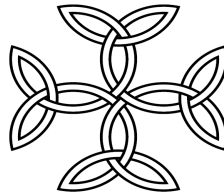




The Classic Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style



by Angela M. Kaelin

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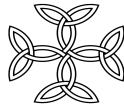
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The Classic Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style

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The Classic Writer's Guide to Grammar and Style



I. The Beauty of Simplicity

Only about 2,000 words are needed to speak and write correctly, which is a small number compared with what is in the dictionary. Nobody ever uses all the words in the dictionary and there is no need to do so to communicate effectively. In fact, it is best to stick with familiar wording when writing and speaking.

Most literature for public consumption is written on a 9th grade level and even great scholars and writers use simple words. Many people who pass for being polished, refined and educated use fewer words. The greatest scholar alive hasn't more than four thousand different words at his command, and he never has the occasion to use half the number.

It is more important to use a simple vocabulary effectively and accurately. It is an unfortunate fact that for the past forty years in education the importance of grammar has been overlooked and even derided. It is not only essential to proper use of the English language, but it is absolutely necessary to the full mastery of a complex foreign language. Its neglect in modern education is unconscionable.

Fortunately, an understanding of proper grammar can be acquired quickly. The purpose of this little book is to direct the reader along a straight course, pointing out the mistakes he must avoid and giving him such assistance as will enable him to reach the goal of a correct knowledge of the English language. It is not a Grammar in the proper sense of the word, but an essential guide.

Three Essentials for Clear Communication: *Purity, Clarity and Precision.*

- *Purity*: Avoid slang words and obsolete terms.
- *Clarity*: Avoid double meanings. Write without pretense.
- *Precision*: State the matter accurately once.

"Brevity is the soul of wit" - William Shakespeare

ESSENTIALS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Letters

There are two types: Vowels and Consonants

Vowels: a,e,i,o,u.

Consonants: All other letters besides the above. Consonants make distinct sounds by themselves.

Syllables and Words

A syllable is a distinct sound produced by a single effort. In every syllable there must be at least one vowel.

A word may consist of one syllable or a combination of syllables.

Many rules are given for the dividing of words into syllables, but the best is to follow as closely as possible the divisions made by the organs of speech in properly pronouncing them.

II. The Nine Basic Parts of Speech

Article: *A, An, The.* Placed before a noun.

Noun: Common - Person, place, thing.

Proper - the name of a specific person, place or thing, ie. John Brown, Phoenix, Arizona, The Empire State Building.

Adjective: Describes a noun. Comparative form uses *-er* ending, Superlative form uses *-est* ending.

Pronoun: A word used as a substitute for a noun.

Verb: A word that signifies action.

Adverb: A word used to describe a very, frequently has an *-ly* ending.

Preposition: Examples - *In, Around, Through, By, On top of, Under, Beside,* etc.

Conjunction: Words that connect clauses - *And, But, Or*

Interjection: Expresses surprise or emotion. Followed by *"!"*

Article

An *Article* is a word placed before a noun to show whether the noun is used in a particular or general sense.

There are two articles, *a* or *an* and *the*. *A* or *an* is called the indefinite article because it does not point out any particular person or thing but indicates the noun in its widest sense; thus, *a* man means any man whatsoever of the species or race.

The is called the definite article because it points out some particular person or thing; thus, *the* man means some particular individual.

Noun

A *noun* is the name of any person, place or thing as *John, London, book*. Nouns are proper and common.

Proper nouns are names applied to *particular* persons or places.

Common nouns are names applied to a whole kind or species.

Nouns are inflected by *number, gender* and *case*.

Number is that inflection of the noun by which we indicate whether it represents one or more than one.

Gender is that inflection by which we signify whether the noun is the name of a male, a female, of an inanimate object or something which has no distinction of sex.

Case is that inflection of the noun which denotes the state of the person, place or thing represented, as the subject of an affirmation or question, the owner or possessor of something mentioned, or the object of an action or of a relation.

Thus in the example, "John tore the leaves of Sarah's book," the distinction between *book* which represents only one object and *leaves* which represent two or more objects of the same kind is called *Number*; the distinction of sex between *John*, a male, and *Sarah*, a female, and *book* and *leaves*, things which are inanimate and neither male nor female, is called *Gender*; and the distinction of state between *John*, the person who tore the book, and the subject of the affirmation, *Mary*, the owner of the book, *leaves* the objects torn, and *book* the object related to leaves, as the whole of which they were a part, is called *Case*.

Adjective

An *adjective* is a word which qualifies a noun, that is, shows or points out some distinguishing mark or feature of the noun; as, A *black* dog.

Adjectives have three forms called degrees of comparison, the *positive*, the *comparative* and the *superlative*.

The *positive* is the simple form of the adjective without expressing increase or diminution of the original quality: *nice*.

The *comparative* is that form of the adjective which expresses increase or diminution of the quality: *nicer*.

The *superlative* is that form which expresses the greatest increase or diminution of the quality: *nicest*.

or An adjective is in the positive form when it does not express comparison; as, "A *rich* man."

An adjective is in the comparative form when it expresses comparison between two or between one and a number taken collectively, as, "John is *richer* than James"; "he is *richer* than all the men in Boston."

An adjective is in the superlative form when it expresses a comparison between one and a number of individuals taken separately; as, "John is the *richest* man in Boston."

Adjectives expressive of properties or circumstances which cannot be increased have only the positive form; as, A *circular* road; the chief end; an *extreme* measure.

Adjectives are compared in two ways, either by adding -er to the positive to form the comparative and est to the positive to form the superlative, or by prefixing more to the positive for the comparative and most to the positive for the superlative; as, handsome, handsomer, handsomest or handsome, more handsome, most handsome.

Adjectives of two or more syllables are generally compared by prefixing more and most.

Many adjectives are irregular in comparison: *Bad, worse, worst; Good, better, best*.

Pronoun

A *pronoun* is a word used in place of a noun; as, "John gave his pen to James and *he* lent it to Jane to write *her* copy with *it*." Without the pronouns we would have to write this sentence,—"John gave John's pen to James and James lent the pen to Jane to write Jane's copy with the pen."

There are three kinds of pronouns—Personal, Relative and Adjective Pronouns.

Personal Pronouns are so called because they are used instead of the names of persons, places and things. The Personal Pronouns are *I, He, She, and It*, with their plurals, *We, You and They*.

I is the pronoun of the first person because it represents the person speaking.

You is the pronoun of the second person because it represents the person spoken to.

He, She, It are the pronouns of the third person because they represent the persons or things of whom we are speaking.

Like nouns, the Personal Pronouns have number, gender and case. The gender of the first and second person is obvious, as they represent the person or persons speaking and those who are addressed. The personal pronouns are thus declined:

First Person Masculine or Feminine

	Sing.	Plural.
N.	I	We
P.	Mine	Ours
O.	Me	Us

Second Person Masculine or Feminine

	Sing.	Plural.
N.	You	You
P.	Your	Yours
O.	You	You

Third Person Masculine

	Sing.	Plural.
N.	He	They
P.	His	Theirs
O.	Him	Them

Third Person Feminine

	Sing.	Plural.
N.	She	They
P.	Hers	Theirs
O.	Her	Them

Third Person

	Neuter	
	Sing.	Plural.
N.	It	They
P.	Its	Theirs
O.	It	Them

The *Relative Pronouns* are so called because they relate to some word or phrase going before; as, “The boy *who* told the truth;” “He has done well, *which* gives me great pleasure.”

Here *who* and *which* are not only used in place of other words, but *who* refers immediately to boy, and *which* to the circumstance of his having done well.

The word or clause to which a relative pronoun refers is called the *Antecedent*.

The Relative Pronouns are *who*, *which*, *that* and *what*.

Who is applied to persons only; as, “The man *who* was here.”

Which is applied to the lower animals and things without life; as, “The horse *which* I sold.” “The hat *which* I bought.”

That is applied to both persons and things; as, “The friend *that* helps.” “The bird *that* sings.” “The knife *that* cuts.”

What is a compound relative, including both the antecedent and the relative and is equivalent to *that which*; as, “I did what he desired,” i. e. “I did *that which* he desired.”

Relative pronouns have the singular and plural alike.

Who is either masculine or feminine; *which* and *that* are masculine, feminine or neuter; *what* as a relative pronoun is always neuter.

That and *what* are not inflected.

Who and *which* are thus declined:

	Sing. and Plural			Sing. and Plural	
N.	Who	N.	Which		
P.	Whose	P.	Whose		
O.	Whom	O.	Which		

Who, *which* and *what* when used to ask questions are called *Interrogative Pronouns*.

Adjective Pronouns partake of the nature of adjectives and pronouns and are subdivided as follows:

Demonstrative Adjective Pronouns which directly point out the person or object. They are *this*, *that* with their plurals *these*, *those*, and *yon*, *same* and *selfsame*.

Distributive Adjective Pronouns used distributively. They are *each*, *every*, *either*, *neither*.

Indefinite Adjective Pronouns used more or less indefinitely. They are *any*, *all*, *few*, *some*, *several*, *one*, *other*, *another*, *none*.

Possessive Adjective Pronouns denoting possession. They are *my*, *thy*, *his*, *her*, *its*, *our*, *your*, *their*.

The possessive adjective pronouns differ from the possessive case of the personal pronouns in that the latter can stand *alone* while the former *cannot*. “Who owns that book?” “It is *mine*.” You cannot say “it

is *my*,"—the word book must be repeated.

The Verb

A *verb* is a word which implies action or the doing of something, or it may be defined as a word which affirms, commands or asks a question.

Thus, the words *John the table*, contain no assertion, but when the word *strikes* is introduced, something is affirmed, hence the word *strikes* is a verb and gives completeness and meaning to the group.

The simple form of the verb without inflection is called the *root* of the verb; *e. g. love* is the root of the verb,—“To Love.”

Verbs are *regular* or *irregular*, *transitive* or *intransitive*.

A verb is said to be *regular* when it forms the past tense by adding *-ed* to the present or *-d* if the verb ends in *e*. When its past tense does not end in *ed* it is said to be *irregular*.

A *transitive* verb is one the action of which passes over to or affects some object; as “I struck the table.” Here the action of striking affected the object table, hence struck is a transitive verb.

An *intransitive* verb is one in which the action remains with the subject: “*I walk*,” “*I sit*,” “*I run*.” Many intransitive verbs, however, can be used transitively; thus, “I walk the horse;” *walk* is here transitive.

Verbs are Inflected by *Number, Person, Tense and Mood*.

Number and *person* as applied to the verb really belong to the subject; they are used with the verb to denote whether the assertion is made regarding one or more than one and whether it is made in reference to the person speaking, the person spoken to or the person or thing spoken about.

Tense

In their tenses verbs follow the divisions of time. They have *present tense*, *past tense* and *future tense* with their variations to express the exact time of action as to an event happening, having happened or yet to happen.

Mood

There are four simple moods,—the *Infinitive*, the *Indicative*, the *Imperative* and the *Subjunctive*.

The Mood of a verb denotes the mode or manner in which it is used. Thus if it is used in its widest sense without reference to person or number, time or place, it is in the *Infinitive* Mood; as “To run.” Here we are not told who does the running, when it is done, where it is done or anything about it.

When a verb is used to indicate or declare or ask a simple question or make any direct statement, it is in the *Indicative* Mood. “The boy loves his book.” Here a direct statement is made concerning the boy. “Have you a pin?” Here a simple question is asked which calls for an answer.

When the verb is used to express a command or entreaty it is in the *Imperative* Mood as, “Go away.” “Give me a penny.”

When the verb is used to express doubt, supposition or uncertainty or when some future action depends upon a contingency, it is in the subjunctive mood; as, "If I come, he shall remain."

Many grammarians include a fifth mood called the *potential* to express *power, possibility, liberty, necessity, will* or *duty*. It is formed by means of the auxiliaries *may, can, ought* and *must*, but in all cases it can be resolved into the indicative or subjunctive. Thus, in "I may write if I choose," "may write" is by some classified as in the potential mood, but in reality the phrase *I may write* is an indicative one while the second clause, *if I choose*, is the expression of a condition upon which, not my liberty to write, depends, but my actual writing.

Verbs have two participles, the present or imperfect, sometimes called the *active* ending in *-ing* and the past or perfect, often called the *passive*, ending in *-ed* or *-d*.

The *infinitive* expresses the sense of the verb in a substantive form, the participles in an adjective form; as "To rise early is healthful." "An early rising man." "The newly risen sun."

The participle in *-ing* is frequently used as a substantive and consequently is equivalent to an infinitive; thus, "To rise early is healthful" and "Rising early is healthful" are the same.

The principal parts of a verb are the Present Indicative, Past Indicative and Past Participle, such as:

Love, Loved, Loved

Sometimes one or more of these parts are wanting, and then the verb is said to be defective.

	Present	Past	Passive Participle
Can	Could		(Wanting)
May	Might		"
Shall	Should		"
Will	Would		"
Ought	Ought		"

Verbs may also be divided into *principal* and *auxiliary*. A *principal* verb is that without which a sentence or clause can contain no assertion or affirmation. An *auxiliary* is a verb joined to the root or participles of a principal verb to express time and manner with greater precision than can be done by the tenses and moods in their simple form. Thus, the sentence, "I am writing an exercise; when I shall have finished it I shall read it to the class." has no meaning without the principal verbs *writing, finished, read*; but the meaning is rendered more definite, especially with regard to time, by the auxiliary verbs *am, have, shall*.

There are nine auxiliary or helping verbs, viz., *Be, have, do, shall, will, may, can, ought, and must*. They are called helping verbs, because it is by their aid the compound tenses are formed.

To Be

The verb *To Be* is the most important of the auxiliary verbs. It has eleven parts, viz., *am, art, is, are, was, wast, were, wert; be, being* and *been*.

Voice

The *active voice* is that form of the verb which shows the Subject not being acted upon but acting; as, "The cat *catches* mice." "Charity *covers* a multitude of sins."

The *passive voice*: When the subject of the verb denotes the recipient of the action, the verb is said to be in the passive voice. "John was loved by his neighbors."

Conjugation

The *conjugation* of a verb is its orderly arrangement in voices, moods, tenses, persons and numbers.

Here is the complete conjugation of the verb "Love"—Active Voice.

Principal Parts

Present	Past	Past Participle
Love	Loved	Loved

Infinitive Mood

To Love

Indicative Mood
PRESENT TENSE

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I love	We love
2nd person	You love	You love
3rd person	He loves	They love

Past Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I loved	We loved
2nd person	You loved	You loved
3rd person	He loved	They loved

Future Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I shall love	They will love
2nd person	You will love	You will love
3rd person	He will love	We shall love

Present Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I have loved	We have loved
2nd person	You have loved	You have loved
3rd person	He has loved	They have loved

Past Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
--	-------	--------

1st person	I had loved	We had loved
2nd person	You had loved	You had loved
3rd person	He had loved	They had loved

Future Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I shall have loved	We shall have loved
2nd person	You will have loved	You will have loved
3rd person	He will have loved	They will have loved

Imperative Mood
(PRESENT TENSE ONLY)

	Sing.	Plural
2nd person	Love (you)	Love (you)

Subjunctive Mood
PRESENT TENSE

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I love	If we love
2nd person	If you love	If you love
3rd person	If he love	If they love

Past Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I loved	If we loved
2nd person	If you loved	If you loved
3rd person	If he loved	If they loved

Present Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I have loved	If we have loved
2nd person	If you have loved	If you have loved
3rd person	If he has loved	If they have loved

Past Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I had loved	If we had loved
2nd person	If you had loved	If you had loved
3rd person	If he had loved	If they had loved

Infinitives

Present	Perfect
To love	To have loved

Participles

Present	Past	Perfect
Loving	Loved	Having loved

CONJUGATION OF "To Love"
Passive Voice
Indicative Mood

Present Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I am loved	We are loved
2nd person	You are loved	You are loved
3rd person	He is loved	They are loved

Past Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I was loved	We were loved
2nd person	You were loved	You were loved
3rd person	He was loved	They were loved

Future Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I shall be loved	We shall be loved
2nd person	You will be loved	You will be loved
3rd person	He will be loved	They will be loved

Present Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I have been loved	We have been loved
2nd person	You have been loved	You have been loved
3rd person	He has been loved	They have been loved

Past Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I had been loved	We had been loved
2nd person	You had been loved	You had been loved
3rd person	He had been loved	They had been loved

Future Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	I shall have been loved	We shall have been loved
2nd person	You will have been loved	You will have been loved

3rd person He will have been loved They will have been loved

Imperative Mood
(PRESENT TENSE ONLY)

	Sing.	Plural
2nd person	Be (you) loved	Be (you) loved

Subjunctive Mood
PRESENT TENSE

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I be loved	If we be loved
2nd person	If you be loved	If you be loved
3rd person	If he be loved	If they be loved

Past Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I were loved	If they were loved
2nd person	If you were loved	If you were loved
3rd person	If he were loved	If we were loved

Present Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I have been loved	If we have been loved
2nd person	If you have been loved	If you have been loved
3rd person	If he has been loved	If they have been loved

Past Perfect Tense

	Sing.	Plural
1st person	If I had been loved	If we had been loved
2nd person	If you had been loved	If you had been loved
3rd person	If he had been loved	If they had been loved

Infinitives

Present	Perfect
To be loved	To have been loved

Participles

Present	Past	Perfect
Being loved	Been loved	Having been loved

Adverb

An *adverb* is a word which modifies a verb, an adjective or another adverb. Thus, in the example—"He writes *well*," the adverb shows the manner in which the writing is performed; in the examples, "He is remarkably diligent" and "He works very faithfully," the adverbs modify the adjective *diligent* and the other adverb *faithfully* by expressing the degree of diligence and faithfulness.

Adverbs are chiefly used to express in one word what would otherwise require two or more words; thus, *There* signifies in that place; *whence*, from what place; *usefully*, in a useful manner.

Adverbs, like adjectives, are sometimes varied in their terminations to express comparison and different degrees of quality.

Some adverbs form the comparative and superlative by adding *-er* and *-est*; as, *soon*, *sooner*, *soonest*.

Adverbs which end in *-ly* are compared by prefixing *more* and *most*; as, *nobly*, *more nobly*, *most nobly*.

A few adverbs are irregular in the formation of the comparative and superlative; as, *well*, *better*, *best*.

Preposition

A *preposition* connects words, clauses, and sentences together and shows the relation between them. "My hand is on the table" shows relation between hand and table.

Prepositions are so called because they are generally placed *before* the words whose connection or relation with other words they point out.

Conjunction

A *conjunction* joins words, clauses and sentences; as "John *and* James." "My father and mother have come, *but* I have not seen them."

The conjunctions in most general use are *and*, *also*; *either*, *or*; *neither*, *nor*; *though*, *yet*; *but*, *however*; *for*; *that*; *because*, *since*; *therefore*, *wherefore*, *then*; *if*, *unless*, *lest*.

Interjection

An *interjection* is a word used to express some sudden emotion of the mind. Thus in the examples—"Ah! there he comes; alas! what shall I do?" *ah*, expresses surprise, and *alas*, distress.

Nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs become interjections when they are uttered as exclamations, as, *nonsense!* *strange!* *hail!* *away!* etc.

We have now enumerated the parts of speech and as briefly as possible stated the functions of each. As they all belong to the same family they are related to one another but some are in closer affinity than others. To point out the exact relationship and the dependency of one word on another is called *parsing* and in order that every etymological connection may be distinctly understood a brief resume of the foregoing essentials is here given:

The signification of the noun is *limited* to *one*, but to any *one* of the kind, by the *indefinite* article, and to some *particular* one, or some particular *number*, by the *definite* article.

Nouns, in one form, represent *one* of a kind, and in another, *any number* more than one; they are the *names of males*, or *females*, or of objects which are neither male nor female; and they represent the

subject of an affirmation, a command or a question,—the *owner* or *possessor* of a thing,—or the *object* of an action, or of a relation expressed by a preposition.

Adjectives express the *qualities* which distinguish one person or thing from another; in one form they express quality *without comparison*; in another, they express comparison *between two*, or between *one* and a number taken collectively,—and in a third they express comparison between *one* and a *number* of others taken separately.

Pronouns are used in place of nouns; one class of them is used merely as the *substitutes* of *names*; the pronouns of another class have a peculiar *reference* to some *preceding words* in the *sentence*, of which they are the substitutes, and those of a third class refer adjectively to the persons or things they represent. Some pronouns are used for both the *name* and the *substitute*; and several are frequently employed in *asking questions*.

Affirmations and *commands* are expressed by the verb; and different inflections of the verb express *number*, *person*, *time* and *manner*. With regard to *time*, an affirmation may be *present* or *past* or *future*; with regard to *manner*, an affirmation may be *positive* or *conditional*, it being doubtful whether the condition is fulfilled or not, or it being implied that it is not fulfilled; the verb may express *command* or *entreaty*; or the sense of the verb may be expressed *without affirming* or *commanding*. The verb also expresses that an action or state *is* or *was* going on, by a form which is also used sometimes as a noun, and sometimes to qualify nouns.

Affirmations are *modified* by *adverbs*, some of which can be inflected to express different degrees of modification.

Words are joined together by *conjunctions*; and the various relations which one thing bears to another are expressed by *prepositions*. *Sudden emotions* of the mind, and *exclamations* are expressed by *interjections*.

Some words according to meaning belong sometimes to one part of speech, sometimes to another. Thus, in “After a storm comes a *calm*,” *calm* is a noun; in “It is a *calm* evening,” *calm* is an adjective; and in “*Calm* your fears,” *calm* is a verb.

The following sentence containing all the parts of speech is parsed etymologically:

“*I now see the old man coming, but, alas, he has walked with much difficulty.*” *I*, a personal pronoun, first person singular, masculine or feminine gender, nominative case, subject of the verb *see*.

- *now*, an adverb of time modifying the verb *see*.
- *see*, an irregular, transitive verb, indicative mood, present tense, first person singular to agree with its nominative or subject *I*.
- *the*, the definite article particularizing the noun *man*.
- *old*, an adjective, positive degree, qualifying the noun *man*.
- *man*, a common noun, 3rd person singular, masculine gender, objective case governed by the transitive verb *see*.
- *coming*, the present or imperfect participle of the verb “to come” referring to the noun *man*.
- *but*, a conjunction.
- *alas*, an interjection, expressing pity or sorrow.

- *he*, a personal pronoun, 3rd person singular, masculine gender, nominative case, subject of verb has walked.
- *has walked*, a regular, intransitive verb, indicative mood, perfect tense, 3rd person singular to agree with its nominative or subject *he*.
- *with*, a preposition, governing the noun difficulty.
- *much*, an adjective, positive degree, qualifying the noun difficulty.
- *difficulty*, a common noun, 3rd person singular, neuter gender, objective case governed by the preposition *with*.

Much is generally an adverb. As an adjective it is thus compared:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
much	more	most

THE SENTENCE

Different Kinds—Arrangement of Words—Paragraph

A sentence is an arrangement of words intended to express a complete thought or idea. No matter how short, it must contain one finite verb and a subject or agent to direct the action of the verb.

“Birds fly;” “Fish swim;” “Men walk;” are sentences.

A sentence always contains two parts, something spoken about and something said about it. The word or words indicating what is spoken about form what is called the *subject* and the word or words indicating what is said about it form what is called the *predicate*.

In the sentences given, *birds*, *fish* and *men* are the subjects, while *fly*, *swim* and *walk* are the predicates.

There are three kinds of sentences, *simple*, *compound* and *complex*.

The *simple sentence* expresses a single thought and consists of one subject and one predicate, as, “Man is mortal.”

A *compound sentence* consists of two or more simple sentences of equal importance the parts of which are either expressed or understood, as, “The men work in the fields and the women work in the household,” or “The men work in the fields and the women in the household” or “The men and women work in the fields and in the household.”

A *complex sentence* consists of two or more simple sentences so combined that one depends on the other to complete its meaning; as, “When he returns, I shall go on my vacation.” Here the words, “when he returns” are dependent on the rest of the sentence for their meaning.

A *clause* is a separate part of a complex sentence, as “when he returns” in the last example.

A *phrase* consists of two or more words without a finite verb.

Without a finite verb we cannot affirm anything or convey an idea, therefore we can have no sentence.

Infinitives and participles which are the infinite parts of the verb cannot be predicates. “I looking up the street” is not a sentence, for it is not a complete action expressed. When we hear such an expression as “A dog running along the street,” we wait for something more to be added, something more affirmed about the dog, whether he bit or barked or fell dead or was run over.

Thus in every sentence there must be a finite verb to limit the subject.

When the verb is transitive, that is, when the action cannot happen without affecting something, the thing affected is called the *object*.

Thus in “Cain killed Abel” the action of the killing affected Abel. In “The cat has caught a mouse,” mouse is the object of the catching.

Arrangement of Words in a Sentence

Of course in simple sentences the natural order of arrangement is subject–verb–object. In many cases no other form is possible. Thus in the sentence “The cat has caught a mouse,” we cannot reverse it and say “The mouse has caught a cat” without destroying the meaning, and in any other form of arrangement, such as “A mouse, the cat has caught,” we feel that while it is intelligible, it is a poor way of expressing the fact and one which jars upon us more or less.

In longer sentences, however, when there are more words than what are barely necessary for subject, verb and object, we have greater freedom of arrangement and can so place the words as to give the best effect. The proper placing of words depends upon clarity and precision. These two combined give *style* to the structure.

Most people are familiar with Gray’s line in the immortal *Elegy*—“The ploughman homeward plods his weary way.” This line can be paraphrased to read 18 different ways. Here are a few variations:

Homeward the ploughman plods his weary way.
The ploughman plods his weary way homeward.
Plods homeward the ploughman his weary way.
His weary way the ploughman homeward plods.
Homeward his weary way plods the ploughman.
Plods the ploughman his weary way homeward.
His weary way the ploughman plods homeward.
His weary way homeward the ploughman plods.
The ploughman plods homeward his weary way.
The ploughman his weary way plods homeward.

...and so on. It is doubtful if any of the other forms are superior to the one used by the poet. Of course, his arrangement was made to comply with the rhythm and rhyme of the verse. Most of the variations depend upon the emphasis we wish to place upon the different words.

In arranging the words in an ordinary sentence we should not lose sight of the fact that the beginning and end are the important places for catching the attention of the reader. Words in these places have greater emphasis than elsewhere.

In Gray’s line the general meaning conveyed is that a weary ploughman is plodding his way homeward, but according to the arrangement a very slight difference is effected in the idea. Some of the variations make us think more of the ploughman, others more of the plodding, and still others more of the weariness.

As the beginning and end of a sentence are the most important places, it naturally follows that small or insignificant words should be kept from these positions. Of the two places the end one is the more important, therefore, it really calls for the most important word in the sentence. Never commence a sentence with *And*, *But*, *Since*, *Because*, and other similar weak words and never end it with prepositions, small, weak adverbs or pronouns.

(Note: The above rule has changed and now it is considered conducive to the smooth flow of language to use these words sparingly at the beginning of sentences.)

Common Errors to Avoid

Never use the past participle for the past tense nor *vice versa*. This mistake is a very common one. At every turn we hear “He done it” for “He did it.” “The jar was broke” instead of broken. “He would have went” for “He would have gone,” etc.

The use of the verbs *shall* and *will* is a rock upon which even the best speakers come to wreck. They are interchanged recklessly. Their significance changes according as they are used with the first, second or third person. With the first person *shall* is used in direct statement to express a simple future action; as, “I shall go to the city to-morrow.” With the second and third persons *shall* is used to express a determination; as, “You *shall* go to the city to-morrow,” “He *shall* go to the city to-morrow.”

With the first person *will* is used in direct statement to express determination, as, “I will go to the city to-morrow.” With the second and third persons *will* is used to express simple future action; as, “You *will* go to the city to-morrow,” “He *will* go to the city to-morrow.”

A very old rule regarding the uses of *shall* and *will* is thus expressed in rhyme:

In the first person simply *shall* foretells,
In *will* a threat or else a promise dwells.
Shall in the second and third does threat,
Will simply then foretells the future feat.

Take special care to distinguish between the nominative and objective case. The pronouns are the only words which retain the ancient distinctive case ending for the objective. Remember that the objective case follows transitive verbs and prepositions. Don't say “The boy who I sent to see you,” but “The boy whom I sent to see you.” *Whom* is here the object of the transitive verb sent. Don't say “She bowed to him and I” but “She bowed to him and me” since *me* is the objective case following the preposition *to* understood. “Between you and I” is a very common expression. It should be “Between you and me” since *between* is a preposition calling for the objective case.

Be careful in the use of the relative pronouns *who*, *which* and *that*. *Who* refers only to persons; *which* only to things; as, “The boy who was drowned,” “The umbrella which I lost.” The relative *that* may refer to both persons and things; as, “The man *that* I saw.” “The hat *that* I bought.”

Don't use the superlative degree of the adjective for the comparative; as “He is the richest of the two” for “He is the richer of the two.” Other mistakes often made in this connection are (1) Using the double comparative and superlative: “These apples are much *more* preferable.” “The most universal motive to business is *gain*.” (2) Comparing objects which belong to dissimilar classes: There is no nicer *life* than a *teacher*.” (3) Including objects in class to which they do not belong: “The fairest of her daughters, Eve.” (4) Excluding an object from a class to which it does belong: “Caesar was braver than any ancient warrior.”

Don't use an adjective for an adverb or an adverb for an adjective. Don't say, “He acted nice towards me,” but “He acted nicely toward me,” and instead of saying, “She looked *beautifully*” say, “She looked *beautiful*.”

Place the adverb as near as possible to the word it modifies. Instead of saying, “He walked to the door quickly,” say, “He walked quickly to the door.”

Not alone be careful to distinguish between the nominative and objective cases of the pronouns, but try

to avoid ambiguity in their use.

The amusing effect of disregarding the reference of pronouns is well illustrated by Burton in the following story of Billy Williams, a comic actor who thus narrates his experience in riding a horse owned by Hamblin, the manager:

“So down I goes to the stable with Tom Flynn, and told the man to put the saddle on him.”

“On Tom Flynn?”

“No, on the horse. So after talking with Tom Flynn awhile I mounted him.”

“What! mounted Tom Flynn?”

“No, the horse; and then I shook hands with him and rode off.”

“Shook hands with the horse, Billy?”

“No, with Tom Flynn; and then I rode off up the Bowery, and who should I meet but Tom Hamblin; so I got off and told the boy to hold him by the head.”

“What! hold Hamblin by the head?”

“No, the horse; and then we went and had a drink together.”

“What! you and the horse?”

“No, *me* and Hamblin; and after that I mounted him again and went out of town.”

“What! mounted Hamblin again?”

“No, the horse; and when I got to Burnham, who should be there but Tom Flynn,—he’d taken another horse and rode out ahead of me; so I told the hostler to tie him up.”

“Tie Tom Flynn up?”

“No, the horse; and we had a drink there.”

“What! you and the horse?”

“No, me and Tom Flynn.”

Finding his auditors by this time in a *horse* laugh, Billy wound up with: “Now, look here,—every time I say horse, you say Hamblin, and every time I say Hamblin you say horse: I’ll be hanged if I tell you any more about it.”

Sentence Classification

There are two great classes of sentences according to the general principles upon which they are founded. These are termed the *loose* and the *periodic*.

In the *loose* sentence the main idea is put first, and then follow several facts in connection with it. Defoe is an author particularly noted for this kind of sentence. He starts out with a leading declaration to which he adds several attendant connections. For instance in the opening of the story of *Robinson Crusoe* we read: “I was born in the year 1632 in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull; he got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade lived afterward at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in the country and from I was called

Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual corruption of words in England, we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name Crusoe, and so my companions always called me,”

In the periodic sentence the main idea comes last and is preceded by a series of relative introductions. This kind of sentence is often introduced by such words as *that, if, since, because*. The following is an example:

“That through his own folly and lack of circumspection he should have been reduced to such circumstances as to be forced to become a beggar on the streets, soliciting alms from those who had formerly been the recipients of his bounty, was a sore humiliation.”

On account of its name many are liable to think the *loose* sentence an undesirable form in good composition, but this should not be taken for granted. In many cases it is preferable to the periodic form.

As a general rule in speaking, as opposed to writing, the *loose* form is to be preferred, inasmuch as when the periodic is employed in discourse the listeners are apt to forget the introductory clauses before the final issue is reached.

Both kinds are freely used in composition, but in speaking, the *loose*, which makes the direct statement at the beginning, should predominate.

As to the length of sentences much depends on the nature of the composition.

However the general rule may be laid down that short sentences are preferable to long ones. The tendency of the best writers of the present day is towards short, snappy, pithy sentences which rivet the attention of the reader. They adopt as their motto *multum in parvo* (much in little) and endeavor to pack a great deal in small space. Of course the extreme of brevity is to be avoided. Sentences can be too short, too jerky, too brittle to withstand the test of criticism. The long sentence has its place and a very important one. It is indispensable in argument and often is very necessary to description and also in introducing general principles which require elaboration. In employing the long sentence the inexperienced writer should not strain after the heavy, ponderous type. Johnson and Carlyle used such a type, but remember, an ordinary mortal cannot wield the sledge hammer of a giant. Johnson and Carlyle were intellectual giants and few can hope to stand on the same literary pedestal. The tyro in composition should never seek after the heavy style. The best of all authors in the English language for style is Addison. Macaulay says: “If you wish a style learned, but not pedantic, elegant but not ostentatious, simple yet refined, you must give your days and nights to the volumes of Joseph Addison.” The simplicity, apart from the beauty of Addison’s writings causes us to reiterate the literary command: “Never use a big word when a little one will convey the same or a similar meaning.”

Macaulay himself is an elegant stylist to imitate. He is like a clear brook kissed by the noon-day sun in the shining bed of which you can see and count the beautiful white pebbles. Goldsmith is another writer whose simplicity of style charms.

The beginner should study these writers, make their works his *vade mecum*, they have stood the test of time and there has been no improvement upon them yet, nor is there likely to be, for their writing is as perfect as it is possible to be in the English language.

Apart from their grammatical construction there can be no fixed rules for the formation of sentences. The best plan is to follow the best authors and these masters of language will guide you safely along the way.

The Paragraph

The paragraph may be defined as a group of sentences that are closely related in thought and which serve one common purpose. Not only do they preserve the sequence of the different parts into which a composition is divided, but they give a certain spice to the matter like raisins in a plum pudding. A solid page of printed matter is distasteful to the reader; it taxes the eye and tends towards the weariness of monotony, but when it is broken up into sections it loses much of its heaviness and the consequent lightness gives it charm, as it were, to capture the reader.

Paragraphs are like stepping-stones on the bed of a shallow river, which enable the foot passenger to skip with ease from one to the other until he gets across; but if the stones are placed too far apart in attempting to span the distance one is liable to miss the mark and fall in the water and flounder about until he is again able to get a foothold. 'Tis the same with written language, the reader by means of paragraphs can easily pass from one portion of connected thought to another and keep up his interest in the subject until he gets to the end.

Throughout the paragraph there must be some connection in regard to the matter under consideration - a sentence dependency. For instance, in the same paragraph we must not speak of a house on fire and a lost child unless there is some connection between the two.

As in the case of words in sentences, the most important places in a paragraph are the beginning and the end. Accordingly the first sentence and the last should by virtue of their structure and nervous force, compel the reader's attention. It is usually advisable to make the first sentence short; the last sentence may be long or short, but in either case should be forcible. The object of the first sentence is to state a point *clearly*; the last sentence should *enforce* it.

It is a custom of good writers to make the conclusion of the paragraph a restatement or counterpart or application of the opening.

In most cases a paragraph may be regarded as the elaboration of the principal sentence. The leading thought or idea can be taken as a nucleus and around it constructed the different parts of the paragraph. Anyone can make a context for every simple sentence by asking himself questions in reference to the sentence. Thus—"The foreman gave the order"—suggests at once several questions; "What was the order?" "to whom did he give it?" "why did he give it?" "what was the result?" etc. These questions when answered will depend upon the leading one and be an elaboration of it into a complete paragraph.

If we examine any good paragraph we shall find it made up of a number of items, each of which helps to illustrate, confirm or enforce the general thought or purpose of the paragraph. Also the transition from each item to the next is easy, natural and obvious; the items seem to come of themselves. If, on the other hand, we detect in a paragraph one or more items which have no direct bearing, or if we are unable to proceed readily from item to item, especially if we are obliged to rearrange the items before we can perceive their full significance, then we are justified in pronouncing the paragraph construction faulty.

No specific rules can be given as to the construction of paragraphs. The best advice is,—Study closely the paragraph structure of the best writers, for it is only through imitation, conscious or unconscious of the best models, that one can master the art.

The best paragraphist in the English language for the essay is Macaulay, the best model to follow for the oratorical style is Edmund Burke and for description and narration probably the greatest master of paragraph is the American Goldsmith, Washington Irving.

A paragraph is indicated in print by what is known as the indentation of the line, that is, by commencing it a space from the left margin.

IV. FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Figures of Speech—Definitions and Examples

In *Figurative Language* we employ words in such a way that they differ somewhat from their ordinary signification in commonplace speech and convey our meaning in a more vivid and impressive manner than when we use them in their every-day sense. Figures make speech more effective, they beautify and emphasize it and give to it a relish and piquancy as salt does to food; besides they add energy and force to expression so that it irresistibly compels attention and interest. There are four kinds of figures, viz.: (1) Figures of Orthography which change the spelling of a word; (2) Figures of Etymology which change the form of words; (3) Figures of Syntax which change the construction of sentences; (4) Figures of Rhetoric or the art of speaking and writing effectively which change the mode of thought.

We shall only consider the last mentioned here as they are the most important, really giving to language the construction and style which make it a fitting medium for the intercommunication of ideas.

Figures of Rhetoric have been variously classified, some authorities extending the list to a useless length. The fact is that any form of expression which conveys thought may be classified as a Figure.

The principal figures as well as the most important and those oftenest used are: *Simile, Metaphor, Personification, Allegory, Synecdoche, Metonymy, Exclamation, Hyperbole, Apostrophe, Vision, Antithesis, Climax, Epigram, Interrogation* and *Irony*.

The first four are founded on *resemblance*, the second six on *contiguity* and the third five, on *contrast*.

A *Simile* (from the Latin *similis*, like), is the likening of one thing to another, a statement of the resemblance of objects, acts, or relations; as "In his awful anger he was *like* the storm-driven waves dashing against the rock." A simile makes the principal object plainer and impresses it more forcibly on the mind. "His memory is like wax to receive impressions and like marble to retain them." This brings out the leading idea as to the man's memory in a very forceful manner. Contrast it with the simple statement—"His memory is good." Sometimes *Simile* is prostituted to a low and degrading use; as "His face was like a danger signal in a fog storm." "Her hair was like a furze-bush in bloom." "He was to his lady love as a poodle to its mistress." Such burlesque is never permissible. Mere *likeness*, it should be remembered, does not constitute a simile. For instance there is no simile when one city is compared to another. In order that there may be a rhetorical simile, the objects compared must be of different classes. Avoid the old trite similes such as comparing a hero to a lion. Such were played out long ago. And don't hunt for far fetched similes. Don't say, "Her head was glowing as the glorious god of day when he sets in a flambeau of splendor behind the purple-tinted hills of the West." It is much better to do without such a simile and simply say, "She had fiery red hair."

A *Metaphor* (from the Greek *metapherein*, to carry over or transfer), is a word used to *imply* a resemblance but instead of likening one object to another as in the *simile* we directly substitute the action or operation of one for another. If, of a religious man we say, "He is as a great pillar upholding the church," the expression is a *simile*, but if we say, "He is a great pillar upholding the church" it is a metaphor. The metaphor is a bolder and more lively figure than the simile. It is more like a picture and hence, the graphic use of metaphor is called "word-painting." It enables us to give to the most abstract ideas form, color and life. Our language is full of metaphors, and we very often use them quite unconsciously. For instance, when we speak of the *bed* of a river, the *shoulder* of a hill, the *foot* of a mountain, the *hands* of a clock, the *key* of a situation, we are using metaphors.

Don't use mixed metaphors, that is, different metaphors in relation to the same subject: "Since it was launched our project has met with much opposition, but while its flight has not reached the heights ambitioned, we are yet sanguine we shall drive it to success." Here our project begins as a *ship*, then becomes a *bird* and finally winds up as a *horse*.

Personification (from the Latin *persona*, person, and *facere*, to make) is the treating of an inanimate object as if it were animate and is probably the most beautiful and effective of all the figures.

"The mountains *sing* together, the hills *rejoice* and *clap* their hands."

"Earth *felt* the wound; and Nature from her seat,
Sighing, through all her works, gave signs of woe."

Personification depends much on a vivid imagination and is adapted especially to poetical composition. It has two distinguishable forms: (1) when personality is ascribed to the inanimate as in the foregoing examples, and (2) when some quality of life is attributed to the inanimate; as, a *raging* storm; an *angry* sea; a *whistling* wind, etc.

An *Allegory* (from the Greek *allos*, other, and *agoreuein*, to speak), is a form of expression in which the words are symbolical of something. It is very closely allied to the metaphor, in fact is a continued metaphor.

Allegory, *metaphor* and *simile* have three points in common,—they are all founded on resemblance. "Ireland is like a thorn in the side of England;" this is simile. "Ireland *is* a thorn in the side of England;" this is metaphor. "Once a great giant sprang up out of the sea and lived on an island all by himself. On looking around he discovered a little girl on another small island near by. He thought the little girl could be useful to him in many ways so he determined to make her subservient to his will. He commanded her, but she refused to obey, then he resorted to very harsh measures with the little girl, but she still remained obstinate and obdurate. He continued to oppress her until finally she rebelled and became as a thorn in his side to prick him for his evil attitude towards her;" this is an allegory in which the giant plainly represents England and the little girl, Ireland; the implication is manifest though no mention is made of either country. Strange to say the most perfect allegory in the English language was written by an almost illiterate and ignorant man, and written too, in a dungeon cell. In the "Pilgrim's Progress," Bunyan, the itinerant tinker, has given us by far the best allegory ever penned. Another good one is "The Faerie Queen" by Edmund Spenser.

Synecdoche (from the Greek, *sun* with, and *ekdexesthai*, to receive), is a figure of speech which expresses either more or less than it literally denotes. By it we give to an object a name which literally expresses something more or something less than we intend. Thus: we speak of the world when we mean only a very limited number of the people who compose the world: as, "The world treated him badly." Here we use the whole for a part. But the most common form of this figure is that in which a part is used for the whole; as, "I have twenty head of cattle," "One of his hands was assassinated," meaning one of his men. "Twenty *sail* came into the harbor," meaning twenty ships. "This is a fine marble," meaning a marble statue.

Metonymy (from the Greek *meta*, change, and *onyma*, a name) is the designation of an object by one of its accompaniments, in other words, it is a figure by which the name of one object is put for another when the two are so related that the mention of one readily suggests the other. Thus when we say of a drunkard—"He loves the bottle" we do not mean that he loves the glass receptacle, but the liquor that it is supposed to contain. Metonymy, generally speaking, has, three subdivisions: (1) when an effect is put for cause or *vice versa*: as "Gray hairs should be respected," meaning old age. "He writes a fine hand,"

that is, handwriting. (2) when the *sign* is put for the *thing signified*; as, “The pen is mightier than the sword,” meaning literary power is superior to military force. (3) When the *container* is put for the thing contained; as “The *House* was called to order,” meaning the members in the House.

Exclamation (from the Latin *ex*, out, and *clamare*, to cry), is a figure by which the speaker instead of stating a fact, simply utters an expression of surprise or emotion. For instance when he hears some harrowing tale of woe or misfortune instead of saying,—“It is a sad story” he exclaims “What a sad story!”

Exclamation may be defined as the vocal expression of feeling, though it is also applied to written forms which are intended to express emotion. Thus in describing a towering mountain we can write “Heavens, what a piece of Nature’s handiwork! how majestic! how sublime! how awe-inspiring in its colossal impressiveness!” This figure rather belongs to poetry and animated oratory than to the cold prose of every-day conversation and writing.

Hyperbole (from the Greek *hyper*, beyond, and *ballein*, to throw), is an exaggerated form of statement and simply consists in representing things to be either greater or less, better or worse than they really are. Its object is to make the thought more effective by overstating it. Here are some examples:—“He was so tall his head touched the clouds.” “He was as thin as a poker.” “He was so light that a breath might have blown him away.” Most people are liable to overwork this figure. We are all more or less given to exaggeration and some of us do not stop there, but proceed onward to falsehood and downright lying. There should be a limit to hyperbole, and in ordinary speech and writing it should be well qualified and kept within reasonable bounds.

An *Apostrophe* (from the Greek *apo*, from, and *strephein*, to turn), is a direct address to the absent as present, to the inanimate as living, or to the abstract as personal. Thus: “O, illustrious Washington! Father of our Country! Could you visit us now!”

“My Country tis of thee—
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing.”

“O! Grave, where is thy Victory, O! Death where is thy sting!” This figure is very closely allied to Personification.

Vision (from the Latin *videre*, to see) consists in treating the past, the future, or the remote as if present in time or place. It is appropriate to animated description, as it produces the effect of an ideal presence. “The old warrior looks down from the canvas and tells us to be men worthy of our sires.”

This figure is much exemplified in the Bible. The book of Revelation is a vision of the future. The author who uses the figure most is Carlyle.

An *Antithesis* (from the Greek *anti*, against, and *tithenai*, to set) is founded on contrast; it consists in putting two unlike things in such a position that each will appear more striking by the contrast.

“Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring out the false, ring in the true.”

“Let us be *friends* in peace, but *enemies* in war.”

Climax (from the Greek, *klimax*, a ladder), is an arrangement of thoughts and ideas in a series, each part of which gets stronger and more impressive until the last one, which emphasizes the force of all the preceding ones. “He risked truth, he risked honor, he risked fame, he risked all that men hold dear,—yea,

he risked life itself, and for what?—for a creature who was not worthy to tie his shoe-latchets when he was his better self.”

Epigram (from the Greek *epi*, upon, and *graphein*, to write), originally meant an inscription on a monument, hence it came to signify any pointed expression. It now means a statement or any brief saying in prose or poetry in which there is an apparent contradiction; as, “Conspicuous for his absence.” “Beauty when unadorned is most adorned.” “He was too foolish to commit folly.” “He was so wealthy that he could not spare the money.”

Interrogation (from the Latin *interrogatio*, a question), is a figure of speech in which an assertion is made by asking a question; as, “Does God not show justice to all?” “Is he not doing right in his course?” “What can a man do under the circumstances?”

Irony (from the Greek *eironcia*, dissimulation) is a form of expression in which the opposite is substituted for what is intended, with the end in view, that the falsity or absurdity may be apparent; as, “Benedict Arnold was an *honorable* man.” “A Judas Iscariot never *betrays* a friend.” “You can always *depend* upon the word of a liar.”

Irony is cousin germain to *ridicule*, *derision*, *mockery*, satire and *sarcasm*. *Ridicule* implies laughter mingled with contempt; *derision* is ridicule from a personal feeling of hostility; *mockery* is insulting derision; *satire* is witty mockery; *sarcasm* is bitter satire and *irony* is disguised satire.

There are many other figures of speech which give piquancy to language and play upon words in such a way as to convey a meaning different from their ordinary signification in common every-day speech and writing. The golden rule for all is to *keep them in harmony with the character and purpose of speech and composition*.

V. PUNCTUATION

Principal Points—Illustrations—Capital Letters

Lindley Murray and Goold Brown laid down cast-iron rules for punctuation, but most of them have been broken long since and thrown into the junk-heap of disuse. They were too rigid, too strict, went so much into *minutiae*, that they were more or less impractical to apply to ordinary composition. The manner of language, of style and of expression has considerably changed since then, the old abstruse complex sentence with its hidden meanings has been relegated to the shade, there is little of prolixity or long-drawn-out phrases, ambiguity of expression is avoided and the aim is toward terseness, brevity and clearness. Therefore, punctuation has been greatly simplified, to such an extent indeed, that it is now as much a matter of good taste and judgment as adherence to any fixed set of rules. Nevertheless there are laws governing it which cannot be abrogated, their principles must be rigidly and inviolably observed.

The chief end of punctuation is to mark the grammatical connection and the dependence of the parts of a composition, but not the actual pauses made in speaking. Very often the points used to denote the delivery of a passage differ from those used when the passage is written. Nevertheless, several of the punctuation marks serve to bring out the rhetorical force of expression.

The principal marks of punctuation are:

1. The Comma [,]
2. The Semicolon [;]
3. The Colon [:]

4. The Period [.]
5. The Interrogation [?]
6. The Exclamation [!]
7. The Dash [–]
8. The Parenthesis [()]
9. The Quotation [" "]

There are several other points or marks to indicate various relations, but properly speaking such come under the heading of Printer's Marks, some of which are treated elsewhere.

Of the above, the first four may be styled the grammatical points, and the remaining five, the rhetorical points.

The *Comma*: The office of the Comma is to show the slightest separation which calls for punctuation at all. It should be omitted whenever possible. It is used to mark the least divisions of a sentence.

(1) A series of words or phrases has its parts separated by commas:— “Lying, trickery, chicanery, perjury, were natural to him.” “The brave, daring, faithful soldier died facing the foe.” If the series is in pairs, commas separate the pairs: “Rich and poor, learned and unlearned, black and white, Christian and Jew, Mohammedan and Buddhist must pass through the same gate.”

(2) A comma is used before a short quotation: “It was Patrick Henry who said, ‘Give me liberty or give me death.’”

(3) When the subject of the sentence is a clause or a long phrase, a comma is used after such subject: “That he has no reverence for the God I love, proves his insincerity.” “Simulated piety, with a black coat and a sanctimonious look, does not proclaim a Christian.”

(4) An expression used parenthetically should be enclosed by commas: “The old man, as a general rule, takes a morning walk.”

(5) Words in apposition are set off by commas: “McKinley, the President, was assassinated.”

(6) Relative clauses, if not restrictive, require commas: “The book, which is the simplest, is often the most profound.”

(7) In continued sentences each should be followed by a comma: “Electricity lights our dwellings and streets, pulls cars, trains, drives the engines of our mills and factories.”

(8) When a verb is omitted a comma takes its place: “Lincoln was a great statesman; Grant, a great soldier.”

(9) The subject of address is followed by a comma: “John, you are a good man.”

(10) In numeration, commas are used to express periods of three figures: “Mountains 25,000 feet high; 1,000,000 dollars.”

The *Semicolon* marks a slighter connection than the comma. It is generally confined to separating the parts of compound sentences. It is much used in contrasts:

(1) “Gladstone was great as a statesman; he was sublime as a man.”

(2) The Semicolon is used between the parts of all compound sentences in which the grammatical subject of the second part is different from that of the first: “The power of England relies upon the

wisdom of her statesmen; the power of America upon the strength of her army and navy.”

(4) The Semicolon is used before words and abbreviations which introduce particulars or specifications following after, such as, *namely, as, e.g., vid., i.e., etc.*: “He had three defects; namely, carelessness, lack of concentration and obstinacy in his ideas.” “An island is a portion of land entirely surrounded by water; as Cuba.” “The names of cities should always commence with a capital letter; *e.g.*, New York, Paris.” “The boy was proficient in one branch; *viz.*, Mathematics.” “No man is perfect; *i.e.*, free from all blemish.”

The *Colon* except in conventional uses is practically obsolete.

(1) It is generally put at the end of a sentence introducing a long quotation: “The cheers having subsided, Mr. Bryan spoke as follows:”

(2) It is placed before an explanation or illustration of the subject under consideration: “This is the meaning of the term:”

(3) A direct quotation formally introduced is generally preceded by a colon: “The great orator made this funny remark:”

(4) The colon is often used in the title of books when the secondary or subtitle is in apposition to the leading one and when the conjunction *or* is omitted: “Acoustics: the Science of Sound.”

(5) It is used after the salutation in the beginning of letters: “Sir: My dear Sir: Gentlemen: Dear Mr. Jones:” etc. In this connection a dash very often follows the colon.

(6) It is sometimes used to introduce details of a group of things already referred to in the mass: “The boy’s excuses for being late were: firstly, he did not know the time, secondly, he was sent on an errand, thirdly, he tripped on a rock and fell by the wayside.”

The *Period* is the simplest punctuation mark. It is simply used to mark the end of a complete sentence that is neither interrogative nor exclamatory.

(1) After every sentence conveying a complete meaning: “Birds fly.” “Plants grow.” “Man is mortal.”

(2) In abbreviations: after every abbreviated word: Rt. Rev. T. C. Alexander, D.D., L.L.D.

(3) A period is used on the title pages of books after the name of the book, after the author’s name, after the publisher’s imprint: *American Trails*. By Theodore Roosevelt. New York. Scribner Company.

The *Mark of Interrogation* is used to ask or suggest a question.

(1) Every question admitting of an answer, even when it is not expected, should be followed by the mark of interrogation: “Who has not heard of Napoleon?”

(2) When several questions have a common dependence they should be followed by one mark of interrogation at the end of the series: “Where now are the playthings and friends of my boyhood; the laughing boys; the winsome girls; the fond neighbors whom I loved?”

(3) The mark is often used parenthetically to suggest doubt: “In 1893 (?) Gladstone became converted to Home Rule for Ireland.”

The *Exclamation* point should be sparingly used, particularly in prose. Its chief use is to denote emotion of some kind.

(1) It is generally employed with interjections or clauses used as interjections: “Alas! I am forsaken.” “What a lovely landscape!”

- (2) Expressions of strong emotion call for the exclamation: “Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!”
- (3) When the emotion is very strong double exclamation points may be used: “Assist him!! I would rather assist Satan!!”

The *Dash* is generally confined to cases where there is a sudden break from the general run of the passage. Of all the punctuation marks it is the most misused.

- (1) It is employed to denote sudden change in the construction or sentiment: “The Heroes of the Civil War,—how we cherish them.” “He was a fine fellow—in his own opinion.”
- (2) When a word or expression is repeated for oratorical effect, a dash is used to introduce the repetition: “Shakespeare was the greatest of all poets—Shakespeare, the intellectual ocean whose waves washed the continents of all thought.”
- (3) The Dash is used to indicate a conclusion without expressing it: “He is an excellent man but—”
- (4) It is used to indicate what is not expected or what is not the natural outcome of what has gone before: “He delved deep into the bowels of the earth and found instead of the hidden treasure—a button.”
- (5) It is used to denote the omission of letters or figures: “J—n J—s” for John Jones; 1908-9 for 1908 and 1909; Matthew VII:5-8 for Matthew VII:5, 6, 7, and 8.
- (6) When an ellipsis of the words, *namely, that is, to wit*, etc., takes place, the dash is used to supply them: “He excelled in three branches— arithmetic, algebra, and geometry.”
- (7) A dash is used to denote the omission of part of a word when it is undesirable to write the full word: He is somewhat of a r—l (rascal). This is especially the case in profane words.
- (8) Between a citation and the authority for it there is generally a dash: “All the world’s a stage.”—Shakespeare.
- (9) When questions and answers are put in the same paragraph they should be separated by dashes: “Are you a good boy? Yes, Sir.—Do you love study? I do.”

Marks of Parenthesis are used to separate expressions inserted in the body of a sentence, which are illustrative of the meaning, but have no essential connection with the sentence, and could be done without. They should be used as little as possible for they show that something is being brought into a sentence that does not belong to it.

- (1) When the unity of a sentence is broken the words causing the break should be enclosed in parenthesis: “We cannot believe a liar (and Jones is one), even when he speaks the truth.”
- (2) In reports of speeches marks of parenthesis are used to denote interpolations of approval or disapproval by the audience: “The masses must not submit to the tyranny of the classes (hear, hear), we must show the trust magnates (groans), that they cannot ride rough-shod over our dearest rights (cheers);” “If the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Brown), will not be our spokesman, we must select another. (A voice,—Get Robinson).”

When a parenthesis is inserted in the sentence where no comma is required, no point should be used before either parenthesis. When inserted at a place requiring a comma, if the parenthetical matter relates to the whole sentence, a comma should be used before each parenthesis; if it relates to a single word, or short clause, no stop should come before it, but a comma should be put after the closing parenthesis.

The *Quotation marks* are used to show that the words enclosed by them are borrowed.

(1) A direct quotation should be enclosed within the quotation marks: Abraham Lincoln said,—"I shall make this land too hot for the feet of slaves."

(2) When a quotation is embraced within another, the contained quotation has only single marks: Franklin said, "Most men come to believe 'honesty is the best policy.'"

(3) When a quotation consists of several paragraphs the quotation marks should precede each paragraph.

(4) Titles of books, pictures and newspapers when formally given are quoted.

(5) Often the names of ships are quoted though there is no occasion for it.

The *Apostrophe* should come under the comma rather than under the quotation marks or double comma. The apostrophe is used to denote the elision of the century in dates, where the century is understood or to save the repetition of a series of figures, as "The Spirit of '76"; "I served in the army during the years 1895, '96, '97, '98 and '99."

The principal use of the apostrophe is to denote the possessive case. All nouns in the singular number whether proper names or not, and all nouns in the plural ending with any other letter than *s*, form the possessive by the addition of the apostrophe and the letter *s*. The only exceptions to this rule are, that, by poetical license the additional *s* may be elided in poetry for sake of the metre, and in the scriptural phrases "For goodness' sake." "For conscience' sake," "For Jesus' sake," etc. Custom has done away with the *s* and these phrases are now idioms of the language. All plural nouns ending in *s* form the possessive by the addition of the apostrophe only as boys', horses'. The possessive case of the personal pronouns never take the apostrophe, as ours, yours, hers, theirs.

Capital Letters

Capital letters are used to give emphasis to or call attention to certain words to distinguish them from the context.

Some authors, notably Carlyle, make such use of Capitals that it degenerates into an abuse. They should only be used in their proper places as given in the table below.

(1) The first word of every sentence, in fact the first word in writing of any kind should begin with a capital: Time flies. My dear friend...

(2) Every direct quotation should begin with a capital: Dewey said, "Fire, when you're ready, Gridley."

(3) Every direct question commences with a capital: Let me ask you, "How old are you?"

(4) Every line of poetry begins with a capital; "Breathes there a man with soul so dead?"

(5) Every numbered clause calls for a capital: The witness asserts: (1) That he saw the man attacked; (2) That he saw him fall; (3) That he saw his assailant flee.

(6) The headings of essays and chapters should be wholly in capitals: CHAPTER VIII—RULES FOR USE OF CAPITALS.

(7) In the titles of books, nouns, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs should begin with a capital: "Johnson's Lives of the Poets."

(8) In the Roman notation, numbers are denoted by capitals; as, I II III V X L C D M—1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 50,

100, 500, 1000.

(9) Proper names begin with a capital: Jones, Johnson, Caesar, Mark Antony, England, Pacific, Christmas.

Such words as river, sea, mountain, etc., when used generally are common, not proper nouns, and require no capital. But when such are used with an adjective or adjunct to specify a particular object they become proper names, and therefore require a capital; as, "Mississippi River, North Sea, Alleghany Mountains," etc. Similarly, the cardinal points north, south, east and west, when they are used to distinguish regions of a country are capitals; as, "The North fought against the South."

When a proper name is compounded with another word, the part which is not a proper name begins with a capital if it precedes, but with a small letter if it follows, the hyphen: "Post-homeric," "Sunday-school."

(10) Words derived from proper names require a Capital: American, Irish, Christian, Americanize, Christianize.

In this connection the names of political parties, religious sects and schools of thought begin with capitals; Republican, Democrat, Whig, Catholic, Presbyterian, Rationalists, Free Thinkers.

(11) The titles of honorable, state and political offices begin with a capital: President, Chairman, Governor, Alderman.

(12) The abbreviations of learned titles and college degrees call for capitals: LL.D., M.A., B.S., etc. Also, the seats of learning conferring such degrees as, "Harvard University, Manhattan College," etc.

(13) When such relative words as father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, etc., precede a proper name, they are written and printed with capitals: Father Abraham, Mother Eddy, Brother John, Sister Jane, Uncle Jacob, Aunt Eliza. Father, when used to denote the early Christian writer, is begun with a capital: Augustine was one of the learned Fathers of the Church.

(14) The names applied to the Supreme Being begin with capitals: God, Lord, Creator, Providence, Almighty, The Deity, Heavenly Father, Holy One. In this respect the names applied to the Saviour also require capitals" Jesus Christ, Son of God, Man of Galilee, The Crucified, The Anointed One. Also the designations of Biblical characters: Lily of Israel, Rose of Sharon, Comfortess of the Afflicted, Help of Christians, Prince of the Apostles, Star of the Sea, etc. Pronouns referring to God and Christ take capitals: His work, The work of Him, etc.

(15) Expressions used to designate the Bible or any particular division of it begin with a capital: Holy Writ, The Sacred Book, Holy Book, God's Word, Old Testament, New Testament, Gospel of St. Matthew, Seven Penitential Psalms.

(16) Expressions based upon the Bible or in reference to Biblical characters begin with a capital: Water of Life, Hope of Men, Help of Christians, Scourge of Nations.

(17) The names applied to the Evil One require capitals: Beelzebub, Prince of Darkness, Satan, King of Hell, Devil, Incarnate Fiend, Tempter of Men, Father of Lies, Hater of Good.

(18) Words of very special importance, especially those which stand out as the names of leading events in history, have capitals: The Revolution, The Civil War, The Middle Ages, The Age of Iron, etc.

(19) Terms which refer to great events in the history of the race require capitals: The Flood, Magna Carta, Declaration of Independence.

(20) The names of the days of the week and the months of the year and the seasons are commenced with capitals: Monday, March, Autumn.

(21) The Pronoun *I* and the interjection *O* always require the use of capitals. In fact all the interjections when uttered as exclamations commence with capitals: “Alas! he is gone.” “Ah! I pitied him.”

(22) All *noms-de-guerre*, assumed names, as well as names given for distinction, call for capitals: “The Wizard of the North,” “Paul Pry,” “The Northern Gael,” “Sandy Sanderson,” “Poor Robin,” etc.

(23) In personification, that is, when inanimate things are represented as endowed with life and action, the noun or object personified begins with a capital: “The starry Night shook the dews from her wings.” “Mild-eyed Day appeared,” “The Oak said to the Beech—’I am stronger than you.’”

VI. COMMON MISTAKES

Mistakes—Slips of Authors—Examples and Corrections

Errors of Redundancy

In the following examples the word or words in parentheses are uncalled for and should be omitted:

1. Fill the glass (full).
2. They appeared to be talking (together) on private affairs.
3. I saw the boy and his sister (both) in the garden.
4. He went into the country last week and returned (back) yesterday.
5. The subject (matter) of his discourse was excellent.
6. You need not wonder that the (subject) matter of his discourse was excellent; it was taken from the Bible.
7. They followed (after) him, but could not overtake him.
8. The same sentiments may be found throughout (the whole of) the book.
9. I was very ill every day (of my life) last week.
10. That was the (sum and) substance of his discourse.
11. He took wine and water and mixed them (both) together.
12. He descended (down) the steps to the cellar.
13. He fell (down) from the top of the house.
14. I hope you will return (again) soon.
15. The things he took away he restored (again).
16. The thief who stole my watch was compelled to restore it (back again).
17. It is equally (the same) to me whether I have it today or tomorrow.
18. She said, (says she) the report is false; and he replied, (says he) if it be not correct I have been misinformed.
19. I took my place in the cars (for) to go to New York.

20. They need not (to) call upon him.
21. Nothing (else) but that would satisfy him.
22. Whenever I ride in the cars I (always) find it prejudicial to my health.
23. He was the first (of all) at the meeting.
24. He was the tallest of (all) the brothers.
25. You are the tallest of (all) your family.
26. Whenever I pass the house he is (always) at the door.
27. The rain has penetrated (through) the roof.
28. Besides my uncle and aunt there was (also) my grandfather at the church.
29. It should (ever) be your constant endeavor to please your family.
30. If it is true as you have heard (then) his situation is indeed pitiful.
31. Either this (here) man or that (there) woman has (got) it.
32. Where is the fire (at)?
33. Did you sleep in church? Not that I know (of).
34. I never before (in my life) met (with) such a stupid man.
35. (For) why did he postpone it?
36. Because (why) he could not attend.
37. What age is he? (Why) I don't know.
38. He called on me (for) to ask my opinion.
39. I don't know where I am (at).
40. I looked in (at) the window.
41. I passed (by) the house.
42. He (always) came every Sunday.
43. Moreover, (also) we wish to say he was in error.
44. It is not long (ago) since he was here.
45. Two men went into the wood (in order) to cut (down) trees.

Further examples of redundancy might be multiplied. It is very common in newspaper writing where not alone single words but entire phrases are sometimes brought in, which are unnecessary to the sense or explanation of what is written.

Grammatical Errors of Standard Authors

Even the best speakers and writers are sometimes caught napping. Many of our standard authors to whom we have been accustomed to look up as infallible have sinned more or less against the fundamental principles of grammar by breaking the rules regarding one or more of the nine parts of

speech. In fact some of them have recklessly trespassed against all nine, and still they sit on their pedestals of fame for the admiration of the crowd. Macaulay mistreated the article. He wrote,—“That a historian should not record trifles is perfectly true.” He should have used *an*.

Dickens also used the article incorrectly. He refers to “Robinson Crusoe” as ‘an universally popular book,’ instead of *a* universally popular book.

The relation between nouns and pronouns has always been a stumbling block to speakers and writers. Hallam in his *Literature of Europe* writes, “No one as yet had exhibited the structure of the human kidneys, Vesalius having only examined them in dogs.” This means that Vesalius examined human kidneys in dogs. The sentence should have been, “No one had as yet exhibited the kidneys in human beings, Vesalius having examined such organs in dogs only.”

Sir Arthur Helps in writing of Dickens, states—“I knew a brother author of his who received such criticisms from him (Dickens) very lately and profited by *it*.” Instead of *it* the word should be *them* to agree with criticisms.

Here are a few other pronominal errors from leading authors:

“Sir Thomas Moore in general so writes it, although not many others so late as *him*.” Should be *he*.—Trench’s *English Past and Present*.

“What should we gain by it but that we should speedily become as poor as *them*.” Should be *they*.—Alison’s *Essay on Macaulay*.

“If the king gives us leave you or I may as lawfully preach, as *them* that do.” Should be *they* or *those*, the latter having persons understood.—Hobbes’s *History of Civil Wars*.

“The drift of all his sermons was, to prepare the Jews for the reception of a prophet, mightier than *him*, and whose shoes he was not worthy to bear.” Should be than *he*.—Atterbury’s *Sermons*.

“Phalaris, who was so much older than *her*.” Should be *she*.—Bentley’s *Dissertation on Phalaris*.

“King Charles, and more than *him*, the duke and the Popish faction were at liberty to form new schemes.” Should be than *he*.—Bolingbroke’s *Dissertations on Parties*.

“We contributed a third more than the Dutch, who were obliged to the same proportion more than *us*.” Should be than *we*.—Swift’s *Conduct of the Allies*.

In all the above examples the objective cases of the pronouns have been used while the construction calls for nominative cases.

“Let *thou* and *I* the battle try”—Anon.

Here *let* is the governing verb and requires an objective case after it; therefore instead of *thou* and *I*, the words should be *you* (*sing.*) and *me*.

“Forever in this humble cell, Let thee and I, my fair one, dwell” —Prior.

Here *thee* and *I* should be the objectives *you* and *me*.

The use of the relative pronoun trips the greatest number of authors.

Even in the Bible we find the relative wrongly translated:

Whom do men say that I am?—St. Matthew.

Whom think ye that I am?—Acts of the Apostles.

Who should be written in both cases because the word is not in the objective governed by say or think, but in the nominative dependent on the verb *am*.

Who should I meet at the coffee house t'other night, but my old friend?"—Steele.

"It is another pattern of this answerer's fair dealing, to give us hints that the author is dead, and yet lay the suspicion upon somebody, I know not *who*, in the country."—Swift's *Tale of a Tub*.

"My son is going to be married to I don't know *who*."—Goldsmith's *Good-natured Man*.

The nominative *who* in the above examples should be the objective *whom*.

The plural nominative *ye* of the pronoun *thou* is very often used for the objective *you*, as in the following:

"His wrath which will one day destroy *ye both*."—Milton.

"The more shame for *ye*; holy men I thought *ye*."—Shakespeare.

"I feel the gales that from *ye* blow."—Gray.

"Tyrants dread *ye*, lest your just decree Transfer the power and set the people free."—Prior.

Many of the great writers have played havoc with the adjective in the indiscriminate use of the degrees of comparison.

"Of two forms of the same word, use the fittest."—Morell.

The author here in *trying* to give good advice sets a bad example. He should have used the comparative degree, "Fitter."

Adjectives which have a comparative or superlative signification do not admit the addition of the words *more*, *most*, or the terminations, *er*, *est*, hence the following examples break this rule:

"Money is the *most universal* incitement of human misery."—Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*.

"The *chiefest* of which was known by the name of Archon among the Grecians."—Dryden's *Life of Plutarch*.

"The *chiefest* and largest are removed to certain magazines they call libraries."—Swift's *Battle of the Books*.

The two *chiefest* properties of air, its gravity and elastic force, have been discovered by mechanical experiments.—Arbuthno.

"From these various causes, which in greater or *lesser* degree, affected every individual in the colony, the indignation of the people became general."—Robertson's *History of America*.

"The *extremest* parts of the earth were meditating a submission."—Atterbury's *Sermons*.

"The last are indeed *more preferable* because they are founded on some new knowledge or improvement in the mind of man."—Addison, *Spectator*.

"This was in reality the *easiest* manner of the two."—Shaftesbury's *Advice to an Author*.

"In every well formed mind this second desire seems to be the *strongest* of the two."—Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

In these examples the superlative is wrongly used for the comparative. When only two objects are compared the comparative form must be used.

Of impossibility there are no degrees of comparison, yet we find the following:

“As it was impossible they should know the words, thoughts and secret actions of all men, so it was *more impossible* they should pass judgment on them according to these things.”—Whitby’s *Necessity of the Christian Religion*.

A great number of authors employ adjectives for adverbs. Thus we find:

“I shall endeavor to live hereafter *suitable* to a man in my station.”—Addison.

“I can never think so very *mean* of him.”—Bentley’s *Dissertation on Phalaris*.

“His expectations run high and the fund to supply them is extreme scanty.”—Lancaster’s *Essay on Delicacy*.

The commonest error in the use of the verb is the disregard of the concord between the verb and its subject. This occurs most frequently when the subject and the verb are widely separated, especially if some other noun of a different number immediately precedes the verb. False concords occur very often after *either, or, neither, nor, and much, more, many, everyone, each*.

Here are a few authors’ slips:—

“The terms in which the sale of a patent *were* communicated to the public.”—Junius’s *Letters*.

“The richness of her arms and apparel *were* conspicuous.”—Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*.

“Everyone of this grotesque family *were* the creatures of national genius.”—D’Israeli.

“He knows not what spleen, languor or listlessness *are*.”—Blair’s *Sermons*.

“Each of these words *imply*, some pursuit or object relinquished.”—*Ibid*.

“Magnus, with four thousand of his supposed accomplices *were* put to death.”—Gibbon.

“No nation gives greater encouragements to learning than we do; yet at the same time *none are* so injudicious in the application.”—Goldsmith.

“*There’s two or three* of us have seen strange sights.”—Shakespeare.

The past participle should not be used for the past tense, yet the learned Byron overlooked this fact. He thus writes in the *Lament of Tasso*:—

“And with my years my soul *begun to pant* With feelings of strange tumult and soft pain.”

Here is another example from Savage’s *Wanderer* in which there is double sinning:

“From liberty each nobler science *sprung*, A Bacon brighten’d and a Spenser *sung*.”

Other breaches in regard to the participles occur in the following:—

“Every book ought to be read with the same spirit and in the same manner as it is *writ*”—Fielding’s *Tom Jones*.

“The Court of Augustus had not *wore* off the manners of the republic” —Hume’s *Essays*.

Moses tells us that the fountains of the earth were *broke* open or clove asunder.”—Burnet.

“A free constitution when it has been *shook* by the iniquity of former administrations.”—Bolingbroke.

“In this respect the seeds of future divisions were *sowed* abundantly.”—*Ibid*.

In the following example the present participle is used for the infinitive mood:

"It is easy *distinguishing* the rude fragment of a rock from the splinter of a statue."—Gilfillan's *Literary Portraits*.

Distinguishing here should be replaced by *to distinguish*.

The rules regarding *shall* and *will* are violated in the following:

"If we look within the rough and awkward outside, we *will* be richly rewarded by its perusal."—Gilfillan's *Literary Portraits*.

"If I *should* declare them and speak of them, they should be more than I am able to express."—Prayer Book Revision of Psalms XI.

"If I *would* declare them and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."—Ibid.

"Without having attended to this, we *will* be at a loss, in understanding several passages in the classics."—Blair's *Lectures*.

"We know to what cause our past reverses have been owing and we will have ourselves to blame, if they are again incurred."—Alison's *History of Europe*.

Adverbial mistakes often occur in the best writers. The adverb *rather* is a word very frequently misplaced. Archbishop Trench in his "English Past and Present" writes, "It *rather* modified the structure of our sentences than the elements of our vocabulary." This should have been written,— "It modified the structure of our sentences *rather than* the elements of our vocabulary."

"So far as his mode of teaching goes he is *rather* a disciple of Socrates than of St. Paul or Wesley." Thus writes Leslie Stephens of Dr. Johnson. He should have written,— "So far as his mode of teaching goes he is a disciple of Socrates *rather than* of St. Paul or Wesley."

The preposition is a part of speech which is often wrongly used by some of the best writers. Certain nouns, adjectives and verbs require particular prepositions after them, for instance, the word *different* always takes the preposition *from* after it; *prevail* takes *upon*; *averse* takes *to*; *accord* takes *with*, and so on.

In the following examples the prepositions in parentheses are the ones that should have been used:

"He found the greatest difficulty *of* (in) writing."—Hume's *History of England*.

"If policy can prevail *upon* (over) force."—Addison.

"He made the discovery and communicated *to* (with) his friends."—Swift's *Tale of a Tub*.

"Every office of command should be intrusted to persons *on* (in) whom the parliament shall confide."—Macaulay.

Several of the most celebrated writers infringe the canons of style by placing prepositions at the end of sentences. For instance Carlyle, in referring to the Study of Burns, writes:—"Our own contributions to it, we are aware, can be but scanty and feeble; but we offer them with good will, and trust they may meet with acceptance from those they are intended *for*."

—"for whom they are intended," he should have written.

"Most writers have some one vein which they peculiarly and obviously excel *in*."—William Minto.

This sentence should read,—Most writers have some one vein in which they peculiarly and obviously

excel.

Many authors use redundant words which repeat the same thought and idea. This is called tautology.

“Notwithstanding which (however) poor Polly embraced them all around.” –Dickens.

“I judged that they would (mutually) find each other.” –Crockett.

”...as having created a (joint) partnership between the two Powers in the Morocco question.” –The Times.

“The only sensible position (there seems to be) is to frankly acknowledge our ignorance of what lies beyond.” –Daily Telegraph.

Lord Rosebery has not budged from his position –splendid, no doubt, –of (lonely) isolation.” –The Times.

“Miss Fox was (often) in the habit of assuring Mrs. Chick.” –Dickens.

“The deck (it) was their field of fame.” –Campbell.

“He had come up one morning, as was now (frequently) his wont,” –Trollope.

The counsellors of the Sultan (continue to) remain sceptical –The Times.

Seriously, (and apart from jesting), this is no light matter. –Bagehot.

To go back to your own country with (the consciousness that you go back with) the sense of duty well done. –Lord Halsbury.

The *Peresviet* lost both her fighting-tops and (in appearance) looked the most damaged of all the ships –The Times.

Counsel admitted that, that was a fair suggestion to make, but he submitted that it was borne out by the (surrounding) circumstances. –Ibid.

Another unnecessary use of words and phrases is that which is termed circumlocution, a going around the bush when there is no occasion for it, –save to fill space.

It may be likened to a person walking the distance of two sides of a triangle to reach the objective point. For instance in the quotation: “Pope professed to have learned his poetry from Dryden, whom, whenever an opportunity was presented, he praised through the whole period of his existence with unvaried liberality; and perhaps his character may receive some illustration, of a comparison he instituted between him and the man whose pupil he was” much of the verbiage may be eliminated and the sentence thus condensed:

“Pope professed himself the pupil of Dryden, whom he lost no opportunity of praising; and his character may be illustrated by a comparison with his master.”

“His life was brought to a close in 1910 at an age not far from the one fixed by the sacred writer as the term of human existence.”

This in brevity can be put, “His life was brought to a close at the age of seventy;” or, better yet, “He died at the age of seventy.”

“The day was intensely cold, so cold in fact that the thermometer crept down to the zero mark,” can be expressed: “The day was so cold the thermometer registered zero.”

Many authors resort to circumlocution for the purpose of “padding,” that is, filling space, or when they

strike a snag in writing upon subjects of which they know little or nothing. The young writer should steer clear of it and learn to express his thoughts and ideas as briefly as possible commensurate with lucidity of expression.

Volumes of errors in fact, in grammar, diction and general style, could be selected from the works of the great writers, a fact which eloquently testifies that no one is infallible and that the very best is liable to err at times. However, most of the erring in the case of these writers arises from carelessness or hurry, not from a lack of knowledge.

As a general rule it is in writing that the scholar is liable to slip; in oral speech he seldom makes a blunder. In fact, there are many people who are perfect masters of speech,—who never make a blunder in conversation, yet who are ignorant of the very principles of grammar and would not know how to write a sentence correctly on paper. Such persons have been accustomed from infancy to hear the language spoken correctly and so the use of the proper words and forms becomes a second nature to them. A child can learn what is right as easy as what is wrong and whatever impressions are made on the mind when it is plastic will remain there. Even a parrot can be taught the proper use of language. Repeat to a parrot.—“Two and two *make* four” and it never will say “two and two *makes* four.”

In writing, however, it is different. Without a knowledge of the fundamentals of grammar we may be able to speak correctly from association with good speakers, but without such a knowledge we cannot hope to write the language correctly. To write even a common letter we must know the principles of construction, the relationship of one word to another. Therefore, it is necessary for everybody to understand at least the essentials of the grammar of his own language.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

Common Stumbling Blocks—Peculiar Constructions—Misused Forms

Attraction

Very often the verb is separated from its real nominative or subject by several intervening words and in such cases one is liable to make the verb agree with the subject nearest to it. Here are a few examples showing that the leading writers now and then take a tumble into this pitfall:

(1) “The partition which the two ministers made of the powers of government *were* singularly happy.”—Macaulay.

(Should be *was* to agree with its subject, *partition*.)

(2) “One at least of the qualities which fit it for training ordinary men *unfit* it for *training* an extraordinary man.”—Bagehot.

(Should be *unfits* to agree with subject *one*.)

(3) “The Tibetans have engaged to exclude from their country those dangerous influences whose appearance *were* the chief cause of our action.”—The Times.

(Should be *was* to agree with *appearance*.)

(4) “An immense amount of confusion and indifference *prevail* in these days.”—Telegraph.

(Should be *prevails* to agree with amount.)

Ellipsis

Errors in ellipsis occur chiefly with prepositions.

His objection and condoning of the boy's course, seemed to say the least, paradoxical.

(The preposition *to* should come after objection.)

Many men of brilliant parts are crushed by force of circumstances and their genius forever lost to the world.

(Some maintain that the missing verb after genius is *are*, but such is ungrammatical. In such cases the right verb should be always expressed: as—their genius *is* forever lost to the world.)

The Split Infinitive

Even the best speakers and writers are in the habit of placing a modifying word or words between the *to* and the remaining part of the infinitive. It is possible that such will come to be looked upon in time as the proper form but at present the splitting of the infinitive is decidedly wrong. "He was scarcely able *to even talk*" "She commenced *to rapidly walk* around the room." "To have really *loved* is better than not *to have* at all *loved*." In these constructions it is much better not to split the infinitive. In everyday speech the best speakers sin against this observance.

In New York City there is a certain magistrate, a member of "the 400," who prides himself on his diction in language. He tells this story: A prisoner, a faded, battered specimen of mankind, on whose haggard face, deeply lined with the marks of dissipation, there still lingered faint reminders of better days long past, stood dejected before the judge. "Where are you from?" asked the magistrate. "From Boston," answered the accused. "Indeed," said the judge, "indeed, yours is a sad case, and yet you don't seem *to thoroughly realise* how low you have sunk." The man stared as if struck. "Your honor does me an injustice," he said bitterly. "The disgrace of arrest for drunkenness, the mortification of being thrust into a noisome dungeon, the publicity and humiliation of trial in a crowded and dingy courtroom I can bear, but to be sentenced by a Police Magistrate who *splits his infinitives*—that is indeed the last blow."

One

The indefinite adjective pronoun *one* when put in place of a personal substantive is liable to raise confusion. When a sentence or expression is begun with the impersonal *one* the word must be used throughout in all references to the subject. Thus, "One must mind one's own business if one wishes to succeed" may seem prolix and awkward, nevertheless it is the proper form. You must not say—"One must mind his business if he wishes to succeed," for the subject is impersonal and therefore cannot exclusively take the masculine pronoun. With *any one* it is different. You may say—"If any one sins he should acknowledge it; let him not try to hide it by another sin."

Only

This is a word that is a pitfall to the most of us whether learned or unlearned. Probably it is the most indiscriminately used word in the language. From the different positions it is made to occupy in a sentence it can relatively change the meaning. For instance in the sentence—"I *only* struck him that time," the meaning to be inferred is, that the only thing I did to him was to *strike* him, not kick or

otherwise abuse him. But if the *only* is shifted, so as to make the sentence read-"I struck him *only* that time" the meaning conveyed is, that only on that occasion and at no other time did I strike him. If another shift is made to-"I struck *only* him that time," the meaning is again altered so that it signifies he was the only person I struck.

In speaking we can by emphasis impress our meaning on our hearers, but in writing we have nothing to depend upon but the position of the word in the sentence. The best rule in regard to *only* is to place it *immediately before* the word or phrase it modifies or limits.

Alone

is another word which creates ambiguity and alters meaning. If we substitute it for only in the preceding example the meaning of the sentence will depend upon the arrangement. Thus "I *alone* struck him at that time" signifies that I and no other struck him. When the sentence reads "I struck him *alone* at that time" it must be interpreted that he was the only person that received a blow. Again if it is made to read "I struck him at that time *alone*" the sense conveyed is that that was the only occasion on which I struck him. The rule which governs the correct use of *only* is also applicable to *alone*.

Other and Another

These are words which often give to expressions a meaning far from that intended. Thus, "I have *nothing* to do with that *other* rascal across the street," certainly means that I am a rascal myself. "I sent the despatch to my friend, but another villain intercepted it," clearly signifies that my friend is a villain.

A good plan is to omit these words when they can be readily done without, as in the above examples, but when it is necessary to use them make your meaning clear. You can do this by making each sentence or phrase in which they occur independent of contextual aid.

And With the Relative

Never use *and* with the *relative* in this manner: "That is the dog I meant *and which* I know is of pure breed." This is an error quite common. The use of *and* is permissible when there is a parallel relative in the preceding sentence or clause. Thus: "There is the dog which I meant and which I know is of pure breed" is quite correct.

Loose Participles

A participle or participial phrase is naturally referred to the nearest nominative. If only one nominative is expressed it claims all the participles that are not by the construction of the sentence otherwise fixed. "John, working in the field all day and getting thirsty, drank from the running stream." Here the participles *working* and getting clearly refer to John. But in the sentence,—"Swept along by the mob I could not save him," the participle as it were is lying around loose and may be taken to refer to either the person speaking or to the person spoken about. It may mean that I was swept along by the mob or the individual whom I tried to save was swept along.

"Going into the store the roof fell" can be taken that it was the roof which was going into the store when it fell. Of course the meaning intended is that some person or persons were going into the store just as the roof fell.

In all sentence construction with participles there should be such clearness as to preclude all possibility of ambiguity. The participle should be so placed that there can be no doubt as to the noun to which it refers. Often it is advisable to supply such words as will make the meaning obvious.

Broken Construction

Sometimes the beginning of a sentence presents quite a different grammatical construction from its end. This arises from the fact probably, that the beginning is lost sight of before the end is reached. This occurs frequently in long sentences. Thus: "Honesty, integrity and square-dealing will bring anybody much better through life than the absence of either." Here the construction is broken at *than*. The use of *either*, only used in referring to one of two, shows that the fact is forgotten that three qualities and not two are under consideration. Any one of the three meanings might be intended in the sentence, viz., absence of any one quality, absence of any two of the qualities or absence of the whole three qualities. *Either* denotes one or the other of two and should never be applied to any one of more than two. When we fall into the error of constructing such sentences as above, we should take them apart and reconstruct them in a different grammatical form. Thus,—"Honesty, integrity and square-dealing will bring a man much better through life than a lack of these qualities which are almost essential to success."

Double Negative

It must be remembered that two negatives in the English language destroy each other and are equivalent to an affirmative. Thus "I *don't* know *nothing* about it" is intended to convey, that I am ignorant of the matter under consideration, but it defeats its own purpose, inasmuch as the use of *nothing* implies that I know something about it. The sentence should read—"I don't know anything about it."

Often we hear such expressions as "He was *not* asked to give no opinion," expressing the very opposite of what is intended. This sentence implies that he was asked to give his opinion. The double negative, therefore, should be carefully avoided, for it is insidious and is liable to slip in and the writer remain unconscious of its presence until the eye of the critic detects it.

First Personal Pronoun

The use of the first personal pronoun should be avoided as much as possible in composition. Don't introduce it by way of apology and never use such expressions as "In my opinion," "As far as I can see," "It appears to me," "I believe," etc. In what you write, the whole composition is expressive of your views, since you are the author, therefore, there is no necessity for you to accentuate or emphasize yourself at certain portions of it.

Moreover, the big *I's* savor of egotism! Steer clear of them as far as you can. The only place where the first person is permissible is in passages where you are stating a view that is not generally held and which is likely to meet with opposition.

Sequence of Tenses

When two verbs depend on each other their tenses must have a definite relation to each other. "I shall have much pleasure in accepting your kind invitation" is wrong, unless you really mean that just now

you decline though by-and-by you intend to accept; or unless you mean that you do accept now, though you have no pleasure in doing so, but look forward to be more pleased by-and-by. In fact the sequence of the compound tenses puzzle experienced writers. The best plan is to go back in thought to the time in question and use the tense you would then naturally use. Now in the sentence "I should have liked to have gone to see the circus" the way to find out the proper sequence is to ask yourself the question—what is it I "should have liked" to do? and the plain answer is "to go to see the circus." I cannot answer—"To have gone to see the circus" for that would imply that at a certain moment I would have liked to be in the position of having gone to the circus. But I do not mean this; I mean that at the moment at which I am speaking I wish I had gone to see the circus. The verbal phrase *I should have liked carries* me back to the time when there was a chance of seeing the circus and once back at the time, the going to the circus is a thing of the present. This whole explanation resolves itself into the simple question,—what should I have liked *at that time*, and the answer is "to go to see the circus," therefore this is the proper sequence, and the expression should be "I should have liked to go to see the circus."

If we wish to speak of something relating to a time *prior* to that indicated in the past tense we must use the perfect tense of the infinitive; as, "He appeared to have seen better days." We should say "I expected to *meet him*," not "I expected *to have met him*." "We intended *to visit you*," not 'to have visited you.'" "I hoped they would arrive," not "I hoped they *would have* arrived." "I thought I should *catch* the bird," not "I thought I should *have caught* the bird." "I had intended *to go* to the meeting," not "I had intended to *have gone* to the meeting."

Between—Among

These prepositions are often carelessly interchanged. *Between* has reference to two objects only, *among* to more than two. "The money was equally divided between them" is right when there are only two, but if there are more than two it should be "the money was equally divided among them."

Less—Fewer

Less refers to quantity, *fewer* to number. "No man has *less* virtues" should be "No man has *fewer* virtues." "The farmer had some oats and a *fewer* quantity of wheat" should be "the farmer had some oats and a *less* quantity of wheat."

Further—Farther

Further is commonly used to denote quantity, *farther* to denote distance. "I have walked *farther* than you," "I need no *further* supply" are correct.

Each Other—One Another

Each other refers to two, *one another* to more than two. "Jones and Smith quarreled; they struck each other" is correct. "Jones, Smith and Brown quarreled; they struck one another" is also correct. Don't say, "The two boys teach one another" nor "The three girls love each other."

Each, Every, Either, Neither

These words are continually misapplied. *Each* can be applied to two or any higher number of objects to

signify *every one* of the number *independently*. *Every* requires *more than two* to be spoken of and denotes all the *persons* or *things* taken *separately*. *Either* denotes *one or the other of two*, and should not be used to include both. *Neither* is the negative of *either*, denoting not the other, and not the one, and relating to *two persons* or *things* considered separately.

The following examples illustrate the correct usage of these words:

Each man of the crew received a reward.

Every man in the regiment displayed bravery.

We can walk on *either* side of the street.

Neither of the two is to blame.

Neither-Nor

When two singular subjects are connected by *neither; nor* use a singular verb; as, 'Neither John *nor* James *was there*,' not were there.

None

Custom Has sanctioned the use of this word both with a singular and plural; as—"None *is* so blind as he who will not see" and "None are so blind as they who will not see." However, as it is a contraction of *no one* it is better to use the singular verb.

Rise-Raise

These verbs are very often confounded. *Rise* is to move or pass upward in any manner; as to "rise from bed;" to increase in value, to improve in position or rank, as "stocks rise;" "politicians rise;" "they have risen to honor."

Raise is to lift up, to exalt, to enhance, as "I raise the table;" "He raised his servant;" "The baker raised the price of *bread*."

Lay-Lie

The transitive verb *lay*, and *lay*, the past tense of the neuter verb *lie*, are often confounded, though quite different in meaning. The neuter verb *to lie*, meaning to lie down or rest, cannot take the objective after it except with a preposition. We can say "He *lies* on the ground," but we cannot say "He *lies* the ground," since the verb is neuter and intransitive and, as such, cannot have a direct object. With *lay* it is different. *Lay* is a transitive verb, therefore it takes a direct object after it; as "I *lay* a wager," "I *laid* the carpet," etc.

Of a carpet or any inanimate subject we should say, "It *lies* on the floor," "A knife *lies* on the table," not *lays*. But of a person we say—"He *lays* the knife on the table," not "He *lies*—." *Lay* being the past tense of the neuter to lie (down) we should say, "He *lay* on the bed," and *lain* being its past participle we must also say "He has *lain* on the bed."

We can say "I *lay* myself down." "He *laid* himself down" and such expressions.

It is imperative to remember in using these verbs that to *lay* means *to do* something, and to *lie* means *to*

be in a state of rest.

Says I–I Said

“*Says I*” is a vulgarism; don’t use it. “I said” is correct form.

IN–INTO

Be careful to distinguish the meaning of these two little prepositions and don’t interchange them. Don’t say “He went *in* the room” nor “My brother is *into* the navy.” *In* denotes the place where a person or thing, whether at rest or in motion, is present; and *into* denotes *entrance*. “He went *into* the room;” “My brother is *in* the navy” are correct.

Eat–Ate

Don’t confound the two. *Eat* is present, *ate* is past. “I *eat* the bread” means that I am continuing the eating; “I *ate* the bread” means that the act of eating is past. *Eaten* is the perfect participle, but often *eat* is used instead, and as it has the same pronunciation (et) of *ate*, care should be taken to distinguish the past tense, I *ate* from the perfect *I have eaten (eat)*.

Sequence of Person

Remember that the *first* person takes precedence of the *second* and the *second* takes precedence of the *third*. When Cardinal Wolsey said *Ego et Rex* (I and the King), he showed he was a good grammarian, but a bad courtier.

Am Come–Have Come

“*I am come*” points to my being here, while “I have come” intimates that I have just arrived. When the subject is not a person, the verb *to be should* be used in preference to the verb *to have*; as, “The box is come” instead of “The box has come.”

Past Tense–Past Participle

The interchange of these two parts of the irregular or so-called strong verbs is, perhaps, the breach oftenest committed by careless speakers and writers. To avoid mistakes it is requisite to know the principal parts of these verbs, and this knowledge is very easy of acquirement, as there are not more than a couple of hundred of such verbs, and of this number but a small part is in daily use. Here are some of the most common blunders: “I seen” for “I saw;” “I done it” for “I did it;” “I drunk” for “I drank;” “I begun” for “I began;” “I rung” for “I rang;” “I run” for “I ran;” “I sung” for “I sang;” “I have chose” for “I have chosen;” “I have drove” for “I have driven;” “I have wore” for “I have worn;” “I have trod” for “I have trodden;” “I have shook” for “I have shaken;” “I have fell” for “I have fallen;” “I have drank” for “I have drunk;” “I have began” for “I have begun;” “I have rang” for “I have rung;” “I have rose” for “I have risen;” “I have spoke” for “I have spoken;” “I have broke” for “I have broken.” “It has froze” for “It has frozen.” “It has blowed” for “It has blown.” “It has flowed” (of a bird) for “It has flown.”

N. B.—The past tense and past participle of *To Hang* is *hanged* or *hung*. When you are talking about a man meeting death on the gallows, say “He was hanged;” when you are talking about the carcass of an

animal say, "It was hung," as "The beef was hung dry." Also say your coat 'was hung on a hook."

Prepositions and the Objective Case

Don't forget that prepositions always take the objective case. Don't say "Between you and *I*"; say "Between you and *me*"

Two prepositions should not govern *one objective* unless there is an immediate connection between them. "He was refused admission to and forcibly ejected from the school" should be "He was refused admission to the school and forcibly ejected from it."

Summon–Summons

Don't say "I shall summons him," but "I shall summon him." *Summon* is a verb, *summons*, a noun.

It is correct to say "I shall get a *summons* for him," not a *summon*.

Undeniable–Unexceptionable

"My brother has an undeniable character" is wrong if I wish to convey the idea that he has a good character. The expression should be in that case "My brother has an unexceptionable character." An *undeniable* character is a character that cannot be denied, whether bad or good. An *unexceptionable* character is one to which no one can take exception.

The Pronouns

Very many mistakes occur in the use of the pronouns. "Let you and I go" should be "Let you and *me* go." "Let them and we go" should be "Let them and us go." The verb *let* is transitive and therefore takes the objective case.

"Give me *them* flowers" should be "Give me *those* flowers"; "I mean *them* three" should be "I mean those three." *Them* is the objective case of the personal pronoun and cannot be used adjectively like the demonstrative adjective pronoun. "I am as strong as *him*" should be "I am as strong as *he*"; "I am younger than *her*" should be "I am younger than *she*"; "He can write better than *me*" should be "He can write better than *I*," for in these examples the objective cases *him*, *her* and *me* are used wrongfully for the nominatives. After each of the misapplied pronouns a verb is understood of which each pronoun is the subject. Thus, "I am as strong as he (is)." "I am younger than she (is)." "He can write better than I (can)."

Don't say 'It is me;" say 'It is I" The verb *To Be* of which *is* is a part takes the same case after it that it has before it. This holds good in all situations as well as with pronouns.

The verb *To Be* also requires the pronouns joined to it to be in the same case as a pronoun asking a question; The nominative *I* requires the nominative *who* and the objectives *me*, *him*, *her*, *its*, *you*, *them*, require the objective *whom*.

"*Whom* do you think I am?" should be 'Who do you think I am?" and "*Who* do they suppose me to be?" should be 'Whom do they suppose me to be?" The objective form of the Relative should be always used, in connection with a preposition. "Who do you take me for?" should be "*Whom* do, etc." "Who did you give the apple to?" should be "Whom did you give the apple to," but as pointed out

elsewhere the preposition should never end a sentence, therefore, it is better to say, “To whom did you give the apple?”

After transitive verbs always use the objective cases of the pronouns. For ‘He and *they* we have seen,’ say ‘Him and *them* we have seen.’”

That For So

“The hurt it was that painful it made him cry,” say “so painful.”

THESE–THOSE

“Don’t say, *These kind; those sort*. *Kind* and *sort* are each singular and require the singular pronouns *this* and *that*. In connection with these demonstrative adjective pronouns remember that *this* and these refer to what is near at hand, *that* and *those* to what is more distant; as, *this book* (near me), *that book* (over there), *these boys* (near), *those boys* (at a distance).

This Much–Thus Much

“*This much* is certain” should be ‘Thus much or *so much* is certain.’”

FLEE–FLY

These are two separate verbs and must not be interchanged. The principal parts of *flee* are *flee, fled, fled*; those of *fly* are *fly, flew, flown*. *To flee* is generally used in the meaning of getting out of danger. *To fly* means to soar as a bird. To say of a man “He *has flown* from the place” is wrong; it should be “He *has fled* from the place.” We can say with propriety that “A bird has *flown* from the place.”

Through–Throughout

Don’t say “He is well known through the land,” but “He is well known throughout the land.”

Vocation and Avocation

Don’t mistake these two words so nearly alike. Vocation is the employment, business or profession one follows for a living; avocation is some pursuit or occupation which diverts the person from such employment, business or profession. Thus

“His vocation was the law, his avocation, farming.”

Was–Were

In the subjunctive mood the plural form *were* should be used with a singular subject; as, “If I *were*,” not *was*. Remember the plural form of the personal pronoun *you* always takes *were*, though it may denote but one. Thus, ‘You *were*,’ never ‘you *was*.’ ‘If I *was* him’ is a very common expression. Note the two mistakes in it,—that of the verb implying a condition, and that of the objective case of the pronoun. It should read *If I were he*. This is another illustration of the rule regarding the verb *To Be*, taking the same case after it as before it; *were* is part of the verb *To Be*, therefore as the nominative (I) goes before it, the nominative (he) should come after it.

A or An

A becomes an before a vowel or before *h* mute for the sake of euphony or agreeable sound to the ear. *An apple, an orange, an heir, an honor, etc.*

VII. STYLE

Diction—Purity—Propriety—Precision.

It is the object of every writer to put his thoughts into as effective form as possible so as to make a good impression on the reader. A person may have noble thoughts and ideas but be unable to express them in such a way as to appeal to others, consequently he cannot exert the full force of his intellectuality nor leave the imprint of his character upon his time, whereas many a man but indifferently gifted may wield such a facile pen as to attract attention and win for himself an envious place among his contemporaries.

In everyday life one sees illustrations of men of excellent mentality being cast aside and ones of mediocre or in some cases, little, if any, ability chosen to fill important places. The former are unable to impress their personality; they have great thoughts, great ideas, but these thoughts and ideas are locked up in their brains and are like prisoners behind the bars struggling to get free. The key of language which would open the door is wanting, hence they have to remain locked up.

Many a man has to pass through the world unheard of and of little benefit to it or himself, simply because he cannot bring out what is in him and make it subservient to his will. It is the duty of every one to develop his best, not only for the benefit of himself but for the good of his fellow men. It is not at all necessary to have great learning or acquirements, the laborer is as useful in his own place as the philosopher in his; nor is it necessary to have many talents. One talent rightly used is much better than ten wrongly used. Often a man can do more with one than his contemporary can do with ten, often a man can make one dollar go farther than twenty in the hands of his neighbor, often the poor man lives more comfortably than the millionaire. All depends upon the individual himself. If he make right use of what the Creator has given him and live according to the laws of God and nature he is fulfilling his allotted place in the universal scheme of creation, in other words, when he does his best, he is living up to the standard of a useful manhood.

Now in order to do his best a man of ordinary intelligence and education should be able to express himself correctly both in speaking and writing, that is, he should be able to convey his thoughts in an intelligent manner which the simplest can understand. The manner in which a speaker or writer conveys his thoughts is known as his Style. In other words *Style* may be defined as the peculiar manner in which a man expresses his conceptions through the medium of language. It depends upon the choice of words and their arrangement to convey a meaning. Scarcely any two writers have exactly the same style, that is to say, express their ideas after the same peculiar form, just as no two mortals are fashioned by nature in the same mould, so that one is an exact counterpart of the other.

Just as men differ in the accent and tones of their voices, so do they differ in the construction of their language.

Two reporters sent out on the same mission, say to report a fire, will verbally differ in their accounts though materially both descriptions will be the same as far as the leading facts are concerned. One will express himself in a style *different* from the other.

If you are asked to describe the dancing of a red-haired lady at the last charity ball you can either say—"The ruby Circe, with the Titian locks glowing like the oriflamme which surrounds the golden god

of day as he sinks to rest amid the crimson glory of the burnished West, gave a divine exhibition of the Terpsichorean art which thrilled the souls of the multitude” or, you can simply say—“The red-haired lady danced very well and pleased the audience.”

The former is a specimen of the ultra florid or bombastic style which may be said to depend upon the pomposity of verbosity for its effect, the latter is a specimen of simple *natural* Style. Needless to say it is to be preferred. The other should be avoided. It stamps the writer as a person of shallowness, ignorance and inexperience. It has been eliminated from the newspapers. Even the most flatulent of yellow sheets no longer tolerate it in their columns. Affectation and pedantry in style are now universally condemned.

It is the duty of every speaker and writer to labor after a pleasing style. It gains him an entrance where he would otherwise be debarred. Often the interest of a subject depends as much on the way it is presented as on the subject itself. One writer will make it attractive, another repulsive. For instance take a passage in history. Treated by one historian it is like a desiccated mummy, dry, dull, disgusting, while under the spell of another it is, as it were, galvanized into a virile living thing which not only pleases but captivates the reader.

Diction

The first requisite of style is *choice of words*, and this comes under the head of *Diction*, the property of style which has reference to the words and phrases used in speaking and writing. The secret of literary skill from any standpoint consists in putting the right word in the right place. In order to do this it is imperative to know the meaning of the words we use, their exact literal meaning. Many synonymous words are seemingly interchangeable and appear as if the same meaning were applicable to three or four of them at the same time, but when all such words are reduced to a final analysis it is clearly seen that there is a marked difference in their meaning. For instance *grief* and *sorrow* seem to be identical, but they are not. *Grief* is active, *sorrow* is more or less passive; *grief* is caused by troubles and misfortunes which come to us from the outside, while *sorrow* is often the consequence of our own acts. *Grief* is frequently loud and violent, *sorrow* is always quiet and retiring. *Grief* shouts, *Sorrow* remains calm.

If you are not sure of the exact meaning of a word look it up immediately in the dictionary. Sometimes some of our great scholars are puzzled over simple words in regard to meaning, spelling or pronunciation. Whenever you meet a strange word note it down until you discover its meaning and use. Read the best books you can get, books written by men and women who are acknowledged masters of language, and study how they use their words, where they place them in the sentences, and the meanings they convey to the readers.

Mix in good society. Listen attentively to good talkers and try to imitate their manner of expression. If a word is used you do not understand, don't be ashamed to ask its meaning.

True, a small vocabulary will carry you through, but it is an advantage to have a large one. When you live alone a little pot serves just as well as a large one to cook your victuals and it is handy and convenient, but when your friends or neighbors come to dine with you, you will need a much larger pot and it is better to have it in store, so that you will not be put to shame for your scantiness of furnishings.

Get as many words as you possibly can—if you don't need them now, pack them away in the garrets of your brain so that you can call upon them if you require them.

Keep a note book, jot down the words you don't understand or clearly understand and consult the

dictionary when you get time.

Purity

Purity of style consists in using words which are reputable, national and present, which means that the words are in current use by the best authorities, that they are used throughout the nation and not confined to one particular part, and that they are words in constant use at the present time.

There are two guiding principles in the choice of words,—good use and *good taste*. *Good use* tells us whether a word is right or wrong; *good taste*, whether it is adapted to our purpose or not.

A word that is obsolete or too new to have gained a place in the language, or that is a provincialism, should not be used.

Here are the Ten Commandments of English style:

- (1) Do not use foreign words.
- (2) Do not use a long word when a short one will serve your purpose. *Fire* is much better than *conflagration*.
- (3) Do not use technical words, or those understood only by specialists in their respective lines, except when you are writing especially for such people.
- (4) Do not use slang.
- (5) Do not use provincialisms, as “I guess” for “I think”; “I reckon” for “I know,” etc.
- (6) Do not in writing prose, use poetical or antiquated words: as “lore, e’er, morn, yea, nay, verily, peradventure.”
- (7) Do not use trite and worn words and expressions; as, “on the job,” “up and in”; “down and out.”
- (8) Do not use newspaper words which have not established a place in the language as “to dis”; “to suicide,” etc.
- (9) Do not use ungrammatical words and forms; as, “I ain’t;” “he don’t.”
- (10) Do not use ambiguous words or phrases; as—“He showed me all about the house.”

Trite words, similes and metaphors which have become worn out, should not be used. Such expressions and phrases as “Sweet sixteen” “the Almighty dollar,” “Uncle Sam,” “On the fence,” “The Glorious Fourth,” “Young America,” “The lords of creation,” “The rising generation,” “The weaker sex,” “The weaker vessel,” “Sweetness long drawn out” and “chief cook and bottle washer,” should be put on the shelf as they are utterly worn out from too much usage.

Some of the old similes which have outlived their usefulness and should be pensioned off, are “Sweet as sugar,” “Bold as a lion,” “Strong as an ox,” “Quick as a flash,” “Cold as ice,” “Stiff as a poker,” “White as snow,” “Busy as a bee,” “Pale as a ghost,” “Cross as a bear” and a great many more far too numerous to mention.

Be as original as possible in the use of expression. If you are speaking or writing of dancing don’t talk or write about “tripping the light fantastic toe.” It is over two hundred years since Milton expressed it that way in ‘L’Allegro.’ You’re not a Milton and besides over a million have stolen it from Milton until it is now no longer worth stealing.

Don't resurrect obsolete words such as *whilom*, *yclept*, *wis*, etc., and be careful in regard to obsolescent words, that is, words that are at the present time gradually passing from use such as *quoth*, *traw*, *betwixt*, *amongst*, *froward*, etc.

Beware of new words. Be original in the construction and arrangement of your language, but don't try to originate words.

Propriety

Propriety of style consists in using words in their proper sense and as in the case of purity, good usage is the principal test. Many words have acquired in actual use a meaning very different from what they once possessed. "Prevent" formerly meant to go before, and that meaning is implied in its Latin derivation. Now it means to put a stop to, to hinder. To attain propriety of style it is necessary to avoid confounding words derived from the same root; as *respectfully* and *respectively*; it is necessary to use words in their accepted sense or the sense which everyday use sanctions.

Simplicity

Simplicity of style has reference to the choice of simple words and their unaffected presentation. Simple words should always be used in preference to compound, and complicated ones when they express the same or almost the same meaning. The Anglo-Saxon element in our language comprises the simple words which express the relations of everyday life, strong, terse, vigorous, the language of the fireside, street, market and farm.

Clearness

Clearness of style should be one of the leading considerations with the beginner in composition. He must avoid all obscurity and ambiguous phrases. Edit your words in such a way that there can be no possible doubt. Words, phrases or clauses that are closely related should be placed as near to each other as possible that their mutual relation may clearly appear, and no word should be omitted that is necessary to the complete expression of thought.

Unity

Unity is that property of style which keeps all parts of a sentence in connection with the principal thought and logically subordinate to it. A sentence may be constructed as to suggest the idea of oneness to the mind, or it may be so loosely put together as to produce a confused and indefinite impression. Ideas that have but little connection should be expressed in separate sentences, and not crowded into one.

Keep long parentheses out of the middle of your sentences and when you have apparently brought your sentences to a close don't try to continue the thought or idea by adding supplementary clauses.

Strength

Strength is that property of style which gives animation, energy and vivacity to language and sustains the interest of the reader. It is as necessary to language as good food is to the body. Without it the words are weak and feeble and create little or no impression on the mind. In order to have strength the

language must be concise, that is, much expressed in little compass, you must hit the nail fairly on the head and drive it in straight. Go critically over what you write and strike out every word, phrase and clause the omission of which impairs neither the clearness nor force of the sentence and so avoid redundancy. Give the most important words the most prominent places, which, as has been pointed out elsewhere, are the beginning and end of the sentence.

Harmony

Harmony is that property of style which gives a smoothness to the sentence, so that when the words are sounded their connection becomes pleasing to the ear. It adapts sound to sense.

Expressive of Writer

Style is expressive of the writer, as to who he is and what he is. As a matter of structure in composition it is the indication of what a man can do; as a matter of quality it is an indication of what he is.

Kinds of Style

Style has been classified in different ways, but it admits of so many designations that it is very hard to enumerate a table. In fact there are as many styles as there are writers, for no two authors write exactly after the same form. However, we may classify the styles of the various authors in broad divisions as (1) dry, (2) plain, (3) neat, (4) elegant, (5) florid, (6) bombastic.

The *dry* style excludes all ornament and makes no effort to appeal to any sense of beauty. Its object is simply to express the thoughts in a correct manner. This style is exemplified by Berkeley.

The *plain* style does not seek ornamentation either, but aims to make clear and concise statements without any elaboration or embellishment. Locke and Whately illustrate the plain style.

The *neat* style only aspires after ornament sparingly. Its object is to have correct figures, pure diction and clear and harmonious sentences. Goldsmith and Gray are the acknowledged leaders in this kind of style.

The *elegant* style uses every ornament that can beautify and avoids every excess which would degrade. Macaulay and Addison have been enthroned as the kings of this style. To them all writers bend the knee in homage.

The *florid* style goes to excess in superfluous and superficial ornamentation and strains after a highly colored imagery. The poems of Ossian typify this style.

The *bombastic* is characterized by such an excess of words, figures and ornaments as to be ridiculous and disgusting. It is like a circus clown dressed up in gold tinsel Dickens gives a fine example of it in Sergeant Buzfuz' speech in the "Pickwick Papers." Among other varieties of style may be mentioned the colloquial, the laconic, the concise, the diffuse, the abrupt the flowing, the quaint, the epigrammatic, the flowery, the feeble, the nervous, the vehement, and the affected. The manner of these is sufficiently indicated by the adjective used to describe them.

In fact style is as various as character and expresses the individuality of the writer, or in other words, as the French writer Buffon very aptly remarks, "the style is the man himself."

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

How to Write—What to Write—Correct Speaking and Speakers

Rules of grammar and speech are good in their own place; their laws must be observed in order to express thoughts and ideas in the right way so that they shall convey sense and meaning.

Hard and fast rules, however, can never make a writer or author. The author must have thoughts and ideas before he can express them on paper. These come to him by nature and environment and are developed and strengthened by study. Knowledge that is not shared is like gold locked up in a chest where it is of no value to the writer or the rest of the world.

The best way to learn to write is to sit down and write, just as the best way how to learn to ride a bicycle is to mount the wheel and pedal away. Write first about common things, subjects that are familiar to you. Try for instance an essay on a cat. Say something original about her. Tell what you have seen the family cat doing, how she caught a mouse in the garret and what she did after catching it. Familiar themes are always the best for the beginner.

Know what you write about, write about what you know. Don't attempt to describe a scene in Australia if you have never been there and know nothing of the country. Never hunt for subjects, there are thousands around you. Describe what you saw yesterday— a fire or a dog-fight on the street and be original in your description. Imitate the best writers in their *style*, but not in their exact words. Get out of the beaten path, make a pathway of your own.

Don't imagine that a college education is necessary to success as a writer. Far from it. Some of our college men are dead-heads, drones, parasites, useless, not only to the world, but to themselves.

If you are poor that is not a detriment but an advantage. Poverty is an incentive to endeavor, not a drawback. In other fields of endeavor, poverty has been the spur to action. Napoleon was born in obscurity in the backward island of Corsica. Abraham Lincoln came from a log cabin in the Ohio backwoods. So did James A. Garfield. Thomas A. Edison began as a newsboy on a railway tram.

Remember:

"In life's earnest battle they only prevail
Who daily march onward and never say fail."

Let every obstacle you encounter be but a stepping stone in the path of onward progress to the goal of success.

Your brain is a storehouse, don't put useless furniture into it to crowd it to the exclusion of what is useful. Read only the best literature and study the best speakers.

The good speaker is always able to command attention and doors are thrown open to him which remain closed to others who are not equipped with a sharp facility of expression. The man who can talk well and to the point need never fear lack of employment. He is required in nearly every walk of life and field of human endeavor, the world wants him at every turn. Employers are constantly on the lookout for good talkers, those who are able to attract the public and convince others by the force of their language.

Listen to the best conversationalists and how they express themselves and what they say to captivate their audience. Note the words which impress you most. Keep a notebook and jot down words, phrases, sentences that are in any way striking or out of the ordinary run. If you do not understand the exact meaning of a word you have heard, look it up in the dictionary. There are many words, called

synonyms, which have almost a like signification, nevertheless, when examined they express different shades of meaning and in some cases, instead of being close related, are widely divergent. Beware of such words, find their exact meaning and learn to use them in their right places.

Be open to criticism, don't resent it but rather invite it and look upon those as friends who point out your defects in order that you may remedy them.

When you write, create your document. Then, edit yourself for purity, clarity and precision. Then, edit, re-edit. Eliminate redundancy, slang and any extraneous wording that detracts from your meaning.

Writer's Fast Track: <http://www.writersfasttrack.com>

Purdue On-line Writing Lab: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

Excellent On-line Dictionary - Wordsmyth.net: <http://www.wordsmyth.net>