

A. M. D. G.

A

PRACTICAL INTRODUCTION

TO

ENGLISH RHETORIC:

PRECEPTS AND EXERCISES.

1886

BY

REV. CHARLES COPPENS, S.J.,

Author of "The Art of Oratorical Composition."

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PREFACE.

AFTER devoting nearly thirty years of his life to the sacred cause of education, the author of this volume has been requested by many of his friends to arrange for publication the notes on Rhetoric and Poetry which he had gradually accumulated. These consisted partly of precepts carefully selected from the works of the best critics, ancient and modern, partly of choice models gathered from the works of the most distinguished writers, to which were added the results of his own observation and experience.

He began his task by publishing, last year, *The Art of Oratorical Composition*, for the benefit of those who aim at success in public speaking. Encouraged by the readiness with which that treatise has already been adopted in many leading colleges, and urged by his superiors and others to undertake a work of still wider usefulness, he has now written this *Practical Introduction to English Rhetoric* as a general text-book on Composition for the use of Colleges and Academies.

He rests his claims to the patronage of such institutions on the following points:

1. The work is so comprehensive as to embrace all the precepts of Rhetoric usually explained to the pupils of academies. In conjunction with *The Art of Oratori-*

cal Composition it contains the entire course of Rhetoric as studied in colleges and universities.

2. It is very practical, as will appear from even a cursory glance at the numerous exercises suggested in its pages. In the first part of the work many matters are explained and exercises suggested, which the teacher may utilize for the improvement of even young children in the lowest classes.

3. It contains a copious collection of choice quotations in prose and verse, to serve as models for the imitation of pupils. But it does not contain long lists of faulty sentences, etc., because the author thinks that students, in their daily exercises, supply the professor with a sufficient amount of such matter for criticism.

4. Lastly, the work pretends to do what many textbooks on Rhetoric neglect, and what is really the most important task of all—namely, to educate the heart as well as the head of the student; or, as Southey expresses it, “to throw his affections aright”: to guide the steps of the young through the pleasant paths of literature, without exposing them to the danger of losing what is far more precious than all the literature of the world—the purity of their Faith and the innocence of their hearts.

The treatise on “Versification” which forms part of this work is from the able pen of Rev. Eugene H. Brady, S.J., of St. Xavier College, Cincinnati, O. It is highly appreciated by the author of this volume; and he does not doubt that it will prove most acceptable to those for whose benefit it is now published.

ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY, April 13, 1886.

INTRODUCTORY.

1. The foundation of all literary excellence is **common sense**.

“Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons,”

says Horace. His translator, Francis, applies this rule to Poetry,

“Good sense, the fountain of the Muse’s art”

but it holds for all kinds of composition. Now, one of the first dictates of common sense is that an exercise be **not above the power of the writer**. The same critic remarks:

“Examine well, ye writers, weigh with care
What suits your genius, what your strength will bear.
To him who shall his task with judgment choose
Nor words nor method shall their aid refuse.”

School-exercises should therefore be carefully adapted to the capacity of the pupils. A boy may be taught to compose a natural and interesting narration of an excursion, a favorite game, a festive celebration, a distressing accident, etc.; but he is as yet incapable of handling intricate or abstract subjects. He will only write nonsense and acquire a faulty taste and style, if his first theme is the descriptive of an ancient or modern battle, an essay on ‘The spirit of progress,’ or even on ‘The Declaration of Independence.’

2. The first requisite for success in any composition is that the writer have **clear and correct ideas** on the matter

to be treated. Therefore, before speaking of style or the expression of thought, we shall premise a few exercises on the acquisition of thought. Children acquire knowledge readily and naturally by observing what is presented to their senses. We shall follow nature's guidance, and begin with such exercises as will promote or direct this habit of observation, as a preparation for original composition.

BOOK I.

THE ELEMENTS OF COMPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

OBJECT-LESSONS.

3. **Object-Lessons** are exercises on objects that fall under the senses. In these lessons children are trained to notice such objects with care, to observe their parts, their qualities, their actions; the sources whence they come, the means by which they may be obtained, the uses to which they may be applied, and so forth.

4. The **chief advantages** derived from object-lessons are :

1. They cultivate habits of attention ;
2. They lead to greater distinctness of perception ;
3. They store the mind with useful knowledge ;
4. They cultivate a taste for what is real ;
5. They develop the habit of tracing effects to their causes, and following out causes to their effects ;
6. They make the child acquainted with numerous words, not learned at random and vaguely understood, but exactly suited to the clear ideas thus acquired ;
7. The spelling of those same words can easily be learned in connection with the objects studied.

8. The exercises may be so conducted as to introduce various portions of grammar; for instance, the distinctions between nouns, adjectives, verbs; proper and common nouns; gender, number, and case; etc.
9. They afford the teacher opportunities to introduce, in a natural and interesting way, information concerning plants, animals, countries, nations, historical facts; above all, moral and religious maxims and principles, and to point out the evident marks in all things of the wisdom and love of the Creator.
10. They may easily be directed to the cultivation of good taste.

ARTICLE I. NAMES OF OBJECTS.

5. The **name** of anything which exists or of which we have any notion is a noun or substantive.
6. **1st Exercise.**—Write the names of all the objects you notice in this class-room, in the school-yard, in a dining-room, in a garden, in the church, at a picnic, at a funeral, in a sick-room, at a college exhibition, etc., etc.
7. **2d Exercise.**—Point out the agreeable objects collected by Goldsmith to describe a happy village:

"Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the laboring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth where every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topped the neighboring hill!"

8. **3d Exercise.**—Point out separately the gloomy and the pleasing objects in the following lines of the same poem, "The Deserted Village":

"Amid thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a village stints the smiling plain.
No more the glassy brook reflects the day,
But choked with sedges works its weary way;
Along the glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;
And trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away thy children leave the land."

9. **4th Exercise.**—Mention the objects peculiar to morning, to noon, to evening, to night, to winter, to summer, to spring, to autumn, a graveyard, a Sunday, a solemn feast, etc.

Example of an evening scene.

"Or when the plowman leaves the task of day,
And trudging homeward whistles on the way;
When the big-uddered cows with patience stand,
Waiting the strokings of the damsel's hand.
No warbling cheers the wood: the feathered choir,
To court kind slumbers, to the sprays retire,
Where no rude gale disturbs the sleeping trees,
No aspen leaves confess the gentlest breeze.
Engaged in thought, to Neptune's bounds I stray,
To take my farewell of the parting day;
Far in the deep the sun his glory hides,
A streak of gold the sea and sky divides;
The purple clouds their amber linings show,
And edged with flame rolls every wave below:
Here pensive I behold the fading light,
And o'er the distant billows lose my sight."—Gay.

It must be remembered that object-lessons properly apply to such objects only as are actually presented to the senses of the learners. The exercises here set down enlarge this field, so as to include other objects not actually observed, but known to exist under given circumstances. Great fidelity in describing things as they really are is earnestly recommended: exactness is one of the chief qualities of good writing.

ARTICLE II. PARTS OF OBJECTS.

10. **Exercise.**—Examine with care and mention the different parts of the following objects: A pear, a rose, a cherry-tree, a desk, a stove, a furnace, a carriage, a book, a newspaper, a bookcase, a map, an engine, etc. This exercise is treated in detail and with great variety of illustration in many books on Object-Lessons; its main purpose is the promotion of close observation in the learner. It will be sufficient to add here a few **examples**.

An apple has stem, peel, pulp, juice, veins, eye, dimples, core, seeds, seed-case.

A pocket-knife has handle, pivot, blade.

The handle has rivets, frame, heel, sides, back, spring, grooves, plate.

The blade has edge, point, back, notch, sides, maker's name.

ARTICLE III. QUALITIES OF OBJECTS.

A **quality** of an object is expressed by an adjective; as 'new,' 'old,' 'gentle,' etc.

11. **1st Exercise.**—Write the names of the objects in this room, and add to each name a suitable adjective; as, 'a new chair,' 'a square table,' 'a hot stove,' 'a gentle voice,' 'a harsh tone,' etc.

12. **2d Exercise.**—Point out the adjectives occurring in the verses quoted in Nos. 7, 8, 9, distinguishing those that make the objects more pleasing from those that produce the opposite effect.

13. **3d Exercise.**—Mention all the adjectives you know which denote color, figure, size, place, time.

Example of size: Large, big, great, voluminous, bulky, ample, capacious, huge, immense, enormous, vast, monstrous, gigantic, giant-like, colossal, Cyclopean, infinite, boundless; middling, mediocre, moderate, ordinary, average; little, small, minute, diminutive, inconsiderable, tiny, puny, petty, dwarfed, dwarfish, stunted, Liliputian.

ARTICLE IV. ACTIONS DONE BY OR TO OBJECTS.

An **action** done by a person or thing is expressed by an active verb; as, 'to run,' 'to read,' 'to honor,' 'to love,' etc. An action suffered by a person or object is expressed by a passive verb; as, 'to be seen,' 'to be loved,' 'to be rebuked,' etc.

14. **Exercise.**—Mention various actions which can be done by or to flame, rain, air, steam; the eyes, hands, feet, tongue; by or to birds, fishes, paper, pen, ink, etc.

15. **Example** of actions done by and to water ("The Cataract of Lodore"):

"The Cataract strong
Then plunges along,
Striking and raging
As if a war waging
Its caverns and rocks among;
Rising and leaping,
Sinking and creeping,
Swelling and sweeping,

Showering and springing,
Flying and flinging,
Writhing and ringing,
Eddying and whisking,
Spouting and frisking,
Turning and twisting
Around and around
With endless rebound;

And pouring and roaring,	And working and jerking,
And waving and raving,	And guggling and struggling,
And tossing and crossing,	And curling and whirling,
And flowing and going,	And purling and twirling,
And running and stunning,	And thumping and plumping,
And foaming and roaming,	And bumping and jumping,
And dinning and spinning,	And dashing and flashing,
And dropping and hopping,	And splashing and clashing,"
	Etc.

ARTICLE V. USES OF OBJECTS.

16. **1st Exercise.**—Mention the uses of every article to be seen in a school-room, a parlor, a kitchen, a cloak-room, a dining-room, a church, a street-car, a sitting-room.

17. **2d Exercise.**—Mention the purposes served by the various parts of a tree, a stove, an umbrella, a bridge, a wagon, a trunk, a door, an apple.

Example: The parts of a hat.

Body: To cover the sides of the head and give shape to the hat.

Brim: To protect the neck and the face from sun and rain.

Crown: To protect the top of the head.

Band: To keep the hat in shape.

Binding: To keep the edge of the brim from wearing out.

Lining: To keep the sweat from soiling the material of the hat.

Trimming: To give the hat an attractive appearance.

ARTICLE VI. COMPOSITION.

18. **1st Exercise.**—Write a connected description of a fruit, a plaything, a plant, or an article of furniture which you have carefully examined, noting: (a) What kind of a

thing it is, what it resembles, how it differs from other things; (b) What qualities it has; (c) What uses it serves; (d) Whence it comes and how it is obtained; (e) Its parts and their relations, so as to give a full and clear idea of the whole object.

19. **Example: Description of the Cocoa-nut in the *Encyclopædia Americana*:**

"The cocoa-nut is a woody fruit, of an oval shape, from three or four to six or eight inches in length, covered with a fibrous husk, and lined internally with a white, firm, and fleshy kernel. The tree (*cocos nucifera*) which produces the cocoa-nut is a kind of palm, from 40 to 60 feet high, having on its summit only leaves or branches, appearing almost like immense feathers, each 14 or 15 feet long, 3 feet broad, and winged. Of these the upper ones are erect, the middle ones horizontal, and the lower ones drooping. The trunk is straight, naked, and marked with the scars of the fallen leaves. The nuts hang from the summit of the tree in clusters of a dozen or more together. The external rind of the nuts has a smooth surface, and is of a triangular shape. This encloses an extremely fibrous substance of considerable thickness which immediately surrounds the nut. The latter has a thick and hard shell, with three holes at the base, each closed with a black membrane," etc.

20. In writing these exercises be **sure of every statement** you make. It is no shame for one to acknowledge himself ignorant of many things, but it is a shame to pretend to know that of which he is ignorant. Attention to this rule forms an upright character, besides imparting clearness to the knowledge acquired.

21. **Remark 1.**—Object-lessons may be **indefinitely multiplied** and diversified with judicious applications to Botany, Mineralogy, Geology, and other natural sciences. But care should be taken not to attach undue importance to the study of these subjects.

22. **Remark 2.**—A man's own observation is necessarily

limited to a small number of objects, and even about these he generally needs instruction from other persons. **Reading** opens up a wide field of knowledge; but in this field many wander and lose much precious time by reading what is of little or no use. Young people should accustom themselves early to seek for books that are instructive rather than trifling. They may read to advantage books of travel, books on natural history, the lives of great men, the histories of various lands. But even among such works they should be guided to select the most truthful and reliable. Works of fiction readily fill the mind with false notions of men and things; still, when judiciously selected, they may serve a useful purpose.

CHAPTER II.

OF WORDS.

23. **Language** is articulate sound expressive of thought. Children learn it from their parents and from other persons with whom they associate. But it is evident that the first man, Adam, did not learn it in this manner. How did he acquire language? He was not created a child, but a man with all his faculties fully developed; far from being a savage, he was possessed of a much higher intellect before his fall than any man has possessed since. We are not left to conjecture how **he formed a language**, since the Holy Scripture explains what happened:

“The Lord having formed out of the ground all the beasts of the earth, and all the fowls of the air, brought them to Adam to see what he would call them; for whatsoever Adam called any living creature, the same is its name. And Adam called all the beasts by their names, and all the fowls of the air, and all the cattle of the field” (Genesis ii. 19, 20).

A Christian acts very absurdly if he sets aside this teaching for idle theories, such as Dr. Blair explains in his *Rhetoric* (Lect. vi.)

24. Object-Lessons, while giving the learner ideas of a multitude of things, supply him at the same time with the words or terms by which those ideas are to be expressed. This way of learning words, in connection with the objects signified, imparts clearness to knowledge; but it cannot extend to a great variety of things. Most **words in a language** are to be acquired by reading and conversation. As

agency He has bestowed, and make our Columbia the bright exemplar for all the struggling sons of liberty around the globe!"—*Wirt*.

217. **13. Exclamation and Interrogation**, when they are used to adorn the style or move the heart; as:

"Has God rejected the beautiful in this temple of creation? . . . Who was the first painter that touched with his brush the flowers of the valley and tinged with deep azure the ocean? . . . Who was the first inspirer of music? Who was the first decorator that studded with gems the Milky Way, and spread his arch of splendor across the concave of this his temple?"—*Archbishop P. J. Ryan*.

218. **14. Allusions** hint at some fact sufficiently known, in illustration of the present subject. These, as well as **Maxims** and **Quotations**, are figures if they beautify the style; as:

"And why are these eternal gates thus lifted up? And why is this sublime spectacle revealed, if not that we may be induced to take the dove's wings and fly—fly from this earth, which the waters of bitterness and iniquity still cover, and bear the olive-branch of our reconciliation to this open ark, where alone our feet can rest?"—*Cardinal Wiseman*.

"Slowly as out of the heavens with apocalyptic splendors
Sank the city of God, in the vision of John the Apostle,
So with the cloudy walls of chrysolite, jasper, and sapphire
Sank the broad, red sun, and over its turrets uplifted
Glimmered the golden reed of the angel who measured the city."
—*Longfellow*.

219. **Exercise 1.** Collect elegant figures from the speeches of Webster, Calhoun, Clay, Burke, Pitt, Chatham, Cardinals Wiseman, Newman, Manning, Fathers Burke and Smarius; or from any selections in prose or verse—*e.g.*, from your reader or hand-book of elocution.

220. **Exercise 2.** Write an address, full of figures, to stir up indolent students or to enkindle in an audience feelings of patriotism, generosity in behalf of a disabled soldier, or any other noble sentiment.

BOOK III.

STYLE IN LITERARY COMPOSITION.

221. We have so far considered the chief elements of literary composition; we now proceed to combine these elements, and to study the more complex subject of *style*.

Style (from *stylus*, the ancient instrument for writing) is the manner in which a person expresses his thoughts and feelings by means of any of the fine arts. We speak of different styles in music, painting, architecture, etc. In literature style is the manner of expressing one's thoughts and feelings by means of language. A man's thoughts and feelings are not, in themselves, perceptible to other men. Style sets them forth in a sensible form; it gives them body and shape, beauty to please, and power to influence others. We study style with a view to increase this beauty and power in our compositions.

222. For this purpose we are to consider in so many chapters: 1. Beauty in itself; 2. Sublimity, Wit, and Humor, which are species of beauty; 3. Taste, which directs the use of these sources of pleasure; 4. Different species of style; 5. Improvement of style.

CHAPTER I.

BEAUTY.

223. **Beauty** is the power which objects have of pleasing the beholder : beautiful objects please by merely being considered ; *quæ visa placent*, says St. Thomas.

Whence comes this power of an object to please ? From the perfection or excellence of the object itself. Is, then, the beauty of an object the same as its excellence ? It is that excellence inasmuch as it is perceived, and thus made capable of giving pleasure to the beholder ; if hidden or obscured it could not please him. Beauty is "excellence perceived," or "striking excellence"—*splendor veri*, "the brightness of reality," as Plato puts it. Hence one point is evident, that nothing can be beautiful inasmuch as it is bad or imperfect : falsehood is not beautiful, sin is not beautiful, disorder is not beautiful.

224. How, then, can **works of fiction** please, since they are false ? They do not please inasmuch as they are false, but inasmuch as they are true to nature and contain beautiful characters, beautiful scenery, a beautiful plot, beautiful language, etc. But may not a vicious character be beautiful ? The description of it, done with skill and fidelity to nature, may be so, but not the character itself.

225. But does not **vice** please the vicious ? The mere beholding of vice does not please the mind, but a vice may please by gratifying a passion of the heart ; thus, doing wrong to another may please an angry man. But the beautiful pleases *by the mere fact that it is perceived*. What-

ever gratifies one of the passions pleases, and may, therefore, be mistaken for true beauty ; but it is false or only apparent beauty. True beauty pleases because its perfection is perceived and approved by the intellect.

226. We must here notice the difference between the beautiful and **the good** : A thing is good when its possession pleases ; beautiful, when its very perception gives pleasure. Thus a ragged, soiled one-hundred-dollar note may please the possessor, but not the beholder.

From our definition of the beautiful so far explained another consequence follows—namely, that those things which are most perfect in themselves are also most beautiful to those who clearly perceive them. Thus inanimate things contain, as a class, the lowest degree of perfection and are least beautiful ; vegetation rises higher, animals higher still ; man surpasses all other material beings in excellence and in beauty, because he is intelligent ; angels are higher still ; God is **the highest possible beauty** to those blessed beings that behold Him as He is. If He does not always seem so to us, it is because we know Him so little, and also because we let our lower nature obscure the light of our intellect. When, in a better world, God will stand revealed to our sight as He is, our purified souls will see in Him absolute beauty, which will make us supremely happy ; therefore that sight is called the **Beatific Vision**.

227. The fact that man is more perfect and beautiful than all lower beings is the reason why literature delights in **personification**—that is, in attributing to lower objects the actions and feelings of living and intelligent beings. Yet even **lower objects** have their beauty : that *color* is more beautiful which is better proportioned or adapted to our organ of sight ; *straight lines* and *figures* are beautiful, as suggestive of usefulness ; *curves* and *waving lines*, as combining regularity with variety. the waving line is called

the line of beauty, the *spiral* that of grace; *motion* is beautiful, as exhibiting variety and as being suggestive of life. This suggestiveness of higher beauty is founded on *associations of ideas*, and is often a source of great pleasure to the mind, even when things are beheld which are of a very inferior nature; thus the violet is suggestive of modesty, the lily of purity, etc.

228. It is certain that unity, variety, proportion, design, life, etc., are all sources of pleasure to the beholder. Some critics are of opinion that in all beauty there is **one underlying principle**. One class of writers maintain that this principle is the blending of *unity with variety*, others that the one principle is *order with due proportion*, or suitability to the faculties of the beholder. It is not clear that all beauty can be traced to one such principle; but it is certain that *the very perfection of an object*, inasmuch as it is properly considered, whether in itself or in its associations, is the real source of the pleasure produced.

229. We shall next consider **artistic beauty**. The mere reproduction by human skill of some natural beauty is doubly pleasing: first, on account of the natural beauty reproduced, and, secondly, on account of the intellectual power displayed by men in its reproduction. Thus a painted bunch of grapes which almost deceives the eye is more admired than the bunch which nature produced. And though photography gives us a more perfect likeness than drawing can do, still the latter is more admired as being more the effect of human skill and intellect. But while all correct imitation is beautiful because skilful and intellectual, still mere imitation of nature is only the lowest beauty of art. Artistic skill of a higher kind aims at the expression of more than natural beauty—namely, *ideal beauty*.

230. Now, **ideal beauty** is that higher conception of

beautiful things which the artist forms to himself by removing from them all such imperfections as would hinder the full appreciation of them, and by associating with them suggestions of greater perfection than the objects themselves contain.

231. The presentation of ideal beauty is the object of all higher art, of the **fine arts** as such. The ancients aimed at this when their painters and sculptors selected for their subjects the ideal forms of Apollo, Hercules, etc., idealizing human perfections to represent their gods and demigods. Thus, too, Homer is not satisfied with the presentation of human heroes as they really existed, but he portrayed them as the mind loves to contemplate them; and, rising even higher, he presents to us a panorama of superior ideal beings, exhibiting far more power of intellect and will than it is natural for man to possess. Thus he gives us his gods and goddesses, the most wonderful creations of the pagan mind. In fact, the tendency of all true art has ever been upward into the region of religious thought. Not until **Christianity** came to reveal to us a far higher perfection did art produce its noblest creations. The spirits, good and bad, described by Milton in his "Paradise Lost" are grander creations than Homer's; but especially the Saviour of the world, dying upon the cross or reclining upon the straw of the manger, and by His side the purest and fairest of mere created beings, the Blessed Virgin Mother, are subjects for the pencil and the pen which modern artists and poets have fully appreciated. Hence Christian art is far more elevated in its ideals than pagan art could possibly have been.

CHAPTER II.

SUBLIMITY, WIT, AND HUMOR.

232. **Sublimity, Wit, and Humor** give pleasure to the mind by the very fact that they are perceived. They come, therefore, under the definition of beauty, of which they are species. Still, sometimes the term beauty is taken in a narrower meaning, as distinguished from them by certain peculiarities of these three species. We shall next consider those peculiarities.

ARTICLE I. SUBLIMITY.

233. **Sublimity** is that species of the beautiful which imparts pleasure of a peculiarly elevated nature. As beauty is *striking perfection*, so sublimity is *striking greatness*, which is a special kind of perfection. It produces in the beholder a sort of internal elevation and expansion, raises the mind above its ordinary state, and fills it with a degree of astonishment which it cannot well express. The emotion is delightful but serious; when greatest it awes the mind.

The **sources of the sublime** are various—some physical, others moral.

234. 1. The **physical** are chiefly :

- (a) *Boundless views*, in the contemplation of which the mind is lost.
- (b) The exhibition of *vast power* or strength, not accompanied by any apprehension of danger to ourselves.

The ocean combines to a remarkable extent these two sources of the sublime :

“ 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 ; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man’s ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.”

—Byron.

(c) *Unusual magnificence*, as in Byron’s lines on St. Peter’s at Rome :

“ But lo ! the dome—the vast and wondrous dome,
To which Diana’s marvel was a cell—
Christ’s mighty shrine above his martyrs’ tomb !
I have beheld the Ephesian miracle—
Its columns strew the wilderness, and dwell
The hyena and the jackal in their shade ;
I have beheld Sophia’s bright roofs swell
Their glittering mass i’ the sun, and have survey’d
Its sanctuary the while th’ usurping Moslem pray’d ;

“ But thou, of temples old, or altars new,
Standest alone, with nothing like to thee :
Worthiest of God, the holy and the true,
Since Sion’s desolation, when that He
Forsook his former city, what could be
Of earthly structures, in His honor piled,
Of a sublimer aspect ? Majesty,
Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty, all are aisled
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.”—*Id.*

(d) *Loud and deep sounds*, spreading far and wide, as that of the thunder.

(e) *Solemn and awful objects*, bordering on the terrible, and whatever makes us sensible of our littleness

compared to the grandeur around us, as solitude, deep silence, obscurity, mystery.

We have said that *order* is an element of beauty in its usual acceptation; but *disorder* is not unfavorable to the sublime—not disorder in itself, but in connection with grandeur, which it makes incomprehensible to the human mind. The same holds of obscurity, mysteriousness, etc.

235. 2. **Moral sublimity** arises from the exhibition of such power of the mind and will as produces astonishment in the beholder. When two of the Horatii were slain, and their father heard that his third son had fled, he was indignant; and when asked what the youth should have done, "He should have died," he said. The history of the Christian martyrs is full of such examples; but grander than all is the scene on Calvary, when nature trembled at the crimes of men, and the Victim of all this wickedness, the Son of God Himself, opened His lips, not to complain, but to beg pardon for the perpetrators of the deicide: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

236. The **style** in which the sublime is to be expressed is either of the greatest simplicity or of the highest magnificence. We have seen specimens of magnificence in Byron; the style of Holy Writ, which contains the loftiest examples of the sublime, is usually of the simplest kind:

"In the beginning God created heaven and earth. And the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God moved over the waters. And God said: Be light made. And light was made."—*Gen. i. 1-4.*

"The sublime," says Lacordaire, "is elevation, profundity, and simplicity, blended in a single trait." (See Lacordaire's *Jesus Christ*, p. 29.)

237. Other examples from Holy Writ:

"In the horror of A VISION by night, when deep sleep is wont to

hold men, fear seized upon me, and trembling, and all my bones were affrighted: and when a spirit passed before me, the hair of my flesh stood up. There stood one whose countenance I knew not, an image before my eyes, and I heard the voice as it were of a gentle wind: Shall man be justified in comparison of God, or shall a man be more pure than his maker? Behold, they that serve Him are not steadfast, and in His angels He found wickedness: how much more shall they that dwell in houses of clay, who have an earthly foundation, be consumed as with the moth?"—*Job iv. 13-19.*

"Wilt Thou give strength to THE HORSE or clothe his neck with neighing? Wilt Thou lift him up like the locusts: the glory of his nostrils is terror. He breaketh up the earth with his hoof, he pranceth boldly, he goeth forward to meet armed men. He despiseth fear, he turneth not his back to the sword. Above him shall the quiver rattle, the spear and shield shall glitter. Chafing and raging he swalloweth the ground: neither doth he make account when the noise of the trumpet soundeth. When he heareth the trumpet he saith: Ha, ha! he smelleth the battle afar off, the encouraging of the captains, and the shouting of the army."—*Job xxxix. 19-25.*

"God hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and weighed the heavens with His palm; He hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance."—*Isaias xl. 12.*

The following **passages** are full of sublime thoughts and images: the fifteenth chapter of Exodus, which contains the Canticle of Moses, sung by the Jews after their miraculous crossing of the sea; Psalm ciii.; the forty-third chapter of Ecclesiasticus; the thirty-eighth of Job.

238. **Exercise.**—Point out the beautiful and the sublime images accumulated in the following poem, "The Fairest Fair":

"Mountains, that upwards to the clouds arise,
Odorous with thyme, whereon the wild bees linger
Jewelled with flowers of a thousand dyes—
Their petals tinted by no mortal finger;

How solemn in their gray-worn age they stand,
Hills piled on hills in silent majesty !
Lofty and strong, and beautiful, and grand :
All this and more is my Beloved to me.

" Come forth into the woods—in yonder valley,
Where rippling waters murmur through the glade ;
There, 'neath the rustling boughs of some green alley,
We'll watch the golden light and quivering shade :
Or couched on mossy banks we'll lie and listen
To song-birds pouring forth their vernal glee.
Wave on, ye woods ; ye fairy fountains glisten :
But more, far more, is my Beloved to me.

" Know ye the land where fragrant winds awaken
In spicy forests hidden from the eye ;
Where richest perfumes from the boughs are shaken,
And flowers unnoticed bloom, and blush, and die ?
Sweet is the eternal spring that there reposes
On wondrous isles that gem the sunny sea,
And sweet the gales that breathe o'er beds of roses :
But sweeter far is my Beloved to me.

" The roaring torrents from the ice-cliffs leaping—
I see them foaming down the mountain-side ;
Through the green dells and valleys onward sweeping,
They fill the hollows with their mighty tide :
Their voice is as the voice of many waters ;
Onward they rush, exulting to be free ;
But ah ! their thunder fails, their music falters :
Far more than this is my Beloved to me.

" A gentler sound wakes in the hush of even,
The whisper of a light and cooling breeze ;
It stirs when twilight shades are in the heaven,
And bows the tufted foliage of the trees ;
It fans my cheek ; its music softly stealing
Speaks to my heart in loving mystery.
Ah ! gentle breeze, full well thou art revealing
The joy that my Belovèd is to me.

" Night comes at last, in mystic shadows folding
The nodding forest and the verdant lawn,
Till the day breaks, and nature starts, beholding
The golden chariot of the coming dawn :
Then on each bough the feathered chanter, waking,
Pour forth their music over bush and tree.
Cease, cease your songs, ye birds ; my heart-strings
breaking
Lack words to say what JESUS is to me.

" Yea, all the fairest forms that Nature scatters,
And all melodious sounds that greet the ear ;
The murmuring music of the running waters,
The golden harvest-fields that crown the year,
The crimson morn, the calm and dewy even,
The tranquil moonlight on the slumbering sea—
All are but shadows, forms of beauty given
To tell what my Belovèd is to me."

—*Augusta Theodosia Drane.*

ARTICLE II. WIT.

239. **Wit** causes pleasure by a peculiar quickness in perceiving, and felicity in expressing, such hidden relations of things as amuse the hearers. Take this example : " You must either be a knave or a fool," said two lawyers to an Irishman sitting between them. " No ; I am between both," was the prompt reply. Here is a relation which would not have struck one person in a thousand. To be *truc wit*, however, it is necessary that, as soon as the relation is pointed out, the hearers or readers understand it. Besides, the unexpected thought must come apparently unsought, else no peculiar quickness of conception is noticed. When a person evidently tries to be witty he disgusts instead of pleasing.

240. A **pun** is a witticism consisting in a play on words. Hancock, encouraging those who had signed the Declara-

tion of Independence to mutual fidelity, remarked: "We must all hang together." "Yes," said Franklin, "or we shall all hang separately." An occasional pun, when truly witty, undoubtedly gives pleasure. But an habitual punster, like every professed wit, is universally pronounced a bore. And with reason: first, such persons evidently try to be witty; secondly, they often fail; thirdly, they acquire a habit of trifling, and will often spoil a serious conversation for a wretched pun; fourthly, they are often sarcastic or otherwise offensive.

241. But wit, when united with common sense, kindness of heart, and beauty of thought, is, in its own place, not only an innocent charm of social intercourse, but also a **powerful weapon** in the arena of oratorical contests.

It appears to be a kind dispensation of Providence that the seasoning of wit and humor is often copiously granted to those whose homely fare stands most in need of such condiments to make life more supportable.

ARTICLE III. HUMOR.

242. **Humor** is not an elevated species of beauty, but it is more valuable than wit; it fills many a bright page, especially in English literature. One great **advantage** of humor is that it is always good-natured, and thus contributes directly to diffuse happiness all around. Lamb, Hood, Thackeray, and Dickens, in England; Irving, Lowell, Holmes, and Saxe, in the United States, have deserved much credit for their genial productions.

243. Humor is that species of beauty which delights by a good-natured exhibition of **incongruities**; it addresses itself to our perception of the ludicrous. Some persons appear to be almost destitute of this perception; others are overpowered by it beyond the bounds of reason. The

incongruity itself is not beautiful, but the good-natured exposition of it by the common sense of the humorist.

244. Humor implies:

1. In the object, *incongruity*—i.e., want of proportion, as big words and bad grammar. A humorist has a peculiar talent for perceiving and expressing such ludicrous things.

2. In the effect, *surprise* at finding such incongruity where it was not expected: a thing is not ludicrous if it is just what could be expected.

3. In the humorist, strong common sense and *good nature*—i.e., kindness, even towards the persons ridiculed.

245. In order to be truly pleasing, humor requires strict regard to the laws of **decorum**: it must never attempt to ridicule the unfortunate, the truly great and wise, nor be employed on subjects held sacred by the hearers.

"It is a beautiful thing to observe the **BOUNDARIES** which nature has affixed to the ridiculous, and to notice how soon it is swallowed up by the more illustrious feelings of our minds. Where is the heart so hard that could bear to see the awkward resources and contrivances of the poor turned into ridicule? Who could laugh at the fractured, ruined body of a soldier? Who is so wicked as to amuse himself with the infirmities of extreme old age? or to find subject for humor in the weakness of a perishing, dissolving body? Who is there that does not feel himself disposed to overlook the little peculiarities of the truly great and wise, and to throw a veil over that ridicule which they have redeemed by the magnitude of their talents and the splendor of their virtues? Who ever thinks of turning into ridicule our great and ardent hopes of a world to come? Whenever the man of humor meddles with these things, he is astonished to find that in all the great feelings of their nature the mass of mankind always act and think aright, that they are ready enough to laugh, but that they are quite as ready to drive away with indignation and contempt the light fool who comes, with the feather of wit, to crumble the bulwarks of truth and to beat down the Temples of God!"—*Sydney Smith*.

246. The description of a **humorous character** supposes in its subject a blending of strikingly incongruous traits, as shrewdness with apparent simplicity in Sam Weller. Every act and word must accord with the character, and frequently remind us of its incongruous elements, as in Shakspeare's Falstaff.

CHAPTER III.

TASTE.

247. **Taste** is the power of perceiving and properly appreciating the beauties of nature and of art. Some call it the *Æsthetic faculty*; but it is no special faculty at all: it is an exercise of the intellect. As such it is common to all men, though in different degrees of perfection. This difference is due partly to variety of natural powers, and partly to difference of education and of early associations.

248. Good taste should be characterized by two qualities, **delicacy** and **correctness**. The former, when highly developed, enables it to distinguish the nicest shades and varieties of beauty, in the same manner as some persons have so delicate a palate as to distinguish readily the flavor of any viand. The latter quality—correctness—enables it to discern accurately what is true from what is false beauty.

249. Of the two characteristics, correctness ought to be chiefly taught, both because it is more capable of being developed and because the want of it is more offensive. If correctness be carefully taught by precepts and examples, delicacy will follow of itself. The direct object of rhetorical rules is to accustom the student to appreciate true and reject false beauty. The difference between these two is that **true beauty** pleases, not only at first sight, but also after the closest scrutiny, and receives the full approbation of man's highest faculty—the intellect; while **false beauty** cannot bear to be closely examined without displaying a

want of good sense, of naturalness, delicacy, appropriateness, etc.

250. **The precepts of rhetoric** are not arbitrary laws, but the conclusions which the greatest thinkers have drawn from a careful study of literature. Aristotle's mind, the keenest, perhaps, that ever existed, examined the productions of the greatest geniuses that had preceded him, and drew a clear line between true and false beauty. Cicero, Horace, Quintilian, and others continued his labors, and subsequent ages have accepted most of their decisions, because these were found to be conformable to human reason. Still later critics have added their share to this treasury of common sense.

251. **Human reason** itself is the judge of beauty. Now, in matters of taste human reason speaks through the great critics and rhetoricians who have been recognized for ages as the judges of literature. Their unanimous verdict is practically the utterance of mankind itself. This is the **standard of taste**: what it approves is true beauty, what it condemns is false beauty. From time to time some eccentric genius will appear to set at naught all the rules of rhetoricians, imagining that his conceited mind is the great luminary of the world. His brilliant imagination may attract to him a number of admiring followers. Carlyle, in England, was a man of this character, but his departures from the laws of taste were too glaring to mislead many. Other geniuses of less offensive eccentricities have done more real harm to good taste by blending minor faults with superior beauties. It is the part of criticism to point out in the works of even the greatest geniuses any admixture of false beauty. It blames many long speeches and other extravagances in Homer; a want of spirit in some passages of Virgil; excessive self-praise and labored periods in Cicero; a considerable amount of coarse language, wan-

ton irregularities, ill-placed puns, etc., in Shakspeare. In fact, this last author, with all his uncommon beauties, is anything but a safe model on which to fashion the taste of young writers.

252. May there be, then, no **varieties in good taste**? There may be in different men a preference for different kinds of true beauty, and still all these may have good taste. One loves more what is bold or grand, another what is gentle and modest; one admires more the ideal, another the real; one loves sentiment and imagination, another sober sense. But if one person pronounces an object beautiful and another not beautiful, under the same circumstances, one or the other is clearly mistaken. In this sense it is not true that there is *no disputing about taste*. Varieties of taste are a kind dispensation of Providence that diversifies the aspect of human society as it diversifies the flowers of the field.

253. We add a few **general rules regarding taste** which apply to all kinds of composition.

Rule 1.—Let **good sense** pervade every literary production. This rule applies to poetry as well as to prose, to pleasantries as well as to philosophy and religion. But it is often **violated** by two kinds of writers: first, by those whose imagination and feelings are too lively to be controlled by their judgment, as are many orators, poets, and novelists; and, secondly, by some conceited philosophers and literati who put their individual views above the wisdom of all the world besides. Such are, for instance, the **Transcendentalists**, as they are called, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Matthew Arnold, and others, who extol culture and delicacy of taste above common sense.

254. Such, too, are the members of what is called "the **Satanic School**." Southey, in the preface to his "Vision of Judgment," was the first to use this degrading appella-

CHAPTER IV.

VARIETIES OF STYLE.

257. **Literary style** is the manner in which a person expresses his thoughts and feelings by means of language. It is not a person's language merely. The expression of the thought and feelings is intimately connected with the conception of them. Hence style depends on our conceptions as well as on our language. In fact, a work may be translated from one language into another, and the chief peculiarities of its style remain the same.

ARTICLE I. SOURCES OF VARIETY IN STYLE.

258. To understand the **sources of variety in style**, consider the different ways in which the same thought or feeling may be conceived by the mind. Thus suppose I become convinced that the pleasures of this world cannot satisfy the human heart. I may reach this conviction intellectually, by considering that our hearts long for infinite and lasting happiness, and that this world is necessarily finite and of short duration. I may express this reasoning in abstract language, and my style will be **philosophical**.

259. But in conceiving and expressing the same conviction I may be powerfully assisted by my imagination, and I may thus describe the fleeting show of this world's delights under various images, in a **figurative** and **descriptive** style, as is done in the fifth chapter of the Book of Wisdom :

" All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on,

" And as a ship that passeth through the waves ; whereof when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found, nor the path of its keel in the waters :

" Or as when a bird flieth through the air, of the passage of which no mark can be found, but only the sound of the wings beating the light air, and parting it by the force of her flight ; she moved her wings, and hath flown through, and there is no mark found afterwards of her way :

" Or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known .

" So we also being born, forthwith ceased to be ; and have been able to show no mark of virtue ; but are consumed in our wickedness."

260. While this brief passage is descriptive, the whole fifth chapter develops the same thought in a **narrative** style, bordering on the **dramatic**. It will be readily perceived that the chapter needs only metre to give it the **poetic** style. Thus language and mode of thought combine to shape the style of any composition.

261. " Wolsey's Soliloquy " presents the same thought as the Book of Wisdom, and expresses it in poetic language :

" This is the state of man : to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope ; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him :
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost ;
And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory ;
But far beyond my depth : my high-blown pride
At length broke under me, and now has left me,
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream, that must for ever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye ;
I feel my heart new-opened."—*Shakspeare*.

262. Horace deplores the shortness of earthly joys in the **lyric** style. See the fourteenth ode of his second book :

" Swift fly the rolling years, my friend !
Nor can your anxious prayers extend
The fleeting joys of youth ;
The trembling hand, the wrinkled cheek,
Too plainly life's decay bespeak
With sad but silent truth.

The purple vineyard's luscious stores,
Secured by trebly-bolted doors,
Excite in vain your care :
Soon shall the rich and sparkling hoard
Flow largely o'er the festive board
Of your unsparing heir."—*Ralph Bernal*.

263. When thoughts are fully developed, as in the fifth chapter of Wisdom, just quoted, we have the **diffuse** style; when briefly expressed, the **concise**. Each of these is beautiful in its proper place (see Nos. 71, 72).

If an author grasps his subject vigorously and expresses it forcibly, his style is said to be **nervous** and strong; this is always a desirable quality, while its opposite, **feebleness**, is always a defect.

The **vehement** style is characterized by a glowing ardor, pouring out strong feelings with the rapidity and fulness of a torrent, as in most speeches of Demosthenes; it adds strong feeling to strong thought.

264. A chief source of difference in style, among various persons who write on the same subjects, is the difference of their **characters**. A firm character will produce a manly style, a weak, vacillating character a confused style; a generous, open character is favorable to clearness, richness, beauty of expression, while narrow-minded and deceitful dispositions will give a very different coloring to the thought. Whatever improves a person's character improves

his style. The social virtues are the sources of charming ornaments to all literature.

ARTICLE II. ORNAMENT OF STYLE.

265. One of the principal sources of variety in style consists in the **ornament** used to adorn the thought and the expression, in tropes, figures of thought, figures of diction, and harmonious constructions. In this respect Blair appropriately distinguishes five kinds of style, according to five degrees of ornament.

266. 1. The **dry style** rejects all ornament; It is proper in text-books on grammar, arithmetic, and any exact science, in legal documents, in business transactions, etc. The language of an educated man should always be correct and perspicuous, exhibiting great purity, propriety, and precision; but what is merely ornamental would, in the writings just mentioned, savor of affectation.

267. 2. The **plain style** uses ornament sparingly. Whatever subject admits of any play of the imagination or the emotions affords room for the ornaments of composition. All such productions are properly styled **literature**, and no others. Now, among these the plain style is appropriate to such as are either too exact to allow the imagination any great indulgence or too familiar or insignificant to justify much painstaking. Plain facts are best expressed in plain language, in proper words, with refined feeling, and with an occasional admixture of modest ornament. Dean Swift, even on important subjects, always wrote in the plain style, which best suited his earnest character. Clearness, strength, and a blunt honesty are his peculiar qualities.

268. 3. The **neat style** uses ornament more freely, but not copiously; and its ornament is ever modest, never strikingly brilliant or bold. It is a style equally capable of manly beauty and the most delicate refinement. To this

middle region belongs the bulk of good literature. Subjects of any elevation should be treated with neatness as a rule; plainness is an exception already explained; while the highest ornaments should be reserved for subjects and occasions of unusual dignity or excellence.

Washington Irving's prose works and Goldsmith's poems exhibit the perfection of the neat style.

269. 4. The **elegant style** possesses all the virtues of ornament without any of its defects. The noblest subjects, especially the loftiest portions of such subjects, call for the highest refinement and magnificence that human thought and human language can bestow. The solemn panegyrical oration, the highest efforts of eloquence at the bar, in the pulpit, and in the popular assembly; the most important events narrated in dignified histories, real or fictitious; the description of the grandest scenes in nature; the most pathetic emotions poured out in lyric verse—present proper occasions for elegance of style.

270. Most great historians, philosophers, orators, novelists, and essayists compose **habitually in the neat style**, being more taken up with the matter treated than with the beauty of the expression: such are Lingard, Blair, Pitt, Chatham, Calhoun, Dickens, Cooper; Archbishop Spalding, Cardinals Newman and Manning, Brownson, and such poets as Pope, Longfellow, and Scott, and many other writers of didactic and ballad poetry. All these, however, rise to the elegant style when the occasion requires. Others aim more habitually at elegant language, such as Prescott, Father Faber, Edmund Burke, Webster, Irving, Cardinal Wiseman, Lowell; and in poetry Shakspeare, Milton, Willis, Moore, Byron, Young, etc.

271. Compare the following three descriptions of morning, noticing how they rise in ornament above one another:

" See, the day begins to break
And the light shoots like a streak
Of subtile fire; the wind blows cold,
While the morning doth unfold;
Now the birds begin to rouse,
And the squirrel from the boughs
Leaps to get him nuts and fruit;
The early lark, that erst was mute,
Carols to the rising day
Many a note and many a lay."—*Fletcher*.

" Lo! here the gentle lark, weary of rest,
From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,
And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast
The sun ariseth in his majesty;
Who doth the world so gloriously behold,
The cedar-tops and hills seem burnish'd gold."
—*Shakspeare*.

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy."
—*Shakspeare*.

272. 5. The **florid style** is marked by an excess of ornament, so that the reader is distracted from the matter treated and forced to notice how the writer labors to adorn his composition. This excess is always objectionable, but especially in serious works. Still, it may be combined with considerable excellences, and thus leave the composition valuable, though not perfect. This is the case with Harvey's *Meditations among the Tombs* and Rev. Xavier McLeod's *Devotion to the Blessed Virgin in North America*. Both these works are well suited to develop a taste for ornament in prose composition.

CHAPTER V.

IMPROVEMENT OF STYLE.

ARTICLE I. PRACTICAL RULES FOR STYLE.

273. There are certain rules regarding style that should be observed by all writers on all subjects. The chief are these :

1. The **Rule of Clearness**.—Write so that no one can help seeing your exact meaning at the first glance. This is the most important rule of all. To write with clearness the great means is to have clear ideas yourself ; else how can you convey them to others ? Study your subject diligently before you write.

274. 2. The **Rule of Strength**.—Make your thoughts impressive by presenting them strikingly, with proper ornaments and feelings. A languid, feeble style is worthless. Still, distinguish strength from vehemence, as explained above (No. 263).

275. 3. The **Rule of Simplicity**.—The word *simplicity* has many meanings : such as the absence of many parts, as in a simple story ; the absence of much ornament, as in the dry and the plain style ; the absence of refinement, as in the simple manners of rustics ; the absence of shrewdness or intelligence, as in the simplicity of the credulous. Our rule means, write with *naturalness*, so as to avoid all appearance of labor. Labor there must be in writing ; but the labor should not be noticed by the reader. **Virgil** and **Gibbon** labored at their productions with uncommon industry, striving to express every thought to the best advantage.

style is to write with naturalness

tage. Virgil's lines flow smoothly and as naturally as the warbling of a bird ; Gibbon's sentences are evidently labored, and often harsh and strained.

276. A simple style often appears so **artless** that a beginner imagines nothing is easier than to imitate it ; it is the perfection of art to reach all its purposes without making itself known. Such is the style in the *Sketch-Book* of Washington Irving, many essays of Addison, the novels of Conscience, Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales*, the *Stories for Children* of Canon Schmid, the fables of Æsop, of Phædrus, of La Fontaine, Rosa Mulholland's *Robinson Crusoe*. The ancients had more of this apparent artlessness than the moderns : Herodotus, Theocritus, Anacreon, Homer, Virgil, and Ovid abound in it. There is, however, in many recent writers, a return to the simplicity of classic taste.

277. When this simplicity assumes the character of child-like innocence it is called by the French term *naïveté*, of which Xenophon furnishes a pleasing example in his narrative of Cyrus' conversation at the court of Astyages.

278. A slight **appearance of carelessness** in the midst of refinement is not unpleasant in proper season, as in familiar letters ; it resembles the manners of a truly refined gentleman among his intimate friends. But young people cannot let themselves down to it with safety. An appearance of carelessness is admired in those only who have established a name for superiority of mind.

279. 4. The **Rule of Appropriateness** is the most difficult of all to observe, and is necessary on all occasions. It requires that we adapt our style to our subject, to our hearers or readers, to our own talent and our age, and to circumstances of place, time, etc. "He is truly eloquent," says Cicero, "who can express what is simple plainly, what is great nobly, and what is ordinary with decency and mo-

deration"—*Is est eloquens qui et humilia subtiliter, et magna graviter, et mediocria temperate potest dicere*" (Or., 29). Dr. Johnson, though a writer of great eminence, could not adapt his style to his theme, and it was wittily said of him that if he made little fishes talk he would make them speak like whales. **Excess of ornament** is a violation of appropriateness. It is bad taste, in language as in dress, to be ever displaying fineries.

280. Still, this excess is more easily **excused in the young**, whose imaginations are more developed than their judgments. Cicero is not displeased with the youth whose compositions are rather flowery :

"I wish to see exuberance in the youthful mind," he says; "for as it is easier to prune the superfluous branches of a vine than to add to its growth, so I like to see in the youth's production something to lop off" (*De Or*, ii. 21).

ARTICLE II. WRITING AS A MEANS OF IMPROVEMENT.

281. **Writing** is the most important source of improvement in style and in all the other parts of literary composition. "The pen," says Cicero, "is the best and most efficient teacher of eloquence"—*Stylus optimus et præstantissimus dicendi effector ac magister*. Without practice no precepts are of any avail. For this reason we have so far proposed a variety of exercises, applying the several precepts in appropriate ways. Through the remainder of this work, however, fewer suggestions of this kind will be needed. The precepts themselves will directly suggest the exercises. All that the teacher need do is to select models for imitation, and themes or subjects for narrations, descriptions, etc., suited to the age and other circumstances of his pupils. But the exercises should by no means be neglected: in them lies the solid fruit of literary studies

282. For the writing of **original composition** these rules should be carefully observed by the pupil:

Rule 1.—He should **think over the whole matter** to be treated, and trace a plan of it in his mind or on paper before he writes the first line of the composition itself.

Rule 2.—He should **compose slowly**, doing the best he can in the first draught; he will thus improve far more than by putting down every word or idea that presents itself. As in penmanship, so in composition, by writing well we learn to write rapidly, but by writing rapidly we do not learn to write well.

Rule 3.—Still, when the **mind is warmed up** by the subject the writer may allow himself, to some extent, to be carried away by his ardor, provided he does not wander from his theme.

Rule 4.—After writing should come **correction**—a task often neglected because less interesting. But the mind of the master should rule here, not the whim of the scholar. The *limæ labor*—the careful finish—is the straight road to perfection in any art.

Rule 5.—When a composition is written for the eye of the public it should, if possible, be laid by for a while, and then carefully retouched. No one should ever **publish** what an honest and judicious friend condemns, no matter how perfect the composition appears to himself.

ARTICLE III. READING AS A MEANS OF IMPROVEMENT.

283. That **reading** is a copious source of improvement in composition is beyond dispute. Still, on this subject many vague and some erroneous notions are entertained. We shall enter into some details, suggested in part by President Porter's *Books and Reading*.

284. **I. As to the matter** or thought, reflect that when

you read you listen to a **real person**, speaking deliberately and for definite purposes, who undertakes to instruct or to please you. Therefore :

285. 1. **If you read for instruction**, begin by ascertaining whether the author is capable of imparting correct information. (a) Is he a *man of authority* on those matters? Or is he simply a fluent writer who can converse plausibly on any subject, though his knowledge of it may be very superficial? Such are many essayists. (b) Is he a *man of sound principles*? Can you abandon yourself with perfect confidence to his guidance? If you have reason to distrust him, see whether it would not be more expedient to look for information elsewhere, or at least whether there are not some points on which you ought to mistrust his insinuations.

286. *Remark* that **nearly every book instils certain principles** which may do the more evil as they are less suspected—e.g., Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* instils unbelief, seeing in the exchange of a temporal for a spiritual supremacy nothing but decay: it is thus that a pagan would have written. Hume, in his *History of England*, fails to appreciate any virtuous intentions in the nobles and the people; sneering at all things, he chills enthusiasm for every public and private virtue. *Blackwood's Magazine*, a Tory organ, is devoted to strengthen the throne and the Church of England; while the *Westminster Review*, with an opposite aim, tends to undermine the foundations of both.

As the *Fabiola* of Cardinal Wiseman instils purity, generosity, piety, thus many novels instil licentiousness, scepticism, worldliness.

287. 2. **If you read for pleasure**, see (a) whether the **writer** is a **moral** and conscientious man. If he is, do not stop to quarrel with every expression to which an improper meaning

might be attached. Like the bee, sip the honey and leave the poison for the spider. If he is not, ascertain first from others whether it is proper to read that work at all, or whether, at least, you are not to be on your guard against some particular danger. If such information cannot be had, see (b) whether the **pleasure** afforded is of a **healthy** kind, which not only cheers but also expands and elevates the mind, or at least produces a calm serenity.

288. **Southey's rule** may be of use :

"Would you know whether the tendency of a book is good or evil, examine in what state of mind you lay it down. Has it induced you to suspect that that which you have been accustomed to think unlawful may, after all, be innocent, and that that may be harmless which you hitherto have been taught to think dangerous? Has it tended to make you dissatisfied and impatient under the control of others? and disposed you to relax in that self-government without which both the laws of God and man tell us there can be no virtue and consequently no happiness? Has it attempted to abate your reverence for what is great and good? . . . has it defiled the imagination with what is loathsome? Throw the book into the fire."

289. **II. As to the style**: 1. We improve more by reading **a few excellent writers** than by reading a multitude of indifferent ones.

2. Even in reading the best authors we learn more by reading **a few select passages** carefully and frequently than entire books cursorily—*non multa sed multum*.

3. There is an **abundance of good writings** of which the thoughts are proper, so that for style alone we need never read anything really dangerous.

4. The **best** should be read **from earliest childhood**.

5. **Faulty writers** do positive harm to the style of the young; now, many modern writers, highly admired by some, are full of faults.

6. Not mere reading, but a careful study by **analyzing**, is necessary for the acquisition of a good style.

7. Even in select models **distinguish the perfect** from the faulty; but be slow to condemn before understanding well.

290. **III. To read critically** is to judge for yourself of the real value of a book. This supposes the reader to be well versed in the matter treated, and to have read several other works on the same or on a similar subject, so as to be able to compare. Young people are rarely qualified to do so; it will be safer for them to seek information in particular cases from those of greater experience. Still, **some few hints** may be suggested:

1. See what the book professes to treat, what end to obtain. Is that end in itself desirable? Is it of present utility?

2. Can it be reasonably expected that the author, as far as he is known, is qualified to attain it?

3. Does he actually attain it?

4. Does he do so better than is done by any book yet published on that subject in the same language? else what is the use of a new book?

291. **IV. Read attentively.**—1. Do not, as a rule, read a book that cannot keep you awake and interested.

2. Read for a definite purpose—*e.g.*, to know such an author's views on such a question.

3. Know, however, that not every book requires the same closeness of attention.

4. Distracted reading does no good; pause when there occurs a thought worth entertaining.

5. In serious reading pause from time to time—*e.g.*, at a new chapter—to review in mind the matter read.

6. Some readings are so suggestive that but little should be read at a time; the more we reflect, the more we improve.

292. **V. What shall I read?** *Answer:* 1. **On what matter do you need most information** to do well what is expected of you? After settling this you may next inquire what book will best supply this particular want—*e.g.*, one engaged in studying the ancient languages will do well to read Ancient History, that he may understand the facts and circumstances to which classical literature constantly refers.

2. Generally **prefer what is of present use** to the information which may perhaps be useful some future day. Still, do not so confine yourself to your present narrow sphere as to neglect acquiring a certain amount of general information to fit you for a wider field of action in after-life.

3. **Do not read what you cannot at present understand**, and be honest enough to acknowledge your ignorance; but adapt your reading to your age and circumstances. Children should generally read narrations, descriptions, etc., in prose and verse, but these should always be such as inculcate sound principles; later on they will read essays, treatises, etc.

4. Generally **avoid wordy writers**, who say little in many words.

293. **VI. Poetry.**—1. As all will not enjoy the same authors and the same pieces, read only such as you can appreciate. You cannot readily enjoy poetry when you cannot **sympathize with the writer**; and as we should never sympathize with what is vicious, we must be most careful to select pure-minded authors.

2. The moral influence of a piece is good, no matter what the subject, if it **throws our affections aright** and leaves on the mind fit images and contemplations. Milton makes Satan odious, Byron and Goethe make the reader sympathize with the evil spirit against God.

BOOK IV.

VARIOUS SPECIES OF PROSE COMPOSITIONS.

CHAPTER I.

IMITATION.

294. The young are gifted with a remarkable power of **imitation**; it is the most important instinct which the all-wise Creator has provided for their early development, and it suggests the method to be followed by the educator. No kind of exercise is better adapted to their age than the imitation of whatever is excellent in thought and style. It must be noticed, however, that they can be made to imitate advantageously those literary beauties only which they can to some extent understand and appreciate. Hence some exercises in imitation are suitable to children, others to those whose judgment is more mature and whose education is more advanced.

295. The **importance** of imitation is even greater than that of precepts: precepts without models to imitate would not carry a learner far on the road to literary excellence; while many have become skilful writers without the guidance of precepts, by the sole means of imitation, supposing, of course, a fair amount of natural talent.

Longum iter per praecepta, says Seneca, brevis et efficax per

exempla—"The way that leads through precepts is long, that through examples is short and direct."

296. Still, **imitation is not all-sufficient**, for its productions are usually inferior to the originals, not having their naturalness and their power. Besides, what is most valuable in a writer, his genius, ease, tact, etc., cannot be imitated. Exercises of imitation may be almost infinitely varied, but all may be reduced to **two kinds**. We may imitate a model either by writing on the *same subject* or on *another subject*.

ARTICLE I. IMITATIONS ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

297. The ways in which learners may imitate a model by **writing on the same subject** are chiefly five:

I. They may read a composition, or hear it read, and then try to **reproduce the same thoughts** in their own words; and they may even attempt to improve on the original.

These models should be suited to the age, degree of progress, and other circumstances of the pupils; a judicious choice of the proper models must be made by the teacher. He will find a supply of such pieces in readers, selections for elocution, etc.

This exercise may be improved by dictating a brief **analysis** of the model, so that the pupil may develop it more regularly.

298. II. Pupils may write a **prose** composition, reproducing in their own style the thoughts contained in a piece of **poetry**. For instance, let them write a description of a happy village, or of the village inn, the village schoolmaster, etc., in imitation of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village." Or let them read the poem "Evangeline" of Longfellow and then narrate the same story in prose.

299. III. They may **translate** a masterpiece of composi-

tion from an ancient or a modern language into their mother-tongue. Such exercises are of constant use in a classical course of education. They are highly recommended by Cicero (*De Or.*, i. 34) and by Quintilian (x. 5). Pliny points out the following **advantages of such translation**:

"It gives the learner propriety and beauty of expression, a copious supply of figures, facility in explaining every thought; and, by the power of imitation, it stimulates him to invent for himself beauties similar to those of his models. Shades of thought which a reader might not notice cannot escape the attention of the translator, and thus his understanding and his judgment are improved by constant practice."—*Letters*, vii. 9, § 2.

300. That these and other advantages may be secured, the translation must be carefully and **judiciously done**, so that the full and exact meaning of the original be expressed with great propriety in the vernacular. It is not at all necessary that there be a word in English to correspond to every word of the original, nor that the sentences in both be of the same length and construction. But two extremes must be avoided: on the one hand, we should not give a mere paraphrase instead of a translation, and, on the other, we should not follow the original so closely as to do violence to our own idiom.

301. **Two further directions** for translation may usefully be added:

1. The manner of translation should be **regulated by the object** to be attained: thus for a legal or theological document fidelity and closeness are more important than beauty of style; while the latter should receive more care in works of less exact thought which are translated for the general reader.

2. In works of literary merit the translation should **retain the characteristic beauties** of the original style; for instance, Cicero's fulness, fluency, and harmony; Demos-

thenes' closeness and energy; Livy's ease; Cæsar's exactness; Ovid's sweetness; Homer's rapidity and fire; Virgil's delicacy, etc. (See Newman's *Historical Sketches*, vol. ii., advertisement.)

302. IV. A fourth kind of imitation consists in a **double translation**. If the object is, for instance, to perfect one's self in Latin composition, a passage of Cicero or Livy may be translated into English; then, after some interval of time, it is to be translated back into Latin, and the result to be compared with the original. This exercise is well suited for self-improvement, especially with persons of more mature minds.

303. V. A very useful kind of imitation consists in first **analyzing** a model—for instance, an oration—and then **developing this analysis**, so as to produce a composition resembling the original. (See for the preparation of such analysis our *Art of Oratorical Composition*, b. iii. c. iv.)

ARTICLE II. IMITATION ON A DIFFERENT SUBJECT.

304. We may strive to reproduce the beauties of a model by applying them to a **different subject** in three principal ways, of which the first two are suited to younger persons, the third to more advanced students.

305. I. The first manner consists in taking the **elegant words and phrases**, constructions and figures of our model, and applying them, with some judicious changes, to a similar subject. Take as an example the following extract from a speech by Patrick Henry (March, 1775):

"They tell us, sir, that we are weak, unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week? or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction?

Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak, if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us."

In close imitation of this write a strong appeal to sinful men who put off their conversion:

"You may tell me that you are weak, unable at present to subdue your unruly passions. But when will you be stronger? Will it be the next week? or the next year? Will it be when these passions shall have grown still stronger by more protracted indulgence? when your wills shall have been further weakened by habitual excesses? Will you gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Will you acquire the means of effectual resistance to your depraved inclinations by lying supinely on your backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope that you shall be able to shake off the yoke at some future day, when your passions shall have bound you hand and foot? No; you are not too weak now, if you make proper use of those means which a merciful God has placed at your disposal. Men so intelligent and noble in many other respects, men accustomed to make sacrifices for other purposes, which they fully appreciate, are capable of accomplishing any object to which they generously devote their attention. Besides, you are not to fight your battles alone. There is a good God who earnestly wishes every sinner to be converted, who speaks to your hearts this very day, and who is ready now to second your earnest efforts"; etc.

306. II. The second is a much looser method of imitation: it consists in reading carefully a story, a description, a letter, or any elegant passage of a good author, and then endeavoring to compose on a similar subject, profiting by any hint which the model may suggest with regard to style, or plan, or anything else that may improve the composi-

tion. This method of imitation is not subject to definite rules, but it relies on that instinctive power of imitation which is productive of the happiest results, provided the models be judiciously chosen; that is, provided they be excellent in themselves and well suited to the stage of the learner's progress. An **example** would be The Combat of Goliath and David written in imitation of The Combat of the Horatii and Curiatii, as related by Livy (ii. 10).

307. III. The **more advanced exercise** consists in first studying a model thoroughly, examining its excellences of various kinds—the beauty and appropriateness of the thoughts, the order in which they are developed, the harmony of the periods, the elegance and power of the figures, the closeness of the reasoning, the clearness of the arguments, the delicate politeness of the refutation, etc.—and then writing a similar composition on another theme which is capable of analogous treatment.

308. For instance, in imitation of the **first oration of Cicero against Catiline** a speech may be written denouncing some evil practices or some wicked men that are ruining the youth of the country, such as the reading of obscene literature or the wretches who spread it broadcast over the land. It is not necessary that the imitation follow the entire model step by step. Sometimes we may imitate the main division only and the general spirit of a model.

309. Thus we find, for instance, that Demosthenes, in his **Third Olynthiac Oration**, 1. Shows the necessity of seizing the proffered opportunity; 2. Explains how it is to be improved; 3. Enforces these measures by proving that success is certain, if that plan be adopted, and that action is imperative (*Art of Orat. Comp.*, p. 120). Now, on this plan an address to the members of a debating society may readily be composed: 1. Showing the necessity of profiting by

the opportunities for self-improvement which the society affords; 2. Explaining what must be done to derive fruit from the exercises; 3. Enforcing these suggestions by proving that the task is easy, but that earnest application is absolutely necessary to insure success.

The greatest writers of all ages have made use of such imitations while striving to improve on their models. Cicero imitated Plato in his dialogues; Virgil imitated Homer and Theocritus; Horace, Pindar; Pope imitates Virgil's Eclogues, etc.

ARTICLE III. SELECTION OF MODELS.

310. Much depends on the **judicious choice of models** to be proposed for imitation. Even for the youngest children none but excellent examples should be selected, suited to their tender age, of course, but exquisite in their kind. In fact, perfection in the model is more necessary in proportion as the pupils' judgment is less developed; for such learners have no other guide than the instinct of imitation, and cannot discern what should be imitated in the model from what is unworthy of their imitation.

311. Besides, what is thus learned in early years can scarcely be unlearned later on. Very many children have their taste depraved for life by their first picture-books or sensational stories. Quintilian, in his excellent work on the *Education of an Orator*, insists earnestly on the necessity of putting nothing before children that they may not imitate to advantage. *Optima quidem et statim et semper*—"Choose the best models at once and ever after." He would have the very talk of the child's nurse to be grammatical:

"First of all, let the talk of the child's nurses not be ungramma-

tical. Chrysippus wished them, if possible, to be women of some knowledge; at any rate he would have the best chosen that circumstances may allow. To their morals, doubtless, attention is first to be paid; but let them also speak with propriety. It is they that the child will hear first; it is their words that he will try to imitate. We are naturally most tenacious of what we have imbibed in our infant years, as the flavor with which you scent new vessels remains in them; nor can the colors with which wool is stained be effaced hereafter. Those very habits which are of a more objectionable nature adhere with the greater tenacity; for good ones are easily changed for the worse, but when will you change bad ones into good? Do not, then, accustom the child, even when yet an infant, to phraseology which must be unlearned" (b. i. c. i. 4, 5).

312. Those writers, as a rule, are the **best models for imitation** who combine regularity of plan with ease and naturalness of development. Such are chiefly Cicero and Demosthenes, Livy and Herodotus, Cæsar and Xenophon, among the ancients; and among the moderns, Edmund Burke and Erskine, Pitt and Chatham, Webster and Calhoun, Clay and Everett; Lingard and Alison, Prescott and Irving; Addison and Walter Scott, Dickens and Cooper; Cardinals Wiseman, Manning, and Newman.

313. Some writers are useful models for the acquisition of **special excellences**; thus we may learn vigor and condensation of thought from Thucydides and Tacitus, vivid description from Sallust, a forcible and direct style from Macaulay, Brownson, and Father Burke. While perhaps no author is commendable in every respect, beginners especially should confine themselves to those who approach nearest to perfection; or, better still, such passages from any good author should be selected for them by a prudent teacher as are every way fit models for imitation.

314. The teacher will, besides, 1. Vary his selections to suit the capacities and circumstances of his pupils; 2

Point out in what the beauty of those pieces consists, and in what particular respects they are chiefly to be imitated; 3. Vary his selections so as to improve, now some, then other talents of his pupils. A learner trained on one model or to one kind of style only, would not bring all his powers into play; he would not acquire a well-developed mind nor all the beauty of language which is within his reach.

CHAPTER II.

LETTERS.

315. A **letter** is a written communication on any subject from one person to another. Letters deserve most careful study; for, 1. No species of composition is more generally used by all classes of persons. 2. A negligently written letter may entail very injurious consequences. 3. Many will judge of a person's character and attainments from his epistolary correspondence.

It makes a considerable difference in our style whether we write as officials or business men, or as individual members of society. We may, therefore, usefully distinguish letters into **two kinds**—*official* or *business* letters and *unofficial* letters. We class official and business letters together, because they are mainly subject to the same rules.

ARTICLE I. OFFICIAL OR BUSINESS LETTERS.

316. We call **official** or **business letters** all those written by a person in the capacity of an officer, a professional man, a merchant, or a tradesman. In all such correspondence the following are the leading rules:

Rule 1.—Be very **clear**, so that your exact meaning cannot fail to be understood at first sight. Read your letter over with close attention to see that all your thoughts are correctly, fully, and clearly expressed.

Rule 2.—Take care that the **handwriting** be legible, else you may get *boots* for *books*, *matches* for *hatchets* or *latches*, *two ponies* instead of *100 pansies*.

Rule 3.—Be **brief** and to the point; business men have no time to waste.

Rule 4.—Confine yourself to **strict business**. If you wish to add matters of friendship, it is well to write them on a separate leaf, that the business portion may be separately filed.

Rule 5.—Write **grammatical and idiomatic** English, but without any attempt at figures—in the plain style.

Rule 6.—Observe the received **formalities**, which are now to be explained.

The **formalities of epistolary correspondence** are not uniform in all countries. The general tendency of Americans is towards simplicity in forms: they consult the convenience of all persons concerned, showing proper respect for every one, but using few idle compliments. We shall notice the points most generally agreed upon, without condemning such departures from these directions as are authorized by common sense and respectable practice.

317. Here is an **example** of official correspondence. It is taken from General Sherman's *Memoirs*; most of the letters in that work are on the same simple plan:

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES, }
CITY POINT, VIRGINIA, December 26, 1864. }

Major-General W. T. Sherman, Savannah, Georgia:

GENERAL: Your very interesting letter of the 22d inst., brought by Major Gray, of General Foster's staff, is just at hand. As the major starts back at once, I can do no more at present than simply acknowledge its receipt. The capture of Savannah, with all its immense stores, must tell upon the people of the South. All well here.

Yours truly,

U. S. GRANT, *Lieutenant-General*.

318. We call attention to some **special formalities** in general use.

1. Write on white paper with black ink, leaving a half-inch margin at the left side. Use letter or note size, but never tear nor cut off a part. Decided colors, odd patterns, gaudy pictures are in bad taste.

2. Leave at least one inch vacant on the top of the first page.

3. Put on the first line, and to the right, your own post-office **address**; and, either on the same line or on the next, the **date**—that is, the month, day, and year; also the hour, if necessary.

319. 4. On the next line, and beginning near the margin, put the **name, title, and address** of the person or firm you write to. This inside address, as it has been called, may occupy one or two, or even three, lines. It should be complete enough to distinguish the party addressed from all others (as the letter will be filed without the envelope); but it need not be so detailed as the outside address on the envelope.

It is more formal, when addressing dignitaries, to omit or abridge the directions at the head of the letter, and to write the whole address below the signature to the left.

320. Care should be taken to give every one his **proper title**. The following titles are in common use:

In writing to the Pope, "His Holiness, Leo XIII."

To a cardinal, "His Eminence."

To an archbishop, "The Most Rev. P. R. Kenrick (with or without D.D.)"

To a bishop, "The Rt. Rev. — (D.D.)"

To a priest, "Rev. —."

To the President and Vice-President of the United States, "The President," "The Vice-President."

To a governor or foreign minister, "His Excellency."

To members of Congress and other high officers of the State, to judges, aldermen, etc., "The Hon."

After the name of a lawyer or a justice of peace, "Esq." (nothing before it).

To a military officer, "General," "Colonel," "Captain," "Lieutenant."

To private persons, "Mr.," "Master" (for a young boy), "Messrs." or Misses (for a firm), "Mrs. John Brown" (for the wife of John Brown), "Mrs. Mary Brown" (for his widow), "Miss Brown" (for his eldest daughter), "Miss Julia Brown" (for a younger daughter), etc.

321. 5. Next comes the **salutation**:

"Holy Father" or "Your Holiness," "Your Grace," "Your Lordship," "Rev. Father," or "Your Reverence."

"Mr. President," "Mr. Vice-President."

"Your Excellency," "Your Honor."

"General," "Colonel," etc.

"Sir," "Gentlemen" or "Ladies," "Madam," "Miss."

The word "Dear" denotes acquaintance and respect, but not familiarity: the terms "Sir," "Madam," "Miss" look rather formal without "Dear." "My Dear" is considered by some as more familiar, by others as less so.

322. 6. Begin the first **paragraph** at the point where the salutation ends, or on the next line just below it. The other paragraphs will commence about half an inch from the margin.

323. 7. The letter should end with the **subscription**, which consists of two parts—viz., an expression of respect and the signature. The expression of respect often forms part of the last paragraph; at other times it stands separately, and then it usually begins about the middle of the line. The following forms are common in official correspondence:

"I am, with respect, your obedient servant"; "I have the honor to be your obedient servant"; "Very respectfully yours"; "Yours truly"; "Sincerely yours"; "Yours thankfully," etc.

324. 8. Make as few **folds** in the letter as possible. With a full-sized sheet turn the lower on the upper edge and make a fold in the middle; fold the double into three parts. See that the letter does not adhere to the inside of the envelope. The envelope should be suitable to the paper, and both should be of an approved pattern.

325. 9. **On the envelope** put the stamp near the right upper corner. About the middle of the envelope write the name and title of the party addressed; on the next line, a little more to the right, the number of the house and the name of the street (or, for small places, of the town and county); below, the name of the city; and, lastly, that of the State. Take great care that the directions be so explicit as to prevent all possibility of mistake.

10. In **answering** business letters (or any letters that require a direct answer) begin by mentioning the items to which you are replying; thus:

"Yours of the 25th inst. came to hand. You desire to know . . ."

"Your order for . . . is received."

"Your favor of the 30th ult. enclosing check for seventy-five dollars (\$75) on Farmers' Bank, St. Louis, is received and credited to your account, in full payment for . . ."

326. 11. A **note** may be written in the third person throughout; e.g.:

"Mr. Jno. Green will call on Mr. W. Smith on next Thursday at three P.M."

This is often a convenient form for postal cards.

327. 12. When sending a **telegram** the great rule is to convey all the necessary information briefly and in such language as is most apt to be correctly transmitted. Proper names are often mistaken and punctuation marks utterly neglected in the transmission. The formalities of titles, etc., may be dispensed with in telegrams.

328. 13. When it is necessary to add an item after the letter is finished, we begin by making **P. S.** (postscript) near the margin below the last line of the letter, and then state briefly what we have to say; if there is no evident reason for our former omission, we premise a word of excuse.

329. **Exercise 1.**—Write a letter purporting to order from the publisher a dozen copies of this text-book, or of another book designated by the teacher; and submit the letter to him for criticism on all particulars.

330. **Exercise 2.**—Write a letter purporting to send payment for the books received.

331. **Exercise 3.**—Write in the name of the book-firm to acknowledge receipt of payment.

332. Examples:

A Note.

Mr. & Mrs. ———
request the pleasure of
.....Company
at dinner on Friday,
Jan. 19th, at 7½ o'clock.

A Card.

Mr. & Mrs. ———
At Home,
Wednesday, April the eleventh,
from four until six o'clock,
and from eight until eleven o'clock.
No. — Second Avenue.

*An
informal,
familiar
Letter.*

*No. — H Street,
Washington.*

Dear Julia,

*Will you not come to dine
with us to-morrow, Saturday, at 7 o'clock?
We shall be so glad to see you. I hope
that you have no other engagement.*

Affectionately yours,

Agnes Smith.

Jan. 2d, Friday

An Envelope.

[Stamp]

*Mrs. Lily Tulip,
Elm Grove Mansion,
Acacia,
Linwood Co.,
Florida.*

ROSEBUD VILLAGE, Merrydale Co., Ind.,

*Mrs. Lily Tulip,
Acacia, Florida.*

April 1, 1886.

MY DEAR MOTHER:

I have just received your kind favor of the 25th ult. in which you inform me that you desire me to return as soon as convenient. Much as I enjoy the scenery here, and especially the affection of my excellent uncle and aunt, I shall be happy to comply with your wishes. You may look for me on next Saturday morning. I have so many good things to say to you, but the postboy is waiting for this letter. Do take good care of your health: here all are well and send love.

Your loving daughter,

FLORA.

ARTICLE II. UNOFFICIAL LETTERS.

333. **Unofficial letters** are such as are written by any person in his private capacity, as an individual member of society. They may be dictated by friendship, by charity or kindness, by politeness, by respect, by gratitude, by self-interest, or by any other reasonable motive.

There is one important **difference** between official and unofficial letters—namely, that the former exclude sentiment, and the latter admit it freely; the former proceed solely from the head, the latter often from the heart, though, of course, under the guidance of the head. Now, when the heart is interested the imagination is stirred, and literature, in the strict meaning of the word, is the result; then there is room for tropes and figures and other ornaments of style, and, in particular, for the display of the most delicate taste. Epistolary correspondence does not admit the bolder figures of oratory: any attempt at splendor is objectionable in letters. We must charm by gentler beauties, by appropriateness, by modest plays of the imagination, by genial warmth of sentiment.

334. The **style** of these letters should generally be:

(a) *Correct*, as is the language of educated men in conversation; still, somewhat more chastened—*i.e.*, free from all that is rather tolerated than approved. Apparent negligence may be sometimes agreeable; real negligence never.

(b) *Appropriate* to the subject, the persons, the occasion, etc.; on important matters grave, on common ones neat, elegant and playful on trifling ones, etc.

(c) *Concise*, pruning away long introductions, unnecessary developments, diffuse reasoning, especially to men of little leisure. Familiar letters may be more diffuse.

(d) *Modest*, avoiding long periods, bold figures, etc.

(e) *Graceful*, selecting neat constructions and all kinds

of modest ornaments, such as obvious comparisons, natural metaphors, brief narrations and descriptions, pithy sayings, witty and humorous reflections, etc.

335. We shall treat with some detail of the principal species of such letters:

I. **Letters of friendship** are such as are dictated by mutual affection between relatives and friends. They should be natural, easy, frank, without the least affectation. "I wish you to open to me your soul, not your library," said Mme. de Sévigné, who wrote exquisitely herself. Such letters may treat of any subject of common interest to the parties concerned. Their language is that of the heart. Kindness, affection, charity, good-nature should dictate, prudence and common sense supervise them.

336. **Their charm will depend** chiefly on the intelligence and the amiable character of the writer. Whatever, therefore, will quicken or develop our intelligence, but especially whatever will improve our character, making us more sociable, unselfish, considerate, etc., will improve our familiar correspondence. Persons too dull to have any original thoughts, those incapable of warm feelings, pretentious ones who can think of nothing but self, deceitful characters incapable of candor, are not likely to succeed in this species of composition. On the other hand, intelligent persons with warm-hearted, modest, and open characters are sure to succeed, provided they do not take a wrong view of their task. What is that task? It is to make others happy for time and eternity. See what your friend would like to hear; anticipate his queries; speak of yourself for the sake of your friend. Avoid overwrought sentimentality: it is distasteful, because unreal. Genuine goodness and gentle piety are attractive.

337. "A light, easy, playful **style** is most appropriate in

friendship" (*American Gentleman*). Still, the modest ornaments of style are here in place. Happy turns of expression, delicate allusions, innocent hints, ingenious fault-finding, pleasing anecdotes, and pen-pictures have a pleasant effect, but all must be natural. "If you run after wit," says Montesquieu, "you will catch folly." "Most persons write ill," says Chesterfield, "because they aim at writing better than they can, by which means they acquire a formal and unnatural style; whereas to write well you must write easily and naturally."

338. In **telling news** be not a gossip, do not make known the secrets of others; handle the names of others with respect, so that, if they should happen to see the letter (as they may sooner or later), they could not be offended with you; be charitable and prudent. Relate facts with order and clearness, in a pleasant style.

339. **II. Letters of Congratulation**—such as are written on occasion of the New Year, a birthday, a patronal feast, or when a friend has met with some uncommon good-fortune—should be dictated by genuine friendship and sincere esteem, and expressed modestly without any exaggerated praise. Never flatter—*i.e.*, never praise what you feel does not deserve it—but let your friend see that you love him and that you rejoice with him for his sake, not for the advantage his success may bring you.

340. In **New Year's letters**, etc., express gratitude for all that parents and others have done for you, sorrow for the grief you may have caused them, a promise of more thoughtful conduct in the future, with a hope that God will grant you time to fulfil your promise. Add good wishes, and a prayer for the blessings of Heaven on the new year. The writing should be most careful, to show respect and to prove you have profited by your opportunities to learn. In all such letters one good thought, one happy

hit, is more pleasing than four rambling pages: it is more creditable to the writer and more acceptable to the reader.

341. **III. Letters of Condolence.** These require great skill and care. Act like the humane surgeon who touches the wound gently, and only to heal it. If your correspondent knows the sad news already, sympathize sincerely with him: "What a loss sustained! what hopes disappointed!" Hit as it were accidentally on a motive of consolation drawn from reason, or, better, from religion, and develop it skilfully. If you are to announce the bad news yourself prepare the way slowly; suggest motives of resignation to God's will beforehand; state the news at last as delicately as you can. Express your grief again before you conclude.

342. **IV. Letters of Introduction or Recommendation** require special prudence. Think first whether it is proper to write such a letter at all for such a person.

"Consider well for whom you pledge your name,
Lest without guilt you bear another's shame."—*Horace.*

Avoid two dangers: do not offend the applicant for a recommendation; do not deceive your correspondent by exaggerated praise of the one recommended.

If the applicant is *worthy* state his merits, express reasonable confidence in him, ask your friend's interest in his behalf as a personal favor to yourself. If he is *unworthy* or doubtfully worthy, give him a letter which he will prefer not to present; for every such letter is an open letter, which the bearer is expected to read before delivering. It may be necessary to write by mail to the third party, informing him, before the letter is presented to him, of certain facts which could not be mentioned in the recommendation. Write on the envelope, below the address, towards the left: "To introduce Mr. —."

343. V. **Letters of Petition** should be modest and every way moderate. Ingratiate yourself in a manly way ; state your reasons briefly but forcibly ; show your appreciation of the trouble your correspondent may be put to in consequence of the favor ; promise gratitude.

In answering such letters favorably be brief and show your pleasure at rendering the little service asked. Say as little as possible of the trouble it costs, or of limitation or conditions. In refusing show how reluctantly you do so ; give good reasons for it. Express your hope of finding, some other time, a better opportunity of showing your affection or esteem.

344. VI. **Letters of Thanks** should never be neglected when a favor has been received. Express your appreciation both of the favor and of the kindness with which it was bestowed. Hope for an opportunity, not of repaying the person, but of showing your gratitude.

345. We add some further directions for epistolary **correspondence in general** :

1. Give *advice* sparingly : do not volunteer it except for very special reasons ; if asked give it cautiously, modestly, appearing to mistrust your views unless there is a principle at stake. If there is, state it modestly but firmly : in this, as in all things else, honesty is the best policy.

2. If you must *find fault*, do so reluctantly and as gently as circumstances will allow ; but if it is your clear duty to do it at all, do it with manly firmness.

3. To *excuse* yourself rather exaggerate than hide your fault ; express sorrow ; then touch upon palliating circumstances, or explain how the mistake arose ; promise care for the future.

346. **Eminent letter-writers** are few. Cicero's is the best collection : he corresponded in a charming style with the greatest men of his age on all manners of subjects ;

but he wrote simply what the circumstances actually suggested, without any intention of publishing his letters.

Pliny's are highly, even excessively, polished.

Dean Swift's are unaffected, but they want discretion and betray many of his defects of character.

Pope's are entertaining, witty, and refined, but too evidently labored.

Chesterfield's are natural, but often indelicate, and in other ways wanting in a Christian spirit.

Lady Mary Montagu has much ease and vivacity, and a very agreeable epistolary style.

In French, Madame de Sévigné is considered a charming model of familiar correspondence ; still, she is too talkative for English taste.

The letters of Eugénie de Guérin are among the most perfect models in this species of literature.

347. **Exercises.**—Write one letter of each species, the particular circumstances being suggested by your teacher.

CHAPTER III.

NARRATION.

348. **Narration** is defined a species of composition which relates the particulars of a real or fictitious event. In a wider meaning, narration is the statement of successive facts; it enters into histories, biographies, travels, novels, etc. We shall consider: 1. The *general rules* for all good narration; 2. The rules for *Simple Narration*; 3. Those for *Complex Narration*; 4. The *style* of narration.

ARTICLE I. RULES FOR NARRATION IN GENERAL.

349. The first rule regards the **choice of a subject**.

Rule 1.—The writer should select a subject with which he is **sufficiently acquainted**, else he cannot expect to write a sensible composition.

350. *Rule 2.*—He should choose a subject **not too lofty** for his talents, nor too intricate for his ability to handle successfully.

These two rules apply to all compositions; but they are often violated in the choice of subjects for narration. The reason is that many of the most perfect specimens of narration, in ancient and modern writers, are of wars and battles, and other stirring subjects, which are too intricate and too little understood by the young to be good subjects for imitation. Such subjects accustom beginners to unreality and conceit, and do more harm than good.

351. *Rule 3.*—The subject should **suit the end** intended by the writer. If he desires to *please* let him choose facts

which are beautiful or interesting in themselves, or which may readily be beautified; if he aims at *moving* his readers he must select a story that speaks to their hearts; if he wishes to *instruct* he must relate an event that is itself instructive, or from which he can draw a useful lesson. If all these ends be intended together he should choose very carefully some matter which is suited for all these purposes.

352. If the subject deals with real facts the rule of **fidelity** to the truth is essential. It requires that not only the main facts shall be true as they are narrated, but also that all the striking and important details be faithfully stated as they are known to have happened. Little details which are only the filling-up of the picture may be supplied by the writer's knowledge of human nature. But care must be taken that the author does not give a false coloring to his picture by offering his own speculations as real facts. It would be a great fault to introduce any important but fictitious circumstance into the narrative of a real event.

353. *Rule 4.*—The rule of **probability** applies to both real and fictitious narratives. It requires that everything narrated must appear natural, plausible, or true to nature. To make a narration look probable or plausible the writer must show how far the effects mentioned proceeded from known causes, and how far they were merely accidental. He must exhibit the words and actions as in keeping with the characters of the persons, with the times, places, etc. He must do all this without appearing to reason much, simply by presenting the facts and circumstances in a natural manner.

354. *Rule 5.*—To make a narration truly artistic—*i.e.*, a beautiful piece of literary composition—the rule of **unity** is important. All the details of the narrative must be so selected and disposed as to appear parts of one whole story, so that all the attention of the reader is concen-

trated upon a single fact. When the story is brief and simple the rule of unity is easily observed; but not so when the details are many and the narrative is prolonged.

355. **The art of telling a good story well** lies chiefly in this process: that, after a proper introduction, you excite and partly satisfy the curiosity of the reader without hurrying the events too much, suspending the action occasionally without allowing it to languish. Such suspense often adds intense interest to the narrative, which must afterwards be brought to a natural and full close, satisfying all reasonable curiosity and expectation.

ARTICLE II. SIMPLE NARRATION.

356. **A narrative is simple** if it is free from intricacy and multiplicity of details, and so brief that, when it has been read, the whole story is easily remembered—taken in, as it were, at one glance; else it is *complex*. Addison illustrates the truth, “The humble are exalted,” by this simple story, “The Drop of Water”:

“A drop of water fell out of a cloud into the sea, and, finding itself lost in such an immensity of fluid matter, broke out into the following reflection: ‘Alas! what an insignificant creature am I in this prodigious ocean of waters; my existence is of no concern to the universe; I am reduced to a kind of nothing, and am less than the least of the works of God.’ It so happened that an oyster, which lay in the neighborhood of this drop, chanced to gape and swallow it up in the midst of this its humble soliloquy. The drop lay a great while hardening in the shell, till by degrees it was ripened into a pearl, which, falling into the hands of a diver, after a long series of adventures, is at present that famous pearl which is fixed on the top of the Persian diadem.”

357. Dodsley inculcates moderation in pleasure by the “Fable of the Two Bees”:

“On a fine morning in May two bees set forward in quest of honey;

the one wise and temperate, the other careless and extravagant. They soon arrived at a garden enriched with aromatic herbs, the most fragrant and the most delicious fruits. They regaled themselves for a time on the various dainties that were spread before them; the one loading himself at intervals with provisions for the hive against the distant winter, the other revelling in sweets without regard to anything but his present gratification. At length they found a wide-mouthed vial, that hung beneath the bough of a peach-tree, filled with honey ready tempered and exposed to their taste in the most alluring manner. The thoughtless epicure, in spite of all his friend's remonstrances, plunged headlong into the vessel, resolving to indulge himself in all the pleasures of sensuality. The philosopher, on the other hand, sipped a little with caution; but, being suspicious of danger, flew off to fruits and flowers, where, by the moderation of his meals, he improved his relish for the true enjoyment of them. In the evening, however, he called upon his friend to inquire whether he would return to the hive; but he found him surfeited in sweets, which he was as unable to leave as to enjoy. Clogged in his wings, enfeebled in his feet, and his whole frame totally enervated, he was but just able to bid his friend adieu, and to lament with his latest breath that, though a taste of pleasure might quicken the relish of life, an unrestrained indulgence is inevitable destruction.”

358. One of the most perfect models that can be proposed of a simple narration is from the masterly pen of Cicero, “Dionysius and Damocles”:

“Dionysius, the tyrant of Sicily, showed how far he was from being happy, even whilst abounding in riches and all the pleasures which riches can procure. Damocles, one of his flatterers, was complimenting him one day upon his power, his treasures, and the magnificence of his royal state, and affirming that no monarch ever was greater or happier than he. ‘Have you a mind, Damocles,’ said the king, ‘to taste this happiness, and know by experience what my enjoyments are, of which you entertain so high an appreciation?’ Damocles gladly accepted the offer. Then the king ordered that a royal banquet should be prepared, and a gilded couch placed for him, covered with rich embroidery, and sideboards loaded with gold and silver plate of immense value. Pages of extraordinary beauty

were ordered to wait on him at table, and to obey his commands with the greatest readiness and the most profound submission. Neither ointments, chaplets of flowers, nor rich perfumes were wanting. The table was loaded with the most exquisite delicacies of every kind. Damocles fancied himself amongst the gods. In the midst of all his happiness he sees, let down from the roof, exactly over his head as he lay indulging himself in state, a glittering sword hung by a single hair. The sight of destruction, thus threatening him from on high, soon put a stop to his joy and revelling. The pomp of his attendants and the glitter of the carved plate gave him no longer any pleasure. He dreads to stretch forth his hand to the table. He throws off the chaplet of roses. He hastens to escape from his dangerous situation, and at last begs the king to restore him to his former humble condition, having no desire to enjoy any longer so dreadful a kind of happiness."

359. If we study this piece with care we shall **notice the following points** in particular: 1. There is a brief introduction to the story. 2. The facts are related in the natural order. 3. The quotation of the tyrant's words enlivens the narrative. 4. The description of the feast adds elegance. 5. Every detail either throws light upon the facts, or makes them more interesting or impressive. No item could be omitted without detracting from the happy effect of the whole. 6. We see the reason of everything that is said or done. All these are points worthy of imitation.

360. Care ought always to be taken to **select those circumstances** of an event which mark it strikingly. A few well-chosen details may convey a more vivid impression of a fact than a multitude of less telling incidents. Thus Walter Scott, in narrating the "Taking of Roxburgh Castle," selects only a few items; but they stamp the impression of the sudden surprise indelibly on the mind:

"You must know Roxburgh was then a very large castle, situated near where two fine rivers, the Tweed and the Teviot, join each

other. Being within five or six miles of England, the English were extremely desirous of retaining it, and the Scots equally eager to obtain possession of it. I will tell you how it was taken.

"It was upon the night of what is called Shrovetide, a holiday which people paid great respect to and solemnized with much gayety and feasting. Most of the garrison of Roxburgh castle were drinking and carousing, but still they had set watches on the battlements of the castle, in case of any sudden attack; for as the Scots had succeeded in so many enterprises of the kind, and as Douglas was known to be in the neighborhood, they conceived themselves obliged to keep a very strict guard.

"An Englishwoman, the wife of one of the officers, was sitting on the battlements with her child in her arms, and looking out on the fields below. She saw some black objects, like a herd of cattle, straggling near the foot of the wall and approaching the ditch or moat of the castle. She pointed them out to the sentinel, and asked him what they were. 'Pooh, pooh!' said the soldier, 'it is Farmer Such-a-one's cattle' (naming a man whose farm lay near the castle). 'The good man is keeping a jolly Shrovetide, and has forgot to shut up his bullocks in their yard; but if the Douglas come across them before morning he is likely to rue his negligence.' Now, those creeping objects which they saw from the castle-wall were no real cattle, but Douglas himself and his soldiers, who had put black cloaks above their armor, and were creeping about on hands and feet, in order, without being observed, to get so near to the foot of the castle-wall as to be able to set ladders to it. The poor woman, who knew nothing of this, sat quietly on the wall, and began to sing to her child. You must know that the name of Douglas had become so terrible to the English that the women used to frighten their children with it, and say to them when they behaved ill that they 'would make the Black Douglas take them.' And the soldier's wife was singing to her child:

'Hush ye, hush ye, little pet ye;
Hush ye, hush ye, do not fret ye:
The Black Douglas shall not get ye.'

"'You are not so sure of that,' said a voice close beside her. She felt at the same time a heavy hand, with an iron glove, laid on her shoulder, and when she looked round she saw the very 'Black Douglas' she had been singing about standing close beside her, a

tall, swarthy, strong man. At the same time another Scotsman was seen ascending the walls, near to the sentinel. The soldier gave the alarm and rushed at the Scotsman, whose name was Simon Ledehouse, with his lance; but Simon parried the stroke, and, closing with the sentinel, struck him a deadly blow with his dagger. The rest of the Scots followed up to assist Douglas and Ledehouse, and the castle was taken. Many of the soldiers were put to death, but Douglas protected the woman and the child. I dare say she made no more song about the Black Douglas."

361. Washington Irving, in narrating the first landing of Columbus, was naturally led by the importance of the event to give a full and detailed account of what took place on that solemn occasion. But he has carefully avoided overloading his picture with useless circumstances; his narration is in exquisite taste. (See *Life of Columbus*, vol. i. b. iv. c. i.)

ARTICLE III. COMPLEX NARRATION.

362. It is not easy to draw the line between simple and complex narration; nor does it matter much by what name we call a narrative, provided it be clear and interesting. But the reason we speak of **Complex Narrations** is, to show how certain difficulties are to be overcome which do not occur in the pieces so far explained. These **difficulties** are: (a) multiplicity of detail; (b) a want of obvious connection between various events; and (c) intricacy, when various series of facts run into one another.

363. These difficulties are to be overcome by the study of **order**—i.e., a skilful disposition of the parts with a view to obtaining certain results; here the results aimed at are clearness and interest.

364. There are **various kinds of order**. 1. The most common is the **order of time**, called also the historical order. An example of this order is found in the history of

Joseph and his brothers (Genesis xxxvii. to xlv.). Another example is "The Sorrowful Night" (Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*, ii. p. 361). All that is necessary in the historical order is that the events unfold themselves naturally before the eyes of the reader, without confusion.

365. 2. The **order of importance** relates first the principal events, omitting such details as might cause confusion, and returning afterwards to supply them. This order is partly historical, and is often the clearest in relating complicated facts. It is used by Livy in his account of the passage of the Rhine by Hannibal. He narrates first how the soldiers effected the crossing of that rapid stream in the face of a numerous army of hostile Gauls, and then returns to relate other matters omitted in the first account (Livy, xxi. 26-29).

366. 3. The **distributive order** consists in relating separately two or more series of facts which happen about the same time in different places, and which conspire to produce one main result. Thus Livy, in narrating the battle of Cannæ, tells first what was done on one wing, then in the centre, and then on the other wing; thus enabling the reader to follow the account with ease and pleasure. He does not give us three separate narrations; but, by presenting both the armies together to our view before the battle, and as soon again as the rout of the Romans began, he exhibits all the events as the parts of one harmonious whole.

367. 4. The **romantic order** arranges events not so much with a view to clearness as to interest, beginning with a striking fact or scene which is not the first in the order of time, but which is suitable to arouse attention: the writer later on supplies such other facts as had first been omitted. This order is often pursued where the purpose is pleasure and the story is long. In the body of the narration in-

terest may similarly be promoted by delaying the explanation of some facts till a proper degree of suspense has been attained. But inversions are by no means necessary, and the most regular order is usually the most tasteful and pleasing. First-class writers create sufficient interest by the naturalness of their story, their felicity in the choice of items, and the propriety and elegance of their expressions; but inferior writers make constant use of tricks and artificial contrivances, as bad cooks do of strong condiments to atone for the absence of the genuine flavors which please a healthy taste.

368. **Classical taste** favors neatness and regularity, in arrangement as in everything else; but romantic taste loves wildness and striking peculiarities as productive of more excitement. This is at present the prevailing taste of the general reader, but by no means of our best writers nor of the refined portion of society. Goldsmith, Irving, Prescott, Lingard, Wiseman, Newman, and many others are classical in their taste and resemble Livy, Ovid, Virgil, Homer, Plato, Cicero, and Demosthenes. Whatever order is adopted, a long story should be divided into chapters, each of which should exhibit some particular group of facts, so that a brief heading may comprise the whole matter of that division.

369. To insure **unity in a complex narration** one fact must be made more prominent than all the rest, the centre of attention and interest, or the issue to which everything tends. For this purpose the narrator may give prominence to one leading character in whom the interest of the narrative is centred; such would be either Napoleon or Wellington in the battle of Waterloo. When the story is long or very intricate there may be secondary centres of interest, and distinct groups of events, provided the groups and the persons be themselves clustered around one

striking or commanding figure, and directed to one important result.

370. It is a useful exercise to **compare in detail two distinct accounts** of the same event as given by two different writers; for instance, the **defeat of Braddock**, in Bancroft's *History of the United States* (vol. iv., pp. 186-192, Ed. 1852), and in Irving's *Life of George Washington* (vol. i. pp. 173-182, Ed. 1860). It will be observed that Irving premises a clear description of the battle-ground, concentrates attention on one army, keeps Braddock and Washington ever in sight, making the general the central figure, which we can easily follow; while in Bancroft, who is less attentive to these points, there appears to be confusion. This will be seen more clearly if we read the latter account first; else, without noticing it, we are apt to allow the distinct views of Irving to guide us through the less distinct account of Bancroft. With Irving's clear narration of the battle we may compare the no less distinct description of the battle of Poitiers in Lingard's *History of England* (vol. ii. pp. 314 to 316, Ed. of 1840). Lingard appears to gain by the comparison. He concentrates attention more effectually upon the leading points. If we compare with his narrative the taking of Badajoz as related by Alison (vol. iii. pp. 467-469, Ed. 1848), we shall notice that Alison describes very graphically, and distributes the events judiciously and most carefully. But he seems to overload his account with minor details, which make it difficult to follow.

371. This last remark is further illustrated by a comparison of Alison's narrative of the **Battle of Waterloo** (*History of Europe*, vol. iv. c. lxxvii. pp. 532-539, Ed. of 1848) with Abbott's in his life of Napoleon (Griswold's *Prose Writers of America*, pp. 609 to 612). Both are very able narrations of one of the most important events in the history of the world; and they are worthy specimens of

the style of both distinguished authors. The two passages should be carefully read, and compared together in detail. They offer some striking **points of difference**:

Abbott's sympathies are entirely with Napoleon, Alison's are decidedly with Wellington. Both make their favorite hero the centre of the action. Hence results at once a striking difference in the style. The dashing spirit of Napoleon and of his enthusiastic followers pervades the account of the former; the cool, calculating skill of the Iron Duke and of his unyielding legions characterizes the elaborate narration of the latter. Abbott writes as the biographer of one man in whom all interest is naturally centred; Alison, as the painstaking historian of modern Europe, strives to do justice to many individual heroes. Abbott writes for the general reader; Alison for the careful student of history and military tactics. Hence the former's account is more pleasing, more artistic; the latter's more useful and more scientific. As a specimen of literature Abbott's is singularly beautiful; the charge of the Imperial Guard in particular is sublime.

ARTICLE IV. STYLE OF NARRATIONS.

372. The **style** ought to be regulated by the end or purpose of the writer: 1. When *instruction* is aimed at clearness ought to be the chief quality. It should, however, be accompanied by neatness, and even elegance, as the occasion may require, and as the writer's talents can afford: no one should aim higher than he can reasonably expect to reach.

2. If emotion or *persuasion* is aimed at vividness is the chief quality, exhibiting, as if present to the view, whatever can move the heart.

3. If *pleasure* is the chief object the language ought to

be polished accordingly, not by loading it with gaudy ornaments, but by setting forth the subject with becoming dignity and elegance.

Familiar facts can be most gracefully related in what the ancients called the *stylus tenuis*—a style of simplicity and neatness combined, which is unpretending but may be very charming in its apparent artlessness.

“ *Ut sibi quivis*
Speret idem, sudet multum, frustra que laboret
Ausus idem.”—*Ars Poet.*, 240.

“ From well-known tales such fictions would I raise
As all might hope to imitate with ease;
Yet while they strive the same success to gain,
Should find their labor and their hopes are vain.”

—*Francis.*

As a specimen of this style in narration we may refer to Irving's well-known story of Rip Van Winkle in his *Sketch-Book*.

373. Persons who have not acquired a cultivated style should aim at narrating briefly and clearly, in correct language, without attempting any great elegance of style.

374. Narration is said to be **graphic** when the various scenes are so painted that the imagination is arrested by them. This quality of style is obtained by mingling descriptions with the narrative. Long descriptions are rarely appropriate; but brief descriptions and characteristic epithets may occur at every step. Of this style of narration we find a beautiful example in the account of the Romans surrounded in the defile of Caudium (Livy, ix. 2-6).

375. The story should, as a rule, be **told feelingly**; that is, the writer should enter into the sentiments, the spirit of the narration: now exulting, now sympathizing, now indignant, now grateful, etc. The expression itself

CHAPTER IV.

DESCRIPTION.

381. We mean by a **description** the delineation of some object or scene. Narration deals with successive facts ; description with objects that exist at the same time. We rarely find any literary production of great length which is entirely descriptive ; but descriptions are often introduced into narratives with happy effect. Sometimes they serve the purpose of making the narration impressive, by moving the passions of the reader. At other times they are intended to make the events more intelligible. Thus we have seen that some narratives of battles are hard to follow because the writer has neglected to give us a clear description of the battle-field. Descriptions frequently serve as ornaments, affording an agreeable variety to the narration, and presenting scenes of striking interest to the imagination.

We shall divide this chapter so as to treat, first, of the description of things ; secondly, of the description of persons or characters.

ARTICLE I. DESCRIPTION OF THINGS.

382. *Rule 1.*—In all cases the description should be of **a piece with the rest** of the composition, and not look like a purple patch sewed on a common garment.

383. *Rule 2.*—Descriptive passages must have a natural **connection** with the main subject, or be properly introduced.

384. To acquire skill in description it is necessary to form a **habit of close observation**, to study natural objects and the various characters of men. The exercises laid down in a preceding chapter on Object-Lessons are a useful preparation for descriptive compositions.

385. We have already remarked, when treating of narrations, that **brief descriptions** are constantly blended with them to great advantage, making them vivid and impressive. But **long descriptions** are not of very frequent occurrence, because they labor under serious difficulties ; the study of these difficulties and of the ways to overcome them will suggest the chief precepts for the management of descriptions.

386. **I. The first difficulty** is that it is impossible to express in words all that the eye would take in if the scene were actually witnessed.

This difficulty is obviated by making a judicious choice of the **salient features** of the scene. For, in reality, when we behold a landscape, for example, the mind does not pay attention to all the particulars presented to the eye ; it notices distinctly a few striking points, and sees the rest vaguely or not at all. Hence we learn that the great art of description, as of painting and drawing, consists chiefly in the skilful selection of those very items which the eye would rest on if the whole scene were present. We may apply to description what Macaulay remarks of history:

“No history and no picture can present us with the whole truth ; but those are the best pictures and the best histories which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole. . . . An outline scrawled with a pen which seizes the marked features of a countenance will give a much stronger idea of it than a bad painting in oils. Yet the worst painting in oils that ever hung in Somerset House resembles the original in many more particulars.”—*Essays, History.*

Though Macaulay's practical use of this principle is not always defensible, the principle itself is universally acknowledged.

387. Another point of comparison between history and painting is likewise applicable to description:

"History has its foreground and its background, and it is principally in the management of its perspective that one artist differs from another. Some events must be represented on a large scale, others diminished; the great majority will be lost in the dimness of the horizon, and a general idea of their joint effect will be given by a few slight touches."—*Id.*

So in description a few objects will be **fully dwelt upon**, others **briefly pointed out**, and the rest will be suggested by some general terms.

388. We quote as an **example** of this process a passage of Washington Irving's *Sketch-Book* in which he describes his first landing in England:

"It was a fine sunny morning when the thrilling cry of 'Land!' was given from the masthead. None but those who have experienced it can form an idea of the delicious throng of sensations which rush into an American's bosom when he first comes in sight of Europe. There is a volume of associations with the very name. It is the land of promise, teeming with everything of which his childhood has heard or on which his studious years have pondered.

"From that time until the moment of arrival it was all feverish excitement. The ships-of-war that prowled like guardian giants along the coast, the headlands of Ireland stretching out into the Channel, the Welsh mountains towering into the clouds—all were objects of intense interest. As we sailed up the Mersey I reconnoitred the shores with a telescope. My eye dwelt with delight on neat cottages with their trim shrubberies and green grass plots. I saw the mouldering ruin of an abbey overrun with ivy, and the taper spire of a village church rising from the brow of a neighboring hill. All were characteristic of England.

"The tide and wind were so favorable that the ship was enabled

to come at once to the pier. It was thronged with people, some idle lookers-on, others eager expectants of friends or relatives. I could distinguish the merchant to whom the ship was consigned; I knew him by his calculating brow and restless air. His hands were thrust into his pockets; he was whistling thoughtfully, and walking to and fro, a small space having been accorded him by the crowd in deference to his temporary importance. There were repeated cheerings and salutations interchanged between the shore and the ship as friends happened to recognize each other.

"All was now hurry and bustle—the meetings of acquaintances, the greetings of friends, the consultations of men of business. I alone was solitary and idle. I had no friend to meet, no cheering to receive. I stepped upon the land of my forefathers, but felt that I was a stranger in the land."

389. The same happy selection of circumstances may be noticed in his description of a poor man's funeral in the sketch entitled "The Widow and her Son," and in the following pen-picture by Longfellow:

"The first snow came. How beautiful it was, falling so silently all day long, all night long, on the mountains, on the meadows, on the roofs of the living, on the graves of the dead! All white save the river, that marked its course by a winding black line across the landscape; and the leafless trees, that against the leaden sky now revealed more fully the wonderful beauty and intricacies of their branches. What silence, too, came with the snow, and what seclusion! Every sound was muffled, every noise changed to something soft and musical. No more tramping hoofs, no more rattling wheels! Only the chiming sleigh-bells, beating as swift and merrily as the hearts of children."

390. II. The second difficulty arises from the fact that a description, unlike a painting, can present only one feature at a time. To realize the whole scene the reader must exert himself and group the various features in his imagination. Now, ordinary readers are not apt to take so much trouble, unless they feel an unusual interest in the

scene presented ; they soon fail to follow the guidance of the writer, the scene becomes confused, and all effort to follow the description is abandoned.

391. **One means of removing** this inconvenience is never to attempt a long description, except when sufficient attention has been aroused, either by the importance of the matter itself or by some special sympathy or curiosity awakened in the reader. The main points, then, to be studied in this connection are :

1. To see by what process we can arouse the reader's attention ; and especially,
2. To study how we can lessen the strain on his imagination.

392. 1. **To arouse attention** we may show the importance of conceiving the scene distinctly ; we may also enlist the feelings of the reader in our subject. Nothing is more conducive to attention than a deep interest felt in the objects described. Whatever will inspire sympathy, love, affection, or any of the gentler emotions or stronger passions, will quicken the imagination to realize the scene described. We may instance the lengthy description of Westminster Abbey in Irving's *Sketch-Book*. The reflections introduced at every step sustain the attention amid scenes which it is difficult to delineate in a striking manner. Instead of such reflections as Irving introduces in that description, we may keep the reader's sympathies enlisted in a subject by viewing it in connection with one of the persons or characters in whom special interest is felt. Thus Irving describes the scene at the landing of Columbus as seen by that hero ; and Abbott, the various phases of the battle of Waterloo as observed by Napoleon. Thus, too, Homer describes the chief Grecian heroes through the lips of Helen, who points them out to Priam from the top of the Trojan walls.

393. 2. **To lessen the exertion** required of the reader's imagination several means may be suggested :

(a) Place the reader in a **favorable position** to observe the whole scene.

394. (b) **Begin with a striking feature**, or with a view of the general outline, and proceed next to fill up the scene in an orderly manner. Both these rules are well exemplified in this extract from Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* (vol. ii. b. iii. c. 6) :

"Nothing could be more grand than the view which met the eye from the area on the truncated summit of the pyramid. Toward the west stretched that bold barrier of porphyritic rock which nature has reared around the Valley of Mexico, with the huge Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl standing like two colossal sentinels to guard the entrance to the enchanted region. Far away to the east was seen the conical head of Orizaba soaring high into the clouds, and nearer the barren though beautifully-shaped Sierra de Malinche throwing its broad shadows over the plains of Tlascala. Three of these are volcanoes higher than the highest mountain peak in Europe, and shrouded in snows which never melt under the fierce sun of the tropics. At the foot of the spectator lay the sacred city of Cholula, with its bright towers and pinnacles sparkling in the sun, reposing amidst gardens and verdant groves, which then thickly studded the cultivated environs of the capital. Such was the magnificent prospect which met the gaze of the conquerors, and may still, with slight change, meet that of the modern traveller, as from the platform of the great pyramid his eye wanders over the fairest portion of the beautiful plateau of Puebla."

395. (c) Use all the **ornaments of style** that may please the imagination ; as Irving does in this description of a farm-yard :

"A great elm-tree spread its broad branches over it, at the foot of which bubbled up a spring of the softest and sweetest water, in a little well formed of a barrel, and then stole sparkling away through the grass to a neighboring brook that babbled along among the alders and dwarf willows. Hard by the farm house was

a vast barn that might have served for a church, every window and crevice of which seemed bursting forth with the treasures of the farm; the flail was busily resounding within it from morning to night; swallows and martins skimmed twittering about the eaves; and rows of pigeons, some with one eye turned up, as if watching the weather, some with their heads under their wings or buried in their bosoms, and others swelling and cooing and bowing about their dames, were enjoying the sunshine on the roof. Sleek, unwieldy porkers were grunting in the repose and abundance of their pens, whence sallied forth, now and then, troops of sucking pigs, as if to snuff the air. A stately squadron of snowy geese were riding in an adjoining pond, conveying whole fleets of ducks; regiments of turkeys were gobbling through the farm-yard, and guinea-fowls fretting about it, like ill-tempered house-wives, with their peevish, discontented cry. Before the barn-door strutted the gallant cock, that pattern of a husband, a warrior, and a fine gentleman, clapping his burnished wings and crowing in the pride and gladness of his heart—sometimes tearing up the earth with his feet, and then generously calling his ever-hungry family of wives and children to enjoy the rich morsel which he had discovered.”

396. (*d*) Let the **rule of unity**, necessary in all compositions, be strictly observed in every description—that is, let only one object be described, or let a variety of objects be united by one leading idea into a moral whole, the embodiment of one sentiment. Thus Bancroft, in his *History of the United States* (vol. ii. p. 266, old edition), describes the site where New York was afterwards built, and gives unity to all the leading parts by means of the one dominant idea of wildness; next (p. 268) he presents the site as it is now, as an embodiment of civilization.

397. (*e*) It is a great help, where it can be done, to introduce into a long description a **connected narrative** that will unite the various parts of the scene, as when a person is made to visit successively various portions of a landscape.

398. (*f*) Sometimes we may introduce brief narratives

of **incidents** or of historical reminiscences; at other times reflections of an agreeable or elevated kind. These precepts are exemplified in numerous passages of Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*, in particular in his description of the Valley of Mexico (vol. ii. p. 68).

399. The **style** in description should be concise: every word should add light to the picture, and no useless feature should be presented to the imagination. Still, description need not be bare of ornament; on the contrary, it may be richly adorned, as we have explained (No. 395). We add one instance in point from the pen of Fenimore Cooper, “Venice at Night”:

“The moon was at the height. Its rays fell in a flood on the swelling domes and massive roofs of Venice, while the margin of the town was brilliantly defined by the glittering bay. The natural and gorgeous setting was more than worthy of that picture of human magnificence; for at that moment, rich as was the Queen of the Adriatic in her works of art, the grandeur of her public monuments, the number and splendor of her palaces, and most else that the ingenuity and ambition of man could attempt, she was but secondary in the glories of the hour.

“Above was the firmament gemmed with worlds and sublime in immensity. Beneath lay the broad expanse of the Adriatic, endless to the eye, tranquil as the vault it reflected, and luminous with its borrowed light. Here and there a low island, reclaimed from the sea by the patient toil of a thousand years, dotted the lagunes, burdened by the group of some conventual dwellings, or picturesque with the modest roofs of a hamlet of the fishermen. Neither oar, nor song, nor laugh, nor flap of sail, nor jest of mariner disturbed the stillness. All in the near view was clothed in midnight loveliness, and all in the distance bespoke the solemnity of nature at peace. The city and the lagunes, the gulf and the dreamy Alps, the interminable plain of Lombardy and the blue void of heaven, lay alike in a common, and grand repose.”

400. **1st Exercise.**—Analyze various model passages of the best authors, noticing:

1. What object or aim the author wishes to attain ;
2. What features he has selected for distinct treatment, what others for a brief sketch ;
3. How he starts out ;
4. What order he follows in the development ;
5. What sentiments he has introduced ;
6. What special artifices he has used to excite interest, or to enable the reader to follow him with ease.
7. How naturally the description is introduced, and how naturally it is laid aside to return to the narration.

401. **2d Exercise.**—Compare the descriptions of the same or of analogous subjects as drawn by various great writers, noticing how the style will differ with the general aspect of their works. For instance, compare the Pestilence in Athens, by Thucydides (book ii.), with the London Pestilence of A.D. 1665 as described by Lingard (vol. vii. pp. 278–282), by De Foe (Chambers' *Cyclopædia of Literature*, vol. i. p. 621), by Armstrong (*id.* ii. p. 69).

402. **The study of description** is one of the best means of improving the style of narrations, and, in fact, of all literary compositions. It is to his remarkable descriptive power that Prescott, for instance, owes that special charm which makes him so popular among all classes of readers, so that children, who find unadorned history too dry for their taste, will pore over his pictured page as they would over a touching story. As one more specimen of the descriptive style of this author we will refer to the crossing of the Sierra (vol. ii. pp. 461–465).

403. **3d Exercise.**—Mention briefly the items you would select to describe a city, a village, river, picnic-ground, country—putting all the items in good order.

404. **4th Exercise.**—Point out the faults against order in this sketch, a description of a room :

1. The room is nearly square.
2. It is dark and unattractive, having but two small windows on the east side.
3. It is twenty-four feet long and twenty-two feet wide.
4. It is in the southeast corner of the building.
5. It is a low room, the ceiling being only nine feet from the floor.
6. It has a recess on the west side.
7. The walls are plastered.

405. **5th Exercise.**—Describe a pleasant scene in spring, a busy scene in a city, a pompous funeral, a scene of devotion in a church, a scene of distress, one of lively enjoyment, one of solemn grandeur.

ARTICLE II. DESCRIPTIONS OF CHARACTERS.

406. We mean by **descriptions of characters** the pointing-out of those peculiarities by which certain persons are distinguished from the generality of men. Such compositions are far less in use than descriptions of things ; but they are occasionally very appropriate in historical or fictitious works, and as beautiful, when skilfully drawn, as they are difficult to compose.

407. "The drawing of characters," says Blair, "is one of the most splendid and, at the same time, **one of the most difficult ornaments of historical composition.** For characters are generally considered as professed exhibitions of fine writing; and an historian who seeks to shine in them is frequently in danger of carrying refinement to excess from a desire of appearing very profound and penetrating. He brings together so many contrasts and subtile oppositions of qualities that we are rather dazzled with sparkling expressions than entertained with any clear conception of a human charac-

ter. A writer who would characterize in an instructive and masterly manner should be simple in his style and should avoid all quaintness and affectation; at the same time not contenting himself with giving us general outlines only, but descending into those peculiarities which mark a character in its most strong and distinctive features." —*Blair*, Lect. xxxvi.

408. There are **two kinds** of these descriptions: one depicts *general* and one *individual* characters. The latter describes a real or imaginary person by a multiplicity of traits; the former presents one trait only, common to a whole class of men. The former usually occurs in the course of histories, biographies, or novels; of the latter kind Theophrastus among the ancients has left us some good specimens. Marshall, in his *Comedy of Convocation*, gives us some general characters as elegant as they are unpretending. See also "The Bashful Man" (*Models of English Lit.*, p. 59).

409. One of the most admired descriptions of **individual character** is that of the great Carthaginian general Hannibal, which occurs in the twenty-first book of Livy's history of Rome; another, that of Catiline in Sallust's history of that depraved Roman (n. 5). The following by Walter Scott is distinct and truthful:

"**Robespierre** possessed this advantage over Danton, that he did not seem to seek for wealth, either for hoarding or expending, but lived in strict and economical retirement, to justify the name of the 'Incorruptible' with which he was honored by his partisans. He appears to have possessed little talent, saving a deep fund of hypocrisy, considerable powers of sophistry, and a cold, exaggerated strain of oratory as foreign to a good taste as the measures he recommended were to ordinary humanity. It seemed wonderful that even the seething and boiling of the revolutionary caldron should have sent up from the bottom, and long supported on the surface, a thing so miserably void of claims to public distinction; but Robespierre had to impose upon the minds of the vulgar, and he knew

how to beguile them by accommodating his flattery to their passions and scale of understanding, and by acts of cunning and hypocrisy, which weigh more with the multitude than the words of eloquence or the arguments of wisdom. The people listened as to their Cicero when he twanged out his apostrophes of 'Pauvre Peuple, Peuple vertueux!' and hastened to execute whatever came recommended by such honeyed phrases, though devised by the worst of men for the worst and most inhuman of purposes," etc.

410. The **general character is exemplified** in this selection from Marshall's *Comedy of Convocation*:

"**The Good and Easy Clergyman** was a more agreeable type, and one which he had frequent opportunities of studying. One of this school was incumbent of a large and fashionable chapel not half a mile from his own parish church. His voice and manner were so tender that he seemed to be always on the point of making everybody an offer of marriage. His life appeared to glide away in a mild and amiable conflict between the claims of piety and good breeding. Sometimes his eye would kindle, and you would have said he was going to launch a rebuke against some popular sin; but good taste came promptly to the rescue, and the sinner's sensibility was greatly spared. His sermons were generally a tender panegyric of the natural virtues. He considered them in every aspect, and drew such ravishing pictures of the 'devoted mother,' or 'the Christian at home,' or 'the good parent's reward,' that people said his sermons were as good as a novel; and so they were. He was quite sure he never once alluded to hell during his whole career," etc.

411. Rules for the Description of Characters.

1st Rule.—They should present the individual, or the class of persons described, by **striking traits** which will enable the reader to form a lively and distinct conception of the subject.

2d Rule.—These traits of character must be **consistent with one another**, and the whole picture must be true to nature, so that the highest probability be attained.

3d Rule.—Above all, the characters of real persons must be presented with strict **regard to truth**. For truth is the

chief quality of all historical compositions; and no good can come to mankind from falsehood and misrepresentation. And still it is certain that many descriptions of character, occurring in works of great reputation, are very untruthful, often very unjust to the persons described.

412. There are **two chief causes** of this defect. The first is the difficulty of finding out the truth. It is hard enough for us to understand fully those with whom we daily converse, and to picture them to others in their true light without exaggerating or lessening their merit; it is far more difficult to do so with persons who lived in distant ages and in foreign lands. The second source of difficulty lies in the fact that a character drawn with strict regard for the truth is apt to be too tame for the taste of ordinary readers. Most persons, especially the uneducated, want what is striking and sensational in literature. It is easy enough to pander to such taste and to draw flashy portraits in the brightest colors, or, like Carlyle, "to give sketches alternately in chalk or charcoal, that exhibit his saints and his demons, now in ghastliest white and then in the most appalling blackness" (President Porter, *Books and Reading*, p. 162). But to qualify discreetly our praise and blame, to trace those delicate lineaments of the mind and heart which make up a man's individual character, is a task which few can successfully accomplish.

413. How far a straining after effect has injured the truthfulness of historical writings is well explained by President Porter:

"The fact deserves notice in this connection that, of late, professed historians have indulged somewhat freely in romancing, and so in a sense turned their histories into quasi-historical novels; especially when they attempt to give elaborate and eloquent portraits of their leading personages, in which the most lavish use is made of effective epithets and pointed antitheses," etc.—*Id.*

414. As much light may be thrown upon one character by comparing or contrasting it with another, we sometimes meet with **Parallel Characters**, as such descriptions are called. In these, two characters are explained at the same time, every trait in the one being compared with an analogous trait in the other.

415. The following is a specimen of this kind, as elegant in style as it is judicious in thought.

"Homer and Virgil compared":

"Homer was the greater genius, Virgil the better artist. In one we most admire the man, in the other the work, Homer hurries and transports us with a commanding impetuosity, Virgil leads us with attractive majesty. Homer scatters with a generous profusion, Virgil bestows with a careful magnificence. Homer, like the Nile, pours out his riches with a boundless overflow; Virgil, like a river in its banks, with a gentle and constant stream. When we behold their battles, methinks the two poets resemble the heroes they celebrate: Homer, boundless and irresistible as Achilles, bears all before him, and shines more and more as the tumult increases; Virgil, calmly daring like Æneas, appears undisturbed in the midst of the action, disposes all about him, and conquers with tranquillity. And when we look upon their machines, Homer seems like his own Jupiter in his terrors shaking Olympus, scattering the lightnings and firing the heavens; Virgil, like the same power in his benevolence, counselling with the gods, laying plans for empires, and regularly ordering his whole creation."—*Pope.*

See a similar passage with which Blair concludes Lecture xliii. The ancients have left us admirable models of parallel characters; for instance, the comparison between Cæsar and Cato in Sallust's history of Catiline's Conspiracy (liv.)

416. To facilitate the writing of exercises in this species of composition attention is called to the following **items**:

1. A general appreciation of the person's worth.
2. His race, family, age, fortune, station, resources.

3. Bodily aspect, general bearing, complexion, looks, voice, gesture, manners.
4. Qualities of mind and heart, virtues, vices, inclinations.
5. Intercourse with superiors, equals, inferiors, relations, friends, enemies, strangers.
6. Influences acting on him, and exerted by him on others. Etc.

For an analysis of Parallel Characters see "Socrates and Seneca," in *Zanders' Outlines of Composition* (p. 167).

417. Exercises:

- 1 Write a general character of a fop, a troublesome friend, a politician, a spendthrift, a miser. (Compare Saxe's "My Familiar.")
2. Write an individual character of Washington, Napoleon I., St. Francis Xavier, Mary Queen of Scots.
3. Write a contrast between a rich man and a poor man from the cradle to the grave.

CHAPTER V.

ESSAYS.

418. **Essays** are attempts to state one's own reflections upon a given subject. They are of different lengths and kinds, ranging from learned treatises to the first attempts of a school-boy at putting his own thoughts on paper. **As school exercises**, to be beneficial they require careful management. Nothing is easier than for a teacher to tell a pupil to write an essay "On the beautiful" or "On the sublime," etc.; but nothing is more difficult for a pupil than, unassisted, to carry out such an order. Or, if he finds no difficulty in the task, it is perhaps owing to the fact that sense and nonsense are equally welcome to his youthful mind, provided he can cover a few pages of foolscap with well-sounding sentences.

419. **The main difficulty** in this matter is that the boy is thus called upon to express his thoughts on a subject on which he has no clear thoughts to express, and he has not been instructed how to gather thoughts for himself. The first step, therefore, in treating of essay-writing is to teach pupils how to collect appropriate thoughts by a thorough study of the subject assigned.

420. We have said **appropriate thoughts**, for we wish to warn both teachers and learners against an error which has gained ground in our day, and which directs pupils to write down any thought that comes to their minds, no matter how little it be to the point. "At first," says a modern rhetorician, "aim only at copiousness, correcting no faults

except those of grammar and punctuation, and encouraging the pupil to write freely whatever thoughts come up about the subject, and in whatever order they happen to come up." This will teach fluency, no doubt, but not excellence of composition. Let all remember that good sense is ever the foundation of literary success; that, as Quintilian remarks, nothing but what is excellent should be proposed for the imitation of the young, and children should learn nothing which they are afterwards to unlearn (b. i. c. i. 4, 5). A boy who can write ten lines of good sense on a given subject is really further advanced in composition than one who can dash off a hundred lines of mixed sense and nonsense. The first task, then, is to collect appropriate thoughts.

ARTICLE I. COLLECTING APPROPRIATE THOUGHTS.

421. **To study a subject** is to consider carefully all that belongs to that subject, its nature and its name, its causes and its effects, its circumstances and its antecedents, its resemblance to other subjects or its contrast with them; recalling also to mind, or reading, what others have done or said concerning the matter in question, etc., etc.

These are called by rhetoricians the **topics of thoughts**; they are fully explained in the study of oratory (see *Art of Oratorical Composition*, b. ii. "On the Invention of Thought"). We shall confine ourselves here to a brief explanation of them.

§ 1. *The Nature and Name of the Subject.*

422. When we begin to study a subject **four considerations** are apt at once to present themselves: 1. What is really meant by the subject—its *definition*; 2. What class of things it belongs to—its *genus or kind*; 3. Of what

portions it is made up—the *enumeration* of its parts; 4. The *name* by which it is called.

423. 1. A **definition** is a brief explanation stating what is meant by the subject, and how it is distinguished from all others. This is often the most important of all the topics. It makes the writer conceive a clear idea of his subject, and enables him to write a sensible explanation of the same. Thus the essay "On Honor," in the *Guardian*, is mostly taken up with the discussion of the true idea or definition of 'Honor'; that "On Modesty," in the *Spectator*, discusses the definitions of 'Modesty,' of 'Assurance,' and of 'Impudence'; while Addison begins his essay "On Cheerfulness," in the same paper, by a brief explanation of what 'Cheerfulness' is, showing how it differs from 'Mirth,' with which unreflecting minds often confound it.

"I have always preferred cheerfulness to mirth. The latter I consider as an act, the former as a habit of the mind. Mirth is short and transient, cheerfulness fixed and permanent. Those are often raised into the greatest transports of mirth who are subject to the greatest depressions of melancholy. On the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind such exquisite gladness, prevents us from falling into any depths of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of lightning, that breaks through a gloom of clouds and glitters for a moment; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of daylight in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity."

These last lines show how figures may be used to set off a definition to advantage.

424. 2. **Genus or Kind.**—It is often useful to examine to what kind or class of things the subject belongs. Thus Cardinal Wiseman, in his essay "On the Miracles of the New Testament," shows how these may be viewed either as exhibitions of Christ's power, proving that he was God; or as works of mercy, wrought to relieve the sufferings of men; or as teachings of certain truths, as when He healed

the paralytic to prove that a man may receive from God the power to forgive sin.

425. 3. **Enumeration of Parts.**—This topic opens a wide field for the development of thought. In our chapter on "Object-Lessons" we have suggested a useful exercise, which consists in pointing out the parts of an object presented to the senses (b. i. c. i. a. 2). A similar process may often be applied to moral subjects. Thus Henry Giles begins his essay "On the Worth of Liberty" with this paragraph:

"What is the worth of liberty? Within the limits of this inquiry all that I propose to say on the present occasion will be confined. Of course I refer mainly to civil liberty, although I do not exclude all reference to liberty in its more spiritual relations. I do not attempt to define liberty either civil or moral. What civil liberty is we all practically comprehend; and if we do not, defining it would not enable us. I will simply mention the following as a few of the attributes that belong to it: supremacy of the law; equality of all before the law; the representation of all in the enactment or changes of the law. To these we may add the provisions which wisdom and experience suggest by which such conditions can be most thoroughly attained and most inviolately preserved."

In the last lines he enumerates the attributes or moral parts which make up liberty. He would have done well to begin with a good definition of liberty; for it is not true that "we all practically comprehend what civil liberty" or any other kind of liberty is. Many think it is the absence of all restraint, whereas it is only the absence of all undue restraint.

426. 4. **Name.**—Sometimes the very name of the subject will suggest some appropriate thoughts. For instance, if the subject were "The United States, a Land of True Liberty," the name 'United States' may remind us that the wisdom of our forefathers knew how to combine in the

Union all the advantages of a strong government, respected by all the world, with most of the advantages of independent legislation for the different States of the Union, so that every part of the land may enjoy as large a share of independence as is compatible with the common good.

§ 2. *Causes and Effects.*

427. 1. **Causes.**—The author of the essay "On Cheerfulness," in the *Spectator*, raises the question, what causes produce this happy disposition in the mind, and devotes to these causes a considerable portion of his paper. The consideration of the causes throws much light on every kind of subjects. The essay "On Gratitude," in the *Tatler*, examines in particular the reasons why we should be grateful to the Creator:

"If gratitude is due from man to man, how much more from man to his Maker? The Supreme Being does not only confer on us those bounties which proceed more immediately from His hand, but even those benefits which are conveyed to us by others. Every blessing we enjoy, by what means soever it may be derived upon us, is the gift of Him who is the great Author of good and Father of mercies."

The essay of Addison "On Laughter," in the *Spectator* (No. 52), is almost entirely drawn from the topic of causes.

428. 2. **Effects.**—Effects suggest still more abundant thoughts, and such as are more easy of development. Often a whole essay is nothing more than a description of effects. Such is an essay in the *Spectator* "On the Advantages of a Good Education," and one in the *Rambler* "On the Disadvantages of a Bad Education."

Exercise.—Write an essay on bad company, on intemperance, on war, on music, on steam, on electricity, drawing all the thoughts from this one topic of effects.

§ 3. *Circumstances and Antecedents.*

429. 1. **Circumstances.**—Every subject may be viewed as connected with various circumstances, under which it exists or may be supposed to exist. For instance, if I am to write an essay on "Our National Banner," I may speak of it as displayed in war and in peace, on land and on sea, at home and abroad, and in various events of our national history. If I write on "Water," I may view it in the rain, in the ocean, in the destructive torrent, in the quiet stream, in the bubbling brook, in the refreshing spring, in the clouds of heaven, in the form of falling snow or of the floating iceberg, etc.

"How common, and yet how beautiful and how pure, is a drop of water! See it as it issues from the rock to supply the spring and the stream below. See how its meanderings through the plains and its torrents over the cliffs add to the richness and the beauty of the landscape. Look into a factory standing by a waterfall, in which every drop is faithful to perform its part, and hear the groaning and rustling of the wheels, the clattering of shuttles, and the buzz of spindles, which, under the direction of their fair attendants, are supplying myriads of purchasers with fabrics from the cotton-plant, the sheep, and the silkworm."

430. **Exercise.**—Describe a good-natured man, a peevish man; the display of heroism, of cowardice; the power of music, of eloquence viewed in various circumstances or situations.

431. 2. **Antecedents.**—It may often be useful in an essay to describe what a man or a thing was at a former time, in order to conjecture thence what may be expected from the same on future occasions. Thus in an essay "On the Early Propagation of Christianity," I may invite the reader to go back in spirit and consider that those wonderful men, the Apostles, who established so sublime a religion in so many lands, had been ignorant and timid fishermen, and

that they could never have accomplished their great mission without the assistance of a higher power, that of God Himself.

From this same topic an essay on Hume, in the *Dublin Review* for May, 1842, shows that this writer was utterly unqualified by his antecedents to become the historian of England, and therefore that truth cannot be expected from such a source.

§ 4. *Resemblance and Contrast.*

432. One of the readiest means to understand a subject clearly and to explain it to others is to compare it with other matters and trace out certain points of resemblance or opposition.

1. **Resemblance.**—We may take as an example the labors of an educator, and compare them with those of the gardener, who raises young plants. The consideration of what the latter does to foster, to protect from harm, to quicken, to prune, etc., the objects of his assiduous care, may suggest many analogous duties incumbent on the educator of human hearts and minds. Again, the enriching of the soul for heaven may be compared to advantage with the indefatigable industry of merchants, who gather wealth for earth, etc.

Our American essayist, E. P. Whipple, in his essay "On Words," illustrates the various styles of English writers by playfully comparing them to various kinds of soldiers.

"Words are more effective when arranged in that order called style. The great secret of a good style, we are told, is to have proper words in proper places. To marshal one's verbal battalions in such order that they may bear at once upon all quarters of a subject is certainly a great art. This is done in different ways. . . . The tread of Johnson's style is heavy and sonorous, resembling that of an elephant or a mail-clad warrior. He is fond of levelling an object

by a polysyllabic battering-ram. Burke's words are continually practising the broad-sword exercise and sweeping down adversaries at every stroke. Arbuthnot 'plays his weapon like a tongue of flame.' Addison draws up his light infantry in orderly array, and marches through sentence after sentence without having his ranks disordered or his line broken," etc.

Addison, in the 153d number of the *Tatler*, compared different characters in conversation to different instruments of music.

433. 2. **Contrast.**—Many subjects may be appropriately illustrated by contrasting them with their opposites, as when modesty is inculcated by making boastfulness odious, when the useful citizen is praised by contrasting him with a man who is a burden to the state. Thus Addison, in the *Guardian* (No. 111), makes the indolence of the British youth of his day odious by contrasting it with the love of knowledge displayed by Julius Cæsar, by Alexander the Great, and by King Solomon.

§ 5. *Authorities and Examples.*

434. Lastly, it may be very useful to consider what others have said and done in connection with the subject on which we are to write. For this purpose we must study authorities and examples.

1. **Authorities** are the sayings of men whose word inspires confidence. Now, though an essay-writer is supposed to give his own views on the subject before him, he is not expected to form those views without considering what thoughtful and well-informed men have said on the same matter. He will exhibit a pleasing modesty by leaning on the judgment of others; and the authorities quoted, besides showing him to be possessed of learning, will often inspire much more confidence than his own speculations could command. An appropriate quotation of some excel-

lent authority is like a gem in a composition, adding considerably to its brilliancy and its real value. Notice the happy effect of this topic in the following passage of Washington Irving:

"How vain, how fleeting, how uncertain are all those gaudy bubbles after which we are panting and toiling in this world of fair delusion! The wealth which the miser has amassed with so many weary days, so many sleepless nights, a spendthrift heir may squander away in joyless prodigality. The noblest monuments which pride has ever reared to perpetuate a name the hand of time will shortly tumble into ruins, and even the brightest laurels gained by feats of arms may wither and be for ever blighted by the chilling neglect of mankind. 'How many illustrious heroes,' says the good Boethius, 'who were once the pride and glory of the age, has the silence of historians buried in oblivion!' And this it was that induced the Spartans, when they went to battle, to sacrifice to the Muses, supplicating that their achievements should be worthily recorded. 'Had not Homer tuned his lofty lyre,' observes the elegant Cicero, 'the valor of Achilles had remained unsung.'"

435. 2. **Examples** are remarkable actions of great men proposed for imitation, or referred to as confirming our opinion. Addison, in the *Tatler* (No. 133), begins his essay "On Silence" thus: "Silence is something more magnificent and sublime than the most noble and expressive eloquence, and is, on many occasions, an indication of a great mind." He then refers to several facts of illustrious personages to confirm his proposition, in particular to the silence of the Son of God under calumny and defamation.

ARTICLE II. VARIOUS KINDS OF ESSAYS.

436. The topics just explained will furnish appropriate thoughts for every kind of essays. But the use of these topics, and the treatment and development of them, will differ considerably for the various kinds.

§ 1. *School Essays.*

437. Essays have been written as **school exercises** from time immemorial. The ancient rhetorician Aphthonius explains them with some detail, and in a manner well suited to develop in the student habits of orderly and sensible composition. He proposes to the pupils what he calls a *chria* (*Χρεία*)—that is, a pregnant or suggestive sentence, borrowed from some author and developed by certain rules. There are three species of this *chria*:

438. (a) The **verbal chria** proposes a wise maxim, as would be the advice Shakspeare puts on the lips of Wolsey:

“Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition.”

439. (b) The **historical chria** proposes a fact which implies, though it does not express, an important lesson; as:

“Pythagoras required of his disciples that, to learn how to speak, they should be silent for five years.”

440. (c) The **mixed chria** proposes a fact containing the statement of a maxim; as:

“The mother of the Gracchi exhibited no gold nor pearls; but pointing to her young boys she said, ‘These are my jewels.’”

441. To develop any of these species of *chria* Aphthonius proposes **eight heads** or considerations:

1. A *Commendation* of the sentence proposed, or of its author, by way of introduction. Let it be brief and modest.
2. A *Paraphrase*, expressing the meaning of the sentence in other words, with some further development or explanation.
3. The *Cause* or reason why the maxim is true, or why the fact is such as stated.

4. *Resemblance*, illustrating by comparison with similar things.
5. *Contrast*, illustrating by comparison with contrary things.
6. *Examples*.
7. *Testimonies* or authorities.
8. *Conclusion* addressed to the mind or the heart of the reader. Care should be taken that the transition from one point to another appear natural.

442. One **advantage** derived from so regular an exercise is that the young learn to think and write in an orderly manner, which result is, or should be, one of the great aims of all literary education; for it is one of the chief elements of literary excellence. Still, it is not necessary that the same amount of regularity be observed in all essays, whether written as school exercises or not.

443. There is, besides the regular *chria*, the free or **loose chria**, as some rhetoricians call it, which allows much more variety of arrangement. Sometimes one or two topics will supply a sufficient amount of appropriate thought, and there is a special advantage in fully developing a few points. In fact, it may be laid down as a rule that one consideration well developed will produce a more effective composition than a great number of separate reflections, each briefly expressed. If we analyze the essays of great writers we shall find that they usually confine their treatment of a subject to few topics.

444. **Example 1.**—Let us consider how Blair does this in his third lecture on Rhetoric. In it he treats of four subjects, giving us, as it were, four different essays, on “Criticism,” on “Genius,” on the “Pleasures of Taste,” and on “Sublimity in Objects.”

On *Criticism*, he examines its definition and its nature.

On *Genius*, its nature and a comparison between Genius and Taste.

On the *Pleasures of Taste*, he considers the sources of those pleasures and the authority of Addison.

On *Sublimity in Objects*, the nature and the sources of sublimity.

445. **Example 2.**—His fourteenth lecture is "On Figurative Language." After some introductory remarks he treats:

1. Of the *cause* or origin and of the *nature* of figures.
2. Of the *circumstances* of time, showing that language is most figurative in early ages.
3. Of the *effects* or advantages of figures.
4. He *enumerates* and explains various kinds of figures.

(On Blair's treatment of the topics, see *Art of Oratorical Composition*, 127.)

446. Let the student, then, apply to the study of his subject such topics as he thinks may give him suitable thoughts. He will do well to examine all the topics, and then **select for treatment** those thoughts which appear most appropriate and most within his power of treatment. Let him note in the margin the topic he is developing and the various thoughts suggested by it. For instance, if, with Blair, he considers the nature and the sources of sublimity, let him write in the margin 'Nature,' and then explain what he has to say on that topic; further on he will write 'Sources,' and then mark, in the order in which he treats them, the different sources, 'Obscurity,' 'Disorder,' 'Moral Sublimity,' and, lastly, the general source, the 'Foundation of the Sublime.'

447. With pupils not sufficiently advanced the teacher may usefully point out the sources which are most likely to furnish appropriate thoughts, and even make out a

sketch to be developed by them, adding special hints for the development of every part.

If he assigns an **essay upon a sensible object**, he will do well to remind the pupils of what has been explained in the chapter on "Object-Lessons," and lay down as a plan the division suggested in Exercise I. of Lesson VI.

It will be proper to begin with such sensible objects as are well known to the students, or on which they can gather information from books put at their disposal.

448. Next will come insensible or **abstract subjects**, such as virtues and vices—for instance, diligence or sloth, courage or cowardice, generosity or selfishness. For the treatment of these the following **plan** may be suggested:

1. Definition or description of the virtue or vice;
2. Causes in which it originates;
3. Circumstances in which it is apt to be exhibited;
4. Effects which it produces;
5. Comparisons and contrasts;
6. Authorities and examples.

For the thorough treatment of Order or Arrangement we must refer the student to our *Art of Oratorical Composition* (book iii.)

§ 2. *Magazine Articles.*

449. Modern literature abounds in essays. They fill the pages of our Quarterly Reviews, Monthly Magazines, Weekly and Daily Papers in endless variety and profusion. Many **essays in periodicals** are written with great ability, being the productions of cultivated minds, who strive to condense and to set forth with clearness, for the benefit of the general reader, what has cost them years, perhaps, of study and meditation. But the vast majority of periodical articles are compositions of a very different kind. Even when written by authors of considerable reputation they

are dashed off in haste with a view to excite the interest and to please the craving for novelty of the thoughtless public.

450. As a natural consequence most periodical essays are both **unreliable in matter and defective in form**: far from being good models for the imitation of the young, they falsify taste by preferring apparent to real excellences.

"A magazine," says Macaulay, "is certainly a delightful invention for a very idle or a very busy man. He is not compelled to complete his plan or adhere to his subject. He may ramble as far as he is inclined, and stop as soon as he is tired. No one takes the trouble to recollect his contradictory opinions or his unredeemed pledges. He may be as superficial, as inconsistent, and as careless as he chooses" (*Essays*, "Athenian Orators").

451. **Macaulay's Essays** are striking proofs of these assertions. They contain, indeed, an abundance of original thoughts, suggestive and bold speculations, of real facts and plausible theories; but in many of them truth is blended with fiction, facts are distorted and exaggerated, as if the author were sometimes trying to see to what extent an able pen can trifle with the convictions of ages and still remain within the sphere of plausible argumentation.

452. One of the worst features of periodical essays is that **order**, so essential to real beauty of composition, is much neglected in them, and the minds both of readers and writers lose all power of regular development of thought. Even Orestes A. Brownson, probably the greatest of American essayists, acknowledged in his *Republic* that constant essay-writing had disqualified him for the composition of a regular treatise.

In order that essay-writing may be truly beneficial, systematic arrangement and development must ever be made a prominent point in it, as in all other species of composition. With these cautions great benefit may be derived

from the study of our leading essayists, whose productions constitute a rich and important portion of English literature.

453. But while order is necessary in essays, we can lay down **no definite plan** upon which such composition should be written. Maturer minds, at least, must be allowed considerable liberty. Let them study the matter thoroughly and then draw up such a plan in each case as will display their matter to the best advantage. For the study of such power of combination and division we must refer them to the *Art of Oratorical Composition* (book iii.) An essay is in many respects similar to an oration, and we can conceive no better precepts for it than those which ancient and modern rhetoricians have laid down for oratorical composition. Periodical essays may be critical, philosophical, historical, or political.

§ 3. *Critical Essays.*

454. Two things require special explanation in connection with **critical essays**: 1. The general laws of criticism; and 2. The special points to which the critic should attend in composing his essay.

455. **I. General Laws of Criticism.**

The critic is not to be guided by his individual preferences, his likes and dislikes; but he is to judge of literature by the **universally received laws of composition**. These precepts are not the arbitrary dictates of any man or any body of men, but the systematized expression of the judgments pronounced by the most judicious minds in the civilized world, and confirmed by the approbation of many generations. Every new work on Rhetoric or Belles-Lettres is but another attempt to restate those laws or precepts with new illustrations and with particular applica-

tion to special circumstances. In our language Alexander Pope has written a beautiful poetical essay, showing, both by his own example and by his judicious precepts, how the laws of composition are to be applied by the critic. His little work deserves careful study ; but we must here confine ourselves to those directions which are most necessary for the composition of critical essays.

456. **The chief laws of criticism are these:**

1. Let the critic consider with care what is the **real value of the work** he undertakes to criticise. For this purpose it will be useful to compare it with other works written on the same subject, and see in what respects it is superior. Publications which are not, in some important particulars, superior to all other works already existing in the same language are not deserving of recommendation.

457. 2. In judging of the value of a recent work let the critic not be misled by the manner in which it has been received by the press or the general public. The **first welcome given to a book** is not always the result of genuine admiration. "Puffers," says Macaulay, "are a class of people who have more than once talked the people into the most absurd errors, but who surely never played a more curious or more difficult trick than when they passed Mr. Robert Montgomery off upon the world as a great poet." But one of his poems had already gone through eleven editions before Macaulay, by his critique in the *Edinburgh Review* (April, 1830), stemmed the tide of general admiration.

458. 3. Nor should the critic allow himself to be captivated by the **fashions of the day**, or by the mannerism of a prevalent school of art. Acknowledging what is really good in such fashions, which are often reactions against other species of depraved taste, he should judge of per-

fection by the old universal standard and the undoubted maxims of genuine taste.

459. 4. Still, he should not be so **pedantic** as to refuse to see real beauties because marred by some flagrant violations of admitted rules. Shakspeare and others have uncommon beauties mixed with great defects. To reject both were not reasonable ; to praise both is not judicious. It is the part of the critic carefully to draw the line between what is good and what is bad.

460. 5. In writing the critique of a commendable composition, more trouble should generally be taken to bring to view its **excellences** than its **shortcomings**. Students in their essays should occupy themselves almost exclusively in showing forth what is really worthy of approbation. To do so will practise their skill and improve their appreciation of the beautiful.

461. 6. Let praise or blame be given with **due moderation**.

" Avoid extremes ; and shun the fault of such
Who still are pleased too little or too much.
At every trifle scorn to take offence,
That always shows great pride or little sense :
Those heads or stomachs are not sure the best
Which nauseate all and nothing can digest.
Yet let not each gay turn thy rapture move :
For fools admire, but men of sense approve ;
As things seem large which we through mists descry,
Dulness is ever apt to magnify."

—*Pope's Essay on Criticism.*

462. 7. When defects are to be pointed out let it be done with **politeness** and delicacy of speech, so as not to wound susceptibilities more than is necessary. Still, there are occasions when more emphasis is required to counteract the evil which violations of good taste would otherwise produce. Whatever would do injury to religion or moral-

ity should be openly condemned ; and it will generally be found that what is hurtful to these is at the same time a departure from true artistic beauty.

463. 8. Lastly, we must guard the critic against an odious but not uncommon mistake—that of **condemning what he does not thoroughly understand.**

“ But you who seek to give and merit fame,
And justly bear a critic's noble name,
Be sure yourself and your own reach to know,
How far your genius, taste, and learning go ;
Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet,
And mark that point where sense and dulness meet.”

—*Id.*

464. II. The composition of a critical essay.

It is useful to begin by analyzing the work which is to be criticised, and writing a clear **synopsis** of the same. (See the precepts for Analysis and Synopsis in the *Art of Oratorical Composition*, book iii. c. iv.) This synopsis need not form a part of the critical essay ; but it will aid the writer to understand thoroughly the subject of his criticism. In preparing it he will notice in particular the following points :

1. What the author criticised pretends to prove or to explain, or what appears to be the purpose of his work.
2. What are the difficulties which he has had to overcome.
3. How he enters upon his subject ; what proposition he lays down, if any ; what process he chiefly adopts—whether narrating, discussing, theorizing, etc.
4. What line of thought he follows from the beginning to the end of his composition.
5. What original thoughts occur in the course of the work.

6. To what species of composition the work belongs.

7. What appears to be its chief merit in thoughts, style, etc.

8. How far it accomplishes the purpose for which it was written.

465. The writer should carefully **examine the rules** which rhetoricians have laid down for the species of composition to which the work criticised belongs, and see how they are followed by the author.

After these preparations he will proceed to write the **plan** of his own criticism ; in doing which he may profit by the following suggestions :

1. It is often appropriate to begin with a general appreciation of the work criticised ; this appreciation should be expressed with accuracy, in a spirit of moderation, and usually of kindness.

2. After this, and sometimes before it, the principles should be explained upon which the criticism is based. If these principles are not generally recognized they should be supported by proofs drawn from reason or from authority.

3. In proceeding to details a lucid order should be followed. It is usually proper to treat first of those items for which the work criticised deserves praise ; then to proceed, with expressions of regret, to those items which call for censure.

466. The **style** most appropriate for critical essays is that which is called the *neat* (*supra*, book iii. c. iv. art. 2). As proper models of style we may propose Prescott's, Bancroft's, and Spalding's Miscellanies, Cardinals Wiseman's and Newman's Essays, and Lingard's Tracts.

467. The **tone** of the criticism should usually be kind and respectful, observant of the oratorical precautions and all the laws of literary politeness, even when dealing with

authors who ignore such precepts. (On Politeness and Oratorical Precautions see *Art of Oratorical Composition*, book iv. c. iv. art. 2.)

468. As an **example** we insert a synopsis of Archbishop Spalding's criticism on Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*:

1. General appreciation of the work, remarks on the style.
2. Brief criticism on the introduction—*i.e.*, the Aztec Civilization.
3. General principles of historical writing—stated, proved, and applied:
 - (a) Research: diligent and thorough.
 - (b) Accuracy: general, not universal.
 - (c) Impartiality: much wanting, proved by quotations.
4. A synopsis of the history, with quotations.
5. Special moral questions debated.
 - (a) Was the Conquest justifiable? Yes, as shown not *à priori*, but from the facts and from the principles of natural and international law.—The Pope's interference.
 - (b) Was it stained with wanton cruelty? No. Discussion of details.

§ 4. *Scientific, Historical, and Political Essays.*

469. All the remaining species of essays belong to one of three kinds: **Scientific or Philosophical, Historical, and Political** Essays. The first deal with abstract principles, the second with past facts, and the third with future measures. This distinction bears a close resemblance to the division of oratory into Demonstrative, Judicial or Forensic, and Deliberative discourses. (See *Art of Oratorical Composition*, book vi. No. 334.) In fact, essays have almost

everything in common with orations: the invention, the arrangement, the development of thought.

470. Therefore the **precepts** for essay-writing are nearly identical with those treated fully in the *Art of Oratorical Composition*. The chief difference is that essays are read, not spoken. This will affect the **style** and the use of pathos. But even the difference of style is confined to very few points. The essay is not composed in the direct style, which is suitable to speeches (*Ib.* No. 308), nor does it require the same copiousness of treatment (No. 313). Still, this last difference does not affect essays intended for the general reader, especially in an age when readers do so little thinking for themselves.

The earnest pupil who wishes to perfect himself in essay-writing should study thoroughly the work referred to. We shall here add such points as belong more directly to the composition of various essays.

471. **I. Scientific or Philosophical Essays.**

Science traces the connection between particular conclusions and general principles. It may treat of religion, of philosophy proper, or of the physical sciences. A Scientific Essay usually takes the form of a **Thesis**—*i.e.*, it lays down a proposition which it undertakes to prove, as 'Man is a free agent'; 'The soul of man is immortal'; 'The theory of spontaneous generation is untenable.'

472. The **plan of a Thesis** usually comprises:

1. An *introduction* to awaken interest. (See *Art of Or. Comp.*, b. iv. c. i.)
2. A *statement* and an *explanation* of the proposition which we undertake to prove.

This should be clear, pointed, and concisely expressed. Any vagueness on this point would be a great defect. (*Ib.* c. ii.)

3. The *proof* or argumentation, containing two parts:

(a) Lay down carefully and establish firmly the first principles from which you intend to draw your conclusion. Do not hurry your readers on to your deductions till they have fully agreed to your principles. Finish this part by reminding them of the truths so far established.

(b) Show by logical and lucid reasoning that your Thesis or proposition follows from those truths. Propose your reasoning in various forms, if necessary; make it striking to every class of your readers. (*Ib.* c. iv. art. i. § 2.)

4. A *refutation* of objections. (*Ib.* § 3.)

5. A *conclusion*, drawing inferences or making practical applications.

473. Scientific essays are at present extensively printed and read in magazines and other periodicals. When intended for the general public they should be written in a popular **style**, elegant and racy, substituting for abstract thoughts all kinds of clear and apt illustrations. How to adapt such a composition to different classes of readers is explained in connection with Academic Lectures in the *Art of Oratorical Composition* (b. vi. c. iii. art. 3). A noble model for such essays is found in the lectures of Cardinal Manning "On the Four Great Evils of the Day."

474. II. An **Historical Essay** treats of an historical event or an historical character. It may assume various forms; the following are the principal:

475. 1. A connected **Narrative** of an historical event; such an essay is nothing else than a narration, and the precepts for it have already been given (book iv. c. iii.)

476. 2. A **Biographical Sketch** of an historical personage; this will be treated under Biography (c. vii.)

477. 3. A **Thesis** to be proved by historical facts; this

will follow a plan similar to the scientific thesis just explained. Archbishop M. J. Spalding, in the eleventh article of his *Miscellanea* ("On the Spanish Inquisition"), lays down and proves these three theses:

(a) The Spanish Inquisition was mainly a political institution, and the result of extraordinary political circumstances;

(b) Its cruelties have been greatly exaggerated;

(c) The Catholic Church is not responsible for the institution itself, much less for its abuses, real or alleged (p. 222).

His whole "Chapter on Mobs" (p. 619) is an historical thesis proving that "mobs cannot put down truth and virtue."

478. 4. A **Dissertation**, presenting different views entertained by different historians on some event or character. This kind of essay is not bound down to any definite plan; still, it should observe the rules of all good compositions respecting unity of subject, an orderly process, and clear development.

Of this species is the essay of J. C. Calhoun which he entitles "A Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States" (*Works*, vol. i.)

Other examples are found in various chapters of Balme's *European Civilization; or, Protestantism and Catholicity compared in their Effects on the Civilization of Europe*, a work of extraordinary ability. Chapter ii. contains a brief dissertation "On the Causes of Protestantism."

479. 5. A **disquisition** or systematic inquiry into a special historical question. The essay must confine itself to that one question, and explain lucidly:

(a) What is the exact point at issue;

(b) What views are entertained by different parties regarding it:

- (c) What reasons are urged by them in support of their several views ;
- (d) What the author considers to be the true solution, and how far it appears to be certain ;
- (e) What reasons support his conclusion.

See J. C. Calhoun's "Disquisition on Government" (*Works*, vol. i.)

Another example is found in Archbishop M. J. Spalding's criticism of Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* (analyzed in No. 468) ; he discusses in particular :

- (a) Was Cortez justifiable in attempting the subjugation of Mexico ?
- (b) Were the conquerors wantonly cruel ?

480. **III. Political Essays**, like political speeches, are of a practical nature, regarding measures advocated or opposed. They occur most commonly as editorials in newspapers. **Editorials** are such leading articles as formally express the editor's opinions on the current topics of the day ; they must be distinguished from mere news reports, communications, clippings, etc.

481. News articles simply record the facts of the day, while editorials discuss the leading events, commending or condemning, explaining or defending, convincing and exhorting, assigning causes and suggesting remedies, also pointing out tendencies and probable consequences—in a word, giving the philosophy of present history. Hence the style is very different : news must be stated clearly, accurately, briefly ; editorials must be written eloquently.

482. The **importance of Editorials** at present is uncommonly great. They are the teachers of the age, exerting the widest and most telling influence for good or evil, truth or falsehood, sound or corrupt morality. They replace songs in O'Connell's saying : "Give me the making of a nation's songs, and I care not who makes its laws."

483. **Their aim** should be to inculcate and defend sound principles of private morality and public virtue, expose present events in their true light, trace their true causes, tendencies, and probable consequences ; expose public vice and falsehood, unmask false pretenders and public quacks, uphold the noble traditions and aspirations of the country. Editors should be the advocates of right and truth at the bar of public opinion.

484. **The style of editorials** is of a high order, combining popularity with judicial dignity, vigor with moderation, simplicity with the various charms of eloquence.

Editorials, and all essays written for practical purposes, bear a very close resemblance to speeches addressed to popular assemblies. No better precepts can be laid down for the thorough study of them than the rules given for Deliberative Oratory ; these should be as carefully studied by editors as by popular orators. (See *Art of Oratorical Composition*, book vi. c. i.)

CHAPTER VI.

DIALOGUES.

485. A **Dialogue** is a conversation between two or more persons. Among the ancients this species of composition was carried to great perfection. Their dialogues were of two kinds, the *descriptive* and the *didactic* or philosophical.

486. The **descriptive** kind was used by Lucian for the portrayal of characters. We have elsewhere spoken of the description of characters. **Lucian**, instead of describing them in his own words, introduces his personages as speaking. He makes the pagan gods and the souls of the dead converse among themselves in such a way as to exhibit marked traits of character, and he does this in a lively, interesting manner. His object is to show forth the absurdities of pagan superstitions.

487. **Didactic** or philosophical dialogues were written with great elegance by Plato, and, after his example, by Cicero. These authors introduced learned men discussing some important subject, in an easy and natural manner, with great refinement of thought and language. Their purpose was the same as that of philosophical essays; but the conversational form added special charm to the composition. The personages introduced were such as would command attention; they were placed in situations interesting to the reader, and made to converse in language consistent with their respective characters.

488. As an **example** we may take the dialogue of Plato styled *Phædon*. A discourse on the immortality of the

soul is put on the lips of the philosopher Socrates, and addressed by him to his disciples, under circumstances which make it remarkably impressive. It was the day at the close of which the philosopher was to drink hemlock in punishment of his teachings. His disciples had gathered round him in his prison to show their esteem and affection for their master. Every one must feel that such circumstances add far more weight to the philosopher's words than an abstract essay could possess.

489. **Plato** in his dialogues never speaks in his own person; but **Cicero** proceeds differently. He dedicates his compositions to some friend, and explains to him who his characters are, why he has chosen them, and under what circumstances they are supposed to discourse. His conversations "On Old Age," "On Friendship," and "On the Orator" are special favorites with classical scholars.

490. **English literature** has not produced any acknowledged masterpieces in this species of composition. But we have many scenes in dramas and in novels exhibiting characters as strikingly as do the dialogues of Lucian—*e.g.*, the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius in Shakspeare's "Julius Cæsar"; the examination of Sam Weller by Sergeant Buzfuz in Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*; the character of the Martyr's Boy in Cardinal Wiseman's *Fabiola* (c. ii.).

491. Of the **philosophical dialogue** we have a good specimen in *Brownson's Review* for 1854, styled "Uncle Jack and his Nephew," and another in the *Month* for November, 1869, styled "The Dialogues of Sydney." A late work by St. George Mivart, entitled *Nature and Thought*, is an imitation of Cicero's dialogues. In modern times didactic treatises usually assume the form of essays; when conversation is introduced at all it is wont to be combined with so much incident as to be classed among Novels. Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* is of this nature.

492. Dialogues are subject to the following **rules** :

1. They must create interest by presenting lifelike characters, placed in interesting situations, and conversing in a natural and unaffected manner.

2. If didactic they must treat of some theme, and develop it with sufficient regularity, so as to give a clear insight into the views of the author on that subject.

3. They must be replete with wisdom, or at least with good sense.

4. They must be couched in refined language, with tasteful and modest ornament.

493. **Exercise I.** Write a descriptive dialogue exhibiting the character of a miser, a spendthrift, a fop, a flatterer, a young hero. (For a model see *Fabiola*, c. ii.)

494. **Exercise II.** Write a didactic conversation on the advantages of a thorough education, of music, of good company; on the Crusades, the Inquisition, on Galileo. (For a model see a dialogue between *Fabiola* and her slave Syra in the sixteenth chapter of *Fabiola*.)

CHAPTER VII.

NOVELS.

495. A **Novel** is a fictitious narrative in prose, embracing a complete series of events, and exhibiting some phase of human life.

Such phases of human life are, for instance :

(a) *Peculiar conditions of society*, as in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, his *Leatherstocking Tales*, etc.

(b) *The manners of certain periods* of history, as in historical novels generally. Such are Cardinal Wiseman's *Fabiola*, Cardinal Newman's *Callista*, B. O'Reilly's *Victims of the Mamertine*, McKeon's *Dion and the Sibyls*, Bailey's *Pearl of Antioch*, Conscience's *Lion of Flanders*, Lady Fullerton's *Constance Sherwood* and *Too Strange not to be True*.

(c) *The workings of the passions*, as in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, etc.

(d) *The tendencies of institutions* and popular movements, as in Bresciani's *Few of Verona* and *Lionello*, and in Brownson's *Spirit-Rapper*.

(e) *Peculiar views of the world*, as in Dickens' *Christmas Carols*.

496. Some novels may be called **philosophical**, being intended to set forth special views and systems of doctrine. To this class belong religious novels. In all such it is important that not only the doctrines inculcated be sound, but also that the composition possess literary beauty and

proper interest, and that the moral tone of the characters be favorable to virtue. We can mention no more excellent model than the *Fabiola* referred to above. Gen. Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur* deserves praise.

497. Others are called **Society Novels**: these are usually written to ridicule the extravagances of prevalent tastes and practices, thus answering the same purpose as comedy. Such is Bulwer's *My Novel*. Many of these give little attention to plot, being chiefly taken up with the exhibition of character. All such compositions may be useful in their way; but unfortunately not many can be recommended for the perusal of those who care to keep their hearts undefiled by the contamination of vice.

498. **Sensational Novels** are still more objectionable. These stir up the passions by frequent vivid sketches of exaggerated and unreal scenes. They create a morbid craving for exciting stories, and impair that calm of mind which is an essential element of a prudent and considerate character.

499. Well-written novels possess certain **advantages** over other species of literature:

1. They reach those who will not read more serious books;
2. They may fill up profitably an occasional hour of needed relaxation, even with earnest men;
3. They may widen the reader's knowledge of the world;
4. If well chosen they may improve his heart;
5. They may enlarge his stock of words and phrases.

500. The **objections** universally urged against promiscuous novel-reading are numerous; the principal are:

1. They cause great waste of time;
2. They produce desultory habits of mind, which disqualify a person for earnest attention to duty;

3. They give false views of life;
4. They make the reader familiar with vice and vicious characters, thus lowering his standard of virtue by showing that many others are worse than himself;
5. They often make vices look like virtues, or at least like excusable foibles;
6. They develop in the reader that spirit of the world which is diametrically opposed to the spirit of Christ.

(See further objections to novel-reading in Jenkins' *British and American Literature*, pp. 322, etc.)

501. There are **two schools** of novelists, the *realistic* and the *ideal*. The *ideal* is the older school; it has more of the spirit of poetry. It presents men not as they usually are, but as they may exceptionally be, and as we love to imagine them—more noble, more disinterested, more heroic. Such novels are called Romances; most French novels belong to this class. Their effect on the reader is often elevating, analogous to that produced by epic and tragic poetry; but they are apt to become unreal and extravagant, as were the tales of knight-errantry in the Middle Ages. They are also liable to another objection, for they often exalt passions that should rather be checked, in particular the passion of love, which up to the time of Walter Scott made up the plot of nearly all novels.

502. The **realistic** school is more prosaic; it is also more favorable to common sense. It is well exemplified in the novels of Charles Dickens. It describes men and things just as they are, and makes persons act in a probable, natural manner. This process also has its inconveniences. Brownson is severe on Dickens for making his readers so familiar with vulgar and vicious characters.

503. Most of the precepts that should direct this species

of composition have been treated in this work under the heads of Narration (book iv. c. iii.) and Description (c. iv.) We shall here add a few **special rules**.

Rule 1.—Let the novel be **interesting** to the class of readers for whom it is intended; some novels written for very laudable purposes are undeniably dull.

Rule 2.—It should **aim at a higher purpose** than mere amusement—namely, to deck valuable knowledge and true wisdom in the pleasing garb of fiction, so as to captivate the imagination, and thus more readily gain mind and heart to what is worthy of man.

Rule 3.—It should give a right direction and a **healthy tone** to the passions. No amount of interest can atone for the slightest injury to mind and heart.

Rule 4.—It should, in order to be a true work of art, either portray **characters** in a very natural and pleasing manner, or excite great interest by a well-developed **plot**, combining variety of incident with unity of the general plan.

504. **Novelists.**—De Foe was the father of the English novel as distinguished from the more romantic tales of knight-errantry; Fielding and Richardson soon followed him; but those novelists are now almost forgotten by the general public. Every year brings new authors into general notice. But none, perhaps, have gained so continued and general favor as Walter Scott.

Novelists are by this time so numerous that it were vain to attempt a criticism upon their respective merits. Gerald Griffin, the Banim Brothers, Marion Crawford, Miss Rosa Mulholland, Christian Reid, Kathleen O'Meara—also known as Grace Ramsay—and especially Bolanden, may be mentioned, in addition to those referred to with praise in the above precepts, as novelists that have written in a moral spirit; while George Eliot, Victor Hugo, Charles

Reade, Wilkie Collins, George Sand, Balzac, and many others are immoral and often blasphemous. Bulwer's early novels are objectionable, but his later ones are better.

505. **Exercise.**—Analyze a novel according to the following plan:

1. What is known of the author?
2. To what school or class of novels does the work belong?
3. Is a definite purpose, philosophical, political, moral, or religious, discernible in the novel?
4. What is the plot? Analyze it briefly.
5. In what lies the principal excellence of the work?
6. What are its leading characters and how naturally are they presented throughout?
7. Is the style beautiful and properly varied to suit the different characters?
8. What of the descriptions? the narration? the dialogues?

CHAPTER VIII.

HISTORY.

506. History is **one of the noblest studies** to which man can devote himself. Cicero styles it :

“ The witness of ages, the light of truth, the life of our memory, the teacher of our lives, a messenger from the distant past ” (*De Or.*, ii. 9).

Frederick Schlegel remarks :

“ History constitutes the apparently easy and first elements of all instruction ; and yet the more cultivated the mind of a man becomes, the more multiplied opportunities will he find of applying it and turning it to use, the more will he discern its richness and divine its deeper sense. Indeed, no thinker is so profound as to be able to anticipate with accuracy the course of history, no scholar so learned as to think he has exhausted it, and no sovereign so powerful that he may with impunity disregard its silent teachings ” (*Lectures on Modern History, I.*)

507. The **kind of instruction** that history affords is most precious, for it enables us to gather with comparatively little trouble that knowledge which others have acquired by long, and often bitter, experience ; it enables one man to profit by the lives of millions. As he travels in mind through various lands and successive ages, he observes the customs of diverse nations, their manners of worship, of government, of warfare, of commerce, and of agriculture ; their cultivation or their neglect of the liberal and the useful arts ; and he becomes acquainted with the characters of men and the workings of the human pas-

sions. Thus his mind is enlarged, his views are extended, and he gathers wisdom for his own conduct, learning what course of life leads to success, and what other course leads to destruction.

ARTICLE I. NATURE AND GENERAL LAWS OF HISTORY.

508. **History is defined** as the narrative of past events for the instruction of mankind. Instruction, then, is its end or purpose. Should this instruction embrace all the information that can be drawn from the study of past ages ? Macaulay would require this (*Essay on Mitford's Greece*) ; but in doing so he departs from the approved way and he aims at what is visionary and unattainable. He acknowledges that such an historian as he desires has never existed ; and Prescott remarks : “ Such a monster never did and never can exist ” (*Essay on Irving's Conquest of Granada*).

The historian who strives to compass more than he can will necessarily neglect some part of his task ; and the danger is that he will neglect what is less attractive but more truly important.

509. There are two classes of details which **the historian will properly omit** and leave to other writers :

1. Whatever affords **mere gratification of curiosity** rather than valuable information. Such matters, as Macaulay acknowledges, are usually left to the historical novelist :

“ Mr. Sismondi publishes a grave and stately history, very valuable and a little tedious. He then sends forth as a companion to it a novel, in which he attempts to give a lively representation of characters and manners. . . . We manage these things better in England. Sir Walter Scott gives us a novel ; Mr. Hallam a critical and argumentative history. Both are occupied with the same matter ” (*Essays*, “ Hallam ”).

Macaulay has striven to unite both elements, but with little success. His *History of England* has all the charms of a novel; but "it is not a student's book, and could no more be quoted as an authority than Shakspeare" (*Dublin Review*, June, 1856, "Hallam"). "Everybody reads, everybody admires, but nobody believes in Macaulay" (*Blackwood's Magazine*, August, 1856).

510. 2. What is of no importance for the general student, but **interesting to specialists only**, should not overload the pages of a general history. There are special histories of painting, music, commerce, etc.; but history proper deals with such matters in so far only as they are intimately connected with great events and lessons of wisdom, which are the specialty of history as such. For history is not a collection of universal knowledge, but a special department of study.

511. What knowledge, then, or **what special instruction is the historian to impart?** We answer, the knowledge of the great events and important changes which have affected mankind, in as far as the knowledge of these increases the wisdom of succeeding generations. This is what the greatest historians have endeavored to record, and for the proper recording of which they have been considered as great historians. Tacitus troubled himself very little about "rummaging the old-fashioned wardrobe" of Tiberius—a task which Macaulay would impose upon the historian—but he unmasked the hypocrisy of that prince and showed the world how he destroyed the liberty of Rome.

512. Among the great events and important changes that the historian is to record, **the principal are** those which affect religion and systems of government, military achievements, the progress or decay of liberty, of general enlightenment, or of the arts and sciences, and whatever is prominent in the civilization of a people.

513. There is one line of thought in which modern historians are expected to improve on the ancients. We attach more importance now to **the welfare of the people** than to the splendor of public exploits, and justly so, because we understand better than the ancients did that the true end of government is the happiness of the governed. The modern historian must therefore take more pains to point out what measures led to the happiness and what to the sufferings of the common people. This task is more important than the descriptions of battles and sieges, which make up so extensive a portion of ancient histories. On this point Macaulay is correct:

"The circumstances which have most influenced the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity—these are for the most part noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. . . . The upper-current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the under-current flows. We read of defeats and victories, but we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories and prosperous amidst defeats. . . . We have read books called histories of England, under the reign of George II., in which the rise of Methodism is not even mentioned" (*Essays*, "History").

514. Since the purpose of history is instruction, **the great law for history** is that it shall impart sound knowledge, giving us true facts, faithfully presented and correctly interpreted. Truth is to the mind what food is to the body—an essential requisite for its proper development and healthy condition. For the absence of truth from histories nothing can atone—no style, however beautiful; no name, however popular.

515. Still, **all errors are not equally important.** If an historian is somewhat mistaken about the number of men who perished in a given battle, about the armor of certain

troops or the name of their commander, such errors do not seriously interfere with the lessons of wisdom which the reader is expected to learn. But those errors are most pernicious which affect practical conclusions; above all, when those conclusions regard the highest interests of mankind. Thus Hume, who so misrepresents many facts as to instil infidelity; Gibbon, who labors to undermine Christianity; Macaulay, who incessantly carps at Catholicity; and Bancroft, who, while patronizing all religions, inculcates indifferentism to all positive teaching—far from instructing, lead men astray on subjects which it is their highest interest to understand aright.

516. It is not here supposed that all these historians have set themselves deliberately to work to misrepresent what they knew to be the truth. **The critic** deals with the literary productions themselves, and with the motives of the writers in so far only as they throw light upon the value of the works. As for the **student of history**, he ought to inquire before reading whether the author is a reliable guide, whether he is sound on the first principles of reason and revelation. If he is not sound on these he will be sure to mislead. "Can the blind lead the blind? do they not both fall into the ditch?" (Luke vi. 39).

ARTICLE II. SOURCES OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE.

517. **Rule 1.**—In gathering materials for a history the writer should, as far as possible, **consult the original documents**, and not be satisfied with taking statements at second-hand. Lingard's conduct in this respect is worthy of imitation:

"To render these volumes more deserving of public approbation," he writes in his preface to the *History of England*, "I did not hesitate, at the commencement of my labors, to impose on myself a

severe obligation from which I am not conscious of having on any occasion materially swerved: to take nothing upon trust; to confine my researches, in the first instance, to original documents and the more ancient writers, and only to consult the modern historians when I had satisfied my own judgment and composed my own narrative. My object was to preserve myself from copying the mistakes of others, to keep my mind unbiassed by their opinions and prejudices, and to present to the reader from authentic sources a full and correct relation of events."

518. It is owing in great part to the **neglect of this rule** that misconceptions and misstatements are handed down from one historian to another. For instance, how often do we not hear of the cruel dungeon in which Galileo is supposed to have been incarcerated, when in reality he was simply forbidden to leave for some time the halls and gardens of a magnificent palace? (See the collection of original documents regarding Galileo in the *Dublin Review*, vol. xvii., New Series. On the transmission of false statements from one historian to another, see an interesting chapter in Cardinal Newman's *Present Position of Catholics in England*, pp. 226, etc.)

519. The original **documents to be consulted** are not only books, deeds, journals, chronicles, memoirs, official records, private letters, etc., but even such relics of the past as buildings, tombs, coins, paintings, tools, and so forth. Lately much light has been thrown on some portions of history by the study of such relics. Still, we must distinguish between the real facts which these studies have discovered and the mere theories which historians and scientists are ever inventing to fill up the void left by the facts.

520. **The Holy Scriptures** are, of course, the most venerable and the most reliable source of historic knowledge: besides being inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are, even from a human point of view, the most ancient and the most

authentic documents. (See Southwall's *Recent Origin of Man*, Preface.) Vain men are ever building up theories, and exploring every remnant of former ages, with the view to find contradictions between God's word and the records of time. But the highest authorities in antiquarian researches, such as the two brothers Rawlinson, Lenormant, Chevallier, and others, have sufficiently shown that there is no real conflict between science and revelation.

521. *Rule 2.*—Distinguish carefully between **reliable and unreliable documents**. Not every document, however ancient, is truthful; nor is it enough that a writer is a contemporary of an event to be a reliable witness of it. The historian must know how to sift his evidence with acute discrimination, as a judge must do with conflicting testimony. Within this century there has been considerable earnestness displayed by leading historians in discovering the truth on many points which had been misunderstood for ages. Niebuhr has made important discoveries bearing on the history of ancient Rome. Voigt and Roscoe, though not Catholics, have restored the honor of Gregory VII. and of Leo X.; Hallam and Ranke have labored zealously in the cause of truth, though both are prejudiced witnesses; Maitland has, to a considerable extent, changed the views of the learned in favor of the middle ages; and the Catholic historian Digby has set forth the true grandeur of those Ages of Faith. (On Hallam see *Dublin Review*, vols. xix., xx., New Series. See also Maitland's *Reformation*, Essay I. "On Puritan Veracity.")

522. As examples of unreliable documents from which writers have often drawn gross falsehoods, we may mention the two historians of the Spanish Inquisition, **Limborch** and **Llorente**, who have supplied Prescott with most of his misrepresentations on that subject. Both are utterly unreliable writers, as is proved to evidence in Archbishop M. J.

Spalding's *Miscellanea* (pp. 216, etc.; see also Balmes' *European Civilization*, appendix). Prescott admits the extravagant exaggerations of Llorente; but unfortunately he has thought it proper to consign this important admission to a foot-note which he puts near the end of his work (*History of Ferdinand and Isabella*, vol. iii. p. 492), while he takes special trouble to exalt the authority of Llorente in the chapter on the Inquisition (vol. i. p. 265), to which he purposely appends a sketch of Llorente's life.

523. Late historians owe much of their reliability to the fact that they have gained more free access to authentic documents than was granted to their predecessors. For instance, Agnes Strickland in her *Lives of the Queens of England and Scotland*, and Lingard in his *History of England*, have been allowed to consult the English State papers; and now the Vatican archives have been thrown open to all comers.

ARTICLE III. QUALITIES REQUIRED IN AN HISTORIAN.

524. The *first quality* which an historian will need in collecting his materials is **industry**—hard, long, and persevering labor. Lucian, in his *Treatise on the Manner of Writing History*, correctly remarks:

"This is not a task for fluent writers or careless compilers; but more than any other species of literature it requires much thought, if the historian wishes to produce what Thucydides calls a treasure that will endure for ever" (ch. v.)

525. Of industry **the ancients** have given us bright examples. Herodotus travelled over the greater part of the then known world. Thucydides began to collect his documents at the beginning of the war of which he intended to become the historian. Polybius travelled much

to visit those places with which remarkable events were connected. From him we have this celebrated maxim: "Truth is to history what eyes are to animals. As animals are of no use without sight, so history without truth is only amusing and unprofitable narration."

526. Most eminent **historians of modern times** have displayed no less industry. Prescott's laborious research is unquestionable.

"He has thoroughly examined," says Archbishop M. J. Spalding, "and seems to have carefully sifted all the original documents relating to the Conquest [of Mexico]. . . . He obtained no less than 8,000 pages of unpublished documents. He was also greatly aided in this task by men of distinguished talent in Mexico" (*Miscellanea*, p. 252).

527. David Hume, on the contrary, is notoriously deficient in research. He wrote before the critical school of history began; he consulted no original documents; he did not weigh his second-hand authorities; he simply wished to write a pleasant narrative in a faultless style. Hence the *North American Review* says of him: "That any instructor in our day should place Hume's work in the hands of a youth, leaving him to suppose that it contained the truth, is to us a matter of no little surprise." (See a thorough criticism of Hume in the *Dublin Review* for May, 1842.)

528. The *second quality* needed by an historian is **impartiality**. This does not consist in being indifferent to justice and injustice, good and evil, as the infidel critic Taine pretends to be.

"What matters it," he writes, "if Peter or Paul is a rascal? That is the business of his contemporaries; they suffered from his vices, and ought to think only of despising or contemning him. Now we are beyond his reach, and hatred has disappeared with the danger. At this distance, and in the historic perspective, I see in him but a mental machine, provided with certain springs, animated by a

primary impulse, affected by various circumstances," etc. (*English Literature*, vol. ii. p. 407).

This is an absurd indifference, which can only be justified on Taine's own theory: "Vice and virtue are products, like vitriol and sugar" (vol. i. Introduction). Still, such indifference is not seldom exhibited by writers of unsound principles.

529. The impartiality required of the historian is the absence of such **prejudice** as would prevent him from discovering or from acknowledging the truth. For instance, a person raised in a mercantile community and destitute of a liberal education is apt to appreciate no enterprise which does not add to the wealth of the nation. He may readily be blinded by prejudice to such a point that he will judge a grand enterprise like the Crusades by no other rule than that of cold utilitarianism.

How far prejudice has affected historians in regard to religious questions is ably explained by Cardinal Newman in his *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (L. i., etc.)

530. The *third quality* needed by the historian is **discrimination**, which will enable him to determine:

- (a) What documents are reliable;
- (b) What is the real meaning of obscure passages in reliable documents; and
- (c) Which is the true or the most probable among conflicting testimonies.

The ancients did not generally manifest this critical spirit. Still, even Herodotus takes care to distinguish between what he witnessed and what he heard, between what he considered as probable and what as fabulous. In the present century history is become much more critical than ever before; but it is far from perfection as yet. For instance, Fra Paolo, alias Pietro Sarpi, continues to be

quoted as an authority about the Council of Trent, though it is clearly proved that he wrote under the dictation of passion and bitter hatred.

Judicious discrimination supposes in the historian a keen insight into the characters and the passions of men, so as to discern the selfish motives which may impair the value of his authorities.

ARTICLE IV. HISTORY GENERALLY RELIABLE.

531. Mankind has exhibited in all ages a high appreciation of fidelity in historical records; and historians have, as a rule, striven earnestly to discover and transmit the truth. It may, therefore, be safely asserted that **history is generally reliable**. Several reasons contribute to make it so:

1. Man is naturally desirous of discovering the truth on important matters;

2. It is a principle of Ethics that men do not deceive wantonly when important interests are at stake; and, therefore, even questions of life and death are unhesitatingly decided by the testimony of proper witnesses;

3. When historians have gone to great trouble to discover the truth with regard to events, they are not apt to trifle with knowledge so laboriously acquired;

4. If one is tempted by special considerations to misrepresent some weighty events, others will unite their testimony to contradict him, and thus no gross errors are apt to be universally received.

532. What, then, must we think of the well-known saying of Sir Robert Walpole to his son Horace, "Quote me not history; for that I know to be false"? This means that not every assertion found in a history is to be at once received as decisive. Thus understood, the caution is a wise one. We should **read history with a critical spirit**, with careful discrimination between reliable and unreliable au-

thors. When history is thus read it will be found that the vast majority of past events are agreed on by historians, and therefore it would be folly to refuse credence to them. It will appear, besides, that falsifications concurred in by many historians are confined to special classes of events. If copious streams of error have been poured out upon the earth, those streams can be shown to flow from certain sources and along determined channels which it is quite possible to distinguish from the general currents of reliable information.

533. Against our thesis, "history is generally reliable," it **may be objected** that so great an authority as Count de Maistre has said: "The history of the last three centuries is a general conspiracy against the truth." And our Supreme Pontiff, Leo XIII., in a late encyclical letter on historical studies, writes: "Now, if ever, it may justly be said that the art of writing history would seem to be a conspiracy against the truth." But it must be noticed that both these authorities speak of special departments of history, of such as bear upon the Catholic Church.

534. That the **history of the Church** should have been greatly misrepresented by her opponents need not surprise us. Christ had foretold that His Church should be persecuted. "If you had been of the world, the world would love its own," etc. (John xv. 18-22). The persecution of the sword has ceased, but other methods of attack are continuing in all ages.

"It was natural," says the Pontiff, "that those who were attacking the Papacy by every means in their power should not spare history, the witness of such great facts. They have tampered with her integrity, and that with such persistent art as to turn into weapons of offence the very arms that were most suited to the purpose of warding off aggression. The Centuriators of Magdeburgh made themselves conspicuous by their adoption of this system," etc.

He proceeds to show that their example was followed by the opponents of the Church generally. Unfortunately most English writers have ranked themselves with her enemies. How this hostility has led to various systems of falsification we shall have occasion to explain in the next article.

ARTICLE V. SPECIAL SOURCES OF ERROR.

535. **The law of truthfulness** in historical writings is thus expressed by Cicero :

“Who does not know that the first law of history is that it shall dare say nothing false, next that it shall not fear to tell the whole truth, again that the narration suggest no suspicion of favor or enmity?” (*De Or.*, ii. 15).

This wise rule may be **violated in four ways**, which constitute so many sources of error—namely, by *false assertions*, by the *suppression of facts*, by *partiality*, by *prejudice* or *hostility*. There is a fifth source of error, less familiar to the ancients—*i.e.*, the misrepresentation of facts by *false theories*.

§ 1. *False Statements.*

536. No truly great historian would deliberately stain his pages with **false statements**. When these occur they are usually the result of misinformation, of prejudice, or of such party spirit as blinds the mind to the light of truth. As examples of false statements, the **results of misinformation**, we may refer to the works of Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, and to the portions of Rollin which are drawn from those unreliable authorities. Lenormant and Chevalier speak with great respect of those authors ; but they judiciously add :

“To reproduce as a whole the facts which they relate, and to give

them as an account of the chain of principal events in Egyptian or Abyssinian history, . . . would convey an absolutely untrue idea” (*History of the East*, Introduction).

Happily, Rawlinson's notes in his edition of Herodotus correct most of the errors in the original. Lenormant and Chevalier's *History of the East* now replaces the corresponding parts of Rollin.

537. Of false statements **resulting from a violent partisan spirit** James M-line points out many examples occurring in Froude's *History of England*. (See a series of articles on Froude in the *Catholic World* for 1870.)

538. **Misquoting and mistranslating documents** is a method of falsification that comes under the head of false statements. In this connection it has been said “Mr. Froude does not seem to have fully grasped the meaning of inverted commas.” (For examples of this defect see *Catholic World* for October, 1870, p. 73 ; and *Month* for 1879, p. 142.)

539. It is usual for great historians to give in **marginal notes** references to their authorities for every important statement. Prescott blames the earlier editions of Bancroft's *History of the United States* for discarding notes and abridging references, and he points out the evil results of this practice (*Miscellanies*, p. 327). The last edition of Bancroft has omitted references, and is now merely a popular book, no longer a work of great authority. (See articles on Bancroft in the *Catholic World* for 1883-84.)

540. How **documents may be distorted** from their real meaning by designing men is exemplified by the efforts of Gibbon to cast a doubt on the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures. Three Evangelists narrate that there was darkness over all the earth at the death of our Blessed Saviour. Gibbon, to invalidate their testimony, says among other things : “A distinct chapter of Pliny is designed for

eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration" (chap. xv.) Now, Pliny pretends to give only an example, and the distinct chapter referred to is only this brief paragraph, which we quote entire :

"There happen wonderful and protracted eclipses" [notice the plural number], "as was the one which occurred when Cæsar had been slain, and while the war of Antony was carried on, at which time the sun was pale for a whole year continuously" (Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, ii. 30).

§ 2. *Suppression of Facts.*

541. Witnesses before our courts of justice are made to swear that they will tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." The reason is that the **suppression of facts** may be, and often is, equivalent to a false statement. This suppression is another of the disingenuous methods by which Gibbon attacks the Christian religion. Prescott writes :

"He [Gibbon] has often slurred over in the text such particulars as might reflect most credit on the character of the religion, or shuffled them into a note at the bottom of the page, while all that admits of a doubtful complexion in its early propagation is ostentatiously blazoned and set in contrast to the most amiable features of paganism," etc. (Essay on *Conquest of Granada*).

It is a remarkable illustration of the power of prejudice that Prescott, who has written this correct criticism of Gibbon, should have incurred a similar reproach in his writings. He has described the conversion of Mexico to Christianity in a manner analogous to Gibbon's method of accounting for the early rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire. (See Spalding's *Miscellanea*, p. 293.)

542. Are there not some **details which an historian may properly suppress**? There certainly are; for as history aims at useful instruction, whatever can in no

way contribute to this purpose is to be omitted; for instance, the scandalous details of the voluptuous lives of Tiberius and Heliogabalus. But only details are to be suppressed, not important facts; thus the life of David would be incomplete without the story of his fall into sin. Such events are important for the instruction of mankind, and as such they are related both by profane and sacred writers. It is not usually expedient, in writing the life of Luther, to quote freely from the shocking vulgarities of his *Table Talk*; but it is a falsification of history to garble some of the extracts without warning the reader, as is done in Bohn's edition.

543. In encyclopædias, and similar works of reference, falsification by suppression of facts is often carried very far. Thus in the latest edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, a work of high pretensions, the article on "Missions to the Heathens" suppresses and ignores almost all the facts regarding Catholic missions. (See a detailed criticism of the article in the *Dublin Review* for July, 1884.)

§ 3. *Partiality.*

544. It is not required, nor is it even desirable, that the historian shall feel no **special affection** for the nation whose history he writes. In fact, unless he can sincerely sympathize with the actors of his story he will scarcely do justice to their motives :

"Who would think," asks Prescott, "of looking to a Frenchman for a history of England? to an Englishman for the best history of France? Ill fares it with the nation that cannot find writers of genius to tell its own story. What foreign hand could have painted like Herodotus and Thucydides the achievements of the Greeks? Who like Livy and Tacitus have portrayed the shifting character of the Roman in his rise, meridian, and fall? Had the Greeks trusted their story to these same Romans, what would have been their fate with posterity? Let the Carthaginians tell" (*Miscellanies*, "Bancroft").

Washington Irving did not sympathize with the Spaniards in their struggle for independence from Moorish domination: the result is that his *Conquest of Granada* fails to bring out the true spirit of that heroic enterprise; the work looks like the parody of a history.

545. But, on the other hand, **excessive sympathy** with a cause often leads to serious misrepresentations, and gross injustice towards its opponents. Livy is severely blamed for such partiality to Rome. Still, it must be remembered that Livy is not our only authority on the subject which he has treated. Several Greek historians support his statements concerning the virtues and the glory of the early Romans. The criticism passed on Livy by Macaulay in his "Essay on History" is exaggerated, as are many other statements in that unreliable essay (*supra* No. 51).

§ 4. *Prejudice or Hostility.*

546. We have seen that **prejudice** may readily prevent an author from discovering the truth; but it often goes further, and under the form of **hostility** it leads the historian to make unjust attacks upon his opponents. This hostility sometimes manifests itself by direct charges, as when Prescott writes: "In that day the principle that the end justifies the means was fully recognized" (*History of Ferdinand and Isabella*, vol. i. p. 245).

547. False charges are often disguised under the form of **innuendoes**.

"Gibbon," says Prescott, "by a style of innuendo that conveys more than meets the ear, has contrived, with Iago-like duplicity, to breathe a taint of suspicion on the purity which he dares not openly assail" ("Essay on Irving").

This unmanly system of warfare is not uncommon. After Irving has given us such a character of Ferdinand as the

most reliable authorities prove him to have deserved, he continues thus: "It has been added, however, that he had more bigotry than religion, that his ambition was craving rather than magnanimous," etc. Irving does not say that such charges rested on good authority; he merely breathes suspicion on a character which he appears unwilling to assail openly (*History of Columbus*, book ii. c. ii.) Another species of innuendo consists in suggesting unworthy motives where the actions related are honorable, as Irving does in attributing to Ferdinand unworthy motives for encouraging Columbus; and he introduces these motives with a mere *perhaps* (c. iii.)

§ 5. *False Theories.*

548. **False theories** are a source of falsification which requires special attention, both because they are extensively used by late writers, and because they escape detection on the part of many readers. Macaulay gives a lucid explanation of them:

"The best historians of later times have been seduced from truth, not by their imagination, but by their reason. They far excel their predecessors in the art of deducing general principles from facts. But unhappily they have fallen into the error of distorting facts to suit general principles. They arrive at a theory from looking at some of the phenomena, and the remaining phenomena they strain or curtail to suit the theory. For this purpose it is not necessary that they should assert what is absolutely false. . . . In every human character and transaction there is a mixture of good and evil: a little exaggeration, a little suppression, a judicious use of epithets, a watchful and searching scepticism with respect to the evidence on one side, a convenient credulity with respect to every report or tradition on the other, may easily make a saint of Laud or a tyrant of Henry the Fourth. This species of misrepresentation abounds in the most valuable works of modern historians" (*Essays*, "History").

549. Macaulay applies this criticism to Hume and to

Gibbon, and especially to Mitford's *History of Greece*. Orestes A. Brownson, in his *Quarterly Review* for 1852 (p. 423), applies it to several others :

"Herder, Kant, Hegel, Guizot, Cousin, Michelet, and even Carlyle and Macaulay," he says, "are instances in point, as all who are familiar with their writings need not be informed. None of them give us genuine history; they merely give us their speculations on what is not history, and what, according to those speculations, ought to be history. It is the common error of the modern school of so-called philosophical historians, and to which school Mr. Bancroft belongs, though he is not by any means the worst of the school, to suppose that history may be reduced to the terms of a speculative science, and be written, as it were, *a priori*. 'Give me the geographical position of a people,' says the brilliant and eloquent Cousin, 'and I will give you its history.'"

550. Brownson gives the following examples of false theories:

"Herder finds in all history only his ideas of human progress; Kant finds nothing but his categories; Hegel finds the significance and end of all history, the operations of divine Providence, of all mankind, and of all nature, to have been the establishment of the Prussian monarchy; Mr. Bancroft finds that the original purpose of creation, of God and the universe, is fulfilled in the establishment of American democracy."

The same article of Brownson's, in analyzing the entire theory of Bancroft, shows conclusively that the philosophical speculations of that historian are not merely visionary, but fraught with false principles of government and morality tending to the ruin of society. The article deserves most careful study (Brownson's *Quarterly Review* for 1852, "Bancroft").

551. Carlyle's theory is:

(a) That the world is ever tending to go wrong. From time to time appear great minds that labor to set it right. These are his "Heroes," who are not to be judged, but

whose conduct is law for us. Such are Oliver Cromwell, Mahomet, Napoleon I., Frederick the Great, as well as St. Paul, Shakspeare, Dante, Burns, Luther, and Calvin; not Voltaire, who only pulled down. "It is from the heart of the world that he [the Hero] comes; he is a portion of the primal reality of things" (Carlyle).

(b) The world is all wrong now: "God's laws are become a Great Happiness Principle, a Parliamentary expediency." "The Universe—a swine's trough," all scrambling for felicity.

(c) Religion is very necessary. It is moral rectitude as understood by Cromwell and the Puritans. They read their duty in themselves; the Bible only aided them. At need they did violence to it. Carlyle is so much their brother that he excuses or admires their excesses. He sets them before us as models, and judges both past and present by them alone. "Carlyle's style has introduced into this country a thoroughly false method of writing history" (Justin MacCarthy).

552. Macaulay, in his *History of England*, disclaims all theory; but, unconsciously perhaps, he inculcates the "Great Happiness Principle," which Carlyle condemns. By this standard everything is judged. Puritanism is good, the Establishment bad, Catholicity worst of all. This last did some good in the Dark Ages, when "the priests, with all their faults, were by far the wisest portion of society"; it is now become "an unjust and noxious tyranny" (*Hist. of England*, chap. i.)

Hence he is more severe on blunders than on crimes. While "under Cromwell hell was the dread of being found guilty before the just Judge, now it is the dread of making a bad speculation or of transgressing etiquette" (Carlyle). Macaulay is the impersonation of the spirit of the world. (See also *Dublin Review* for April, 1886, "Studies of History.")

ARTICLE VI. THE PLAN OF A HISTORY.

553. To erect a building that shall unite beauty with usefulness we need, besides sound material, a suitable **plan** drawn by a skilful architect. In the same manner the historian must conceive an artistic plan for the composition of his work. Now, everything artistic supposes unity of design. The events that make up a history must be bound together by some connecting principle, which enables the mind to see them in their bearing on one another, and to view them as the portions of one entire group.

554. This unity is easily attained in **particular histories**—that is, in those which narrate one event, such as the Conspiracy of Catiline, the French Revolution of 1789, etc.

But the difficulty is much greater in general or **universal histories**, which deal with various nations, each of which presents an independent series of events. In such works both utility and artistic beauty require that some leading idea shall combine those separate parts into a harmonious whole. The ancients, with their well-known perfection of taste, are here again our models.

555. Thus Herodotus, while embracing in his work all the nations known in his day, arranges the parts so as to develop this one idea: "that the whole empire of Persia, after subjugating and incorporating with itself all the nations of the East, was in its turn conquered by united Greece." His history resembles an heroic poem, in which one great enterprise or action is related. We find ourselves at once in the midst of the events, and we are gradually informed of all that preceded by long episodes appropriately introduced. Both in the main narration, which is the history of the Persian war, and in the various episodes or partial

histories of different lands, one philosophic thought is ever held before us—that of a Nemesis or avenging deity, which causes the exalted to be humbled.

556. **Polybius**, whom Blair pronounces the most successful of all ancient historians in respect to unity, wrote what he calls a *Universal History*—not, indeed, comprising all times, but all nations within a given period; he maintains unity by professing to show "how and by what sort of policy almost all the countries of the inhabited earth, in less than fifty-three years, passed into the power of Rome."

557. **Livy** exhibits "the power of Rome arising from humble beginnings and extending through gradual conquests to universal empire." Thus Livy begins at the centre and spreads to the circumference of Roman power, while Polybius begins at the circumference and unites all its parts with the centre.

558. **Thucydides**, on the contrary, in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, has entirely neglected this source of light and beauty. Though his subject possessed the closest unity, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus observes, his account of it has none, but it is cut up into various campaigns, into winters and summers; he leaves one enterprise or expedition unfinished, to carry us away to disconnected events in other parts of Greece. (See Dionys. Halic. Letter to Cnæus Pompey.)

559. Among modern historians **Archibald Alison** is very successful in maintaining unity. He had a difficult task to perform, as he had undertaken to write the *History of Europe from the Commencement of the French Revolution in 1783 to the Restoration of the Bourbons in 1815*, which he afterwards continued to the accession of Louis Napoleon in 1852. His bond of unity is expressed in the following lines of his preface:

"Its earliest years [*i.e.* of the French Revolution] suggest at

every page reflections on the evils of political fanaticism, and the terrible consequences of democratic fervor; the latter on the debasing effects of absolute despotism and the sanguinary march of military ambition."

Alison's is truly a learned work, but it bears a partisan character. To his mind the English constitution is the ideal of perfection politically, and the Church of England religiously; everything else is measured by its approach to these two standards.

560. **The different parts** also of a large history must have their own principles of unity. For instance, one period of a nation's history may be marked by the steady growth of popular freedom, another by the constant increase of absolutism in the ruling power.

561. It is evident that the **selection of a false principle** or leading idea will cause misconceptions of many events, as if in the history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the author should pretend to see the growth of liberty, whereas those centuries rather promoted the principles of absolutism. When the philosophic ideas which connect or underlie a history are made so prominent that the facts are not fully considered, but only in so far as they bear on the theory or the thesis, the work is then called a philosophical history, or the philosophy of history, of which species we are yet to treat.

ARTICLE VII. DEVELOPMENT OF THE FACTS.

562. **The facts should be so developed** as to secure two results—the *artistic beauty* of the narrative, and *proper instruction* for the reader.

§ 1. *The Artistic Beauty of the Narrative.*

563. **The artistic beauty of the narrative** is attained by

the observance of the precepts laid down for narration (*supra*, book iv. c. iii.)

As an example of the application of these precepts to a history, we shall here add a **criticism of Sallust's "Conspiracy of Catiline,"** confining our remarks to the artistic beauty of the narrative.

564. It is evident that not all the circumstances of that intricate plot, all that was said and done in Rome and elsewhere in connection with it, can be or need be narrated by the historian. He must "exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole." Let us suppose that we see Sallust at work. How does he go about it? He has formed to himself a clear conception of the events. He knows that the conspiracy did not arise suddenly and of itself, nor was it entirely the work of one designing man; but it was the natural outcome of a **combination of causes**, which had been some time developing before they produced so vast an effect.

565. He will, then, begin by showing us those causes at work. This, however, he does not attempt to do by a philosophical discussion, but by an exhibition of the facts. For the sake of unity he seizes upon **one prominent figure**, around which all the separate facts are made to cluster, as the parts in a group of statuary are gathered around one central figure. This prominent figure is Catiline. After his introduction, therefore, the historian at once makes us acquainted with that personage, who is to remain prominently before us during the whole narrative, like the hero of an epic poem.

566. This sketch, or **Character of Catiline**, is certainly a striking picture, perhaps overdrawn so far as truth is concerned, but artistically adapted to arouse interest from the opening of the story.

567. With this commanding figure before us, we are next

made to review the **history of Rome**, from its simple beginnings to its full development, from the patriarchal virtues of its early founders to the luxury and depravity of those latter days. All this account is expressed in terms pregnant with meaning, but very rapidly, especially the description of former virtues, which forms the background to the picture. Soon we see Rome abandoned to the designing ambition of wicked men, the laws violated with impunity, and wealth and lust replacing all higher aspirations.

568. As a natural consequence we see **the Roman youth corrupt**, leading a life of extravagance and dissipation. Here we have the materials which are to be kindled into a vast conflagration. Now Catiline, whose commanding figure has struck us from the beginning, steps forward to apply the match. His methods of corrupting still further the Roman nobility, the intended tools of his ambition, and of next gaining them and binding them to himself, are most vividly described. With this comes a brief sketch of Catiline's former career, which makes the whole narrative more probable.

569. With No. XVII. begins the narration of **the Conspiracy** itself. So far great skill was required to keep unity in view while tracing the various remote and proximate cause of the events; but unity has been well maintained. All is clear and interesting. Now the narrative becomes more exciting; it reads like a novel or a tragedy. We see the most desperate of the young Roman nobles assembled at night around Catiline. We have his speech almost in his own words—and an artful speech it is, showing the justice and necessity of conspiring. For Sallust understood human nature well: he knew that the most vicious men will hide their wickedness from their own eyes under the cloak of justice, or at least of a sad necessity. Then the plan of action intended by Catiline is more fully devel-

oped; there are stirring scenes, as that of the conspirators pledging themselves to each other in cups of human blood.

570. But now a new personage, Furius, is introduced, whose foolish vanity must lead to the discovery of the criminal plot. All this is as naturally developed as in a well-conceived novel. Rome takes the alarm. **Cicero is made consul**. Here, however, it appears that private rancor in Sallust against the noble "Father of his country" prevented the historian from adding another great source of beauty and interest to his narrative. For as every element of evil had skilfully been gathered around Catiline, so now Cicero might and should have been made the central figure of the opposing group. Artistic beauty suggested it; truth required it; and the story would have gained from it in thrilling interest.

571. It will be a useful study to **compare** with Sallust's account of Catiline's Conspiracy the narrative of the Gunpowder Plot in Lingard's *History of England* (vol. vi. c. 1), or, better still, Father Gerard's *Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot*, which is more reliable.

§ 2. *Proper Instruction for the Reader.*

572. That a history may impart **proper instruction** to the reader, two rules must be observed:

Rule 1.—The facts must be narrated without false coloring, so that they may appear to the reader such as they really are.

Rule 2.—The historian should not be constantly interrupting his narrative to preach a sermon or point a moral; such practice would be inartistic, blending the historical with the didactic style of composition—as great a fault against good taste as the blending of two styles in architecture.

573. But **should the historian never show himself**, never

aid his readers directly to take the right view of the facts, by saying honestly what he himself thinks of them? This is the point on which critics and historians differ considerably, so that they may be divided into three distinct schools.

574. One school may be called the **Fatalistic School** of history. It wishes the historian not only to utter no judgment on the facts presented, approving some and condemning others, but not even to form such a judgment in his own mind. Writers of this school in reality admit no radical or essential difference between right and wrong; or at most they consider this distinction as a matter of opinion only, which therefore the historian may leave to the taste of the reader. Of this school Thiers and Mignet are the leaders among the French. Bancroft is one of their imitators in this country. As scepticism is spreading, there is a tendency in many late historians to adopt the same course.

575. The second may be called the **Descriptive School**. It allows the historian to form his own judgment, but directs him never to utter it in so many words, but to describe or represent the facts in such a manner as to inculcate his own conclusions on the reader. This is, at present, a very popular school, adopted by some very good men and by many writers of unsound principles.

576. The third may be called the **Judicial School**, in which the historian, like a judge, after fully examining the evidence on both sides, boldly pronounces his judgment, approving and condemning as important occasions may require. This school is that of the ancients; it is best exemplified in Tacitus, the prince of historians, who brands with ignominy the human monsters that bore the sceptre of the Roman Empire during so many calamitous years. To the same school belong, among the moderns, Bossuet in his

Discourse on Universal History, Alzog and Darras in their *Histories of the Church*, Ranke in his *History of the Popes*, and a multitude of others of the best historians.

577. The Fatalistic school is utterly unsound in principle and pernicious in practice. Of the two other schools **the Judicial** is, we think, **preferable** for several reasons:

1. It appears to be more honest on the part of the historian to state clearly his views on important events.

2. It is more useful; for the historian, who is supposed to be a man of maturity and wisdom, is better qualified to form such a judgment than ordinary readers, and thus can guide them aright.

3. It is the practice sanctioned by the approbation of ages.

578. 4. The only plausible objection brought against it—viz., that the historian may misjudge the facts—vanishes if we consider that the Descriptive school may mislead its readers as well, and that in a more pernicious manner. For in the Descriptive school the historian inculcates his private judgments by the coloring which he gives to the facts; he does not lead the reader to judge for himself, but he forces his own conclusions on him.

579. 5. The Judicial school adds to the narrative the warmth of genuine passion, which, as the readers of Tacitus well know, contributes more to interest than any degree of ornament. In fact, without such honest warmth that defect is felt for which Prescott blames Gibbon when he says ("Essay on Irving"):

"It is a consequence of this scepticism in Gibbon, as with Voltaire, that his writings are nowhere warmed with a generous moral sentiment. The most sublime of all spectacles, that of the martyr who suffers for conscience' sake, . . . is contemplated by the historian with the smile, or rather sneer, of philosophic indifference. This is not only bad taste, as he is addressing a Christian audience,

but he thus voluntarily relinquishes one of the most powerful engines for the movement of human passion, which is never so easily excited as by deeds of suffering, self-devoted heroism."

Certainly, the Judicial manner of writing history may be abused; but every good thing may be abused, and the Descriptive manner is still more liable to this objection.

ARTICLE VIII. THE STYLE OF HISTORY.

580. As history is one of the noblest and most dignified species of composition, all critics mention dignity as the chief quality of **historical style**. But **dignity** does not mean pomposity; and such writers as Gibbon, Robertson, and Bancroft become less interesting by their excess of stateliness. Prescott says:

"The historian of the *Decline and Fall* too rarely forgets his own importance in that of his subject. The consequence which he attaches to his personal labors is shown in a bloated dignity of expression and an ostentation of ornament that contrast whimsically enough with the trifling topics and commonplace thoughts on which, in the course of his long work, they are occasionally employed. He nowhere moves along with the easy freedom of nature, but seems to leap, as it were, from triad to triad by a succession of strained, convulsive efforts" (*Miscell.*, "Irving").

In what, then, consists the dignity of style which history requires?

581. **Dignity consists, (a) in a proper gravity**, which Blair explains thus:

"Gravity must always be maintained in the narration. There must be no meanness nor vulgarity in the style; no quaint nor colloquial phrases; no affectation of pertness or wit. The smart or the sneering manner of telling a story is inconsistent with the historical character. I do not say that the historian is never to let himself down. He may sometimes do it with propriety, in order to diversify the strain of his narration, which, if it be perfectly uniform, is apt

to become tiresome. But he should be careful never to descend too far; and on occasions when a light or ludicrous anecdote is proper to be recorded, it is generally better to throw it into a note than to hazard becoming too familiar by introducing it into the body of the work" (Lecture xxxvi.)

582. It consists, (b) in the use of such **ornaments of style** as will set off the thoughts to the best advantage, without, however, diverting the attention of the reader from the thoughts to the figures, from the march of the events to the harmonious flow of the sentences. History admits of a rich style, as rich as any other species of prose composition; but no writing admits of bombast—*i.e.*, of more sound than sense, such as we find in the following lines of Bancroft (*Hist. of U. S.*, vol. i. p. 209):

"It is one of the surprising results of moral power that language, composed of fleeting sounds, retains and transmits the remembrance of past occurrences long after every monument has passed away. Of the labors of the Indians on the soil of Virginia there remains nothing so respectable as would be a common ditch for the draining of lands; the memorials of their former existence are found only in the names of their rivers and their mountains. Unchanging nature retains the appellations which were given by those whose villages have disappeared and whose tribes have become extinct."

The middle sentence would have been all-sufficient.

583. **Exactness** is a second quality of style in history. It consists in expressing just what the historian means, and not merely something like it. For instance, one of the sources of vagueness in the first sentence of the passage just quoted is the use of the word *moral* in a meaning which the word does not properly bear; for 'moral' regards law, or the distinction of right and wrong, which is not in question here.

584. Exactness should affect even the smallest words and the apparently insignificant portions of a sentence; an ill-chosen or ill-placed adjective or adverb is often enough to

give a wrong notion to the reader which will accompany him through life. But this quality is **particularly required** with regard to the names of men and places, the dates of events, and similar minutiae, which perhaps make no great show in the work, but which must be distinctly and carefully noted if the events are to be rightly understood. It has often happened that an inexactness in such details has involved historical events in considerable confusion.

585. **Calmness** is a third quality which should belong to historical style. For the historian is like a judge who has examined a cause thoroughly, and who gives us the wise conclusions at which his mind has coolly and deliberately arrived. Strong passion is inimical to correctness of thought and expression. Macaulay, for example, is evidently too passionate on many occasions; and the sensational style of Carlyle would strip history of that calm dignity which so becomes its character. Still, we have seen that a certain glow of feeling is highly proper in the language of an honest historian, and we have quoted Prescott as censuring Gibbon and Voltaire for their apathy at the sight of heroic virtue (No. 579).

ARTICLE IX. VARIOUS SPECIES OF HISTORICAL WRITING.

586. The following are the **principal species** of historical writing: history proper; annals, memoirs, and travels; philosophical histories; and biographies.

§ 1. *History proper.*

587. **History proper**, called by Polybius and by German critics 'Pragmatical,' embraces *general*, *particular*, and *special* histories.

588. A **general history** treats of several nations, as Alison's *History of Modern Europe*. If it embraces all nations and times it is properly called **universal**. General histo-

ries should (a) suppress minor details, so that the important events, names, and dates stand out prominently; (b) observe due proportion among the parts—for instance, in a general history of the Church one country should not engross most of the attention of the writer.

589. A **particular history** treats of one nation, one province, one event, as Lingard's *History of England*, Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*, etc. It enters more into detail, offers more picturesque passages, more dramatic scenes.

590. A **special history** relates events in as far only as they bear on one science, one art, one special consideration; such is Bossuet's *History of the Variations of Protestantism*, any history of painting, commerce, literature, etc. The advantage of special histories is that they throw a concentrated light on one particular branch of study.

§ 2. *Annals, Memoirs, and Travels.*

591. **Annals or Chronicles** are not so much histories as a supply of materials for future histories. Being mere records of events penned down from day to day, they require no plan nor deep thought, but fidelity and distinctness throughout, and completeness with regard to all matters of importance. They need not be elegantly worded; still, as Prescott observes, we find that some chronicles of the middle ages, in spite of their ill-formed and obsolete idiom, are read with more delight than many modern histories of high pretensions, because their narrative is more spirited (*Miscell.*, p. 107).

We may mention here the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists, S.J., a learned collection of biographies and of records from which the lives of the saints are usually written. Baronius' *Annales Ecclesiastici* contain the history of the Church from the first to the sixteenth century. Both

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these most valuable works rise far above the dignity of ordinary annals.

592. **Memoirs** relate such facts as have fallen under the personal observation of the writer. They descend from the stateliness of the historic style; they should be sprightly and interesting, give useful information with regard to facts and characteristic traits of persons. Cardinal Wiseman's *Recollections of the Four Last Popes*, General Sherman's *Memoirs*, are examples in point. Cæsar's *Commentaries* of the Gallic and the Civil Wars are the most perfect memoirs in existence.

593. **Travels** may be ranked with memoirs as furnishing the materials for future histories. Such are the graphic narratives of the great American missionary Father De Smet, Livingstone's African and Kane's Arctic Explorations, Vetromile's Travels in the Holy Land, etc.

§ 3. *Philosophical Histories.*

594. **Philosophical histories** are those in which the principles derived from the facts are made more prominent than the facts themselves. When the work is so taken up with theories that it resembles an essay rather than a narrative, it is called a **philosophy of history**.

595. Philosophical histories are of comparatively recent origin. The first in time, and so far the grandest in conception, is Bossuet's **Discourse on Universal History**, the English version of which is unfortunately garbled, omitting whatever is distinctively Catholic. The work enables us to realize the definition which Bunsen gives of history, as "that most sacred epic or dramatic poem, of which God is the author, humanity the hero, and the historian the philosophical interpreter." Bossuet's idea is to unveil the workings of Providence in the government of mankind.

596. **Voltaire**, in his *Essai sur les Mœurs* and in his *His-*

tory of Louis XIV., exhibits his anti-Christian theories, which made Prescott say: "He resembled the allegorical agents of Milton, paving the way across the gulf of Chaos for the spirits of mischief to enter more easily upon the earth" (*Miscell.*, p. 99).

597. **Montesquieu**, in his *Grandeur et Décadence des Romains*, used the facts of history simply as the arguments of a thesis, or, as Prescott calls it, "the ingredients from which the spirit was to be extracted. But this was not always the spirit of truth" (*Ib.* p. 100).

598. **Buckle's History of Civilization** is but a fragment of what was intended to be a voluminous work. It is brilliant in style but weak in logic; its spirit is infidel.

599. **Guizot** wrote his *History of Civilization* in a Christian spirit. It is full of novel views, of sagacious inductions, of pathetic eloquence, but also of capital errors. It pays some glowing tributes to the Catholic Church; but the author, being an alien, often fails to understand this divine institution, and grossly misconceives its legislation.

600. The most valuable Philosophy of History is **Balmes'** noble work, *Protestantism and Catholicity compared in their Effects on the Civilization of Europe*. It analyzes the history of modern times, and discusses all the vital questions which have agitated the civilized world in the last three centuries. It combines varied information, lofty views, sound principles, close reasoning, all expressed in a noble style, whose eloquence is preserved in the English translation.

§ 4. *Biography.*

601. **Biography** is the history of the life and character of a particular person. Such writings present two **advantages**:

1. They throw light upon general history.

common saying that the history of the world is to a great extent the record of the great men of the world. Such men exert a powerful influence upon all around them, and usually contribute greatly to shape the events of the age in which they live, and even of future ages. Their influence, however, has been exaggerated by some writers, particularly by Carlyle in his lectures on Heroes. The great events of the world's history have generally deeper and wider causes than the character of one or two individuals. Still, it is true that Almighty God raises up great geniuses at proper times to accomplish His designs of mercy or justice on the nations. Thus He raised Cyrus for the establishment, and Alexander for the overthrow, of the Persian empire, and both these conquerors for the protection of His chosen people (Josephus, *Antiq.*, xi. c. 8; Daniel viii.)

602. 2. Biographies aid the reader to understand human nature more thoroughly when he studies it in the passions, the virtues, and the foibles of remarkable characters. He will there find that man, as such, is in many respects a feeble and very defective being, elevated, however, at times by the principles which he imbibes, and by the natural or supernatural strength of will and intellect with which he carries these principles into effect.

603. Knowing now the two advantages to be aimed at, we shall readily discover the rules which the biographer must follow.

Rule 1.—Only very remarkable men and women should be made the subjects of biographies—such persons as have widely influenced public events, or such as afford the reader special opportunities for studying the workings of human nature or the operations of divine grace.

Rule 2.—The writer should clearly trace the influence which the subject of his biography exercised over persons

or events, avoiding the common mistake of introducing irrelevant facts with which he had but little to do.

Rule 3.—He must exhibit the true character of his hero: the motives of his conduct, the grasp of his intellect, the principles which he has adopted, the promptings of his passions, the power or the weakness of his will, the causes that have contributed to the development of his virtues or his vices. We may refer to Father Morris' *Life of St. Thomas Becket* as a model in this respect. Characters are often better represented by mentioning sayings, incidents, etc., than by the description of battles and other public exploits. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is replete with familiar traits.

Rule 4.—The facts narrated, even the familiar traits and incidents, must be drawn from authentic sources or from personal knowledge. Of late the practice has gained ground of quoting liberally in biographies from the letters and other writings of the persons concerned; and the results of this innovation are very gratifying. Thus Father Coleridge gives us the *Life and Letters* of St. Francis Xavier, Father Bowden those of F. W. Faber. Bouhours had already written in French an excellent biography of St. Xavier, which the poet Dryden thought it worth his while to translate into English. It seemed difficult to surpass this masterpiece, but extensive quotations from the Saint's own letters have enabled Coleridge to overcome the difficulty.

604. A danger to be guarded against in biographies is an excess of admiration or hatred for the character described. Carlyle idolizes his hero Oliver Cromwell; Abbott extols Napoleon I., while Scott undervalues the qualities of this great genius. No human work is perfect.

605. Still, literature is rich in successful biographies; the

Latin *Lives* of Cornelius Nepos and the **Greek** *Lives* of Plutarch are deservedly admired. The latter gains much interest for his biographies by presenting them in pairs, comparing a Grecian with a Roman character; but fidelity to truth is often wanting. Xenophon's *Cyropædia* is highly praised for its literary qualities, but not for the truth of its narrative. Tacitus' *Life of Agricola* is a work unsurpassed in merit.

606. Of **French** biographies we may mention with special praise Audin's *Lives of Luther, Calvin, Henry VIII., and Leo X.*; Baunard's *Life of Madame Barat*, the foundress of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, and his *Life of Madame Duchesne*. (See also *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 1878, p. 321, on Pope Alexander VI.)

607. In **English** model biographies are numerous; in particular, Miss Strickland's *Lives of the Queens of England and of Scotland*, Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, Sparks' *American Biographies*, Clarke's *Deceased Bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States*, Kathleen O'Meara's *Life of Ozanam*, Thompson's *Lives of St. Aloysius and St. Stanislaus*. The *Life of Washington*, by Washington Irving, is probably the most elaborate and most successful biography written in the English language.

608. There are many modern works of considerable historical and literary value which comprise not merely the life, but the **life and times** together, of some distinguished personage. In such books the hero must never be lost sight of; for unity requires that only those events be introduced which have some real connection with the leading character. All must be made to cluster around him, without, however, attributing to him more influence than he really exercised. Among the most valuable works of this kind are Hurter's *Life of Innocent III.*, Voigt's *Life of*

Gregory VII., Hübner's *Sixtus V.*, Hefele's *Ximenes*, Montalembert's *Life and Times of St. Elizabeth of Hungary*.

609. In **conclusion** we may remark that while in many species of literature the highest point of perfection appears to have been reached, and a decline to have set in, history has been remarkably improved within this century, and there seems to be, in the minds of many, an earnest determination to establish on earth the reign of historic truth.