A GRAMMAR
OF THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE,
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS;
INTENDED FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS AND OF YOUNG
PERSONS IN GENERAL, BUT MORE ESPECIALLY
FOR THE USE OF SOLDIERS, SAILORS,
APPRENTICES AND PLOUGH-BOYS.

BY
WILLIAM COBBETT.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED
SIX LESSONS, INTENDED TO PREVENT STATESMEN FROM_using
FALSE GRAMMAR, AND FROM WRITING IN AN
AWKWARD MANNER.

WITH NOTES BY ROBERT WATERS.
Brown, Green, White, and Black, may be thrown into the fire, and the world will be none the worse off; for, in my opinion, boys and girls ought to be taught the principles of English grammar without placing any text-book whatever in their hands. Never did the Board of Education of New York adopt a wiser resolution than that recently adopted, abolishing grammar text-books from the public schools, in all but the two higher grades. Any person, that requires a book in the hands of his scholars in order to teach them the principles of English grammar, is no teacher; he is simply a crammer-down of other people's building up his own knowledge; but no book should ever be placed in the hands of his scholars. To children, books on the subject of grammar are generally in a dead language; it is all Greek to them; the living speech of the teacher is the only language they can understand. Away, therefore, with all grammar text-books; for they are the dead-weights of progress, fatal to all true teaching.

Nor is this book of Cobbett's intended for boys and girls at school; it is for those who are studying out of school; for those who are trying to acquire that real, practical, profitable knowledge which is acquired by self-exertion, or self-help; for those who have no teacher, and are striving to teach themselves; for those who wish to learn in order to teach; for those who have failed to make any proper progress by means of other grammars, and now wish to understand and master the subject for themselves.

I do not deny that this book, being so entirely different from all other grammars; so conversational, easy, and plain in its character; I do not deny that it may be ad-
Editor's Preface.

vantageously used by school-boys under a competent teacher; nay, even under an incompetent teacher;—in fact, if the teacher must use a text-book, he cannot select a better one than Cobbett's;—but what I maintain is, that it is the only grammar that can be profitably used without a teacher; the only book that can teach grammar by itself to those who are learning for themselves. As long as principles last, and as long as men learn by using their reason, grammar must be taught; and this being granted, I contend that there is no better way of teaching it than this way of Cobbett's. Of course, no child ought ever to be taught a word about grammar until he has learned to read fluently, and even write tolerably well, the words of his native language; not until he has attained his twelfth or fourteenth year, for grammar is a matter which cannot be rightly understood and assimilated before that age. This is another reason why the action of the New York Board of Education is a wise one.

Some of Mr. White's readers—feeling, no doubt, as I did, that even if all ordinary grammars are worthless, some grammar of some sort is necessary, and being delighted by his clear and sensible manner of writing—requested him to write a grammar; one of them declaring that if he did so, a future generation would rise up and call him blessed. Whereupon Mr. White makes the following amusing and significant reply: "I would gladly act on this suggestion if it were probable that any responsible and competent publisher would make it prudent for me to do so. It would be delightful to believe that the next generation would rise up and call me blessed; but I am of necessity much more interested in the question whether the present generation would rise up and put its hand into its pocket to pay me for my labor. Any one who is acquainted with the manner in which school-books are 'introduced' in this country, knows that the opinions of competent persons upon the merits of a book have the least possible influence upon its coming sufficiently into vogue to make its publication profitable; and publishers, like other men of business, work for money. One of the trade made, I know—although not to me—an answer like this to a proposition to publish a short series of school-books: 'I believe your books are excellent; but supposing that they are all that you believe them to be, I should, after stereotyping them, be obliged to spend $100,000 in introducing them. I am not prepared to do this, and therefore I must say No, at once. The merit of a book has nothing to do with its value in trade.' And the speaker was a man of experience."

Now, I am strongly inclined to think that these admirers of Mr. White's, and all those disgusted with the ordinary grammars and the ordinary methods of teaching grammar, will, if made acquainted with Cobbett's little grammar, which has long been out of print in this country, find what they want, or nearly what they want; for there does not exist in our language a clearer exposition of the nature of English grammar than this by Cobbett. The very language of the grammar itself is a capital illustration of how one ought to write; and if the scholar's understanding the subject is a true test of the proper learning of it, then no other grammar can, in the attainment of this end, be compared with this; for thousands, who have failed to understand the subject by other grammars, have succeeded by this, and have, no doubt, risen up and called Cobbett blessed for writing it. Even Mr. White himself, who looks upon most other grammars as worse than useless, declares of Cobbett's grammar, that he has "read it with great admiration, both for the soundness of its teaching and the excellence of its sys-

Editor's Preface.

And he also declares, I think (I quote from memory), that if grammar is to be taught at all, it cannot be taught better than by this method of Cobbett's.

At a meeting of school superintendents held recently in Iowa, one of the superintendents read a paper on textbooks, in which he says: "Men of letters and men of science have sought to veil their thoughts with the obscurity of strange and foreign terms rather than to make the road following them in their investigation easy. They have sought the vain-glory of stultification in their selection of a medium for the communication of their thoughts, rather than the lasting praise consequent upon a simple style. Hence the difficulty in following them in their text-books, and the unprofitableness of being taught how to read thought from printed characters." If there is one writer in the whole range of English literature who deserves more praise than another for avoiding this very style, so common among ordinary writers; if there is one author who is more conspicuous than any other for clothing his thoughts in plain, intelligible language, it is William Cobbett. In all that goes to the making up of good English speech, he has no superior. He was the first to show how one ought to write for young people, the first to write in a manner that plain people could understand; the first to instruct in a truly edifying manner. It is his great glory that he uses simple, plain language, and he makes every subject he touches, whether it be the definition of a verb or the explanation of the nature of the national debt, perfectly clear and intelligible.

The Editor has endeavored to write the notes in something of the same plain and easy style as that in which Cobbett has written the grammar, keeping constantly in mind that he is addressing a youth of fourteen or fifteen years of age. Of course, he has never for a moment thought of imitating Cobbett; but simply and only of making the matter plain.


Contents of the Grammar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.—Introduction.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.—Definition of Grammar and of its Different Branches or Parts.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.—Etymology: the Different Parts of Speech, or Sorts of Words.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.—Etymology of Articles.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.—Etymology of Nouns.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.—Etymology of Pronouns.</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.—Etymology of Adjectives.</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.—Etymology of Verbs.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.—Etymology of Adverbs.</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.—Etymology of Adjectives.</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI.—Etymology of Prepositions.</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII.—Cautionary Remarks.</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII.—Syntax Generally Considered.</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV.—Syntax: the Points and Marks made use of in Writing.</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV.—Syntax, as relating to Articles.</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVI.—Syntax, as relating to Nouns.</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVII.—Syntax, as relating to Pronouns.</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVIII.—Syntax, as relating to Adjectives.</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIX.—Syntax, as relating to Verbs.</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DEDICATION.

TO HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY,

QUEEN CAROLINE.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

A work, having for its objects, to lay the solid foundation of literary knowledge amongst the laboring classes of the community; to give practical effect to the natural genius found in the soldier, the sailor, the apprentice, and the plough-boy; and to make that genius a perennial source of wealth, strength, and safety to the kingdom; such a work naturally seeks the approbation of your majesty, who, amongst all the royal personages of the present age, is the only one that appears to have justly estimated the value of the people.

The nobles and the hierarchy have long had the arrogance to style themselves the pillars that support the throne. But, as your majesty has now clearly ascertained, royalty has, in the hour of need, no efficient supporters but the people.

During your majesty’s long, arduous, magnanimous, and gallant struggle against matchless fraud and bound-
less power, it must have inspired you with great confidence to perceive the wonderful intelligence and talent of your millions of friends; while your majesty cannot have failed to observe, that the haughty and insolent few who have been your enemies, have, upon all occasions, exhibited an absence of knowledge, a poverty of genius, a feebleness of intellect, which nothing but a constant association with malevolence and perfidy could prevent from being ascribed to dotage or idiocy.

That to her, whose great example is so well calculated to inspire us with a love of useful knowledge, and to stimulate us to perseverance in its pursuit; that to her, the records of whose magnanimity and courage will make mean spite and cowardice hide their heads to the end of time; that to her, who, while in foreign lands, did honor to Britain's throne, and to Britain herself, by opening the debtor's prison, and by setting the captive Christian free; that to her, who has so long had to endure all the sufferings that malice could invent and tyranny execute; that to her, God may grant, to know no more of sorrow, but long to live in health, prosperity, and glory, surrounded and supported by a grateful and admiring people, is the humble prayer of

Your majesty's most dutiful
And most devoted servant,

WILLIAM COBBETT.

London, Nov. 25th, 1820.

---

Mr. James Paul Cobbett.

Letter I.

Introduction.

North Hempstead, Long Island, Dec. 6, 1817.

My dear Little James:

You have now arrived at the age of fourteen years without ever having been hidden, or even advised, to look into a book; and all you know of reading or of writing you owe to your own unbiased taste and choice. But, while you have lived unpersecuted by such importunities, you have had the very great advantage of being bred up under a roof beneath which no cards, no dice, no gaming, no senseless pastime of any description, ever found a place.

In the absence of these, books naturally became your companions during some part of your time: you have read and have written, because you saw your elders read and write, just as you have learned to ride and hunt and shoot, to dig the beds in the garden, to trim the flowers and to prune the trees. The healthful exercise, and the pleasures, unmixed with fear, which you have derived from these sources, have given you "a sound mind in a sound body," and this, says an English writer, whose works you will by-and-by read, "is the greatest blessing that God can give to man."

It is true that this is a very great blessing; but mere
soundness of mind, without any mental acquirements, possessed by millions; it is an ordinary possession; and it gives a man no fair pretensions to merit, because it owes it to accident, and not to any thing done by himself. But knowledge, in any art or science, being always the fruit of observation, study, or practice, gives, in proportion to its extent and usefulness, the possessor a just claim to respect. We do, indeed, often see all the outward marks of respect bestowed upon persons merely because they are rich or powerful; but these, while they are bestowed with pain, are received without pleasure. They drop from the tongue or beam from the features, but have no communication with the heart. They are not the voluntary offerings of admiration, or of gratitude; but are extorted from the hopes, the fears, the anxieties, of poverty, of meanness, or of guilt. Nor is respect due to honesty, fidelity, or any such qualities; because dishonesty and perfidy are crimes. To entitle a man to respect, there must be something of his own doing, beyond the bounds of his well-known duties and obligations.

Therefore, being extremely desirous to see you, my dear James, an object of respect, I now call upon you to apply your mind to the acquiring of that kind of knowledge which is inseparable from an acquaintance with books; for, though knowledge in every art and science is, if properly applied, worthy of praise in proportion to its extent and usefulness, there are some kinds of knowledge which are justly considered as of a superior order, not only because the possession of them is a proof of more than ordinary industry and talent, but because the application of them has naturally a more powerful influence in the affairs and on the condition of our friends, acquaintances, neighbors, and country. Blake, the Titchfield Thatcher, who broke his leg into splinters in falling from a wheat-rick, was, on account of the knowledge which he possessed, beyond that of laborers in general, an object of respect; but, in its degree, and in the feelings from which it arose, how different was that respect from the respect due to our excellent neighbor, Mr. Blundell, who restored the leg to perfect use, after six garrison and army surgeons had declared that it was impossible to preserve it, and that, if the leg were not cut off, the man must die within twenty-four hours! It is probable that the time of Mr. Blundell was not, on this occasion, occupied more, altogether, than four days and four nights; yet, the effect was a great benefit to be enjoyed by Blake for probably thirty or forty years to come: and, while we must see that this benefit would necessarily extend itself to the whole of his numerous family, we must not overlook those feelings of pleasure which the cure would naturally produce amongst friends, acquaintances, and neighbors.

The respect due to the profession of the surgeon or physician is, however, of an order inferior to that which is due to the profession of the law; for whether in the character of counsellor or of judge, here are required, not only uncommon industry, labor, and talent, in the acquirement of knowledge; but the application of this knowledge in defending the property of the feeble or incautious against the attacks of the strong and the wiles of the crafty, in affording protection to innocence and securing punishment to guilt, has, in the affairs of men and on their condition in life, a much more extensive and powerful influence than can possibly arise from the application of surgical or medical knowledge.

To the functions of statesmen and legislators is due the highest respect which can be shown by man to anything human; for, not only are the industry, labor, and talent requisite in the acquirement of knowledge, still greater and far greater here, than in the profession of the law; but, of the application of this knowledge, the effects are so transcendent in point of magnitude as to place them
Introduction.

beyond all the bounds of comparison. Here it is not in
dividual persons with their families, friends, and neigh-
bors that are affected; but whole countries and communi-
cies. Here the matters to be discussed and decided are
peace or war, and the liberty or slavery, happiness or
misery, of nations. Here a single instance of neglect, a
single oversight, a single error, may load with calami-
ety on the progress and condition of millions of men, and entail that calamity on a long series of future generations.

This is true enough; but it is a remarkable fact that nearly all the efforts of legislators, political as well as ecclesiastical, have been of such a nature as to cause anything but respect for them. The historian Buckle shows that the great bulk of the enactments of legislators, since the beginning of history, have been conducive of results directly opposite to those for which they were intended; that is, evil results; and that the only beneficial legislation of modern times has consisted in the undoing of what previous legislators have done. So that, of all the personages in history, none, unhappily, are deserving of more profound contempt, or, at least, of less esteem, than precisely those very men who ought to have secured the greatest esteem, legislators. And all this, not because they were bad men, but because they were lacking in knowledge.

And if this is the case with law-makers of honest intentions, what shall we say of those execrable wretches, those deadly enemies on the body politic, who, on becoming members of a legislature, sell themselves, body and soul, to wealthy corporations? What shall we think of their influence on the progress and welfare of the people, whose interests they were elected to protect and to promote? Such creatures lose not only the esteem of all honest men, but their own esteem, their self-esteem; they become contemptible, not only in their own eyes, but in the eyes of those who buy them; and as to the future, the hottest, deepest gulf in hell are yawning for them!

As a contrast to Buckle's judgment of the great crowd of igno-
rant and consequently pernicious legislators, consider this remark-
able statement which the same writer makes of the power and
influence of one man of real knowledge: "Well may it be said of Adam Smith (author of 'The Wealth of Nations'), and said too without fear of contradiction, that this solitary Scotchman has, by the publication of one single work, contributed more towards the

happiness of man, than has been effected by the united abilities of
dall the statesmen and legislators of whom history has preserved an
authentic account."—Hist. of Civilization, Vol I., p. 166.

But, my dear James, you will always bear in mind that as the degree and quality of our respect rise in proportion to the influence which the different branches of knowledge naturally have in the affairs and on the condition of men, so, in the cases of an imperfection in knowledge, or of neglect in its application, or of its perversion to bad pur-
poses, all the feelings which are opposite to that of respect rise in the same proportion. To ignorant pretenders to surgery and medicine we award our contempt and scorn; on time-serving or treacherous counsellors, and on cruel or partial judges, we inflict our detestation and abhor-
rence; while, on rapacious, corrupt, perfidious, or tyrannical statesmen and legislators, the voice of human nature cries aloud for execration and vengeance.

The particular path of knowledge to be pursued by you will be of your own choosing; but, as to knowledge connected with books, there is a step to be taken before you can fairly enter upon any path. In the immense field of this kind of knowledge, innumerable are the paths, and Grammar is the gate of entrance to them all. And if grammar is so useful in the attaining of knowledge, it is abso-
lutely necessary in order to enable the possessor to com-
municate, by writing, that knowledge to others, with-
out which communication the possession must be com-
paratively useless to himself in many cases, and, in almost all cases, to the rest of mankind.

The actions of men proceed from their thoughts. In or-
der to obtain the cooperation, the concurrence, or the
consent, of others, we must communicate our thoughts to
them. The means of this communication are words; and
grammar teaches us how to make use of words. There-
fore, in all the ranks, degrees, and situations of life, a
knowledge of the principles and rules of grammar must
be useful; in some situations it must be necessary to
the avoiding of really injurious errors; and in no sit-
uation, which calls on man to place his thoughts upon
paper, can the possession of it fail to be a source of self
gratulation, or the want of it a cause of mortification and
sorrow.

But, to the acquiring of this branch of knowledge, my
dear son, there is one motive which, though it ought at
all times, to be strongly felt, ought, at the present time,
to be so felt in an extraordinary degree: I mean that de-
sire which every man, and especially every young man,
should entertain to be able to assert with effect the
rights and liberties of his country. When you come to read
the history of those laws of England by which the freedom
of the people has been secured, and, by which the happi-
ess and power and glory of our famed and beloved coun-
try have been so greatly promoted; when you come to
read the history of the struggles of our forefathers, by
which those sacred laws have, from time to time, been
defended against despotic ambition; by which they have
been restored to vigor when on the eve of perishing; by
which their violators have never failed, in the end, to be
made to feel the just vengeance of the people; when you
come to read the history of these struggles in the cause
of freedom, you will find that tyranny has no enemy so
formidable as the pen. And, while you will see with exul-
tation the long-imprisoned, the heavily-fined, the banish-
ed William Prynne, returning to liberty, borne by the people
from Southampton to London, over a road strewn with
flowers; then accusing, bringing to trial, and to the block
the tyrants from whose hands he and his country had un-
justly and cruelly suffered; while your heart and the
heart of every young man in the kingdom will bound with
joy at the spectacle, you ought all to bear in mind that
without a knowledge of grammar, Mr. Prynne could not
have performed any of those acts by which his name has
been thus preserved, and which have caused his memory
to be held in honor.

Though I have now said what, I am sure, will be more
than sufficient to make you entertain a strong desire to
take this first step in the road to literary knowledge, I
cannot conclude this introductory letter without observ-
ning, that you ought to proceed in your study, not only
with diligence, but with patience; that, if you meet with
difficulties, you should bear in mind that, to enjoy the
noble prospect from Port's-Down Hill, you had first to
climb slowly to the top; and that, if those difficulties
gather about you and impede your way, you have only to
call to your recollection any one of the many days that
you have toiled through briars and brambles and bogs,
cheered and urged on by the hope of at last finding and
killing your game.

I have put my work into the form of Letters, in order
that I might be continually reminded that I was address-
ing myself to persons who needed to be spoken to with
great clearness. I have numbered the Letters themselves,
and also the paragraphs, in order that I might be able, in
some parts of the work, to refer you to, or tell you where
to look at, other parts of the work. And here I will just
add, that a sentence, used as a term in Grammar, means
one of those portions of words which are divided from the
rest by a single dot, which is called a period, or full point;
and that a paragraph means one of those collections, or
blocks, of sentences which are divided from the rest of the
work by beginning a new line a little further in than the
lines in general; and, of course, all this part, which I have
just now written, beginning with "I have put my work
into the form," is a paragraph.

In a confident reliance on your attentiveness, industry,
and patience, I have a hope not less confident of seeing
you a man of real learning, employing your time and
talents in aiding the cause of truth and justice, in afford-
Definition of Grammar, and of Its Different Branches, or Parts.

My dear James:

1. In the foregoing Letter I have laid before you some of the inducements to the study of Grammar. In this I will define, or describe, the thing called Grammar; and also its different Branches, or Parts.

2. Grammar, as I observed to you before, teaches us how to make use of words; that is to say, it teaches us how to make use of them in a proper manner, as I used to teach you how to sow and plant the beds in the garden; for you could have thrown about seeds and stuck in plants of some sort or other, in some way or other, without any teaching of mine; and so can anybody, without rules or instructions, put masses of words upon paper; but to be able to choose the words which ought to be employed, and to place them where they ought to be placed, we must become acquainted with certain principles and rules; and these principles and rules constitute what is called Grammar.

3. Nor must you suppose, by-and-by, when you come to read about Nouns and Verbs and Pronouns, that all this tends to nothing but mere ornamental learning; that it is not altogether necessary, and that people may write to be understood very well without it. This is not the case; for, without a good deal of knowledge relative to these same Nouns and Verbs, those who write are never sure that they put upon paper what they mean to put upon paper. I shall, before the close of these Letters, show you that even very learned men have frequently written, and caused to be published, not only what they did not mean, but the very contrary of what they meant; and if errors, such as are here spoken of, are sometimes committed by learned men, into what endless errors must those fall who have no knowledge of any principles or rules, by the observance of which the like may be avoided! Grammar, perfectly understood, enables us not only to express our meaning fully and clearly, but so to express it as to enable us to defy the ingenuity of man to give to our words any other meaning than that which we ourselves intend them to express. This, therefore, is a science of substantial utility.

4. As to the different Branches or Parts of Grammar, they are four; and they are thus named: Orthography, Prosody, Etymology, and Syntax.

5. There are two of these branches on which we have very little to say, and the names of which have been kept in use from an unwillingness to give up the practice of former times; but, as it is usual to give them a place in books of this kind, I will explain to you the nature of all the four branches.

6. ORTHOGRAPHY is a word made up of two Greek words, which mean spelling. The use of foreign words, in this manner, was introduced at the time when the English language was in a very barbarous state; and, though this use has been continued, it ought to be a rule with you, always, when you either write or speak, to avoid the use of any foreign or uncommon word, if you can express your meaning as fully and clearly by an English word in common use. However, Orthography means neither more nor less than the very humble business of putting letters together properly, so that they shall form words. This is so very childish a concern that I will not appear to
suppose it necessary for me to dwell upon it; but as you will, by-and-by, meet with some directions, under the head of Etymology, in which Vowels and Consonants will be spoken of, I will here, for form's sake, just observe that the letters, A, E, I, O, and U, are Vowels. X, in certain cases, is also a Vowel. All the rest of the letters of the alphabet are Consonants.

This "very humble business" of spelling, however, must not be passed over so lightly; for it is a subject of very great difficulty to many persons. It is notorious that many of our ablest English authors were never able to spell or punctuate correctly, and that the correctness of their printed books, in this respect, is entirely owing to the skill of the compositor. Some of their manuscripts might, indeed, be very aptly compared to the communication of Tom Hood's witty but illiterate correspondent, who, on writing him a long letter without any points whatever, jotted them all down in a row at the end of his letter, and told him to "pepper and salt" as he pleased. It is the compositor that does the "peppering and salting," and much more, for many a writer of large pretensions.

The orthography of our English words, from their various derivation and the variety of sounds given to the letters of the alphabet, is perhaps more difficult than that of the words of any other modern tongue; and I wish to indicate here the very best education and the variety of sounds given to the letters of the alphabet are.

8. PROSODY is a word taken from the Greek language, and it means not so much as is expressed by the more common word PRONUNCIATION; that is to say, the business of using the proper sound, and employing the due length of time, in the uttering of syllables and words. This is a matter, however, which ought not to occupy much of your attention, because pronunciation is learned as birds learn to chirp and sing. In some counties of England many words are pronounced in a manner different from that in which they are pronounced in other counties; and between the pronunciation of Scotland and that of Hampshire the difference is very great indeed. But, while all inquiries into the causes of these differences are useless, and all attempts to remove them are vain, the differences are of very little real consequence. For instance, though the Scotch say coor, the Londoners caur, and the Hampshire folks caur, we know they all mean to say corn. Children will pronounce as their fathers and mothers pronounce; and if, in common conversation, or in speeches, the matter be good and judiciously arranged, the facts clearly stated, the arguments conclusive, the
words well chosen and properly placed, hearers whose approbation is worth having will pay very little attention to the accent. In short, it is sense, and not sound, which is the object of your pursuit; and, therefore, I have said enough about Prosody.

Here is a circumstance that suggests a by no means unfavorable commentary on the difference between the pronunciation of English in this country and in England: Mr. James Paul Cobbett, son of William Cobbett, has added to a late edition of this grammar, a sixteen-page chapter on pronunciation, pointing out the various classes of words commonly mispronounced by classes and counties of people in England. After carefully noting them all, I have come to the conclusion that the whole batch is utterly useless for our people, as I do not know of a single class of people in this country who make any one of the same mispronunciations. Many of the mistakes are, it is true, made here, too; as, hood for bud; done for done; above for above; farther for father; awch for arch; glass for glass; but they are not made by none but a few illiterate and pretentious people.

The most common mistake made by people in this country consists in misplacing the accent of words; as, in-dustry for in-'dus-try; in-ter-est-ing for in-'ter-e-st-ing. All these may be corrected by reference to the dictionary, in which the pronunciation of every word is properly marked. The stress of the voice always falls on that syllable having the accent-mark ('); thus, per-'emp-to-ry, not per-em-t-o-ry. I have read somewhere that, on one occasion, when Mr. Sumner's colleague in the Senate said he hoped that the honorable gentlemen would make an in'-quir-y into some matter, Mr. Sumner whispered to him: "inquir'y."

By-the-bye, there is one other mistake in pronunciation, which is very common among Americans, in the Eastern States at least, and that is pronouncing such words as new, deo, stone, as if they were written noo, doo, stoo. They must be pronounced like fas and sas. The same error is made in such words as duet, grati-\l tude, where the u must be long, as in useful.

There is something else that usually comes under this heading. The Greek word prosodia means, literally, "belonging to song or hymn," and is usually employed to signify that part of grammar which treats of the rules of rhythm in metrical compositions. Cobbett, it is well known, had very little admiration for poetry, and no doubt considered it a waste of time to say anything about its laws; but, though perhaps not one in a hundred of those who study this book will ever attempt to write poetry, every intelligent person ought to know something of its laws; and I shall, therefore, at the end of the book, after more necessary matters have been mastered, attempt to show what a simple matter this is, as far as English is concerned.

8. ETYMOLOGY is a very different matter; and, under this head, you will enter on your study. This is a word which has been formed out of two Greek words; and it means the pedigree or relationship of words, or, the manner in which one word grows out of, or comes from, another word. For instance, the word walk expresses an action, or movement, of our legs; but, in some cases we say walks, in others walked, in others walking. These three latter words are all different from each other, and they all differ from the original word, walk; but the action or movement, expressed by each of the four, is precisely the same sort of action or movement, and the three latter words grow out of, or come from, the first. The words here mentioned differ from each other with regard to the letters of which they are composed. The difference is made in order to express differences as to the Persons who walk, as to the Number of persons, as to the Time of walking. You will come, by-and-by, to the principles and rules according to which the varying of the spelling of words is made to correspond with these and other differences; and these principles and rules constitute what is called Etymology.

9. SYNTAX is a word which comes from the Greek. It means, in that language, the joining of several things together; and, as used by grammarians, it means those principles and rules which teach us how to put words together so as to form sentences. It means, in short, sentence-making. Having been taught by the rules of Etymology, what are the relationships of words, how words grow out of each other, how they are varied in their
letters in order to correspond with the variation in the circumstances to which they apply, Syntax will teach you how to give all your words their proper situations or places, when you come to put them together into sentences. And here you will have to do with points as well as with words. The points are four in number, the Comma, the Semi-Colon, the Colon, and the Period. Besides these points, there are certain marks, such as the mark of interrogation, for instance; and to use these points and marks properly is, as you will by-and-by find, a matter of very great importance.

10. I have now given you a description of Grammar, and of its separate Branches or Parts. I have shown you, that the first two of these Branches may be dismissed without any further notice; but very different is the case with regard to the latter two. Each of these will require several Letters; and these Letters will contain matter which it will be impossible to understand without the greatest attention. You must read soberly and slowly, and you must think as you read. You must not hurry on from one Letter to another, as if you were reading a history; but you must have patience to get, if possible, at a clear comprehension of one part of the subject before you proceed to another part. When I was studying the French language, the manner in which I proceeded was this: when I had attentively read over, three times, a lesson, or other division of my Grammar, I wrote the lesson down upon a loose sheet of paper. Then I read it again several times in my own hand-writing. Then I copied it, in a very plain hand, and without a slit, into a book, which I had made for the purpose. But if, in writing my lesson down on a loose sheet of paper, I committed one single error, however trifling, I used to tear the paper, and write the whole down again; and, frequently, this occurred three or four times in the writing down of one lesson. I, at first, found this labor very irksome; but, having imposed it on myself as a duty, I faithfully discharged that duty; and, long before I had proceeded half way through my Grammar, I experienced all the benefits of my industry and perseverance.

This was, no doubt, how Cobbett, in his soldier days, learned to spell and punctuate; for what he did was as good as writing so many dictations. If any scholar feels like following his example, he may lighten the labor and secure nearly equal benefit by writing the lessons down as dictations.

---

LETTER III.

ETYMOLOGY.

The different Parts of Speech, or Sorts of Words.

My dear James:

11. In the second Letter I have given you a description of Etymology, and shown you that it treats of the pedigree, or relationship, of words, of the nature of which relationship I have given you a specimen in the word walk. The next thing is to teach you the principles and rules, according to which the spelling and employing of words are varied in order to express the various circumstances attending this relationship. But, before I enter on this part of my instructions, I must inform you that there are several distinct sorts of words, or, as they are usually called, Parts of Speech; and it will be necessary for you to be able, before you proceed further, to distinguish the words belonging to each of these Parts of Speech from those belonging to the other parts. There are Nine Parts of Speech, and they are named thus:

- ARTICLES,
- PRONOUNS,
- VERBS,
- PREPOSITIONS,
- NOUNS,
- ADJECTIVES,
- ADVERBS,
- INTERJECTIONS.

---
12. Before the sergeant begins to teach young soldiers their exercise of the musket, he explains to them the different parts of it; the butt, the stock, the barrel, the loops, the swivels, and so on; because, unless they know these by their names, they cannot know how to obey his instructions in the handling of the musket. Sailors, for the same reason, are told which is the tiller, which are the yards, which the shrouds, which the tackles, which the sheets, which the booms, and which are each and every part of the ship. Apprentices are taught the names of all the tools used in their trade; and ploughboys the names of the various implements of husbandry. This species of preliminary knowledge is absolutely necessary in all these callings of life; but not more necessary than it is for you to learn, before you go any further, how to know the sorts of words one from another. To teach you this, therefore, is the object of the present letter.

13. ARTICLES. There are but three in our language; and these are, the, an, and a. Indeed, there are but two, because an and a are the same word, the latter being only an abbreviation, or shortening, of the former. I shall, by-and-by, give you rules for the using of these Articles; but my business in this place is only to teach you how to know one sort of words from another sort of words.

14. NOUNS. The word Noun means name, and nothing more; and Nouns are the names of persons and things. As far as persons and other animals and things that we can see go, it is very easy to distinguish Nouns; but there are many Nouns which express what we can neither see, nor hear, nor touch. For example: Conscience, Vanity, Vice, Sobriety, Steadiness, Valour; and a great number of others. Grammarians, anxious to give some easy rule by which the scholar might distinguish Nouns from other words, have directed him to put the words, the good, before any word, and have told him that, if the three words make sense, the last word is a Noun. This is frequently the case; as, the good house, the good dog; but the good sobriety would not appear to be very good sense. In fact there is no rule of this kind that will answer the purpose. You must employ your mind in order to arrive at the knowledge here desired.

15. Every word which stands for a person or any animal, or for any thing of substance, dead or alive, is a Noun. So far the matter is very easy. Thus, man, cat, tree, log, are Nouns. But when we come to the words which are the names of things, and which things are not substances, the matter is not so easy, and it requires a little sober thought. This word thought, for example, is a Noun.

16. The only sure rule is this: that a word which stands for any thing that has an existence is a Noun. For example: Pride, Folly, Thought, Misery, Truth, Falsehood, Opinion, Sentiment. None of these have any substance. You cannot see them, or touch them; but they all have an existence. They all exist in the world; and, therefore, the words which represent them, or stand for them, are called Nouns. If you be still a little puzzled here, you must not be impatient. You will find the difficulty disappear in a short time, if you exert your powers of thinking. Ask yourself what existence means. You will find that the words, very, for, think, but, pretty, do not express any thing which has an existence, or a being; but that the words, motive, zeal, pity, kindness, do express things which have a being, or existence.

17. PRONOUNS. Words of this sort stand in the place of Nouns. Their name is from the Latin, and it means For-nouns, or For-names; that is to say, these words, called Pronouns, are used for, or instead of, Nouns. He, She, Her, Him, Who, for example, are Pronouns. The use of them is to prevent the repetition of Nouns, and to make speaking and writing more rapid and less
Encumbered with words. An example will make this clear to you in a minute. Thus:

18. A woman went to a man, and told him that he was in great danger of being murdered by a gang of robbers, who had made preparations for attacking him. He thanked her for her kindness, and, as he was unable to defend himself, he left his house and went to a neighbor's.

19. Now, if there were no Pronouns, this sentence must be written as follows:—A woman went to a man, and told the man, that the man was in great danger of being murdered by a gang of robbers; as a gang of robbers had made preparations for attacking the man. The man thanked the woman for the woman's kindness; and as the man was unable to defend the man's self, the man left the man's house and went to a neighbor's.

20. There are several different classes of Pronouns; but of this, and of the manner of using Pronouns, you will be informed by-and-by. All that I aim at here is to enable you to form a clear idea with regard to the difference in the sorts of words, or Parts of Speech.

21. ADJECTIVES. The word Adjective, in its full, literal sense, means something added to something else. Therefore, this term is used in Grammar as the name of that Part of Speech which consists of words which are added, or put, to Nouns, in order to express something relating to the Nouns, which something could not be expressed without the help of Adjectives. For instance, there are several turkeys in the yard, some black, some white, some speckled; and, then, there are large ones and small ones of all the colours. I want you to go and catch a turkey; but I also want you to catch a white turkey, and not only a white turkey, but a large turkey. Therefore, I add, or put to the Noun, the words white and large, which, therefore, are called Adjectives.

22. Adjectives sometimes express the qualities of the Nouns, to which they are put; and this being very frequently their use, some grammarians have thrown aside the word Adjectives, and have called words of this sort, Qualities. But this name is not sufficiently comprehensive; for there are many words which are Adjectives which have nothing to do with the quality of the Nouns to which they are put. Good and bad express qualities, but long and short merely express dimension, or duration, without giving any intimation as to the quality of the things expressed by the Nouns to which they are put; and yet long and short are Adjectives. You must read very attentively here, and consider soberly. You must keep in mind the above explanation of the meaning of the word Adjective; and if you also bear in mind that words of this sort always express some quality, some property, some appearance, or some distinctive circumstance, belonging to the Nouns to which they are put, you will very easily, and in a very short space of time, be able to distinguish an Adjective from words belonging to any other Part of Speech.

23. VERBS. Grammarians appear to have been at a loss to discover a suitable appellation for this important sort of words, or Part of Speech; for the word Verb means nothing more than Word. In the Latin it is verbum, in the French it is verbe; and the French, in their Bible, say Le Verbe, where we say The Word. The truth is that there are so many properties and circumstances, so many and such different powers and functions, belonging to this Part of Speech, that the mind of man is unable to bring the whole of them into any short and precise description. The first grammar that I ever looked into told me that "a Verb is a word which signifies to do, to be, or to suffer." What was I to understand from this laconic account?

24. Verbs express all the different actions and movements of all creatures and of all things, whether alive or dead. As, for instance, to speak, to bark, to grow, to
moulder, to crack, to crumble, and the like. In all these cases there is movement clearly understood. But in the cases of to think, to reflect, to remember, to like, to disbelieve, and in an infinite number of cases, the movement is not so easily perceived. Yet these are all Verbs, and they do indeed express movements which we attribute to the mind, or the heart. But what shall we say in the cases of to sit, to sleep, to rot, and the like? Still these are all Verbs.

25. Verbs are, then, a sort of words, the use of which is to express the actions, the movements, and the state or manner of being, of all creatures and things, whether animate or inanimate. In speaking with reference to a man, to fight is an action; to reflect is a movement; to sit is a state of being.

26. Of the manner of using Verbs you will hear a great deal by-and-by; but what I have here said will, if you read attentively, and take time to consider, be sufficient to enable you to distinguish Verbs from the words which belong to the other Parts of Speech.

27. ADVERBS are so called because the words which belong to this Part of Speech are added to verbs. But this is an inadequate description; for, as you will presently see, they are sometimes otherwise employed. You have seen that Verbs express actions, movements, and states of being; and it is very frequently the use of Adverbs to express the manner of actions, movements, and states of being. Thus: the man fights bravely; he reflects profoundly; he sits quietly. In these instances the Adverbs perform an office, and are placed in a situation, which fully justify the name that has been given to this sort of words. But there are many Adverbs which do not express the manner of actions, movements, or states of being, and which are not added to verbs. For instance: "When you sow small seeds, make the earth very fine, and if it have, of late, been dry weather, take care to press the earth extremely hard upon the seeds." Here are four Adverbs, but only the last of the four expresses any thing connected with a verb. This shows that the name of this class of words does not fully convey to our minds a description of their use.

28. However, with this name you must be content; but you must bear in mind that there are Adverbs of time, of place, and of degree, as well as of manner; and that their business is to express, or describe, some circumstances in addition to all that is expressed by the Nouns, Adjectives, and Verbs. In the above sentence, for example, the words when, very, of late, and extremely, add greatly to the precept, which, without them, would lose much of its force.

29. PREPOSITIONS. The Prepositions are, in, to, for, from, of, by, with, into, against, at, and several others. They are called Prepositions from two Latin words, meaning before and place; and this name is given them because they are in most cases placed before Nouns and Pronouns; as, "Indian corn is sown in May. In June, and the three following months, it is carefully cultivated. When ripe, in October, it is gathered in the field, by men who go from hill to hill with baskets, into which they put the ears. The leaves and stalks are then collected for winter use; and they not only serve as food for cattle and sheep, but are excellent in the making of sheds to protect animals against the inclemency of the weather."

30. Prepositions are not very numerous, and, though you will be taught to be very careful in using them, the above sentence will be quite sufficient to enable you to know the words belonging to this Part of Speech from the words belonging to any other Part of Speech.

Notes that the word is from "prae," before, and "poste," a placing. Now take any article of furniture near you—the desk, for instance—and think of all the relations of position with regard to it and something else. The book is in the desk, on the desk, over the desk, above, under, beneath or below the desk, near
the desk, against the desk, beside the desk, within or without the desk, and so on. Still, other relations are sometimes expressed by prepositions as well as that of position; as, by the desk, of the desk, to the desk, for the desk; but the majority of them show some relation of position between things and actions, or between persons and actions, or between things and states. This word *between*, for instance, is a preposition. Like other words used in grammar, its name, preposition, does not express completely the nature of it.

31. CONJUNCTIONS are so called because they *con*join, or *join* together, words, or parts of sentences; as, "Peas and beans may be severed from the ground before they be quite dry; but they must not be put into sacks or barns until perfectly dry, *for* if they be, they will mould." The word *and* joins together the words peas and beans, and, by the means of this *juncti on*, makes all the remaining part of the sentence apply to both. The word *but* connects the first with the second member of the sentence. The word *for*, which is sometimes a Conjunction, performs, in this case, the same office as the word *but*; it continues the connection; and thus does every part of the sentence apply to each of the two nouns which are the subject of it.

What a deal of useless learning we find in the ordinary grammars about this simple matter of conjunctions! They speak of conjunctions which are mere connectives, of co-ordinate and subordinate connectives, of copulative, adverSeeive, and alternative conjunctions; then of subordinate connectives which join heterogeneous elements, and these subordinate connectives again divided into those which unite substantive clauses, those which unite adjective clauses, and those which unite adverbial clauses. What are children to make of all these hard words? Or, supposing they are made to understand the words, will it enable them to use the word *and*, for instance, more correctly by informing them that it is a copulative conjunction?

32. INTERJECTIONS. This name comes from two Latin words: *inter*, which means *betw een*, and *jectio*, which means *something thrown*. So that the full, literal mean-

ing of the word is *something thrown between*. The Interjections are *Ah!* Oh! *Alas!* and such like, which, indeed, are not words, because they have no definite meaning. They are mere *sounds*, and they have been mentioned by me merely because other grammarians have considered them as being a Part of Speech. But this one notice of them will be quite sufficient.

Here Cobbett's defective knowledge of Latin crops out, for *jectio* (jude) does not mean *something thrown*, but merely to *throw*. But he is quite right in setting down interjections as forming no part of grammar. A writer in Chamber's Encyclopedia hits the mark still more effectively when he says that "they are, in fact, mere skin to the sounds emitted by the lower animals than to articulate speech." Yet most grammarians take the trouble to set them down in classes, those that express surprise, those that express fear, and so on; as if the veriest boor that ever hopped over a clod would not know how to utter an exclamation expressing fear or surprise when he felt it! It is something very much like the Irishman's "teaching ducks to swim."

33. Thus, then, you are now able to distinguish, in many cases at least, to what Part of Speech belongs each of the several words which may come under your observation. I shall now proceed to the Etymology of each of these Parts of Speech. As we have done with the Interjections, there will remain only *eight* Parts to treat of, and this I shall do in eight Letters, allotting one Letter to each Part of Speech.

Here it seems proper to say to the thoughtful scholar that a word *may* (as remarked by Mr. White) belong to almost any part of speech, according to its use. We say *dog* is a noun; and so it is when it means an animal of the dog species; but it may be a verb or an adjective: as, he will *dog* me to my home; here is a *dog cart*. In this very phrase, "*dog species,*" it is an adjective. Take, again, the word *but*. I will give it to you of four different parts of speech in four different senses. "I will go, but I will return. He is *but* five years old. The goat will *but* his head against you. He always has a *but* in his sayings." And the word could no doubt be used in still other parts of speech. If you cannot make these out now, wait a little; you will be able to do so by-and-by.
Spelled with two t's, there are three different butts, with three different meanings: the butt of ridicule, the butt of a sedge, the butt of wine. Then, again, a word may be of two different parts of speech with a different accent, as, I re-cord the deed; this is the rec'ord. You see, therefore, every thing depends on the sense or the use made of a word; and you see, too, the utter uselessness of learning by heart instead of by reason. In learning any art or science, an ounce of understanding is worth a ton of memory.

LETTER IV.

ETYMOLOGY OF ARTICLES.

My dear James:

34. In Letter III., paragraph 13, you have seen what sort of words Articles are; that is to say, you have there learned how to distinguish the words belonging to this Part of Speech from words belonging to other Parts of Speech. You must now turn to Letter II., paragraph 8. Having read what you find there under the head of Etymology, you will see at once, that my business, in this present Letter, is to teach you those principles and rules according to which Articles are varied in order to make them suit the different circumstances which they are used to express.

35. You have seen that there are but three Articles, namely, A or AN, and THE. The two former are, in fact, the same word, but of this I shall say more presently. They are called indefinite Articles, because they do not define, or determine, what particular object is spoken of. The Nouns, to which they are prefixed, only serve to point out the sort of person or thing spoken of, without defining what person or what thing; as, a tree is blown down. From this we learn that some tree is blown down, but not what tree. But the definite Article THE determines the particular object of which we speak; as, the tree which stood close beside the barn is blown down. In this last instance, we are not only informed that a tree is blown down, but the sentence also informs us what particular tree it is. This Article is used before nouns in the plural as well as before nouns in the singular number. It is sometimes used before words expressive of degrees of comparison; as, the best, the worst, the highest, the lowest. When we use a noun in the singular number to express a whole species, or sort, we use the definite Article; thus, we say, the oak is a fine tree, when we mean that oaks are fine trees.

36. The Article A becomes AN when this Article comes immediately before any word which begins with a vowel. This is for the sake of the sound, as an adder, an elephant, an inch, an oily seed, an ugly hat. The word an is also used before words which begin with an h which is mute; that is to say, which, though used in writing, is not sounded in speaking; as, an hour. This little variation in the article is, as I said before, for the sake of the sound; for it would be very disagreeable to say, a adder, a elephant, a inch, a oily seed, a ugly hat, a hour, and the like. But a is used in the usual way before words which begin with an h which is sounded in speaking; as, a horse, a hair, and the like. The indefinite Article can be used before nouns in the singular number only. There is a seeming exception to this rule in cases where the words few and many come before the noun; as, a few horses; a great many horses; but, in reality, this is not an exception, because the words few and many mean number; thus, a small number of horses, a great number of horses; and the indefinite Article agrees with this word number, which is understood, and which is in the singular.

It is remarkable that a man of Cobbett's discernment did not see through a certain inconsistency in the strict or literal application of this rule, the more especially as he explicitly declares that the change is made for the sake of the sound. He, like a thousand
others to the present day, followed out the letter of the rule and violated its spirit. For a word may begin with a vowel and yet have a consonant sound; and in this case the article must not be changed. Does it not sound much better to say, "a useful book," than "an useful book" or "such a one?" And it will be seen that when we say a useful book, a one, a yunon, a vose, a European, and the like, we really conform to the spirit of the rule; for in all these cases the words begin with the sound of a consonant; as, a yuseful book, a yone, a yunion, a yose, a yuropean.

And this also clearly illustrates something else that has been left mysteriously indefinite in many grammars: "The vowels are a, ə, i, e, u, and sometimes e and y." What a puzzle this used to be to me in my grammar-studying days! There was the rule, plain enough; but when w and y were consonants, I knew no more than the man in the moon! I suppose these writers of grammars repeat this rule, one after another, without knowing anything about it themselves. Now the reason here given why the indefinite article must remain unchanged before words beginning with a vowel and having a ə or w sound, explains the whole matter; namely, that y and w at the beginning of a syllable are consonants, but in the middle or at the end of a syllable are vowels. In the word sympathy, for instance, both y's are vowels, because they are equal to ə's; in the word yesterday, the first is a consonant, and the second a vowel. It is precisely the same with the w; in the words new, fee, pene, the w's are vowels, being equal to ə's; in the word window, the first is a consonant and the second a vowel.

But there is another rule concerning words beginning with h, a rule of which Cobbett and many other writers of his day seem to have been unaware—although I have no doubt they unconsciously obeyed it—which is also formed for the sake of the sound. In those four words, for instance, history, historical, hero, heroic, the h is uniformly sounded, or aspirated. Yet we say an historical fact, an heroic poem, a history, a hero. How does this come? It is because we must say an before words beginning with h aspirate, when the accent of such words falls on the second syllable. That is the rule. Say, therefore, an hotel, an hereditary prince, and not, as many do, a hotel, a hereditary prince; for the former sounds better.

I may here add that the tendency now-a-days is to sound the h in some words in which it was formerly silent: a humble man, a hospital, a hostler. I suppose Dickens's Uriah Heep has made most people disgusted with "an 'umble man." And it is perhaps worth remarking here that many Americans make a serious mistake when they believe that all Englishmen drop their aitches, and put them in where they ought not to do so. The latter is never done by anybody in England but illiterate Londoners, and the former seldom by Englishmen of any culture.

I notice that recent grammarians follow Noah Webster in setting down articles as adjectives. It is true that these words always modify nouns in some way; but I see no advantage in setting them down among a class of words which generally signify the kind or quality of things, thus rendering the adjective itself all the more difficult to define. Besides, the articles have characteristics entirely their own, which can be remembered the better by keeping them apart. We shall see this more clearly by-and-by.

**Letter V.**

**Etymology of Nouns.**

37. This, my dear James, is a Letter of great importance, and, therefore, it will require great attention from you. Before you proceed further, you will again look well at Letter II., paragraph 8, and Letter III., paragraphs 14, 15, and 16, and there read carefully everything under the head of Nouns.

38. Now, then, as Letter III. has taught you how to distinguish Nouns from the words which belong to the other Parts of Speech, the business here is to teach you the principles and rules according to which Nouns are to be varied in the letters of which they are composed, according to which they are to be used, and according to which they are to be considered in their bearings upon other words in the sentences in which they are used.

39. In a Noun there are to be considered the branches, the numbers, the genders, and the cases; and all these must be attended to very carefully.

40. The branches. There are two; for Nouns are
some of them proper and some common. A Noun is called proper when it is used to distinguish one particular individual from the rest of the individuals of the same species or kind; as James, Botley, Hampshire. The Noun is called common when it applies to all the individuals of a kind; as, man, village, county. Botley is a proper Noun, because all villages have not this name; but village is a common noun, because all villages are called by that name: the name is common to them all. Several persons have the name of James, to be sure, and there is a Hampshire in America as well as in England; but, still, these are proper names, because the former is not common to all men, nor the latter to all counties. Proper Nouns take no articles before them, because the extent of their meaning is clearly pointed out in the word itself. In figurative language, of which you will know more by-and-by, we sometimes, however, use the article; as, "Goldsmith is a very pretty poet, but not to be compared to the Popes, the Drydens, or the Otways." And again; "I wish I had the wit of a Swift." We also use the definite article before proper Nouns when a common Noun is understood to be left out; as, The Delaware, meaning the River Delaware. Also when we speak of more than one person of the same name; as, the Henries, the Edwards.

A very important difference in the use of proper and common nouns is, that the former are written with a capital letter, and the latter are not. This is the general rule, and it is generally observed; but some writers begin every word they think important with a capital letter, and nobody is more peculiar in this respect than Cobbett himself. He writes noun, you see, with a capital, although it is a common noun. Formerly every noun used to be written with a capital letter, as is done in German till this day. Thomas Carlyle is another singular punctuator and capitalizer; but he is singular in all things.

41. THE NUMBERS. These are the Singular and the Plural. The Singular is the original word; and, in general, the Plural is formed by adding an s to the singular, as dog, dogs. But though the greater part of our Nouns form their plurals from the singular in this simple manner, there are many which do not; while there are some Nouns which have no plural number at all, and some which have no singular. Therefore, considering the above to be the First Rule, I shall add other rules with regard to the Nouns which do not follow that Rule.—The Sixth Rule. Nouns, the singular numbers of which end in ch, s, sh, or z, require es to be added in order to form their plural number; as, church, churches; brush, brushes; lass, lasses; fox, foxes.—The Third Rule is that Nouns which end in y, when the y has a consonant coming immediately before it, change the y into ies in forming their plurals; as, quantity, quantities. But you must mind that if the y be not immediately preceded by a consonant, the words follow the First Rule, and take only an s in addition to their singular; as, day, days. I am the more anxious to guard you against error as to this matter, because it is very common to see men of high rank and profession writing valtis, vallises, attornyes, correspondences, conveniencies, and the like, and yet all these are erroneous. Correspondence and inconvenience should have simply an s; for they end in y, and not in y.—The Fourth Rule is, that Nouns which end in a single j, or in je, form their plurals by changing the j; or je, into ves; as, loaf, loaves; wife, wives. But this rule has exceptions, in the following words, which follow the First Rule: Dwarf, scarf, mischief, handkerchief, chief, relief, grief, and others. The two last are seldom used in the plural number; but, as they sometimes are, I have included them.—The Fifth Rule is, that the following Nouns have their plural in en; man, men; woman, women; ox, oxen; child, children. And brethren is sometimes used as the plural of brother.—The Sixth Rule is, that all which nature, or art, or habit, has made plural, have no singular; as, ashes, annals, bellows, bowels, thanks, breeches, entrails, lungs, scissors,
snuffers, tongs, wages, and some others. There are also some Nouns which have no plurals, such as those which express the qualities, or propensities, or feelings, of the mind or heart; as, honesty, meekness, compassion. There are, further, several names of herbs, metals, minerals, liquids, and of fleshy substances, which have no plurals, to which may be added the names of almost all sorts of grain. There are exceptions here; for while liquids, and of fleshy substances, which have no plural, oats has seldom any singular. But all these words, and others which are irregular, in a similar way, are of such very common use that you will hardly ever make a mistake in applying them; for I will not suppose it possible for my dear James to fall into either the company or the language of those who talk, and even write, about barleys, wheats, clovers, flours, grasses, and malts. There remain to be noticed, however, some words which are too irregular in the forming of their plurals to be brought under any distinct head even of irregularity. I therefore, insert these as they are used in both numbers.

**Singular** | **Plural**
---|---
Die | Dice, Goose, Geese.
Mouse | Mice, Penny, Pences.
Louise | Lice, Tooth, Teeth.
Deer | Deer, Foot, Feet.

Die, dice. This is the little cubic implement of the gamester; but the more worthy implement of the die-sinker is regular; dies, dies. You must not confound this with the dye and dyes of the dyer. It is customary to change penny to pence when speaking of a sum of money; but, in speaking of penny-pieces, the word is regular; as, I have a pocketful of pennies. By-the-bye, all such words as this word pocketful are also regular; three pocketfuls, four spoonfuls, five shorefuls. Three pocketful would be quite another thing. Then again, we must, from the nature of the words, say mothers-in-law, cousins-german, curtes-martial; for the words in-law, german, and martial, are adjectives or qualifying words, and adjectives, in English, never make any change to express number. Englishman and Frenchman become Englishmen and Frenchmen; but not all the nationalities ending in man become men; there are the Romans, the Normans, and the Germans, brave manly races, he doubt, but who will say that the Mussulmans, Turkomans and Ottomans deserve to be called men?

Most of the nouns ending in a, add es to form the plural; as, negro, negroes. There are only a few exceptions; as, folio, quarto, duodecimo, piano, nuncle, cameo, which follow the general rule. I think it useless to clap down every one of the exceptions; for, in the first place, usage is gradually changing the form of some of these words (motto, portico); and, in the second place, the reader can always, when necessary, find the desired information by reference to the dictionary. "I always did admire that speech!!" were the sarcastic words of Mr. Butler in reply to one of Mr. Bingham's speeches. I may say the same thing, unsarcastically, of the reply of a young candidate for the bar, who, on being asked some isolated, unimportant question, said, "I could find that out in two minutes by reference to an encyclopaedia."

There are some nouns, with a plural form but a singular meaning, that are always used in the singular. "The molasses is sticky. The measles is spreading. What is the news? He has made a series of blunders. The pains he has taken to repair them is remarkable. Mathematics (physics, optics, &c.) is an interesting science." Look, therefore, to the meaning and not the form of the word.

Deer, sheep, ratine, vermin, are the same in both singular and plural; but snipes, trout, salmon, fish, and the like, become plural when number is signified, and singular when quantity is signified. "Here are two snipes; I have shot a quantity of snipe. Here are three fishes, three salmons; I have caught a lot of fish, of salmon." Down and pair are used like hundred and thousand; that is, singular with any other number, but plural without any other number. "I saw dozens of those creatures; they walked in pairs; I shot five dozen partridges and bought six pair of pigeons. Five hundred men; there were hundreds of men."

In some compound nouns, both parts are made plural: manservant, men-servants; woman-servant, women-servants; knights-templar, knights-templars. To prevent a confusion of things, we must add 's to figures and letters to indicate the plural: "I want three 5's and four 6's. Mind your p's and q's, and dot your i's."

There are a number of names of persons and things in war affairs that do not make any change for the plural; as, 300 foot (meaning foot-soldiers, or infantry).
400 horse (meaning horse-soldiers, or cavalry).
100 canon; although we also say, many cannons; a number of cannons.
500 head (of cattle).
40 yoke of oxen.
50 sail (meaning ships).

This is a practice that seems to come from the German language, in which words of measure or quantity do not, generally, charge to indicate plurality. Drei Pfund, zehn Fuss, vier Zoll.

Among proper nouns, the only peculiarity is one concerning the young ladies; for in speaking of them, you may give their title or their name the sign of the plural; you may say, the Miss Campbell or the Miss Campbells, just as you please. The latter is, I think, the more common usage, and the one that is likely to prevail; for it is more natural than the former, and prevents confounding the young ladies with their mamma, Mrs. Campbell. (How is it, by-the-way, that most of the children in this country say mam'ma and pap'a instead of mam-ma' and pa-pa', which is the proper pronunciation?) In addressing people, in conversation, we say sir to one person, and gentlemen to several; miss (or Miss So-and-So) to one, and ladies to several. Good morning, sir. Good morning, gentlemen. Good morning, miss (or Miss Jessie). Good morning, ladies. And here let me throw in, without any extra charge, a bit of information for my young reader, which has something to do with politeness as well as with grammar; namely, that when you meet two persons in the street, only one of whom you know, it is proper for you to address both while saluting them: Good morning, gentlemen.

...
34

43. While, however, I lay down this rule as required by strict grammatical correctness, I must not omit to observe that the license allowed to figurative language enables us to give the masculine or feminine gender to inanimate objects. This has justly been regarded as a great advantage in our language. We can, whenever we observe that the license allowed to figurative language into feminine, nouns which are, strictly speaking, neuter; and thus, by giving the functions of life to inanimate objects, enliven and elevate our style, and give to our expressions great additional dignity and force.

This is the figure called personification, which may be illustrated by such examples as these: "Grim-visaged War hath smoothed his wrinkled front." "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than War." "I care not, Fortune, what you me deny; you cannot rob me of free Nature's grace; you cannot shut the windows of the sky, through which Aurora shows her brightening face." Notice that a noun personified is always spelled with a capital letter; and that the noun is made masculine or feminine according to its nature.

Some grammarians speak of a fourth gender, the common gender. Nouns that are common to both genders, they call such; as, friend, parent, cook, slave. But there is really no necessity for such a distinction. When I speak of a friend, I certainly know whether that friend is man or woman, and it is very easy for my hearer or reader know, too, if necessary. If I do not indicate it by the pronoun, my hearer or reader may assume that the friend is man or woman, as he thinks fit; but he cannot think of him or her as both at once. Indeed the gender is usually indicated by the context; that is, by the parts of the discourse preceding and succeeding the word in question. I can hardly speak of a person without using he or she. The Germans generally add es to the masculine noun to make it feminine; as, Freund, Freundin; the French generally add e to the masculine form; as, servante, servante; and the only form in English that is regular is adding ess to the masculine, or changing its ending into ess; as, mayor, mayress; hunter, huntress; actor, actress; count, countess; duke, duchess. As this, however, can be applied but comparatively few words in our language, we are obliged to make use of various expediencies to indicate gender; as, dog-tax, bitch-tax; cock-sparrow, hen-sparrow; he-goat, she-goat; male cook, female cook. Generally, however, in speaking of animals, and also of infants, the distinction of sex is not observed; that is to say, these are usually spoken of in the neuter gender. "What a handsome bird it is! Look at that dog! What a noble creature it is! Did you see the baby? What an interesting child it is!" When we speak of any bird or animal distinguished for its boldness, size, or other quality peculiar to the male, we usually give it the masculine gender, even if its sex is not known. Such are, for instance, the horse or steed, the eagle, the condor, the mastiff, the St. Bernard or Newfoundland dog, and the like. Of course, all animals are personified in fables.

As the words male and female carry a rather animalish significance with them, we sometimes say a lady-friend, a gentleman-rider, a boy-singer. Somebody has observed that the words over the public-school entrances, "Entrance for males," "Entrance for females," sound as if they were entrances for so many little he-bears and she-bears, and therefore prefers "Entrance for boys," "Entrance for girls." It is far better to speak, for instance, of a country being governed by a woman than by a female.

44. THE CASES. The word case, as applied to the concerns of life, has a variety of meanings, or of different shades of meaning; but its general meaning is state of things, or state of something. Thus we say, "In that case, I agree with you." Meaning, "that being the state of things, or that being the state of the matter, I agree with you." Lawyers are said "to make out their case;" or not to make out their case;" meaning the state of the matter which they have undertaken to prove. So, when we say that a horse is in good case, we mean that he is in a good state. Nouns may be in different states, or situations, as to other Nouns, or other words. For instance, a Noun may be the name of a person who strikes a horse, or of a person who possesses a horse, or of a person whom a horse kicks. And these different situations, or states, are, therefore, called cases.

45. You will not fully comprehend the use of these distinctions till you come to the Letter on Verbs; but it
is necessary to explain here the nature of these cases, in order that you may be prepared well for the use of the terms, when I come to speak of the Verbs. In the Latin language each Noun has several **different endings**, in order to denote the different cases in which it may be used.

In our language there is but one of the **cases** which is expressed or denoted by a change in the ending of the Noun; and of this change I will speak presently.

46. There are three Cases: the **Nominative**, the **Possessive**, and the **Objective**. A Noun is in the **Nominative** case when it denotes a person, or thing, which **does** something or is something: as, Richard strikes; Richard is good.

47. A Noun is in the **Possessive** case when it names a person or thing that **possesses** some other person or thing, or when there is one of the persons or things belonging to the other; as, Richard's hat; the mountain's top; the nation's fleet. Here Richard, mountain, and nation, are in the possessive case, because they denote persons or things which possess other persons or things, or have other persons or things belonging to them. And here is that change in the ending of the Noun, of which I spoke above. You see that Richard, mountain, nation, has, each of them, an **s** added to it, and a mark of **elision** over; that is to say, a **comma**, placed above the last letter of the word and the **s**. This is done for the purpose of distinguishing this case from the plural number; or, at least, it answers the purpose in all cases where the plural of the Noun would end in an **s**; though there are different opinions as to the origin of its use. In Nouns which do not end their plural in an **s**, the mark of elision would not appear to be absolutely necessary. We might write man's mind, woman's heart, but it is best to use the mark of elision. When plural Nouns end with an **s**, you must not add an **s** to form the possessive case, but put the elision mark only after the **s** which ends the Noun; as, mountains' tops; nations' fleets; lasses' charms. Observe, however, that, in every instance, the possessive case may be expressed by a turn of the words; as, the hat of Richard; the top of the mountain; the fleet of the nation; the mind of man; and so on. The Nouns, notwithstanding this turn of the words, are still in the possessive case; and, as to when one mode of expression is best, and when the other, it is a matter which must be left to taste.

48. A noun is in the **Objective** case when the person or thing that it names or denotes is the **object or end** of some act or of some movement, of some kind or other; Richard strikes Peter; Richard gives a blow to Peter; Richard goes after Peter; Richard hates Peter; Richard wants arms; Richard seeks after fame; falsehood leads to mischief; oppression produces resistance. Here you see that all these Nouns in the objective case are the object, the end, or the effect, of something done or felt by some person or thing, and which other person or thing is in the nominative case.

That is to say, a noun is always the object of one of two things, a transitive verb or a preposition. I don't think there is anything that enables one to understand this matter of case so well as a proper comprehension of the difference between the transitive and the intransitive verb. I know I never understood it until I learned what a transitive verb was. We have seen that verbs are words expressing action or a state of being. Now watch. "I walk in the field; I run every day; I dream very often; I live in Hoboken." Here the verbs walk, run, dream, live, express an action which does not pass from the actor or subject; it is confined to him; does not pass over to any thing; it is therefore intransitive. "I walk a horse; I run a fire-boat; I dream bad dreams; I live the lie down." Here the action passes from the actor to something else; it goes over to something, the verb is, therefore, transitive. Now whereon this is the case, whatever the action passes to some object, that object or thing or noun is in the objective case. Again: "The boy is choking"—"the boy is choking the cat." In the first instance, the verb is intransitive; in the second, it is transitive, and "cat" is conse-
quently in the objective case. Besides the transitive verb, there is, as I have said, only one other thing that can put a noun in the objective case, and that is the preposition, which always governs the objective case, or puts whatever thing follows it in the objective case. You notice this in the above examples of Cobby's. A noun each time comes after a transitive verb or a preposition. You notice this in the above examples of Cobb's, and the desk (Letter III, par. 29), the word is invariably in the objective case. As to the nominative case (the subject), the name of the person or thing that does, or suffers something, is in that case. Notice that a noun following the verb to be is always in the nominative case. The Germans, in their expressive language, call these three cases the who-case, the whose-case, and the whom-case. Just try this, and you will see that the nominative answers to Who? the possessive to Whose? and the objective to Whom?

LETER VI.

ETYMOLOGY OF PRONOUNS.

MY DEAR JAMES:

49. You will now refer to paragraphs 17, 18, and 19, in Letter III; which paragraphs will refresh your memory as to the general nature and use of Pronouns. Then, in proceeding to become well acquainted with this Part of Speech, you will first observe that there are four classes, or descriptions, of Pronouns: first, the Personal; second, the Relative; third, the Demonstrative; and, fourth, the Indefinite.

50. In PERSONAL PRONOUNS there are four things to be considered: the person, the number, the gender, and the case.

51. There are three persons. The Pronoun, which represents, or stands in the place of, the name of the person who speaks, is called the first person; that which stands in the place of the name of the person who is spoken to, is called the second person; that which stands in the place of the name of the person who is spoken of, is called the third person. For example: “I am asking you about him.” This circumstance of person you will by and by find to be of great moment; because, as you will see, the verbs vary their endings sometimes to correspond with the person of the Pronoun; and, therefore you ought to pay strict attention to it at the outset.

52. The number is either singular or plural, and the Pronouns vary their spelling; to express a difference of number; as in this table, which shows, at once, all the persons and all the numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person</td>
<td>I,</td>
<td>We</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person</td>
<td>Thou,</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person</td>
<td>He,</td>
<td>They</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53. The next thing is the gender. The Pronouns of the first and second person have no changes to express gender; but the third person has changes for that purpose: he, she, or it; and I need not point out to you the cases where one of these should be used instead of the other.

54. The case is the last thing to be considered in personal Pronouns. The meaning of the word case, as used in the rules of Grammar, I have fully explained to you in Letter V, paragraph 44. In paragraphs 46, 47, and 48, in the same Letter, I have treated of the distinction between the cases. Read all those paragraphs again before you proceed further: for now you will find their meaning more clearly explained to you; because the personal Pronouns, and also some of the other Pronouns, have different endings, or are composed of different letters, in order to point out the different cases in which they are: as, he, his, him.

55. The personal Pronouns have, like the nouns, three cases: the Nominative, the Possessive, and the Objective,
The following table exhibits the whole of them at a view, with all the circumstances of person, number, gender, and case.

### SINGULAR NUMBER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Nominative</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Person</strong></td>
<td>I,</td>
<td>Me,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second Person</strong></td>
<td>Thou,</td>
<td>Thee,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masc. Gen.</td>
<td>He,</td>
<td>Him,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third Pers.</strong></td>
<td>She,</td>
<td>Her,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td>It,</td>
<td>Its,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PLURAL NUMBER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Nominative</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Person</strong></td>
<td>We,</td>
<td>Us,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second Person</strong></td>
<td>You,</td>
<td>You,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masc. Gen.</td>
<td>They,</td>
<td>Them,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third Pers.</strong></td>
<td>They,</td>
<td>Their,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57. Thou is here given as the second person singular; but common custom has set aside the rules of Grammar in this case; and though we, in particular cases, still make use of Thou and Thee, we generally make use of You instead of either of them. According to ancient rule and custom this is not correct; but what a whole people adopts and universally practises must, in such cases, be deemed correct, and to be a superseding of ancient rule and custom.

58. Instead of you the ancient practice was to put ye in the nominative case of the second person plural; but this practice is now laid aside, except in cases which very seldom occur; but whenever ye is made use of, it must be in the nominative, and never in the objective case. I say, speaking to several persons, say, “Ye have injured me,” but not “I have injured ye.”

There is nothing that more strikingly displays the spirit of caste in Germany than the fact that there are four different ways in German of saying you, according to the rank or social position of the person addressed (Sie, du, ihr, er). In English, we say you to the President, and you to a beggar; you to a king, and you to an assembly of kings; and this is characteristic of the sturdy love of fairplay (a word for which there is no proper equivalent in German) among the English race. Among German students, there are only two classes worthy of respect; those that are students, and those that have been students; all the rest are cattle. — Ye is never now except in the solemn style, nominative plural: O ye boys of America, beware of the cheap story-papers, and the cheap and
nasty story-books, for they carry the seeds of a disease that kill soul and body, something far worse than small-pox or yellow-fever.

It is a remarkable fact that many of our obsolete expressions are retained for the solemn style. Thou, thy, thee are now used in prayer, and in solemn compositions, such as Coleridge's Hymn to Mont Blanc, or Milton's Paradise Lost.

59. The words self and selves are sometimes added to the personal Pronouns; as myself, thyself, himself; but, as these compounded words are liable to no variations that can possibly lead to error, it will be useless to do anything further than just to notice them.

60. The Pronoun it, though a personal Pronoun, does not always stand for, or at least appear to stand for, any noun whatever; but is used in order to point out a state of things, or the cause of something produced. For instance: "It freezed hard last night, and it was so cold that it was with great difficulty the travellers kept on their journey." Now, what was it that freezed so hard? Not the frost; because the frost is the effect, and not the cause of freezing. We cannot say that it was the weather that freezed; because the freezing constituted in part the weather itself. No; the Pronoun it stands, in this place, for state of things, or circumstances; and this sentence might be written thus: "The freezing was so hard last night, and the cold was so severe, that the travellers found great difficulty in keeping on their journey." Let us take another example or two: "It is a frost this morning. It will rain to-night. ... It will be fine to-morrow." That is to say, "A state of things called frost exists this morning; a state of things called rain will exist to-night; and to-morrow a state of things called fine weather." Another example: "It is delightful to see brothers and sisters living in uninterrupted love to the end of their days." That is to say, "The state of things which exhibits brothers and sisters living in uninterrupted love to the end of their days is delightful to see." The Pronoun it is, in this its impersonal capacity, used in a great variety of instances; but I forbear to extend my remarks on the subject here; because those remarks will find a more suitable place when I come to another part of my instructions. I have said enough here to prevent the puzzling that might have arisen from your perceiving that the Pronoun it was sometimes used without your being able to trace its connection with any noun either expressed or understood.

61. In order, however, further to illustrate this matter in this place, I will make a remark or two upon the use of the word there. Example: "There are many men, who have been at Latin schools for years, and who, at last, cannot write six sentences in English correctly," Now, you know, the word there, in its usual sense, has reference to place; yet it has no such reference here. The meaning is that "Many men are in existence who have been at Latin schools." Again: "There never was any thing so beautiful as that flower." That is to say, "Any thing so beautiful as that flower never existed, or never was in being."

It may, perhaps, be useful for you to know (especially if you intend to pass an examination) that the word there in the sentences here given is called an expletive, which means a word used merely to fill up a vacancy. You can always leave it out without altering the sense. "There is a tree in the garden" is nothing but "a tree is in the garden."

And you will now, perhaps, be better able to understand Pope's satirical lines on the works of poor authors:

"While expletives their feeble aid do join,
And ten slow words oft creep in one dull line."

62. We now come to the RELATIVE PRONOUNS, of which class there are only three; namely, Who, Which, and That. The two latter always remain the same, through all numbers, genders, and cases; but the Pronoun who changes its endings in order to express the possessive and objective cases; as, who, whose, whom.
63. These Pronouns are called relative, because they always relate directly to some noun or some personal Pronoun, or to some combination of words, which is called the antecedent; that is to say, the person or thing going before. Thus: "The soldier who was killed at the siege." Soldier is the antecedent. Again: "The men, if I am rightly informed, who came hither last night, who went away this morning, whose money you have received, and to whom you gave a receipt, are natives of South America." Men is here the antecedent; and in this sentence there are all the variations to which this Pronoun is liable.

64. Who, whose, and whom cannot be used correctly as relatives to any Nouns or Pronouns which do not represent men, women, or children. It is not correct to say, the horse, or the dog, or the tree, who was so and so, or to whom was done this or that; or whose color, or any thing else, was such or such. But the word That, as a relative Pronoun, may be applied to nouns of all sorts; as, the boy that ran; the horse that galloped; the tree that was blowed down.

The real reason for this use of the word that, however, is because we must sometimes find a pronoun that will stand for both men and animals together: "The horses and the riders that we saw are the favorites." And concerning the pronoun who, a change has taken place since Cobbett's time: we can now use it in the possessive case (whose) with reference to things as well as persons. "The mountain whose top is covered with snow," is considered easier and more elegant than "The mountain the top of which is covered with snow." The poets began to use this form, and prose-writers now use it too. By-the-way, you will notice that Cobbett is a little peculiar in using some irregular verbs in the regular form; as, blowed and frone for blowen and frone. More of this farther on.

65. Which, as a relative Pronoun, is confined to irrational creatures, and here it may be used as a relative in differently with that; as, the horse which galloped; the tree which was blowed down. This application of the relative which solely to irrational creatures is, however, of modern date; for, in the Lord's Prayer, in the English Church Service, we say, "Our Father which art in heaven." In the American Liturgy this error has been corrected; and they say, "Our Father who art in heaven."

66. I cannot, even for the present, quit these relative Pronouns without observing to you that they are words of vast importance, and that more errors, and errors of greater consequence, arise from a misapplication of them than from the misapplication of almost all the other classes of words put together. The reason is this, they are relatives, and they frequently stand as the representatives of that which has gone before, and which stands in a distant part of the sentence. This will be more fully explained when I come to the Syntax of Pronouns; but the matter is of such great moment that I could not refrain from giving you an intimiation of it here.

67. The DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS are so called because they more particularly mark or demonstrate the nouns before which they are placed, or for which they sometimes stand. They are, This, These, That, Those, and What. The use of them is so well known, and is liable to so little error, that my chief object in giving them this separate place is to show you the difference between That, when a relative, and when not a relative. Take an example: "That man is not the man, as far as I am able to discover, that came hither last night." The first of these That's does not relate to the man; it merely points him out; but the latter relates to him, carries you back to him, and supplies the place of repetition. This same word, That, is sometimes a conjunction; as, "That man is not the man, as far as I can discover, that came hither last night, and that was so ill that he could hardly walk." The relative is repeated in the third That; but
the fourth. That is merely a conjunction serving to connect the effect of the illness with the cause.

"I say that that that that author uses is false." Try and discover the four different parts of speech represented by the word that in this sentence. This, that, and their plurals, these, those, are like the articles, called limiting adjectives when used directly before nouns: this hat, these hats. When used with reference to things pointed at, these refers to things nearer at hand than those.

68. Perhaps a profound examination of the matter would lead to a proof of That being always a Pronoun; but, as such examination would be more curious than useful, I shall content myself with having clearly shown you the difference in its offices, as a relative, as a demonstrative, and as a conjunction.

69. What, together with who, whose, whom, and which, are employed in asking questions; and are sometimes ranged under a separate head, and called Interrogative Pronouns. I have thought this unnecessary; but here is an observation of importance to attend to; for which, though as a relative it cannot be applied to the intellectual species, is, as an interrogative, properly applied to this species; as, "Which man was it who spoke to you?"

70. What sometimes stands for both noun and relative Pronoun; as, "What I want is well known." That is to say, "The thing which I want is well known." Indeed, what has, in all cases, this extended signification; for when, in the way of inquiry as to words which we have not clearly understood, we say, What? our full meaning is, "Repeat to us that which you have said," or, "the words which you have spoken."

In this sentence, "I gave him what (that which) he wanted," what is a relative pronoun, but in this sentence, "I gave him what funds he wanted," it is an adjective. Notice that we always say that, never what, after every thing, any thing, nothing, something, all things.

71. The INDETERMINATE PRONOUNS are so called because they express their objects in a general and indeterminate manner. Several of them are also adjectives. It is only where they are employed alone, that is to say, without nouns, that they ought to be regarded as Pronouns. For instance: "One is always hearing of the unhappiness of one person or another." The first of these ones is a Pronoun; the last is an Adjective, as is also the word another; for a noun is understood to follow, though it is not expressed. These pronouns are as follows: One, any, each, none, some, other, every, either, many, whoever, whatever, neither, and some few others, but all of them words invariable in their orthography, and all of very common use.

LETTER VII.

ETYMOLOGY OF ADJECTIVES.

My dear James:

72. In Letter III, paragraph 21, I have described what an Adjective is. You will, therefore, now read that paragraph carefully over, before we proceed in studying the contents of the present Letter.

73. The Adjectives have no changes to express gender or case; but they have changes to express degrees of comparison. As Adjectives describe the qualities and properties of nouns, and as these may be possessed in a degree higher in one case than in another case, such words have degrees of comparison; that is to say, changes in their endings, to suit these varying circumstances. A tree may be high, but another may be higher, and a third may be the highest. Adjectives have, then, these three degrees: the first degree, or rather, the primitive word, called the Positive; the second, the Comparative; the third, the Superlative. For the forming of these degrees I shall
give you four rules; and if you pay strict attention to these rules, you will need to be told very little more about this Part of Speech.

74. First Rule. Adjectives in general, which end in a consonant, form their comparative degree by adding er to the positive, and form their superlative degree by adding est to the positive; as,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>Richer</td>
<td>Richest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise</td>
<td>Wiser</td>
<td>Wisest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Redder</td>
<td>Reddest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big</td>
<td>Bigger</td>
<td>Biggest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot</td>
<td>Hotter</td>
<td>Hottest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75. Second Rule. Adjectives, which end in e, add, in forming their comparative, only an r, and in forming their superlative, st; as,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Better</td>
<td>Best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Worse</td>
<td>Worst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Least</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

76. Third Rule. When the positive ends in d, g, or t, and when these consonants are, at the same time, preceded by a single vowel, the consonant is doubled in forming the comparative and superlative; as,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>Kinder</td>
<td>Kindest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neat</td>
<td>Neater</td>
<td>Neatest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But, if the d, g, or t, be preceded by another consonant, or by more than one vowel, the final consonant is not doubled in the forming of the two latter degrees; as,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loverly</td>
<td>Lovelier</td>
<td>Loveliest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Prettier</td>
<td>Prettiest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

77. Fourth Rule. When the positive ends in y, preceded by a consonant, the y changes into is in the other degrees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loverly</td>
<td>Lovelier</td>
<td>Loveliest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Prettier</td>
<td>Prettiest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

78. There are some Adjectives which can be reduced to no rule, and which must be considered as irregular; as,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Littl e</td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>Least</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

79. Some Adjectives can have no degrees of comparison, because their signification admits of no augmentation; as, all, each, every, any, several, some; and all the numerical Adjectives; as, one, two, three; first, second, third.

But there are some other adjectives that do not admit of comparison. Consider, for a moment, such words as true, round, square, perfect, dead. Properly speaking, nothing can be truer, rounder, squarer, more perfect, or deader than another; yet, in popular speech, these words are often used in the comparative or superlative degree. How often we hear people say, "I never saw anything more perfect;" "this figure is not quite so round as that;" and the like. I do not mean to say that such expressions are absolutely uncorrect; only that they are not strictly correct. To say "more nearly round" or "more nearly perfect" would be more nearly correct. These expressions, however, occur in the rapid flow of conversation, and perhaps express the idea intended better than a more correct (notice these very words) or more choice expression. Editors sometimes speak of a political question as "the deadest of all dead issues;" which is very forcible language; and there is a comparison implied in the familiar expressions, "dead as a door-nail, dead as Julius Caesar."—I may here mention that the word old, in its regular form, old, elder, oldest, is used with reference to persons and things in general; while the forms, elder, eldest, is used to distinguish kinsfolk or historical personages: my elder brother or nephew, my eldest sister or cousin; the elder Pliny, the elder Brutus, the elder or younger Pitt.

Far, further, farthest are used exclusively with reference to distance; but we sometimes use the form further, to indicate something more, or to point out that we have something more to say on a subject. The latter form is also sometimes used as an adjective; have you any further objection?
80. Adjectives which end in most are superlative, and admit of no change; as, utmost, uppermost, innermost.

81. However, you will observe that all Adjectives which admit of comparison may form their degrees by the use of the words more and most; as,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE</th>
<th>COMPARATIVE</th>
<th>SUPERLATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>More rich</td>
<td>Most rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tender</td>
<td>More tender</td>
<td>Most tender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the positive contains but one syllable, the degrees are usually formed by adding to the positive according to the four rules. When the positive contains two syllables, it is a matter of taste which method you shall use in forming the degrees. The ear is, in this case, the best guide. But when the positive contains more than two syllables, the degrees must be formed by the use of more and most. We may say tender and tenderer, pleasant and pleasantest, prettier and prettiest; but who could tolerate delicater and delicatest?

Nobody but Thomas Carlyle, who uses beautifulst, wonderfuller, and the like. To use another of Carlyle’s Germanisms, there is no question but this usage is unright.

LETTER VIII.

ETYMOLOGY OF VERBS.

My dear James:

82. The first thing you have to do in beginning your study, as to this important Part of Speech, is to read again very slowly and carefully paragraphs 23, 24, 25, and 26, in Letter III. Having, by well attending to what is said in those paragraphs, learned to distinguish Verb from the words belonging to other Parts of Speech, you will now enter, with a clear head, on an inquiry into the variations to which the words of this Part of Speech are liable.

83. Sorts of Verbs. Verbs are considered as active, passive, or neuter. A Verb is called active when it expresses an action which is produced by the nominative of the sentence; as, “Pitt restrained the Bank.” It is passive when it expresses an action which is received, or endured, by the person or thing which is the nominative of the sentence; as, “the Bank is restrained.” It is neuter when it expresses simply the state of being, or of existence, of a person or thing; as, “Dick lies in bed;” or, when it expresses an action confined within the actor.

84. It is of great consequence that you clearly understand these distinctions, because I shall, by-and-by, use these terms very frequently. And in order to give you a proof of the necessity of attending to these distinctions, I will here give you a specimen of the errors which are sometimes committed by those who do not understand Grammar. This last-mentioned Verb, to lie, becomes, in the past time, lay. Thus: “Dick lies on a bed now, but some time ago, he lay on the floor.” This verb is often confounded with the Verb to lay, which is an active Verb, and which becomes, in its past time, laid. Thus: “I lay my hat on the table to-day, but, yesterday, I laid it on the shelf.” Let us take another instance, in order the more clearly to explain this matter. A Verb may sometimes be what we call a neuter Verb, though it expresses an action; but this happens when the action is confined within the actor; that is to say, when there is no object to which the action passes. Strike is clearly an active Verb, because something is stricken; a stroke is given to, or put upon, something. But in the case of to rise, though there is an action, it passes on to no object; as, I rise early. Here is no object to which the action passes. But to raise is an active Verb, because the action passes on to an object; as, I raise a stick, I raise my hand, I raise
my head, and also I raise myself; because, though in this last instance the action is confined to me, it is understood that my mind gives the motion to my body. These two verbs are, in speaking and writing, incessantly confused; though one is a neuter and the other an active verb, though one is regular and the other irregular, or though they are not, in any person, time, or mode, composed of the same letters. This confusion could never take place if attention were paid to the principle above laid down.

This is one of the hard passages in the gospel of grammar; a passage which, I am sure, has been a stumbling-block to many a poor fellow who has been unable to make head or tail of it. Well do I remember the difficulty I had myself, when I first studied this grammar, in making it out. It is, I now see, no wonder that the matter was very cloudy to me; for even Cobbett, the plainest and clearest of writers, has got into a muddle about it, as I shall presently show.

Look again at my explanation of the difference between the transitive and the intransitive verb (note to paragraph 11). Then remember that Cobbett’s “nominative” is another word for subject, and his “verb” another word for predicate. “Boys study grammar.” These three words form subject, predicate, and object. “Man dies.” Here is nothing but subject and predicate; and you will notice that “study” has an object, while “dies” has not.

I rise at six o’clock. I raise a wall; I raise my voice. You will readily see that the verb to rise is intransitive, because it has no object; its action does not pass to anything; and that to raise is transitive, because it has an object; its action passes to something, even if it is my own voice, head or hand. Now both these verbs, as used by Cobbett, are in the active voice, for the passing or not passing of the action has nothing to do with the verb being in the active or passive voice, but only with its being transitive or intransitive. It is the state of the subject (or nominative) alone that determines whether a verb is active or passive. “I rise early. I raise my hand.” Both these verbs are in the active voice; for the subject or nominative (I) is acting, and not acted upon. The verb is in the passive voice where the subject or nominative is acted on; as, I am raised; but it is in the active voice when the subject or nominative is acting; as, I rise at five o’clock. Notice that the verb in the passive voice always consists of some part of the verb to be and the past participle of another verb. Cobbett is altogether wrong in saying that “to raise is an active verb because it passes on to an object;” it would be active whether the action passed on to an object or not; for, as I have said, it is the state of the subject that determines its activity or passiveness, and not the verb itself. The passing of the action simply shows that it is transitive.

Now observe that this matter of transitive and intransitive verbs is something by itself, and that active and passive voice is also something by itself. It will, perhaps, help you to understand the matter, when I tell you that no intransitive verb can be used in the active voice. You can not say, I am slept, I am dreamt, I am lived. No; only transitive verbs can be used in the passive voice: I am hated, I am robbed, I am punished. These forms come from the verbs to hate, to rob, to punish, all of which take an object, and are therefore transitive; but the forms to sleep, to dream, to live do not take an object and are therefore intransitive, and cannot be used in the passive voice.

Now, as to that other bugbear, the neuter verb, I think we shall not have much difficulty in understanding it. I never learned the meaning of it from Cobbett, I must confess. And here I may inform you that many grammarians discard the term neuter altogether, and act neuter verbs down simply as intransitive verbs, which, indeed, they are. But you must understand what is meant by a neuter verb, any way. You have seen that when a verb is used in the active voice, the subject or nominative of that verb is acting, and that when one is used in the passive voice, the subject or nominative of that verb is acted on. Now, where a neuter verb is used, the subject is neither acting nor acted on; it is neither, neither. Take an example of all three cases: Tommy kicks the pony; Tommy is kicked by the pony; Tommy is ill. Now in the first case, kicks is active, because the subject (Tommy) is acting; in the second case, is kicked is passive, because the subject is acted on; and in the third case, it is neuter, because the subject is neither acting nor acted on: it is existent without action. Just try if this is not the case with such verbs as to sit, to stand, to exist, to live, to lie, to sleep. When you are sitting, standing, existing, living, etc., you are neither acting nor acted on; you are neither, neuter. Of course, these verbs are intransitive, too; for all neuter verbs are intransitive, but all intransitive verbs are not neuter. There’s the rub; there is where
91. The MonEs.—The
while it is nothing of the sort; it is simply intransitive, and
active. The most recent classification of verbs is into active,
transitive, active-intransitive, and neuter. He kicks the pony; he
rises; he lives. Cobbett, no doubt, followed the grammarians
and dictionary-makers of his time.

85. Having thus given you the means of distinguishing
the sorts of Verbs, I now proceed to matters which are
common to all the sorts. There are four things to be
considered in a verb; the person, the number, the time,
and the mode.

86. The Person.—Read again Letter VI, on the Etymology
of Pronouns. You will there clearly see the use of
this distinction about Persons; and, as I have told you,
you will find that it is a matter of great consequence;
because it will now, at once, be evident to you that, unless
the distinction of person be attended to, almost every
sentence must be erroneous.

87. The Verb must agree in person with the Noun or
the Pronoun which is the nominative of the sentence.
Look back at Letter V, and at paragraphs 44, 45, 46, and
47, in order to refresh your memory as to the nominatives
and other cases. The Verb, then, must agree with the
nominative; as, “I write; he writes.” To say, “I writes; he
write;” these would be both erroneous.

88. Look back at the explanation about the persons in
the Etymology of Pronouns in Letter VI. There are
three persons; but our Verbs have no variation in their
spelling, except for the third person singular. For we
say, “I write, you write, we write, they write;” and only
“he, she, or it writes.” This, then, is a very plain matter.

89. Number is a matter equally plain, seeing that our
Verbs do not, except in one or two instances, vary their
endings, to express number. But when several nouns or
pronouns come together, care must be taken to make the
Verb agree with them; as, “Knight and Johnstone resist
the tyrants.” Not resists. But this will be more fully
discussed in the Syntax.

90. The TIME.—The Verb has variations to express the
time of an action; as, “Sidmouth writes a Circular Letter;
Sidmouth wrote a Circular Letter; Sidmouth will write a
Circular Letter.” Again: “The Queen defies the tyrants;
the Queen defied the tyrants; the Queen will defy the
tyants.” The Times of a Verb are, therefore, called the
present, the past, and the future.

91. The Modes.—The Modes of Verbs are the different
manner of expressing an action or a state of being, which
manner are sometimes positive, sometimes conditional,
and sometimes indeterminate; and there are changes or
variations, in the spelling, or writing, of the Verb, or of
the little words used with the Verb, in order to express
this difference in manner and sense. I will give you an
instance: “He walks fast.” “If he walk fast, he will
fatigue himself.” In most other languages the Verb
changes its form very often and very much to make it
express the different modes. In ours it does not; because
we have little words called signs, which we use with the
Verbs instead of varying the form of the Verbs them-
selves. To make this matter clear, I will give you an
example of the English compared with the French
language in this respect.

E.                               F.
I march,                          Je marche.
I marched,                       Je marchais.
I might march,                   Je marchusera.
I should march,                  Je marcherai.

There are other variations in the French Verb; but we
deflect the purposes of these variations by the use of the
signs, shall, may, might, could, would, and others.

92. The Modes are four in number; the Infinitive, the
Indicative, the Subjunctive, and the Imperative. Besides
there are the two Participles, of which I shall speak presently.

93. The Infinitive Mode is the Verb in its primitive state; as, to march. And this is called the Infinitive because it is without bounds or limit. It merely expresses the action of marching, without any constraint as to person or number or time. The little word to makes, in fact, a part of the Verb. This word to is, of itself, a preposition; but, as prefixed to Verbs, it is merely a sign of the Infinitive Mode. In other languages there is no such sign. In the French, for instance, aller means to go; écrire means to write. Thus, then, you will bear in mind that in English, the to makes a part of the Verb itself, when in the Infinitive Mode.

94. The Indicative Mode is that in which we express an action, or state of being, positively; that is to say, without any condition, or any dependent circumstances. It merely indicates the action or state of being, without being subjoined to anything which renders the action or state of being dependent on any other action or state of being. Thus: “He writes.” This is the Indicative.

95. But the Subjunctive Mode comes into use when I say, “If he write, the guilty tyrants will be ready with their dungeons and axes.” In this case there is something subjoined; and therefore this is called the Subjunctive Mode. Observe, however, that in our language there is no very great use in this distinction of modes, because, for the most part, our little signs do the business, and they never vary in the letters of which they are composed. The distinction is useful only as regards the employment of Verbs without the signs, and where the signs are left to be understood; as in the above case, “If he (should) write, the guilty tyrants will be ready.” And observe, further, that when the signs are used, or understood, the Verb retains its original or primitive form throughout all the persons, numbers, and times.

96. The Imperative Mode is mentioned here merely for form’s sake. It is that state of the Verb which commands, orders, bids, calls to, or invokes; as, come hither; be good; march away; pay me. In other languages there are changes in the spelling of the Verbs to answer to this mode; but in ours there are none of these; and therefore the matter is hardly worth notice, except as a mere matter of form.

97. The Participles, however, are different in point of importance. They are of two sorts, the active and the passive. The former ends always in ing, and the latter is generally the same as the past time of the Verb out of which it grows. Thus: working is an active participle, and worked a passive participle. They are called participles because they partake of the qualities of other Parts of Speech as well as of Verbs. For instance: “I am working; working is laudable; a working man is more worthy of honor than a titled plunderer who lives in idleness.” In the first instance, working is a Verb, in the second a Noun, in the third an Adjective. So in the case of the passive participle: I worked yesterday; that is worked mortar. The first is a Verb, the last an Adjective.

After the indicative, grammarians now insert another mood, called the potential mood, which indicates power, permission, possibility, necessity, determination, duty. This mood Cobbett runs into the subjunctive, after the manner of the French. It is that form which necessitates one of “those powerful little words,” as he calls them, may, might, can, must, will, shall, should, would. This matter of mood, which is quite a difficult subject for beginners, became much clearer to me when I saw how the Germans tamed their moods in their expressive language. They call the infinitive mood the ground-form; the indicative the reality-form; the potential the possibility-form; the subjunctive, the doubt-form; and the imperative the commanding-form. Like the who-case, the where-case, and the whom-case, these words are far more expressive than the Latin terms we use, which ought to have been left where they belonged, in Latin.

You will perhaps be surprised to see will and shall, would and
should, set down as belonging to the potential mood. You will say they belong to the future and the conditional. So they do; but they belong to the potential, too, as I shall show you by-and-by. Take these two examples of the difference between the future and the potential: "I shall write (future) to you, if I can. I will write (potential) to you, come what may. You will do (future) that to-morrow. You shall do (potential) as I tell you." This is one of the most difficult matters in English grammar; a matter which, Cobbett says, foreigners never learn rightly, but which natives learn to use rightly from infancy, and do so without ever thinking of the matter. Extensive reading of good authors and extensive intercourse with good speakers are among the best means of learning the correct use of these words. I have read of a man who, on falling into the river, exclaimed: "I will drown, and nobody shall help me!" More of this anon. (Note to paragraph 585.)

98. Thus have I gone through all the circumstances of change to which Verbs are liable. I will now give you the complete conjugation of a Verb. To conjugate, in its usual acceptation, means to join together; and, as used by grammarians, it means to place under one view all the variations in the form of a Verb; beginning with the Infinitive Mode and ending with the Participle. I will now lay before you, then, the conjugation of the Verb to work, exhibiting that to all its persons, numbers, times, and modes.

INFinitive Mode.

To Work.

INDICATIVE Mode.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Person. I work</td>
<td>We work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d Person. Thou workest</td>
<td>You work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d Person. He, she, or it works</td>
<td>They work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Past Time.

| 1st Person. I worked | We worked |
| 2d Person. Thou workest | You worked |
| 3d Person. He, she, or it worked | They worked |

Future Time.

| 1st Person. I shall or will work | We shall or will work |
| 2d Person. Thou shalt or wilt work | You shall or will work |
| 3d Person. He shall or will work | They shall or will work |

SUBJunctive Mode.

If I work, or may, might, could, would, or should work.
If thou work, or may " " " " work.
If he, she, or it work, or may " " " " work.
If we work, or may " " " " work.
If you work, or may " " " " work.
If they work, or may " " " " work.

IMPERATIVE Mode.

Let me work, Let us work.
Work thou, Work you.
Let him work, Let them work.

PARTICIPLES.

Active.—Working.
Passive.—Worked.

99. Some explanatory remarks are necessary here. The third person singular of the Indicative present used to be written with eth; as, worketh; but this spelling has long been disused. The past time may be formed by did; as, did work, instead of worked; and do work may be used in the present time; but, in fact, these little words are a great deal more than mere marks of the times. They are used in one time to express the negative of another, or to affirm with more than ordinary emphasis.

100. Grammarians generally make a present and a past time under the Subjunctive Mode; but the truth is that any of the signs may apply to the present, past, or future of that mode. These are little words of vast importance; and constant use; and though that use is so very difficult to be learned by foreigners, we ourselves never make mistakes with regard to it. The Verb to be alone changes its form in order to make a past time in the Subjunctive Mode.

101. As to the Imperative Mode, where the pronouns thou and you are put after the Verb, we seldom put the thou and the you. We make use of the Verb only, which is quite sufficient.
102. Some grammarians put in their conjugations what they call the compound times; as, I have worked, I had worked, I shall have worked, I may have worked, and so on. But this can only serve to fill up a book; for all these consist merely in the introduction and use of the Verb to have in its various parts. In the above conjugation all the changes or variations of the Verb are exhibited; and it is those changes and variations which, under the present head, form the important object of our inquiry.

Well, at the risk of incurring the reproach of merely "filling up a book," or, as the reviewers call it, "padding a book," I shall give you this one verb entire, in its present form, with its present names for moods and tenses. Do not be afraid; it will not confuse you, if you will only be patient. There are about six or seven thousand verbs in our language, and they are all, except in the past tense and past participle, conjugated like this. It is in these last two parts that the irregular verbs vary. You cannot single sentence, however short, without a verb; so, surely, you will notice that the compound forms are, as Cobbett says, nothing but the past participle, worked, and the various forms of the verb to have. But the seeing it will help you to remember it. As to the tenses, consider for a moment how many kinds of time there are in nature. What is the time called in which you now are? When is that you had yesterday? What time is it to-morrow? Well, there are three kinds, present, past, and future; and in grammar you may say there are really only three tenses, with a tail to each of them, a perfect tail; and this perfect tail is the compound form of the verb. It is nothing but present, present-perfect; past, past-perfect; future, future-perfect. As to the use of them, you will learn that when we come to the Syntax. Then you will notice that there are five moods, just as there are five continents, five oceans, five races of men, and five zones. Notice that the subjunctive has no changes whatever in its endings. This mood, of which common people and common writers know nothing, and which, some writers think, will finally disappear altogether, is

Complete conjugation of the active verb To Work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Present tense</th>
<th>Indicative mood</th>
<th>Perfect tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple tense</td>
<td>I work</td>
<td>I have worked</td>
<td>I had worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We work</td>
<td>Thou hast worked</td>
<td>Thou hast worked</td>
<td>Thou had worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You work</td>
<td>You have worked</td>
<td>You have worked</td>
<td>You had worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They work</td>
<td>They have worked</td>
<td>They have worked</td>
<td>They had worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past tense</td>
<td>I worked</td>
<td>I have worked</td>
<td>I had worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou worked</td>
<td>Thou hast worked</td>
<td>Thou hast worked</td>
<td>Thou had worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We worked</td>
<td>We have worked</td>
<td>We have worked</td>
<td>We had worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You worked</td>
<td>You have worked</td>
<td>You have worked</td>
<td>You had worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They worked</td>
<td>They have worked</td>
<td>They have worked</td>
<td>They had worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present tense conditional</td>
<td>I should work</td>
<td>I should have worked</td>
<td>I should have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou should work</td>
<td>Thou should have worked</td>
<td>Thou should have worked</td>
<td>Thou should have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We should work</td>
<td>We should have worked</td>
<td>We should have worked</td>
<td>We should have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should work</td>
<td>You should have worked</td>
<td>You should have worked</td>
<td>You should have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They should work</td>
<td>They should have worked</td>
<td>They should have worked</td>
<td>They should have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect tense</td>
<td>I would work</td>
<td>I would have worked</td>
<td>I would have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou would work</td>
<td>Thou would have worked</td>
<td>Thou would have worked</td>
<td>Thou would have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We would work</td>
<td>We would have worked</td>
<td>We would have worked</td>
<td>We would have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You would work</td>
<td>You would have worked</td>
<td>You would have worked</td>
<td>You would have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They would work</td>
<td>They would have worked</td>
<td>They would have worked</td>
<td>They would have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential mood</td>
<td>I might, could</td>
<td>I might have worked</td>
<td>I might have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have work</td>
<td>I might have worked</td>
<td>I might have worked</td>
<td>I might have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou might, could</td>
<td>Thou might, could</td>
<td>Thou might, could</td>
<td>Thou might, could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should work</td>
<td>Thou might, could</td>
<td>Thou might, could</td>
<td>Thou might, could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We might, could</td>
<td>We might, could</td>
<td>We might, could</td>
<td>We might, could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You might, could</td>
<td>You might, could</td>
<td>You might, could</td>
<td>You might, could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They might, could</td>
<td>They might, could</td>
<td>They might, could</td>
<td>They might, could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive mood</td>
<td>I should work</td>
<td>I should have worked</td>
<td>I should have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Thou should work</td>
<td>Thou should have worked</td>
<td>Thou should have worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particles</td>
<td>Present perfect (participial form)</td>
<td>Worked</td>
<td>Having worked</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of Verbs.
used to mark a certain uncertainty or contingency which the indicative cannot well mark, and is used not only after if, but after although, lest, unless, provided that, and various other expressions indicating uncertainty. The only verb in our whole language which makes a complete change in the subjunctive is the verb to be, and that becomes if I be, it I were. Cobbett follows the conjugation of the French verb in using the verb in the imperative. "Let me work," is not the imperative of the verb to work, but the imperative of the verb to let; as is the case with everything that follows let; let me eat, let me drink, let me be. No English verb needs more than one word in the imperative, for the subject or pronoun you is generally unexpressed, or left understood. It is sometimes used for emphasis or contrast; as, "Work you! I shall not work." As to those two great stumbling-blocks of that, in persons. They are called do and will, should and would, all you have to do here is to notice that, in the future and conditional tenses, shall and should are generally used in the first person singular and plural—that is, after I and we—and that will and would are generally used in the other persons.

103. The Verbs to have and to be are of great use in our language. They are called auxiliary verbs. To let and to do are also called auxiliaries, but they are of far less importance than to have and to be. Before, however, I say more on the subject of these auxiliaries, I must speak of all the Verbs as regular or irregular, just observing here that the word auxiliary means helper, or helping.

104. Verbs are called regular when they have their changes or variations according to a certain rule or manner. Thus: "I walk, I walked; I work, I worked." But I cannot say, "I worted." I must say, "I wrote." Now observe that we call regular Verbs all those which end their past time of the Indicative and their passive participle in ed; and if you now look back at the conjugation of the Verb to work, you will find that it is a regular Verb. Indeed this is the case with almost all Verbs. But there are some little irregularities even here, and they must be very well attended to, because a want of attention to them leads to very great errors even as to spelling.

105. These little irregularities I shall notice under five separate heads; and if you should forget, at any time, what has been said on the subject, a reference to these will in a moment set you right.—I. The Verb to work is perfectly regular, for it has ed added to it in order to form the past time, and also in order to form the passive participle. It is the same with the Verbs to walk, to turn, to abandon, and many others. But if the Infinitive, that is to say, the primitive or original word, end in e, then e only is added in the past time and participle, and s instead of est after thou; as in the case of to move, which becomes moved and moves. You have seen, also, in the case of the Verb to work, that we add only an s to form the third person singular of the present of the Indicative: he works. But if the Infinitive end in h, s, z, or e, then es must be added; as, to wish, he wishes; to toss, he tosses; to box, he boxes; to buzz, he buzzes.—II. When the Infinitive ends in y, and when that y has a consonant immediately before it, the y is changed into i, to form the third person singular of the present of the Indicative; as to reply, he replies. But (and I beg you to mark it well) if the ending y have a vowel immediately before it, the Verb follows the general rule in the formation of the third person singular of the present of the Indicative; as to delay, he delays; and not he delays. It is the same in the second person singular; as, to reply, thou repitest, to delay, thou delayest.—III. When the Infinitive ends in y with a consonant immediately before it, the past time of the Indicative and the passive participle are formed by using an i instead of the y; as, to reply, he replied; to deny, it was denied. But if the y be preceded by a vowel, ed is added to the y in the usual manner; as, to delay, he delayed.—IV. The active participle, which always ends in ing, is in general formed by simply adding the ing to the Infinitive; as, to work, working; to talk, talking. But if the Infinitive end in a single e, the e is
dropped; as, to move, moving. The Verb to be is an exception to this; but then that is an irregular Verb. It is never silent in its past tense and in the participles, rap, rapped, rapping; cheat, cheated, cheating; work, worked, working. It is something that is demanded by the pronunciation of the words; for if we did not double the final consonant in words of this kind, we should have to say borer instead of hotter, rapping instead of rapping. And this reminds me to say that it is of the utmost importance for you to study and understand the marking and accentuation of words in the dictionary; for if you wish to pronounce the English language correctly, you will find it necessary to consult the dictionary very frequently. The most learned Englishman or American that lives, or has ever lived—not excepting Doctor Johnson or Noah Webster himself—is, or has been, constantly obliged to consult the dictionary for the correct pronunciation of English words.

How different, in this respect, is the German language! In that language there is but one single word irregularly pronounced; le'-ben-dig, instead of le'-ben-dig, like le'ben. And as to the meaning of every German word explains itself; so that no German boy or man need ever look into a dictionary to find out the meaning or the pronunciation of a word in his language. Every word in that language is spelled, too, as it is pronounced. But the grammatical construction of that language is far more difficult than ours. Mr. White confesses that, in order to learn German, the grammar of the language must be studied. I will go so far as to say, that an Englishman or American who studies the grammar of that language thoroughly well, will never need much further study of the grammar of his mother-tongue.

106. These irregularities, though very necessary to be attended to, do not prevent us from considering the Verbs which are subject to them as regular Verbs. The mark of a regular Verb is that its past time and passive participle end in ed; every Verb which does not answer to this, this mark is irregular.

107. There are many of these irregular Verbs, of which I shall here insert a complete list. All the irregularities (except the little irregularities just mentioned) which it is possible to find in an English Verb (the auxiliary Verbs excepted) are in the past time and the passive participle only. Therefore, it will be sufficient to give a list, showing, in those two instances, what are the irregularities of each Verb; and, in order to render this list
convenient, and to shorten the work of referring to it, I shall make it alphabetical. With the past time and the passive participle of the several Verbs I shall use the first person singular of the pronoun, in order to make the examples as clear as possible.

**LIST OF IRREGULAR VERBS.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Past Time</th>
<th>Participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to abide</td>
<td>I abode</td>
<td>I have abode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be</td>
<td>I was</td>
<td>&quot; been</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to bear</td>
<td>I bore</td>
<td>&quot; borne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to beat</td>
<td>I beat</td>
<td>&quot; beaten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to become</td>
<td>I became</td>
<td>&quot; become</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to befall</td>
<td>it befell</td>
<td>it has befallen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to beget</td>
<td>I begot</td>
<td>I have begotten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to begin</td>
<td>I began</td>
<td>&quot; begun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to behold</td>
<td>I beheld</td>
<td>&quot; beheld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to bend</td>
<td>I bended</td>
<td>&quot; bent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to beseech</td>
<td>I besought</td>
<td>&quot; besought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to bid</td>
<td>I bade</td>
<td>&quot; bidden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to bind</td>
<td>I bound</td>
<td>&quot; bound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to bite</td>
<td>I bit</td>
<td>&quot; bitten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to bleed</td>
<td>I bled</td>
<td>&quot; bled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to break</td>
<td>I broke</td>
<td>&quot; broken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to breed</td>
<td>I bred</td>
<td>&quot; bred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to bring</td>
<td>I brought</td>
<td>&quot; brought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to buy</td>
<td>I bought</td>
<td>&quot; bought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to catch</td>
<td>I caught</td>
<td>&quot; caught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to choose</td>
<td>I chose</td>
<td>&quot; chosen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cleave</td>
<td>I cleave</td>
<td>&quot; cloven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to come</td>
<td>I came</td>
<td>&quot; come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cost</td>
<td>I cost</td>
<td>&quot; cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cut</td>
<td>I cut</td>
<td>&quot; cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to die</td>
<td>I died</td>
<td>&quot; died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do</td>
<td>I did</td>
<td>&quot; done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to drink</td>
<td>I drank</td>
<td>&quot; drunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to drive</td>
<td>I drove</td>
<td>&quot; driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to eat</td>
<td>I ate</td>
<td>&quot; eaten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fall</td>
<td>I fell</td>
<td>&quot; fallen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to feel</td>
<td>I felt</td>
<td>&quot; felt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fight</td>
<td>I fought</td>
<td>&quot; fought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to find</td>
<td>I found</td>
<td>&quot; found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to fly</td>
<td>I flew</td>
<td>&quot; flown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to forbear</td>
<td>I forbore</td>
<td>I forbade,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to forget</td>
<td>&quot; forgot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to forgive</td>
<td>I forgave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to forsake</td>
<td>I forsook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to go</td>
<td>I went</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to ground</td>
<td>I grounded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have</td>
<td>I had</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hear</td>
<td>I heard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hide</td>
<td>I hid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hit</td>
<td>I hit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hold</td>
<td>I held</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hurt</td>
<td>I hurt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to keep</td>
<td>I kept</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to know</td>
<td>I knew</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lay</td>
<td>I laid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to led</td>
<td>I led</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to left</td>
<td>I left</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lent</td>
<td>I lent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to let</td>
<td>I let</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lay</td>
<td>I lay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lose</td>
<td>I lost</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to make</td>
<td>I made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to mean</td>
<td>I meant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to mend</td>
<td>I mended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to meet</td>
<td>I met</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to melt</td>
<td>I melted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to mean</td>
<td>I meant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to melt</td>
<td>I melted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to mean</td>
<td>I meant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Of Verbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinite</th>
<th>Past Time</th>
<th>Participles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to meet</td>
<td>I met</td>
<td>I have met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to overcome</td>
<td>I overcame</td>
<td>I have overcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to overdo</td>
<td>I overdid</td>
<td>I have overdone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to pay</td>
<td>I paid</td>
<td>I have paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to put</td>
<td>I put</td>
<td>I have put</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to read</td>
<td>I read</td>
<td>I have read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to rend</td>
<td>I rent</td>
<td>I have rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to ride</td>
<td>I rode</td>
<td>I have ridden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to ring</td>
<td>I rang</td>
<td>I have ringed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to run</td>
<td>I ran</td>
<td>I have run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to say</td>
<td>I said</td>
<td>I have said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to see</td>
<td>I saw</td>
<td>I have seen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to seek</td>
<td>I sought</td>
<td>I have sought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to sell</td>
<td>I sold</td>
<td>I have sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to send</td>
<td>I sent</td>
<td>I have sent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to set</td>
<td>I set</td>
<td>I have set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to shake</td>
<td>I shook</td>
<td>I have shaken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to shear</td>
<td>I sheared</td>
<td>I have sheared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to shed</td>
<td>I shed</td>
<td>I have shed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to show</td>
<td>I showed</td>
<td>I have shown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to shrink</td>
<td>I shrank</td>
<td>I have shrunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to shoe</td>
<td>I shod</td>
<td>I have shod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to shoot</td>
<td>I shot</td>
<td>I have shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to shut</td>
<td>I shut</td>
<td>I have shut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to sing</td>
<td>I sang</td>
<td>I have sung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to sink</td>
<td>I sank</td>
<td>I have sunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to sit</td>
<td>I sat</td>
<td>I have sat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to slay</td>
<td>I slew</td>
<td>I have slain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to sleep</td>
<td>I slept</td>
<td>I have slept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to slide</td>
<td>I slid</td>
<td>I have sliped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to slit</td>
<td>I slit</td>
<td>I have slipped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to smile</td>
<td>I smote</td>
<td>I have smitten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to speak</td>
<td>I spoke</td>
<td>I have spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to speed</td>
<td>I sped</td>
<td>I have sped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

118. It is usual with grammarians to insert several verbs in their *List of Irregulars* which I have not inserted here. But I have, in the above list, placed every verb in our language which is really irregular. However, I will here subjoin a list of those verbs which are, by some grammarians, reckoned irregular; and then I will show you, not only that they are not irregular, strictly speaking, but that you ought by all means to use them in a regular form.
## Etymology of Verbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infinitive</th>
<th>Past Time</th>
<th>Participles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to awake</td>
<td>I awoke</td>
<td>I have awaked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to bereave</td>
<td>I bereft</td>
<td>&quot; bereft, &quot; overflow, &quot; overflowed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to blow</td>
<td>I blew</td>
<td>&quot; blown, &quot; saw, &quot; sawed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to build</td>
<td>I built</td>
<td>&quot; built, &quot; shave, &quot; shaved,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to burn</td>
<td>I burnt</td>
<td>&quot; burnt, &quot; shine, &quot; shone,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to burst</td>
<td>I burst</td>
<td>&quot; burst, &quot; sink, &quot; slung,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cast</td>
<td>I cast</td>
<td>&quot; cast, &quot; slip, &quot; slipt,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to chide</td>
<td>I chid</td>
<td>&quot; chidden, &quot; slip, &quot; slipt,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cling</td>
<td>I clung</td>
<td>&quot; clung, &quot; melt, &quot; smelt,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to creep</td>
<td>I crept</td>
<td>&quot; crept, &quot; snow, &quot; snowed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to crow</td>
<td>I crew</td>
<td>&quot; crew, &quot; sow, &quot; sowed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to curse</td>
<td>I curse</td>
<td>&quot; curse, &quot; spell, &quot; spelt,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to dare</td>
<td>I dared</td>
<td>&quot; dared, &quot; spill, &quot; spilt,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to deal</td>
<td>I dealt</td>
<td>&quot; dealt, &quot; split, &quot; split,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to dig</td>
<td>I dug</td>
<td>&quot; dug, &quot; spring, &quot; sprung,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to dip</td>
<td>I dip</td>
<td>&quot; dip, &quot; stamp, &quot; stampet,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to draw</td>
<td>I drew</td>
<td>&quot; draw, &quot; string, &quot; strewn,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to dream</td>
<td>I dreamt</td>
<td>&quot; dreamt, &quot; string, &quot; stridden,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to dwell</td>
<td>I dwelt</td>
<td>&quot; dwell, &quot; straw, &quot; strung,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to freeze</td>
<td>I froze</td>
<td>&quot; frozen, &quot; stride, &quot; striven,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to geld</td>
<td>I gelt</td>
<td>&quot; gelt, &quot; string, &quot; strung,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to gild</td>
<td>I gilt</td>
<td>&quot; gilt, &quot; strip, &quot; stript,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to gird</td>
<td>I girt</td>
<td>&quot; girt, &quot; strive, &quot; strived,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to grow</td>
<td>I grew</td>
<td>&quot; grown, &quot; sweep, &quot; swept,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hang</td>
<td>I hung</td>
<td>&quot; hung, &quot; swing, &quot; swung,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to help</td>
<td>I helpt</td>
<td>&quot; helpt, &quot; swim, &quot; swam,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hew</td>
<td>I hewed</td>
<td>&quot; hewn, &quot; swing, &quot; swung,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to kneel</td>
<td>I knelt</td>
<td>&quot; knelt, &quot; thrive, &quot; throw,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to knit</td>
<td>I knit</td>
<td>&quot; knit, &quot; throw, &quot; throwed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lade</td>
<td>I laded</td>
<td>&quot; laden, &quot; thrust, &quot; thrust,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to leap</td>
<td>I leaped</td>
<td>&quot; leapt, &quot; wax, &quot; waxed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to light</td>
<td>I lit</td>
<td>&quot; lighted, &quot; weave, &quot; wove,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LIST OF VERBS WHICH, BY SOME PERSONS, ARE PAST TIME.**

- I loaded, I have loaden or laden.
- I meant, I have meant.
- I mowed, I have mowed.
- I overflowed, I have overflowed.
- I sawed, I have sawed.
- I shaved, I have shaved.
- I shrewed, I have shrewed.
- I shone, I have shone.
- I slung, I have slung.
- I slunk, I have slunk.
- I slipt, I have slipt.
- I smelt, I have smelt.

**PARTICIPLES.**

- It has snowed.
- It has sown.
- It has sown.
109. The greater part of these verbs have become irregular by the bad practice of abbreviating or shortening in writing. We are always given to cut our words short; and, with very few exceptions, you find people writing I wopt, mov’d, walk’d; instead of loved, moved, walked. They wish to make the pen correspond with the tongue; but they ought not then to write the word that is at full length, nor the word of, nor any other little word; for scarcely ever are these words fully sounded in speaking. From mov’d, walk’d, it is very easy to slide into movt, movt, walkt. And this has been the case with regard to curtst, deatst, dwellt, leapt, helpst, and many others in the last inserted list. It is just as proper to say jumpt, as it is to say leapst; and just as proper to say walkst as either; and thus we might go on, till the orthography of the whole language were changed. When the love of contraction came to operate on such Verbs as to burst and to light, it found such a clump of consonants already at the end of the words that it could add none. It could not enable the organs of English speech to pronounce burst’d, light’d. It therefore made really short work of it, and, dropping the last syllable altogether, wrote burst and light in the past time and passive participle. But it is not so harmonious, as well as more correct, to say, “the bubble is almost bursted,” than it is to say, “The bubble is almost burst?” And as to hang, is it not better to say hanged than hung? “I will be hanged if I do,” is a very common phrase, and is it not better than it would be to say, “I will be hung if I do?” Many of these Verbs, being very difficult to contract, have, as in the case of hang, to swing, and the like, reduced the shorteners to the necessity of changing almost all the letters of the words; as, to dare, durst; but is it not better to say I dared than I durst? This habit of contracting or shortening is a very mischievous habit. It leads to the destruction of all propriety in the use of letters; and instead of a saving of time, it produces, by the puzzling that it gives rise to, a great loss of time. Hoping that what I have here said will be a warning to you against the cutting of words short, I have only to add, on the subject of irregular verbs, that those in the last list are to be used in the regular form, and that the only real irregulars are those of the first list. Nay, I have, after all, left some verbs in the first list which may be used in the regular form, as past, which may be, in the participle, passed, and with full as much propriety.

The fact that this second series of verbs, which Cobbett declares ought to be used in the regular form, are now almost all used in cantform, is a pretty good proof of the soundness of his judgment. There is a strong tendency now-a-days to make irregular verbs regular, as well as to make irregularly-pronounced words regular. Mr. White is singular in his notions on this subject. He dislikes all departures from old-established pronunciations; calls them “bookish, not free, manly speech.” Though the people of the town of Darby, for instance, pronounce the name of their town just as it is spelled, he thinks the aristocratic pronunciation “Darby” is the proper one, because it has support in other words pronounced in the same style, such as clerk for clerks, clergy for clergymen, serjeant for serjeants. And yet he seems to agree with Walker that surnames and virtue have “a grossness approaching to vulgarity.” Is not the one just as bad as the other? nay, worse; for we see in these words, like that in thirst and girl, has, in everybody’s mouth, something of the sound of the u. Ought we, in order to satisfy a peculiarity or nicety of taste, to retain an irregular pronunciation in particular words, which gives endless trouble to thousands of teachers and millions of children? I am all the more surprised at this peculiar notion of Mr. White’s, as he seems willing to abolish every change in the ending of words in order to simplify the grammar; even the m in whom he is willing to discard. There is no use in talking about it; it is quite natural that a practical, progressive, reading people like the Americans should pronounce words as they are spelled. We no longer hear housewife pro-
nounced buzzif, as in England; or, haunt pronounced hant. Nor do I think there is any less whatever, but a gain, in so pronounced. "Darby" sounds just as good as "Dar;" "clark" as good as "clerk;" "Berkeley" as "Barkley."

Simplicity is, in fact, the order of the day; it is the tendency of the age in all things; for modern progress, modern ideas, are rendering all mankind more neighborly, more brotherly, more nearly akin to each other. Mr. White is inclined to think that those we call irregular verbs are the real strong ones, and the others the weak. I notice that my little girl, five years old, frequently makes irregular verbs regular (I dranked, I eated, etc.) although she never hears them so used. This to me is a proof that there is a natural tendency in the language to regularity of construction. And indeed there is a reason for this change, as for all changes, in our language—a satisfactory, a compensatory reason; for most of the old irregular forms are needed for other and different service; they are wanted for qualitative and figurative use. Let us take some of these very verbs in the second list—to burn, to chide, to gild, to hew, to load, to shave, to spill, to weave—and we shall see that though used in the regular form as verbs, the irregular form is used as adjectives. I burned the cork; here is burnt cork;—he chid the children; there they go, like a children train;—she gilded the faces of the sleepers; she wears gilt lace;—he girded himself for the combat; here is a sea-girl tale;—he hewed the stone; here is a temple built of hewn stone; and so on. Though we speak of having worked hard, of having melted the ice, and of having sweiled the tide of prosperity, yet we speak of wrought iron, of a swollen flood, of molten lead. Though we say that "she knit the stockings," and "he freighted the vessel," we say that "her brows were knit, and the enterprise was fraught with misfortune." Thus we see that the irregular form of the verb has been turned into an adjective, and the regular form retained as a verb.

The old form is also needed to form nouns as well as adjectives.

"During the past year, he has often passed me without a glance, but, never mind; the past is forgotten." And the old form is sometimes used to show a difference of meaning as compared with the regular form; for "he durst not do it" is quite a different thing from "he dared not do it;" the former indicating that he had not the permission to do it, and the latter that he had not the courage.—Having forgotten what Cobbett said above of the verb to pass, I struck it out of the list of irregulars, as it is never now used irregularly. Otherwise I should have let it stand. It is, however, the only verb I did strike out.

110. AUXILIARY VERBS.—In the present Letter, paragraph 103, I opened this part of my subject. The word let is the past time and the passive participle of the Verb to let. It is used as an auxiliary, however, in the present time; and only in the imperative mode; as, Let me go; let us go; let him go. That is to say, Leave me to go, leave us to go, leave him to go. Perhaps the meaning, fully expressed, would be, Act in such a way that I may be left to go, or suffered to go.

The peculiarity of this verb to let is, that like a dozen other irregular verbs, it may be used in all the tenses without undergoing any change of form; as, I let him come now; I let him come yesterday; I have let him come. I put it away now; I put it away yesterday; I have put it away. So with cut, cast, hit, and others.

111. The auxiliary do, which, for the past time, becomes did, is part of the Verb to do, which in its past time is did, and in its passive participle done. In this sense, it is not an auxiliary, but a principal Verb, and its meaning is equal to that of to execute, or to perform; as, I do my work, I execute my work, I perform my work. As an auxiliary or helper, it seems to denote the time of the principal Verb; as, I do walk; I did walk; and, we may say, I do execute my work, or, I do my work. In this last example, the first do is an auxiliary, and the last do a principal Verb. However, as I said before, do and did, used as auxiliaries, do a great deal more than merely express time. In fact, they are not often used for that purpose only. They are used for the purpose of affirming or denying in a manner peculiarly strong; as, I do work, means, that I work, notwithstanding all that may be, or may have been, said, or thought, to the contrary; or it means, that I work now, and have not done it at some other stated or supposed time. It is the same, with the exception of time, as to the use of did. These are
amongst those little words of vast import, the propriety of force and use of which foreigners scarcely ever learn, and which we learn from our own infancy.

This is, I think, the proper place to state that the English verb has, in fact, five forms in the present tense—something which, I believe, is not found in the verbs of any other modern tongue:

He works, common form.
He is working, progressive form.
He does work, emphatic form.
He worketh, solemn form.
He doth work, solemn emphatic form.

All these forms convey a different shade of meaning, and are used under different circumstances, which will be explained by and by. I will only say here that the first three are the most frequently used. The French and the Germans have only one form for the whole five: il travaille, er arbeitet. They have, it is true, the progressive form, too, but it is seldom used by the French and hardly ever by the Germans.

Now, concerning do, you must notice that, as an auxiliary, it is used chiefly in negative and interrogative sentences:

He works, he is working, affirmative.
He does not work, negative.
Does he work? interrogative.

It is never used in affirmative sentences except for emphasis.

The French and the Germans, for the two last forms, simply say:

He works not, he does not work.

Notice that when any other auxiliary is used (have, be, must, may, etc.), we cannot use do in either negative or interrogative sentences:

"I have not seen him. He must not go. Am I your friend? My speak?" To say, therefore, "I did not have a penny," is not as good as, "I had not a penny."

112. The Verbs to have and to be are the two great auxiliaries. These words demand an extraordinary portion of your attention. They are principal Verbs as well as auxiliaries. The Verb to have, as a principal Verb, signifies possession; as, I have a pen, that is to say, I possess a pen.

Then, this is a word of very great use in its capacity of principal Verb; for we say, I have a headache, I have a hatred of such a thing, I have a mind to go; and hundreds of similar phrases. I possess a headache has the same meaning; but the other is more agreeable to the natural turn of our language. As auxiliaries, this Verb is absolutely necessary in forming what are called the compound times of other Verbs, and those times are called compound because they are formed of two or more Verbs. Suppose the subject to be of my working, and that I want to tell you that my work is ended, that I have closed my work, I cannot, in a short manner, tell you this without the help of the Verb to have. To say, I work, or I worked, or I will work; these will not answer my purpose. No: I must call in the help of the Verb to have, and tell you I have worked. So, in the case of the past time, I must say, I had worked; in the future, I shall have worked; in the subjunctive mode, I must say, I may, might, could, or should have worked. If you reflect a little, you will find a clear reason for employing the Verb to have in this way: for when I say, "I have worked," my words amount to this: that the act of working is now in my possession. It is completed. It is a thing I own, and therefore I say, I have it.

113. The Verb to be signifies existence, when used as a principal Verb. "To be ill, to be well, to be rich, to be poor," mean to exist in illness, in health, in riches, in poverty. This Verb, in its compound times, requires the help of the Verb to have; as, I have been, I had been, I shall have been, and so on. As auxiliary, this Verb is used with the participles of other Verbs; as, to be working, he is working, it is worked. Now you will perceive, if you reflect, that these phrases mean as follows: existing in work, he exists in work, it exists in a worked state. Both these Verbs are sometimes used, at one and the same time, as auxiliaries to other principal Verbs; as, I have been writing; I have been imprisoned; and so on; and, upon patient attention to what has already been said, you will find that they retain upon all occasions their full
meaning, of possession in the one case, and of existence in the other.

114. Now, my dear James, if I have succeeded in making clear to you the principle out of which the use of these words, as auxiliaries, has arisen, I have accomplished a great deal; for, if well grounded in that principle, all the subsequent difficulties will speedily vanish before you.

115. I now proceed to close this long and important Letter, by presenting to you the conjugation of these Verbs, both of which are irregular, and every irregularity is worthy of your strict attention.

### INFINITIVE MODE.

#### To Be.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Person. I am,</td>
<td>We are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d Person. Thou art,</td>
<td>You are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d Person. He, she, or it is,</td>
<td>They are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Past Time.

| If I was, | If thou wast, |
| -He, she, or it was, | -He, she, or it was, |

#### Future Time.

| If I shall, or will be, | If thou shall, or will be, |
| -He, she, or it shall, or will have, | -He, she, or it shall, or will have, |

### INFINITIVE MODE.

#### Of Verbs.

#### PARTICIPLES.

Active.-Having.
Passive.—Had.

116. Though I have inserted hath in the third person singular of the present of the indicative, it is hardly ever used. It is out of date, and ought to be wholly laid aside.

117. The Verb to be is still more irregular, but a little attention to its irregularities will prevent all errors in the use of it.

### INFINITIVE MODE.

#### To Have.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Person. I have,</td>
<td>We have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d Person. Thou hast,</td>
<td>You have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d Person. He, she, or it has</td>
<td>They have.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Past Time.

| If I had, or hath, | If thou hadst, |
| -He, she, or it had, | -He, she, or it had, |

#### Future Time.

| If I shall, or will have, | If thou shalt, or will have, |
| -He, she, or it shall or will have, | -He, she, or it shall or will have, |

### SUBJUNCTIVE MODE.

#### If I have, or may, might, would, could, or should have.

| If thou have, or may " " " have. |
| If he, she, or it have, or may " " " have. |
| If we, have, or may " " " have. |
| If you, have, or may " " " have. |
| If they, have, or may " " " have. |

### IMPERATIVE MODE.

| Let me have, | Let us have. |
| Have thou, | Have you. |
| Let him, her, or it have, | Let them have. |
118. In the Subjunctive Mode I have made use of the conjunction if throughout all the conjugations of Verbs. But a Verb may be in that mode without an if before it. The if is only one of the marks of that mode. A Verb is always in that mode when the action or state of being expressed by the Verb is expressed conditionally, or when the action or state of being is, in some way or other, dependent on some other action or state of being. But of this I shall speak more at large when I come to the Syntax of Verbs.

119. There remain a few words to be said about the signs, the defective Verbs, and the impersonal Verbs. The signs, may, might, can, could, will, would, shall, should, and must, have all, originally, been Verbs, though they are now become defective in almost all their parts, and serve only as signs to other Verbs. Will, indeed, is part of a regular Verb; as, to will, they willed, they were willing, they will be willing. The word would is certainly the past time and passive participle of the same Verb; and indeed, it is used as a principal Verb now, in certain cases, as, “I would he were rich.” That is to say, I desire, or am willing, or, it is my will, that he should be rich. But deep inquiries regarding the origin of these words are more curious than useful. A mere idea of the nature of their origin is enough. The Verb ought is a Verb defective, in most of its parts. It certainly, however, is not other than a part of the Verb to owe, and is become ought by corruption. For instance, “I ought to write to you” means that “I owe the performance of the act of writing to you.” Ought is made use of only in the present time, and for that reason a great deal has been lost to our language by this corruption. As to the Verbs which some grammarians have called impersonal, there are, in fact, no such things in the English language. By impersonal Verb is meant a Verb that has no noun or pronoun for its nominative case; no person or thing that is the actor, or receiver of an action, or that is in being. Thus: “it remains,” is by some called an impersonal Verb; but the pronoun it represents the person. Look again at Letter II, and at paragraphs 60 and 61. You will there find what it is that this it, in such cases, represents.

120. Thus I have concluded my Letter on the Etymology of Verbs, which is by far the most important part of the subject. Great as have been my endeavors to make the matter clear to you, I am aware, that, after the first reading of this Letter, your mind will be greatly confused. You will have had a glimpse at everything in the Letter, but will have seen nothing clearly. But, my dear James, lay the book aside for a day or two; then read the whole Letter again and again. Read it early, and late, while your mind is clear, and while sluggards are snoring. Write it down. Lay it aside for another day or two. Copy your own writing. Think as you proceed; and, at the end of your copying, you will understand clearly all the contents of the Letter. Do not attempt to study the Letter piece by piece. In your readings, as well as in your copyings, go clean throughout. If you follow these instructions, the remaining part of your task will be very easy and pleasant.

As to this last piece of advice, I cannot agree with Cobbett. As to this last piece of advice, I cannot agree with Cobbett. As to this last piece of advice, I cannot agree with Cobbett. As to this last piece of advice, I cannot agree with Cobbett.
curiositics at one visit; master the whole collection step by step; and when you have got it pretty clear in your mind, then you may go over it all at one run.

To complete this, the most important part of etymology, I must give you a full view of a passive verb, or rather of a verb in the passive voice. Just devote one little half-hour to it in the early morning, when your mind is fresh; and you will see its nature clearly; compare it with the same verb in the active voice, and you will get a fair idea of what a verb in the passive voice is. For, to make the matter all the more plain, I see no reason why this same verb to work, which I have given you in the active voice should not be given in the passive, too; for we often say, He is worked to death; the mine was well worked; the problem was worked out, and so on. Besides—and this is a secret which every school-boy does not know—there must, in the conjugation of every passive verb, be displayed a complete conjugation of the verb to be, so here we kill two birds with one stone.

Complete Conjugation of the Passive Verb To be worked.

\[\begin{align*}
\text{INFINITIVE} & : \text{To be worked} \\
\text{INDICATIVE MOOD} & : \\
\text{Present tense} & : \begin{align*}
\text{I am worked,} & \quad \text{I have been worked,} \\
\text{Thou wast worked,} & \quad \text{Thou hast been worked,} \\
\text{He has been,} & \quad \text{He has been.} \\
\text{We were,} & \quad \text{We were,} \\
\text{You were,} & \quad \text{You have been,} \\
\text{They were,} & \quad \text{They have been.}
\end{align*} \\
\text{Past tense} & : \\
\text{I was worked,} & \quad \text{I had been worked,} \\
\text{Thou wast worked,} & \quad \text{Thou hast been worked,} \\
\text{He has been,} & \quad \text{He has been.} \\
\text{We were,} & \quad \text{We were,} \\
\text{You were,} & \quad \text{You have been,} \\
\text{They were,} & \quad \text{They have been.}
\end{align*} \\
\text{SIMPLE FUTURE TENSE.} & : \begin{align*}
\text{I shall be worked,} & \quad \text{I shall have been worked,} \\
\text{Thou will be worked,} & \quad \text{Thou will have been worked,} \\
\text{He will be} & \quad \text{He will have been.} \\
\text{We shall be} & \quad \text{We shall have been.} \\
\text{You shall be} & \quad \text{You shall have been.} \\
\text{They shall be} & \quad \text{They shall have been.}
\end{align*} \\
\text{PERFECT FUTURE TENSE.} & : \begin{align*}
\text{I should be worked,} & \quad \text{I should have been worked,} \\
\text{Thou would be worked,} & \quad \text{Thou would have been worked,} \\
\text{He would be} & \quad \text{He would have been.} \\
\text{We should be} & \quad \text{We should have been.} \\
\text{You would be} & \quad \text{You would have been.} \\
\text{They would be} & \quad \text{They would have been.}
\end{align*}
\]

LETTER IX.

ETYMOLOGY OF ADVERBS.

121. In Letter III, and in paragraphs 27 and 28, you will find a description of this Part of Speech. Read again those two paragraphs, in order to refresh your memory. There is not much to be said about Adverbs under the head of Etymology. They are words liable to few variations. Adverbs are very numerous, and may be divided into five principal classes: that is to say, Adverbs of time, of place, of order, of quality, and of manner.
This last class, which is the most numerous, is composed of those which are derived immediately from adjectives, and which end in *ly*; as, *especially*, *particularly*, *thankfully*.

122. These Adverbs, ending in *ly*, are, for the most part, formed by simply adding *ly* to the adjective; as, *special* becomes *especially*; but if the adjective end in *y* that *y* is changed into *i* in forming the Adverb; as, *happy* becomes *happily*; *steady*, *steadily*. If the adjective end in *e*, the *e* is dropped in forming the Adverb; as, *possible*, *possibly*.

123. Some few Adverbs have *degrees of comparison*; as, *often*, *oftener*, *oftenest*; and those which are derived from irregular adjectives are irregular in forming their degrees of comparison; as, *well*, *better*, *best*.

124. Some Adverbs are *simple* or *single*; others *compound*. The former consist of one word, the latter of two or more words; as, *happily*; *at present*; *now-a-days*; which last means at the days that are now. Another Adverb of this description is, *by-and-by*; which is used to express, *in a short time*; and literally it means *near and near*; because by itself, as an Adverb, means *near*, *close*, *beside*. When Adverbs are compound, the words composing them ought to be connected by a *hyphen*, or *hyphens*, as in the above examples of *now-a-days* and *by-and-by*.

I must here explain to you two important things, of which Collembot makes no mention: the *phrase* and the *clause*. In the sentence, "I shall return immediately," the word immediately immediately is an adverb of time, modifying the verb shall return; but when I change the adverb into several words, as, "I shall return in an instant," it becomes a phrase, an adverbial phrase. Phrases are used to express all that adverbs are used to express, and nearly all adverbs can be turned into adverbial phrases. The adverb now may be changed into at this moment or at present; beautifully may be rendered by in a *beautiful* manner; here may be turned into at this *place*; in a quiet way may be rendered by *quietly*; and so on. And here I must show you that there are many cases where we prefer the adverbial phrase to the adverb. To what part of speech do you think the words *silly*, *kindly*, *friendly*, belong? They look like adverbs, do they not? But they are not, as you will find by *silly*: a *silly* boy, a kindly gentleman, a friendly lady. Shall I then say, The boy speaks *silly*? The gentleman acts *kindly*? The lady received us *friendly*? These expressions are not absolutely incorrect; they are better than with the adjective, *the boy speaks silly, etc.*; but they do not sound agreeable; so we prefer the adverbial phrase: *The boy speaks in a silly manner*, *the gentleman acts in a kindly manner*; *the lady received us in a friendly manner, in a friendly way*. Observe, too, that you ought never to put a preposition before an adverb of place; as, *to here, from there*. You must use a *phrase*, and say, *to this place, from that place*, etc., *always naming the place referred to*. Never say from *sentence, from thence*; but simply *whence, thence*.

Now for the *clause*. The difference between the phrase and the clause is this: the clause always has a subject and predicate (nominative and verb), the phrase never has either. "I shall return when I please." Here, instead of the phrase in an instant, we have an assertion, with subject (1) and predicate (please), which cannot be changed for a single word. This is called an *adverbial clause*; adverbial because it modifies the verb of the first clause; for the sentence now contains two clauses, and is changed from a simple sentence into a compound sentence. Every sentence must have at least one clause, while there may not be a single phrase in ten consecutive sentences. A clause may be not onl, but *objective, participial, infinitive, or relative.* "He asked *what I was doing,*" objective clause; "He came in *as I was going away,*" participial clause; "He wants to see *what will some of it,*" infinitive clause; *the boy who learns English is my son,* relative clause; and so on. Observe the following three examples, and you will see how the adverb may be turned into an adverbial phrase, and the latter into an adverbial clause:

*Speak distinctly.*
*Speak in a distinct manner.*
*Speak so that you may be understood.*

It is worth noticing that some adverbs help to join clauses as well as to express *time* or *place*, and are therefore called *conjunctive adverbs*: I shall return when he returns. I will tell you where we are going. Others, again, express *negation*, *affirmation*, or *cause*, and are called adverbs of *nagation*, of *affirmation*, or of *cause*; as, (1) *no, not, never*; (2) *yes, you, truly, certainly*; (3) *why, wherever,*
therefore. No, coming immediately before a noun, is, of course, an adjective; as, No person under 25 years of age can become a member of Congress. Observe that all adverbs ending in ly are compared with more and most, or less and least; as, handsomely, more handsomely, most handsomely;—handsomely, less handsomely, least handsomely. Do you remember the names of these three degrees?

LETTER X.

ETYMOLOGY OF PREPOSITIONS.

125. Letter III, paragraphs 29 and 30, has taught you of what description of words Prepositions are. The chief use of them is to express the different connections which nouns have with each other, or in which nouns stand with regard to each other; as, John gives money to Peter; Peter receives money from John. It is useless to attempt to go into curious inquiries as to the origin of Prepositions. They never change their endings; they are always written in the same manner. Their use is the main thing to be considered; and that will become very clear to you, when you come to the Syntax.

126. There are two abbreviations, or shortenings, of Prepositions, which I will notice here, because they are in constant use, and may excite doubts in your mind. These are a and o; as, I am a hunting; he is a coming; it is one o'clock. The a thus added is at, without doubt; as, I am at hunting; he is at coming. Generally this is a vulgar and redundant manner of speaking; but it is in use. In mercantile accounts you will frequently see this a made use of in a very odd sort of way; as, “Six bales marked 1 a 6.” The merchant means, “Six bales marked from 1 to 6.” But this I take to be a relic of the Norman French, which was once the law and mercantile language of England; for, in French, a with an accent, means to or at. I wonder that merchants, who are generally men of sound sense, do not discontinue the use of this mark of affectation. And, I beg you, my dear James, to bear in mind, that the only use of words is to cause our meaning to be clearly understood; and that the best words are those which are familiar to the ears of the greatest number of persons. The o' with the mark of elision means of, or of the, or on, or on the; as, two o'clock, which is the same as to say two of the clock, or two according to the clock, or two on the clock.

127. As to the Prepositions which are joined to verbs or other words; as, to outline, to undervalue, to be overdone, it would be to waste our time to spend it in any statements about them; for these are other words than to live, to value, to be done. If we were to go in this way, into the subject of the composition of words, where should we stop? Thankful, thankless, without, within; these are all compound words, but, of what use to us to enter on, and spend our time in, inquiries of mere curiosity? It is for monks and for Fellows of English colleges, who live by the sweat of other people's brows, to spend their time in this manner, and to call the result of their studies learning; for you, who will have to earn what you eat and what you drink and what you wear, it is to avoid everything that tends not to real utility.

It may, however, not be quite useless to mention the names given to the parts of derived words. Kind, un-kind, kind-ness. The original word is called the root; the syllable placed before the root is called the prefix; and the syllable added to the root is called the suffix. Although any word having a prefix or a suffix may be called a compound word, we generally call those words compound which are formed by uniting two or more whole words; as, workshop, schoolmaster, army-chest. And as to which compound words take a hyphen, and which do not, this depends a good deal upon the shape of the first and the last letter of the two words united. For instance, churchyard needs no hyphen, because
the two parts are sufficiently separated by the ascending a and the
descending y; but church-bell or church-hymn must be so separated,
because the parts of the word would otherwise not be sufficiently
distinct.

As to the correct use of prepositions generally, there is no guide
equal to the feeling for propriety acquired by much reading and
speaking, and by frequent hearing of good speakers. Well do I
remember that, among my most advanced scholars in Germany,
amost the only mistake they finally made was in the use of
the prepositions, showing that this was the last difficulty to be
mastered. It was sometimes a matter so peculiar, so delicate, so diffi-
cult to choose the right preposition, that I was myself obliged to
repeat a sentence aloud several times before I could hit on the
right word.

Do not forget that the preposition governs the objective case—I
send for him—not that the same word may sometimes belong to
another part of speech: I send for him, for I cannot do without
him. Notice that people are said to be in any place, but that they
go into a place. We are in the garden, we are going into the
house. In the Broadway stages there stands, over the fare-box,
this sentence: "Put the exact fare in the box." It should be into
the box; for, though the money may be in the box, it is put into
it.—Do not suppose that every preposition must be a little word,
for concerning, respecting, regarding, notwithstanding are also prepo-
sitions. Observe, too, that nine phrases out of ten begin with a
preposition.

In regard to the expressions, a-hunting, a-coming, and the like,
Cobbett does not mean that these are vulgar and redundant,—
which is what, at first, I thought he meant,—but that at hunting,
at coming, are so. The other expression is perfectly legitimate,
and used by the best authors. You may say, therefore, that some-
thing or anything is a-doing, a-making, a-building, a-ripening,
a-brewing, and so on.

LETTER XI.

ETYMOLOGY OF CONJUNCTIONS.

128. In Letter III, paragraph 31, you have had a de-
scription of this sort of words, and also some account of
the uses of them. Some of them are called copulative
Conjunctions, and others disjunctive. They all serve to
join together words, or parts of sentences; but the for-
er express an union in the actions, or states of being,
expressed by the verb; as, you and I talk. The latter a
disunion; as, you talk, but I act. The words of this
Part of Speech never vary in their endings. They are
always spelled in one and the same way. In themselves
they present no difficulty; but, as you will see by-and-by,
to use them properly, with other words, in the forming
of sentences, demands a due portion of your attention
and care.

You see Cobbett says "an union." Can you tell why this is
wrong? If not, look at Letter IV, paragraph 36 (note).

LETTER XII.

CAUTIONARY REMARKS.

My dear James:

129. Before we enter on Syntax, let me give you a
cautions or two with regard to the contents of the forego-
ing Letters.

130. There are some words which, under different cir-
cumstances belong to more than one Part of Speech, as, indeed, you have seen in the Participles. But this is by
no means confined to that particular description of words.
I act. Here act is a verb; but "the act performed by me" shows the very same word in the capacity of a noun. The message was sent by him; he stood by at the time. In the first of these examples by is a preposition; in the latter an adverb. Mind, therefore, that it is the sense in which the word is used, and not the letters of which it is composed, that determines what is the Part of Speech to which it belongs.

131. Never attempt to get by rote any part of your instructions. Whoever falls into that practice soon begins to esteem the powers of memory more than those of reason; and the former are despicable indeed when compared with the latter. When the fond parents of an eighth wonder of the world call him forth into the middle of the parlor to repeat to their visitors some speech of a play, how angry would they be if any one were to tell them that their son's endowments equalled those of a parrot or a bullfinch! Yet a German bird-teacher would make either of these more perfect in this species of oratory. It is this mode of teaching, which is practised in the great schools, that assists very much in making dunces of lords and country squires. They "get their lessons;" that is to say, they repeat the words of it; but as to its sense and meaning, they seldom have any understanding. This operation is sometimes, for what reason I know not, called getting a thing by heart. It must, I should think, mean by heart; that is to say, by heart. That a person may get and retain and repeat a lesson in this way, without any effort of the mind, is very clear from the fact of which we have daily proof, that people sing the words and the tune of a song with perfect correctness, at the very time that they are most seriously thinking and debating in their minds about matters of great importance to them.

132. I have cautioned you before against studying the foregoing instructions piecemeal; that is to say, a little at a time. Read a letter all through at once; and, now that you have come to the end of my instructions on Etymology, read all the Letters through at once: do this repeatedly; taking care to proceed slowly and carefully; and, at the end of a few days, all the matters treated of will form a connected whole in your mind.

133. Before you proceed to the Syntax, try yourself a little, thus: Copy a short sentence from any book. Then write down the words, one by one, and write against each what Part of Speech you think it belongs to. Then look for each word in the dictionary, where you will find the several Parts of Speech denoted by little letters after the word: s. is for substantive, or noun; pro. for pronoun; a. for article; v. a. for verb active; v. n. for verb neuter; adj. for adjective; adv. for adverb; pre. for preposition; con. for conjunction; int. for interjection. It will give you great pleasure and encouragement when you find that you are right. If you be sometimes wrong, this will only urge you to renewed exertion. You will be proud to see that, without any one at your elbow, you have really acquired something which you can never lose. You will begin, and with reason, to think yourself learned; your sight, though the objects will still appear a good deal confused, will dart into every part of the science; and you will pant to complete what you will be convinced you have successfully begun.

This is Mr. White's much-ridiculed and thoroughly-despised parsing exercise. Of course, carried on as it is at the public schools, with little or no real understanding of the matter, and with a kind of rapid, mechanical, parrot-like repetition of grammatical terms, it is worse than useless. But I am convinced that, properly considered, and understandingly carried out, this exercise is of positive value. To a boy or girl of proper age, it may be made indeed, tolerably interesting. Let us look at a single little sentence. "Boys love swimming." Boys is a common noun, third person, plural number, masculine gender. nominative case.
Syntax Generally Considered.

Love is a regular transitive verb, active voice, third person plural number, present tense, indicative mood.

Swimming is a common (or participial) noun, third person, singular number, objective case.

Now, take each one of these definitions, and ask why? and if you can answer properly, then the exercise has become of real and substantial benefit to you. Why a common noun? Because it is a general name, and not a particular one. Why third person? Because it is spoken of. Why plural number? Because it means more than one. Why masculine gender? Because it is the name of males. Why nominative case? Because it is the subject of the sentence; and so on. If I had said, “Boys love to swim,” the object, to swim, would be called a verbal noun.

---

LETTER XIII.

SYNTAX GENERALLY CONSIDERED.

My dear James:

134. In Letter II, paragraph 9, I shortly explained to you the meaning of the word Syntax, as that word is used in the teaching of grammar. Read that paragraph again.

135. We are, then, now entering upon this branch of your study; and it is my object to teach you how to give all the words you make use of their proper situation when you come to put them into sentences. Because, though every word that you make use of may be correctly spelled; that is to say, may have all the letters in it that it ought to have, and no more than it ought to have; and though all the words may, at the same time, be the fit words to use in order to express what you wish to express; yet, for want of due observance of the principles and rules of Syntax, your sentences may be incorrect, and, in some cases, they may not express what you wish them to express.

136. I shall, however, carry my instructions a little further than the construction of independent sentences. I shall make some remarks upon the manner of putting sentences together; and on the things necessary to be understood, in order to enable a person to write a series of sentences. These remarks will show you the use of figurative language, and will, I hope, teach you how to avoid the very common error of making your writing confused and unintelligible.

---

LETTER XIV.

SYNTAX.

The Points and Marks made use of in Writing.

My dear James:

137. There are, as I informed you in paragraph 9, Letter II, Points made use of in the making, or writing, of sentences; and, therefore, we must first notice these; because, as you will soon see, the sense, or meaning, of the words is very much dependent upon the points which are used along with the words. For instance: “You will be rich if you be industrious, in a few years.” Then again: “You will be rich, if you be industrious in a few years.” Here, though in both sentences the words and the order of the words are precisely the same, the meaning of one of the sentences is very different from that of the other. The first sentence means that you will, in a few years’ time, be rich, if you be industrious now. The second sentence means that you will be rich, some time or other, if you be industrious in a few years from this time. And all this great difference in meaning is, as you must see, produced solely by the difference in the situation of the comma. Put another comma after the last word industrious, and the meaning becomes dubious.
A memorable proof of the great importance of attending to Points was given to the English nation in the year 1817. A committee of the House of Lords made a report to the House, respecting certain political clubs. A secretary of one of those clubs presented a petition to the House, in which he declared positively, and offered to prove at the bar, that a part of the report was totally false. At first their Lordships blustered; their high blood seemed to boil; but, at last, the Chairman of the Committee apologized for the report by saying that there ought to have been a full-point where there was only a comma! and that it was this which made that false which would otherwise have been, and which was intended to be true!

138. These Points being, then, things of so much consequence in the forming of sentences, it is necessary that I explain to you the use of them, before I proceed any farther. There are four of them: the Full-point, or Period; the Colon; the Semi-colon; the Comma.

139. The Full-point is a single dot, thus [ ], and it is used at the end of every complete sentence. That is to say, at the end of every collection of words which make a full and complete meaning, and is not necessarily connected with other collections of words. But a sentence may consist of several members or divisions, and then it is called a compound sentence. When it has no divisions, it is called a simple sentence. Thus: "The people suffer great misery." This is a simple sentence; but, "The people suffer great misery, and yet perish for want," is a compound sentence; that is to say, it is compounded, or made up, of two simple sentences.

140. The Colon, which is written thus [:], is next to the full-point in requiring a complete sense in the words. It is, indeed, often used when the sense is complete, but when there is something still behind, which tends to make the sense fuller or clearer.

111. The Semi-colon is written thus [:], and it is used to set off, or divide, simple sentences, in cases when the comma is not quite enough to keep the meaning of the simple sentences sufficiently distinct.

142. The Comma is written thus [,] and it is used to mark the shortest pauses in reading, and the smallest divisions in writing. It has, by some grammarians, been given as a rule to use a comma to set off every part of a compound sentence, which part has in it a verb not in the infinitive mode; and, certainly, this is, in general, proper. But it is not always proper; and, besides, commas are used, in numerous cases, to set off parts which have no verbs in them; and even to set off single words which are not verbs; and of this the very sentence which I am now writing gives you ample proof. The comma marks the shortest pause that we make in speaking; and it is evident that, in many cases, its use must depend upon taste. It is sometimes used to give emphasis, or weight, to the word after which it is put. Observe, now, the following two sentences: "I was very well and cheerful last week; but am rather feeble and low-spirited now." "I am very willing to yield to your kind requests; but, I will set your harsh commands at defiance." Commas are made use of when phrases, that is to say, portions of words, are thrown into a sentence, and which are not absolutely necessary to assist in its grammatical construction. For instance: "There were in the year 1817 petitions from a million and a half of men, who, as they distinctly alleged, were suffering the greatest possible hardships." The two phrases, in italics, may be left out in the reading, and still the sentence will have its full grammatical construction.

Here Cobbett shows he made no distinction between a phrase and a clause. It is true that in a popular sense any number of words may be called a phrase; as, "How do you do? Good-bye." But in grammar this word has a particular sense, and these last-
mentioned expressions do not agree with it. "In the year 1817" is a phrase, and "as they distinctly alleged" is a clause, because the former has neither subject nor predicate and the latter has both.

I must say, too, that at the present day no corrector for the press (proof-reader) would allow those commas to stand after those words. Further, *thrown* instead of *thrown* is not yet in common use; but I am inclined to think it will soon be, just like *sawed* instead of *sawn*, or *crossed* instead of *crosse*.

143. Let us now take a compound sentence or two containing all the four points. "In a land of liberty it is extremely dangerous to make a distinct order of the profession of arms. In absolute monarchies this is necessary for the safety of the prince, and arises from the main principle of their constitution, which is that of governing by fear; but in free states the profession of a soldier, taken singly and merely as a profession, is justly an object of jealousy. In these states no man should take up arms, but with a view to defend his country and its laws; he puts off the citizen when he enters the camp: but it is because he is a citizen, and would continue so, that he makes himself for a while a soldier. The laws therefore and constitution of these kingdoms know no such profession than that of a perpetual standing soldier, bred up to no other employment of it. "Palladus thought also, with others of the ancients, that Heaven was to be frightened with red cloth, with the feathers or the heart of an owl, and a multitude of such ridiculous scarecrows, from spoiling the fruits of the fields and gardens. The ancients having no rational principles, or theory of agriculture, placed their chief confidence in magical charms and enchantments, which he, who has the patience or curiosity to read, may find, under the title aforementioned, in Caro, in Varro (and even Columella is as fulsome as any of them), all written in very fine language; which is most of the erudition that can be acquired as to field husbandry, from the Greek and Latin writers, whether in verse or prose." For want of the mark of parenthesis in the first of these sentences, we almost think, at the close of it, that the author is speaking of the crows, and not of

144. You will now see that it is quite impossible to give any precise rules for the use of these several points...
Heaven, being frightened from spoiling the fruits of the fields and the gardens. But with regard to the use of the parenthesis, I shall speak, perhaps, more fully by and by: for the employment of it is a matter of some importance.

It is, perhaps, worth mentioning that this word parenthesis, like all the words ending in is, changes the s into e in the plural: parentheses, crises, theses. So that we must speak of a word or sentence being enclosed in parentheses, not parenthesis.

147. The mark of Interrogation, which is written thus [?], is used when a question is asked; as, “Who has my pen?” “What man is that?” In these and numerous other cases, the mark is not necessary to our clearly comprehending the meaning of the writer. But this is not always the case. “What does he say? Put the horse into the stable.” Again: “What does he say? Put the horse into the stable?” In speaking, this great difference in the meaning, in this instance, would be fully expressed by the voice and manner of the speaker; but in writing, the mark of interrogation is, you see, absolutely necessary in order to accomplish the purpose.

148. The mark of Exclamation, or Admiration, is written thus [,] and, as its name denotes, is used to distinguish words or sentences that are exclamationary, from such as are not: “What do you say! What do you say!” The difference in the sense is very obvious here. Again: “He is going away to-night! He is going away to-night.” The last simply states the fact; but the first, besides stating the fact, expresses surprise at it.

149. The Apostrophe, or mark of Elision, is a comma placed above the line, thus [“]. Elision means a striking out; and this mark is used for that purpose; as, don’t for do not; tho’ for though; ’d for loved. I have mentioned this mark, because it is used properly enough in poetry; but, I beg you never to use it in prose in one single instance during your whole life. It ought to be called the mark not of elision, but of laziness and vulgarity. It is necessary as the mark of the possessive case of nouns, as you have seen in Letter V, paragraph 47. That is its use, and any other employment of it is an abuse.

150. The Hyphen or Conjoinder is a little line used to connect words, or parts of words; as in sea-fish, water-rat. For here are two distinct words, though they, in these instances, make but one. Sometimes the hyphen is used to connect many words together: “The never-to-be-forgotten cruelty of the borough-tyrants.” When, in writing, or in printing, the line ends with part of a word, a hyphen is placed after that part, in order to show that that part is to be joined, in the reading, with that which begins the next line.

151. These are all the grammatical marks; but there are others used in writing for the purpose of saving time and words. The mark of quotation or of citing. This mark consists of two commas placed thus: “There were many men.” It is used to enclose words taken from other writings or from other persons’ discourse; and, indeed, it is frequently used to enclose certain sentences, or words, of the writer, when he wishes to mark them as wholly distinct from the general course of any statement that he is making, or of any instruction that he is giving. I have, for instance, in the writing of these Letters to you, set off many of my examples by marks of quotation. In short, its use is to notify to the reader that such and such words, or such and such sentences, are not to be looked upon as forming part of the regular course of those thoughts which are at the present time coming from the mind of the writer.

152. This mark [“] is found in the Bible. It stands for paragraph. This [§] is sometimes used instead of the word section. As to stars [§] and the other marks which are used for the purpose of leading the eye of the reader to notes, in the same page, or at the end of the
book, they are perfectly arbitrary. You may use for this purpose any marks that you please. But let me observe to you here, that notes ought seldom to be resorted to. Like parentheses, they are interrupters, and much more troublesome interrupters, because they generally tell a much longer story. The employing of them arises, in almost all cases, from confusion in the mind of the writer. He finds the matter too much for him. He has not the talent to work it all up into one lucid whole, and, therefore, he puts part of it into notes. Notes are seldom read. If the text, that is to say, the main part of a writing, be of a nature to engage our earnest attention, we have not time to stop to read the notes: and if our attention be not earnestly engaged by the text, we soon lay down the volume, and of course read neither notes nor text.

153. As a mark of abbreviation, the full point is used as, “Mr. Mrs.” But I know of hardly any other words that ought to be abbreviated; and if these were not included, would be all the better. People may indulge themselves in this practice, until at last they come to write the greater part of their words in single letters. The frequent use of abbreviation is always a mark of slovenliness and of vulgarity. I have known lords abbreviate almost half of their words: it was, very likely, because they did not know how to spell them to the end. Instead of the word and, you often see people put &. For what reason I should like to know. But to this & is sometimes added a c; thus, &c. And is in Latin et, and c is the first letter of the Latin word cetera, which means the like, or so on. Therefore this &c. means and the like, or and so on. This abbreviation of a foreign word is a most convenient thing for such writers as have too much impudence or too little sense to say fully and clearly what they ought to say. If you mean to say and the like, or and so on, why not say it? This abbreviation is very frequently made use of without the writer having any idea of its import. A writer on grammar says, “When these words are joined to if, since, &c., they are adverbs.” But where is the like of if, or of since? The best way to guard yourself against the committing of similar errors is never to use this abbreviation.

154. The use of capitals and italics I will notice in this place. In the books printed before the middle of the last century, a capital letter was used as the first letter of every noun. Capitals are now used more sparingly. We use them at the beginning of every paragraph, let the word be what it may; at the beginning of every sentence which follows a full-point; at the beginning of all proper names; at the beginning of all adjectives growing out of the names of countries, or nations; as, the English language; the French fashion; the American government. We use capitals, besides, at the beginning of any word, when we think the doing of it likely to assist in elucidating our meaning, but in general we use them as above stated. The use of italic characters in print is to point out, as worthy of particular attention, the words distinguished by those characters. In writing with a pen, a stroke is drawn under such words as we wish to be considered to be in italics. If we wish words to be put in small capitals, we draw two strokes under them; if in full capitals, we draw three strokes under them.

155. The last thing I shall mention, under this head, is the caret [^], which is used to point upwards to a part which has been omitted, and which is inserted between the line, where the caret is placed, and the line above it. Things should be called by their right names, and this should be called the blunder-mark. I would have you, my dear James, scorn the use of this thing. Think before you write; let it be your custom to write correctly and in a plain hand. Be as careful that neatness, gram-
mar, and sense prevail, when you write to a blacksmith about shoeing a horse, as when you write on the most important subjects, and when you expect what you write to be read by persons whose good opinion you are anxious to obtain or secure. Habit is powerful in all cases, but its power in this case is truly wonderful. When you write, bear constantly in mind that some one is to read your handwriting, and also your meaning, plain. 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. Far, I hope, from my dear James will be the ridiculous, the contemptible affectation, of writing in a slovenly or illegible hand; or of that of signing his name otherwise than in plain letters.

As to the “no patching; no after-pointing,” this is all very well for those who are endowed with uncommon talent for composition; but everybody cannot be a Shakespeare or a Cobbett. It is well known that Pope corrected and recorrected, polished and repolished his lines many a time and oft, and I have heard that Shaker and other good writers have done the same thing; Macaulay, for instance. You will have written many a page before you acquire such sureness of hand and perfect power of expression as never to need to change a word or add a point on looking over what you have written. In this very paragraph I had first written “everybody cannot be Shakespeares or Cobbetts;” but, on looking it over, I saw that everybody, the subject, is singular, and that therefore the attribute ought to agree with it. The eye often detects errors committed by the ear or the tongue; and the ear often detects errors committed by the hand or the pen.

Cobbetts advice concerning the dash, I think, by no means to be followed. His contempt for this mark is one of his crotchets, of which he had quite a large stock. The dash is now universally used by good writers, and is, in its proper place, conducive to clearness; it is, in fact, quite as good a point as any other. There are some persons—especially half-educated young board-school misses—who clap in a dash for almost every pause; but this is no reason why it should not be used in its proper place, which is either immediately before some expression tending to complete the thought, or to enclose some explanatory clause thrown in like a parenthesis. The first case may be illustrated by the dash on page 1, immediately before the words “I mean dictation,” and the second case by the above expression concerning half-educated young misses. To be sure, there are cases in which another point may, perhaps, be used with equal propriety; but this mark is now generally recognized as a proper mark in punctuation, and you may use it whenever you think proper.

The very best way of learning punctuation is, as I have elsewhere said, by writing to dictation. By the frequent writing down of other people’s points, one gets a good general knowledge of the whole subject, and then one gradually forms a style of one’s own. For it is well known that in the English language punctuation is to a great extent, a matter of taste; and Cobbett himself, as you must have seen by this time, is quite peculiar in his taste in this matter. He uses far more points than most other writers, especially commas, and he capitalizes far more words than most
others writers. This he does for the sake of emphasis, or prominence: as, for instance, in the names of the parts of speech throughout this whole grammar. He overdoes this matter I think, and he uses too many italics; for in most sentences the proper emphasis must be left to the reader.

I notice that the tendency in our modern newspapers is to drop as many points as possible. Whether this is done to save space, time, and labor, or whether it is done for the sake of improvement, I do not know; but I do know that the punctuating of our New York editor of to-day presents a remarkable contrast to that of Cobbett; for you may see any day in the leading columns of the Herald, the Tribune, or the Times, sentences of seven or eight lines, with all manner of phrases and clauses, without a single point of any description, except a period at the end. I suppose they will leave that out too, by-and-by. I once heard of a painter who put a period between every word of the sign which he was painting, but put no point at the end. On being reproached with this, he exclaimed: "Why, every fool knows enough to stop when he comes to the end!" I suppose our New York editor would excuse his omission of points on the same principle, that every one should know enough to stop where he ought to stop. Cobbett committed, I think, the opposite error: he seems to have attempted to put a point after every word, or nearly every word, where a pause occurs; which is something that ought not to be done, and indeed never is nor can be done. Those pauses occurring where there are no points are rhetorical pauses, which the feeling or instinct of every good reader leads him to make. We often pause, for instance, for the sake of emphasis; as after pointing, feeling and instinct in the preceding sentence.

The matter of simple, compound, and complex sentences, which Cobbett merely touches, is very important to those who intend to pass an examination in grammar; for a knowledge of it is necessary in Analysis, and all those who pretend to have a "teaching" knowledge of grammar must know how to analyze. I will therefore try to give a little fuller explanation of it. "I study." This is a simple sentence, because it consists of but one simple proposition or assertion, having but one subject and one predicate. "I study and Charles plays." Here there are two distinct propositions, or two distinct clauses; hence the sentence is compound. "When I study, Charles plays." Here there are also two clauses, but not distinct; they are dependent or rather one depends on the other; hence the sentence is called complex. The clause that makes complete sense (Charles plays), is the chief clause, and the other is the dependent one. You perceive that the dependent clause simply shows when Charles plays; therefore the main thing is the playing of Charles, and the other simply shows the time of his playing. When there is but one proposition or statement, the sentence is simple; when there are two or more distinct or separate propositions, the sentence is compound; but when there are two or more propositions, one depending on the other, the sentence is complex. "Every morning at five o'clock we walk into the forest beyond the river." Here is one simple statement, we walk, and the rest consists of modifying phrases. We walk. When? Every morning. At what time? At five o'clock. Where? Inte forest. Where is the forest? Beyond the river.

Here is a good, though somewhat mechanical rule, for determining the nature of a sentence: Any sentence that you may cut into two sentences by placing a period after any word in it, is compound; any sentence, consisting of two or more clauses, which you can not thus cut into two sentences, is complex.

A sentence consisting of but one proposition, having but one subject and predicate, is simple. Of Cobbett's three sentences, at the beginning of this paragraph 186, the first is complex, the second compound, the third simple.

And now I see that I have to explain something else that is necessary to a knowledge of Analysis,—I mean the classification of sentences into declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative. "I study" is called a simple declarative sentence; declarative, because it declares or affirms something. Nine out of ten of all the sentences we utter are declarative. "Do I study?" is a simple interrogative sentence; interrogative, because it asks a question. An Interrogation may sometimes be merely a forcible way of declaring something; as, Should any man be deprived of his liberty because he is black? But this is a figure, as you will see by-and-by. "How I love to study!" is a simple exclamatory sentence; exclamatory, because it contains an exclamation. "Study, and get on in the world!" is a compound imperative sentence; imperative, because it contains a command or an entreaty. Thus, we find that a sentence that declares or affirms anything is declarative; that one that asks a question is interrogative; that one that contains an exclamation is exclamatory; and that one that contains a command or an entreaty is imperative. Let me give you three more examples, covering the whole ground:
The employing of all the paragraphs in few in number, and they are subject to so in their orthography, that very few errors can use of them. But, still, errors may arise; and it be passage cited by Doctor Lowth, of the Articles. You will not say, as in the 1Ton . this informed the Queen of it, and she you may commit errors less glaring. "The Chancellor informed the Queen of it, and she immediately sent for the Secretary and Treasurer." Now, it is not certain here, whether the Secretary and Treasurer be not one and the same person; which uncertainty would have been avoided by a repetition of the Article: "the Secretary and the Treasurer:" and you will bear in mind that, in every sentence, the very first thing to be attended to is clearness as to meaning.

159. Nouns which express the whole of a species, not, in general, take the definite Article; as, "Grass good for horses, and wheat for men." Yet, in speaking of the appearance of the face of the country, we say, "The grass looks well; the wheat is blighted." The reason of this is that we are, in this last case, limiting our meaning to the grass and the wheat which are on the ground at this time. "How do hops sell? Hops are dear; but the hops look promising." In this respect there is a passage in Mr. Tull which is faulty. "Neither could weeds be of any prejudice to corn." It should be "the corn;" for he does not mean corn universally, but the standing corn, and the corn amongst which weeds grow; and, therefore, the definite Article is required.

160. "Ten shillings the bushel," and like phrases, are perfectly correct. They mean, "ten shillings by the bushel, or for the bushel." Instead of this mode of expression we sometimes use, "ten shillings a bushel": that is to say, ten shillings for a bushel, or a bushel at a time. Either of these modes of expression is far preferable to per bushel; for the per is not English, and is, to the greater part of the people, a mystical sort of word.

161. The indefinite Article a, or an, is used with the third day, month, year, and others; as, once a day; twice a month; a thousand pounds a year. It means in a day, in a month, in or for a year; and though per annum means the same as this last, the English phrase is, in all respects, the best. The same may be said of per cent, that is per centum, or, in plain English, for the hundred, or a hundred; by ten per centum we mean ten for the hundred, or ten for a hundred; and why can we not, then, say, in plain English, what we mean?

162. When there are several nouns following the indefinite Article, care ought to be taken that it accord with them. "A dog, cat, owl, and sparrow." Owl requires an; and, therefore, the Article must be repeated in this phrase; as, a dog, a cat, an owl, and a sparrow.

163. Nouns, signifying fixed and settled collections of individuals, as thousand, hundred, dozen, score, take the
indirect Article, though they are of plural meaning. It is a certain mass, or number, or multitude, called a crew, and so on; and the Article agrees with these understood words, which are in the singular number.

In a recent announcement of a novel by Robert Buchanan, the publishers quote this one line concerning it from the London Spectator: "The work of a genius and a poet,"—which is in itself a sufficient comment on the discriminating taste of the publisher and the culture of the critic. But I suppose a man may be a good publisher or a good critic, and yet not know how to write or to select good English.

You must say either "the first and the second class," or "the first and second class," which would mean one class that is both first and second. Take one or two similar examples: "I have read the first and the second chapter, or the first and second chapters; strike out the first and the second line, or the first and second lines." You may say, "the north and south line," because this is one line that runs north and south; but you cannot say "the north and west line." It will not do to say "the two first classes," because there cannot be any such thing as two first classes; but "the first two classes," which means simply the two classes that come first in order. So with other similar expressions: as, the first two pages, the first two days, &c. You must say, "He is a better speaker than writer," not "than a writer." "He is a statesman and historian," not "a statesman and an historian." "Wanted—A clerk and copyist." How often such an expression is used to mean two persons, whereas it really means one! "There lives in this town a philosopher and a poet." The predicate shows that one person is meant, while the subject indicates two. Mr. White quotes the following announcement from a street-car: "Passengers are requested not to hold conversation with either conductor or driver;" and then says: "Now this implies that there are two conductors and two drivers, and that the passengers are asked not to talk, or, in elegant phrase, 'hold conversation,' with each of them. The simple introduction of this rectifies the phrase: 'not to hold conversation with either the conductor or the driver.'"

I saw the other day in Pearl Street, New York, a place with this sign: "Hatters, Tailors, and Factory Stoves." This really means that the owner of the place has hatters and tailors as well as factory stoves. It might pass with the sign of the place:"

As Relating to Nouns.

**LETTER XVI.**

**SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO NOUNS.**

My dear James,

164. Read again Letter V, the subject of which is the **syntax of Nouns.** Nouns are governed, as it is called, by verbs and prepositions; that is to say, these latter sorts of words cause nouns to be in such or such a case; and there must be a concord, or an agreement, between the Nouns and the other words, which, along with the Nouns, compose a sentence.

165. But these matters will be best explained when I come to the Syntax of Verbs, for, until we take the verb into account, we cannot go far in giving rules for the forming of sentences. Under the present head, therefore, I shall content myself with doing little more than to give some farther account of the manner of using the possessive case of Nouns; that being the only case to denote which our Nouns vary their endings.

166. The possessive case was pretty fully spoken of by me in the Letter just referred to; but there are certain
other observations to make with regard to the using of it in sentences. When the Noun which is in the possessive case is expressed by a circumlocution, that is to say by many words in lieu of one, the sign of the possessive case is joined to the last word; as, "John, the old farmer's wife." "Oliver, the spy's evidence." It is however much better to say, "The wife of John, the old farmer." The "evidence of Oliver, the spy."

167. When two or more Nouns in the possessive case follow each other, and are joined by a conjunctive conjunction, the sign of the possessive case is, when the thing possessed is the same, put to the last noun only; as, "Peter, Joseph, and Richard's estate." In this example, the thing possessed being one and the same thing, the sign applies equally to each of the three possessive Nouns. But "Peter's, Joseph's, and Richard's estate," implies that each has an estate; or, at least, it will admit of that meaning being given to it, while the former phrase will not.

168. Sometimes the sign of the possessive case is left out, and a hyphen is used in its stead; as, "Edwards, the government-spy." That is to say, "the government's spy;" or, "the spy of the government." These two words, joined in this manner, are called a compound Noun; and to this compounding of Nouns our language is very prone. We say "chamber-floor, horse-shoe, dog-collar," that is to say, "chamber's floor, horse's shoe, dog's collar."

169. This is an advantage peculiar to our language. It enables us to say much in few words, which always gives strength to language; and, after clearness, strength is the most valuable quality that writing or speaking can possess. "The Yorkshiremen flew to arms." If we could not compound our words, we would have to say, "The men of the shire of York flew to arms." When you come to learn French, you will soon see how much the English language is better than the French in this respect.

170. You must take care, when you use the possessive case, not to use after it words which create a confusion in meaning. Hume has this sentence: "They flew to arms and attacked Northumberland's house, whom they put to death." We know what is meant, because whom can relate to persons only; but if it had been an attack on Northumberland's men, the meaning would have been that the men were put to death. However, the sentence, as it stands, is sufficiently incorrect. It should have been: "They flew to arms, and attacked the house of Northumberland, whom they put to death."

171. A passage from Doctor Hugh Blair, the author of Lectures on Rhetoric, will give you another instance of error in the use of the possessive case. I take it from the 24th Lecture: "In comparing Demosthenes and Cicero, most of the French critics are disposed to give the preference to the latter. P. Rapin, the Jesuit, in the parallels which he has drawn between some of the most eminent Greek and Roman writers, uniformly decides in favor of the Roman. For the preference which he gives to Cicero, he assigns and lays stress on one reason, of a pretty extraordinary nature, viz., that Demosthenes could not possibly have so clear an insight as Cicero into the manners and passions of men. Why? because he had not the advantage of perusing Aristotle's Treatise on Rhetoric, wherein, says our critic, he has fully laid open that mystery; and to support this weighty argument, he enters into a controversy with A. Gallinus, in order to prove that Aristotle's Rhetoric was not published till after Demosthenes had spoken, at least, his most considerable orations." It is surprising that the Doctor should have put such a passage as this upon paper, and more surprising that he should leave it in this state after having perused it with that care which is usually employed in examining writings that are to be put into print, and especially writings in which every word is expected to be
used in a proper manner. In Bacon, in Tull, in Blackstone, in Hume, in Swift, in Bolingbroke: in all writers, however able, we find errors. Yet, though many of these sentences will not stand the test of strict grammatical criticism, the sense generally is clear to our minds; and we read on. But, in this passage of Dr. Blair, all is confusion: the mind is puzzled: we at last hardly know whom or what the writer is talking about, and we fairly come to a stand.

172. In speaking of the many faults in this passage, I shall be obliged to make here observations which would come under the head of pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and prepositions. The first two of the three sentences are in themselves rather obscure, and are well enough calculated for ushering in the complete confusion that follows. The he, which comes immediately after the word because, may relate to Demosthenes; but to what noun does the second he relate? It would, when we first look at it, seem to relate to the same noun as the first he relates to; for the Doctor cannot call Aristotle’s Treatise on Rhetoric a he: No: in speaking of this the Doctor says “wherein,” that is to say, in which. He means, I dare say, that the he should stand for Aristotle; but it does not stand for Aristotle. This noun is not a nominative in the sentence, and it cannot have the pronoun relating to it as such.

This he may relate to Cicero, who may be supposed to have laid open a mystery in the perusing of the treatise, and the words which follow the he would seem to give countenance to this supposition; for what mystery is meant by the words “that mystery?” Is it the mystery of rhetoric, or the mystery of the manners and passions of men? This is not all, however; for the Doctor, amidst the love of confusion, must tack on another long member to the sentence, and bring forward another he to stand for P. Rapin, whom and whose argument we have, amidst the general confusion, wholly forgotten.

There is an error also in the use of the active participle perusing. “Demosthenes could not have so complete an insight as Cicero, because he had not the advantage of perusing.” That is to say, the advantage of being engaged in perusing. But this is not what is meant. The Doctor means that he had, not the advantage of perusing; or, rather, that he had not the advantage of having perused. In other words, that Demosthenes could not have, or possess, a certain kind of knowledge at the time when he made his orations, because at that time, he had not, or did not possess, the advantage of having perused, or having finished to peruse, the treatise of Aristotle. Towards the close of the last sentence the adverb “at least” is put in a wrong place. The Doctor means, doubtless, that the adverb should apply to considerable, and not to spoken; but, from its being improperly placed, it applies to the latter, and not to the former. He means to say that Demosthenes had spoken the most considerable, at least, of his orations; but as the words now stand, they mean that he had done the speaking part to them, if he had done nothing more. There is an error in the use of the word “insight,” followed, as it is, by “into.” We may have a look, or sight, into a house, but not an insight.

This would be to take an inside view of an inside.

173. We have here a pretty good proof that a knowledge of the Greek and Latin is not sufficient to prevent men from writing bad English. Here is a profound scholar, a teacher of Rhetoric, discussing the comparative merits of Greek and Latin writers, and disputing with a French critic; here he is writing English in a manner more incorrectly than you will, I hope, be liable to write at the end of your reading of this little book. Lest it should be supposed that I have taken great pains to hunt out this erroneous passage of Doctor Blair, I will inform you that I have hardly looked into his book. Your brothers, in reading it through, marked a great number
of erroneous passages, from amongst which I have selected the passage just cited. With what propriety, then, are the Greek and Latin languages called the "learned languages?"

We take the form 's from the Germans, and hence it is called the Saxon possessive; we take the form of the from the French, and hence it is called the Norman possessive. You will notice that the Saxon possessive is used, generally, in speaking of being things, and the other in speaking of things being at the man's hat, the horse's tail, the cow's horns; the top of the house, the lid of the kettle, the color of the apple;" but this is by no means always the case, for we can speak of the mountain's top and of the roar of the lion. Sometimes we are obliged to use the Norman possessive to avoid a misconstruction, as in the case of "the house of Northumberland," above quoted.

There is another peculiar use of the possessive case, which Cobbett has not mentioned. "He spoke of John's (his) going to college. There is no doubt of the only case-change an English noun can undergo is the addition of 's in the possessive. In both English and French the nominative and objective cases of nouns are invariable. Not so in German. The following sentence will show you at a glance the difference between our language and the German in this respect:

"nom. obj. nom. obj."
The boy loves the traveler. The traveler loves the boy.
Der Knabe liebt den Reisenden. Der Reisende liebt den Knabe.

Here is a curious passage on this subject from Mr. White's "Everyday English"—a passage which, to prevent a confusion of apostrophes, I give in one paragraph, with none but Mr. White's points, except the dash at the beginning and at the end:

"The Board of Civil Service Examiners at Washington gave a test of the knowledge of the use of the apostrophe as a sign of the possessive case, the following sentence: 'The Commissioners of Custom's decisions are correct,' requiring the apostrophe to be placed after "Customs." A dispute having arisen upon the point, and it being contended that the proper form was "The Commissioner's (of Custom's) decisions are correct," an officer of the Treasury Department submitted the question to me for an opinion.—

And Mr. White declares that the decision of the Civil Service Board is correct. Now I am positive that, in this case, both Mr. White and the Board of Examiners are wrong. It is when a word or title is in the possessive case plural that we put merely an apostrophe after the s; as, the Examiners' duties; the Commissioners' affairs; but the term "Commissioner of Customs" is not plural, any more than "Secretary of the Treasury." We say "The Secretary of the Treasury's report;" and if the Saxon possessive is to be used, grammar demands that we say "The Commissioner of Custom's decisions;" for the sign of the possessive is for the whole expression, and not simply for Custom. An apostrophe alone may be placed after Customs, because it will sound better, but not because it is grammatical.

But why use this form at all? Has it not been from a desire to avoid just such awkward expressions that the Norman possessive has come into use? Does it not sound much better to say "The decisions of the Commissioner of Customs" than "The Commissioner of Custom's decisions?"—By the bye, is it not somewhat remarkable, not to say absurd, that the Board of Examiners should give applicants for inferior offices questions such as they themselves are in dispute about, and concerning which even critics in language are at variance?

**LETTER XVII.**

**SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO PRONOUNS.**

**MY DEAR JAMES:**

174. You will now read again Letter VI. It will bring you back to the subject of pronouns. You will bear in mind that personal Pronouns stand for, or in the place of, nouns; and that the greatest care ought always to be taken in using them, because, being small words, and in
frequent use, the proper weight of them is very often unattended to.

176. You have seen in the passage from Doctor Blair, quoted in the foregoing Letter, what confusion arises from the want of taking care that the Pronoun relates clearly to its nominative case, and that it be not left to be understood to relate to anything else. Little words of great and sweeping influence, ought to be used with the greatest care; because errors in the using of them make such great errors in point of meaning. In order to impress, at the outset, these precepts on your mind, I will give you an instance of this kind of error from Addison; and, what is well calculated to heighten the interest you ought to feel upon the occasion, is, that the sentence which contains the error is, by Doctor Blair, held up to students of languages, in the University of Edinburgh, as a perfect model of correctness and of elegance. The sentence is from Addison's Spectator, Number 411: "There are, indeed, but very few who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a relish of any pleasures that are not criminal; every diversion they take is at the expense of some one virtue or other, and that very first step out of business is into vice or folly." So that the sentence says precisely the contrary of what the author meant; or, rather, the whole is perfect nonsense. All this arises from the misuse of the Pronoun they. If, instead of this word, the author had put people in general, or most people, or most men, or any word or words of the same meaning, all would have been right.

177. I will take another instance of the consequence of being careless in the use of personal Pronouns. It is from Judge Blackstone, Book II, Chapter 6. "For the custom of the manor has, in both cases, so far superseded the will of the lord, that, provided the services be performed, or stipulated for by fealty, he cannot, in the first instance, refuse to admit the heir of his tenant upon his death; nor, in the second, can he remove his present tenant so long as he lives." Here are lord, heir, and tenant, all confounded. We may guess at the Judge's meaning; but we cannot say that we know what it is; we cannot say that we are certain whose life, or whose death, he is speaking of.

178. Never write a personal Pronoun, without duly considering what noun it will, upon a reading of the sentence, be found to relate to. There must be a noun, expressed or understood, to which the Pronoun clearly relates, or you will not write sense. "The land-holder has been represented as a monster which must be hunted down, and the fund-holder as a still greater evil, and both have been described as rapacious creatures, who
take from the people fifteen pence out of every quarter loaf. They have been told that Parliamentary Reform is no more than a half measure, changing only one set of thieves for another; and that they must go to the land, for nothing short of that would avail them." This is taken from the memorable report of a committee of the House of Lords, in 1817, on which report the cruel dungeon bill was passed. Now, to what nouns do these Pronouns relate? Who are the nominatives in the first sentence? The land-holder and the fund-holder, to be sure; and, therefore, to them do the Pronouns relate. These lords mean, doubtless, that the people had been told that the people must go to the land; that nothing else would avail the people; but, though they mean this, they do not say it; and this part of their report is as false in grammar as other parts of the report were in fact.

179. When there are two or more nouns connected by a copulative conjunction, and when a Personal Pronoun is made use of to relate to them, or stand for them, you must take care that the personal Pronoun agrees with them in number. "He was fonder of nothing than of wit and raillery; but he is far from being happy in it." This Doctor Blair, in his 19th Lecture, says of Lord Shafterbury. Either wit and raillery are one and the same thing; or they are different things; if the former, one of the words is used unnecessarily; if the latter, the Pronoun ought to have been them and not it.

"I learned from Macaulay never to be afraid of using the same word or name over and over again, if by that means anything could be added to clearness or force. Macaulay never goes on, like some writers, talking about 'the former' and 'the latter,' 'he, she, it, they,' through clause after clause, while his reader has to look back to see which of several persons it is that is so darkly referred to. No doubt a pronoun, like any other word, may often be repeated with advantage, if it is perfectly clear who is meant by the pronoun. And with Macaulay's pronouns, it is always perfectly clear who is meant by them."—E. L.

Freeman, in the International Review. Quoted by A. S. Hill. I have frequently noticed that there is a misty uncertainty as to the meaning of sentences in which "the former" and "the latter" occur. How often one is obliged to stop for a moment, and consider which is "the former" and which "the latter"! I do not say you must not use these words; Cobbett, you see, uses them quite clearly in this last paragraph; but it is, generally, better to repeat the words for which they stand.

180. When, however, the nouns take the disjunctive conjunction or, the Pronoun must be in the singular; as, "When he shoots a partridge, a pheasant, or a woodcock, he gives it away."

181. Nouns of number, or multitude, such as Mob, Parliament, Rabble, House of Commons, Regiment, Court of King's Bench, Den of Thieves, and the like, may have Pronouns agreeing with them either in the singular or in the plural number; for we may, for instance, say of the House of Commons, "They refused to hear evidence against Castlereagh when Mr. Maddox accused him of laying sold a seat;" or, "It refused to hear evidence." When, however, the nouns take the disjunctive conjunction or, the Pronoun must be in the singular; as, "When he shoots a partridge, a pheasant, or a woodcock, he gives it away."

182. When there are two or more nouns connected by a copulative conjunction, and when a Personal Pronoun is made use of to relate to them, or stand for them, you must take care that the personal Pronoun agrees with the nouns in number. "He was fonder of nothing than of wit and raillery; but he is far from being happy in it." This Doctor Blair, in his 19th Lecture, says of Lord Shafterbury. Either wit and raillery are one and the same thing; or they are different things; if the former, one of the words is used unnecessarily; if the latter, the Pronoun ought to have been them and not it.

"I learned from Macaulay never to be afraid of using the same word or name over and over again, if by that means anything could be added to clearness or force. Macaulay never goes on, like some writers, talking about 'the former' and 'the latter,' 'he, she, it, they,' through clause after clause, while his reader has to look back to see which of several persons it is that is so darkly referred to. No doubt a pronoun, like any other word, may often be repeated with advantage, if it is perfectly clear who is meant by the pronoun. And with Macaulay's pronouns, it is always perfectly clear who is meant by them."—E. L.
unity is to be conveyed, and in the plural if the idea of plurality is to be conveyed. Let me illustrate with some of these very nouns which Cobbett so sarcastically huddles together: "The mob now began to scatter in every direction, and they set up a hideous yell as they moved off. The mob came on in one compact body, and it did not fail to press itself through the gates of the palace. He hated the rabble, because they hated him. The rabble of New York has a language and a literature of its own. The House of Commons could not agree on any measure of Reform; so they were dismissed by the king. The House of Commons was unanimous in condemning the obstructing Irish members, and it suspended them for two weeks. When the Court of King's Bench passed sentence on Mr. Cobbett, it refused to reconsider its decision. I have been informed that there was some difference of opinion in the Court of King's Bench concerning Mr. Cobbett's case, though they refused to reconsider their decision. Here is a den of thieves; suppress it. We came upon a den of thieves, who were so numerous that we did not venture to attack them." Thus, you see, that the singularity or plurality of the pronoun standing for a noun of multitude depends entirely upon whether an idea of unity or of plurality is to be conveyed.

182. As to gender, it is hardly possible to make a mistake. There are no terminations to denote gender, except in the third person singular, he, she, or it. We do, however, often personify things. Speaking of a nation, we often say she; of the sun, we say he; of the moon, we say she. We may personify things at our pleasure; but we must take care to be consistent, and not call a thing he, or she, in one part of a sentence, and it in another part. There are occasions when you ought to personify things, and when you ought not, cannot be stated in any precise rule. Your own taste and judgment will be your best guide. I shall give you my opinion about figures of speech in a future Letter.

In an article on Longfellow, in the North American Review for July, 1882, the writer speaks of meeting "Mrs. William Cullen Bryant and her daughter, and others of my countrymen," but you can hardly make such a blunder as that.

183. Nouns which denote sorts, or kinds, of living creatures, and which do not of themselves distinguish the male from the female, such as rabbit, hare, hog, cat, pheasant, fox, take the neuter Pronoun, unless we happen to know the gender of the individual we are speaking about. If I see you with a cock pheasant in your hand, I say, "Where did you shoot him?" but if you tell me you have a pheasant, I say, "Where did you shoot it?" (See paragraphs 42 and 43.)

184. The personal Pronouns in their possessive case must, of course, agree in number and gender with their correspondent nouns or Pronouns: "John and Thomas have been so foolish as to sell their land and to purchase what is called stock; but their sister, who has too much sense to depend on a bubble for her daily bread, has kept her land; theirs is gone forever; but hers is safe." So they must, also, in their objective case: "John and Thomas will lose the interest of their money, which will soon cease to be paid to them. The rents of their sister will be regularly paid to her; and Richard will also enjoy his income, which is to be paid to him by his sister." If there be nouns of both genders used before Pronouns, care must be taken that no confusion or obscurity arise from the misuse of the Pronoun. Hume says: "They declared it treason to attempt, imagine, or speak evil of the king, queen, or his heirs." This has, at least, a meaning which shuts out the heirs of the queen. In such a case the feminine as well as the masculine pronoun should be used: "his or her heirs."

185. Take care, in using the personal Pronouns, not to employ the objective case where you ought to employ the nominative; and take care also of the opposite error. "Him strikes I: Her loves he." These offend the ear at once. But when a number of words come in between the discordant parts, the ear does not detect the error. "It was some of those who came hither last night, and went away this morning, who did the mischief, and not
my brother and me.” It ought to be “my brother and I.”
For I am not, in this instance, the object but the actor, or
supposed actor. “Who broke that glass?” “It was me.”
It ought to be I; that is to say, “It was I who broke it.”
Fill up the sentence with all the words that are un­
derstood; and if there be errors, you will soon discover them.
After the words than and as, this error, of putting the
objective for the nominative, is frequently committed; as,
“John was very rich, but Peter was richer than him;
and, at the same time, as learned as him, or any of his
family.” It ought to be richer than he; as learned as he;
for the full meaning here is, “richer than he was; as
learned as he was.” But it does not always happen that
the nominative case comes after than or as. “I love you
more than him; I give you more than him; I love you
as well as him;” that is to say, I love you more than I
love him; I give you more than I give to him; I love
you as well as I love him. Take away him and put he, in
all these cases, and the grammar is just as good, only the
meaning is quite different. “I love you as well as him,”
means that I love you as well as I love him; but “I
love you as well as he,” means, that I love you as well as
he loves you.

186. You see, then, of what importance this distinction
of cases is. But you must not look for this word, or that
word, coming before or coming after to be your guide.
It is reason which is to be your sole guide. When the
person or thing represented by the Pronoun is the object,
then it must be in the objective case; when it is the actor,
or when it is merely the person or thing said to be this or
that, then it must be in the nominative case. Read again
paragraphs 46, 47, and 48, of Letter V.

187. The errors committed with regard to the con­
foundung of cases arise most frequently when the Pronouns
are placed, in the sentences, at a great distance
from the words which are connected with them, and which
determine the case. “He and his sister, and not their
uncle and cousins, the estate was given to.” Here is
nothing that sounds harsh; but, bring the Pronoun close
to the proposition that demands the objective case; say
the estate was given to he; and, then you perceive the
grossness of the error in a moment. “The work of
national ruin was pretty effectually carried on by the
ministers; but more effectually by the paper-money
makers than they.” This does not hurt the ear; but it
ought to be them; “more effectually than by them.”

188. The Pronouns mine, thine, theirs, yours, hers, his,
stand frequently by themselves; that is to say, not fol­
lowed by any noun. But then the noun is understood.
“That is hers.” That is to say, her property; her hat, or
whatever else. No difficulty can arise in the use of these
words.

Except one. Some people erroneously write these words with
an apostrophe; our’s, etc. A gentleman once showed me a letter
which he considered perfect. So it was; all except the last two
words, which were written thus: “Your’s truly.”

189. But the use of the personal Pronoun it is a subject
of considerable importance. Read again paragraphs 60
and 61, Letter VI. Think well upon what you find there;
and when you have done that, proceed with me. This
Pronoun with the verb to be is in constant use in our
language. To say, “Your uncle came hither last night,”
is not the same thing as to say, “It was your uncle who
came hither last night,” though the fact related be the
same. “It is I who write” is very different from “I
write,” though in both cases, my writing is the fact very
clearly expressed, and is one and the same fact. “It is
those men who deserve well of their country,” means a
great deal more than “Those men deserve well of their
country.” The principal verbs are the same; the prepo­
sitions are the same; but the real meaning is different.
“It is the dews and showers that make the grass grow;”
is very different from merely observing, “Deus and showers make the grass grow.”

190. Doctor Lowry has given it as his opinion, that it is not correct to place plural nouns or pronouns after the it, thus used; an opinion which arose from the want of a little more reflection. The it has nothing to do, grammatically speaking, with the rest of the sentence. The it, together with the verb to be, express states of being, in some instances, and in others this phrase serves to mark, in a strong manner, the subject, in a mass, of what is about to be affirmed or denied. Of course, this phrase, which is in almost incessant use, may be followed by nouns and pronouns in the singular, or in the plural number. I forbear to multiply examples, or to enumerate the various ways in which this phrase is used, because one grain of reasoning is worth whole tons of memory. The principle being once in your mind, it will be ready to be applied to every class of cases, and every particular case of each class.

An example, however, often sticks where the principle fails to do so. “It is I; it is thou; it is he; it is she; it is we; it is you; it is they; it is the devil; it is the devils.” These are all correct; because it is the subject, is the predicate, and what follows is the attribute, which may be singular or plural.—I cannot help remarking that the pause after “thus used” in the third line of the above paragraph is a capital example of the place where the dash ought to be used.

191. For want of reliance on principles, instead of examples, how the latter have swelled in number, and grammar-books in bulk! But it is much easier to quote examples than to lay down principles. For want of a little thought as to the matter immediately before us, some grammarians have found out “an absolute case,” as they call it; and Mr. Lindley Murray gives an instance of it in these words: “Shame being lost, all virtue is lost.” The full meaning of the sentence is this: It being, or the state of things being such, that “shame is lost, all virtue is lost.”

This “shame being lost” is called by some grammarians a participial phrase; by others, an abridged participial clause, standing for “As shame is lost.” Therefore, “all virtue is lost, as shame is lost;” the second clause modifying the first. “On arriving in London, I went to see Madame Tussaud’s Exhibition.” These first four words form another such participial phrase or abridged participial clause, modifying sent.: “I went, on arriving in London (when I arrived in London), to see Madame Tussaud’s Exhibition.”—This absolute case is something like what other grammarians call the independent case: “Charles, mind what you are about. Sir, I deny the charge. I have seen a wax figure of Cobbett, boys, at Madame Tussaud’s Exhibition.” Charles, Sir, boys, are here said to be in the independent case, because they have no bearing on any other part of the sentence. These words may, however, be resolved into the nominative case, thus: To you, whose name is Charles, I have this to say: mind what you are about. To you, who are a Sir—to you, who are boys, etc. Remember, therefore, that any word standing alone like these, or in an exclamation—O Roscoe! Roscoe! what an ass you have made of yourself!—is said to be in the independent case.

192. Owing to not seeing the use and power of this it in their true light, many persons, after long puzzling, think they must make the pronouns which immediately follow conform to the cases which the verbs and prepositions of the sentence demand. “It is them, and not the people, whom I address myself to.” “It was him, and not the other man, that I sought after.” The prepositions to and after demand an objective case; and they have it in the words whom and that. The Pronouns which follow the it and the verb to be must always be in the nominative case. And, therefore, in the above examples, it should be, “It is they, and not the other people;” “It was he, and not the other man.”

193. This it with its verb to be is sometimes employed with the preposition for, with singular force and effect. “It is for the guilty to live in fear, to skulk and to hang
their heads; but for the innocent it is to enjoy ease and tranquillity of mind, to scorn all disguise, and to carry themselves erect." This is much more forcible than to say, "The guilty generally live in fear," and so on, throughout the sentence. The word for, in this case, denotes appropriateness, or fitness; and the full expression would be this: "To the state of being, or state of things called guiltiness, to live in fear is fitting, or is appropriate." If you pay attention to the reason on which the use of these words is founded, you will never be at a loss to use them properly.

194. The word it is the greatest trouble that I know of in language. It is so small, and so convenient, that few are careful enough in using it. Writers seldom spare this word. Whenever they are at a loss for either a nominative or an objective to their sentence, they, without any kind of ceremony, clap in an it. A very remarkable instance of this pressing of poor it into actual service, contrary to the laws of grammar and of sense, occurs in a piece of composition, where we might, with justice, insist on correctness. This piece is on the subject of grammar; it is a piece written by a doctor of divinity, and read by him to students in grammar and language in an academy; and the very sentence that I am now about to quote is selected, by the author of a grammar, as testimony of high authority in favor of the excellence of his work. Surely, if correctness be ever to be expected, it must be in a case like this. I allude to two sentences in the "Charge of the Reverend Doctor Abercrombie to the Senior Class of the Philadelphia Academy," published in 1806; which sentences have been selected and published by Mr. Lindley Murray, as a testimonial of the merits of his grammar; and which sentences are, by Mr. Murray, given to us in the following words: "The unwearied exertions of this gentleman have done more towards elucidating the obscurities, and embellishing the structure of our language, than any other writer on the subject. Such a work has long been wanted; and, from the success with which it is executed, cannot be too highly appreciated."

195. As, in the learned Doctor's opinion, obscurities can be elucidated, and, as, in the same opinion, Mr. Murray is an able hand at this kind of work, it would not be amiss were the grammarian to try his skill upon this article from the hand of his dignified eulogist; for here is, if one may use the expression, a constellation of obscurities. Our poor oppressed it, which we find forced into the Doctor's service in the second sentence, relates to "such a work," though this work is nothing that has an existence, notwithstanding it is said to be executed. In the first sentence, the "exertions" become, all of a sudden, a "writer;" the exertions have done more than "any other writer;" for, mind you, it is not the gentleman that has done anything; it is "the exertions" that have done what is said to be done. The word gentleman is in the possessive case, and has nothing to do with the action of the sentence. Let us give the sentence a turn, and the Doctor and the grammarian will hear how it will sound. "This gentleman's exertions have done more than any other writer." This is upon a level with "This gentleman's dog has killed more hares than any other sportsman." No doubt Doctor Abercrombie meant to say, "the exertions of this gentleman have done more than those of any other writer. Such a work as this gentleman's has long been wanted: his work, seeing the successful manner of its execution, cannot be too highly commended." Meant? No doubt at all of that! And when we hear a Hampshire ploughboy say, "Poll Cherrycheek have giv'd I thick handkercher," we know very well that he means to say, "Poll Cherrycheek has given me this handkercher;" and yet, we are but too apt to laugh at him, and to call him ignorant; which is wrong; be-
cause he has no pretensions to a knowledge of grammar, and he may be very skilful as a ploughboy. However, we will not laugh at Doctor Abnerkoff, whom I knew, many years ago, for a very kind and worthy man, and who baptized your older brother and elder sister. But if we may, in any case, be allowed to laugh at the ignorance of our fellow-creatures, that case certainly does arise when we see a professed grammarian, the author of voluminous precepts and examples on the subject of grammar, producing, in imitation of the possessors of invaluable medical secrets, testimonials vouching for the efficacy of literary panaceas, and when, in those very testimonials, we find most flagrant instances of bad grammar.

196. However, my dear James, let this strong and striking instance of the misuse of the word it serve you in the way of caution. Never put an it upon paper without thinking well of what you are about. When I see many its in a page, I always tremble for the writer.

197. We now come to the second class of Pronouns; that is so say, the Relative Pronouns, of which you have had some account in Letter VI, paragraphs 62, 63, 64, 65, and 66; which paragraphs you should now read over again with attention.

198. Who, which becomes whose in the possessive case, and whom in the objective case, is, in its use, confined to rational beings; for though some writers do say, "the country whose fertility is great," and the like, it is not correct. We must say, "the country the fertility of which." But if we personify; if, for instance, we call a nation a she, or the sun a he, we must then, if we have need of relative Pronouns, take these, or the word that, which is a relative applicable to rational as well as irrational and even inanimate beings.

It is now correct to say "the country whose fertility is great;" for it is a much more direct and easy way of speaking than the other. This form was begun by the poets, and is now constantly used by prose-writers.

199. The errors which are most frequent in the use of these relative Pronouns arise from not taking care to use who and whom, when they are respectively demanded by the verbs or prepositions. "To who did you speak! Whom is come to-day?" These sentences are too glaringly wrong to pass from our pens to the paper. But, as in the case of personal Pronouns, when the relatives are placed in the sentence, at a distance from their antecedents, or verbs or prepositions, the ear gives us no assistance. "Who, of all the men in the world, do you think I saw, the other day? Who, for the sake of his numerous services, the office was given to." In both these cases it ought to be whom. Bring the verb in the first, and the preposition in the second case, closer to the relative; as, who I saw; to whom the office was given; and you will see the error at once. But take care! "Whom of all men in the world, do you think was chosen to be sent as an ambassador? Whom, for the sake of his numerous services, had an office of honor bestowed upon him." These are nominative cases, and ought to have who; that is to say, "who was chosen; who had an office." I will not load you with numerous examples. Read again about the nominative and objective cases in Letter V. Apply your reason to the subject. Who is the nominative, and whom the objective. Think well about the matter, and you will want no more examples.

200. There is, however, an erroneous way of employing whom, which I must point out to your particular attention, because it is so often seen in very good writers, and because it is very deceiving. "The Duke of Argyle, than whom no man was more hearty in the cause." "Cromwell, than whom no man was better skilled in artifice." A hundred such phrases might be collected from Hume, Blackstone, and even from Doctors Blair and Johnson. Yet they are bad grammar. In all such cases, who should be made use of; for it is nominative and not
objective. "No man was more hearty in the cause than he was; no man was better skilled in artifice than he was." It is a very common Parliament-house phrase, and therefore presumptively corrupt; but it is a Doctor Johnson phrase too; "Pope, than whom few men had more vanity." The Doctor did not say, "Myself, than whom few men have been found more base, having, in my Dictionary, described a pensioner as a slave of state, and having afterwards myself become a pensioner."

201. I differ, as to this matter, from Bishop Lowth, who says that "the relative who, having reference to no verb or preposition understood, but only to its antecedent, when it follows than, is always in the objective case; even though the Pronoun, if substituted in its place, would be in the nominative." And then he gives an instance from Milton. "Beelzebub, than whom, Satan, except, none higher sat." It is curious enough that this sentence of the Bishop is, itself, ungrammatical! Our poor unfortunate is so placed as to make it a matter of doubt whether the Bishop meant it to relate to who, or to its antecedent. However, we know his meaning; but, though he says that who, when it follows than, is always in the objective case, he gives us no reason for this departure from a clear general principle; unless we are to regard as a reason the example of Milton, who has committed many hundreds, if not thousands, of grammatical errors, many of which the Bishop himself has pointed out. There is a sort of side-wind attempt at a reason in the words, "having reference to no verb or preposition understood." I do not see the reason, even if this could be; for it appears to me impossible that a Noun or Pronoun can exist in a grammatical state without having reference to some verb or preposition, either expressed or understood. What is meant by Milton? "Than Beelzebub none sat higher, except Satan." And when, in order to avoid the repetition of the word Beelzebub, the relative becomes necessary, the full construction must be, "no devil sat higher than who sat, except Satan;" and not "no devil sat higher than whom sat." The supposition that there can be a Noun or Pronoun which has reference to no verb, and no preposition, is certainly a mistake.

Mr. Swinton quotes these two sentences about Pope and Beelzebub, and then says: "This construction must be regarded as anomalous; but it has been used by so many reputable authors that we can scarcely refuse to accept it." It seems to me that this is one of those cases where long usage has made a faulty expression appear or sound correct; just as there are many people who think "it is me" sounds much better than "it is I." I am sure "than whom" is now much more rarely used than formerly.

202. That, as a relative, may, as we have seen, be applied either to persons or things; but it has no possessive case, and no change to denote the other two cases. We say, "the man that gives, and the man that a thing is given to." But there are some instances when it can hardly be called proper to use that instead of who or whom. Thus, directly after a proper name, as in Hume: "The Queen gave orders for taking into custody the Duke of Northumberland, who fell on his knees to the Earl of Arundel, that arrested him." Who would have been much better, though there was a who just before in the sentence. In the same author: "Douglas, who had prepared his people, and that was bent upon taking his part openly." This never ought to be, though we see it continually. Either may do; but both never ought to be relatives of the same antecedent, in the same sentence. And, indeed, it is very awkward, to say the least of it, to use both in the same sentence, though relating to different antecedents, if all these be names of rational beings. "The Lords, who made the first false report, and the Commons, that seemed to vie with their Lordships in falsehood, became equally detested." That, as a relative, cannot take the preposition or verb immediately before it. I may say "The man to whom I gave a book;" but I cannot say, "the
man to that I gave a book;" nor "the knife to that I put handle." "Having defeated whom, he remained quiet;" but we cannot, in speaking of persons, say, "Having defeated that, he remained quiet."

203. Which, as a relative Pronoun, is applied to irrational beings only, and, as to those beings, it may be employed indifferently with that, except in the cases where the relative comes directly after a verb or a preposition, in the manner just spoken of. We say, "the town, the horse, the tree, which; or to which;" and so on. And we say, "the town, the tree, the horse, that;" but not to or for that.

204. We may, in speaking of nouns of multitude, when the multitude consists of rational creatures, and when we choose to consider it as a singular noun, make use of who or whom, or of which, just as we please. We may say, "the crowd which was going up the street;" or "the crowd who was going up the street;" but we cannot make use of both in the same sentence and relating to the same noun. Therefore, we cannot say, "the crowd who was going up the street and which was making a great noise." We must take the who, or the which, in both places. If such noun of multitude be used in the plural number, we then go on with the idea of the rationality of the individuals in our minds; and therefore we make use of who and whom. "The assembly, who rejected the petition, but to whom another was immediately presented."

205. Who, whose, whom, and which, are employed in asking questions; to which, in this capacity, we must add what. "Who is in the house! Whose gun is that! Whom do you love best! What has happened to-day!" What means, generally, as a relative, "the thing which," as, "Give me what I want." It may be used in the nominative and in the objective case: "What happens to-day may happen next week; but I know not to what we shall come at last;" or, "The thing which happens to-day may happen next week; but I know not the thing which we shall come to at last."

This little word what may, sometimes, curiously enough, be both subject and object in the same sentence. "Give what is proper. Tell me what was done." In the first sentence, what is the object of give and the subject of is proper; and may be set down as equal to that which. In the second sentence, what is the object of tell and the subject of was done; me being the indirect object, or adverbial phrase, meaning to me. You may also say that the whole clause what was done is the object of tell, and call it an objective clause.

Notice that the relative pronoun is sometimes omitted, but only in the objective case; as, You are the boy (whom) I mean; this is the book (that) I want. This omission of words, which grammarians call an ellipsis, is very common in our tongue; as, Dinner done, we walked into the garden; that argument granted, I proceed to the next.

The place of the relative pronoun is a mighty important matter. Somebody sent Mr. White this striking instance of such misplacement: "Just now, I saw a man talking to the Rev. Mr. Blank, who was so drunk that he could hardly stand." The last two clauses were intended, of course, to come after man, who was drunk, and not the reverend gentleman. Here are some more examples from Greene's Grammar: "Mr. Brown needs a physician who is sick. The oranges came in a basket which we ate. Found, a gold watch by a gentleman with steel hands. A man brought home my Newfoundland dog in his shirt-sleeves." These last two sentences have no relative pronoun, but they are good examples of misplacement of words. "I told you to do that this morning" is a very different thing from "I told you, this morning, to do that."

Here is an advertisement which I have just noticed in the Tribune: "Conditioned scholars coached for fall examinations during the summer months at Tarrytown." These words, as they stand, mean that the scholars are to be coached (that is, prepared) for fall examinations, taking place during the summer months at Tarrytown; but the advertiser did not mean anything of the kind. He meant to say, "Conditioned scholars coached, during the summer months, at Tarrytown, for fall examinations." You will say that the fall examinations could not be during the summer months. No; but the words say so.
206. Which, though in other cases it cannot be employed as a relative with nouns which are the names of rational beings, is, with such nouns, employed in asking questions; as, “The tyrants allege that the petition was disrespectful. Which of the tyrants?” Again: “One of the petitioners had his head cleaved by the yeomanry. Which?” That is to say, “Which of the petitioners was it?”

207. What, when used in asking for a repetition of what has been said—as, what?—means, “Tell me that which, or the thing which, you have said.” This word is used, and with great force, in the way of exclamation: “What! rob us of our right of suffrage, and then, when we pray to have our right restored to us, shut us up in dungeons!” The full meaning is this: “What do they do? They rob us of our right.”

208. It is not, in general, advisable to crowd these relatives together; but it sometimes happens that it is done. “Who, that has any sense, can believe such palpable falsehoods? What, that can be invented, can disguise these falsehoods? By whom, that you ever heard of, was a pardon obtained from the mercy of a tyrant? Some men’s rights have been taken from them by force and by genius, but whose, that the world ever heard of before, were taken away by ignorance and stupidity?”

209. Whosoever, whosoever, whomsoever, whatsoever, whichever, follow the rules applicable to the original words. The so is an adverb, which, in its general acceptation, means in like manner; and ever, which is also an adverb, means, at any time, at all times, or always. These two words, thus joined in whosoever, mean, who in any case that may be; and so of the other three words. We sometimes omit the so, and say, whoever, whomever, whatever, and even whoever. It is a mere abbreviation. The so is understood; and it is best not to omit to write it. Sometimes the soever is separated from the Pronoun: “What man soever he might be.” But the main thing is to understand the reason upon which the use of these words stands; for, if you understand that, you will always use the words properly.

210. The Demonstrative Pronouns have been described in Letter VI, paragraph 67; and I have very little to add to what is there said upon the subject. They never change their endings to denote gender or case; and the proper application of them is so obvious that it requires little to be said about it. However, we shall hear more of these Pronouns when we come to the Syntax of Verbs. One observation I will make here, however, because it will serve to caution you against the commission of a very common error. You will hardly say, “Them that write;” but you may say, as many do, “We ought always to have great regard for them who are wise and good.” It ought to be, “for those who are wise and good,” because the word persons is understood: “those persons who are wise and good;” and it is bad grammar to say, “them persons who are wise and good.” But observe, in another sense, this sentence would be correct. If I be speaking of particular persons, and if my object be to make you understand that they are wise and good, and also that I love them; then I say, very correctly, “I love them, who are wise and good.” Thus: “The father has two children; he loves them, who are wise and good; and they love him, who is very indulgent.” It is the meaning that must be your guide, and reason must tell you what is the meaning. “They, who can write, save a great deal of bodily labor,” is very different from “Those who can write save a great deal of bodily labor.” The those stands for those persons; that is to say, any persons, persons in general, who can write: whereas, the they, as here used, relates to some particular persons; and the sentence means that those particular persons are able to write, and, by that means, they save a great deal of bodily labor. Doctor Blair, in
his 21st Lecture, has fallen into an error of this sort; thus, "These two paragraphs are extremely worthy of Mr. Addison, and exhibit a style, which they, who can successfully imitate, may esteem themselves happy." It ought to be those instead of they. But this is not the only fault in this sentence. Why say "extremely worthy"? Worthiness is a quality which hardly admits of degrees, and surely it does not admit of extremes! Then, again, at the close: to esteem is to prize, to set value on, to value highly. How, then, can men "esteem themselves happy?" How can they prize themselves happy? How can they highly value themselves happy? My dear James, let chambermaids, and members of the House of Commons, and learned Doctors, write thus: be you content with plain words which convey your meaning; say that a thing is quite worthy of a man; and that men may deem themselves happy.—It is truly curious that Lindsay Murray, even in the motto in the title-page of his English Grammar, have selected a sentence containing a grammatical error; still more curious that he should have found this sentence in Doctor Blair's Lectures on Language; and most curious of all that this sentence should be intended to inculcate the great utility of correctness in the composing of sentences. Here, however, are the proofs of this combination of curious circumstances: "They who are learning to compose, and arrange their sentences with accuracy and order, are learning, at the same time, to think with accuracy and order." Pohl: Never think a man either learned or good merely on account of his being called a Doctor.

211. The Indeterminate Pronouns have been enumerated in Letter VI, paragraph 71. They are sometimes Adjectives, as is stated in that paragraph. Whoever, whatever, and whichever (that is, whosever, whatsoever, whichever), though relatives, are indeterminate too. But, indeed, it signifies little how these words are classed. In the use of them that we ought to look to. Every, which I have now reckoned amongst these Pronouns, is never, now-a-days, used without a noun, and is therefore, in fact, an adjective. The error that is most frequently committed in using these Pronouns is the putting of the plural verb or plural Pronoun after nouns preceded by every, each, or either; especially in the case of every: as, "every man; every body; every house." These are understood to mean, all the men, all the people, all the houses; but, only one man, one body, one house, is spoken of, and therefore the verb ought to be in the singular: as, "everybody is disgusted;" and not "every body are disgusted." 212. Before you use any of these words, you should think well on their true meaning; for, if you do this, you will seldom commit errors in the use of them. Doctor Johnson, in his Rambler, No. 177, has this passage: "Every one of these virtuosos looked on all his associates as wretches of depraved taste and narrow notions. Their conversation was, therefore, fretful and waspish, their behavior brutal, their merriment bluntly sarcastic, and their seriousness gloomy and suspicious." Now these theirs certainly relate to every one, though the author meant, without doubt, that they should relate to the whole body of virtuosos, including the every one. The word therefore adds to the confusion. The virtuosos were, therefore, fretful and waspish. What for? Was it because every one saw his associates in a bad light? How can my thinking meanly of others make their conversation fretful? If the Doctor had said, "These virtuosos looked on each other" . . . the meaning would have been clear.

213. The Pronoun either, which means one of two, is very often improperly employed. It is sometimes used to denote one of three or more, which is always incorrect. We say, "either the dog, or the cat;" but not "either the dog, or the cat, or the pig." Suppose some one to ask me which I choose to have, mutton, veal, or woodcock; I
answer any one of them; and not either of them. Doctor Blair has used any one where he ought to have used either: "The two words are not altogether synonymous; yet, in the present case, any one of them would have been sufficient."

214. In concluding this Letter on the Syntax of Pronouns, I must observe that I leave many of these indeterminant Pronouns unnoticed in a particular manner. To notice every one individually could answer no purpose except that of swelling the size of a book; a thing which I most anxiously wish to avoid.

Sometimes one cannot help using either... or with reference to one of three things. Expressions like the following will be found in the works of the best authors: Either the Romans, the Greeks, or the Persians. Neither the planters, the poor whites, nor the blacks.

Nearly all the grammars set down the rule that one must use each other with reference to two persons, and one another with reference to more than two. I have not, however, found a single author, good or bad, that adheres to this rule. When you are speaking of three persons, it is perhaps better to say, "They love one another," than "They love each other;" but sometimes these words have to be repeated so frequently that it would be very disagreeable to use always the same word. In Punch's Address to Brother Jonathan, these words occur almost interchangeably: "Let us quarrel, American kinsmen. Let us plunge into war. We have been friends too long. We have too highly promoted each other's wealth and prosperity. We are too pithoric; we want depletion; to which end let us cut each other's throats. Let us sink each other's shipping, burn each other's arsenals, destroy each other's property at large. Let our banks break while we smile and slay one another. Let us maim and mutilate one another; let us make of each other miserable objects," etc.—Notice that each has a restricting sense, and every an extended or general one. "He examined each one; he examined every one." The first means each single one; the second means them all, in a general sense. "Here are ten lazy boys; give each one a caning. Give a caning to every lazy boy in the school."

That error of making verbs and pronouns agree with each and every, as if these words were plural, is as common to-day as it was in Cobbett's time. How often we hear such expressions as..."
219. If wo or more Adjectives be used as applicable to the same noun, there must be a comma, or commas, to separate them; as, "a poor, unfortunate man;" unless and or or be made use of, for then the comma or commas may be omitted; as, "a lofty and large and excellent house."

220. Be rather sparing than liberal in the use of Adjectives. One which expresses your meaning is better than two, which can, at best, do no more than express it, while the additional one may possibly do harm. But the error most common in the use of Adjectives is the endeavoring to strengthen the Adjective by putting an adverb before it, and which adverb conveys the notion that the quality or property expressed by the Adjective admits of degrees, as, "very honest, extremely just." A man may be wiser than another wise man; an act may be more wicked than another wicked act; but a man cannot be more honest than another; every man who is not honest must be dishonest; and every act which is not just must be unjust. "Very right," and "very wrong," are very common expressions, but they are both incorrect. Some expressions may be more common than others; but that which is not right is wrong; or that which is not wrong is right. There are here no intermediate degrees. We should laugh to hear a man say, "You are a little right, I am a good deal wrong;" that person is honest in a trifling degree, that act was too just. But our ears are accustomed to the adverbs of exaggeration. Some writers deal in these to a degree that tires the ear and offends the understanding. With them, everything is excessively or immensely, or extremely or vastly or surprisingly or wonderfully or abun-
dantly, or the like. The notion of such writers is that these words give strength to what they are saying. This is a great error. Strength must be found in the thought, or it will never be found in the words. Big sounding words, without thoughts corresponding, are effort without effect.

221. Care must be taken, too, not to use such adjectives as are improper to be applied to the nouns along with which they are used. "Good virtues; bad vices; painful tooth-aches; pleasing pleasures." These are staringly absurd; but, amongst a select society of empty heads, "moderate Reform" has long been a fashionable expression; an expression which has been well criticized by making the gentlemen who use it how they would like to obtain moderate justice in a court of law, or to meet with moderate chastity in a wife.

222. To secure yourself against the risk of committing such errors, you have only to take care to ascertain the full meaning of every word you employ.

As show you how easy our English is, in this part of its grammar, as compared with other languages, I shall ask you to look at this little sentence: "The good boy loves a good book and a good friend; to good bread and butter he gives not a thought," gives the adjective good occurs four times without ever once changing its form; now you will see that this little word, in this one line sentence, changes five different times in German: Der gute Knabe lielt ein gutes Buch und einen guten Freund; gutem Brod und gutem Butter gibt er keinen Gedanken. What do you think of that, my lad? Would you not think that the poor German, when he speaks, would be constantly thinking of his genders, numbers, and cases? Would you not think he would be apt to get things mixed? But he doesn't; he speaks his language in correct form, as naturally as a canary-bird sings in correct tune; or he has learned to speak as the canary has learned to sing.

This is why some writers, like Mr. Grant White, say that the English language has no grammar; that is, because its words have few or no declensions, or changes to indicate person, number, gender, case, mood, and tense. It has, however, a grammar of its own, and the proof of it is this: Notwithstanding the fact that it has so few declensions, as compared with German, it is just as bad, if not harder, for an adult German to learn to speak and write our English in a perfectly correct and idiomatic manner, as for an adult American or Briton to learn to speak and write German in a similar manner. Of the two or three millions of native Germans who are now in the United States, how many of
them, do you think, are able to speak our English in such a manner as to have their words taken down on the spot, and printed just as spoken? I do not think there are half a dozen; I know of but one; and that is Mr. Carl Schurz. When I say native Germans, I mean, of course, those who, like him, have come to this country and learned the language after attaining manhood. Those who come here in infancy, or in childhood, become, in fact, Americans. Of the others, not one in ten thousand ever learns to speak like a native. As an offset to Mr. Schurz, we have at least one American who may be said to have spoken and written German as perfectly as Mr. Schurz speaks and writes English; and that is our lamented Bayard Taylor.

It is very easy to learn enough English to talk about one's daily wants; to ask for meat and drink; to count money; to buy and sell; and to inquire one's way; it is far easier for a German to learn this much in English than for an American to learn as much in German; but it is, I think, as hard for the German to master the English as it is for the Englishman to master the German. The German language, in utterance and in construction, is, like the people who speak it, almost as regular, formal, and law-conforming as mathematics; while our English, in utterance and in construction, is, like the typical Englishman, though grounded in law and principle, essentially a mass of peculiarities, irregularities, and eccentricities.

---

**LETTER XIX.**

**Syntax, as relating to verbs.**

223. Let us, my dear James, get well through this letter; and then we may, I think, safely say that we know something of grammar: a little more, I hope, than is known by the greater part of those who call themselves Latin and Greek scholars, and who dignify their having studied those languages with the name of "Liberal Education."

224. There can be no sentence, there can be no sense in words, unless there be a verb either expressed or understood. Each of the other parts of speech may almost be dispensed with; but the verb never can. The verb being, then, of so much importance, you will do well to read again, before you proceed further, paragraphs 23, 24, 25, and 26, in Letter III, and the whole of Letter VIII.

225. Well, then, we have now to see how verbs are used in sentences, and how a misuse of them affects the meaning of the writer. There must, you will bear in mind, always be a verb expressed or understood. One would think that this was not the case in the direction written on a post letter. "To John Goldsmith, Esq., Hambledon, Hampshire." But what do these words really mean? Why, they mean, "This letter is to be delivered to John Goldsmith, who is an Esquire, who lives at Hambledon, which is in Hampshire." Thus, there are no less than five verbs where we thought there was no verb at all. "Sir, I beg you to give me a bit of bread." The sentence which follows the Sir is complete; but the sir appears to stand wholly without connection. However, the full meaning is this: "I beg you, who are a Sir, to give me a bit of bread." "What, John?" That is to say, "What is said by you, whose name is John?" Again, in the date of a letter; "Long Island, March 25, 1818." That is: "I am now writing in Long Island; this is the twenty-fifth day of March, and this month is in the one thousand eight hundred and eighteenth year of the Christian era."

226. Now, if you take time to reflect a little on this matter, you will never be puzzled for a moment by those detached words, to suit which grammarians have invented "nominative cases and cases absolute," and a great many other appellations, with which they puzzle themselves, and confuse and bewilder and torment those who read their books. (See paragraph 191.)

227. We almost always, whether in speaking or in writing, leave out some of the words which are necessary to a
full expression of our meaning. This leaving out is called the Ellipsis. Ellipsis is, in geometry, an oval figure; and the compasses, in the tracing of the line of this figure, do not take their full sweep all round, as in the tracing of a circle, but they make skips and leave out parts of the area, or surface, which parts would be included in the circle. Hence it is, that the skipping over, or leaving out, in speaking or in writing, is called the Ellipsis; without making use of which, we, as you will presently see, scarcely ever open our lips or move our pens. "He told me that he had given John the gun which the gunsmith brought the other night." That is: "He told me that he had given to John the gun, which the gunsmith brought to this place, or hither, on the other night." This would, if we see, be very cumbrous and disagreeable; and, therefore, seeing we may easily go too far in this elliptical way, and say "He told me he had given John the gun the gunsmith brought the other night." This is leaving the sentence too bare, and making it to be, if not nonsense, hardly sense.

228. Reserving some further remarks, to be made by and-by, on the Ellipsis, I have now to desire that, always, when you are examining a sentence, you will take into your view the words that are left out. If you have any doubt as to the correctness of the sentence, fill it up by putting in the left-out words, and, if there be an error you will soon discover it.

229. Keeping in mind these remarks on the subject of understood words, you will now listen attentively to me, while I endeavor to explain to you the manner in which Verbs ought to be used in sentences.

230. The first thing is to come at a clear understanding with regard to the cases of nouns and pronouns as connected, in use, with Verbs and prepositions; for the connection depends a great deal. Verbs govern, as it is called, nouns and pronouns; that is to say, they sometimes cause, or make, nouns or pronouns to be in a certain case. Nouns do not vary their endings to denote different cases; but pronouns do; as you have seen in Letter VI. Therefore, to illustrate this matter, I will take the pronoun personal of the third person singular, which in the nominative case is he, possessive case his, objective case him.

231. When a man (it is the same with regard to any other person or thing) is the actor, or doer, the man is in the nominative case, and the corresponding pronoun is he; "He strikes." The same case exists when the man is the receiver or endurer, of an action. "He is stricken." It is still the same case when the man is said to be in any state or condition. "He is unhappy." Indeed, there is no difference in these two latter instances; for "he is stricken" is no other than to say that "he is in a state or condition called stricken." Observe, too, that in these two latter instances, the he is followed by the Verb to be: he is stricken, he is unhappy; and observe, moreover, that whenever the Verb to be is used, the receiver, or be-er (if I may make a word) is, and must be, in the nominative case. But now let me stop a little to guard you against a puzzle. I say, "the Verb to be;" but I do not mean these two words always. When I say the Verb to be, I may mean, as in the above examples, is. This is the Verb to be in the third person singular. "I write." I should say that here is the pronoun I and the Verb to write; that is to say, it is the Verb to write in one of its forms. The to is the sign of the infinitive mode; and the Verb in that state is the root, or the foundation, from which all the different parts or forms proceed. Having guarded ourselves against this puzzle, let us come back to our nominative case. The actor, the doer, the receiver of an action, the be-er, must always be in the nominative case;
and it is called nominative case because it is that state, or situation, or case, in which the person or thing is named, without being pointed out as the object, or end, of any foregoing action or purpose; as, “he strikes; he is stricken; he is unhappy.” This word nominative is not a good word; acting and being case, would be much better. This word nominative, like most of the terms used in teaching grammar, has been taken from the Latin. It is bad; it is inadequate to its intended purpose; but it is used; and if we understand its meaning, or, rather, what it is designed to mean, its intrinsic insufficiency is of no consequence. Thus, I hope, then, that we know what the nominative is. “He writes; he sings; he is sick; he is well; he is smitten; he is good;” and so on, always with a he.

232. But (and now pay attention) if the action pass from the actor to a person or thing acted upon, and if there be no part of the Verb to be employed, then the person or thing acted upon is in the objective case; as, “He smites him; he strikes him; he kills him.” In these instances we wish to show, not only an action that is performed and the person who performs it, but also the person upon whom it is performed. Here, therefore, we state the actor, the action, and the object; and the person or thing which is the object, is in the objective case. The Verb is said, in such instances, to govern the noun or pronoun; that is to say, to make it, or force it, to be in the objective case; and to make us use him instead of he.

This is simply another way of saying that the transitive verb puts the noun or pronoun which follows it in the objective case; and that a sentence with a transitive verb must consist of subject, predicate, and object; as, Garfield defeated Hancock. (See par. 48.)

233. However, I remember that I was very much puzzled on account of these cases. I saw that when “Peter was smitten,” Peter was in the nominative case; but that when any person or thing “had smitten Peter,” Peter was in the objective case. This puzzled me much; and the loose and imperfect definitions of my grammar-book yielded me no clue to a disentanglement. Reflection on the reason for this apparent inconsistency soon taught me, however, that, in the first of these cases, Peter is merely named, or nominated as the receiver of an action; and that, in the latter instance, Peter is mentioned as the object of the action of some other person or thing, expressed or understood. I perceived that, in the first instance, “Peter is smitten,” I had a complete sense. I was informed as to the person who had received an action, and also as to what sort of action he had received. And I perceived that, in the second instance, “John has smitten Peter,” there was an actor who took possession of the use of the Verb, and made Peter the object of it; and that this actor, John, now took the nominative, and put Peter in the objective case.

234. This puzzle was, however, hardly got over when another presented itself: for I conceived the notion that Peter was in the nominative only because no actor was mentioned at all in the sentence; but I soon discovered this to be an error; for I found that “Peter is smitten by John,” still left Peter in the nominative; and that, if I used the pronoun, I must say, “he is smitten by John;” and not “him is smitten by John.”

235. Upon this puzzle I dwelt a long time: a whole week, at least. For I was not content unless I could reconcile everything to reason; and I could see no reason for this. Peter, in this last instance, appeared to be the object, and there was the actor, John. My ear, indeed, assured me that it was right to say, “He is smitten by John;” but my reason doubted the information and assurances of my ear.

236. At last, the little insignificant word by attracted my attention. This word, in this place, is a preposition. Ah! that is it! prepositions govern nouns and pronouns;
that is to say, make them to be in the objective case! So
that John, who had plagued me so much, I found to be in
the objective case; and I found that, if I put him out, and
put the pronoun in his place, I must say, “Peter is smitten
by him.”

237. Now, then, say dear James, do you clearly un­
derstand this? If you do not, have patience. Read and
think, and weigh well every part of what I have here
written: for, as you will immediately see, a clear un­
derstanding with regard to the cases is one of the main inlets
to a perfect knowledge of grammar.

As soon as a verb is changed from the active-transitive to the
passive voice, the subject becomes the object of the sentence; as,
“She loves him,” active; “He is loved by him,” passive.

Be careful to observe the difference between the object and the
attribute. I remember I could not, for a long time, see the dif­
ference in such sentences as these: “He is a Jew. She loves a Jew.”
I thought that “a Jew” was, in both instances, the object of the
verb; but it is not. When I came to learn German, I saw the
difference at once, and the matter became clear to me. Er ist ein
Jude. Sie liebt einen Juden. You see that “loves” is a transitive
verb, whereas “is” is a neuter, or intransitive one. The objective
is a neuter, or intransitive one. The objective

What follows the neuter verb, therefore, or any verb naming or
nominating anybody, is not the object, nothing in the objective-
case; but the attribute—so called because it generally attributes
something to somebody—and, if a noun, is always in the nomina­
tive case. “He is a man; he is manly; he stands a freeman; he
remains a prince; he seems poor; he appears wealthy; he looks
handsome; he is called The Great Unknown; he is appointed judge;
he is elected governor”—in all these cases, what follows the verb
is an attribute or quality, and, wherever it is a noun, it is in the
nominative case. Remember, therefore, that nouns following such
verbs as he, become, seem, appear, stand, exist, and the passive verbs
in called, is named, is styled, is appointed, is elected, is made, are
always in the nominative case, and are termed the attribute, or, by
some grammarians, the complement, of the sentence.

238. Verbs, of which there must be one, at least, ex­
pressed or understood, in every sentence, must agree in
person and in number with the nouns or pronouns which
are the nominatives of the sentence; that is to say, the
Verbs must be of the same person and same number as
the nominatives are. Verbs frequently change their forms
and endings to make themselves agree with the nomin­
aives. How necessary it is, then, to know what is, and
what is not, a nominative in a sentence! Let us take an
example. “John smite Peter.” What are these words?
John is a noun, third person, singular number, nomin­
avie case. Smite is a Verb, first person, singular number.
Peter is a noun, third person, singular number, objective
case. Therefore, the sentence is incorrect; for the nomi­
native, John, is in the third person, and the Verb is in
the first; while both ought to be in the same person.
The sentence ought to be, “John smites Peter,” and not
“John smite Peter.”

239. This is, to be sure, a very glaring error; but still
it is no more than an error, and is, in fact, as excusable
as any other grammatical error. “The men lives in the
country.” Here the Verb lives is in the singular number,
and the noun men, which is the nominative, is in the
plural number. “The men live in the country,” it ought
to be. These errors stare us in the face. But when the
sentences become longer, and embrace several nominatives
and Verbs, we do not so readily perceive the errors that
are committed. “The intention of the act of Parliament,
and not its several penalties, decide the character of the
corrupt assembly by whom it was passed.” Here the noun
penalties comes so near to the Verb decide that the
ear deceives the judgment. But the noun intention is
the nominative to the Verb, which therefore ought to be
decided. Let us take a sentence still more deceiving.
“Without the aid of a fraudulent paper-money, the tyrants
never could have performed any of those deeds by which
their safety have been endangered, and which have, at the
same time, made them detested.” Deeds is the nomina-
tive to the last have and its principal Verb; but safety is the nominative to the first have; and therefore this first have ought to have been has. You see that the error arises from our having the plural noun deeds in our eye and ear. Take all the rest of the sentence away, and leave "safety have been" standing by itself, and then the error is as flagrant as "John smite Peter." Watch me now, in the next sentence. "It must be observed that land fell greatly in price as soon as the cheats began to draw in their paper-money. In such cases the quantity and quality of the land is the same as it was, but the price is reduced all of a sudden, by a change in the value and power of the money, which becomes very different from what it was." Here are two complete sentences, which go very glibly off the tongue. There is nothing in them that offends the ear. The first is, indeed, correct; but the last is a mass of error. Quantity and quality, which are the nominatives in the first member of the sentence, make, together, a plural, and should have been followed, after the word land, by are not by is; and the it was, which followed, should, of course, have been they were. In the second member of the sentence, value and power are the nominatives of becomes, which, therefore, should have been become; and then, again, there follows an it was, instead of they were. We are misled, in such cases, by the nearness of the singular noun, which comes in between the nominatives and the Verbs. We should not be likely to say, "Quantity and quality is; value and power becomes." But when a singular noun comes in between such nominatives and the Verbs, we are very apt to be thinking of that noun, and to commit error. When we once begin, we keep on; and if the sentence be long, we get together, at last, a fine collection of Verbs and pronouns, making as complete nonsense as heart can wish. Judge Blackstone, in the 4th Book, Chapter 33, says, "The very scheme and model of the administration of common justice, between party and party, was entirely settled by this king; and has continued nearly the same to this day." Administration of common justice was full upon the judge's ear; down he clapped was; and has naturally followed; and thus, my dear son, in grammar as in moral conduct, one fault almost necessarily produces others.

240. Look, therefore, at your nominative, before you put a Verb upon paper; for, you see, it may be one word, or two or more words. But observe, if there be two or more singular nouns or pronouns, separated by or, which, you know, is a disjoining conjunction; then, the Verb must be in the singular; as, "A soldier, or a sailor, who has served his country faithfully, is fairly entitled to a pension; but who will say that a prostituted peer, a pimp, or a buffoon, merits a similar provision from the public?"

241. It sometimes happens that there are, in the nominative, two or more nouns, or pronouns, and that they are in different numbers, or in different persons; as, "The minister or the borough-tyrants." These nouns cannot have the Verb to agree with them both. Therefore if it be the conspiring of these wretches against the liberties of the people, of which we have to speak, we cannot say, "The minister or the borough-tyrants conspire," because the Verb would not then agree in number with the noun minister; nor can we say conspires; because the Verb would not agree with the noun borough-tyrants. Therefore, we must not write such sentences; we must say, "The minister conspires, or the borough-tyrants conspire, against the liberties of the people." Repetition is sometimes disagreeable to the ear; but it is better to repeat, be it ever so often, than to write bad grammar, which is only another term for nonsense.

242. When nominatives are separated by nor, the rule of or must be followed. "Neither man nor beast is safe in such weather;" and not are safe. And if nominatives
of different numbers present themselves, we must not give them a Verb which disagrees with either the one or the other. We must not say: “Neither the halter nor the bayonets are sufficient to prevent us from obtaining our rights.” We must avoid this bad grammar by using a different form of words; as, “We are to be prevented from obtaining our rights by neither the halter nor the bayonets.” And why should we wish to write bad grammar, if we can express our meaning in good grammar?

243. If or nor disjoin nouns and pronouns of different persons, these nouns and pronouns, though they be all of the same number, cannot be the nominative of one and the same Verb. We cannot say, “They or I am in fault; I, or they, or he, is the author of it; George or I am the person.” Mr. Lindley Murray says that we may use these phrases; and that we have only to take care that the Verb agrees with that person which is placed nearest to it; but he says, also, that it would be better to avoid such phrases by giving a different turn to our words, I do not like to leave anything to chance or to discretion when we have a clear principle for our guide. Fill up the sentences, and you will see what pretty work there is.

“They am in fault, or I am in fault; I is the author, or they is the author, or he is the author; George am the person, or I am the person.” Mr. Murray gives a similar latitude to the Verbs used with a mixture of plurals and singualrs, as mentioned in the foregoing paragraph.

The truth, I suspect, is, that Mr. Murray, observing that great writers frequently committed these errors, thought it prudent to give up the cause of grammar, rather than seem to set himself against such formidable authority. But if we follow this course, it is pretty clear that we shall very soon be left with no principle and no rule of grammar.

The grammarians declare that you may say, “Either he or I am the guilty one;” or, “He is the guilty one, or I am;” “You are to go;” or, “You are to go, or William is.” The eye of the ear often decides which is best. “You must not tell us what you or anybody else thinks,” seems more compact than “You must not tell us what you think, or what anybody else thinks.” If one of the nominatives be negatively used, the verb must be in the singular. Thus, “He, and not I, is chosen;” “I, and not they, am the person.” These are, indeed, correct; and yet I think it is better to say, He is chosen, and not I; I am to go, and not they. I beg you to notice how frequently and nicely Cobbett uses the subjunctive be after if and though, which is correct, and which now, unfortunately, is falling out of use among common writers.

244. The nominative is frequently a noun of multitude; as, mob, parliament, gang. Now, where this is the case, the Verb is used in the singular or in the plural, upon precisely the same principles that the pronouns are so used; and as these principles, together with ample illustrations by the way of example, have been given you in Letter XVII, paragraph 181, I need say nothing more of the matter. I will just observe, however, that consistency, in the use of the Verb, in such cases, is the main thing to keep in view. We may say, “The gang of borough-tyrants is cruel;” or, “that the gang of borough-tyrants are cruel;” but if we go on to speak of their notoriously brutal ignorance, we must not say, “The gang of borough-tyrants is cruel, and are also notoriously as ignorant as brutes.” We must use is in both places, or are in both places.

245. In looking for the nominative of a sentence, take care that the relative pronoun be not a stumbling-block, for relatives have no changes to denote number or person; and though they may sometimes appear to be of themselves nominatives, they never can be such. “The men who are here,” the man who is here; the cocks that crow, the cock that crow.” Now, if the relative be the nominative, why do the Verbs change, seeing that here is no change in the relative? No: the Verb, in pursuit of its nominative, runs through the relatives to come at their
antecedents, men, man, cocks, cock. Bishop Lowth says, however, that "the relative is the nominative when no other nominative comes between it and the Verb;" and Mr. Murray has very faithfully copied this erroneous observation. "Who is in the house? Who are in the house? Who walks in the street? Who strike the iron? Who walks in the street?" Now, here is, in all these instances, no other nominative between the relative and the Verb; and yet the Verb is continually varying. Why does it vary? Because it disregards the relative and finds the antecedent, and accommodates its number to that antecedent. The antecedents are, in these instances, understood: "What person is in the house? What persons are in the house? What person strikes the iron? What persons strike the iron? What person was in the street? What persons were in the street?" The Bishop seems to have had a misgiving in his mind, when he gave this account of the nominative functions of the relative; for he adds, "the relative is of the same person as the antecedent; and the Verb agrees with it accordingly." Oh! oh! but the relative is always the same, and is of any and of every number and person. How then can the Verb, when it makes its changes in number and person, be said to agree with the relative? Disagree, indeed, with the relative the Verb cannot any more than it can with a preposition; for the relative has, like the preposition, no changes to denote cases; but the danger is that in certain instances the relative may be taken for a nominative, without your looking after the antecedent, which is the real nominative, and that thus not having the number and person of the antecedent clearly in your mind, you may give to the Verb a wrong number or person. It is very seldom that those who lay down erroneous rules furnish us with examples by the means of which we are enabled to detect the error of these rules; yet, Mr. Murray has, in the present case, done this most amply. For in another part of his book he has these two examples: "I am the general who gives the orders to-day. I am the general who gives the orders to-day." Here the antecedent as well as the relative are precisely the same; the order of the words is the same; and yet the words are different. Why? Because, in the first example, the pronoun I is the nominative, and in the second, the noun general. The first means, "I, who am the general here, give the orders to-day." The second means, "The general who gives the orders to-day is I." Nothing can more clearly show that the relative cannot be the nominative, and that to consider it as a nominative must lead to error and confusion. You will observe, therefore, that when I, in the Etymology and Syntax as relating to relative pronouns, speak of relatives as being in the nominative case, I mean that they relate to nouns or to personal pronouns which are in that case. The same observation applies to the other cases.

I am strongly inclined to think that Cobbett is in error here. The relative pronoun must have person, number, gender, and case, like any other pronoun; and who is undoubtedly always of the same person and number as the word to which it relates. Let us put it directly after all the three persons, singular and plural:

- It is I who speak,
- It is thou who speakest,
- It is he who speaks,
- It is we who speak,
- It is you who speak,
- It is they who speak,

Now here each who is of the same person as the pronoun or word to which it relates, and consequently the verb agrees with it. Strangely enough, the relative pronoun may, as Cobbett says, be of any person; but that does not prevent it from agreeing with its antecedent. I used to think that who was always of the third person, referring always to somebody spoken of; but now I see that it may be of the first person, referring to somebody who is speaking. Nevertheless, we do sometimes hear, It is I who speaks German; it is you who speaks Spanish; it is you that speaks
French. This may be explained by supposing that the full meaning of the words is: It is I who am the person that speaks German; it is you who are the person that speaks Spanish. And here again each who is of the same person as the antecedent.

246. We are sometimes embarrassed to fix precisely on the nominative, when a sort of addition is made to it by words expressing persons or things that accompany it; as, “The Tyrant, with the Spy, have brought Peter to the block.” We hesitate to determine whether the Tyrant alone is in the nominative, or whether the nominative includes the Spy; and of course we hesitate which to employ, the singular or the plural Verb; that is to say, has or have. The meaning must be our guide. If we mean that the act has been done by the Tyrant himself, and that the Spy has been a mere involuntary agent, then we ought to use the singular; but if we believe that the Spy has been a co-operator, an associate; an accomplice; then we must use the plural of the Verb. “The Tyrant with his Proclamation has produced great oppression and flagrant violations of law.” Has, by all means, in this case; because the proclamation is a mere instrument. Give the sentence a turn: “The Tyrant has produced great oppression and flagrant violations of the law with his proclamation.” This is good; but “the Tyrant has brought Peter to the block with the Spy,” is bad; it sounds badly; and it is bad sense. It does not say what we mean it should say. “A leg of mutton, with turnips and carrots, is very good.” If we mean to say that a leg of mutton when cooked with these vegetables, is good, we must use is; but if we be speaking of the goodness of a leg of mutton and these vegetables taken together, we must use are. When with means along with, together with, in company with, and the like, it is nearly the same as and; and then the plural Verb must be used. “He, with his bare hand, takes up hot iron.” Not, “he, with his bare hand, take up.” “He, with his brothers, are able to do much.” Not, “is able to do much.” If the pronoun be used instead of brothers, it will be in the objective case: “He, with them, are able to do much.” But this is no impediment to the including of the noun (represented by them) in the nominative. With, which is a preposition, takes the objective case after it; but if the persons or things represented by the words coming after the preposition form part of the actors in a sentence, the understood nouns make part of the nominatives. “The bag, with the guineas and dollars in it, were stolen.” For if we say was stolen, it is possible for us to mean that the bag only was stolen. “Sobriety, with great industry and talent, enable a man to perform great deeds.” And not enables; for sobriety alone would not enable a man to do great things. “The borough-tyranny, with the paper-money makers, have produced misery and starvation.” And not has; for we mean that the two have co-operated. “Zeal, with discretion, do much;” and not, does much; for we mean, on the contrary, that it does nothing. It is the meaning that must determine which of the numbers we ought, in all such cases, to employ.

The grammarians are now unanimous in declaring that a phrase beginning with the preposition with, coming directly after the subject, does not affect the verb, or predicate; as, The vessel, with her crew, was lost; the regiment, with its officers, was captured; the house, with its contents, has been sold; the minister, with his cabinet, has resigned; the emperor, with his family, has been assassinated; Cobett, with his Grammar, has done much good.

Therefore, it is correct to say, The tyrant, with the spy, has brought Peter to the block; he, with his brothers, has done much; the bag, with the guineas and dollars in it, was stolen; zeal, with discretion, does much. Because, in these instances, “with the spy” and “with his brothers” indicate the phrase with his proclamation, merely instruments; and the sentence about the bag of money means simply that the bag was stolen with what it contained. The sentence about sobriety means that this virtue, employed or combined with other qualities, enables a man to
perform great deeds; and that about zeal with discretion must be regarded in the same way. Besides, the preposition with puts the spy and the brothers, the guineas and the dollars, the industry and the talent, in the objective case; and how can any thing in the objective case be the subject, which is always in the nominative case? What Cobbett says about the sentence, "He, with his brothers, are able to do much," is about as good an example of sophistry as any thing I know. For an expression of this kind, see Cobbett's account of the sand-hill as an educator, Life, page 261.

The same is the case with sentences in which the phrase as well as occurs. Clay, as well as Webster, was a great orator; Charles, as well as his brother, was successful in business; the father, as well as his son, is in fault; the minutest insect, as well as the largest quadruped, derives its life from the same Omnipotent Source.

247. The Verb to be sometimes comes between two nouns of different numbers. "The great evil is the borough-debt." In this sentence there is nothing to embarrass us; because evil and borough-debt are both in the singular. But, "the great evil is the taxes," is not so clear of embarrassment. The embarrassment is the same, when there is a singular noun on one side, and two or more singulars or plurals on the other side; as, "The curse of the country is the profligacy, the rapacity, the corruption of the law-makers, the base subserviency of the administrators of the law, and the frauds of the makers of paper-money." Now, we mean, here, that these things constitute, or form, or make up, a curse. We mean that the curse consists of these things; and if we said this, there would be no puzzling. "The evil is the taxes." That is, the taxes constitute the evil; but we cannot say, "the evil are the taxes," nor can we say, that the "curse are these things." Avoid, then, the use of the Verb to be in all such cases. Say, the curse of the country consists of, or arises from, or is produced by. Dr. Blair, in his 19th Lecture, says: "A feeble, a harsh, or an obscure style, are always faults." The or required the singular Verb is; but faults required are. If he had put is and faulty, there would have been no doubt of his being correct. But as the sentence now stands, there is great room for doubt, and, that, too, as to more than one point; for fault means defect, and a style, which is a whole, cannot well be called a defect, which mean a want of goodness in a part. Feebleness, harshness, obscurity, are faulty. But to call the style itself, to call the whole thing a fault, is more than the Doctor meant. The style may be faulty, and yet it may not be a fault. The Doctor's work is faulty; but, surely, the work is not a fault!

248. Lest you should be, in certain instances, puzzled to find your nominative case, which, as you now see, constitutes the main spring and regulator of every sentence, I will here point out to you some instances wherein there is used, apparently, neither Verb nor nominative. "In general I dislike to drink wine." This in general is no more, in fact, than one word. It means generally. But sometimes there is a Verb comes in: "generally speaking." Thus: "The borough-tyrants, generally speaking, are great fools as well as rogues." That is to say, "when we speak generally," or, "if we are speaking generally," or, "when men or people speak generally." For observe that there never can be a sentence without a Verb, expressed or understood, and that there never can be a Verb without a nominative case, expressed or understood.

249. Sometimes not only two or more nouns, or pronouns, may be the nominative of a sentence, but many other words along with them may assist in making a nominative; as, "Pitt, Rose, Steele, and their associates, giving to Walter a sum of the public money, as a reward for libelling the sons of the king, was extremely profligate and base." That is to say, this act of Pitt and his associates was extremely profligate and base. It is, when you come to inquire, the act which is the nominative, and all the other words only go to describe the origin and end of the act.
I doubt very much whether this sentence be correct. Following Cobbett's own instructions, let us shorten the sentence, and see how it will look then: "Pitt giving Walter a sum of money was extremely base." I think this neither looks nor sounds correct. It was his act, Pitt's act, which was base; and therefore it should be, "Pitt's giving Walter a sum of money was extremely base;" that is to say, Pitt's acting was base; for we cannot say, Pitt acting was base. We say, "Bacon's drawing up charges against Essex was extremely base; John Chinnaman's working for low wages is the head and front of his offense;" and not, Bacon drawing up, etc.—By the-bye, such sentences as, "The great evil is the taxes," are perfectly correct; for the subject is "the evil," which is singular, and it makes little matter what the attribute may be, for it has nothing to do with the verb. It is precisely the same form of expression which we use when we say, "Theirs, if it relate to anything, must relate to laws;" and then the laws have ancestors. Then, what is it that was to be of above the value of twelve-pence? The death, or the theft? By, "if above the value of twelve-pence," the Judge, without doubt, meant, "if the thing stolen were above the value of twelve-pence," but he says no such thing; and the meaning of the words is, if the death were above the value of twelve-pence. The sentence should have stood thus: "Our ancient Saxon laws nominally punished theft with death, if above the value of twelve-pence; but the criminal was permitted to redeem his life by a pecuniary ransom; as among their German ancestors." What confusion is here? Whose ancestors? Theirs. Who are they? Why the criminal. Theirs, if it relate to anything, must relate to laws; and then the laws have ancestors. Then, what is it that was to be of above the value of twelve-pence? The death, or the theft? By, "if above the value of twelve-pence," the Judge, without doubt, meant, "if the thing stolen were above the value of twelve-pence," but he says no such thing; and the meaning of the words is, if the death were above the value of twelve-pence. The sentence should have stood thus: "Our ancient Saxon laws nominally punished theft with death, if above the value of twelve-pence; but the criminals were permitted to redeem their lives by a pecuniary ransom; as among their German ancestors." I could quote, from the same author, hundreds of examples of similar errors; but were there only this one to be found in a work which is composed of matter which was read, in the way of Lectures, by a professor of law, to students in the University of Oxford, even this one ought to be sufficient to convince you of the importance of attending to the precepts which I have given you relative to this part of our subject.

250. You must take care that there be a nominative, and that it be clearly expressed or understood. "The Attorney-General Gibbs, whose malignity induced him to be extremely violent, and was listened to by the Judges." The first Verb induced has a nominative, namely, the malignity of the Attorney-General Gibbs; but the was has no nominative, either expressed or clearly understood; and we cannot, therefore, tell what or who it was that was listened to; whether the malignity of Gibbs, or Gibbs himself. It should have been, and who, or, and he, was listened to; and then we should have known that it was Gibbs himself that was listened to. The omitting of the nominative, five hundred instances of which I could draw from Judge Blackstone and Doctor Johnson, arises very often from a desire to avoid a repetition of the noun or pronouns; but repetition is always to be preferred before obscurity.

251. Now, my dear James, I hope that I have explained to you, sufficiently, not only what the nominative is, but what are its powers in every sentence, and that I have imprinted deeply on your mind the necessity of keeping the nominative constantly in your eye. For want of doing this, Judge Blackstone has, in Book IV, Chap. 17, committed some most ludicrous errors. "Our ancient Saxon laws nominally punished theft with death, if above the value of twelve-pence; but the criminal was permitted to redeem his life by a pecuniary ransom; as among their German ancestors." What confusion is here? Whose ancestors? Theirs. Who are they? Why the criminal. Theirs, if it relate to anything, must relate to laws; and then the laws have ancestors. Then, what is it that was to be of above the value of twelve-pence? The death, or the theft? By, "if above the value of twelve-pence," the Judge, without doubt, meant, "if the thing stolen were above the value of twelve-pence," but he says no such thing; and the meaning of the words is, if the death were above the value of twelve-pence. The sentence should have stood thus: "Our ancient Saxon laws nominally punished theft with death, if above the value of twelve-pence; but the criminals were permitted to redeem their lives by a pecuniary ransom; as among their German ancestors." I could quote, from the same author, hundreds of examples of similar errors; but were there only this one to be found in a work which is composed of matter which was read, in the way of Lectures, by a professor of law, to students in the University of Oxford, even this one ought to be sufficient to convince you of the importance of attending to the precepts which I have given you relative to this part of our subject.

252. As to the objective case, it has nothing to do with Verbs; because a noun which is not in the nominative must be in the objective; and because Verbs do never vary their endings to make themselves agree with the objective. This case has been sufficiently explained under the head of personal pronouns, which have endings to denote it.

253. The possessive case, likewise, has nothing to do
with Verbs, only you must take care that you do not, in any instance, look upon it as a nominative. "The quality of the apples were good." No; it must be was; for quality is the nominative and apples the possessive. "The want of learning, talent, and sense are more visible in the two houses of Parliament than in any other part of the nation." Take care upon all such occasions. Such sentences are, as to grammatical construction, very deceiving. It should be "is more visible," for want is the nominative; and learning, talent, and sense are in the possessive. The want of learning, and so on.

254. You now know all about the person and number of Verbs. You know the reasons upon which are founded their variations with regard to these two circumstances. Look, now, at the conjugation in Letter VIII, paragraph 98; and you will see that there remain the Times and Modes to be considered.

255. Of Times there is very little to be said here. All the fanciful distinctions of perfect present, more past, and more perfect past, and numerous others, only tend to bewilder, confuse, and disgust the learner. There can be but three times, the present, the past, the future; and, for the expressing of these, our language provides us with words and terminations the most suitable that can possibly be conceived. In some languages, which contain no little words such as our signs, will, shall, may, and so on, the Verbs themselves change their form in order to express what we express by the help of these signs. In French, for instance, there are two past times. I will give you an example in order to explain this matter.

"The working men, every day, gave money to the tyrants, who, in return, gave the working men dungeons and axes." Now here is our word gave, which is the past time of the Verb to give. It is the same word, you see, in both instances; but you will see it different in the French. "Tous les jours, les ouvriers donnaient de l'argent aux tyrants, qui, en retour, donnaient aux ouvriers des cachots et des haches." You see that, in one place, our give is translated by donnaient, and in the other place, by donnèrent. One of these is called, in French, the past imperfect, and the other the past perfect. This distinction is necessary in the French; but similar distinctions are wholly unnecessary in English.

256. In the Latin language, the Verbs change their endings so as to include in the Verbs themselves what we express by our auxiliary Verb to have. And they have as many changes, or different endings, as are required to express all those various circumstances of time which we express by work, worked, shall work, may work, might work, have worked, had worked, shall have worked, may have worked, might have worked, and so on. It is, therefore, necessary for the Latins to have distinct appellations to suit these various circumstances of time, or states of an action; but such distinction of appellations can be of no use to us, whose Verbs never vary their endings to express time, except the single variation from the present to the past; for, even as to the future, the signs answer our purpose. In our compound times, that is to say, such as I have worked, there is the Verb to have, which becomes had, or shall have, and so on.

257. Why, then, should we perplex ourselves with a multitude of artificial distinctions, which cannot, by any possibility, be of any use in practice? These distinctions have been introduced from this cause: those who have written English Grammars have been taught Latin; and either unable to divest themselves of their Latin rules, or unwilling to treat with simplicity that which, if made somewhat of a mystery, would make them appear more learned than the mass of people, they have endeavored to make our simple language turn and twist itself so as to become as complex in its principles as the Latin language is.
258. There are, however, some few remarks to be made with regard to the times of Verbs; but before I make them, I must speak of the participles. Just cast your eye, once again on Letter VIII, paragraphs 97 and 102. Look at the conjugations of the Verbs to work, to have, and to be, in that same Letter. These participles, you see, with the help of to have and to be, form our compound tenses. I need not tell you that I was working means the same as I worked, only that the former supposes that something else was going on at the same time, or that something happened at the time I was working, or that, at least, there is some circumstance of action or of existence collateral with my working; as, “I was working when he came; I was sick while I was working; it rained while I was working; she scolded while I was working.” I need not tell you the use of do and did; I need not say that I do work is the same as I work, only the former expresses the action more positively, and adds some degree of force to the assertion; and that did work is the same as worked, only the former is, in the past time, of the same use as do is in the present. I need not dwell here on the uses of will, shall, may, might, should, would, can, could, and must; which uses, various as they are, are as well known to us all as the uses of our teeth and our noses; and to misapply which words argues not only a deficiency in the reasoning faculties, but also a deficiency in instinctive discrimination. I will not, my dear James, in imitation of the learned doctors, pester you with a philological examination into the origin and properties of words, with regard to the use of which, if you were to commit an error in conversation, your brother Richard, who is four years old, would instantly put you right. Of all these little words I have said quite enough before; but when the Verbs to have and to be are used as auxiliaries to principal Verbs, and, especially, when the sentences are long, errors of great consequence may be committed; and, therefore, against these it will be proper to guard you.

And yet, here in the United States, there is no more common error than the confounding of shall and will. If you can stick the following rule fast in your mind, it will save you from making many mistakes in the use of these words:—I shall, you will, he will, are the forms of the future, and merely foretell what will take place; I will, you shall, he shall, are the forms of the potential, and express will or determination on the part of the speaker. The latter are equal to the German ich will, du sollst, er soll. Now try to repeat this rule without looking at the book. Turn it over in your mind, and try it in sentences of your own formation. Look at the last three paragraphs of Cobbett’s Farewell Address to his Countrymen, page 159.

An English nobleman, Sir E. W. Head, has written a whole book on these two mighty little words, “Shall and Will,” from which the following “admirable statement of the true distinction between these auxiliaries” is taken:

“Will in the first person expresses a resolution or a promise: ‘I will not go’ = it is my resolution not to go. ‘I will give it you’ = I promise to give it you. Will in the second person foretells: ‘If you come at six o’clock, you will find me at home.’ Will in the second person, in questions, anticipates a wish or an intention: Will you go to-morrow? = Is it your wish or intention to go to-morrow? Will in the third person foretells, generally implying an intention at the same time, when the nominative is a rational creature; ‘He will come to-morrow,’ signifies what is to take place, and that it is the intention of the person mentioned to come. ‘I think it will snow to-day,’ intimates what is, probably, to take place. Will must never be used in questions with nominative cases of the first person: ‘Will we come to-morrow?’ = Is it our intention or desire to come to-morrow? which is an absurd question. We must say, Shall we come to-morrow?

‘Would is subject to the same rules as will. Would followed by that is frequently used (the nominative being expressed or understood) to express a wish: ‘Would that he had died before this disgrace befell him!’ = I wish that he had died before this disgrace befell him. Would have, followed by an infinitive, signifies a desire to do or to make; ‘I would have you think of these things’ = I wish to make you think of these things. Would is often used to express a

*As Relating to Verbs.

A. S. Hill’s Rhetoric, in which I found the above rule and this quotation.
mean; what you wish to say. Examine well into this true meaning of your words, and you will never make a mistake as to the times. "I thought to have heard the noble Lord produce something like proof." No! my dear James will never fall into the use of such senseless gabble! You would think of hearing something; you would expect to hear, not to have heard. You would be waiting to hear, and not, like these men, be waiting to have heard. "I should have liked to have been informed of the amount of the Exchequer Bills." A phraseology like this can be becoming only in those Houses where it was proposed to relieve the distresses of the nation by setting the laborers to dig holes one day and fill them up the next.

262. It is erroneous to confound the past time with the passive participle of the Verb. But now, before I speak of this very common error, let us see a little more about the participles. You have seen, in Letter VIII, what the participles are; you have seen that working is the active participle, and worked the passive participle. We shall speak fully of the active by-and-by. The passive participle and the Verb to be, or some part of that Verb, make what is called the passive Verb. This is not a Verb which, in its origin, differs from an active Verb, in like manner as a neuter Verb differs from an active Verb. To sleep is neuter in its origin, and must, in all its parts, be neuter; but every active Verb may become a passive Verb. The passive Verb is, in fact, that state of an active Verb which expresses, as we have seen above, the action as being received or endured; and it is called passive because the receiver or endurer of the action is passive; that is to say, does nothing. "John smites; John is smitten." This is erroneous. Now, then, the passive Verb is no other than the passive participle used along with some part of the Verb to be.

263. Now, then, let us see a specimen of the errors which I spoke at the beginning of the last paragraph. When the Verb is regular, there can be no error of this sort; because the past time and the passive participle are written in the same manner; as, "John worked; John is worked." But, when the Verb is irregular, and when the past time and the passive participle are written in a manner different from each other, there is room for error, and error is often committed: "John smotes; John is smote." This is gross. It offends the ear; but when a company, consisting of men who have been enabled, by the favor of the late William Pitt, to plunder and insult the people, meet under the name of a Pitt Club, to celebrate the birthday of that corrupt and cruel minister, those who publish accounts of their festivities always tell us, that such and such toasts were drunk; instead of drunk. I drank at my dinner to-day, but the milk and water which I drank, were drunk by me. In the lists of irregular Verbs, in Letter VIII, the differences between the past tense and the passive participles are all clearly shown. You often hear people say, and see them write, "We have spoke; it was spoke in my hearing;" but "we have come; it was did," are just as correct.

It may be well to notice that most of these verbs, like the German verbs from which they are derived, change the i to u in the past tense, and to u in the past participle. Say, therefore, I sing, sang, have sung; I spring, sprung, have sprung; I ring, rang, have rung; I swim, swam, have swum; I sink, sank, have sunk; and so on. But there are a few exceptions; as, to cling, to cling, to ring, to stung, which change the i to u in both the past tense and the past participle.

264 Done is the passive participle of to do, and it is very often misused. This done is frequently a very great offender against grammar. To do is the act of doing. We often see people write, "I did not speak, yesterday, so well as I wished to have done." Now, what is meant by the writer? He means to say that he did not speak so well as he then wished, or was wishing, to speak.
Therefore, the sentence should be, "I did not speak yesterday so well as I wished to do." That is to say, "so well as I wished to do it," that is to say, to do, or to perform, the act of speaking.

265. Take great care not to be too free in your use of the Verb to do in any of its times or moods. It is a nice little handy word, and, like our oppressed it, it is made use of very often when the writer is at a loss for what to put down. To do is to act, and, therefore, it never can, in any of its parts, supply the place of a neuter Verb. Yet, to employ it for this purpose is very common. Dr. Blair, in his 23rd Lecture, says: "It is somewhat unfortunate that this Number of the Spectator did not end, as it might very well have done, with the former beautiful period." That is to say, "done it." And, then, we ask: done what? Not the act of ending; because, in this case, there is no action at all. The Verb means to come to an end; to cease; not to go any further. This same Verb to end, is, sometimes, an active Verb: "I end my sentence;" and then the Verb to do may supply its place; as, "I have not ended my sentence so well as I might have done;" that is, done it; that is, done, or performed, the act of ending. But the Number of the Spectator was no actor; it was expected to perform nothing; it was, by the Doctor, wished to have ceased to proceed. "Did not end as it very well might have ended. . . ." This would have been correct; but the Doctor wished to avoid the repetition, and thus fell into bad grammar. "Mr. Speaker, I do not feel so well satisfied as I should have done, if the Right Honorable gentleman had explained the matter more fully." You constantly hear talk like this amongst those whom the boroughs make law-givers. To feel satisfied is, when the satisfaction is to arise from conviction produced by fact or reasoning, a senseless expression; and to supply its place, when it is, as in this case, a neuter Verb, by to do, is as senseless. Done what?

As Relating to Verbs.

266. But do not misunderstand me. Do not confound do and did, as parts of a principal Verb, with the same words, as parts of an auxiliary. Read again Letter VIII, paragraph 111. Do and did, as helpers, are used with neuter as well as with active Verbs; for here it is not their business to supply the place of other Verbs, but merely to add strength to affirmations and negations, or to mark time; as, "The sentence does end; I do feel easy." But done, which is the passive participle of the active Verb to do, can never be used as an auxiliary. The want of making this distinction has led to the very common error of which I spoke in the last paragraph, and against which I am very desirous to guard you.

267. In sentences which are negative or interrogative, do and did express time; as, "You do not sleep; did you not feel?" But they do not here supply the place of other Verbs; they merely help; and their assistance is useful only as to the circumstance of time; for we may say, "You sleep not; felt you not?" And if in answer to this question, I say, "I did," the word feel is understood: "I did feel."

You will sometimes hear even Wall-street millionaires say, "I done it; he seen him; he is dead broke;" which is confounding the past participle and the past tense. You must say, I did it, I saw him; he is dead broken; or, rather, completely ruined. But here is a very important matter; something which Cobbett does not touch; something of prime importance. What is the difference between "I did it" and "I have done it?" between "I was in New York" and "I have been in New York?" between "I wrote the letter" and "I have written the letter?" When do you use the one and when the other? Think for a moment. Give your own explanation before reading mine. These two forms are
termed the past tense and the present perfect tense. Those who are "native and to the manner born" seldom confound these tenses, but foreigners constantly do. The distinction between them, however, is exceedingly plain. We use the past tense when speaking of anything that has happened in a *completely past time*; as, I did it yesterday; I was in New York last week, I wrote a letter last Thursday. We use the present perfect tense when speaking of anything that has happened in a *time not yet entirely past*, or in an *indefinite past time*; I have done it to-day; I have been in New York this week, I have written many letters; I have been in Paris. Both the Germans and the French can, in their languages, use either form for the same time; so that they can say, which we cannot, "I have been in New York yesterday; I have written a letter last week."

The past perfect, *I had done*; *I had written*; *I had been*, is used when speaking of something happening at a time farther back than or anterior to a given past time. For instance: While I am telling you of what happened to me in 1868 in London, and of my doing something there at that time, and of my writing a letter to somebody in that year, I suddenly inform you, for the better understanding of my narrative, that *I had been* in London before that year; that *I had written* something there before that time, and that *I had written* to somebody before writing at that time. This, you see, is past perfect time; it is going behind the past time of our narrative; and it is called the perfectly past time.

268. Well, then, I think, that as far as relates to the active Verb, the passive Verb, and the passive participle, enough has now been said. You have seen, too, something of the difference between the functions of the active Verb and those of the *neuter*; but there are a few remarks to be made with regard to the latter. A neuter Verb cannot have a noun or a pronoun in the objective case immediately after it; for though we say, "I dream a dream," it is understood that my mind has been engaged in a dream. "I live a good life," means that I am living in a good manner. "I walk my horse about," means that I lead or conduct my horse in the pace called a walk. Nor can a neuter Verb become passive; because a passive Verb is no other than a Verb describing an action received.

As Relating to Verbs.

For endured. "The noble earl, on returning to town, found that the noble countess was *ecloped* with his grace." I read this very sentence in an English newspaper not long ago. It should be *had eloped*; *for* was eloped means that somebody had eloped the countess; it means that she had received or endured, from some actor, the act of eloping, whereas she is the actress, and the act is confined to herself. The Verb is called neuter because the action does not pass over to anything. There are Verbs which are *inactive*; such as, to *sit*, to *sleep*, to *exist*. These are also neuter Verbs, of course. But *inactivity* is not necessary to the making of a Verb neuter. It is sufficient for this purpose that the action do not pass from the actor to any object.

These *inactive* verbs are the *real* neuter ones; for, in the use of them, the nominative is neither acting nor acted on. But we now set down the whole batch, neuter and intransitive, as intransitive verbs; and Cobbett simply says, by this verb to *elope*, that we cannot say an intransitive verb in the passive voice; we can no more say *I am eloped* than we can say *I am eloping*, *I am slept*, or *I am existed*. There are a few intransitive verbs that seem an exception to this rule; but they are not. I mean the verbs to *come*, to *arrive*, to *go*, to *return*, to *fall*, to *rise*, and some others. Let me set them down in the two ways in which they are used:

- He has come, He is come.
- He has arrived, He is arrived.
- He has gone, He is gone.
- He has returned, He is returned.
- He has fallen, He is fallen.
- He has risen, He is risen.

In the second form, *He is come*, etc., the words *come*, *arrived*, *gone*, *returned*, *fallen*, *risen*, are not really participles, but adjectives, indicating state; so this form is not at all a passive form of the verb; it is simply neuter; for the subject is neither acting nor acted on. In the first form, *He has come*, etc., these words are participles, and the sentences indicate action completed. But I find I am anticipating; Cobbett says the same thing in the next paragraph but one. Just keep in mind that what he calls *neuter*
we now call intransitive; and that what he calls active, we now call transitive.

269. In the instance just mentioned, the error is flagrant: "was eloped," is what few persons would put down in writing; yet anybody might do it upon the authority of Dr. Johnson; for he says in his Dictionary, that to elope is an active Verb, though he says that it is synonymous with to run away, which, in the same Dictionary, he says, is a neuter Verb. However, let those who prefer Doctor Johnson's authority to the dictates of reason and common sense say that "his grace eloped the countess;" and that, accordingly, the countess was eloped.

270. The danger of error, in cases of this kind, arises from the circumstance of there being many Verbs which are active in one sense and neuter in another. The Verb to endure, for instance, when it means to support, to sustain, is active; as, "I endure pain." But when it means to last, to continue, it is neuter; as, "The earth endures from age to age." In the first sense we can say, the pain is endured; but, in the last, we cannot say the earth is endured from age to age. We say, indeed, I am fallen; the colt is grown, the trees are rotten, the stone is crumbled, the post is mouldered, the pitcher is cracked; though to grow, to rot, to crumble, to moulder, to crack, are all of them neuter Verbs. But it is clearly understood here that we mean that the colt is in a grown, or augmented state; that the trees are in a rotten state; and so on; and it is equally clear that we could not mean that the countess was in an eloped state. "The noble earl found that the countess was gone." This is correct, though to go is a neuter Verb. But gone, in this sense, is not the participle of the Verb to go; it is merely an adjective, meaning absent. If we put any word after it, which gives it a verbal signification, it becomes erroneous. "He found that the countess was gone out of the house." That is to say, was absent out of the house; and this is nonsense. It must, in this case be, "He found that the countess had gone out of the house." 271. Much more might be said upon this part of my subject; many niceties might be stated and discussed; but I have said quite enough on it to answer every useful purpose. Here, as everywhere else, take time to think. There is a reason for the right use of every word. Have your meaning clear in your mind; know the meaning of all the words you employ; and then you will seldom commit errors.

272. There remains to be noticed the use of the active participle, and then we shall have a few, and only a few, words to say upon the subject of the modes of Verbs. As to the active participle, paragraph 97, in Letter VIII, will have told you nearly all that is necessary. We know well that I am working means that I work, and so on. There is great nicety in distinguishing the circumstances which call for the use of the one from those which call for the other: but, like many other things, though very difficult to explain by words, these circumstances are perfectly well understood, and scrupulously attended to, by even the most illiterate persons. The active participle is, you know, sometimes a noun in its functions; as, "Working is good for our health." Here it is the nominative case to the Verb is. Sometimes it is an adjective; as, "the working people." As a noun it may be in any of the three cases; as, "Working is good; the advantage of working; I like working." It may be in the singular or in the plural: "The working of the mines; the workings of corruption." Of course it requires articles and prepositions as nouns require them. More need not be said about it; and, indeed, my chief purpose in mentioning the active participle in this place is to remind you that it may be a nominative case in a sentence.

273. The modes have been explained in Letter VIII,
The indicative mode is that manner of using the Verb which is applied when we are speaking of an action without any other action being at all connected with it, so as to make the one a condition or consequence of the other. "He works every day; he rides out;" and so on. But, there may be a condition or a consequence dependent on this working and riding; and in that case these Verbs must be in the subjunctive mode; because the action they express depends on something else, going before or coming after. "If he work every day, he shall be paid every day; if he ride out, he will not be at home by supper time." The s is dropped at the end of the Verbs here; and the true cause is this, that there is a sign understood. If filled up, the sentence would stand thus: "If he should work; if he should ride out." So that, after all, the Verb has, in reality, no change of termination to denote what is called mode. And all the fuss which grammarians have made about the potential modes, and other fanciful distinctions of the kind, only serve to puzzle and perplex the learner.

275. Verbs in general, and, indeed, all the Verbs, except the Verb to be, have always the same form in the present time of the indicative and in that of the subjunctive, in all the persons, save the second and third person singular. Thus, we say, in the present of the indicative, I work, we work, you work, they work; and in the subjunctive the same. But we say, in the former, thou wastest, he works; while, in the subjunctive, we say, thou work, he work; that is to say, thou mayst work, or might, or should (and so on), work; and he may work, or might or should, as the sense may require. Therefore, as to all Verbs, except the Verb to be, it is only in these two persons that anything can happen to render any distinction of mode necessary. But the Verb to be has more variation than any other Verb. All other Verbs have the same form in their indicative present time as in their infinitive mode.
with the trifling exception of the st and s added to the second and third person singular; as, to have, to write, to work, to run; I have, I write, I work, I run. But the Verb to be becomes, in the present time of its indicative, I am, thou art, he is, we are, you are, they are; which are great changes. Therefore, as the subjunctive, in all its persons, takes the infinitive of the Verb without any change at all, the Verb to be exhibits the use of this mode most clearly; for, instead of I am, thou art, he is, we are, the subjunctive requires, I be, thou be, he be, we be; that is to say, I may be, or might be; and so on. Look now at the conjugation of the Verb to be, in Letter VIII, paragraph 117; and then come back to me.

276. You see, then, that this important Verb, to be, has a form in some of its persons appropriated to the subjunctive mode. This is a matter of consequence. Distinctions, without differences in the things distinguished, are fanciful, and, at best, useless. Here is a real difference; a practical difference; a difference in the form of the word. Here is a past time of the subjunctive; a past time distinguished, in some of its persons, by a different manner of spelling or writing the word. If I be; if I were; if he were; and not if I was, if he was. In the case of other Verbs, the past of the indicative is the same as the past of the subjunctive; that is to say, the Verb is written in the same letters; but in the case of the Verb to be it is otherwise. If I worked, if I smote, if I had. Here the Verbs are the same as in I worked, I smote, I had; but in the case of the Verb to be, we must say, in the past of the indicative, I was, and in that of the subjunctive, if I were.

277. The question, then, is this: What are the cases in which we ought to use the subjunctive form? Bishop Lowth, and, on his authority, Mr. Lindley Murray, have said, that some conjunctions have a government of verbs; that is to say, make them or force them to be in the subjunctive mode. And then these gentlemen mention particularly the conjunctions, if; though, unless, and some others. But (and these gentlemen allow it), the Verbs which follow these conjunctions are not always in the subjunctive mode; and the using of that mode must depend, not upon the conjunction, but upon the sense of the whole sentence. How, then, can the conjunction govern the Verb? It is the sense, the meaning of the whole sentence, which must govern; and of this you will presently see clear proof. "If it be dark, do not come home. If eating is necessary to man, he ought not to be a glutton." In the first of these sentences, the matter expressed by the Verb may be or may not be. There exists an uncertainty on the subject. And if the sentence were filled up, it would stand thus: "If it should be dark, do not come home." But in the second sentence there exists no such uncertainty. We know, and all the world knows, that eating is necessary to man. We could not fill up the sentence with should; and, therefore, we make use of is. Thus, then, the conjunction if, which you see is employed in both cases, has nothing at all to do with the government of the verb. It is the sense which governs.

It is worth while, however, to notice the conjunctions that are said to govern the subjunctive: though, although, unless, lest, until, till, whether, provided that, on condition that,—because, when used, they generally indicate some uncertainty. When they do not do this, then the indicative must be used. Here is an example that will illustrate this. If I were speaking of the possibilities in the future career of a young man, I should naturally say, "Unless he be honest, he will never, though he be rich as Croesus, be happy." But if I were speaking of a real person, who is actually rich as Croesus, I should naturally say, "Though he is rich as Croesus, he is not happy." Again: "Do not admit him, unless he has a ticket." Here we say has, because we anticipate something as fact. But, where there is a doubt, we use the subjunctive. "Do not give him the money, unless he return you the goods." When, therefore, anything is spoken of as about fact, or as in absolute existence, the indicative is used. Those who have studied French will remember
that the French have also a number of words that govern the subjunctive, and in many, if not most, of the cases where they use the subjunctive, we do so too. Though he be a giant; unless he be attentive; lest he hurt you; provided that he pay you; on condition that he reward you; wait until he come. The French use the subjunctive in all these cases. They also use it after certain verbs, as we do too; as, "Be sure that he lay no hand on you; mind that he do not touch you." You have doubtless noticed this use of the subjunctive in such sentences as that of Cobbeit himself in paragraph 250: "You must take care that there be a nominative, and that it be clearly expressed or understood." Some writers think that the subjunctive mode is fast passing out of use, and that it will soon be altogether obsolete. I can only say that if it do go out of use, we shall lose the means of indicating different shades of meaning in the words we use. I suppose one reason why it is going out of use is because the great army of newspaper-writers know nothing of it; they are obliged to write with such extraordinary rapidity and in such haste that they can't take time to consider fine shades of difference of meaning in the words they employ.—Notice that the difference between the indicative and the subjunctive, in all verbs except the verb to be, is, simply this, that in the subjunctive the endings are all cut off. Cast your eye over the conjugations of to work and to be worked.

278. There is a great necessity for care as to this matter; for the meaning of what we write is very much affected when we make use of the modes indiscriminately. Let us take an instance. "Though her chastity be right and becoming, it gives her no claim to praise; because she would be criminal if she were not chaste." Now, by employing the subjunctive, in the first member of the sentence, we leave it uncertain whether it be right or not for her to be chaste; and by employing it in the second, we express a doubt as to the fact of her chastity. We mean neither of these; and, therefore, notwithstanding here are a though and an if; both the Verbs ought to be in the indicative. "Though her chastity is right and becoming, it gives her no claim to praise; because she would be criminal if she was not chaste." Fill up with the signs. "Though her chastity may be right; if she should not be chast;" and then you see, at once, what a difference there is in the meaning.

279. The subjunctive is necessarily always used where a sign is left out; as, "Take care that he come to-morrow, that you be ready to receive him, that he be well received, and that all things be duly prepared for his entertainment." Fill up with the signs, and you will see the reason for what you write.

280. The Verb to be is sometimes used thus: "Were he rich, I should not like him the better. Were it not dark, I would go." That is to say, if he were; if it were. "If were a jest, indeed, to consider a set of seat-sellers and seat-buyers as a lawful legislative body. It were to violate every principle of morality to consider honesty as a virtue, when not to be honest is a crime which the law punishes." The it stands for a great deal here. "Ridiculous, indeed, would the state of our minds be, if it were such as to exhibit a set of seat-sellers and seat-buyers as a lawful legislative body." I mention these instances because they appear unaccountable; and I never like to slur things over. These expressions for the using of which we cannot give a reason ought not to be used at all.

There is another use of the verb to be, unnoticed by Cobbeit, which may be spoken of here. It has long been a matter of controversy whether we should say, "the bridge is building," or "the bridge is being built;" "preparations are making," or "preparations are being made." Mr. White maintains that the former is the only proper form, and that the latter form is contrary to the genius of our language. And other critics are of the same opinion. Well, there is no use in talking of it now; it is too late to alter it; for this manner of speaking is now used by almost everybody that speaks or writes English. Every newspaper in the United States uses this form; and the truth is, it has become a necessity, for there are some cases in which no other form can be used without changing the meaning of the sentence. We can say, The house is building, the book is printing, the play is acting, the bread is baking, the clothes are making, and so on, in many other instances; but we cannot say, "The boy is whipping" or "The girl is
ruining" to signify that "The boy is being whipped" or "The girl is being ruined." No; it is no use trying to change this now; there are certain cases where we must use "is being;" it is in the very life-blood of the language; it is every-day English; and there is no taking it out. It is like the word execute, which originally meant, and still properly means, to put a sentence into force; but now it is used every day, in print and in conversation, to signify putting a person to death. And there is no doubt but it will continue to be so used to the end of time; for no dictum of the critics can change it.

It is worth while remarking, that in sentences like "The house is building," "'the corn is thrashing," the words building and thrashing are not verbs, but nouns; for the original form was "is building," "is thrashing. The Germans have an entirely different verb for such expressions; for "The house is building" they say Das Haus wird gebaut, and not Das Haus ist gebaut, which latter means The house is built.

281. As to instances in which authors have violated the principles of grammar, with respect to the use of the modes, I could easily fill a book much larger than this with instances of this kind from Judge Blackstone and Doctor Johnson. One only shall suffice. I take it from the Judge's first Book. "Therefore, if the king purchases lands of the nature of gavel-kind, where all the sons inherit equally; yet, upon the king's demise, his eldest son shall succeed to these lands alone." Here is fine confusion, not to say something inclining towards high-treason; for, if the king's son be to inherit these lands alone, he, of course, is not to inherit the crown. But it is the Verb purchases with which we have to do at present. Now, it is notorious that the king does not purchase lands in gavel-kind, or any other lands; whereas, from the form of the Verb, it is taken for granted that he does it. It should have been, "If the king purchase lands;" that is to say, if he were to purchase, or if he should purchase.

282. Thus, my dear James, have I gone through all that appeared to me of importance relating to Verbs. Every part of the Letter ought to be carefully read, and its meaning ought to be well weighed in your mind; but always recollect that, in the using of Verbs, that which requires your first and most earnest care is the ascertaining of the nominative of the sentence; for, out of every hundred grammatical errors, full fifty, I believe, are committed for want of due attention to this matter.

Let me say a word here which will make clear to you what the Germans mean by what they call genetic teaching; that is, unfolding a subject in such a way as to show how it originates and grows up to completion. The shortest possible sentence must have a subject and a predicate (nominative and verb); for although the one word, "Love!" is a sentence, the subject is understood: "Love thou!" The next step is the object: "Love thou me!" A sentence may, therefore, consist of merely subject and predicate, or of subject, predicate, and object.

The last is an imperative sentence; let us take a declarative one. "Men love." This is a sentence; it contains subject and predicate, and makes complete sense. "Men love women." This has subject, predicate, and object. Now we may go on adding words, phrases, and clauses, modifying each of these chief parts of the sentence, until we stretch it out into a compound or complex sentence. For a sentence, like a house, is just built up by successive additions. These additions are often called adjuncts; they consist of single words, of phrases and clauses. I shall add all I can to the separate words of this sentence; first modifying the subject by various single words, then by a phrase, then by a clause; and then I shall endeavor to do the same to the predicate and the object.

Now observe, and you will see how a sentence grows:

Men love women.
The men love women.
The very worthy men love women.
The very worthy men in this city love women.

Here we have modified the subject, first by the definite article, then by an adjective, then we have modified the adjective by an adverb, then we have modified or limited the subject by a phrase, and finally by a clause. Now let us try and do the same thing to the predicate and the object:

As Related to Verbs.
Syntax, as Relating to Adverbs.

Men love women.

Men love the women.

Men love the good women.

Men love the very good women.

Men love dearly the very good women.

Men love dearly the very good women of this city.

If men love dearly the very good women of this city, who are respected by all the world.

The whole sentence will therefore be: “The very worthy men in this city, who are noted for their excellent character, love dearly the very good women of this city, who are respected by all the world.” This, therefore, has now become a complex sentence, of which the chief clause is, “Men love women,” and all the rest modifies the subject, the predicate, and the object of this clause. Of course, it might be extended much farther: but this will do to show you how a sentence grows: or, if you please, how it is built up.

Should you ever be requested to give a trial lesson in English grammar, in a class of scholars who have learned something of the subject, you cannot do better than show them, in this manner, how a sentence is formed.

LETTER XX.

SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO ADVERBS, PREPOSITIONS, AND CONJUNCTIONS.

283. After what has been said, my dear James, on the subject of the Verb, there remains little to be added. The Adverbs, Prepositions, and Conjunctions, are all words which never vary their endings. Their uses have been sufficiently illustrated in the Letters on the Syntax of Nouns, Pronouns, and Verbs. In a Letter, which is yet to come, and which will contain specimens of false grammar, the misuse of many words, belonging to these inferior Parts of Speech, will be noticed; but it would be a waste of your time to detain you by an elaborate account of that which it is, by this time, hardly possible for you not to understand.

284. Some grammarians have given lists of Adverbs.

Prepositions, and Conjunctions. For what reason I know not, seeing that they have not attempted to give lists of the words of other parts of speech. These lists must be defective, and, therefore, worse than no lists. To find out the meaning of single words, the Dictionary is the place. The business of grammar is to show the connection between words, and the manner of using words properly. The sole cause of this dwelling upon these parts of speech appears to me to have been a notion that they would seem to be neglected, unless a certain number of pages of the book were allotted to each. To be sure each of them is a part of speech, as completely as the little finger is a part of the body; but few persons will think that, because we descant very frequently, and at great length, upon the qualities of the head and heart, we ought to do the same with regard to the qualities of the little finger.

285. I omitted, in the Letter on Verbs, to notice the use of the word thing; and I am not sorry that I did, because by my noticing it in this concluding paragraph, the matter may make a deeper impression on your mind. Thing is, of course, a noun. A pen is a thing, and every animal, or creature, animate or inanimate, is a thing. We apply it to the representing of every creature in the universe, except to men, women, and children; and a creature is that which has been created, be it living, like a horse, or dead, like dirt or stones. The use of the word thing, as far as this goes, is plainly reconcilable to reason; but “to get drunk is a beastly thing.” Here is neither human being, irrational animal, nor inanimate creature. Here is merely an action. Well, then, this action is the thing; for, as you have seen in Letter XIX, paragraph 273, a verb in the infinitive mode has, in almost all respects, the functions and powers of a noun. “It was a most atrocious thing to uphold the Bank of England in refusing to give gold for its promissory notes, and to compel the nation to submit to the wrong that it sustained from that refusal.”
186 Syntax.

The meaning is, that the whole of these measures or transactions constituted a most atrocious deed or thing.

Cobbett despatches the syntax of adverbs in half-a-dozen lines; and yet there is one little matter connected with the use of these words that has, perhaps, caused more uncertainty, perplexing uncertainty, than anything connected with grammar. We say, rightly, that he fights bravely and she sings finely; but shall I say that he looks bravely and that her voice sounds finely? I may say that he dances smoothly and that she plays sweetly; but shall I say that his coat feels smoothly and that she looks sweetly? If not, how am I to know when to use the adverb and when the adjective?

This, as I have said, is a matter which has puzzled many a student of grammar, and caused anxiety to many a young writer. Here is a rule which I have never seen in any grammar, but which, I think, will cover the majority of such cases, and is easily understood and remembered: After all the verbs referring to the five senses, the adjective, and not the adverb, is to be used; as, It tastes good; it smells nice; it sounds harsh; it feels smooth; it looks handsome. Expressed in a larger and more comprehensive manner, the rule might stand thus: Wherever manner is to be expressed, use the adverb; wherever quality is to be expressed, use the adjective.

Cobbett repeatedly uses the expression "talks fine," meaning, of course, fine talk, and not the manner of speaking. In the same way, we must say, "I arrived here safe and sound," and not safely and soundly; for it is not the manner of arriving, but the state in which he arrived, that is meant.

I thought that Cobbett explained somewhere in this grammar the difference between so and such; but I cannot find it. Mr. Swinton says: "So has sometimes a pronounal use; as, Whether he is a genius or not, he is considered so." (a genius)." I think this is an error; so is used adjectival and adverbially, not pronominally; such is used pronominally; as, Whether he be a genius or not, he is considered such; whether he be rich or not, he is considered so. (See paragraph 143.)
mind and not in the tongue; learning consists of ideas and not of the noise that is made by the mouth. If, for instance, the Reports drawn up by the House of Commons, and which are compositions discovering in every sentence ignorance the most profound, were written in Latin, should we then call them learned? Should we say that the mere change of the words from one tongue into another made that learned which was before unlearned? As well may we say that a falsehood written in English would have been truth if written in Latin; and as well may we say that a certain handwriting is a learned handwriting, or, that certain sorts of ink and paper are learned ink and paper, as that a language, or tongue, is a learned language or tongue.

The cause of the use of this false appellation, “learned languages,” is this, that those who teach them in England have, in consequence of their teaching, very large estates in house and land, which are public property, but which are now used for the sole benefit of those teachers, who are, in general, the relations or dependents of the aristocracy. In order to give a color of reasonableness to this species of appropriation, the languages taught by the possessors are called “the learned languages,” and which appellation is, at the same time, intended to cause the mass of the people to believe that the professors and learners of these languages are, in point of wisdom, far superior to other men; and to establish the opinion that all but themselves are unlearned persons. In short, the appellation, like many others, is a trick which fraud has furnished for the purpose of guarding the snug possessors of the property against the consequences of the people’s understanding the matter.

It is curious enough that this appellation of “learned languages” is confined to the English nation and the American, which inherits it from the English. Neither in France, in Spain, in Italy, nor in Germany, is this false and absurd appellation in use. The same motives have not existed in those countries. There the monks and other priests have inherited from the founders. They had not any occasion to resort to this species of imposition. But in England the thing required to be glossed over. There was something or other required in that country as an apology for taking many millions a year from the public to keep men to do no apparently useful thing.

Seeing themselves unable to maintain the position that the Latin and Greek are more “learned languages” than others, the impostors and their dupes tell us that this is not what they mean. They mean, they say, not that those languages are, in themselves, more learned than others; but that, to possess a knowledge of them is a proof that the possessor is a learned man. To be sure, they do not offer us any argument in support of this assertion; while it would be easy to show that the assertion must, in every case, be false. But let it suffice, for this time, that we show that the possession of the knowledge of those languages does not prevent men from committing numerous grammatical errors when they write in their native language.

I have, for this purpose, fixed upon the writings of Doctor Johnson and of Doctor Watts; because, besides its being well known that they were deeply skilled in Latin and Greek, it would be difficult to find two men with more real learning. I take also the two works for which they are respectively the most celebrated; the Ramblers of Doctor Johnson, and the Loock of Doctor Watts. These are works of very great learning. The Ramblers, though its general tendency is to spread a gloom over life, and to damp all enterprise, private as well as public, displays a vast fund of knowledge in the science of morals; and the Loock, though the religious zeal of its pious, sincere, and benevolent author has led him into the very great error of taking his examples of
self-evident propositions from amongst those, many of which great numbers of men think not to be self-evident, is a work wherein profound learning is conveyed in a style the most simple, and in a manner the most pleasing. It is impossible to believe that the Loure was not revised with great care; and, as to the Rambler, the biographer of its author tells us that the Doctor made six thousand corrections and alterations before the work was printed in volumes.

The Rambler is in Numbers; therefore, at the end of each extract from it, I shall put the letter R, and the Number. The Loure is divided into Parts and Chapters. At the end of each extract from it, I shall put L; and then add the Part and Chapter. I shall range the extracts under the names of the parts of speech to which the erroneous words respectively belong.

ARTICLES.

"I invited her to spend the day in viewing a seat and gardens."—R. No. 34.

"For all our speculative acquaintance with things should be made subservient to our better conduct in the civil and religious life."—L. Introduction.

The indefinite article a cannot, you know, be put before a plural noun. We cannot say a gardens; but this is, in fact, said in the above extract. It should have been "a seat and its gardens." "Civil and religious life," in the second extract are general and indefinite. The article, therefore, was unnecessary, and is improperly used. Look back at the use of Articles, Letter IV.

NOUNS.

"Among the innumerable historical authors, who fill every nation with accounts of their ancestors, or undertake to transmit to futurity the events of their own time, the greater part, when fashion and novelty have ceased to recommend them, are of no other use than chronological memorials, which necessity may sometimes require to be consulted."—R. No. 122.

This is all confusion. Whose ancestors? The nation's ancestors are meant; but the author's are expressed. The two theirs and the them clearly apply to the same Noun. How easily all this confusion would have been avoided by considering the nation as a singular, and saying its ancestors! In the latter part of the sentence, the authors are called chronological memorials; and though we may, in some cases, use the word author for author's work; yet, in a case like this, where we are speaking of the authors as actors, we cannot take such a liberty.

"Each of these classes of the human race has desires, fears, and conversation peculiar to itself; cares which another cannot feel, and pleasures which he cannot partake."—R. No. 160.

The noun of multitude, classes, being preceded by each, has the pronoun itself properly put after it; but the he does not correspond with these. It should have been it. With regard to these two extracts, see paragraph 181.

"His great ambition was to shoot flying, and he, therefore, spent whole days in the woods, pursuing game, which, before he was near enough to see them, his approach frighted away."—R. No. 66.

Game is not a noun of multitude, like mob, or House of Commons. There are different games or pastimes; but this word, as applied to the describing of wild animals, has no plural; and, therefore, cannot have a plural pronoun to stand for it.

"The obvious duties of piety towards God and love towards man, with the governments of all our inclinations and passions."—L. Part 4.

This plural is so clearly wrong that I need not show why it is wrong.
Specimens of False Grammar.

"And by this mean they will better judge what to choose."—L. Part 4.

Mean, as a noun, is never used in the singular. It, like some other words, has broken loose from all principle and rule. By universal acquiescence it is become always a plural, whether used with singular or plural pronouns and articles or not. Doctor Watts, in other instances, says, this means.

It is curious enough that we have several plural words like this, used in a singular manner. We not only say this means, but this news, this series, and this species. We say, "Great pains is taken, he has taken much pains;" because, in this sense, pains means exertion, trouble; while in the plural it means bodily pains. Mean, means, are properly used in the singular and plural when applied to the terms used in proportion. When you are speaking of various distinct things or operations, you ought to say, "By these means;" but when you are speaking of things or circumstances in a mass, you must say, "By this means." Such sentences as, "This is one means of gaining your end," and "The best means is by fair play," are perfectly correct.

"Having delayed to buy a coach myself, till I should have the lady's opinion, for whose use it was intended."—R. No. 34.

We know that whose relates to lady, according to the Doctor's meaning; but, grammatically, it does not. It relates to opinion. It should have been, "the opinion of the lady, for whose use." See Syntax of Nouns, Letter XVI, paragraphs 170, 171.

PRONOUNS.

"Had the opinion of my censurers been unanimous, it might have overset my resolutions; but, since I find them at variance with each other, I can, without scruple, neglect them, and follow my own imagination."—R. No. 23.

You see the Doctor has, in the last member of the sentence, the censurers in his eye, and he forgets his nominative, opinion. It is the opinion that was not unanimous, and not the censurers who were not unanimous; for they were unanimous in censuring.

"They that frequent the chambers of the sick will generally find the sharpest pains and most stubborn maladies among them whom confidence in the force of nature formerly betrayed to negligence or irregularity; and that superfluity of strength, which was at once their boast and their snare, has often, to the end, no other effect than that it continues them long in impotence and anguish."—R. No. 38.

The they and the first them ought to be those; the to ought to be into. The two theirs and the last them are not absolutely faulty, but they do not clearly enough relate to their antecedent.

"Metissa brought with her an old maid, recommended by her mother, who taught her all the arts of domestic management, and was, on every occasion, her chief agent and directress. They soon invented one reason or other to quarrel with all my servants, and either prevailed on me to turn them away, or treated them so ill that they left me of themselves, and always supplied their places with some brought from my wife's family."—R. No. 35.

Here is perfect confusion and pell-mell! Which of the two, the old maid or the mother, was it that taught the arts of domestic management? And which of the two was taught, Metissa or the old maid? "They soon invented." Who are they? Are there two, or all the three? And who supplied the places of the servants? The meaning of the words clearly is that the servants themselves supplied the places. It is very rarely that we meet with so bad a sentence as this.

"I shall not trouble you with a history of the strata-gems practised upon my judgment, or the allurements tried upon my heart, which, if you have, in any part of your life, been acquainted with rural politics, you will..."
easily conceive. Their arts have no great variety, they think nothing worth their care but money."—R. No. 35.

"Their arts;" but whose arts? There is no antecedent, except "rural politics," and thus, all this last sentence is perfect nonsense.

"But the fear of not being approved as just copiers of human manners is not the most important concern that an author of this sort ought to have before him."—R. No. 4.

An author cannot be said to fear not to be approved as just copiers. The word author ought to have been in the plural, and him ought to have been them.

"The wit, whose vivacity condemns slower tongues to silence; the scholar, whose knowledge allows no man to think he instructs him."—R. No. 188.

Which of the two is allowed? The scholar or the no man? Which of the two does he relate to? Which of the two does the him relate to? By a little reflection we may come at the Doctor's meaning; but if we may stop to discover the grammatical meaning of an author's words, how are we to imbibe the science which he would teach us?

"The state of the possessor of humble virtues, to the affecter of great excellencies, is that of a small cottage of stone, to the palace raised with ice by the Empress of Russia; it was, for a time, splendid and luminous, but the first sunshine melted it to nothing."—R. No. 22.

Which, instead of it, would have made clear that which is now dubious, for it may relate to cottage as well as palace; or it may relate to state.

We do not now say excellencies, but excellences, for the singular is excellence. Excellences is the plural of excellency, which is now seldom used except as a title of honor. It is the same kind of error as Castlereagh's indulgences, which you will see by-and-by.

"The love of retirement has, in all ages, adhered closely to those minds which have been most enlarged by knowl-

edge, or elevated by genius. Those who enjoyed everything generally supposed to confer happiness, have been forced to seek it in the shades of privacy."—R. No. 7.

To seek what? The love of retirement, or everything? The Doctor means happiness, but his words do not mean it.

"Those who enjoyed" ought to be "Those who have enjoyed," because no particular time is mentioned. (See paragraph 261.)

"Yet there is a certain race of men that make it their duty to hinder the reception of every work of learning or genius, who stand as sentinels in the avenues of fame, and value themselves upon giving ignorance and envy the first notice of a prey."—R. No. 3.

That, or who, may, as we have seen, be the relative of a noun, which is the name of a rational being or beings; but both cannot be used, applicable to the same noun in the same sentence. Nor is "a prey" proper. Prey has no plural. It is like fat, meat, grease, garbage, and many other words of that description.

"For, among all the animals upon which nature has impressed deformity and horror, there was none whom he durst not encounter rather than a beetle."—R. No. 126.

Here are whom and which used as the relatives to the same noun; and, besides, we know that whom can, in no case, be a relative to irrational creatures, and, in this case, the author is speaking of such creatures only. "Horror" is not a thing that can be impressed upon another thing so as to be seen. Horror is a feeling of the mind; for, though we say "horror was visible on his countenance," we clearly mean that the outward signs of horror were visible. We cannot see horror as we can deformity. It should have been "deformity and hideousness."

"To cull from the mass of mankind those individuals upon which the attention ought to be most employed."—R. No. 4.

The antecedent belongs to rational beings, and, therefore, the which should have been whom.
"This determination led me to Metissa, the daughter of Chrisophilus, whose person was at least without deformity."—R. No. 35.

The person of which of the two? Not of the old papa, to be sure; and yet this is what the words mean.

"To persuade them who are entering the world, that all are equally vicious, is not to awaken judgment."—R. No. 119.

Those persons who are entering the world, and not any particular persons of whom we have already been speaking. We cannot say them persons; and, therefore, this sentence is incorrect.

"Of these pretenders, it is fit to distinguish those who endeavor to deceive from them who are deceived."—R. No. 189.

"I have, therefore, given a place to what may not be useless to them whose chief ambition is to please."—R. No. 34.

The themes in these two sentences should be those. But "them who are deceived" has another sort of error attached to it, for the who, remember, is not, of itself, a nominative. The antecedent, as you have seen, must be taken into view. This antecedent, must be the persons, understood; and then we have them persons are deceived.

"Reason, as to the power and principles of it, is the common gift of God to man."—L. Introduction.

The it may relate to power as well as to reason. Therefore, it would have been better to say, "Reason, as to its power and principles," for if clearness is always necessary, how necessary must it be in the teaching of logic!

"All the prudence that any man exerts in his common concerns of life."—L. Introduction.

Any man means, here, the same as men in general, and the concerns mean the concerns common to men in general; and therefore the article the should have been used instead of the pronoun his.

"It gives pain to the mind and memory, and exposes the unskilful hearer to mingle the superior and inferior particulars together; it leads them into a thick wood instead of open daylight, and places them in a labyrinth instead of a plain path."—L. Part 4, Chap 2.

The grammar is clearly bad; and the rhetoric is not quite free from fault. Labyrinth is the opposite of plain path, but open daylight is not the opposite of a thick wood. Open plain would have been better than open daylight; for open daylight may exist along with a thick wood.

VERBS.

"There are many things which we every day see others unable to perform, and, perhaps, have even miscarried ourselves in attempting; and yet can hardly allow to be difficult."—R. No. 122.

This sentence has in it one of the greatest of faults. The nominative case of can allow is not clear to us. This is a manner too elliptical. "We can hardly allow them," is what was meant.

"A man's eagerness to do that good, to which he is not called, will betray him into crimes."—R. No. 8.

The man is not called to the good, but to do the good. It is not my business, at this time, to criticise the opinions of Doctor Johnson; but I cannot refrain from just remarking upon this sentence, that it contains the sum total of passive obedience and non-resistance. It condemns all disinterested zeal and everything worthy of the name of patriotism.

"We are not compelled to toil through half a folio to be convinced that the author has broken his promise."—R. No. 1.

"The Muses, when they sung before the throne of Jupiter."—R. No. 3.

In the first of these, the past time is used where the
passive participle ought to have been used; and in the
second, the passive participle is used in the place of the
past time. Broken and sang were the proper words.

"My purpose was, after ten months more spent in com-
merce, to have withdrawn my wealth to a safer country."—R. No. 120.

The purpose was present, and therefore it was his pur-
pose to withdraw his wealth.

"A man may, by great attention, persuade others that
he really has the qualities that he presumes to boast; but
the hour will come when he should exert them, and then
whatever he enjoyed in praise, he must suffer in reproach."—R. No. 20.

Here is a complete confounding of times. Instead of
should, it should be ought to; and instead of enjoyed, it
should be may have enjoyed. The sense is bad, too; for
how can a man suffer in reproach what he has enjoyed in
praise?

"He had taught himself to think riches more valua-
able than nature designed them, and to expect from them

..."—R. No. 20.

"I could prudently adventure an inseparable union."—R. No. 119.

"I propose to endeavor the entertainment of my coun-
trymen."—R. No. 1.

"He may, by attending the remarks, which every paper
will produce."—R. No. 1.

In each of these four sentences, a neuter verb has the
powers of an active [transitive] verb given to it. De-
signed them to be; adventure on; endeavor to entertain;
attending to." To design a thing is to draw it; to
attend a thing is to wait on it. No case occurs to me,
at present, wherein adventure and endeavor can be active
[transitive] verbs; but, at any rate, they ought not to
have assumed the active office here.

"I was not condemned in my youth to solitude, either
by indigence or deformity, nor passed the earlier part of
life without the flattery of courtship."—R. No. 119.

The verb cannot change from a neuter to an active
without a repetition of the nominative. It should have
been, nor did I pass; or, nor passed I.

"Antes was content to call a coach, and crossed the
brook."—R. No. 34.

It should be "she crossed the brook."

"He will be welcomed with ardor, unless he destroys
those recommendations by his faults."—R. No. 160.

"If he thinks his own judgment not sufficiently en-
lighted, he may rectify his opinions."—R. No. 1.

"If he finds, with all his industry, and all his artifices,
that he cannot deserve regard, or cannot obtain it, he may
let the design fall."—R. No. 1.

The subjunctive mode ought to be used in all these
three sentences. In the first, the meaning is, "unless he
should destroy." In the last two, the Doctor is speaking
of his own undertaking; and he means, "the author, if
he should think, if he should find; may then rectify his
opinions; may then let fall his design." He therefore
should have written, "if he think; if he find."

"Follow solid argument wherever it leads you."—L. Part 3.

Wherever it may lead you, shall lead you, is meant;
and, therefore, the subjunctive mode was necessary. It
should have been, "wherever it lead you."

"See, therefore, that your general definitions, or de-
scriptions, are as accurate as the nature of the thing
will bear; see that your general divisions and distributions be
just and exact; see that your axioms be sufficiently evi-
dent; see that your principles be well drawn."—L. Part 4.

All these members are correct, except the first, where
the verb is put in the indicative mode instead of the sub-
jective. All the four have the same turn; they are all
in the same mode, or manner; they should, therefore, all
have had the verb in the same form. They all required the subjunctive form.

PARTICIPLES.

"Or, it is the drawing a conclusion, which was before either unknown or dark."—L. Introduction.

It should be "the drawing of a conclusion;" for, in this case, the active participle becomes a noun. "The act of drawing" is meant, and clearly understood; and we cannot say, "the act drawing a conclusion." When the article comes before, there must be the preposition after the participle. To omit the preposition in such cases is an error very common, and therefore I have noticed the error in this instance, in order to put you on your guard.

ADVERBS.

"For thoughts are only criminal when they are first chosen, and then voluntarily continued."—R. N. 8.

The station, or place, of the adverb is a great matter. The Doctor does not mean here that which his words mean. He means that "thoughts are criminal, only when they are first chosen and then voluntarily continued." As the words stand, they mean that "thoughts are nothing else, or nothing more, than criminal," in the case supposed. But here are other words not very properly used. I should like to be informed how a thought can be chosen; how that is possible; and also how we can continue a thought, or how we can discontinue a thought at our will. The science here is so very profound that we cannot see the bottom of it. Swift says, "whatever is dark is deep. Stir a puddle, and it is deeper than a well." Doctor Johnson deals too much in this kind of profundity.

There is no word in our language more frequently misused than this word only. People constantly write and speak such sentences as these: "I have only received ten dollars. He only sells leather. He only speaks French." and so on. The word only must be placed next to the word which it modifies: I have received only ten dollars; he sells only leather, or leather only; he speaks only French. As the sentences stand in the first instance, they do not mean what they are intended to mean: the first means, only received not spent or lost; the second, only sells leather, never buys any; the third only speaks French, never writes it.

"I have heard how some critics have been pacified with claret and a supper, and others laid asleep with the soft notes of flattery."—R. No. 1.

How means the manner in which. As, "How do you do?" That is, "In what manner do you carry yourself on?" But the Doctor tells us here, in other words, the precise manner in which the critics were pacified. The how, therefore, should have been that.

"I hope not much to tire those whom I shall not happen to please."—R. No. 1.

He did not mean that he did not much hope, but that he hoped not to tire much. "I hope I shall not much tire those whom I may not happen to please." This was what he meant; but he does not say it.

"And it is a good judgment alone can dictate how far to proceed in it and when to stop."—L. Part 4.

Doctor Watts is speaking here of writing. In such a case an adverb, like how far, expressive of longitudinal space, introduces a rhetorical figure; for the plain meaning is, that judgment will dictate how much to write on it, and not how far to proceed in it. The figure, however, is very proper, and much better than the literal words. But when a figure is begun it should be carried on throughout, which is not the case here; for the Doctor begins with a figure of longitudinal space, and ends with a figure of time. It should have been "where to stop." Or, "how long to proceed in it and when to stop." To tell a man how far he is to go into the Western countries of America, and when he is to stop, is a very different
thing from telling him how far he is to go and where he is to stop. I have dwelt thus on this distinction, for the purpose of putting you on the watch, and guarding you against confounding figures. The less you use them the better, till you understand more about them.

"In searching out matters of fact in times past or in distant places, in which case moral evidence is sufficient, and moral certainty is the utmost that can be attained, we derive a greater assurance of the truth of it by a number of persons, or multitude of circumstances, concurring to bear witness to it."—L. Part 3.

The adverb here is wholly unnecessary, and it does harm. But what shall we say of the of it, and the to it? What is the antecedent of the it? Is matters of fact the antecedent? Then them, and not it, should have been the pronoun. Is evidence the antecedent? Then we have circumstances bearing witness to evidence! Is certainty the antecedent? Then we have the truth of certainty!

Mind, my dear James, this sentence is taken from a treatise on logic! How necessary it is, then, for you to be careful in the use of this powerful little word it!

PREPOSITIONS.

"And, as this practice is a commodious subject of raillery to the gay, and of declamation to the serious, it has been ridiculed . . . ."—R. No. 123.

With the gay; for to the gay means that the raillery is addressed to the gay, which was not the author's meaning.

"When I was deliberating to what new qualifications I should aspire."—R. No. 123.

With regard to, it ought to have been: for we cannot deliberate a thing nor to a thing.

"If I am not commended for the beauty of my works, I may hope to be pardoned for their brevity."—R. No. 1.

We may commend him for the beauty of his works and we may pardon him for their brevity, if we deem the brevity a fault; but this is not what he means. He means that, at any rate, he shall have the merit of brevity. "If I am not commended for the beauty of my works, I may hope to be pardoned on account of their brevity." This was what the Doctor meant; but this would have marred a little the antithesis; it would have unsettled a little of the balance of that see-saw in which Dr. Johnson so much delighted, and which, falling into the hands of novel-writers and of Members of Parliament, has, by moving unencumbered with any of the Doctor's reason or sense, lulled so many thousands asleep! Dr. Johnson created a race of writers and speakers. "Mr. Speaker, that the state of the nation is very critical, all men must allow; but that it is wholly desperate, few men will believe." When you hear or see a sentence like this, be sure that the person who speaks or writes it has been reading Dr. Johnson, or some of his imitators. But, observe, these imitators go no further than the frame of the sentence. They, in general, take special care not to imitate the Doctor in knowledge and reasoning.

I have now lying on the table before me forty-eight errors, by Doctor Watts, in the use or omission of Prepositions. I will notice but two of them; the first is an error of commission, the second of omission.

"When we would prove the importance of any scriptural doctrine or duty, the multitude of texts wherein it is repeated and inculcated upon the reader seems naturally to instruct us that it is a matter of greater importance than other things which are but slightly or singly mentioned in the Bible."—L. Part 3.

The words repeated and inculcated both apply to upon; but we cannot repeat a thing upon a reader, and the words here used mean this. When several verbs or participles are joined together by a copulative conjunction,
care must be taken that the act described by each verb, or participle, be such as can be performed by the agent, and performed, too, in the manner, or for the purpose, or on the object, designated by the other words of the sentence.

The other instance of error in the use of the Preposition occurs in the very first sentence in the Treatise on Logic.

"Logic is the art of using reason well in our inquiries after truth, and the communication of it to others."—L. Introduction.

The meaning of the words is this: that "Logic is the art of using reason well in our inquiries after truth, and is also the communication of it to others." To be sure we do understand that it means that "Logic is the art of using reason well in our inquiries after truth, and in the communication of it to others;" but, surely, in a case like this, no room for doubt, or for hesitation, ought to have been left. Nor is "using reason well" a well-chosen phrase. It may mean treating it well; not ill-treating it. "Using reason properly or employing reason well," would have been better. For, observe, Doctor Watts is here giving a definition of the thing of which he was about to treat; and he is speaking to persons unacquainted with that thing; for as to those acquainted with it, no definition was wanted. Clearness, everywhere desirable, was here absolutely necessary.

CONJUNCTIONS.

"As, notwithstanding all that wit, or malice, or pride, or prudence, will be able to suggest, men and women must, at last, pass their lives together, I have never, therefore, thought those writers friends to human happiness who endeavor to excite in either sex a general contempt or suspicion of the other."—R. No. 149.

The as is unnecessary; or the therefore is unnecessary. "But the happy historian has no other labor than of gathering what tradition pours down before him."—R. No. 122.

"Some have advanced, without due attention to the consequences of this notion, that certain virtues have their correspondent faults, and therefore to exhibit either apart is to deviate from probability."—R. No. 4.

"But if the power of example is so great as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, care ought to be taken that, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited; and that which is likely to operate so strongly should not be mischievous or uncertain in its effects."—R. No. 4.

It should have been, in the first of these extracts, "than that of gathering;" in the second, "and that therefore;" in the third, "and that which is likely." If the Doctor wished to avoid putting two thats close together, he should have chosen another form for his sentence. The that which is a relative, and the conjunction that was required to go before it.

"It is, therefore, a useful thing, when we have a fundamental truth, we use the synthetic method to explain it."—L. Part 4.

It should have been that we use, or to use.

WRONG PLACING OF WORDS.

Of all the faults to be found in writing, this is one of the most common, and perhaps it leads to the greatest number of misconceptions. All the words may be the proper words to be used upon the occasion; and yet, by a misplacing of a part of them, the meaning may be wholly destroyed; and even made to be the contrary of what it ought to be.

"I asked the question with no other intention than to
set the gentleman free from the necessity of silence, and give him an opportunity of mingling on equal terms with a polite assembly, from which, however uneasy, he could not then escape, by a kind introduction of the only subject on which I believed him to be able to speak with propriety."—R. No. 126.

This is a very bad sentence altogether. "However uneasy," applies to assembly, and not to gentleman. Only observe how easily this might have been avoided. "From which he, however uneasy, could not then escape." After this we have "he could not then escape, by a kind introduction." We know what is meant; but the Doctor, with all his commas, leaves the sentence confused. Let us see whether we cannot make it clear. "I asked the question with no other intention than, by a kind introduction of the only subject on which I believed him to be able to speak with propriety, to set the gentleman free from the necessity of silence, and to give him an opportunity of mingling on equal terms with a polite assembly, from which he, however uneasy, could not then escape."

"Reason is the glory of human nature, and one of the chief eminences whereby we are raised above our fellow-creatures, the brutes, in this lower world."—L. Introduction.

I have before showed an error in the first sentence of Doctor Watt's work. This is the second sentence. The words, "in this lower world," are not words misplaced only; they are wholly unnecessary, and they do great harm; for they do these two things: first, they imply that there are brutes in the higher world; and, second, they excite a doubt, whether we are raised above those brutes.

I might, my dear James, greatly extend the number of my extracts from both these authors; but these, I trust, are enough. I had noted down about two hundred errors in Doctor Johnson's Lives of the Poets; but afterwards perceiving that he had revised and corrected the Rambler with extraordinary care, I chose to make my extracts from that work rather than from the Lives of the Poets.

DOUBLE-NEGATIVE AND ELLIPSIS.

Before I dismiss the specimens of bad grammar, I will just take, from Tull, a sentence which contains striking instances of the misapplication of Negatives, and of the Ellipsis. In our language two negatives applied to the same verb, or to the same words of any sort, amount to an affirmative; as, "Do not give him none of your money." That is to say, "Give him some of your money," though the contrary is meant. It should be, "Do not give him any of your money." Errors, as to this matter, occur most frequently when the sentence is formed in such a manner as to lead the writer out of sight and out of sound of the first negative before he comes to the point where he thinks a second is required; as, "Neither Richard nor Peter, as I have been informed, and indeed as it has been proved to me, never gave James authority to write to me." You see it ought to be ever. But in this case, as in most others, there requires nothing more than a little thought. You see clearly that two negatives, applied to the same verb, destroy the negative effect of each other. "I will not never write." This is the contrary of "I will never write."

The Ellipsis, of which I spoke in Letter XIX, paragraph 227, ought to be used with great care. Read that paragraph again; and then attend to the following sentence of Mr. Tull, which I select in order to show you that very fine thoughts may be greatly marred by too free use of the Ellipsis.

"It is strange that no author should never have written fully of the fabric of ploughs! Men of greatest learning have spent their time in contriving instruments to measure
the immense distance of the stars, and in finding out the dimensions and even weight of the planets. They think it more eligible to study the art of ploughing the sea with ships than of tilling the land with ploughs. They bestow the utmost of their skill, learnedly to pervert the natural use of all the elements for destruction of their own species by the bloody art of war; and some waste their whole lives in studying how to arm death with new engines of horror, and inventing an infinite variety of slaughter; but think it beneath men of learning (who only are capable of doing it) to employ their learned labors in the invention of new, or even improving the old, instruments for increasing of bread.

You see the never ought to be ever. You see that the the is left out before the word greatest, and again before weight, and, in this last-mentioned instance, the leaving of it out makes the words mean the "even weight"; that is to say, not the odd weight; instead of "even the weight," as the author meant. The conjunction that is left out before "of tilling;" before destruction, the article the is again omitted; in is left out before inventing, and also before improving; and, at the close, the is left out before increasing. To see so fine a sentence marred in this way is, I hope, quite enough to guard you against the frequent commission of similar errors.

We often see the word alone wrongly used for only; as, "To which I am not alone bound by honor, but by law;" but Mr. Tull uses only instead of alone. He should have said, "who alone are capable of doing it."

LETTER XXII.

ERRORS AND NONSENSE IN A KING'S SPEECH.

My dear James:

In my first Letter, I observed to you that to the functions of statesmen and legislators was due the highest respect which could be shown by man to anything human; but I, at the same time, observed that, as the degree and quality of our respect rose in proportion to the influence which the different branches of knowledge naturally had in the affairs and on the conditions of men, so, in cases of imperfection in knowledge, or of negligence in the application of it, or of its perversion to bad purposes, all the feelings opposite to that of respect rose in the same proportion; and to one of these cases I have now to direct your attention.

The speeches of the king are read by him to the Parliament. They are composed by his ministers or select councillors. They are documents of great importance, treating of none but weighty matters; they are always styled Most Gracious, and are heard and answered with the most profound respect.

The persons who settle upon what shall be the topics of these speeches, and who draw the speeches up, are a Lord High Chancellor, a First Lord of the Treasury, a Lord President of the Council, three Secretaries of State, a First Lord of the Admiralty, a Master General of the Ordnance, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, and perhaps one or two besides. These persons are called, when spoken of in a body, the Ministry. They are all members of the king's constitutional council, called the Privy Council, without whose assent the king can issue no proclamation nor any order affecting the people. This council, Judge Blackstone, taking the words of Coke, calls
"a noble, honorable, and reverend assembly." So that, in the Ministry, who are selected from the persons who compose this assembly, the nation has a right to expect something very near to perfection in point of judgment and of practical talent.

How destitute of judgment and of practical talent these persons have been, in the capacity of statesmen and of legislators, the present miserable and perilous state of England amply demonstrates; and I am now about to show you that they are equally destitute in the capacity of writers. There is some poet who says,

"Of all the arts in which the learned excel,
The first in rank is that of writing well." *

And though a man may possess great knowledge, as a statesman and as a legislator, without being able to perform what this poet would call writing well; yet, surely, we have a right to expect in a minister the capacity of being able to write grammatically; the capacity of putting his own meaning clearly down upon paper. But, in the composing of a king's speech, it is not one man, but nine men, whose judgment and practical talent are employed. A king's speech is, too, a very short piece of writing. The topics are all distinct. Very little is said upon each. There is no reasoning. It is all plain matter of fact, or of simple observation. The thing is done with all the advantages of abundant time for examination and re-examination. Each of the ministers has a copy of the speech to read, to examine, and to observe upon; and when no one has anything left to suggest in the way of alteration or improvement, the speech is agreed to, and put into the mouth of the king.

Surely, therefore, if in any human effort perfection can be expected, we have a right to expect it in a king's speech. You shall now see, then, what pretty stuff is put together, and delivered to the Parliament, under the name of king's speeches.

The speech which I am about to examine is, indeed, a speech of the regent; but I might take any other of these speeches. I choose this particular speech because the subjects of it are familiar in America as well as in England. It was spoken on the 8th of November, 1814. I shall take a sentence at a time, in order to avoid confusion.

"My Lords and Gentlemen: It is with deep regret that I am again obliged to announce the continuance of his majesty's lamented indisposition."

Even in this short sentence there is something equivocal; for it may be that the prince's regret arises from his being obliged to announce, and not from the thing announced. If he had said, "With deep regret I announce," or, "I announce with deep regret," there would have been nothing equivocal. And, in a composition like this, all ought to be as clear as the pebbled brook.

"It would have given me great satisfaction to have been enabled to communicate to you the termination of the war between this country and the United States of America."

The double compound times of the verbs, in the first part of the sentence, make the words mean that it would, before the prince came to the House, have given him great satisfaction to be enabled to communicate; whereas he meant, "It would now have given me great satisfaction to be enabled to communicate." In the latter part of the sentence we have a little nonsense. What does termination mean? It means, in this case, end or conclusion; and thus the prince wished to communicate an end to the wise men by whom he was surrounded! To communicate is to impart to another anything that we have in our possession or within our power. And so, the prince wished to impart the end to the noble lords and honorable gentlemen. He might wish to impart, or communicate

* Of all those arts in which the wise excel,
Nature's chief masterpiece is writing well.
Sheffield, Earl of Buckinghamshire.
the news, or the intelligence of the end; but he could not communicate the end itself. What should we say, if some one were to tell us, that an officer had arrived, and brought home the termination of a battle, and carried it to Carlton House and communicated it to the prince? We should laugh at our informant’s ignorance of grammar, though we should understand what he meant. And, shall we, then, be so partial and so unjust as to reverence in king’s councillors that which we should laugh at in one of our neighbors? To act thus would be, my dear son, a base abandonment of our reason, which is, to use the words of Dr. Watts, the common gift of God to man.

“Although this war originated in the most unprovoked aggression on the part of the Government of the United States, and was calculated to promote the designs of the common enemy of Europe against the rights and independence of all other nations, I never have ceased to entertain a sincere desire to bring it to a conclusion on just and honorable terms.”

The most would lead us to suppose that there had been more than one aggression, and that the war originated in the most unprovoked of them; whereas the prince’s meaning was that the aggression was an unprovoked one, unprovoked in the superlative degree; and that, therefore, it was a most unprovoked aggression. The words all other nations may mean all nations except England; or, all nations out of Europe; or, all nations other than the United States; or, all nations except the enemy’s own nation. Guess you which of these is the meaning; I confess that I am wholly unable to determine the question. But, what does the close of the sentence mean when taken into view with the although at the beginning? Does the prince mean that he would be justified in wanting to make peace on unjust and dishonorable terms because the enemy had been the aggressor? He might, indeed, wish to make it on terms dishonorable, and even disgraceful, to the enemy; but could he possibly wish to make it on unjust terms? Does he mean that an aggression, however wicked and unprovoked, would give him a right to do injustice? Yet, if he do not mean this, what does he mean? Perhaps (for there is no certainty) he may mean that he wishes to bring the war to a conclusion as soon as he can get just and honorable terms from the enemy; but, then, what is he to do with the although? Let us try this: “I am ready,” say you, “to make peace, if you will give me just terms, although you are the aggressor.” To be sure you are, whether I be the aggressor or not! All that you can possibly have the face to ask of me is justice; and, therefore, why do you connect your wish for peace with this although? Either you mean that my aggressions gives you a right to demand of me more than justice, or you talk nonsense. Nor must we overlook the word “government,” which is introduced here. In the sentence before, the prince wished to communicate the end of the war between “this country and the United States;” but in this sentence we are at war with “the Government of the United States.” This was a poor trick of sophistry, and as such we will let it pass; only observing that such low trickery is not very becoming in men selected from “a noble, honorable, and reverend assembly.”

“I am still engaged in negotiations for this purpose.”

That is, the purpose of bringing the war to a conclusion. A very good purpose: but why still? He had not told his nobles and his boroughmen that he had been engaged in negotiations. Even this short, simple sentence could not be made without fault.

“The success of them must, however, depend on my disposition being met with corresponding sentiments on the part of the enemy.”

Now, suppose I were to say, “My wagon was met with Mr. Tredwell’s coach.” Would you not think that some-
body. The Prince had met the wagon and coach, both going together the same way? To be sure you would. But if I were to say, "My wagon was met by Mr. Tredwell's coach," you would think that they had approached each other from different spots. And, therefore, the prince should have said, "met by." This sentence, however, short as it happily is, is too long to be content with one error. Disposition, in this sense of the word, means state, or bent, or temper, of mind; and the word sentiments means thoughts, or opinions. So, here we have a temper of mind met by thoughts. Thoughts may correspond or agree with a temper of mind; but how are they to meet it? If the prince had said, "My disposition being met by a corresponding disposition on the part of the enemy," he would have uttered plain and dignified language.

"The operations of his majesty's forces by sea and land in the Chesapeake, in the course of the present year, have been attended with most brilliant and successful results."

Were there only the bad placing of the different members of this sentence, the fault would be sufficient. But we do not know whether the prince means operations by sea and land, or forces by sea and land.

It seems to me there is another error here. The prince speaks of operations of forces by sea and land in the Chesapeake. The Chesapeake is a bay. How can there be operations of forces by land in the Chesapeake? Does he mean the operations of the forces when they got to the bottom of the bay?

"The flotilla of the enemy in the Patuxent has been destroyed. The signal defeat of their land forces enabled a detachment of his majesty's army to take possession of the city of Washington; and the spirit of enterprise, which has characterized all the movements in this quarter, has produced on the inhabitants a deep and sensible impression of the calamities of a war in which they have been so wantonly involved."
On Putting Sentences Together,

the verb, and say, "was followed by the immediate submission." That is to say, was then followed by the then immediate; and not has now been followed by the then immediate submission. The close of this sentence exhibits a fine instance of want of skill in the placing of the parts of a sentence. Could these noble and reverend persons find no place but the end for "to his majesty's arms?" There was, but they could not see it, a place made on purpose, after the word submission.

It is unnecessary, my dear James, for me to proceed further with an exposure of the bad grammar and the nonsense of this speech. There is not, in the whole speech, one single sentence that is free from error. Nor will you be at all surprised at this, if ever you should hear these persons uttering their own speeches in those places which, when you were a naughty little boy, you used to call the "Thieves' Houses." If you should ever hear them there, stammering and repeating and putting forth their nonsense, your wonder will be, not that they wrote a king's speech so badly, but that they contrived to put upon paper sentences sufficiently grammatical to enable us to guess at the meaning.

LETTER XXIII.

ON PUTTING SENTENCES TOGETHER, AND ON FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

My dear James:

I have now done with the subject of grammar, which, as you know, teaches us to use words in a proper manner. But though you now, I hope, understand how to avoid error in the forming of sentences, I think it right not to conclude my instructions without saying a few words upon the subject of adding sentence to sentence, and on the subject of figurative language.

Language is made use of for one of three purposes; namely, to inform, to convince, or to persuade. The first, requiring merely the talent of telling what we know, is a matter of little difficulty. The second demands reasoning. The third, besides reasoning, demands all the aid that we can obtain from the use of figures of speech, or, as they are sometimes called, figures of rhetoric, which last word means the power of persuasion.

Whatever may be the purpose for which we use language, it seldom can happen that we do not stand in need of more than one sentence; and, therefore, others must be added. There is no precise rule; there can be no precise rule, with regard to the manner of doing this. When we have said one thing, we must add another; and so on, until we have said all that we have to say. But we ought to take care, and great care, that if any words in a sentence relate, in any way, to words that have gone before, we make these words correspond grammatically with those foregoing words; an instance of the want of which care you have seen in paragraph 178.

The order of the matter will be, in almost all cases, that of your thoughts. Sit down to write what you have thought, and not to think what you shall write. Use the first words that occur to you, and never attempt to alter a thought; for that which has come of itself into your mind is likely to pass into that of another more readily and with more effect than anything which you can, by reflection, invent.

Never stop to make choice of words. Put down your thought in words just as they come. Follow the order which your thought will point out; and it will push you on to get it upon the paper as quickly and as clearly as possible.

Thoughts come much faster than we can put them upon paper. They produce one another: and the order of their coming is, in almost every case, the best possible
order that they can have on paper; yet, if you have several in your mind, rising above each other in point of force, the most forcible will naturally come the last upon paper.

Mr. Lindley Murray gives rules about long sentences and short sentences, and about a due mixture of long and short; and he also gives rules about the letters that sentences should begin with, and the syllables that they should end with. Such rules might be very well if we were to sing our writing; but when the use of writing is to inform, to convince, or to persuade, what can it have to do with such rules?

There are certain connecting words which it is of importance to use properly; such as therefore, which means for that cause, for that reason. We must take care, when we use such words, that there is occasion for using them. We must take care that when we use but, or for, or any other connecting word, the sense of our sentences requires such word to be used; for, if such words be improperly used, they throw all into confusion. You have seen the shameful effect of an although in the king's speech, which I noticed in my last Letter. The adverbs when, then, while, now, there, and some others, are connecting words, and not used in their strictly literal sense. For example: "Well, then, I will not do it." Then, in its literal sense, means, at that time, or in that time; as, "I was in America then." But "Well, then," means, "Well, if that be so," or "let that be so," or "in that case." You have only to accustom yourself a little to reflect on the meaning of these words; for that will soon teach you never to employ them improperly.

A writing, or written discourse, is generally broken into paragraphs. When a new paragraph should begin, the nature of your thoughts must tell you. The propriety of it will be pointed out to you by the difference between the thoughts that are coming and those which have gone before. It is impossible to frame rules for regulating such divisions. When a man divides his work into Parts, Books, Chapters, and Sections, he makes the division according to that which the matter has taken in his mind; and, when he comes to write, he has no other guide for the distribution of his matter into sentences and paragraphs.

Never write about any matter that you do not well understand. If you clearly understand all about your matter, you will never want thoughts, and thoughts instantly become words.

One of the greatest of all faults in writing and in speaking is this: the using of many words to say little. In order to guard yourself against this fault, inquire what is the substance or amount of what you have said. Take a long speech of some talking lord, and put down upon paper what the amount of it is. You will most likely find that the amount is very small; but, at any rate, when you get it, you will then be able to examine it, and to tell what it is worth. A very few examinations of this sort will so frighten you, that you will be forever after upon your guard against talking a great deal and saying little.

Figurative language is very fine when properly employed; but figures of rhetoric are edge-tools, and two-edged tools, too. Take care how you touch them! They are called figures, because they represent other things than the words in their literal meaning stand for. For instance: "The tyrants oppress and starve the people. The people would live amidst abundance, if those cormorants did not devour the fruit of their labor." I shall only observe to you, upon this subject, that, if you use figures of rhetoric, you ought to take care that they do not make nonsense of what you say; nor excite the ridicule of those to whom you write. Mr. Murray, in an address to his students, tells them "that he is about to offer them some advice with regard to their future walks
in the paths of literature." Now, though a man may take a walk along a path, a walk means also the ground laid out in a certain shape, and such a walk is wider than a path. He, in another part of this address, tells them that they are in the morning of life, and that that is the season for exertion. The morning, my dear James, is not a season. The year, indeed, bas seasons, but the day has none. If he had said the spring of life, then he might have added the season of exertion. I told you they were edge-tools. Beware of them.

I am now, my dear son, arrived at the last paragraph of my treatise, and I hope that, when you arrive at it, you will understand grammar sufficiently to enable you to write without committing frequent and glaring errors. I shall now leave you, for about four months, to read and write English; to practice what you have now been taught. At the end of those four months I shall have prepared a Grammar to teach you the French language, which language I hope to hear you speak, and to see you write well, at the end of one year from this time. With English and French on your tongue and in your pen, you have a resource not only greatly valuable in itself, but a resource that you can be deprived of by none of those changes and chances which deprive men of pecuniary possessions, and which, in some cases, make the purse-proud man of yesterday the crawling sycophant to-day. Health, without which life is not worth having, you will hardly fail to secure by early rising, exercise, sobriety, and abstinence; as to food. Happiness, or misery, is in the mind. It is the mind that lives; and the length of life or to be measured by the number and importance of our resources, and not by the number of our days. Never, therefore, esteem men merely on account of their riches or their station. Respect goodness, find it where you may. Honor talent wherever you behold it unassociated with vice; but honor it most when accompanied with exertion, and especially when exerted in the cause of truth and justice; and, above all things, hold it in honor when it steps forward to protect defenseless innocence against the attacks of powerful guilt.

It is true that figures are edge-tools; but even edge-tools are perfectly safe in the hands of those who know how to use them. And with a little care and attention, anybody of common understanding may learn how to use the ordinary figures of rhetoric, which are powerful auxiliaries in rendering speech effective. There is nothing that impresses like figures. They are edge-tools in another sense: for they cut like swords and wound like daggers. Daniet O'Connell once silenced a troublesome opponent by suddenly turning on him and exclaiming: "Sit down, you pestiferous ramcat!" Lord Chatham finesly designates the corrupt government contractor and jobber as "that blood-sucker, that muck-worm that calls himself 'the friend of government.'" "One should never take a vacation till the sexton gives him one," is far more forcible than "One should never cease working till death." Instead of saying that one must not express high, noble thoughts before low, vulgar people, how much more expressive it is to say, "Do not cast pearls before swine." When Daniel Webster said of Alexander Hamilton, "He smote the rock of the national resources, and abundant streams of revenue burst forth; he touched the dead corpse of public credit, and it sprang upon its feet!" he uttered something far more impressive, far more forcible and beautiful, than if he had merely declared that Hamilton had improved the finances and strengthened the public credit of the country. Everybody, the most illiterate as well as the most learned, uses figures. The illiterate man uses them unconsciously; and so does the learned man in the arbor of speech; in fact, most people use them, and ought to use them, unconsciously; that is, without thinking that they are using figures. When a person exclaims, on seeing a large, fat man coming along, "Here comes Jumbo!" he never thinks that he is using a figure; and I have no doubt that even Cobbett himself, when he said that figures are edge-tools, never suspected that he was using a figure. Our greatest writers, especially the poets, are full of figures. Shakespeare bristles with them; his works have more figures, and more happily-used figures, than perhaps those of any other author. In Macbeth alone there are figures of almost every description. Just count the figures in the murder scene and in the interview between
On Putting Sentences Together,

Macbeth and his wife after the murder, and you will be amazed at their number and variety.

Of course, I do not pretend, in these few words at the end of the book, to teach you all about figures of rhetoric; but I wish to give you an idea of what they are, that you may not be entirely ignorant of the matter.

Though rhetoricians give names to a great number of deviations from the ordinary mode of expression, there are just about a dozen figures of rhetoric whose nature and use are worth studying. The others are common turnings and windings in language, in which nobody ever makes a mistake; but which, closely regarded, are made out to be figures, and dubbed with hard Greek names, the knowledge of which is of no possible use. Hence Butler's famous couplet.

"For all a rhetorician's rules
Teach nothing but to name his tools."

Of these dozen figures, the most common are the METAPHOR and the SIMILE. Definitions are hard, and sometimes very unsatisfactory; but when I say that the sentence "Doctor Johnson was a gnarled oak" contains a metaphor, and that the sentence "Doctor Johnson was like a gnarled oak" contains a simile, you will see at once what both are. "He is a lion," contains a metaphor; "he is like a lion" contains a simile. The metaphor is sometimes called an abridged simile, for it is putting one thing for another which resembles, instead of saying it is like it. The simile is always introduced by the words like, or so, or words of similar import. "Charity, like the sun, brightens all it shines upon. A metaphor, like a beam of light, brightens and enlightens its object whenever it is used." When somebody cried out at the battle of Quebec, "They fly! they fly!" and General Wolff asked, "Who fly?" both used a figure; for men can only flee, not fly. When a little boy calls out, "Look at that frog! I will let this stone fly at his head!" he uses a figure; so that, long before he knows what metaphors are, he learns to use them rightly enough. Look at Coleridge's sentences about Cobbett, on page 210 of the Life, and you will find quite a number of metaphors.

There is another figure, called METONYMY, which looks, at first sight, like the metaphor; but which, on closer inspection, will be found to be essentially different. While the metaphor is really a departure from the ordinary form of speech, metonymy, which is termed a change of names, is one of the most ordinary expressions. "The kettle boils; the lamp burns; he smokes his pipe." Now, is

and on Figurative Language.

If the kettle that boils, or the water in it? the lamp that burns, or the oil? We use these expressions without ever thinking that we are using figurative language, for it is not a departure from the ordinary form of speech; it is everyday speech, everyday and common language. But, when we say, "Experience is the lamp by which my feet are guided," or "We shall never light the pipe of peace until our rights are restored," or "This was the rock on which he split," the language rises at once in force and impressiveness, and we feel that there is a deviation from the common mode of expression. The former is metonymy, and the latter metaphor. "He is fond of his bottle; he drank three glasses; he keeps a good table," these, you see, are merely a change of names.

"The gin-palace is the recruiting-shop for the penitentiary; Senator Conkling sawed off the limb on which he sat; the politicians are hungry for office, for they have been fasting for twenty years," these are metaphors, and you see they convey a picture to the mind which no other words can convey so well.

An ALLEGORY is a sort of continued metaphor, by which an imaginary history with a veiled meaning may be told. Macaulay says Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress is the finest allegory which has been produced in two thousand years. For another fine example, see 80th Psalm.

PERSONIFICATION is the giving of life to inanimate things, or the giving of speech and reason to objects, insects, and animals, as in fables. Cobbett's story of the quarrel in the pot-shop has good examples of this figure. To personify is to speak, for instance, of winter and war as of a man; of spring and peace as of a woman. "Lo! steel-clad War his gorgeous standard rears!"

"How sleep the brave, who slumber in rest
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She shall dress a sweeter sod,"

"Than Fancy's feet have ever trod."

There is another form of personification, a lower form, in which we give the qualities of beings to inanimate objects: we sometimes speak of a raging storm, a cruel disease, a remorseless sword, a scornful lip, a dying lamp, the smiling harvest, the thirsty ground, a fearless pen, the babbling brook.

SYNCRONYCHE is taking a part for the whole, or the whole for a part: as, He has a keen eye; he has seen eighty winters; all the world runs after him.

INTERROGATION is asking a question which does not need an
answer; as, Can any man count the stars? Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? This is a favorite figure in oratory.

Exclamation is the uttering of some expression of surprise, or of some emotion of the mind; as, What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! Would that some good angel had put Cobbett's grammar into that boy's hands!

Irony is saying the opposite of what one means; as, Cobbett was remarkable for his meekness and humility! John Bull's Address to Brother Jonathan (par. 214) is a good example. See also page 198 of the Life. Here is another example:

"So goes the world,—if wealthy, you may call
This, friend; that, brother:—friends and brothers all.
Though you are worthless, wretches: never mind it:
You may have been a stable-boy—what then?
'Tis wealth, good sir, makes honorable men."

Antithesis is the comparing or placing in contrast of opposite qualities; as, Though poor, yet proud; though submissive, gay. The prodigal robs his heir; the miser robs himself. Antithesis is closely allied to epigram, which is a short, pithy saying; as, When you have nothing to say, say it. Wendell Phillips is noted for his epigrammatic style.

Hyperbole is some extravagant expression, employed to heighten the impression conveyed. Macbeth says that the great ocean will not wash his hand clean from the blood-stains on it, but that his hand will rather incarminate the great ocean; while Lady Macbeth says that "all the sweets of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." Antony's declaration that if he were an orator like Brutus, he would "make the stones of Rome rise in mutiny," is another good example. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes," is the Psalmist's fine figure.

Apostrophe is a sudden turning off from the subject of discourse to address some absent or dead person or thing as present. When the news of Lord Byron's death came to England, John Jay, the famous preacher, spoke of him and his works in his pulpit; then he suddenly turned and addressed him as if he were present: "O Byron, hadst thou listened to the words of soberness and truth; hadst thou followed the counsels of the wise and good; hadst thou repressed thy passions, formed noble aims and pursued a nobler ideal of life, what a different tale we would have had to tell! what a different example, for all generations, thy life would have afforded!" His apostrophe was something like this; it is twenty-five years since I read it, I give it as I remember it; I only know it made a deep impression on me at the time. And Byron himself, in his wonderful Childe Harold, gives us perhaps the finest apostrophe in our language. He is speaking of the ocean, when he suddenly turns and addresses it in these noble lines beginning:

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain.
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control stops with the shore."

Climax is rising from one point to another till the highest is reached, or descending from one point to another till the lowest is reached. I have read somewhere this capital example, which is said to be from a sermon on Christian progress by a negro preacher: "If you cannot fly, run; if you cannot run, walk; if you cannot walk, crawl; if you cannot crawl, creep it along!"

Alliteration is the repeating of the same letter at the beginning of each of two or more words in the same line or sentence. One of the characters in Shakespeare's Henry VIII speaks thus of Cardinal Wolsey:

"Begor of butchers and by butchers bred,
How high his highness holds his haughty head."

Besides these, there are figures of etymology and figures of syntax. The former are hardly worth mentioning, being simply such changes in words as o'er for over, tho' for though, 'gainst for against, 'tis for it is, withouten for without, enchain for chain, and a few similar ones, all of which are called by the hardest of Greek names. These figures are simply deviations from the usual orthography of words, and are sometimes called figures of orthography. The figures of syntax are four in number: elipsis, pleonasm, enallage, and hyperbaton. The first, which has already been explained, consists, you will remember, in leaving understood some word or words; as, "This is the man I mean," instead of "whom I mean." Pleonasm is the opposite of this; that is, the using of superfluous words; and the most common example of it is in the use of the word got. "What have you got? I have got a book; you have got a horse." These got may all be left out. The Bible is full of this figure, as indeed of all figures; as, "There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. Oh ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth!" Enallage may be said to be the name given to the grammatical mistakes which the poets are allowed to make, on account of the shackles in which they are obliged to walk. In Leigh Hunt's poem, "The Glove and the Lion," occur these lines:

10*
Now, according to the rules of grammar, these lines declare that the king was a beauteous, lively dame; but the poet was obliged to write thus for the sake of the rhyme. This is called enjambement. Milton's "Beelzebub than whom" may also be called enjambement. Hyperbaton is somewhat similar to inversion, which latter consists in placing the predicate or the object before the subject; as, In came the king; down fell the suppliant; him I adore. Inversion is used to give force and emphasis to the sake of the measure; as, "While its song rolls the woods along," instead of "While its song rolls along the woods."

There is no better example of an awkward blunder in the use of figures than that of the man who prayed that, "the word which had been preached might be like a nail driven in a sure place, sending its roots downward and its branches upward, spreading itself like a green bay-tree, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an iceberg." Lord Cockburn, in his Memoirs, tells of a man who, on being asked at a public dinner to give a toast, exclaimed: "Here's to the moon, shining on the calm bosom of a lake!" The man thought, no doubt, that he was saying something figurative and fine. Franklin, in a toast he gave at a diplomatic dinner at Versailles, made use of the sun and moon in a very different manner. The British minister began with: "George III, who, like the sun in his verdant, spreads a luster throughout and enlightens the world." The French minister followed with: "Louis XVI, who, like the moon, sheds his mild and beneficent rays on and influences the globe." Then our American Franklin gave: "George Washington, commander of the American army, who, like Joshua of old, commanded the sun and the moon to stand still, and they obeyed him." Never were simile and metaphor more happily combined.

I cannot help thinking that, when Cobbett called figures double-edged tools, he had in mind the mischievous which some of his own figures had played with himself on certain occasions. His likening of Doctor Rush to Doctor Sangrado cost him $5,000; his declaration that the appointment of Lord Hardwicke to the vice-royalty of Ireland was "putting the surgeon's apprentice to bleeding the hospital patients," cost him $500; and his comparison of Castlereagh's discipline of British troops to Napoleon's discipline of his conscripts, cost him £1,000 and an imprisonment of two years. Dogberry found comparisons "odorous," Cobbett found them very expensive and very injurious. Defoe's figures served him even worse; for his sarcastic irony in "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters" cost him his ears, exposure in the pillory, and the loss of his liberty for two years. The remorseless metaphor which Brougham applied to Canning, that he was guilty of the "most monstrous tergiversation [shuffling, shifting, twisting, turning] for office," caused that statesman, it is said, to take to his bed, and never to rise from it.

VERSIFICATION.

Now comes that mysterious matter, which I promised, at the beginning of the book, to give you an account of, versification. I said it is a simple matter; so it is; and yet many persons look upon it as something very complicated, far too difficult for common people to learn, and never studied by anybody but poets. Versification is of two kinds, rhyme and blank verse. Rhyme consists of measured lines, every two of which ending with words or syllables of a similar sound; blank verse consists of lines with measure but no rhyme. Shakespeare's tragedies and Milton's Paradise Lost are in blank verse; Butler's Hudibras and Pope's translation of the Iliad—indeed almost all Pope's poems—are in rhyme. Blank verse gives the poet much more freedom and ease in the expression of his thoughts than rhyme; consequently our noblest poetry is in this form.

Although there are many kinds of measure or meter, there are four only to be found in English poetry more than four kinds. These are: the iambic, trochaic, anapestic, and dactylic measures; all hard names, but meaning easy things. Now, what makes these measures easy to learn is, that they go in pairs, and each one in each pair is the contrary or the opposite of the other. Each line of poetry consists of a certain number of feet—and you may have them from one foot up to ten feet—and each foot consists of either two or three syllables. A foot in iambic measure is called an iamb; in trochaic measure, a trochee; in anapestic measure, an anapest; in dactylic measure, a dactyl. Now the iambus and the trochee are feet of two syllables, and the anapest and the dactyl are feet of three syllables. The two syllables of the iambus are short-long; as, re-call, at-tend. The two syllables of the trochee are long-short; as, ho'-ly, cy'-press. Therefore you see that the one is the opposite of the other. Counting the feet in a line of poetry, or passing after each foot as you go along, is
On Putting Sentences Together,
called scansion. Now scan me the following verse, and tell me whether it is in iambic or trochaic measure:

The cur | few tolls | the knell | of part | tag day;
The low | tag herd | winds slow | ly o'er | the lee;
The plough | man home | ward plods | his wea | ry way, And leaves | the world | to dark | ness and | to me.

Gray's Elegy in a Country Churchyard.

Now tell me if the following stanza is in the same measure:

Once up | on a | mid-night | dreary, While I | ponder'd | weak and | weary.
O-ver | many a | quaint and | en-rous | vol-ume
Of for | got-tan | lone,
While I | nod-dad | near-ly | nap-ling,
Sud-den | ly there | came a | nap-ling.
As of | some one | gent-ly | rap-pling,
Rap-pling | at my | cham-ber | door.—Poet's Raven.

You see that in the first stanza the tone falls always on the second syllable, while in the second the tone falls always on the first. The first stanza, therefore, is in the iambic measure, and the second in the trochaic.

Now the other two measures are also opposites. Mark the following verse, and tell me whether it is made up of short-short-long feet (anapestic), or long-short-short feet (dactylic):

The As-syr | Ian came down | like the wolf | on the fold,
And his co | horts were gleam | ing in pur | ple and gold;
And the sheen | of their spears | was like stars | on the sea
When the blue | wave rolls night | ly on deep | Ga-Il-lee.

Byron's Destruction of Senehachert.

Now observe that the feet in the following verse are the opposite or the reverse of the preceding:

Bird of the | wil-der-ness,
Blithe-some and | cum-ber-less,
Sweet be thy | mas-tin o'er | moor-land and | lea!
Em-bLEM of | nap-ping-
Blest is thy | dwell-ing place—
Oh to a | blue in the | de-sert with | thee!

The Lark, by James Hogg.

The first of these last two stanzas is, therefore, in anapestic measure, and the second in dactylic. So that the four verses represent the iambic, the trochaic, the anapestic, and the dactylic measure; and you should learn all four by heart, as a guide in enabling you to determine the measure of other poems. Something that will help you to remember the dactylic measure is the derivation of the word dactyl, which is a Greek word signifying

and on Figurative Language.

finger. Now look at your forefinger, and see if it does not consist of one long joint and two short ones (cum'ber-less). So that I may say—although it sounds like an Irish bull—that this foot is so called because it is like a finger.

Of all the poems in the English language, nine out of ten are in the iambic measure, which is no doubt because that measure is most suited to the nature of our language. Poor Lord Surrey—who seems to have been a noble, chivalric character, something like Sidney; beheaded in the flower of his age by the brutal Henry VIII.—was the first to write in this measure. Nearly all our dramatic and epic poetry, in fact nearly all our great poems, are in this measure. All Shakespeare's blank-verse plays, Milton's Paradise Lost, Pope's Homer, Spenser's Faery Queen, Butler's Hudibras, and Bryant's Thanatopsis are in iambic measure. There is only one thing more to be said, and that is, that you will sometimes find a mixture of these various measures in one and the same poem; but some one measure is, however, usually so predominant as to give a character to the verse. Verse means poetry in general, but one single line of poetry is also called a verse.
THE SIX LESSONS.

LETTER XXIV.

SIX LESSONS, INTENDED TO PREVENT STATESMEN FROM USING FALSE GRAMMAR, AND FROM WRITING IN AN AWKWARD MANNER.

Harpden, Hertfordshire, June 23, 1822.

MY DEAR JAMES:

In my first Letter, I observed that it was of the greatest importance that statesmen, above all others, should be able to write well. It happens, however, but too frequently, that that which should be, in this case as well as in others, is not; sufficient proof of which you will find in the remarks which I am now about to make. The Letter to Tierney—a thing which I foresaw would become of great and lasting importance; a thing to which I knew I should frequently have to recur with satisfaction—I wrote on the anniversary of the day on which, in the year 1810, I was sentenced to be imprisoned for two years, to pay a fine of a thousand pounds, and to be held in bonds of five thousand pounds for seven years, for having publicly, and in print, expressed my indignation at the flogging of English local-militia men in the town of Ely, under a guard of German soldiers. I thought of this at a time when I saw those events approaching which I was certain would, by fulfilling my predictions, bring me a compensation for the unmerited sufferings and insults heaped upon me with so unsparing a hand. For writing the present little work, I select the anniversary of a day which your excellent conduct makes me regard as amongst the most blessed in the calendar. Who, but myself, can imagine what I felt when I left you behind me at New York! Let this tell my persecutors that you have made me more than amends for all the losses, all the fatigue, all the dangers, and all the anxieties attending that exile of which their baseness and injustice were the cause.

The bad writing, on which I am about to remark, I do not pretend to look on as the cause of the present public calamities, or of any part of them; but it is a proof of a deficiency in that sort of talent which appears to me to be necessary in men intrusted with great affairs. He who writes badly thinks badly. Confusedness in words can proceed from nothing but confusedness in the thoughts which give rise to them. These things may be of trifling importance when the actors move in private life; but when the happiness of millions of men is at stake, they are of an importance not easily to be described.

The pieces of writing that I am about to comment on I deem bad writing; and, as you will see, the writing may be bad, though there may be no grammatical error in it. The best writing is that which is best calculated to secure the object of the writer; and the worst, that which is the least likely to effect that purpose. But it is not in this extended sense of the words that I am now going to consider any writing. I am merely about to give specimens of badly-written papers, as a warning to the statesmen of the present day; and as proofs, in addition to those which you have already seen, that we ought not to conclude that a man has great abilities merely because he receives great sums of the public money.

The specimens, that I shall give, consist of papers that relate to measures and events of the very first importance. The first is the speech of the Speaker of the House of Commons to the regent, at the close of the first session of 1819, during which Mr. Peel's, or the Cash-Payment, Bill had been passed; the second is the answer of the regent to that speech; the first is the work of the House; the second that of the ministry.
In Letter XII, I gave the reasons why we had a right to expect perfection in writings of this description. I there described the persons to whom the business of writing king’s speeches belongs. The Speaker of the House of Commons is to be taken as the man of the greatest talent in that House. He is called the “First Commoner of England.” Figure to yourself, then, the king on his throne, in the House of Lords; the lords standing in their robes; the Commons coming to the bar with the Speaker at their head, gorgeously attired, with the mace held beside him; figure this scene to yourself, and you will almost think it sedition and blasphemy to suppose it possible that the speech made to the king, or that his majesty’s answer, both prepared and written down long beforehand, should be anything short of perfection. Follow me, then, my dear son, through this Letter; and you will see that we are not to judge of men’s talents by the dresses they wear, by the offices they fill, or by the power they possess.

After these two papers, I shall take some papers written by Lord Castlereagh, by the Duke of Wellington, and by the Marquis Wellesley. These are three of those persons who have, of late years, made the greatest figure in our affairs with foreign nations. The transactions which have been committed to their management have been such as were hardly ever exceeded in point of magnitude, whether we look at the transactions themselves or at their natural consequences. How much more fit than other men they were to be thus confided in; how much more fit to have the interest and honor of a great nation committed to their hands, you will be able to judge when you shall have read my remarks on those of their papers to which I have here alluded.

In the making of my comments, I shall insert the several papers, a paragraph or two, or more, at a time; and I shall number the paragraphs for the purpose of more easy reference.

**LESSON I.**

Remarks on the Speech of the Speaker of the House of Commons to the Prince Regent, which Speech was made at the close of the first Session of 1819, during which Session Peel’s Bill was passed.

“May it please your Royal Highness,

1. "We, his Majesty’s faithful Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled, attend your Royal Highness with our concluding Bill of Supply.

2. "The subjects which have occupied our attention have been more numerous, more various and more important, than are usually submitted to the consideration of Parliament in the same Session."

It is difficult to say what is meant, in Paragraph No. 2, by the word various. The Speaker had already said that the subjects were more numerous, which was quite enough; for they necessarily differed from each other, or they were one and the same; and, therefore, the word various can in this place have no meaning at all, unless it mean that the subjects were variegated in themselves, which would be only one degree above sheer nonsense.

Next comes the “than are,” without a nominative case. Chambermaids, indeed, write in this way, and, in such a case, “the dear unintelligible scrawl” is, as the young rake says in the play, “ten thousands times more charming” than correct writing; but from a Speaker in his robes we might have expected “than those which are usually submitted.”

And what does the Speaker mean by “in the same Session?” He may mean “in one and the same Session”; but what business had the word same there at all? Could he not have said, “during one Session,” or “during a single Session?”

3. “Upon many of these subjects we have been engaged in long and unwearied examinations; but such has been the pressure of
other business, and particularly of that which ordinarily belongs to a first Session of Parliament—and such the magnitude and intricacy of many of these inquiries, that the limits of the present Session have not allowed of bringing them to a close."

There is bad taste, at least, in using the word examinations in one part of the sentence, and the word inquiries in the other part, especially as the pronoun those was used in the latter case. The verb "has" agrees in number with the noun "pressure," but the Speaker, notwithstanding the aid of his wig, was not able to perceive that the same verb did not agree in number with the nouns "magnitude and intricacy." "Such has been the pressure, and such have been the magnitude and intricacy."

4. "But, Sir, of those measures which we have completed, the most prominent, the most important, and, as we trust, in their consequences, the most beneficial to the public, are the measures which have grown out of the consideration of the present state of the country—both in its currency and its finances."

There is not here any positive error in grammar; but there is something a great deal worse; namely, unintelligible words. The epithet "prominent" was wholly unnecessary, and only served to inflate the sentence. It would have been prudent not to anticipate, in so marked a manner, beneficial consequences from Peel's Bill; but what are we to understand from the latter part of the sentence? Here are measures growing out of the consideration of the state of the country in its currency and finances. What! The state of the country in its currency! Or is it the consideration in its currency! And what had the word both to do there at all? The Speaker meant that the measures had grown out of, or, which would have been much more dignified, had been the result of a consideration of the present state of the country, with regard to its currency as well as with regard to its finances.

5. "Early, Sir, in the present Session, we instituted an inquiry into the effects produced on the exchanges with foreign countries, and the state of the circulating medium, by the restriction on payments in cash by the Bank. This inquiry was most anxiously and most deliberately conducted, and in its result led to the conclusion that it was most desirable, quickly, but with due precautions, to return to our ancient and healthful state of currency:—That whatever might have been the expediency of the Acts for the suspension of payments of cash at the different periods at which they were enacted (and doubtless they were expedient), whilst the country was involved in the most expensive contest that ever weighed down the finances of any country—still that, the necessity for the continuance of these Acts having ceased, it became us with as little delay as possible (avoiding carefully the commotion of too rapid a transition) to return to our ancient system; and that, if at any period, and under any circumstances, this return could be effected without national inconvenience, it was at the present, when this mighty nation, with a proud retrospect of the past, after having made the greatest efforts, and achieved the noblest objects, was now repose in a confident, and, as we fondly hope, a well-founded expectation of a sound and lasting peace."

Here, at the beginning of this long and most confused paragraph, are two sentences, perfect rivals in all respects; each has 37 words in it; each has three blunders; and the one is just as obscure as the other. To "institute" is to settle, to fix, to erect, to establish; and not to set about or undertake, which was what was done here. If I were to tell you that I have instituted an inquiry into the qualities of the Speaker's speech, you would, though I am your father, be almost warranted in calling me an egregious coxcomb. But what are we to make of the "and the" further on? Does the Speaker mean that they instituted (since he will have it so) an inquiry into the state of the circulating medium, or into the effects produced on the circulating medium by the cash suspension? I defy any man living to say which of the two is meant by his words. And then we come to "by the Bank;" and here the only possible meaning of the words is, that the restriction was imposed by the Bank; whereas the Speaker means the restriction on payments made at the Bank. If at, instead
of "by," had happened to drop out of the wig; this part of the sentence would have been free from error.

As to the second sentence in this Paragraph No. 5, I may first observe on the incongruity of the Speaker's two superlative adverbs. **Ancious** means with inquietude; and **deliberately** means coolly, slowly, warily, and the like. The first implies a disturbed, the latter a tranquil, state of the mind; and a mixture of these it was, it appears, that produced Peel's Bill; this mixture it was which "in its results, LED to the conclusion," that is to say, the result led to the result; result being conclusion, and conclusion being result. But tautology is, you see, a favorite with this son of the Archbishop of Canterbury, more proofs of which you have yet to witness. And why must the king be compelled to hear the phrase "healthful state of the currency," threadbare as it had long before been worn by Horner and all his tribe of coxcombs of the Edinburgh Review? Would not "our ancient currency" have answered every purpose? And would it not have better become the lips of a person in the high station of Speaker of the House of Commons?

The remaining part of this paragraph is such a mass of confusion that one hardly knows where or how to begin upon it. The "that" after the colon and the dash seems to connect it with what has gone before; and yet what connection is there? Immediately after this "that" begins a parenthetical phrase, which is interrupted by a parenthesis, and then the parenthetical phrase goes on again till it comes to a dash, after which you come to the words that join themselves to the first "that." These words are "still that." Then, on goes the parenthetical phrase again till you come to "it became us." Then comes more parenthetical matter and another parenthesis; and then comes "to return to our ancient system." Take out all the parenthetical matter, and the paragraph will stand thus: "That it was desirable to return to our ancient and healthful state of currency:—that—still that, it became us to return to our ancient system."

But only think of saying "whatever might have been the expediency of the acts," and then to make a parenthesis directly afterwards for the express purpose of positively asserting that they "were expedient!" Only think of the necessity for the continuance of the acts having ceased, and of its being becoming in the Parliament to return to cash payments as soon as possible, and yet that a convulsion was to be apprehended from a too rapid transition; that is to say, from returning to cash payments sooner than possible!

After this comes a doubt whether the thing can be done at all; for we are told that the Parliament, in its wisdom, concluded that, if "at any period this return could be effected without national inconvenience, it was at the present." And then follows that piece of sublime nonsense about the nation's reposing in the fond (that is, foolish) hope of, not only a lasting, but also a sound, peace. A lasting peace would have been enough for a common man; but the son of an Archbishop must have it sound as well as lasting, or else he would not give a farthing for it.

6. "In considering, Sir, the state of our finances, and in minutely comparing our income with our expenditure, it appeared to us that the excess of our income was not fairly adequate for the purposes to which it was applicable—the gradual reduction of the national debt.

7. "It appeared to us that a clear available surplus of at least five millions ought to be set apart for that object.

8. "This, Sir, has been effected by the additional imposition of three millions of taxes."

The word "fairly," in Paragraph No. 6, is a redundancy; it is mere slang. "Adequate for" ought to be "adequate to;" and "applicable" is inapplicable to the case; for the money was applicable to any purpose. It should have been, "the purpose (and not the purposes)
for which it was intended;" or, "the purpose to which it was intended to be applied."

The 7th Paragraph is a heap of redundant Treasury-slang. Here we have surplus; that is to say, an over-quantity; but this is not enough for the Speaker, who must have it clear also; and not only clear, but available; and then he must have it set apart into the bargain! Leave out all the words in italics, and put purpose instead of object at the end; and then you have something like common sense as to the words, but still foolish enough as to the political view of the matter.

Even the 8th Paragraph, a simple sentence of fourteen words, could not be free from fault. What does the Speaker mean by an "additional imposition"? Did he imagine that the Parliament had imposed three millions of taxes without making an addition to former impositions? How was the imposition to be other than "additional?" Why, therefore, cram in this word?

9. "Sir, in adopting this course, his Majesty's faithful Commons did not conceal from themselves that they were calling upon the nation for a great exertion; but well knowing that honor, and character, and independence have at all times been the first and dearest objects of the hearts of Englishmen, we felt assured that there was no difficulty that the country could not encounter, and no pressure to which she would not willingly and cheerfully submit, to enable her to maintain, pure and unimpaired, that which has never yet been shaken or sullied—her public credit and her national good faith."

This is a sentence which might challenge the world! Here is, in a small compass, almost every fault that writing can have. The phrase "conceal from themselves" is an importation from France, and from one of the worst manufacturers too. What is national "honor" but national "character?" In what do they differ? And what had "independence" to do in a case where the subject was the means of paying a debt? Here are three things named as the "first" object of Englishmen's hearts. Which was the "first" of the three? Or were they the first three? To "feel assured" is another French phrase. In the former part of the sentence, the Parliament are a they; in the latter part they are a we. But it is the figures of rhetoric which are the great beauties here. First it is Englishmen who have such a high sense of honor and character and independence. Next it is the country. And next the country becomes a she; and in her character of female will submit to any "pressure" to enable her to "maintain" her purity; though scarcely anybody but the sons of Archbishops ever talk about maintaining purity, most people thinking that, in such a case, preserving is better. Here, however, we have pure and unimpaired. Now, pure applies to things liable to receive stains and adulterations; unimpaired, to things liable to be undermined, dilapidated, demolished, or worn out. So the Speaker, in order to make sure of his mark, takes them both, and says that the thing which he is about to name, "has never yet been shaken or sullied!" But what is this fine thing after all? Gad! there are two things; namely, "public credit and national good faith." So that, leaving the word good to go to the long account of redundancy, here is another instance of vulgarly-false grammar: for the two nouns, joined by the conjunction, require the verb have instead of has.

10. "Thus, Sir, I have endeavored, shortly, and I am aware how imperfectly, to notice the various duties which have devolved upon us, in one of the longest and most arduous sessions in the records of Parliament."

11. "The Bill, Sir, which it is my duty to present to your Royal Highness, is entitled, 'An Act for applying certain monies therein mentioned for the Service of the year 1819, and for further appropriaing the supplies granted in this Session of Parliament.' To which, with all humility, we pray his majesty's royal assent."

Even here, in these commonplace sentences, there must be something stupidly illiterate. The Speaker does not
mean that his "endeavor" was "shortly" made, or made in a short manner, but that his notice was made in a short manner; and, therefore, it ought to have been, "to notice shortly," if shortly it must be; yet, surely phraseology less galling might have been used on such an occasion. "In the longest session," and "in the records of Parliament," are colloquial, low and incorrect into the bargain; and as for "monies" in the last paragraph, the very sound of the word sends the mind to Change Alley, and conjures up before it all the noisy herd of Bulls and Bears.

There is, indeed, one phrase in this whole Speech (that in which the Speaker acknowledges the imperfectness of the manner in which he has performed his task) which would receive our approbation; but the tenor of the speech, the at once flippant and pompous tone of it, the self-conceit that is manifest from the beginning to the end, forbid us to give him credit for sincerity when he confesses his deficiencies, and tell us that the confession is one of those clumsy traps so often used with the hope of catching unmerited applause.

LESSON II.
Remarks on the Speech which the Prince Regent made to the Parliament on the occasion when the above Speech of the Speaker was made.

"My Lords and Gentlemen:"
12. "It is with great regret that I am again obliged to announce to you the continuance of his Majesty's lamented indisposition.
13. "I cannot close this session of Parliament without expressing the satisfaction that I have derived from the zeal and assiduity with which you have applied yourselves to the several important objects which have come under your consideration.
14. "Your patient and laborious investigation of the state of the

King's Speech.

circulation and currency of the kingdom demands my warmest acknowledgment; and I entertain a confident expectation that the measures adopted, as the result of this inquiry, will be productive of the most beneficial consequences."

The phrase pointed out by italics in the 12th Paragraph is ambiguous; and, as it is wholly superfluous, it has no business there. The 13th Paragraph (for a wonder!) is free from fault; but, in the 14th, why does the king make two of the "circulation and currency"? He means, doubtless, to speak of the thing, or things, in use as money. This was the currency; and what, then, was the "circulation"? It is not only useless to employ words in this way; it is a great deal worse; for it creates a confusion of ideas in the mind of the reader.

"Investigation and inquiry" come nearly to each other in meaning; but when the word "this," which had a direct application to what has gone before, was used, the word investigation ought to have followed it, and not the word inquiry; it being always a mark of great affectation and of false taste, when pains are taken to seek for synonymous words in order to avoid a repetition of sound. The device is seen through, and the littleness of mind exposed.

The fine word "adopted" is not nearly so good as the plain word taken would have been. The Parliament did not adopt the measures in question; they were their own; of their own invention; and, if I were here writing remarks on the measures, instead of remarks on the language in which they were spoken of, we might have a hearty laugh at the "confident expectation" which the king entertained of the "most beneficial consequences" of those measures, which were certainly the most foolish and mischievous ever taken by any Parliament, or by any legislative assembly, in the world.

"Gentlemen of the House of Commons:"
15. "I thank you for the supplies which you have granted for the service of the present year.

11
16. "I sincerely regret that the necessity should have existed of making any additions to the burthens of the people; but I anticipate the most important permanent advantages from the effort which you have thus made for meeting at once all the financial difficulties of the country; and I derive much satisfaction from the belief that the means which you have devised for this purpose are calculated to press as lightly on all classes of the community as could be expected when so great an effort was to be made."

Nobody, I presume, but kings say an "effort for meeting." Others say that they make an effort to meet. And nobody, that I ever heard of before, except bill-brokers, talks about meeting money demands. One cannot help admiring the satisfaction, nay, the "much satisfaction" that the king derived from the belief that the new taxes would press as lightly as possible on all classes of the community. I do not like to call this vulgar nonsense, because, though written by the ministers, it is spoken by the king. But, what is it? The additional load must fall upon somebody; upon some class or classes; and where, then, was the sense of expressing "much satisfaction" that they would fall lightly on all classes? The words "as possible," which come after likely, do nothing more than make an addition to the confusion of ideas.

"MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN:"

17. "I continue to receive from foreign powers the strongest assurances of their friendly disposition towards this country.

18. "I have observed with great concern the attempts which have recently been made in some of the manufacturing districts to take advantage of circumstances of local distress, to excite a spirit of disaffection to the institutions and government of the country. No object can be nearer my heart than to promote the welfare and prosperity of all classes of his majesty's subjects; but this cannot be effected without the maintenance of public order and tranquillity.

19. "You may rely, therefore, upon my firm determination to employ, for this purpose, the powers entrusted to me by law; and I have no doubt that, on your return to your several counties, you will use your utmost endeavors, in co-operating with the magis.

"King's Speech."

"Weak minds, feeble writers and speakers, delight in superlatives. They have big sound in them, and give the appearance of force; but they very often betray those who use them into absurdities. The king, as in Paragraph No. 17, might continue to receive strong assurances; but how could he receive "the strongest" more than once?"

In the 18th Paragraph we have "welfare and prosperity." I, for my part, shall be content with either (the two being the same thing), and if I find, from the acts of the government, reason to believe that one is really sought for, I shall care little about the other.

I am, however, I must confess, not greatly encouraged to hope for this, when I immediately afterwards hear of a "firm determination" to employ "powers," the nature of which is but too well understood. "Determination" can, in grammar, receive no additional force from having "firm" placed before it; but, in political interpretation, the use of this word cannot fail to be looked upon as evincing a little more of eagerness than one could wish to see apparent in such a case.

In these speeches, nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs generally go, like crows and ravens, in pairs. Hence we have, in the 18th Paragraph, "the institutions and government" of the country. Now, though there may be institutions of the country, which do not form a part of its government; the government is, at any rate, amongst the country's institutions. If every institution do not form a part of the government, the government certainly forms a part of the institutions. But as the old woman said by her goose and gander, these words have been a couple for so many, many years, that it would be a sin to part them just at the last."
Six Lessons.

The gross grammatical errors in the latter part of the last paragraph, where the singular pronoun it represents the plural noun projects, and the verb profess is in the past instead of the present time, one can account for only on the supposition that the idea of Reform had scared all the powers of thought from the minds of the writers. This unhappy absence of intellect seems to have continued to the end of the piece: for here we have “no other object but,” instead of no other object than; and the word “really” put into the mouth of a king, and on such an occasion, is something so very low that we can hardly credit our eyes when we behold it.

INTRODUCTION

To the Four Lessons on the productions of Lord Castlereagh, the Duke of Wellington, the Marquis Wellesley, and the Bishop of Winchester.

From the literary productions of Speakers and Ministers, I come to those of Ambassadors, Secretaries of State, Viceroy, and Bishops. In these persons, even more fully perhaps than in the former, we are entitled to expect proofs of great capacity, as writers. I shall give you specimens from the writings of four persons of this description, and these four, men who have been intrusted with the management of affairs as important as any that the king of this country ever had to commit to the hands of his servants: I mean Lord Castlereagh, the Duke of Wellington, the Marquis Wellesley, and the Bishop of Winchester; the first of whom has been called the greatest statesman, the second the greatest captain, the third the greatest viceroys, the fourth the greatest tutor, of the age.

The passages which I shall first select from the writings of these persons are contained in state papers relating to the Museums at Paris.

And here, in order that you may be better able to judge of the writings themselves, I ought to explain to you the nature of the matters to which they relate, and the circumstances under which they were written. The Museums at Paris contained, in the year 1815, when the King of France was escorted back to that city by the armies of the Allies, a great many statues and pictures, which Napoleon had, in his divers conquests and invasions, taken from the collections of other countries, and carried to France. When, therefore, the Allies had, by their armies, possession of Paris, at the time just mentioned, they rifled these Museums, and took from them what had, or what they asserted had, belonged to the Allies respectively. The French contended that this was unjust, and that it was an act of pillage. They said, that, in 1814, when the Allies were also in possession of the capital of France, they put forward no claim to the things in question, which were, to all intents and purposes, military booty, or prize; and that for the Allies to make this claim now, was not only contrary to their own precedent of 1814, but that it was to assume the character of enemies of France, directly in the teeth of their own repeated declarations, in which they had called themselves friends and even Allies of France; and in direct, violation of their solemn promises to commit against the French nation no act of hostility, and to treat it, in all respects, as a friend. The Allies had now, however, the power in their hands; and the result was the stripping of the Museums.

To characterize this act committed by those who entered France under the name of the Allies of the king and of the great body of his people, and who took possession of Paris in virtue of a convention which stipulated for the security of all public property; to characterize such an act is unnecessary; but we cannot help lamenting that the Ministers of England were open abettors, if not original instigators, in this memorable transaction, which, of
all the transactions of that time, seems to have created
the greatest portion of rancor in the minds of the people
of France.

That the English Ministers were the instigators appears
pretty clearly from the seizure (which was by force of
arms) having been immediately preceded by a paper
(called a note) delivered by Lord Castlereagh in the name
of the Prince Regent to the Ambassadors of the Allies,
which paper was dated 11th Sept., 1815, and from which
paper I am now about to give you a specimen of the
writing of this Secretary of State.

LESSON III.

Remarks on Lord Castlereagh's Note of the 11th Sep-
tember, 1815, on the subject of the Museums at Paris.

This Note sets out by saying, that representations, on
the subject of the Statues and Pictures, have been laid
before the Ambassadors of the Allies, and that the writer
had received the commands of the Prince Regent to
submit, for the consideration of the Allies, that which
follows. After some further matter, amongst which we
find this "greatest statesman" talking of "the indulgences"
(instead of indulgences) to which the French had a
right "to aspire" (instead of to hope for); after saying
that the purity of the friendship of the Allies had been
"proved beyond a question" by their last year's conduct,
and "still more," that is to say, farther than beyond, by
their this year's conduct; after talking about the "sub-
stantial integrity" of France, and thereby meaning that
she was to be despoiled of only a part of her dominions;
after talking about "combining" this "integrity with such
an adequate system of temporary precaution as may sat-
sify what the Allies owe to the security of their own
subjects;" after all this, and a great deal more of the
same description, we come to the paragraphs that I am
now going to remark on. Observe, I continue the num-
bering of the paragraphs, as if the whole of the papers on
which I am commenting formed but one piece of writing.

20. "Upon what principle can France, at the close of such
a war, expect to sit down with the same extent of possessions which
she held before the Revolution, and desire, at the same time, to
retain the ornamental spoils of all other countries? Is it that there
can exist a doubt of the issue of the contest, or of the power of the
Allies to effectuate what justice and policy require? If not, upon
what principle deprive France of her late territorial acquisitions,
and preserve to her the spoliations appertaining to those territories
which all modern conquerers have invariably respected, as insepar-
able from the country to which they belonged?

21. "The Allied Sovereigns have perhaps something to atone for
to Europe, in consequence of the course pursued by them, when
at Paris, during the last year. It is true, they never did so far
make themselves parties in the criminality of this mass of plunder
as to sanction it by any stipulation in their treaties; such a recog-
nition has been on their part uniformly refused; but they certainly
did use their influence to repress at that moment any agitation of
their claims, in the hope that France, not less subdued by their
generosity than by their arms, might be disposed to preserve
inviolate a peace which had been studiously framed to serve as a
bond of reconciliation between the nation and the king. They
had also reason to expect that his Majesty would be advised volun-
tarily to restore a considerable proportion, at least, of these spoils,
to their lawful owners.

22. "But the question is a very different one now, and to pursue
the same course, under circumstances so essentially altered, would
be, in the judgment of the Prince Regent, equally unsafe towards
France, and unjust towards our Allies, who have a direct interest
in this question.

23. "His Royal Highness, in stating this opinion, feels it neces-
-sary to guard against the possibility of misrepresentation.

24. "Whilst he deems it to be the duty of the Allied Sovereigns
not only not to obstruct, but facilitate, upon the present occasion,
the return of these objects to the places from whence they were torn,
it seems not less consistent with their delicacy not to suffer the
position of their armies in France, or the removal of these works
from the Louvre, to become the means, either directly or indirectly, of bringing within their own dominions a single article which did not of right, at the period of their conquest, belong either to their respective family collections, or to the countries over which they now actually reign.

25. "Whatever value the Prince Regent might attach to such exquisite speciments of the fine arts, if otherwise acquired, he has no wish to become possessed of them at the expense of France, or rather of the countries to which they of a right belong, more especially by following up a principle in war which he considers as a reproach to the nation by which it has been adopted, and so far from wishing to take advantage of the occasion to purchase from the rightful owners any articles they might, from pecuniary considerations, be disposed to part with, his Royal Highness would, on the contrary, be disposed rather to afford the means of replacing them in those very temples and galleries of which they were so long the ornaments.

26. "Were it possible that his Royal Highness's sentiments towards the person and cause of Louis XVIII. could be brought into doubt, or that the position of his Most Christian Majesty was likely to be injured in the eyes of his own people, the Prince Regent would not come to this conclusion without the most painful reluctance; but, on the contrary, his Royal Highness believes that his Majesty will rise in the love and respect of his own subjects, in proportion as he separates himself from these remembrances of revolutionary warfare. These spoils, which impede a moral reconciliation between France and the countries she has invaded, are not necessary to record the exploits of her armies, which, notwithstanding the cause in which they were achieved, must ever make the arms of the nation respected abroad. But whilst these objects remain at Paris, constituting as it were the title-deeds of the countries which have been given up, the sentiments of rudging these countries again to France will never be altogether extinct; nor will the genius of the French people ever completely associate itself with the more limited existence assigned to the nation under the Bourbons."

I shall say nothing of the logic of this passage; and I would fain pass over the real and poorly-disguised motive of the proceeding; but this must strike every observer.

It is the mere writing, which, at present, is to be the principal object of our attention. To be sure, the sentiments, the very thoughts, in Paragraphs 24 and 25, which speak the soul, as they are conveyed in the language, of the sedentary and circumspect keeper of a huckster's stand, or the more sturdy perambulating bearer of a miscellaneous pack, do, with voice almost imperious, demand a portion of our notice; while, with equal force, a similar claim is urged by the suspicions in the former of these paragraphs, and the protestations in the latter, which present to the nations of Europe, and especially to the French nation, such a captivating picture of English frankness and sincerity!

But let us come to the writing; and here, in Paragraph 20, we have spoliations appertaining to territories, though spoliation means the act of despoiling, and never does or can mean the thing of which one has been despoiled; and next, we have the word which, relating to spoliation, and then the subsequent part of the sentence tells us that spoliations have invariably been respected.

In the 21st Paragraph, does the it relate to criminality or to mass of plunder? and what is meant by a sanction given to either? Could the writer suppose it possible that it was necessary to tell the Allies, themselves, that they had not sanctioned such things? And here, if we may, for a moment, speak of the logic of our "greatest statesman," the Allies did sanction, not criminality, not a mass of plunder, but the quiet possession of the specimens of art, by leaving, in 1814, that possession as they found it. At the close of this paragraph, we have a proportion, instead of a part, an error common enough with country fellows when they begin to talk fine, but one that surely ought to be absent from the most stately of the productions of a Secretary of State.

"Unwise towards France, and unjust towards the Allies," and "equally" too, is as pretty a specimen of what is called twaddle as you will find; while "the return"
of these "objects," the not purloining of a "single article,"
the not wishing to "take advantage" and to "purchase
any of the articles" that the owners might wish to part
with," form as fine an instance of the powers of the plume
d'erreasse, or pen of mud, as you will be able to hunt out
of the history of a whole year's proceedings at the Police
Offices.

But, in Paragraph 24, we have "their conquest." The
conquest of whom or what? That of the Allies, that of
their dominions, or that of the "objects"? It is impossible
to answer, except by guess; but it comes out, at any
rate, that there was a conquest; and this "greatest
statesman" might have perceived that this one word was
a complete answer to all his assertions about plunder and
spoliation; for that which is conquered is held of right;
and the only want of right in the Allies, forcibly to take
these "articles," arose from their having entered France
as Allies of the King of France, and not as enemies and
conquerors.

And what, in Paragraph 25, is meant by "following up
a principle in war"? The phrase, "follow up a prin-
ciple," is as low as the dirt; it is chit-chat, and very unfit
to be used in a writing of this sort. But, as to the sense;
how could the regent, even if he had purchased the pic-
tures, be said to follow up a principle "in war"? The
meaning, doubtless, was that the regent had no wish to
become possessed of these things at the expense of
France, or, rather, at the expense of the countries
to which they belonged, especially as he could not
thus gratify his taste for the arts without acting
upon a principle which the French had acted on in
war. This meaning might, indeed, be supposed to be
contained in the above phrase of Lord Castlereagh;
but in a writing of this kind, ought anything be left to
supposition?

The 26th Paragraph is an assemblage of all that is
incorrect, low, and ludicrous. The "was" after Christian
Majesty ought to be could be, that is, "were it possible
that his position could be likely to be injured;" and not
"were it possible that his position was likely to be in-
jured," which is downright nonsense. And then only
think of an injured position; and of the king's position
being injured "in the eyes" of his people! "But, on the
contrary." On the contrary of what? Look back, and
see if it be possible to answer this question. Next comes
the intolerable fustian of the king's "separating himself
from remembrances," and from this flight, down the
"greatest statesman" pitches, robs the attorney's office,
and calls the statues and pictures "title deeds, as it
were," and this "as it were" is, perhaps, the choicest
phrase of the whole passage. But, in conclusion (for it is
time to have done with it), what do you say to "the sen-
timents of re-uniting the countries to France"? And
what do you say, then, to the "genius" (that is, the dis-
position) "of the French people associating itself with
the limited existence assigned to the nation under the
Bourbons"? What do you say of the man who could
make use of these words, when his meaning was, "that,
as long as these statues and pictures remained to remind
the French people of the late extent of the dominions of
France, their minds would not be completely reconcil-
ted to those more narrow limits, which had now been pre-
scribed to her"? What do you say of the man who,
having this plain proposition to state, could talk of the
genius of the people associating itself with the more
limited existence of the nation, the nation being the
people; and therefore his meaning, if there can be any
sense in the words, being, that the people as a nation had,
under the Bourbons, had their existence, or length of life,
abridged? What do you say, what can you say of such
a man, but that nature might have made him for a valet,
for a strolling player, and possibly for an auctioneer; but
Six Lessons.

never for a Secretary of State! Yet this man was educated at the University of Cambridge."

LESSON IV.

Remarks on a Dispatch of the Duke of Wellington (called the greatest Captain of the age) relative to the Museums at Paris.

Having, as far as relates to the Museums, taken a sufficient view of the writing of the greatest Statesman of the age, I now come to that of the "greatest Captain." The writing that I am now about to notice relates to the same subject. The Captain was one of the Commanders at Paris, at the time above spoken of, and it is in that capacity that he writes. But we ought to observe, here, that he is not only a great Captain, but a great Ambassador also; and that he was Ambassador at the Congress of Vienna just before the time we are speaking of; and that he was formerly Secretary of State for Ireland.

The paper, from which I am about to make a quotation, is a "dispatch" from the "greatest Captain" to Lord Castlereagh, dated at Paris, 23rd September, 1815, soon after the museums had been rifled.

I shall not take up much of your time with the performance of this gentleman; a short specimen will suffice;

"This Lesson was written in June, 1822. On the 13th of August, 1822, this same Lord Castlereagh (being still Secretary of State) killed himself at North Cray, in Kent, by cutting his throat. A Coroner's Jury pronounced him to have been insane; and, which is very curious, a letter from the Duke of Wellington was produced to prove that the deceased had been insane for some time. Though mind, he had been for some time, and was when he cut his throat, actually entrusted with the care and powers of the two other Secretaries' offices (they being absent), as well as those of the office of Foreign Affairs!"

"My dear Lord:

27. "There has been a good deal of discussion here lately respecting the measures which I have been under the necessity of adopting, in order to get for the King of the Netherlands his pictures, etc., from the museums; and lest these reports should reach the Prince Regent, I wish to trouble you, for his Royal Highness's information, with the following statement of what has passed.

28. "Shortly after the arrival of the sovereigns at Paris, the minister of the King of the Netherlands claimed the pictures, etc., belonging to his sovereign, equally with those of other powers; and, as far as I could learn, never could get any satisfactory reply from the French government. After several conversations with me, he addressed your lordship an official note, which was laid before the ministers of the allied sovereigns, assembled in conference; and the subject was taken into consideration repeatedly, with a view to discover a mode of doing justice to the claimants of the specimens of the arts in the museums, without injuring the feelings of the King of France. In the meantime the Prussians had obtained from his majesty not only all the really Prussian pictures, but those belonging to the Prussian territories on the left of the Rhine, and the pictures, etc., belonging to all the allies of his Prussian majesty; and the subject pressed for an early decision; and your lordship wrote your note of the 11th instant, in which it was fully discussed.

29. "The ministers of the King of the Netherlands still having no satisfactory answer from the French government, appealed to me, as the general-in-chief of the army of the King of the Netherlands, to know whether I had any objection to employ his majesty's troops to obtain possession of what was his unadulterated property. I referred this application again to the ministers of the allied courts, and no objection having been stated, I considered it my duty to take the necessary measures to obtain what was his right."

The great characteristic of this writing (if writing it ought to be called) is the thorough-paced vulgarity of it. There is a meanness of manner as well as of expression, and, indeed, a suitableness to the subject much too natural in all its appearances, to have been the effect of art.
The writer, though addressing a minister of state, and writing matter to be laid before a sovereign, begins exactly in the manner of a quidnunc talking to another that he has just met in the street. "There has been a good deal of discussion," (that is to say, talk) "here," that is to say, at Paris, Castlereagh being, at the time, in London. The phrase "to get for" is so very dignified that it could have come only from a great man, and could have been inspired by nothing short of the consciousness of being "the ally of all the nations of Europe," as the writer calls himself in another part of this famous "dispatch."

But what are "these reports," of which the great Captain speaks in the latter part of this paragraph? He had spoken of no reports before. He had mentioned "discussion," and a "good deal" of it; but had said not a word about reports; and these reports pop out upon us like "these six men in buckram," in Falstaff's narrative to the Prince.

The captain's "wishing to trouble" Lord Castlereagh, "for the regent's information," closes this paragraph in a very suitable manner, and prepares the mind for the next, where the regent would find trouble enough, if he were compelled to find out the English of it. The Dutch minister "claimed the pictures belonging to his sovereign, equally with those of other powers." What! did this Dutchman claim the whole: those belonging to the Dutch sovereign and those belonging to all the other powers besides? This, to be sure, would have been in the true Dutch style; but this could hardly be the fact. If it were, no wonder that the duke had learned that the minister "never could get any satisfactory reply," for it must have been a deal indeed that would have satisfied him.

The phrase "he addressed your lordship an official note" is in the counting-house style; and then to say to Lord Castlereagh, "your lordship wrote your note of the

11th of September," was so necessary, lest the latter should imagine that somebody else had written the note! Nor are the four ands in this paragraph to be overlooked; for never was this poor conjunction so worked before, except, perhaps, in some narrative of a little girl to her mother.

The narrative is, in the last-quoted paragraph, continued with unrelaxed spirit. The Dutch minister can still obtain no satisfactory answer; he asks the duke whether he has any objection to use force, and asserts, at the same time, that the goods in question are his master's "undoubted property." Upon this the duke applies to the other ministers, and, "no objection having been stated," he considers it his duty to obtain "what was his right;" that is to say, the Dutch king's right.

Never was there surely a parcel of words before put together by anybody in so clumsy a manner. In a subsequent part of the "dispatch," we have this: "I added, that I had no instructions regarding the museum, nor no grounds on which to form a judgment." In another place we have "the King of the Netherland's pictures." In another place we have "that the property should be returned to their rightful owners."

But, to bestow criticism on such a shocking abuse of letters is to disgrace it; and nothing can apologize for what I have done but the existence of a general knowledge of the fact that the miserable stuff that I have quoted, and on which I have been remarking, proceeded from the pen of a man who has, on many occasions, had some of the most important of the nation's affairs committed to his management. There is in the nonsense of Castlereagh a frivolity and a foppery that give it a sort of liveliness, and that now and then elicit a smile; but in the productions of his correspondent there is nothing to relieve; all is vulgar, all clumsy, all dull, all torpid inanity.
LESSON V.

Remarks on a Note presented by Lord Castlereagh to the Ambassadors of the Allies, at Paris, in July, 1815, relative to the slave trade.

Lord Castlereagh observes that there is reason to apprehend that the French ship-owners may be induced to renew the slave trade, from a supposition that the total abolition, recently decreed by Napoleon, has been nullified by the cessation of his authority; that motives of humanity, as well as a desire to promote the establishment of the king's authority, suggest that no time should be lost in taking efficient measures to maintain the decree of abolition; that at the time of the Treaty of Paris, the king's ministers wished to abolish this trade, but, in order that the king might, as much as possible, consult the interests of the colonial proprietors, those ministers wished the object to be accomplished by degrees during the space of five years; that now, however, when the abolition has been actually decreed, the matter assumes an entirely different shape, seeing that it is not now an abolition, but the refraining from revoking an abolition, that is proposed to be suggested to the king; that, if the king were to do this, he would warrant amongst his own people the injurious imputation, more than once brought against his former government, of countenancing the work of undoing and overturning, and would, at the same time, confirm foreign nations, and particularly the English, in the belief that he had adopted a systematic opposition to liberal principles and views; that, therefore, the interests of the king not less than those of humanity seem to call upon the Allies to give, formally and without delay, the weight of their influence in favor, as far as relates to France, of an entire and immediate abolition of the slave trade, an abolition, the necessity of which has, in principle at least, been acknowledged in the transactions of the Congress of Vienna.

Now, I put this question to you: Do you understand what this great statesman means? Read the note three times over, and then say whether you understand what he wants. You may guess; but you can go little further. Here is a whole mass of grammatical errors; but it is the obscurity, the unintelligibleness of the note, that I think constitutes its greatest fault. One way of proving the badness of this writing is to express the meaning of the writer in a clear manner; thus:

"Lord Castlereagh observes that there is reason to apprehend that the French ship-owners may be induced to renew the slave trade, from a supposition that the total abolition, recently decreed by Napoleon, has been nullified by the cessation of his authority; that motives of humanity, as well as a desire to promote the establishment of the king's authority, suggest that no time should be lost in taking efficient measures to maintain the decree of abolition; that at the time of the Treaty of Paris, the king's ministers wished to abolish this trade, but, in order that the king might, as much as possible, consult the interests of the colonial proprietors, those ministers wished the object to be accomplished by degrees during the space of five years; that now, however, when the abolition has been actually decreed, the matter assumes an entirely different shape, seeing that it is not now an abolition, but the refraining from revoking an abolition, that is proposed to be suggested to the king; that, if the king were to do this, he would warrant amongst his own people the injurious imputation, more than once brought against his former government, of countenancing the work of undoing and overturning, and would, at the same time, confirm foreign nations, and particularly the English, in the belief that he had adopted a systematic opposition to liberal principles and views; that, therefore, the interests of the king not less than those of humanity seem to call upon the Allies to give, formally and without delay, the weight of their influence in favor, as far as relates to France, of an entire and immediate abolition of the slave trade, an abolition, the necessity of which has, in principle at least, been acknowledged in the transactions of the Congress of Vienna."
Now, as to the several faulty expressions in the note of Castlereagh, though I have made great use of italics, I have not pointed out one-half of the faults. Whoever before heard of a reason to foresee a thing? He meant reason to believe that the thing would take place, and as it was a thing to be wished not to take place, to apprehend was the word; because to apprehend means to think of with some degree of fear. Wishing to-morrow to be a fine day, what would you think of me if I were to say that I had reason to foresee that it would rain? The might is clearly wrong. If the abolition were total, what had peremptory to do there? Could it be more than total? The nevertheless had no business there. He was about to give reasons why the abolition decree ought to be confirmed; but he had stated no reasons given by anybody why it should not. To lose no time to maintain; and then the in France, and then the immediate; altogether there is such a mass of confusion that one cannot describe it. "To maintain in France," would lead one to suppose that there was, or had been, a slave trade in France. The next part, beginning with "that if," sets all criticism at defiance. Look at the verbs could wish, and should be! Look at of having. Then comes prohibition for abolition, two very different things. To assume entirely a different shape is very different from to assume an entirely different shape. The latter is meant and the former is said. Then what does the for do there? What consequence is he coming to? How was he going to show that the shape was different? He attempts to show no such thing; but falls to work to foretell the evils which will fall on the King of France if he revoke Napoleon's decree. And here, Goddess of Grub-street, do hear him talking of the King of France giving himself the disadvantage of authorizing reproaches! If the king's conduct would justify people in believing ill of him, why should it justify the English in particular?

They might, indeed, be more ready to believe ill of him; but it could not be more just in them than in others. An opposition to ideas is a pretty idea enough; and so is the giving of weight in France to an immediate prohibition!

Never was there, surely, such a piece of writing seen before! Fifty years hence, no man who should read it would be able to ascertain its meaning. I am able to pick it out, because, and only because, I am acquainted with the history of the matter treated of. And yet, most momentous transactions, transactions involving the fate of millions of human beings, have been committed to the hands of this man!

It is not unnecessary for me to observe that, though I have stated the meaning of this note in a way for it to be understood, I by no means think, that even in the words in which I have expressed it, it was a proper note for the occasion. It was false in professions; and it was, as towards the King of France, insolent in a high degree. Even if it had been just to compel the king to abolish the slave trade, the matter might have been expressed in a less offensive manner; and, at any rate, he might have been spared the brutal taunt that we meet with towards the close of this matchless specimen of diplomatic stupidity.

Hoping that this book will outlive the recollection of the transactions treated of by the papers on which I have been remarking, it seems no more than justice to the parties to say that the abolition, which was thus extorted, had effect but for a very short time; and the French nation never acknowledged it as binding; that at this moment (June, 1822), complaints are made in the House of Commons of the breach of agreement on the part of the French; that the French have revived and do carry on the traffic in African slaves; that our ministers promise to make remonstrance; but that they dare not talk of
for the prevalence was that without declaring their readiness for war, their remonstrances can have no effect.

Lesson VI.

Remarks on passages in Dispatches from the Marquis Wellesley, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to Viscount Sidmouth, and to Mr. Peel, Secretaries of State; dated Dublin Castle, from 3d January to 12th June, 1822; and also on the charge of the Bishop of Winchester, delivered in July, 1822.

31. "Concluding that your lordship had been apprised, before my arrival in Dublin, of every important circumstance respecting the unhappy disturbances which have prevailed in this country, I proceed to submit to you, for His Majesty’s consideration, such information as I have received on that subject during the few days that I have passed since my succession to this government.

32. I propose to arrange this information with reference to each county respectively, for the purpose of facilitating a comparison with such statements as may already be in your lordship’s possession, and of enabling you to form a judgment of the relative state of each particular district at the different periods of time specified in each dispatch.

The marquis’s style is not, in general, love and clumsy; it has the opposite faults, affectation and foppishness; and where the meaning of the writer is obscure, it is not so much because he has not a clear head as because he cannot condescend to talk in the language and manner of common mortals.

"Had been apprised before of disturbances which have prevailed" presents great confusion as to times. We can hardly come at the precise meaning. It should have been: "Concluding that, before my arrival, your lordship was apprised of every important circumstance respecting the unhappy disturbances prevailing in this country." For the prevalence was still in existence. To submit is to place at the disposal of, to put under the power of, and, therefore, transmit, or send, was the proper word; for it is the king to whom the information is submitted.

The marquis sent the information to Lord Sidmouth that he might submit it to the king.

"Succession to this government" is a strangely pompous phrase at best. But it is not correct; for his succession (if it were one) took place at his appointment; and he is about to speak of what he has learned since his arrival in Dublin; and why not say arrival?

The 32d paragraph is, perhaps, as complete a specimen of smoothness in words and of obscurity in meaning as ever found its way upon paper; and yet this was an occasion for being particularly clear, seeing that the marquis was here explaining the plan of his dispatch. With reference to, means in relation to, as pertaining to, having a view towards. The first is the best for the marquis: and that is little short of nonsense; for what is arranging information in relation to each county? What does it mean? Not what the marquis thought he was saying, which was that he proposed to speak of the state of all the counties, and that the information relating to each county he meant to place under a separate head. This was what he meant; but this he does not say.

And then again, what does respectively do here after each? Respectively means particularly or relatively; and as he had before said, or meant to say, that he proposed to place the information relating to each county under the head of that county, what need was there of the addition of this long and noisy adverb?

To be sure, to place the information under separate heads, each head confining itself to the information relating to one county, was a very good way of facilitating a comparison of this information with that which was already in Lord Sidmouth’s possession; but it was not enough to say “facilitating a comparison with such
and there appears, besides, to be no reason to conclude that the information before possessed was arranged according to counties; on the contrary, the marquis's laying down of his plan would induce us to suppose that the arrangement of his matter was new.

The latter part of the sentence is all confusion. The marquis means that, by placing his information as before described, he shall enable Lord Sidmouth to form a judgment of the state of each district, now, compared with the state in which it was at the date of the former information. The "relative state of each particular district" may mean its state at one period compared with its state at another period; but "at different periods of time" by no means gives us this idea. And, even if it did, what are we to do with the "each document" at the close? Each means one of two, one of more than one. So that here we have the relative state of a district at the different periods of time specified in one document; and the main point that the marquis was driving at was to show Lord Sidmouth the manner in which he was going to enable him to compare the contents of the present document with those of the documents already held in his possession.

I have taken here the first two sentences of the dispatch. They are a fair specimen of the marquis's style, the great characteristic of which is obscurity arising from affectation. What he meant was this: "I propose to place the information relating to each county under a distinct head, for the purpose of facilitating a comparison of this information with that which your lordship may already possess, and also for the purpose of enabling you to form a judgment of the present state of each county, compared with the state in which it was at the date of former dispatches." And would it not have been better to write thus than to put upon paper a parcel of words, the meaning of which, even if you read them a hundred times over, must still remain a matter of uncertainty?

But there is another fault here; and that is, all the latter part of the sentence is a mere redundancy; for of what was Lord Sidmouth to "form a judgment?" A judgment of the comparative state of the country at the two periods? What could this be more than the making of the comparison? Judgment, in this case, means opinion; and if the marquis had said that his object was to enable Lord Sidmouth to form a judgment as to what ought to be done, for instance, in consequence of the change in the state of the country, there would have been some sense in it; but to enable him to see the change was all that the marquis was talking about; and the very act of making the comparison was to discern, or judge of, the change.

It is not my intention to swell out these remarks, or, with this dispatch before me, I could go on to a great extent indeed. Some few passages I cannot, however, refrain from just pointing out to you.

33. "The commanding officer at Bantry reports a daring attack made a few nights previously, on several very respectable houses in the immediate vicinity of that town, by a numerous banditti, who succeeded in obtaining arms from many; and the officer stationed at Skibbereen states his opinion that the spirit of disaffection, which had been confined to the northern baronies of the county, had spread in an alarming measure through the whole of West Carbury; that nightly meetings are held at various places on the coast, and that bands of offenders assemble, consisting of not less than three hundred in each band.

34. "It further appears, from various communications, that the greater part of the population of the northern part of the county of Cork had assembled in the mountains, and that they have in some places made demonstrations of attack, and in others have committed outrages by day, with increased force and boldness."

"Reports an attack" is of the slang military, and should not have forced its way into this dispatch. "States his opinion that," is little better. But it is to the strange
confusion in the times of the verbs that I here wish to
direct your attention. This is a fault the marquis very
frequently commits.

I cannot help drawing your attention to "a numerous banditti" and "not less than three hundred men." Banditti is plural, and therefore the a ought to be left out. Less is the comparative of little, used with reference to quantity; but men are not a quantity, but a number, and the comparative of few, which is fewer, ought to have been used here.

37. "The magistrates resident at Dunmanaway report that illegal oaths have for a long time been administered in that neighborhood; that nocturnal meetings have frequently been held; that in the adjoining parishes, notices of an inflammatory description have been posted; and in one parish, arms have been taken from the peaceable inhabitants.

38. "The Rector of — reports, on the 10th, that six houses of his parishioners had been attacked on the preceding night, and some arms obtained from them, and then an attempt had been made to assassinate Captain Bernard, an active yeomanry officer, when only a short distance behind his corps, but that, owing to the pistol presented at him missing fire, he escaped, and his brother shot the assailant."

We do not know from the words "have for a long time been administered," whether the oaths were administered a long time ago, or are now, and long have been administering. The that should have been repeated between the and the in towards the close of paragraph 35; for the want of it takes the last fact out of the report of the magistrates, and makes it an assertion of the marquis. The same remark applies to the 36th paragraph, where, for the want of the that between the and the then, it is the marquis, and not the rector, who asserts the fact of an attempt to assassinate the captain. An odd sort of an attempt to assassinate, by-the-bye, seeing that it was made by a pistol openly presented at him, and that, too, when his troop was just on before, and when his brother was so near at hand as to be able to shoot the assailant! But assassinate is become a fashionable word in such cases.

37. "On the evening of the same day a detachment of the 11th Regiment was attacked, on its march from Macroom to Bandon, by a party of sixty men, who followed it for three miles, and took advantage of the inclosures to fire, and to retard the march of the king's troops."

The meaning is that the party of sixty men followed it (the regiment), took advantage of the inclosures to fire on it, and to retard its march; but the marquis, from a desire to write fine, leaves us in doubt whether the regiment and the king's troops be the same body of men; and this doubt is, indeed, countenanced by the almost incredible circumstance that a regular regiment should be followed for three miles, and actually have its march retarded by sixty men.

38. "A countryman's house is also stated to have been attacked by forty men, well mounted and armed, who severely beat and wounded him, and took his horse. — reports an attack on the house of Mr. Sweet, near Macroom, who, having received previous intimation of the attack, and having prepared for defence, succeeded in repulsing the assailants, about two hundred in number, with a loss of two killed, who were carried off by their associates, although their horses were secured."

Here we have reports an attack again; but your attention is called to the latter part of the paragraph, where it would appear that Mr. Sweet sustained a loss of two killed; and yet these two dead men were carried off by their assailants. If the marquis had stopped at the word killed, it would have been impossible not to understand him to mean that Mr. Sweet had two of his men killed.

39. "A magistrate communicates that information had been received by him of several intended attacks upon houses in that neighborhood, but that they had been prevented by the judicious employment of the police, stationed at Sallans, under the Peace Preservation Act."

By employing the police in a judicious manner, the marquis means; but says quite another thing.

40. "The police magistrate at Westmeath reports the setting fire..."
Six Lessons.

To a farmer's outhouses, which, together with the cattle in them, was consumed.

It should be "the setting of fire," and it should be were, and not was; for the dene is in it if out-houses, together with the cattle in them, do not make up a plural.

41. "The result of the facts stated in this dispatch, and its inclosures, seems to justify an opinion that, although no material change has occurred in any other part of Ireland, the disturbances in the vicinity of Macroom have assumed a more decided aspect of general disorder, and accordingly I have resorted to additional measures of precaution and military operation."

There should be an in between the and and the its. But, it is not the result of the facts that seems to justify the opinion; it is the facts themselves that justify the opinion, and the opinion is the result. Measures of military operation, too, is an odd sort of phrase. This paragraph is all bad, from beginning to end; but I am merely pointing out prominent and gross errors.

42. "Another magistrate reports several robberies of arms in the parishes of Skull and Kilmore, and the burning of a corn-store at Crookhaven; and another, in representing the alarming state of the country, adds, that the object of the insurgents, in one district at least, has not been confined to the lowering of rents and tithes, but extended to the refusal also of the priest's dues."

To rob applies to the person or thing from whom or which something is violently and unlawfully taken. Men rob a man of his money, or a house of its goods; but it is not the money and goods that are robbed. Yet this is a very common phrase with the marquis, who, in other places, talks of "plundering arms from people," and who, by saying "six hundred and seventy-six fire-arms," and the like, leaves us clearly to understand that he is at liberty to use this noun in the singular, and, of course, to say a fire-arm whenever he may choose; a liberty, however, which I would, my dear James, earnestly recommend to you never to think of taking.

Marquis Wellesley's Dispatches.

To confine and extend an object does not seem to be very clear sense; and, at any rate, to say that the object of lowering rents and tithes has been extended to the refusal also of the priest's dues makes sad work indeed. Without the also, the thing might pass; but that word makes this part of the sentence downright nonsense.

43. "No additional military force, no improvement nor augmentation of the police, would now be effectual without the aid of the Insurrection Act; with that aid it appears to be rational to expect that tranquillity may be maintained, confirmed, and extended throughout Ireland. It is, therefore, my duty, in every view, to request the renewal of the law, of which the operation forms the subject of this dispatch."

Did any man, in any writing of any sort, ever before meet with anything like this? Suppose I were to say, "the writings of which the inaccuracies form the subject of these remarks," what would the world think and say of me? This is indeed "prose run mad."

Cobbett means, of course, that we should say, "the writings, the inaccuracies of which;" but we can now say, "the writings whose inaccuracies," which sounds much more smooth and elegant.

44. "With respect to Westmeath, the chief magistrate of police has stated the revival of those party feuds and personal conflicts in the neighborhood of Mullingar, which are considered in this country to be indications of the return of public tranquillity, and from which the magistrate expects the detection of past offences against the state."

One loses sight of everything about language here, in contemplating the shocking, the horrible fact! For, what is so horrible as the fact here officially stated, that party feuds and personal conflicts are deemed indications favorable to the government, and that they are expected by the magistrate to lead to the detection of past offences against the state! As to the grammar: to "state the revival" is just as good English as it would be to say that the magistrate has stated the fine weather. The "the return" ought to be "a return."
“The early expiration of the Act would, at least, hazard the revival of that tyranny; the restraints imposed on violence have not yet been of sufficient duration to form any solid foundation of a better and more disciplined disposition in the minds of the people. Even now it is believed that arms are retained in the hope of the expiration of the law on the 1st of August; and although a more auspicious sentiment may exist in the hearts of some, even of the guilty, it would be contrary to all prudent policy and provident wisdom, by a premature relaxation of the law, to afford facility to the accomplishment of the worst designs, and to weaken the protections and safeguards, which now secure the lives and properties of the loyal and obedient, before the spirit of outrage had been effectually extinguished.”

“To hazard the revival” is not correct. To hazard is to expose to danger; and certainly the marquis did not mean that the revival of the tyranny was a thing that ought not to be put in danger. The word hazard had no business there. Another mode of expression ought to have been used; such as, “exposed the country to the danger of the revival of the tyranny.”

The semicolon after tyranny ought to have been a full-point. “In the hope of the expiration” is bad enough; but it is the arrangement of this sentence, the placing of the several parts of it, which is most worthy of your attention, and which ought to be a warning to every one who takes pen in hand.

“Prudent policy and provident wisdom” would seem to say that there are such things as imprudent policy and improvident wisdom; but, still, all the rest is inferior, in point of importance, to the confusion which follows, and which leaves you wholly in doubt as to the meaning of the writer. Now, observe what facility this mass of confusion is reduced to order, and that, too, without adding to or taking from the marquis one single word. I begin after the word wisdom: “to afford, by a premature relaxation of the law, facility to the accomplishment of the worst designs, and to weaken, before the spirit of outrage had been effectually extinguished, the safeguards

which now secure the lives and properties of the loyal and obedient.”

How clear this is! And how much more harmonious and more elegant, too, than the sentence of the marquis; and yet the words are all the same identical words! Towards the close of Letter XXI, I gave you, from Dr. Johnson and Dr. Watts, some striking instances of the wrong placing of words in sentences; and, lest these should be insufficient to keep so great a man as the marquis in countenance, I will here show that a bishop can commit errors of the same sort and greater in degree.

Before passing to the bishop, is it not worth while to pause a moment to notice the remarkable fact, that, in the matter of outrages and violence, the Irish seem to have been just as bad at the beginning of the century as they are now toward the end of it? Whatever picture of outrage and violence these dispatches present, and what a time the English have had in governing the people of this “ever faithful” isle! The government has certainly improved since the time these dispatches were written; and yet what shall we say of the advance made by the people? Are all these murders and assassinations of the present day the result of English tyranny and injustice, or are they the result of other causes? What have the English done to improve the character of the Irish people? I fear that if these were weighed in the balance, they would all be found wanting. The French under the Revolutionists and the Germans under Bismarck have suffered ten times more oppression than the Irish under Victoria, without committing one tenth as many crimes; and the reason of this is, that the French and the Germans are better educated than the Irish. They have the moral sense to perceive that the commission of crime no more leads to national liberty than to personal happiness. Not the least important part of that education in which the Irish are lacking, is the practice of economy and foresight in the affairs of daily life. Out of every hundred Frenchmen, at least ninety-five save something every year; and the proportion of saving people among the Germans is perhaps still greater. Now I am positive that, among the Irish, not ten in a hundred ever think of saving anything; and this is one cause of the misery and starvation that periodically overtakes them.

I have before me “A Charge delivered to the Clergy of...
from his own will, cannot strictly be called an opportunity. But it is the double meaning, occasioned by the wrong-placing of the words, that I wish you to attend to.

Now, see how easily the sentence might, with the same words, have been made unequivocal, clear, and elegant: "My Reverend Brethren, being called, at a late period of life, to preside over this distinguished diocese, I have thought it incumbent on me not to delay, longer than circumstances rendered absolutely necessary, the opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with my clergy."

How easy it was to write thus! And yet this bishop did not know how to do it. I dare say that he corrected and re-corrected every sentence of this charge. And yet what bungling work it is, after all! And these are your college and university bred men! These are the men who are called Doctors on account of their literary acquirements, doctus being the Latin word for learned? Thus it is that the mass of mankind have been imposed upon by big sounding names, which, however, have seldom failed to insure, to those who have assumed them, power, ease, luxury, and splendor, at the expense of those who have been foolish or base enough to acquiesce, or to seem to acquiesce, in the fitness of the assumption.

Such acquiescence is not, however, so general now-a-days as it formerly was; and the chagrin which the "Doctors" feel at the change is not more evident than it is amusing. In the very charge which I have just quoted, the tutor of the heaven-born minister says, "A spirit is still manifest amongst us, producing an impatience of control, a reluctance to acknowledge superiority, and an eagerness to call in question the expediency of established forms and customs." What! is it, then, a sin; is it an offence against God, to be reluctant to "acknowledge superiority" in a bishop who cannot write so well as ourselves? Oh, no! We are not to be censured, because we doubt of the expediency of those establishments, those
Six Lessons.

colleges and universities, which cause immense revenues, arising from public property, to be expended on the education of men, who, after all, can produce, in the literary way, nothing better than writings such as those on which we have now been remarking.

The nature of the faults in these extracts may, perhaps, be made still clearer by calling your attention to the two kinds of sentences called loose and periodic. A loose sentence is one in which the sense is complete at the end of any phrase or clause in it, whereas a periodic sentence keeps the sense suspended till the end. The latter is generally preferable to the former. For instance: "We have learned to speak and write English correctly, in a few months, by means of this little book, in spite of many obstacles." This is a loose sentence; so loose that any member of it may be dropped without injuring the sense. Now let us put it in a periodic form, and you will see that you can come to a full-stop nowhere except at the end. "By means of this little book, we have, in a few months, in spite of many obstacles, learned to speak and write English correctly."

THE END.