations. We must either admit a parenthesis, "John said that he (John) was going to see him (Tom)," a clumsy device, or we must modify the introductory words: "John expressed an intention of going to see him."

Questions and quotations give trouble when these are to be reported. Consider the instances that follow. The actual words of a question are "Will you come?"; the reported question is "He asked me whether I would come." You have omitted the question mark, and you have altered the word order. The actual words of a request are, "Come as soon as you can"; the reported request appears in, "I told him to come as soon as he could."

A quotation within a quotation may give a deal of perplexity. Suppose we have such a sentence as: *The witness said, "I heard the defendant say, 'I did not know that my father was there at the time.'"* You turn the direct speech into reported speech smoothly enough till you reach the second *I*: *The witness said that he heard the defendant say.* Now the difficulty presents itself: how are you to denote whether the next pronoun refers to the witness or to the defendant? Had we better discard the pronoun and use the noun? The choice lies between: *He heard the defendant say that he (the defendant) did not know that his (the defendant's) . . .*, or *He heard the defendant say that the defendant did not know that the defendant's . . .* Neither is a quite satisfactory solution; but at all events neither is ambiguous. Note, too, that in the report the future "I shall" becomes "he should, not "he would." Look at this paragraph of Jane Austen's—

Captain Wentworth had no fortune. He had been

lucky in his profession, but spending freely what had come freely had realized nothing. But he was confident that he should soon be rich; full of life and ardour he knew that he should soon have a ship and soon be on a station that would lead to everything he wanted. He had always been lucky; he knew that he should be so still. Such confidence, powerful in its own warmth and bewitching in the wit which often expressed it, must have been enough for Anne; but Lady Russell saw it very differently. His sanguine temper and fearlessness of mind operated very differently on her. She saw in it but an aggravation of the evil. It only added a dangerous character to himself. He was brilliant, he was headstrong; Lady Russell had little taste for wit and of anything approaching to imprudence a horror. She deprecated the connection in every light.

Note "He was confident that he should soon be rich." Captain Wentworth thought "I shall soon." Note the distinction in the next sentence. He said to himself "I *shall* soon have a ship and on a station that *will* lead to everything I want." The report is "he should . . . the station would."

An Exercise in Reporting

Here is a little of Antony's speech. Report it with the introduction, "Antony continued"—

But yesterday the word of Cæsar might
Have stood against the world: now lies he there
And none so poor to do him reverence.
O masters! if I were disposed to stir
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,
I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,
Who you all know are honourable men.

CHAPTER XXII

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE ART: ARGUMENTS

Reason and Language

MAN alone of animals can reason. He can reason because he has language at his service. He has the power of putting thoughts into words; he can record the thoughts and he can ponder over them; he can, from the knowledge conveyed by the words, reach out to farther and ever farther fields of knowledge. The pity is that we so often, making an ill use of language, lead ourselves into errors. We think; we reason; we reason badly, and mislead ourselves into errors. We may mislead others, too. It will not be wasted time, then, to consider for a while the process of reasoning. For we wish to avoid fallacies in our reasoning. At all events—if, being in desperate plight for sound arguments, we unscrupulously use fallacies—we wish to recognize them for what they are.

"A is heavier than B because A weighs B down." "I am told," writes a correspondent, "that the reasoning here is erroneous. In what way?" One might object to the form in which the question is put, say "There is no reasoning here at all." To reason is to use one or more statements in order to draw a conclusion. You reason when you say "Gold is heavier than lead; platinum is heavier than gold; therefore platinum is heavier than lead." That is, you reach what may be to you a quite new truth. You have never tested platinum against lead; yet, being sure of the first two statements, you are also sure of the third. In the sentence submitted, however, there is no progress at all. You say the one thing twice over; and the conjunction "because" is of no force. Such a fallacy is similar to saying "Cheese is cheese because it is cheese"; or as Shakespeare said, when he in unchivalrous manner made light of woman's reasoning powers, "I have no other but a woman's reason: I think him so because I think him so." Fallacy it is, even though it does so often come in answers to examination questions. "Because" is properly "By reason of": Rosalind uses the word correctly when she asks—

Were it not better
Because that I am more than common tall,
That I did suit me all points like a man?

It adds nothing, however, to our knowledge when "because" ushers in a tautology, "I love him because I do." Is this sound reasoning? "He passed the examination because he scored high marks." Of course not: to pass and to score high marks are simply the one thing said twice over. He passed because he worked hard. Something similar to this fallacy is the one where the speaker or the writer makes two assertions that are really the same. Thus: "Freedom is the natural right of man. It is therefore wrong to imprison any man."

A Fallacy: "Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc"

Here is one that dislikes paying rates and taxes for the education of "other people's children." He gravely puts forward the argument that education takes away as well as gives. "Why is it," he asks, "that children are often bright and interesting while they are young, and uninteresting when they are grown-up? What has happened in the interval? The answer is education."

You easily brush that argument away. You say that a hundred and one things beside education had happened in the interval; that in particular the children had become grown-ups; you don't expect the mature sheep to gambol as it did when a lamb. Besides, you would contend, some grown-ups are still bright and interesting.

Perhaps, too, you would find fault with the word "often." Does it imply that all children at frequent intervals, right through their waking hours, are bright and entertaining? Or does it imply that very frequently you find children who invariably are bright and interesting?

At any rate you agree that his argument is very slipshod reasoning; it is fallacious. The particular error of reasoning in that example is sometimes called *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. This is the fallacy of thinking that, because one thing follows another, the second is due to the first. There has been a sequence; we suppose there is also a consequence.

When there is an eclipse of the sun, savages beat their tom-toms; the dark shadow disappears as the beating goes on;

therefore, it is the beating that has brought back the light. The mercury falls in the barometer. This certainly may be followed by rain; but we should err if we thought the rain due to the fall in the barometer. A man argues: "I was sick; I took such and such a medicine and became well; this medicine therefore cured me." Why you could say, with almost equal force: "I was sick; the sun rose, and I became well; therefore the sun cured me."

Other Instances of Slipshod Reasoning

You will not need to listen long to the discussions that go on around you without meeting fallacies of all kinds. They swarm perhaps more thickly than elsewhere in discussions on politics or on business affairs. Examine one or two examples of such erroneous reasoning, not to triumph over the perpetrators of the fallacies but so as to avoid similar ones. Is this reasoning correct?—"Speaking of money," said the night-watchman thoughtfully, "the whole world would be different if we all had more of it. It would be a brighter and happier world for everybody."

Of course the reasoning is incorrect. The value of a shilling in your pocket results from the lack of a shilling in mine. If all the money in everyone's possession were magically doubled in amount, we should all be just as well, or as badly, off as we were before. For, so far as money is concerned, we should all be in the same relation towards one another. Let one of us suddenly find that his money has miraculously doubled, and he will certainly be better off; but only on condition that it is his money alone that has doubled.

The argument is similar to that often put forward by manufacturers pleading for a subsidy from Government. It is evident that a subsidy has done good to this industry and to that. Obviously, therefore, a subsidy all round would be good. Clearly this is wrong. It is like giving all runners in a race a start. It is an error in reasoning similar to the error in this statement: "Any member of the class would stand higher in the examination list if that member received 15 per cent more marks. If, therefore, the marks of all members of the class be increased by 15 per cent all will stand higher in the class list."

Arguing in a Circle

You have heard about people "arguing in a circle." In the course of their argument they assume as true what they seek to prove. The lady presents a cheque. The cashier says, "You will need to be identified, Madam." "My friend here will identify me." "But I don't know her." "Oh, I'll introduce you."

The argument looks like a proof; but it proves nothing. It is like saying that "Opium produces sleep because it has a soporific effect." Is there anything in that but "Opium produces sleep because it does"? Yet we hear people thinly veiling such question-begging statements by using a synonym. Thus we may hear, "The House of Lords is out of date because an upper chamber is an anachronism in England to-day." That is saying the one thing in two different ways. It is no reasoning at all.

Does this argument stand a close examination? "Gold and silver are wealth. Therefore the diminution of the gold and silver in the country by exportation is the diminution of the wealth of the country." The conclusion does not follow in the least. In the argument it is taken, quite without warranty, that nothing is wealth except gold and silver. But, of course, for the gold and silver we sent out of the country we might well have brought in much more valuable things.

A similar error in reasoning, a similar confusion of wealth with gold and silver, is contained in this argument: "The morning papers say that 'money is more plentiful in London to-day than it was yesterday.' But this cannot be true; for we know that there is no more coin or bullion in London to-day than there was yesterday." As we very well know, however, the credit that the banker, or any one else, puts at our disposal is money: by means of that credit we can buy things as well as if we had in our pockets gold coins.

Negations and Reasoning

A negative statement will not lead you far towards a positive conclusion. Because you know with certainty that a man isn't a knave, you are not justified in thinking him a fool—

Why needs a bishop be a fool or knave
When there's a thousand diamond weights between?

Yet speeches are made in abundance in which great stress is placed upon a negative; and often the desired result follows. The hearers come to a positive conclusion. Cæsar was slain because he was over-ambitious. Not so, declared Antony—

> You all did see that on the Lupercal
> I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
> Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?

His audience agrees, "He would not take the crown; therefore 'tis certain he was not ambitious." Yet both presentation and refusal might have been play-acting; Cæsar might have been, for all that, the most ambitious of men. A man declines the offer of appointment as Lord Chancellor, declines it on two separate occasions. Flattered by the offer he is. But then his accepting it would be a bar to the office upon which his heart is set; he would be Lord Chief Justice, and he sees another made Lord Chancellor.

So in this, too, the conclusion may very likely be quite true; but it does not follow from the premises: "No woman has a vote unless she is twenty-one years old; Miss X is twenty-one years old; therefore Miss X has a vote." The being twenty-one does not exhaust the qualifications for a vote, and Miss X, though she has one qualification, may lack another. You would not find it difficult to recognize that this reasoning is fallacious: "No one can become a judge except a barrister; Miss X is a barrister; therefore Miss X will become a judge."

At times, indeed, we come to wrong conclusions by another's trickery. A man pointed to a small target chalked upon the door. There was a bullet hole through the centre of it and the man asserted that he had fired the shot from an old rifle at the distance of a hundred yards. His assertion was quite true. But he did not mention the fact that he had fired the shot before he chalked the target. Your inference that he was a good shot had therefore no sound basis.

Analogy as Argument

It is strange how very frequently people give an illustration—an analogy or comparison it may be—and think that this illustration is an argument. They are sometimes annoyed that you do not accept their illustration as quite conclusive of the

matter. The illustrations no doubt serve to make the arguments clear; they are not, however, arguments in themselves. Still, they sometimes stir people and bring about a desired effect much sooner than solid reasoning does.

In 1831 the Lords rejected the First Reform Bill. It was illustration rather than argument that Sydney Smith used against them. His analogy has, in fact, become part of the stock-in-trade of the debater—

As for the possibility of the House of Lords preventing ere long a reform of Parliament, I hold it to be the most absurd notion that ever entered into human imagination. I do not mean to be disrespectful. But the attempt of the Lords to stop the progress of reform reminds me of the great storm at Sidmouth, and of the conduct of the excellent Mrs. Partington on that occasion. In the winter of 1824, there set in a great flood upon that town—the tide rose to an incredible height—the waves rushed in upon the houses and everything was threatened with destruction. In the midst of this sublime and terrible storm, Dame Partington, who lived upon the Beach, was seen at the door of her house with mop and pattens, pushing away the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic was roused, Mrs. Partington's spirit was up; but I need not tell you that the contest was unequal. The Atlantic Ocean beat Mrs. Partington. She was excellent at a slop, or a puddle, but she should not have meddled with a tempest. Gentlemen, be at your ease—be quiet and steady. You will beat Mrs. Partington.

The unflattering identification of the House of Lords with the discomfited housewife coupled with the flattering identification of the audience with the mighty Atlantic, probably had more persuasive effect than the cogent reasoning of the rest of the speech.

Analogy May Mislead

The analogy may, in fact, lead one astray: we are not justified in thinking that, because things are alike in one way, they are alike in every other way. That the Earth is inhabited may

suggest a possibility that Mars, also a planet, is inhabited; but "therefore" is not justified.

Fluellen in the play establishes a comparison between Henry V and the Great Alexander. Ingenious though the comparison is, you only need Captain Gower's sturdy sense to reject it as an argument—

Flu. I think it is in Macedon where Alexander is porn. I tell you captain, if you look in the maps of the 'orld, I warrant you shall find, in the comparisons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the situations, look you, it both alike. There is a river in Macedon; and there is also moreover a river at Monmouth: it is called the Wye at Monmouth; but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river; but 'tis all one, 'tis so like as my fingers is to my fingers, and there is salmons in both. If you mark Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well; for there is figures in all things. Alexander, God knows, and you know, in his rages, and his furies, and his wraths, and his cholers, and his moods, and his displeasures, and his indignations, and also being a little intoxicated in his prains, did, in his ales and his angers, look you, kill his best friend, Cleitus.

Gower. Our king is not like him in that: he never killed any of his friends.

Flu. It is not well done, mark you now, to take the tales out of my mouth, ere it is made an end and finished. I speak but in the figures and comparisons of it: as Alexander killed his friend Cleitus, being in his ales and his cups; so also Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and his goot judgments, is turn away the fat knight with the great pelly-doublet: he was full of jests, and gipes, and knaveries, and mocks: I am forget his name.

Gower. Sir John Falstaff.

Flu. That is he: I can tell you there is goot men born at Monmouth.

Doubtless, you have often delighted yourself by reading this capital scene from Shakespeare's *Henry the Fifth.*

Analogy Helps towards Persuasion

The analogy may be delightful reading (or hearing) and it may help to convince, even though it falls short of proving a point. This capital passage of Ruskin, for example, might well lead you to prefer co-operation to competition, though in reality the passage has no bearing upon the question at all—

The highest and first law of the universe—and the other name of life is "help." The other name of death is "separation." Government and co-operation are in all things and eternally the laws of life. Anarchy and competition, eternally and in all things the laws of death.

Perhaps the best, though the most familiar example we could take of the nature and power of co-operation, will be that of the possible changes in the dust we tread on.

Exclusive of animal decay, we can hardly arrive at a more absolute type of impurity than the mud or slime of a damp, over-trodden path in the outskirts of a manufacturing town. I do not say mud of the road, because that is mixed with animal refuse; but take merely an ounce or two of the blackest slime of a beaten footpath on a rainy day, near a large manufacturing town.

That slime we shall find in most cases composed of clay (or brick dust, which is burnt clay) mixed with soot, a little sand, and water. All these elements are at helpless war with each other, and destroy reciprocally each other's nature and power, competing and fighting for place at every tread of your foot;—sand squeezing out clay, and clay squeezing out water, and soot meddling everywhere and defiling the whole. Let us suppose that this ounce of mud is left in perfect rest, and that its elements gather together, like to like, so that their atoms may get into the closest relations possible.

Let the clay begin. Ridding itself of all foreign substance, it gradually becomes a white earth, already very beautiful; and fit, with help of congealing fire,

to be made into finest *porcelain*, and to be painted on, and be kept in kings' palaces. But such artificial consistence is not its best. Leave it still quiet to follow its own instinct of unity, and it becomes not only white, but clear; not only clear, but hard; not only clear and hard, but so set that it can deal with light in a wonderful way, and gather out of it the loveliest blue rays only, refusing the rest. We call it then a *sapphire*.

Such being the consummation of the clay, we give similar permission of quiet to the sand. It also becomes, first, a white earth, then proceeds to grow clear and hard, and at last arranges itself in mysterious, infinitely fine, parallel lines, which have the power of reflecting not merely the blue rays, but the blue, green, purple, and red rays in the greatest beauty in which they can be seen through any hard material whatsoever. We call it then an *opal*.

In next order the soot sets to work; it cannot make itself white at first, but instead of being discouraged, tries harder and harder, and comes out clear at last, and the hardest thing in the world; and for the blackness that it had, obtains in exchange the power of reflecting all the rays of the sun at once in the vividest blaze that any solid thing can shoot. We call it then a *diamond*.

Last of all, the water purifies or unites itself, contented enough if it only reach the form of a dew-drop; but, if we insist on its proceeding to a more perfect consistence, it crystallizes into the shape of a star.

And for the ounce of slime which we had by political economy of competition, we have, by political economy of co-operation, a sapphire, an opal, and a diamond, set in the midst of a star of snow. (*Modern Painters.*)

Analogy from Macaulay

Here is another capital instance of argument by analogy. It is from Macaulay's plea that the Jews should enjoy the rights enjoyed by other citizens. Macaulay's opponents contend that they do not deserve such rights because they are disaffected to the State. That contention, argues Macaulay,

is absurd: "The tyrant who punished their fathers for not making bricks without straw was not more unreasonable than the statesmen who treat them as alien, and abuse them for not entertaining all the feelings of natives."

"Rulers," he continues, "must not be suffered thus to absolve themselves of their solemn responsibility. It does not lie in their mouths to say that a sect is not patriotic. It is their business to make it patriotic. History and reason clearly indicate the means. The English Jews are, as far as we can see, precisely what our government has made them. They are precisely what any sect, what any class of men, treated as they have been treated, would have been. If all the red-haired people in Europe had, during centuries, been outraged and oppressed, banished from this place, imprisoned in that, deprived of their money, deprived of their teeth, convicted of the most improbable crimes on the feeblest evidence, dragged at horses' tails, hanged, tortured, burned alive, if, when manners became milder, they had still been subject to debasing restrictions and exposed to vulgar insults, locked up in particular streets in some countries, pelted and ducked by the rabble in others, excluded everywhere from magistracies and honours, what would be the patriotism of gentlemen with red hair? And if, under such circumstances, a proposition were made for admitting red-haired men to office, how striking a speech might an eloquent admirer of our old institutions deliver against so revolutionary a measure! 'These men,' he might say, 'scarcely consider themselves as Englishmen. They think a red-haired Frenchman or a red-haired German more closely connected with them than a man with brown hair born in their own parish. If a foreign sovereign patronises red hair, they love him better than their own native king. They are not Englishmen: nature has forbidden it: experience proves it to be impossible. Right to political power they have none; for no man has a right to political power. Let them enjoy personal security; let their

property be under the protection of the law. But if they ask for leave to exercise power over a community of which they are only half members, a community the constitution of which is essentially dark-haired, let us answer them in the words of our wise ancestors, *Nolumus leges Angliæ mutari.*'"

Still, analogy is a weak argument; and we do wisely as a rule to cut it out. For a keen opponent eagerly concentrates upon the weak, leaving your weighty arguments unassailed. Yet his crushing of your weak argument may leave your contention true. You have perhaps ventured upon a *reductio ad absurdum.* This is a method of proving the untruth of a proposition by showing the absurd conclusions into which it leads us. We deduce the conclusion from it: it is obvious that the conclusion is contrary to admitted truth: we suppose ourselves, therefore, to have established the untruth of the proposition.

It is at times a good method. Yet there are pitfalls. An orator relates how the candle-maker presented a petition against the sun. Here, indeed, was unfair competition; for the sun, during twelve of the twenty-four hours, dumped free light into their markets, thereby grievously curtailing their sales. Shut the sunlight out of houses by forbidding windows, and the candle-makers' trade would flourish. The absurdity of Protection and the wisdom of Free Trade are taken to be established by the exhibition of the foolishness of a prohibition of windows. Protection may in fact be foolish, Free Trade may be the highest wisdom. But the candle-makers' petition does not conclude the matter. As well argue that strychnine should be rigorously excluded from the list of remedial drugs for the reason that an excessive dose kills the patient. A little may do good, though much does ill.

Make Clear the Question at Issue

Well, having spent some time in considering faulty reasoning, let us consider some effective reasoning. The first thing to make sure about when conducting an argument, whether as assailant or assailed, is that the point in dispute shall be perfectly clear. We cannot convince a man of the truth of a thing he does not understand; and we may discover, as soon as we

realize our opponent's point of view, that we are in entire agreement with him. A few words of explanation, and half the disputes in the world are superfluous.

Thus Addison discusses cheerfulness. His first point is to make it impossible to mistake his theme—

I have always preferred cheerfulness to mirth. The latter I consider as an act, the former as a habit of the mind. Mirth is short and transient, cheerfulness fixed and permanent. Those are often raised into the greatest transports of mirth who are subject to the greatest depressions of melancholy. On the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind such an exquisite gladness, prevents us from falling into any depth of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of lightning, that breaks through a gloom of clouds, and glitters for a moment, cheerfulness keeps up a kind of daylight in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity.

A Dilemma

One effective mode of arguing consists in showing one's opponent that he is in a dilemma. "Dilemma" is here used in its precise sense—not in the slipshod sense as a word interchangeable with "difficulty." In that precise sense "dilemma" means a forced choice between two courses of action. Both courses are disagreeable or dangerous or unprofitable; but one is obviously more so than the other. The suggestion is that the less disagreeable or dangerous or unprofitable course should be adopted.

We must hang together, or hang separately,

says the ruffian; you must either stick to the gang, much as you now dislike their ways, or you will be taken by the police and deservedly hanged.

A variant of this method of arguing—or at any rate of persuading—is the presentation of alternatives, one to be avoided, one to be eagerly adopted.

If we are marked to die, we are enough
To do our country loss; and, if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

So declares King Henry, putting before his followers two possibilities, as though these were the only ones. But, clearly, those not fired by the burning words of the speaker would coolly suggest many other possibilities than life with honour as one choice, or death with defeat as the other. There lies the trouble with this argument: the alternatives presented rarely exhaust the possibilities.

Yorick was cutting the manuscript of his sermon into slips so that the company might light their pipes. This annoyed *Didius:*

"If the sermon is of no better worth than to light pipes with—'twas certainly, Sir, not good enough to be preached before so learned a body; and if 'twas good enough to be preached before so learned a body—'twas certainly, Sir, too good to light their pipes with afterwards.

"I have got him fast hung up, quoth *Didius* to himself, upon one of the two horns of my dilemma—let him get off as he can.

"I have undergone such unspeakable torments, in bringing forth this sermon, quoth *Yorick* upon this occasion—that I declare, *Didius*, I would suffer martyrdom, before I would sit down and make such another: it came from my head instead of my heart—and it is for the pain it gave me, both in the preaching and writing of it, that I revenge myself of it in this manner.—To preach, to show the extent of our reading, or the subtleties of our wit—to parade in the eyes of the vulgar with the beggarly accounts of a little learning, tinselled over with a few words that glitter, but convey little light and less warmth—is a dishonest use of the poor single half-hour in a week which is put into our hands."

The Burden of Proof

When, either against or with our wills, we are involved in argument, it is well to realize on which side the burden of proof lies. Are we to attack; are we called upon to upset a presumption against our contention? Or are we to defend; are we simply to rebut evidence brought against us?

If I am charged with neglect of duty, my accuser must bring proof to make his accusation worth considering; all I have to do is to refute the evidence brought, or else to show that, even if true, such evidence does not substantiate the accusation. Till he brings the evidence, I can ignore the charge. If, on the other hand, I claim to be entitled to allowances many and large, I must submit to the Paymaster proof of my claim; he merely decides whether the proofs are sufficient to justify the payments. In his quaint language he declares that the claim is "admissible" or "inadmissible."

In the first case the presumption is with me; in the second case against me. I am not to assume the burden of proof in the first case; I cannot decline the burden in the second. I ought to make a triumphant defence, not a feeble attack in the first case; to be on the defensive will not avail in the second. Suppose you have the proposition—

Games of football should be given up because players sometimes sustain injuries.

Does the burden of proof rest upon those who affirm or upon those who deny? Clearly, on the former, the advocates of the change, those that wish to upset the established order of things. This, indeed, we may take as the general rule: he that affirms must prove.

An Example of Cogent Reasoning

Is the English language well adapted for purposes of argument? Certainly. It can state particular facts so that there is no doubt at all about them; and it can make general statements based on these facts. The debates in Parliament will on occasion—perhaps not so frequently as one might expect—provide you with excellent illustrations of the capacity of English to express sound reasoning. The law reports wellnigh invariably provide you with such illustrations.

That they do is not at all surprising. For, by a convention none seeks or desires to evade, our judges state in open court the reasons prompting their decisions. From the earliest times publicity has been characteristic of the methods of our judges: they have stated their decisions in public; they have never shrunk from saying why they came to their decisions. They know that their reasons will be scrutinized by their fellows,

intent upon detecting the slightest flaw in the chain of argument. Moreover, they have a quite natural antipathy to a reversal of their judgments by a superior court. And, more important than all perhaps, they are anxious not only to administer justice but also to make clear that justice is being done.

Of our modern reports we may safely say this. Lucidity and orderliness cannot help being present in a considered judgment. And, when we remember that the way to the judicial bench has lain through the presentation of pleas to a jury, we need not be surprised at finding in the prose of our judges another cardinal virtue of prose, the virtue of persuasiveness. *Clearness, coherence, force*—these are invariably present. And, though we can find instances to the contrary, and though lawyers are (erroneously, indeed) reputed to be verbose as well as voluble, conciseness also is usually there.

Doubtless you will welcome an example of this clear judicial reasoning. This of *Leslie* v. *Sheill*, considering the legal liability of an infant, will serve as well as any.

There is on the statute book the *Infants' Relief Act*, which enacts that "all contracts entered into by infants for the repayment of money, or for goods supplied (other than contracts for necessaries) shall be absolutely void." The question was whether or not this applied to an infant who had defrauded an adult. Has the adult no legal remedy? The infant had, by pretending to be over twenty-one obtained loans from a money-lender. The Supreme Court, reluctantly as it appears, decided that it did apply: the money-lender could not recover the money lent under the contract, nor could he recover it in an action for fraud.

Here is part of Lord Sumner's clear reasoning—

At the time of the transaction in question the appellant was an infant. He succeeded in deceiving some money-lenders by telling them a lie about his age, and so got them to lend him £400 on the faith of his being adult. Perhaps they were simpler than money-lenders usually are; perhaps the infant looked unusually mature. At any rate when they awoke to the fact that they could not enforce their bargain and sought to recover the £400 paid, charging him with fraud, the jury found that the appellant had been guilty of fraud, and he does not now complain of the verdict. On further consideration Horridge, J., gave judgment against him for the full amount that he received.

It is not a pretty story to begin with, one might have expected

that the appellant's chief anxiety would have been to live it down, but money is money, and I suppose £400 is more than he cares to pay, or rather to repay, if he can manage to avoid it. Accordingly he appeals, alleging that there is no process of law by which the money-lenders can get their money back from him, and, if this is so, he must succeed on this appeal.

For where an infant has made an improvident contract with a person who has been wicked enough to contract with him, such person cannot resort to a Court of Law to enforce such contract. It is perhaps a pity that no exception was made where, as here, the infant's wickedness was at least equal to that of the person who innocently contracted with him. But so it is. It was thought necessary to safeguard the weakness of infants at large even though here and there a juvenile knave slipped through.

To the claim for the return of the principal moneys paid to the infant under the contract, as money had and received to the plaintiff's use, there are at least two answers: the infancy itself was an answer before 1874 at common law, and the Infants' Relief Act, 1874, is an answer now.

The ground on which Horridge, J., held the appellant liable was that by reason of his fraud he was compellable in equity to repay the money, actually received and professedly borrowed, and compellable too by a judgment *in personam* for the amount, not by any mere proprietary remedy.

For a very long time and in many forms equity has interfered to give relief against frauds committed by infants, or has refused it to infants guilty of fraud; but the practice and even the principles applicable to such cases were long ill-defined.

Last year, in *Stocks* v. *Wilson* (1913, 2 K.B.), an infant, who had obtained furniture from the plaintiff by falsely stating that he was of age and had sold part of it for £30 was personally judged by Lush, J., to pay this £30 as part of the relief granted to the plaintiff. This is the case which more than any other influenced Horridge, J., in the Court below. I think it is plain that Lush, J., conceived himself to be merely applying the equitable principle of restitution.

But the decision in *Stocks* v. *Wilson* (1913) is distinguishable from the present case and is independent of the above dictum, and I need express no opinion about it. In the present case there is clearly no accounting. There is no fiduciary relation: the money was paid over in order to be used as the defendant's own and he has so used it, and I suppose spent it. There is no question of tracing it, no possibility of restoring the very thing got by the fraud, nothing but compulsion through a personal judgment to pay an equivalent sum out of his present or future resources, in a word nothing but a judgment in debt to repay the loan. I think this would be nothing but enforcing a void contract. So far as I can find, the Court of Chancery never would have enforced any liability under circumstances like the present, any more than a Court of Law would have

done so, and I think that no ground can be found for the present judgment, which would be an answer to the Infants' Relief Act.

Accordingly the appeal succeeds; the judgment must be set aside and entered for the defendant.

EXERCISE

Now show in these examples where the error in reasoning occurs—

1. In going round the world westward we keep gaining time, and the whole trip would gain us a whole day. Therefore, if we could make the full journey in twenty-four hours, it would really take us no time at all.

2. A child reaches youth and maturity, but in the end dies. So, too, a State after passing through a period of vigour and prosperity must ultimately decay and perish.

3. The Earth is inhabited. The Earth is a planet. Therefore the planet Mars is inhabited.

4. The sun rose in the east yesterday and to-day; it will therefore rise in the east to-morrow. (The English captain won the toss in the first and also in the second Test Match; therefore he will win the toss in the third.)

5. The more one works, the richer one is. The greater the obstacles to be overcome, the more one has to work. Therefore, the greater the obstacles to be overcome, the richer one is. (Therefore we should be better off without the use of the right hand.)

CHAPTER XXIII

A LITTLE ABOUT ESSAY WRITING

To define an essay is difficult. You may suggest that it is an attempt to say, in a reasonable compass, what is worth saying upon a definite topic. But that does not lead you far. To describe what an essay should be is easier; and it is the easier task that we attempt. A good essay should be good matter expressed in good prose.

Yet here again we can give only very general directions. For one great attraction of an essay consists in its freshness. On rare occasions the essay says new things; more often it achieves the less laborious end, and says old things in a new manner. Still, one may venture to say this. Your essay should be well-proportioned, the introduction not too long nor too laboured, the middle substantial and satisfying, the conclusion striking. You do well to consider carefully the manner in which you usher in the topic; for first impressions mean much. You do well to consider, too, how you round off the topic; for the conclusion remains in mind, and your readers ponder on it.

An Effective Opening

Study for a while the manner in which a skilled writer ushers in his topic. Quite true, a dull beginning is more tolerable than a dull ending. The speaker, halting and diffident at the outset, may achieve a triumph at the close. Still, in our essay we had better try to capture attention at the first, lest the end should never be read. A letter provides you with stereotyped, thought-saving openings: "Dear Sir, Referring to your letter *xyz* of the 18th of this month, I am happy to inform you . . ." The essay opening, however, calls for thought.

Often the topic is suggested by an event worth noting; the writer describes the event and makes that description his introduction. Macaulay writes upon "Milton." He seizes a piece of current news as his introduction—

> Towards the close of the year 1823, Mr. Lemon, deputy-keeper of the state papers, in the course of his

researches among the presses of his office, met with a large Latin manuscript. With it were found corrected copies of the foreign despatches written by Milton, while he filled the office of Secretary, and several papers relating to the Popish trials and Rye-house Plot.

The fortuitous discovery makes the time opportune. Macaulay discusses for a while the newly found relics of the poet; but the poet himself is the real subject of the essay—

The dexterous Capuchins never choose to preach on the life and miracles of a saint, until they have awakened the devotional feelings of their auditors by exhibiting some relic of him—a thread of his garment, a lock of his hair, or a drop of his blood. On the same principle, we intend to take advantage of the late interesting discovery, and, while this memorial of a great and good man is still in the hands of all, to say something of his moral and intellectual qualities. Nor, we are convinced, will the severest of our readers blame us if, on an occasion like the present, we turn for a short time from the topics of the day, to commemorate, in all love and reverence, the genius and virtues of John Milton, the poet, the statesman, the philosopher, the glory of English literature, the champion and the martyr of English liberty.

Defining Your Topic

A definition of the topic you undertake to discuss is at times a good opening; and you will find abundant authority for such. The definition limits your subject. It not only prepares your reader for what you have to say; it ought to prevent your straying into all kinds of irrelevancies. Thus, my Lord Bacon writes his essay "Of Revenge." He opens with a crisp and picturesque description: "Revenge is a kind of wild justice: which the more a man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong pulleth the law out of office." He writes "Of Marriage and Single Life"; and he

captures your attention at the outset by the challenging statement, "He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief."

Hazlitt writes his best known, perhaps most charming essay, "On Going a Journey." He defines his topic; he at once tells you what he would have you to understand by his title: "One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey; but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out of doors, nature is company enough for me. I am never less alone than when alone: 'The fields his study, nature was his book.'" Have you ever read his delightful commentary upon "The Indian Jugglers"? He introduces in clear-cut terms the question to be discussed: "Coming and seating himself on the ground in his white dress and tightened turban, the chief of the Indian Jugglers begins with tossing up two brass balls, which is what any of us could do, and concludes with keeping up four at the same time, which is what none of us could do to save our lives, or if we were to take our whole lives to do it in. Is it then a trifling power we see at work, or is it not something next to miraculous?"

A Well-chosen Quotation

An apt quotation is a favourite opening. R. L. Stevenson writes upon the topic "On Falling in Love." Very well, by his use of Puck's comment, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" he summons into our mind the curious antics of the varied lovers in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream.* He writes upon "Crabbed Age and Youth"; and his opening quotation is from *Clarissa,* a collection of letters once widely read: "You know my mother now and then argues very notably; always very warmly at least. I happen often to differ from her; and we both think so well of our own arguments, that we very seldom are so happy as to convince one another. A pretty common case, I believe, in all *vehement* debatings. She says, I am *too witty*; Anglice, *too pert*; I, that she is *too wise*; that is to say, being likewise put into English, *not so young as she has been.*"

He writes, what perhaps many of us need at times, "An Apology for Idlers"; and he takes his cue from Doctor Johnson. "*Boswell*: We grow weary when idle. *Johnson*:

That is, sir, because others being busy, we want company; but if we were all idle, there would be no growing weary: we should all entertain one another."

Dispensing with Ceremonial Ushering

Now and again a writer plunges into his subject without delay; and, where the title of his essay is self-explanatory, this entering into the midst of things—*in medias res*—is an excellent opening. Hazlitt writes "On Actors and Acting." It would be derogatory to his reader's intelligence to enter into laboured explanations of his theme. Instead of indulging in this simplicity, Hazlitt launches out at once: "Players are the 'abstracts and brief chronicles of the time'; the motley representatives of human nature. They are the only honest hypocrites. Their life is a voluntary dream; a studied madness. The height of their ambition is to be *besides themselves*. To-day kings, to-morrow beggars, it is only when they are themselves that they are nothing."

Maintaining Interest

You do well to marshall your ideas upon your topic—perhaps before you begin the writing. This writing should be fairly continuous; the necessary thinking should be a preliminary, not an interruption. We may assume that Thackeray's pen went currently as he produced his lively paragraphs—

I daresay the reader has remarked that the upright and independent vowel, which stands in the vowel-list between E and O, has formed the subject of the main part of these essays. How does that vowel feel this morning?—fresh, good-humoured, and lively? The Roundabout lines, which fall from this pen, are correspondingly brisk and cheerful. Has anything, on the contrary, disagreed with the vowel? Has its rest been disturbed, or was yesterday's dinner too good, or yesterday's wine not good enough? Under such circumstances, a darkling, misanthropic tinge, no doubt, is cast upon the paper. The jokes, if attempted, are elaborate and dreary. The bitter temper breaks out. That sneering manner is adopted, which you know,

and which exhibits itself so especially when the writer is speaking about women. A moody carelessness comes over him. He sees no good in any body or any thing; and treats gentlemen, ladies, history, and things in general, with a gloomy flippancy. Agreed. When the vowel in question is in that mood; if you like airy gaiety and tender gushing benevolence—if you want to be satisfied with yourself and the rest of your fellow-beings; I recommend you, my dear creature, to go to some other shop in Cornhill, or turn to some other article. There are moods in the mind of the vowel of which we are speaking, when it is ill-conditioned and captious. Who always keeps good health, and good humour? Do not philosophers grumble? Are not sages sometimes out of temper? and do not angel-women go off in tantrums? To-day my mood is dark. I scowl as I dip my pen in the inkstand.

Here is the day come round—for everything here is done with the utmost regularity:—intellectual labour, sixteen hours; meals, thirty-two minutes; exercise, a hundred and forty-eight minutes; conversation with the family, chiefly literary, and about the housekeeping, one hour and four minutes; sleep, three hours and fifteen minutes (at the end of the month, when the Magazine is complete, I own I take eight minutes more); and the rest for the toilette and the world. Well, I say, the *Roundabout Paper Day* being come, and the subject long since settled in my mind, an excellent subject—a most telling, lively, and popular subject—I go to breakfast determined to finish the meal in $9\frac{3}{4}$ minutes, as usual, and then retire to my desk and work, when—oh, provoking!—here in the paper is the very subject treated, on which I was going to write! Yesterday another paper which I saw treated it—and of course, as I need not tell you, spoiled it. Last Saturday, another paper had an article on the subject; perhaps you may guess what it was—but I won't tell you. Only this is true, my favourite subject, which was about to make the best paper we have had for a long time: my bird, my game

that I was going to shoot and serve up with such a delicate sauce, has been found by other sportsmen; and pop, pop, pop, a half-dozen of guns have banged at it, mangled it, and brought it down.

Knowing when to Finish

One dread you should have while penning your essay, not to weary your reader. The skilful writer leaves us craving for more rather than thankful for finishing the course. The axiom that "The whole is greater than its part" is not universally true: it is not true of some writings and speeches.

The essay will nevertheless be well rounded off; as the opening seizes our attention, so the close will leave us admiring. How charming is the ending of *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist*!

That last game I had with my sweet cousin I wished it might have lasted for ever, though we gained nothing, and lost nothing, though it was a mere shade of play: I would be content to go on with that idle folly for ever. The pipkin should be ever boiling that was to prepare the gentle lenitive to my foot which Bridget was doomed to apply after the game was over: and as I do not much relish appliances, there it should ever bubble. Bridget and I should be ever playing.

What Essay Writing Demands

Essay writing calls for power to select and discriminate. You have a mass of floating ideas and vague information upon the topic; you fix and make definite such of those ideas as will present a coherent account of it. You will know what to omit: "My brethren, these sermons are professedly short; for I have that opinion of my dear congregation which leads me to think that, were I to preach at great length, they would yawn, stamp, make noises, and perhaps go straightway out of church."

That restraint must be practised is maybe a hard saying. For some of us are in poverty of ideas: "Thrice have I forced my imagination to make the tour of my invention and thrice it has returned empty." We are glad to insert whatever

suggests itself, though ever so remotely connected with the subject.

If we are to select the best ideas, however, we must have a store from which to select. The essay writers whose writings have become literature—which means writing worth remembering—give you the feeling that their minds are full fraught with their topic. Look, for instance, at the way in which Hazlitt embodies his thoughts about Shakespeare's fairies—

Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, is the leader of the fairy band. He is the Ariel of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*; and yet as unlike as can be to the Ariel in *The Tempest*. No other poet could have made two such different characters out of the same fanciful materials and situations. Ariel is a minister of retribution who is touched with a sense of pity at the woes he inflicts. Puck is a madcap sprite, full of wantonness and mischief, who laughs at those whom he misleads—"Lord, what fools these mortals be!" Ariel cleaves the air, and executes his mission with the zeal of a winged messenger; Puck is borne along on his fairy errand like the light and glittering gossamer before the breeze. He is indeed a most Epicurean little gentleman, dealing in quaint devices, and faring in dainty delights. Prospero and his world of spirits are a set of moralists; but with Oberon and his fairies we are launched at once into the empire of the butterflies. How beautifully is his race of beings contrasted with the men and women actors in the scene, by a single epithet which Titania gives to the latter, "the human mortals!" It is astonishing that Shakespeare should be considered, not only by foreigners, but by many of our own critics, as a gloomy and heavy writer, who painted nothing but "gorgons and hydras, and chimeras dire."

Does it not seem quite certain that Hazlitt could, if he chose, say much more upon the topic?

The first step, therefore, in the preparation of an essay is the gaining of sufficient thoughts on the subject. Clear, full, and accurate knowledge is usually accompanied by ability to utter that knowledge in lucid and adequate fashion. There may

be those so unlucky as to lack skill in imparting the information they possess. Such, however, are probably exceptions. And until they do gain the power by tongue or pen of making others partakers of their acquisitions, the knowledge they have acquired is of little use to the world.

APPENDIX

SUGGESTIONS FOR ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

CHAPTER I

IN (*a*) we are faced with a test not so much of correctness in grammar as of knowledge of idioms. We call these peculiarities of our language "idioms" when we can give, to an inquiring foreigner for instance, no convincing reason for them: we can only say that custom prefers one preposition to another in a particular context.

There is no real reason why we say *tamper with* a plan, but *tinker at* a plan; only *tamper at* is not in keeping with usage. It is not congenial to the language. If we speak of "English idioms" we mean the peculiar ways of language characteristic of English. Idiomatic English is natural, unaffected English. Just so we may call the mingling of peculiarities that go to make up a man's character his "idiosyncrasy." Well, for our exercise we have: insensible *to* (but also *of*), unconscious *of*, indifferent *to*, oblivious *of*, confidence *in*, objection *to*, relieved *with*, deficient *in*, offence *against*.

(*b*) The *muses* are the nine goddesses that give inspiration to the poet or the musician or other artist: "'Tis Apollo comes leading his choir, the Nine. The leader is fairest, But all are divine." Their mother is Memory or *Mnemosyne* (nĕm-ŏz-ĭn-ē). Their names and the provinces over which they hold sway are: *Clio* (history), *Melpomene* (tragedy), *Thalia* (comedy), *Euterpe* (music), *Terpsichore* (dance), *Erato* (lyric), *Calliope* (epic), *Urania* (astronomy), *Polyhymnia* (rhetoric).

Plagiarism is the pilfering of another's work and the presenting it as one's own. Thus *Puff* in the play is criticized for plagiarism, but excuses himself for incorporating in his own play a line from *Othello* by saying, "That's of no consequence; all that can be said is, that two people happened to hit on the same thought—and Shakespeare made use of it first, that's all."

Mimicry is the copying of another's manner of moving or of talking, usually for the purpose of holding him up to ridicule: such mimicry is the least of all the arts.

A *rehearsal* is a preparatory performance, of a play or a piece of music or other work, before presentation to public criticism: the sub-title of *The Critic* is "A Tragedy Rehearsed."

A *metaphor* is a transfer to one thing of the name properly belonging to another thing: instead of saying "I have grown old" Macbeth says "My way of life is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf."

An *antithesis* is a placing of ideas in contrast to one another: antithesis is Macaulay's favourite device for giving sprightliness to his prose. Of the Puritan he wrote, "He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker; but he set his foot on the neck of his king."

Sentiment is general feeling: we may say "Sentiment unchecked by reason is a bad guide."

A *prologue* is the preface of a play or of a novel, an introduction to explain or to commend or to make understanding easy: Hamlet says "Ere I could make a prologue to my brains, they had begun the play." The contrasted speech at the end of the play or the novel is the *epilogue*. Rosalind says at the close of *As You Like It*: "It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue; but it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue. If it be true that good wine needs no bush, 'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue: yet to good wine they do use good bushes; and good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues."

A *parody* is a mimicry of an author's composition, usually in order to poke fun at it: in *As You Like It* Touchstone turns Orlando's verses into ridicule by his parody of them.

Conduct is *quixotic* when it resembles, in its fastidious sense of honour and its pursuit of desirable but unattainable aims, the conduct of Don Quixote, the hero of Cervantes's novel.

You call a project *Utopian* when you wish to suggest that it is such as might be found in Utopia but nowhere else: Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (Nowhere) expounded his theories of the ideal state, and perhaps, when political reasoning was attended with much danger, this veiling of his ideas was wise.

(*c*) Look up these words in your dictionary and observe the distinction between the pairs.

CHAPTER II

(*a*) Should you say, "I was late through my having missed the train" or "I was late through me having missed the train"? Clearly, the first; for "having missed the train" is a name, a noun equivalent perhaps for "stupidity" or "laziness" or "misfortune." As a noun it needs the possessive adjective "my." So in the sentence from the 1937 Factories Act. It may sound clumsy, maybe pedantic, but should not the phrase have been "in consequence of the occupier's of a factory having contravened"? Take out the intervening prepositional phrase, "of a factory," and you have no doubt upon the matter. It is doubtless a small point; but the King's Printer should issue nothing but King's English.

(*b*) Are we wise or foolish when we ask for absolute precision in language? Probably foolish. In an Act of Parliament, no doubt, the utmost precision is called for; and the draftsman should use

anxious care lest there should be any ambiguity or obscurity in the Act. In other documents, too, in a partnership agreement, in a marriage settlement, we must be precise; we must choose our words with scrupulous care. In the journey-work of life, however, there is room for much give and take in language. We may usually rely upon our hearer to interpret our words in the sense we intend. This curious and frequent expression seems, however, easily capable of improvement. For it is perfectly certain that the informant was in no fear about the matter. She may well have been sorry that the inquirer should be disappointed. Perhaps it might be desirable to say so. "I'm sorry; she is not in at the moment" is as readily understandable, is quite as courteous, is more likely to be truer than the alternative expression.

(*c*) It is perhaps late in the day to protest against the use of "proposition" as a general substitute for "problem." We do talk about the "Propositions of Euclid," and these include not only "theorems" (formal statements of truths that are to be demonstrated) but also "problems" (statements of operations to be performed). You have wrestled with these propositions, with the theorem "The angles of a triangle are together equal to two right angles," with the problem "To construct an equilateral triangle." "Proposition" is there rightly used. It is something suggested, put before the hearer's mind for consideration. So Rosalind pours out her impetuous questions to Celia: "But doth he know that I am in this forest, and in man's apparel? Looks he so freshly as he did the day he wrestled?" Celia answers, "It is as easy to count atomies as to resolve the propositions of a lover." Well, "resolve the propositions" is not greatly different from "solve the problems"; and the curious American use, now widespread among us, may have some justification. Still, it is a little derogatory to a person's dignity when he is described as a "tough proposition."

CHAPTER III

(*c*) We might paraphrase (*a*) The story is strange, but we have no reason to disbelieve it; (*b*) June is a summer month yet frosts are not unknown in June; (*c*) That a man smiles and smiles does not prove he is not a villain; (*d*) There is no constitutional bar to a Nonconformist clergyman's becoming a Member of Parliament; (*e*) A Government official is forbidden to send information to the Press.

CHAPTER IV

We apprehend when our minds grasp an idea. We comprehend when we understand a matter in all its bearings: to comprehend is to know a thing as well as ever it can be known.

The second pair both imply a slighting of the rights of others. The arrogant man, however, very likely has just claims to some dignity or authority: he is overbearing in asserting those claims, and tramples on the rights of others. The insolent man, on the other hand, probably has little to be proud of; yet he is contemptuous of the claims of those in authority.

The third pair—cloak, and palliate—illustrate how, when two words meaning the same thing are in a language, one of the words takes on a figurative sense. The Latin *pallium*, like the Old French *cloke*, was a garment protecting from the inclement weather: to palliate is now, however, used in the sense of extenuating or excusing. Thus, "They tried to palliate what they could not justify."

The adjectives, illegible and unreadable, alike imply writing that presents unusual difficulty to the reader. The writing is illegible when it is hard, maybe impossible, to decipher the letters; the writing is unreadable when the subject dealt with is repellent, or when the subject is dealt with in a most uninteresting manner. The handwriting of an occasional correspondent is well-nigh illegible; and many a clearly printed book on grammar is quite unreadable.

"Revenge is a kind of wild justice," wrote my Lord Bacon: the man that exacts revenge is prosecutor and judge and executioner in his own cause. Vengeance, however, implies a just retribution: "Thou Lord to whom vengeance belongeth, show Thyself."

"To simulate" is to take on another's similitude, to pretend to be what one is not; "to dissimulate" is to hide one's own similitude, to pretend not to be what one is. "Let love be without dissimulation," is the apostle's injunction to his followers—without feigning or pretence, that is, In short, simulation is a pretence of what is not, and dissimulation is a concealment of what is.

It is difficult to distinguish between "precise" and "exact." "Precise" appears, however, to be more appropriate to expression. Thus, a definition, we are told, "should be precise, should contain nothing unessential, nothing superfluous." Where "precise" is compared with "exact" there is a suggestion of over-exactness, of a fastidiousness near to affectation. So Cowper speaks of the sensible man, who is "Learned without pride, Exact, yet not precise."

Your "vocation" is the business of life that enables you to earn your livelihood; your "avocations" are the diversions to which you turn in your hours of leisure, the hobbies that relieve the monotony of life. The vocation is the more important, the avocation the less important thing: "Heaven is his vocation, and therefore he counts earthly employments avocations."

CHAPTER VII

A. The words used in the extract (from Traill's *The New Lucian*) are: *discoursed, endeavoured, common, object, jargon, notable, promoters, twofold, reform, trammels, view, distorting, tradition.*

CHAPTER IX

In (*a*) *that* is a conjunction ("since"); in (*b*) *that* is a demonstrative adjective; in (*c*) the first *that* is a demonstrative adjective, the second *that* is a conjunction introducing the object of " 'tis my faith"; in (*d*) *that* is a demonstrative pronoun; in (*e*) *that* is a relative pronoun; in (*f*) *that* is an adverb of degree.

CHAPTER X

(*a*) Material from which a thing is made: "A gown made of the finest wool."
(*b*) Agent (doer).
(*c*) Origin (derivative).
(*d*) Resulting from.
(*e*) Point from which measure is taken.

CHAPTER XI (page 216)

(*a*) "I shall never finish that ballade," he thought to himself.
(*b*) "You will pardon me if I go in first."
(*c*) "I was born in a garret, and I shall not improbably die upon the gallows."

(These three sentences are from R. L. Stevenson's tale *A Lodging for the Night*, where he recounts something of the life of Master Francis Villon.)

(*d*) The element itself, till seven years' heat,
Shall not behold her face at ample view.
(*e*) It shall become thee well to act my woes;
She will attend it better in thy youth.
(*f*) O, sir, I will not be so hard-hearted; I will give out divers schedules of my beauty; it shall be inventoried and every particle and utensil labelled.
(*g*) I will deliver his challenge by word of mouth; set upon Aguecheek a notable report of valour; and drive the gentleman, as I know his youth will aptly receive it, into a most hideous opinion of his rage.

(These four quotations are from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.)

CHAPTER XI (page 223)

The sentences would run better in this form—

(*a*) There are a door and three windows on the front of the house.

(*b*) Observation together with experience of life helps us to realize facts.

(*c*) All the grandeur of the days of chivalry breathes on his pages.

(*d*) I learnt that he is one of the few writers who have dealt with this subject.

(*e*) Neither she nor her brother is strong.

(*f*) The best thing about the book was the quotations.

CHAPTER XI (page 226)

(*a*) This is a most interesting question. It illustrates how, in a living and developing language like English, there must constantly appear strife between the old and the new. The old language had usually a distinctive form for the verb when, as in the sentence submitted, there was a supposition, an imagined state of affairs. Look at these lines of Scott—

> Yet sang she "Brignall banks are fair,
> And Greta woods are gay;
> I would I were with Edmund there,
> To reign his Queen of May!"

"I were" is the subjunctive, now rapidly disappearing from the spoken language, after the expression of wish. The tendency is to use "was" in the singular, even when unreality is to be indicated. "Need" in the sentence is the singular of the subjunctive mood, and will be preferred by those reluctant to admit change. "Needs" is the singular of the indicative mood, and will soon oust the subjunctive. Yet the subjunctive was a useful form to have; and it will struggle long against extinction. For we shall all continue to read Shakespeare, who habitually uses it in imaginative clauses. You know, for instance, how that scamp Falstaff in one of his moments of contrition—or pretended contrition—wished for a better reputation: "But, Hal, I prithee, trouble me no more with vanity. I would to God thou and I knew where a commodity of good names were to be bought." "Were" is the subjunctive singular with its subject "commodity."

(*b*) "Winning" is a noun. It is equivalent to "victory," "success"; and the appropriate pronoun is the possessive, not the objective. "There are bright prospects of their victory" is a variant of "There are bright prospects of their winning the trophy." This particular error is extraordinarily common; but that fact does not make it less an error. It is easy to fall into the error; for the participle is in spelling the same as the verbal noun. If we say "Girls playing cricket enjoy what was once a boys' game," then "girls" is the subject of the sentence, and "playing" is the participle. If, how-

ever, we say "Girls playing cricket is not greatly to be applauded," then the subject of the sentence is not "girls," but the phrase "girls playing cricket." "Playing" is here the verbal noun, and girls is in the possessive case, needing, therefore, the apostrophe. The proper form of the sentence is, "Girls' playing cricket is not greatly to be applauded."

There is another point calling for remark. "Team is a collective noun; and, though a team is composed of many, "team is the best" is quite correct. But then we ought not, in the one sentence,to dart from the unity of the collection to the plurality of its components. If we say "team is" then we had better also say "if it continues its form," and so on.

(*c*) The sense of incongruity arises from the omission of the intended subject in the first part of the sentence. To be sure, we all, tourists and every one else, know what the intended meaning is. We know that it is, "If you should be pressed for time in making a tour of England, you may omit Cambridge." The form of the sentence, however, suggests the whimsical notion that Cambridge might possibly be pressed for time, that Cambridge ever could be in a hurry. You get the same kind of incongruity in such sentences as the following, in all of which a suggestion of absurdity would be removed by a judicious rearrangement: "She wore a diamond pin in her hair which was bought in Paris." "The native inhabitants produce all manner of curios, the great majority of which appear to command a ready sale among the visitors, crude and commonplace as these frequently are."

CHAPTER XII

EXERCISE II

"Yes," said the dealer, "our windfalls are of various kinds. Some customers are ignorant, and then I touch a dividend of my superior knowledge. Some are dishonest," and here he held up the candle so that the light fell strongly on his visitor, "and in that case," he continued, "I profit by my virtue."

Markheim had but just entered from the daylight streets, and his eyes had not yet grown familiar with the mingled shine and darkness in the shop. At these pointed words, and before the near presence of the flame, he blinked painfully and looked aside.

EXERCISE III

On occasions which required set speeches Pym generally took the lead. Hampden very seldom rose till late in a debate. His speaking was of that kind which has, in every age, been held in the highest estimation by English Parliaments, ready, weighty, perspicuous, condensed. His perception of the feelings of the House was exquisite, his temper unalterably placid, his manner eminently

courteous and gentlemanlike. His talents for business were as remarkable as his talents for debate. "He was," says Clarendon, "of an industry and vigilance not to be tired out or wearied by the most laborious, and of parts not to be imposed upon by the most subtle and sharp." Yet it was rather to his moral than to his intellectual qualities that he was indebted for the vast influence which he possessed. "When this Parliament began,"—we again quote Clarendon,—"the eyes of all men were fixed upon him, as the pilot that must steer the vessel through the tempests and rocks which threatened it. And I am persuaded his power and interest at that time were greater to do good or hurt than any man's in the kingdom, or than any man of his rank hath had in any time."—(MACAULAY, *Essay on John Hampden.*)

CHAPTER XIII (page 262)

Long ā: take, take, away, break, day, again, again, vain, vain.
Long ē: sweetly, mislead, seals, sealed, sealed.

CHAPTER XIII (page 271)

(1)

di-shev-el: the *shevel* represents the Old French *cheval* (hair); the prefix is *di* not *dis*;

laboratory: the abbreviation *lab.* will tend to keep the accent on the first syllable when the word is fully pronounced, in spite of the flight of unaccented syllables; but the American *lab-or-at-ory* is more comfortable and may prevail;

apparatus, plural *apparatuses:* the accent is on the third syllable, and *atus* rhymes with *hate us*;

precedence: probably, in spite of *precede* with its long vowels, the sound *presedence* will be established: so also *precedent* may become *precedent* (see the exercise below);

decadent: short vowel sound and accent on the first syllable: so with *decadence*;

vagary: the final syllables rhyming with *wary*;

abdomen: long *o* and accent on the second syllable;

despicable accent on the first syllable with short vowels;

subsidence: the *i* is sometimes heard long as in *subside*; but the recognized pronunciation will probably be *subsidence*, in line with *residence*, *confidence*, *coincidence*, and the like;

exigency: accent on the first syllable, short *i*.

(2)

ăb-jĕct: ăb-sĭnth: ăb-străct: ăc-ā-cia (*sh*a): ăc-cĕss-ŏr-y (but also ac-cĕs-sor-y): ăc-ŏw-stic (but also ac-ōō-stic): ă-dŭlt: ăd-vĕrt-ĭse-ment (but ăd-ver-tise): ā-er-ĭ-ăl: ăg-aĭn (but also agĕn): ā-jĭd (meaning "having lived long," but ājd in such phrases as "aged twelve"): ăl-lȳ (both verb and noun: the plural "allies" is pronounced ălīz): ăl-tĕr-nāt (the verb, meaning "to make things succeed one another by turns," is, however, ăl-tĕr-nāt, the accent being thrown forward): ăl-tĕr-nă-tĭv: ă-mĕn-ăbl: ă-mĕn-ĭt-ēs (This, with a short *e* in the second syllable, seems to be the usual pronunciation. But mēn is more in keeping with the Latin origin, and is at times heard): ăp-păr-āt-ŭs: ăp-pār-ĕnt (Here, again, pār is more in keeping with the original Latin and is occasionally heard): ă-rŏm-ă: ăs-pĭr-ănt (But ăs-pīr-ănt is also heard; and this pronunciation brings out the connexion with as-pīre. Still, note the short *i* in ăspĭrātion): ăt-tĕr-nȳ: ĭ *or* ā (The pronunciation varies with the meaning. Meaning. *Yes*—"The Ayes have it"—the pronunciation is ī. Meaning *ever* as in "For ever and aye" the pronunciation is ā): băn-ăl (But bān-ăl is also heard. The word—meaning *commonplace, trite, what many another has used*—is connected with the feudal lord's *băn*, or command; the "banned mill" was the mill that all his tenants were under compulsion to use and pay for): bŏsn, one syllable: bō *or* bow (When the word means a curve, or something shaped in a curve—rainbow, bow and arrows—the pronunciation is *bō*. When the word means an inclination of the head it is *bow*): brăv-ăd-ō (but vah is also heard, perhaps more often): cān-īn (This pronunciation, the accent on the first syllable and both vowels long, seems to be the most common. But căn-ĭn and căn-ĭn are heard): sĭn-ĕm-ă (In spite of the allied word kĭnĕtĭc the pronunciation with the *s* sound and the short *i* will probably prevail): clĕm-ă-tĭs: cŏmmŭn-ăl (cŏm-mū-năl is also heard): cŏn-trary (But when the word is used to signify *perverse, self-willed*, the pronunciation cŏn-trăr-y is usual, perhaps because people remember

"Mary, Mary, quite contrary"): kŭn-jer *or* kŏn-jōor (The word has the first pronunciation in the sense of *juggle*—"The speaker conjured up a delightful vision." It has the second pronunciation when used in the sense of *solemnly appeal, beseech*—"I conjure you to think long before you decide"): dĕc-ă-dence: dĕc-ăd: dĕf-ĭc-ĭt: dĭf-the-rĭ-ă: ĕn-ĕr-vāt (when used as adjective meaning *wanting vigour*), ĕn-ĕr-vāt (when used as verb meaning *to weaken*): ĕx-tĕm-pŏr-ĕ (four syllables): fĭn-ăhlī: fīnance (*or* fĭnance): fĭn-an-cĭer: fōksl (one syllable): gar-rōol-ŏus: gen-ū-ĭn: gĭb-bĕr (or jĭb-ber): glă-cĭ-er: grat-ĭs: grĭm-ăc: ha-nŭs: id-ĭl (but ĭd-īl is also heard): imp-ĭ-ŭs (but notice ĭm-pi-ĕt-y): lăm-ĕn-tăbl: lĕj-ĕnd: lĭt-ĕr-ă-tūr (*or* tsher): nawt (not as sometimes heard *ought*): ŏp-po-nĕnt: pājnt (but pājnt is heard at times): pat-rĭ-ŏt (but some prefer to retain the Latin short vowel and say păt-rĭ-ŏt): patrŏn (but also păt-ron, and always păt-rŏn-age): pĕt-al: pre-cĕd-ence (but the pronunciation prĭs-ĕd-ence often heard is more in keeping with pre-cēde): prec-ēd-ent (when used as noun meaning "a previous case taken as a guide") but precēdent (when used as adjective meaning "preceding in order"): kē: rāshn (this is the pronunciatoin that brings out the connexion with *rāte* and *rātio*; but răshn seems to be expelling the older pronunciation): re-volt: săc-rĭ-fīs: sŭtl (one syllable): tor-shŭs: trĭ-bun-al (but the alternative trĭ-bun-ăl is closer to trĭb-une): văg-ar-i: rawth: zo-ŏl-ŏg-y.

CHAPTER XIV

The words that Pope used are *infant, breast, foe, proceed, avert, corse, spouse, vultures, naked.*

If your words do differ from Pope's, do not be greatly downcast. For there is much liberty of choice; and one might demur about *avert* and *spouse* and *naked* as being the most appropriate.

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