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HELP

TO

YOUNG WRITERS.

BY A

PRESIDENT OF A COLLEGE.

New York:

PUBLISHED BY THE
"AMERICAN COMMON SCHOOL UNION,"

No. 128 Fulton-street.

1838.

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P R E F A C E .

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

farther to extend their acquaintance with language, and to give effect to their previous attainments by trying their skill in Composition. The work is peculiarly well adapted to the use of academies and elementary schools, and is one of the series of "Useful School Books," published by the "American Common School Union."

COMPOSITION.

1. COMPOSITION is but little attended to in our elementary schools. Scholars are seldom required to combine and arrange their ideas; and they rarely put their knowledge of any subject in the form of a written language.

2. This is one of the deficiencies in the present systems of teaching. There are several reasons for this. To compose well is not a necessary qualification in the teacher, under the present system of inspection.

3. In ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, the inspectors never inquire or ascertain if the candidate can think naturally and connectedly on any one subject, or clothe his thoughts with language which is appropriate and grammatical; and the consequence is, but few teachers compose with ease and correctness.

4. What they perform imperfectly and with difficulty, they will not feel disposed (and if they do, would be unable) to teach others. Hence the art of composing is of very little importance

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in the estimation of the teacher, and entirely disregarded by the scholar.

5. Parents are not in the habit of composing, and take no pains to have their children taught the art. They are pleased when it is discovered that their child writes a good letter; but the means of ensuring this excellence they disregard.

6. They seem to forget that the ability of expressing their thoughts with readiness and perspicuity, is acquired only by long practice and right instruction.

7. They do not see that an apprenticeship in this is as necessary as in any thing else; nor do they perceive what would give their children this desirable qualification.

8. "The scholars suppose composition a mystery; something that does not belong to *them*, but to *those* who have great learning and a wonderful genius."

9. They look upon it as impossible that they should learn to write; and what they regard so far beyond their reach, they make no efforts to obtain.

10. There is no study for which scholars usually have such an abhorrence, and which they make such efforts to shun, as composition.

They struggle with the vacant, undisciplined mind, till they become exhausted, and then give up in despair.

11. "They feel that their labour has been fruitless and wearisome, and are heartily glad to escape, wishing never to resume the task again.

12. "~~One cause of the difficulty is an improper choice of their subject.~~ They generally select one which they know nothing of; one that would puzzle a skilful writer to handle intelligibly; and one that is abstract and indefinite, and altogether above their comprehension.

12. "By trying to grasp subjects of this kind, the mind perceives nothing distinctly; the thoughts become vague and uncertain, and the little that may be written, after much toil, is unconnected and dissatisfactory.

14. "~~Another difficulty is,~~ they think that they must write something that no one else has written, and that their very language must be in a new idiom, or else it cannot be considered as their own.

15. "Thus, by selecting subjects with which they are unacquainted, and which their minds are not able to investigate, and by supposing that something perfectly original and new must

be produced, they put obstacles in the way which neither patience nor perseverance can overcome; and, after repeated efforts, they consider composition to be something that some gifted few only have executed by a sort of magical and supernatural power.

16. "In other arts, it is usual to begin, for the sake of practice, with the easiest; but the reverse takes place in learning the art of composing. The scholar has a harder task assigned him, and one in which he is less likely to succeed, than he will meet with in the actual business of life. The scholars choose such subjects, that they know not what to say or how to say it.

17. "They select subjects about which they have scarcely any information, and no interest; concerning which they know little, and care still less. And hence it commonly happens, that an exercise, composed with diligent care by a young pupil, will be very greatly inferior to a real letter written by him to his friends on subjects that interest him.

18. "On real occasions of after-life, for which his school exercises were designed to prepare him, he will find that he writes both better and with more facility than on the *artificial* occasion, as it may be called, of composing a decla-

mation. And he will discover that he has been attempting to learn the easier by practising the harder.

19. "But, what is worse, it will often happen that such exercises will have formed a habit of stringing together empty commonplaces and vapid declamations; of multiplying words, and spreading out the matter thin; of composing in a stiff, artificial, and frigid manner; and that this habit will more or less cling through life to one who has been thus trained, and will infect all his future compositions.

20. "The only preventive of these evils is a most scrupulous care in the selection of *such subjects* for exercises as are likely to be *interesting* to the pupil, and on which he has, or may, (with pleasure, and without much toil,) acquire sufficient information.

21. "Such subjects will of course vary, according to the learner's age and intellectual advancement; but they had better be rather below than much above him.

22. "Compositions on such subjects, and in a free, natural, and simple style, may be thought puerile by those who practice the opposite mode of teaching; but you will see a picture of the writer himself; boyish, indeed, it may be, in

looks and stature, in dress and demeanour, but lively, unfettered, and natural, giving a fair promise for manhood; and, in short, what a boy should be.

23. "In education, we should consider what is becoming and appropriate in each period of life.

24. "First, subjects for composition should be drawn from the studies the pupil is engaged in; relating, for instance, to the characters or incidents of any history he may be reading.

25. "Secondly, subjects drawn from any conversation he may have listened to (*with interest*) from his seniors; or, thirdly, relating to the amusements, familiar occurrences, and every-day transactions, which are likely to have formed the topics of conversation among his familiar friends. These subjects may be intermingled with as great a variety as possible.

26. "And the teacher should frequently recall to his own mind these two considerations: first, that since the benefit proposed does not consist in the intrinsic value of the composition, but in the *exercise* of the pupil's mind, it matters not how insignificant the subject may be, if it will but interest him, and hereby afford him such exercise.

27. "And, secondly, that the younger and more backward each scholar is, the more unfit will he be for *abstract* speculations, and the less remote must be the subject proposed, from those *individual* objects and occurrences which always form the first beginning of the furniture of the youthful mind."

28. Instruction and exercise in the art of composition should have a prominent place in ~~the education of the young~~. By collecting and arranging their ideas the scholars would be taught *to think*. They would be taught to think patiently and correctly, and to confine the action of the mind to one subject.

29. This exercise would supply the greatest deficiency in our systems of education, viz. the want of clear, connected thought.

30. It would do more; it would show the scholar how much he knew of the subject he had been studying. Scholars are generally very much deceived as to the real amount of their knowledge, thinking they know much more than they actually do.

31. After they have read a book, or finished a study, a few general ideas or prominent outlines may be remembered, and with these the scholar supposes he has mastered the whole.

32. But when he is required to communicate his knowledge, or arrange it in a composition, he finds that he has in reality but very little to say; and this little is told in a very awkward, unintelligible manner.

33. When the book is laid aside, he feels himself *unable to go alone*; and, as respects intelligence for practical purposes, he is no more improved than before he read the book.

34. But if scholars were in the habit of composing, they *would think when they read*; and, by writing their thoughts, they would know how much they have learned by reading.

35. Practice in composition will give scholars the power of expressing themselves with ease and elegance.

36. We seldom find one, even among the most learned, who possesses this faculty; and the reason is, they have not been in the habit of arranging their knowledge, and clothing it with expressive language.

37. Let all, then, who would learn to think, and would ascertain how much they really know, and have the power of imparting knowledge to others, pay close attention to the exercises in composition.

38. To write a composition is not so difficult

as scholars imagine. He who can talk, can write; and if he can talk correctly, he can write correctly. Composition is nothing more than written conversation.

39. And yet. I have seen lads who would continue a narrative, or a debating speech, for a half hour or more, but not be able in the same time to put three sentences upon paper. If they had been taught what composition is, and had practised it, writing would be as easy as speaking.

40. There is no mystery in composition; there is nothing in it to torture the mind; it is easy, and as simple as conversation; and all may learn to write with facility and accuracy. Let there be the right kind of practice, and any one will soon possess the ability.

41. ~~The teacher should require every scholar, who can read and write, to produce a composition every week.~~ He should see that the proper subjects were selected, and that the scholars had suitable assistance. The compositions should be handed to the teacher, for examination and correction.

42. He should so point out the defects, that the scholars would perceive and avoid them. After the compositions have been corrected, the

teacher may allot a certain hour, or half of a day in a week, for reading them publicly to the school.

43. He need not mention the writer's name, nor make public the corrections he has made. This exercise, if judiciously conducted, may be made pleasing to the teacher, and highly beneficial to the scholar.

A HELP
TO
YOUNG WRITERS.

CHAPTER I.

Of Language, and its Origin.

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

A. By his powers of reasoning, and his great susceptibility of improvement.

Q. On what do these mainly depend ?

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

Q. What do you understand by speech or language ?

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

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

A. It is supposed by some to be the fruit of human invention ; but the more common opi-

nion is, that it was a Divine gift, bestowed upon man at his creation.

Q. Under what aspects may language be considered?

A. It may be viewed either as spoken or written.

Q. What is the chief difference between these two?

A. Language, as spoken, constitutes the immediate signs of our ideas; but, as written, it forms merely the signs of spoken language.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II.

Of Alphabetic Writing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. The Hebrew, or Samaritan, which was the same as the Phœnician.

Q. What chiefly gives rise to this supposition,

A. Its having been the source whence almost all known alphabets have been derived.

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

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

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

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

Q. In what did picture writing consist?

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

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

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

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

A. Picture writing has been practised by many rude nations, but particularly by the

Mexicans prior to the discovery of America; and hieroglyphics principally by the ancient Egyptians.

CHAPTER III.

Of the Materials anciently used in Writing, &c.

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

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

Q. What substances came next into use?

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

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

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

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

A. The invention of a substance called papyrus, which was prepared from a reed of the same name, that grew in great abundance on the banks of the Nile.

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

A. Yes; and it was during a great scarcity of the Egyptian papyrus that the important art of making skins into parchment was discovered.

Q. Where and about what time did this happen?

A. In the city of Pergamus; but at what time is rather uncertain.

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

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

Q. In what manner did the ancients chiefly write their letters?

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

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

A. No; they first adopted the plan of writing from right to left, and from left to right, al-

ternately; and, at length, the more convenient mode, which at present prevails, of writing solely from left to right.

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

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

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Scarcity of Books in former times.

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

A. Far from it; for, at no very remote period, they were so scarce as to be in the hands of only the wealthy and the noble, and a very few volumes would have brought a price equal to the purchase of a good estate.

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

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

Q. What was the consequence of this scarcity?

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

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

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

Q. Where and by whom did this take place?

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

Q. What is the cause of such uncertainty?

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

Q. What benefits has the invention of printing produced?

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

CHAPTER V.

Of Composition.

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

A. Such selection and arrangement of words, in speech or writing, as render them fit to express to others our thoughts or opinions upon any subject.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q. Is composition an important acquirement?

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

Q. Has it any other advantages?

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

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

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

Q. How are these best attained?

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI.

Of Genius.

Q. What do you mean by Genius?

A. Some considerable degree of mental superiority, or a person of distinguished talents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. When he produces new trains of thought, or some original piece of composition.

Q. What do you mean by original composition?

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

Q. Are these qualities very common?

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

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

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

CHAPTER VII.

Of Taste.

Q. What do you mean by Taste?

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

Q. What is the chief peculiarity of this faculty?

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

Q. What are the chief means of improving it?

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

Q. What are the chief characteristics of taste?

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

Q. In what does delicacy of taste chiefly consist?

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

Q. In what does correctness consist?

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

Q. Are both attributable to the same source?

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER VIII

Of Beauty and Sublimity.

Q. What do you understand by Beauty?

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

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

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

Q. What is Sublimity?

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

Q. On what does sublimity chiefly depend?

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

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

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

Q. What do you mean by beauty of language?

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

Q. And what is sublimity in language?

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

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

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

CHAPTER IX.

Of Style and Idiom.

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

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

Q. From what is the word style derived?

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

Q. Is there much diversity of style among men?

A. Very great; as almost every speaker and writer has a manner of speaking and writing of his own, though in some this is more marked and peculiar than in others.

Q. On what does this diversity of style depend?

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

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

A. Those generally of greatest genius, great-

est vigour of mind, or of highest mental cultivation.

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

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

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

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

Q. Do languages differ much in point of idiom?

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

 CHAPTER X.
Of Different Kinds of Style.

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

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

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

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

Q. And what by a weak or feeble style?

A. A style that is destitute of force, and produces little effect upon the reader or hearer.

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

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

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

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

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

A. It is the style which a writer or speaker uses who expresses himself in a few words.

Q. And what of the diffuse?

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

Q. Are there any more qualities of style?

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

Q. What do you mean by a natural style?

A. A style in accordance with the language in which a person speaks or writes, and well adapted to the subject of which he treats.

Q. What is a bombastic style?

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

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

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

CHAPTER XI.

Of Perspicuity.

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

A. Perspicuity, or that quality which enables us to see at once into an author's meaning,

and renders it impossible for us to misunderstand it.

Q. What quality stands next to perspicuity in importance?

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

Q. What renders perspicuity so essential in style?

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

Q. On what does perspicuity depend?

A. On the choice of words and the structure of sentences.

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

A. Purity, propriety, and precision.

Q. What do you understand by the structure of sentences?

A. Such an arrangement of the different words and members as is best fitted to express the meaning intended to be conveyed.

CHAPTER XII.

Of Purity.

Q. What do you mean by Purity of style?

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

Q. What do you consider a violation of purity?

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

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

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

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

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

Q. What is the standard of purity?

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

Q. Are words much subject to change ?

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

Q. In what manner do they suffer these changes ?

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

Q. What does purity of construction denote ?

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

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

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

Q. How would you correct this ?

A. By leaving out the word *himself*.

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

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

Q. Can you give an example ?

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

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

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

CHAPTER XIII.

Of Propriety.

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

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

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

A. Avoid such words and expressions as are

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

Q. What is the second rule ?

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

Q. What is the rule next to be observed ?

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

Q. What is the next rule ?

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

Q. How would you rectify these sentences ?

A. Thus ; "The king communicated his intention to the minister, the minister disclosed it to the secretary, and the secretary made it

known to the public." "His own judgment might have suggested better reasons."

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

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

Q. What rule have you next to give ?

A. Avoid all equivocal or ambiguous expressions.

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

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

Q. Can you give an example of this ?

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

Q. Have you any further rule to give ?

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

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

A. The word confused or indistinct, which

signifies not clear, while opaque means not fit to be seen through.

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

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

CHAPTER XIV.

Of Precision.

Q. What do you mean by the term Precision?

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

Q. To what does precision stand opposed?

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

Q. What mostly tends to produce precision?

A. Clear and accurate thinking.

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

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

Q. Is want of precision a common error?

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

Q. What is the best means of avoiding this error?

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

Q. When is precision most apt to be violated?

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. Words should be so placed as to preserve a proper connexion in the thoughts for which they stand, and which they are intended to convey.

Q. Is there any more particular rule ?

A. All relative and connective words should be so placed as to indicate at once what they connect and to what they refer.

Q. What will be the consequence of improper position ?

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

Q. Will you endeavour to correct the following sentences ? It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, by heaping

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

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

CHAPTER XVII.

Of Unity.

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

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

Q. When is unity most apt to be violated?

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

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

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

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

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

Q. Can you exemplify the violation of this rule?

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

Q. What is faulty in this sentence?

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

Q. Can you give it in a corrected form?

A. "After we came to anchor, I was put on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends,

and received by them with the greatest kindness."

Q. What is the next rule for obtaining unity?

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

Q. Can you give an example?

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

Q. How would you correct this sentence?

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

Q. What is the next rule under this head?

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

Q. Are parentheses always improper?

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

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

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

Q. How may long and awkward parentheses be avoided?

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

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

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

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

A. A short time after this injury, he came to himself; and being the next day put on board a ship, he was conveyed first to Corinth, and

thence to the island of Ægina. Never delay till to-morrow what reason and conscience tell you ought to be performed to-day. To-morrow is not yours; and though you should live to enjoy it, you must not overload it with a burden not its own.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of Strength.

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

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

Q. What is the first requisite for obtaining strength?

A. It is to avoid all tautology, and admit into a sentence no words and members but such as the sense absolutely requires.

Q. What am I to understand by tautology?

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

Q. Can you give an example of tautology?

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

Q. What words are here redundant?

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

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

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

Q. What must we often do to accomplish this?

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

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

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

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

A. It is, that a weak assertion should never

follow a stronger; nor a shorter member one of greater length.

Q. Can you give an illustration of this principle?

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

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

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

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

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

Q. Will you exemplify what you have stated?

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

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

A. It is, that when two things are contrasted with one another for the purpose of expressing either resemblance or opposition, a similar resemblance should be observed in the construction of the sentence.

Q. Upon what principle is this rule founded?

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

Q. Will you give an example of this?

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

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

A. It is six years since I paid a visit to my relations. The reason he acted in the manner he did, was never fully explained. If I mis-

take not, he is improved both in knowledge and behaviour. These two boys appear equal in capacity.

CHAPTER XIX.

Of Harmony.

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

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

Q. What quality of style does this constitute?

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

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

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

Q. Is harmony an important quality of style?

A. It is certainly of less consequence than perspicuity; yet still it is a singular excellence,

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

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

Q. Can you give any illustration of this?

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

Q. Have you any thing further to remark?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q. How might it be corrected?

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

CHAPTER XX.

Of Sound as suited to the Sense.

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

A. That which consists in an adaptation of the sound to the sense.

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

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

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

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

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

A. The following may all be considered examples of this:—

“A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.”

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

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

———“On a sudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound.

The infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q. Has this study never been carried to excess?

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

Q. Do not strength and harmony generally go together?

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

Q. Can you give any example of this ?

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

CHAPTER XXI.

Of Figurative Language.

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

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

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

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

Q. What do you understand by literal language ?

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

Q. And what by figurative language ?

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

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

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

Q. On what is figurative language founded ?

A. On some resemblance or opposition which one thing is supposed to bear to another.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. It is in general highly figurative; though to this circumstance we are so accustomed as to pass it over almost unnoticed.

Q. Can you give examples of this?

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

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

A. By its figurative use it is rendered more varied and copious, more sprightly and energetic.

Q. How does it produce these effects?

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

Q. Can you give an example to this effect?

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

Q. When is figurative language improper?

A. When it is either unnatural or far-fetched, —used with too great profusion, or not calculated to deepen the impression intended to be made.

Q. Is figurative language all of one character?

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

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

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

CHAPTER XXII.

Of Simile.

Q. What do you understand by Comparison or Simile?

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

Q. Can you give an example of this figure?

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

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

Q. What is the foundation of this figure?

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

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

A. From objects which are of a different class, but yet possess some quality in common with those to be explained or illustrated.

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

A. Because the resemblance is then too close and obvious to admit of comparison.

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

A. We compare things of the same class, for the purpose of marking their difference; but those of a different class, with a view to point out their resemblance.

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

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

Q. Can you give any example of this?

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

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

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

Q. Can you give any examples of this?

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

Q. By what terms are comparisons generally introduced?

A. By the words *like, thus, as, or so.*

Q. What then do you deem a perfect simile?

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

Q. What sort of comparisons should we avoid?

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

CHAPTER XXIII.

Of Metaphor.

Q. What do you understand by a Metaphor?

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

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

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

Q. On what is it founded?

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

Q. Can you illustrate this difference by example?

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

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

A. Not to use them too profusely, and let them be such as accord with the natural train of the thoughts.

Q. What is the next?

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

Q. On what is this rule founded?

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

Q. What is the next rule?

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

Q. Can you illustrate this by example?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q. What is the error here?

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

CHAPTER XXIV.

Of Allegory.

Q. What is an Allegory?

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. Among the ancients, though many mod-

ern writers have used it with good effect ; and it is a mode of inculcating truth very much resorted to even in the Scriptures.

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

A. The great requisite in the use of this figure is to make it lively and interesting, and preserve a proper distinction between the figurative expression and the literal signification.

CHAPTER XXV.

Of Personification.

Q. What do you mean by Personification ?

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

Q. By what is this figure prompted ?

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

Q. What effect has it upon style ?

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

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

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

Q. To what is this to be ascribed ?

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

Q. And what advantage does this give us ?

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

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

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

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

A. In speaking of the sun, on common occasion, we say, *it* rises, or *it* sets ; but, in cases of greater moment, we ascribe to it the attributes of a male, and use *he*, as Thomson in his Seasons :—

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

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

A. It is used very frequently, and always with great propriety, in the Scriptures; and it often appears in the works of our best poets and orators.

Q. Will you give an example from the Scriptures?

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

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

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

CHAPTER XXVI.

Of Apostrophe.

Q. What do you mean by an Apostrophe?

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

Q. What is the character of this figure?

A. It is the boldest and most striking of all the figures of speech, and is always a token of great fervour of mind.

Q. Can you give an example?

A. One of the most striking is that of David lamenting the death of his son Absalom: "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

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

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

Q. Can you give an example of this?

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

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

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

Q. What is faulty in this?

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

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

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

CHAPTER XXVII.

Of Metonymy and Synecdoche.

Q. What do you understand by Metonymy?

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

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

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

Q. Can you explain the figures here used?

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

Q. And what do you mean by Synecdoche?

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

Q. Can you give examples of this?

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

Q. In what sense are all these terms taken?

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

Q. To what figure is synecdoche most allied?

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

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Of Climax and Enumeration.

Q. What do you mean by a Climax?

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

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

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

Q. Can you give an example of this figure?

A. "What hope is there remaining of liberty, if whatever is their pleasure, it is lawful for them to do; if what is lawful for them to do,

they are able to do; if what they are able to do, they dare do; if what they dare do, they really execute; and if what they execute is no way offensive to you."

Q. What is the character of this figure?

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

Q. By whom is it chiefly used?

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

Q. What is Enumeration?

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

Q. Can you give an example?

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

Q. Are not climax and enumeration often conjoined together?

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

Q. On what is it founded ?

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

Q. Of what then is it generally the result ?

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

Q. Is this a common figure of speech ?

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

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

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

Q. Can you give an example of this kind ?

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

Q. What do you mean by Irony ?

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

Q. How then must the true meaning be known ?

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

Q. What end does Irony serve ?

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

Q. How is it best applied ?

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

Q. Can you give an example of this figure ?

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

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

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

CHAPTER XXXI.

Of Interrogation and Exclamation.

Q. What do you mean by Interrogation ?

A. Such a form of speech as serves to ask a question.

Q. Is interrogation always used figuratively?

A. No; it is never so used when employed to make inquiry about any thing of which one is ignorant.

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

A. When so used, that, under the appearance of a question, it serves the purpose of strong declaration.

Q. Can you exemplify this?

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

Q. What is implied in these questions?

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

Q. Is this a common figure?

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

Q. What do you understand by Exclamation?

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

Q. By what is it generally produced?

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

Q. In what does it differ from interrogation?

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

Q. Can you give an example of this figure?

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

Q. Is this figure ever combined with any other?

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

CHAPTER XXXII.

Of Vision and Alliteration.

Q. What do you mean by Vision?

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

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

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

Q. What effect has it when properly introduced?

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

Q. Can you give an example of this?

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

Q. What do you mean by Alliteration?

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

Q. Is this figure much in use?

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

Q. On what is the figure founded?

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

Q. Can you give any examples?

A. "Ruin seize thee, ruthless king."
"Up the high hill he heaves a huge round stone."
"Softly sweet in Lydian measures,
Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures."
"To high-born Hoel's harp, or soft Llewellyn's lay."

Q. Is this figure always the effect of study?

A. In many instances it may be purely accidental, and on these occasions it appears most natural, and its effects are by far the most pleasing.

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

A. It is, never to make a deliberate search after them; use them only when they rise spontaneously out of the subject; never pursue them too far; and let them always be such as enforce and illustrate, as well as embellish a subject.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Of the more General Rules for Composition.

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

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

Q. On what again do these depend ?

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

Q. What renders these so essential ?

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

Q. And how are these to be obtained ?

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

Q. What is further requisite ?

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

Q. How comes this to be so necessary ?

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

Q. How is this knowledge to be obtained ?

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

Q. Is any thing further necessary ?

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

Q. What proof have you of this ?

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

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

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

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

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

Q. What are requisite for attaining eminence in composition ?

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

Q. How is ease in composition best attained ?

A. By writing fearlessly and boldly ; but, at

the same time, guarding against every thing like extravagance either of sentiment or manner.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Of Different Kinds of Composition.

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

A. They are those of prose and poetry.

Q. What do you understand by prose composition?

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

Q. What do you understand by poetry?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q. To what is this to be ascribed?

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

Q. For what purpose was the earliest poetry used?

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

Q. Under what heads may prose composition be included?

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

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

A. They are those of Blank Verse and Rhyme.

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

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

CHAPTER XXXV.

Of Letters and Dialogue.

Q. What is Letter-writing commonly called?

A. Epistolary correspondence.

Q. Is this an important branch of composition?

A. Perhaps as much so as any; all persons who can write, requiring occasionally to write letters of business, of friendship, or of amusement.

Q. Is it confined to any particular subjects?

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

Q. But upon what occasions are letters chiefly composed?

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

Q. What should be the character of epistolary writing?

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

Q. What do you understand by Dialogue?

A. Conversation kept up by different speakers upon any subject of interest.

Q. Is it confined to any particular subject?

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

Q. Is it a difficult style of writing?

A. Very much so; as the different parts of the dialogue require to correspond with the character of the different speakers.

Q. Is this branch of literature much in request?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Of History.

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

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

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

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

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

A. Because they are all, though very different in other respects, an account of events

and transactions that are altogether past, and beyond the observation of the person who reads them.

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

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

Q. What is the chief excellence of all these?

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

Q. In what style should they be written?

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

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

A. That which is at once the most faithful and the most interesting.

Q. On what does fidelity in any history depend?

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

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

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

Q. How do you know this ?

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

Q. Have we many good historians ?

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

Q. What are the most common faults in biography ?

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

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Of Essays and Philosophy.

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

A. Essays are a species of writing confined to no particular description of subjects, though

generally understood as denoting short dissertations upon topics connected with life and manners.

Q. What does the term essay properly mean ?

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

Q. What is meant by the British Essayists ?

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

Q. Is there any particular style by which essays are characterized ?

A. Their style depends altogether upon the subject ; and they may contain every species, according to the topic discussed, from the simplest to the most sublime.

Q. What do you understand by philosophical writing ?

A. All compositions on the subjects of art and science, or the investigation of moral and physical truth.

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

A. Plainness and perspicuity of style, and clear and accurate arrangement, are the chief requisites.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Of Orations.

Q. What do you understand by Orations ?

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

Q. Into how many species may eloquence be divided ?

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

Q. What other names do these sometimes receive ?

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

Q. What is the object of all public speaking ?

A. To instruct and to persuade ?

Q. What is the first requisite in the art of persuading ?

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

Q. What do you deem the next requisite ?

A. That we be ourselves perfectly in earnest, and fully persuaded of that to which we demand the assent of others.

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

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

Q. What do you understand by the Exordium ?

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

Q. What do you mean by the Division ?

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

Q. What do you understand by the *Narration*?

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

Q. And what is the *Confirmation*?

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

Q. And what is the *Refutation*?

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

Q. What is then the *Peroration*?

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

Q. Are all these parts kept perfectly distinct?

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

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

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

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

A. Far from it; the period when eloquence chiefly flourished was in the days when Greece and Rome were in all their splendour, and in the full enjoyment of liberty.

Q. Who were the most distinguished of ancient orators?

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

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Of Novels.

Q. What do you understand by the term *Novel*?

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

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

A. Allegories, fables, and stories of all kinds

whether invented for the purpose of instruction or amusement.

Q. Where had this species of composition its origin?

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

Q. What are the best known of eastern fictions?

A. The Arabian Nights' Entertainments; though all the writings of the Eastern nations possess more or less of a fictitious character.

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

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

Q. In what language did they compose?

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

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

A. A novel is a fictitious work, either founded upon the events of real life, or at least bear-

ing some resemblance to them; while a romance is a work of a similar kind, having something wild and unnatural in it; and, if not purely imaginary, resting upon some extravagant tradition, and extending far beyond the limits of probability.

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

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

Q. Are novels an important branch of literature?

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

Q. What is the character of a good novel?

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

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

A. It tends to distract the mind, and disquali-

fy it for solid thinking, and the pursuit of useful knowledge.

Q. Is there any peculiar style adapted to novels?

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

CHAPTER XL.

Of Blank Verse and Rhyme.

Q. What do you understand by Blank Verse?

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

Q. Can you give an example?

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

Q. What do you mean by Rhyme?

A. Poetry in which, besides the measured arrangement of the words, there is a recurrence of similar sounds at the end of certain lines.

Q. Can you exemplify this?

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

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

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

"Honour and shame from no condition *rise*;
Act well your part, there all the honour *lies*."
"The hare in pastures or in plains is found,
Emblem of human life! who runs the round;
And after all his wandering ways are *done*,
His circle fills, and ends where he *begun*," }
Just as the setting meets the rising *sun*."

Q. What do you mean by imperfect rhymes?

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

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

Q. What do you mean by double rhymes?

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

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

Q. What do you understand by the term stanza?

A. A certain arrangement of verses in which the rhymes do not take place in successive lines, but in those placed at some distance; as,

" Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar!
Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime
Hath felt the influence of malignant star,
And waged with fortune an eternal war;
Check'd by the scoff of Pride, by Envy's frown,
And Poverty's unconquerable bar,
In life's low vale remote hath pined alone,
Then dropt into the grave unpitied and unknown."

Q. What is the shortest stanza in our language?

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

" O Thou great Being! what thou art
Surpasses me to know;
Yet sure I am, that known to thee
Are all thy works below."
" How smiling wakes the verdant year,
Arrayed in velvet green;

How glad the circling fields appear,
That bound the blooming scene!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLI.

Of the Structure of Verse.

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

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

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

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

Q. Can you illustrate this by example?

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

Q. On what do these poetic feet depend?

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

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

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

Q. Do accent and quantity ever coincide?

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

Q. How many kinds of poetic feet are there?

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

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

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

Q. What are those which have three each?

A. The Dactyl, the Amphibrach, the Anapæst, and the Tribrach.

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

A. The Trochee has the first syllable accented, and the second unaccented; the Iambus, the first unaccented, and the second accented; the Spondee, both accented; and the Pyrrhic, both unaccented; as, bŏldnĕss; dĕlight; pāle sŭns; ōn it.

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

A. The Dactyl has the first syllable accented, and the second and third unaccented; the Amphibrach, the first and third unaccented, and the second accented; the Anapæst, the first and second unaccented, and the third accented; and the Tribrach, the whole three unaccented; as, rĕgŭlār; dĕtĕrmĭne; cŏuntĕrvāil; measŭrāblĕ.

Q. Do these feet admit of any other division?

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

Q. What are the principal feet?

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

Q. Why are the former called principal feet?

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

Q. Why are the others called secondary feet?

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

CHAPTER XLII.

Of Varieties of Verse.

Q. How are different kinds of verse denominated?

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

Q. How many sorts of Iambic verse are there?

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

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

A. 1. "With ravished ears

The mōnārch hears,

Assumes the god,

Affects to nod,

2. And seems to shake the spheres."

3. "And now when busy crowds retire

To take their evening rest,

3. The hermit trimmed his little fire,

2. And cheered his pensive guest."

4. "The hind, how blest, who ne'er beguiled

To quit the hamlet's hawthorn wild;

Nor haunt the crowd, nor tempt the main,

For splendid care and guilty gain."

Q. What is this last species called?

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

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

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

Q. When is the Alexandrine measure commonly introduced?

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

"The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away!
But fixed his word, his saving power remains;
Thy realm for ever lasts, thy own Mésalah reigns!"

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

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

"Alas! by some degree of woe
We ev'ry bliss must gain:
The heart can ne'er a transport know,
That never knew a pain."

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

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

1. "In my rage shall be seen
The revenge of a queen.
2. "Not a pine in my grove is there seen,
But with tendrils of woodbine is bound;
Not a beech is more beautiful green,
But a sweet-brier entwines it around."
3. "May I govern my passions with absolute sway,
And grow wiser and better as life wears away."

Q. Is anapæstic verse a common species of poetry?

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

Q. Is there much fine trochaic and dactylic verse?

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

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

A. "Soon would the vine his wounds deplore,
And yield its purple gifts no more."
"She tells with what delight he stood,
To trace his features in the flood."

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLIII,

Of Poetic Pauses.

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

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

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

A. Some say it does; but it may be safely asserted, that no pause should be made in poetry, that, in the slightest degree, interferes with the sense, or would be altogether improper in prose.

Q. What poetry is most harmonious.

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

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

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

Q. How many sorts of poetic pauses are there?

A. Two; *Final* and *Cæsural*.

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

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

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

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

Q. Can you illustrate both of these?

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

Q. When are heroic verses generally most harmonious?

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

Q. Can you give any examples of this?

A. "And hence the charm | historic scenes impart;
Hence Tiber awes, | and Avon melts the heart."
"Mark yon old mansion | frowning through the trees,
Whose hollow turret | woos the whistling breeze."
"Remark each anxious toil, | each eager strife,
And watch the busy scenes | of crowded life."

Q. When is the harmony of verse impaired?

A. When the cæsural pause happens nearer the beginning than the fourth, or nearer the end than the sixth syllable.

Q. Can you give an example?

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

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

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

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

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

Q. Has great uniformity of pauses a pleasing effect?

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

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

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

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

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

"Hów flêet | is ā glānce | ôf thê mīnd,
Cōmpāred | with thê spēed | ôf its flight;
Thê tēm- | pēst itsēlf | lāgs bēhīnd,
ānd thê swīft- | wīngēd ār- | rōws ôf light."

CHAPTER XLIV.

Of Pastoral and Descriptive Poetry.

Q. What is the nature of Pastoral Poetry?

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

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

A. As coming from the Latin word *pastor*, a shepherd, in strictness of meaning, it implies only what is connected with the care of sheep; but it is generally taken in a wider sense, to denote every thing connected with country life and occupation.

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

A. From the tranquil scenes, and pictures

of simple innocence, which it sets before the reader.

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

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

Q. What do you understand by Descriptive Poetry?

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

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

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

Q. What is the chief excellence of descriptive poetry?

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

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

A. Acute observation and great vividness of

imagination, that we may at once observe, and be able to delineate, the most striking features of an object.

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

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

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

A. It may be viewed as a species of descriptive poetry; and, when well executed, it possesses great fascination.

Q. Can you mention any poetry of this class?

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

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

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

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CHAPTER XLV.

Of Didactic and Lyric Poetry.

Q. What do you mean by Didactic Poetry?

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

Q. Is this a pleasing vehicle of knowledge?

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

Q. What are its chief advantages?

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

Q. What do you conceive to be its disadvantages?

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

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

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

Q. What is to be understood by Lyric Poetry?

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

Q. Was its meaning always so confined?

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

Q. From what is the word lyric derived?

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

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

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

Q. What do you understand by a song?

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

Q. What is the nature of the ode?

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

Q. Who are our principal writers of odes?

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

Q. What do you mean by sonnet?

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

CHAPTER XLVI.

Of Epic Poetry.

Q. What rank does the Epic hold in poetry?

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

Q. What is its peculiar object?

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

Q. What other name does it often receive?

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

Q. Why is he so named?

A. Because the whole course of the action, and train of events, are made to turn upon his manner of acting.

Q. What is the plan of such a work generally called?

A. It is commonly called the plot, which denotes the arrangement of all the various parts.

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

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

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

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

Q. Does he begin and give a regular ac-

count of the whole transaction from the commencement?

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

Q. What name is given to those parts which the different actors describe?

A. They are called episodes, which mean separate incidents or stories, having an intimate connexion with the main action.

Q. How should an epic poem be arranged?

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

Q. What ought the sentiments and language to be?

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

Q. What must be the character of the style?

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

Q. Have there been many great epic poems produced?

A. Very few, compared with the number of

excellent productions in a most every other kind of poetry.

Q. Can you mention the principal?

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

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

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

CHAPTER XLVII.

Of Dramatic Poetry.

Q. What do you understand by Dramatic Poetry?

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

Q. In what does it differ from epic poetry?

CONCLUSION.

Q. What do you understand by a Hymn?

A. A religious poem, fit for being set to music, and sung for the purpose of awakening devotional feelings.

Q. What is an Elegy?

A. A short pathetic poem, in commemoration of the dead, though it often assumes a different character, and is applied to any plaintive subject.

Q. What is a Satire?

A. A species of writing, not entirely, though chiefly, confined to poetry, and intended to correct the vices and follies of mankind, by holding them up to laughter and ridicule.

Q. What do you mean by an Epigram?

A. A short, witty poem, containing some peculiar conceit or point of humour, usually expressed in the concluding lines.

Q. What do you mean by an Epitaph?

A. An inscription upon a tomb, written sometimes in verse, sometimes in prose.

Q. Are not letters sometimes written in verse?

A. Frequently; and much excellent poetry has appeared under the character of epistles, particularly from the pen of Pope.

Q. Is the line of distinction between the different descriptions of poetry very clear?

A. Far from it; the one sort runs always less or more into the other; and all the species are, in some degree, entitled to the character of descriptive and didactic, as they are almost all used, in some degree, for the purpose of teaching or describing.