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

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CHAPTER II.

OF WORDS.

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

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

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

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

terms stand for ideas, an enlarged familiarity with words and their meanings extends the limits of our knowledge, and is thus an important part of education. It would not, however, be correct to say that a man's **knowledge is valuable** in proportion to the multitude of words which he has learned to understand; for some matters are far more worthy of knowledge than others.

25. From all this it follows that the **exercises selected for the young** should—

1. Make them familiar with a large number of words;
2. Aid them to understand those words clearly in their various meanings;
3. Fix their attention by preference on those words which represent the most valuable ideas.

It must also be remarked that words found in print or heard in conversation are not all equally fit for use; precepts and exercises will train the pupil to make a proper choice.

26. **To acquire a copious supply of proper words**—

1. Children should **converse** frequently with persons whose knowledge is sound and whose language is correct and elegant.
2. Their **reading** should be confined to the choicest productions of the best writers, suited, however, to their age and their circumstances. The text-books which they use for reading and for models of composition should be selected with the greatest care. Such selection being made, the following exercises are recommended:

27. **1st Exercise.**—Write in one column all the nouns occurring in the First Lesson of your Reader, all the adjectives in a second column, the verbs in a third, and the adverbs in a fourth.

28. **2d Exercise.**—Write, in the same manner, all such words of the Second Lesson as did not occur in the first, or occur in a different meaning.

29. **3d Exercise.**—Point out the new words of the Third Lesson, of the Fourth, of the Fifth, etc.

Similar exercises may be written on passages in text-books of History, Geography, etc., to familiarize pupils with numerous good English words, and with the different meanings which each may bear.

In selecting words for actual use pupils must attend to the rules of Purity, Propriety, and Precision.

Article I. Purity.

30. **Purity** requires that all our expressions belong to the idiom of our language. It forbids the use of words and phrases which are (*a*) foreign, (*b*) obsolete or no longer in use, (*c*) newly coined or not yet adopted into the language. A violation of purity is called a *barbarism.*

31. The **standard of purity** is the practice of the best writers and speakers. This standard is thus explained by Campbell in his *Rhetoric.* To judge whether a word is pure he bids us consult: 1. *Reputable use*—that is, the usage of the best writers and speakers, as opposed to that of the uneducated; 2. *National use*, as opposed to provincial and foreign; 3. *Present use*, as opposed to obsolete.

32. We may add this special **rule regarding foreign words:** When our own language has a good word to express a certain idea it is pedantry to borrow a word from another tongue, as those persons are fond of doing who wish to show that they know a little French, Italian, etc. We need not, for instance, talk of a 'coup d'œil,' a 'chef-d'œuvre,' or a 'faux pas,' etc., when we have such words as a 'glance,' a 'masterpiece,' a 'false step,' etc.

33. Pope, in his "Essay on Criticism," lays down this rule regarding **obsolete and newly-coined words:**

> "In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold,
> Alike fantastic if too new or old:
> Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
> Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

In conformity with this rule we should avoid in prose composition words which were at one time in general use, but which are now confined by our best writers to the language of poetry. Such are: 'Sheen,' 'swain,' 'ween,' 'wist,' 'wot,' 'quoth,' etc.

34. Even among such words as are conformable to the standard of purity **a further selection** may often be advisable, for which Campbell lays down these rules:

1. Choose the word or phrase which has but **one meaning** in preference to that which has more than one; *e.g.*, say 'The weapons dropped from the hands of his soldiers,' not 'The arms dropped from the hands of his soldiers.'
2. Prefer the word that conforms to the **analogy** of the language; hence use 'contemporary' rather than 'cotemporary,' since the 'n' in 'con' is usually retained before a consonant and dropped before a vowel.
3. Prefer the word **more agreeable** to the ear; hence rather say 'kindness' than 'graciousness,' if either will suit the sense.
4. Prefer the **simpler expression**: 'to approve' is better than 'to approve of,' to 'subtract' than to 'substract.'
5. Prefer what **savors less of innovation,** unless there be a special reason to the contrary.

35. **Exercise.**—Substitute English words and phrases for the following barbarisms: à la mode, incertain, resurrected, docible, preventative, sang-froid, enthused, rampage, amour propre, parvenu, soi-disant, skedaddle, vamose, patois, instanter, fête, absquatulate, fixings, walking-papers, sine qua non, comme il faut; to get into a scrape, to acknowledge the corn, to pitch into, to cut shines, to clear out.

Article II. Propriety.

36. **Propriety** means suitableness. Words should be suited: 1. To the expression of a given idea; 2. To the usage of polite society; 3. To the understanding of the reader or hearer; 4. To the subject treated.

§ 1. *Proper to express a given idea.*

37. Propriety should make us choose those words of our language which most exactly express our ideas. This choice of **the right word for every idea** is in itself a source of pleasure to the intelligent reader; it is one of the chief beauties of style, and it is necessary in all species of compositions. There are many words in English which express the same idea; such words are called **synonyms.** If they present the same idea somewhat differently they are *imperfect* synonyms. There are few *perfect* synonyms; and negligence in discriminating between imperfect ones leads to many violations of propriety.

38. **Exercise.**—Point out the meanings which the following synonyms have in common, and the differences between them. Write brief sentences in which these differences appear.

Austerity, severity, rigor. Custom, habit. Surprised, astonished, amazed, confounded. Desist, renounce, quit, leave off. Pride, vanity. Haughtiness, disdain. To distinguish, to separate. To weary, to fatigue. To abhor,

to detest. To invent, to discover. Only, alone. Entire, complete. Tranquillity, peace, calm. A difficulty, an obstacle. Wisdom, prudence. Enough, sufficient. To avow, to acknowledge, to confess. To remark, to observe. Equivocal, ambiguous. With, by. (See Blair's *Rhetoric*, Lect. x.)

39. Even ordinary conversation cannot dispense with this propriety in the choice of words. A foolish **habit of exaggeration** leads some people to commit gross mistakes in this matter. To signify that an object is very pleasing they will say that it is 'awfully nice' or 'perfectly splendid'; they express themselves to be 'delighted,' when they mean 'pleased'; they 'love' poetry, flowers, and fine clothes, instead of 'liking' them.

40. **To select the proper synonym** the following hints may help:

1. Some words are *more comprehensive* than others: every 'river' is a 'stream,' but every 'stream' is not a 'river.' 2. Some relate more to *action*, others to a state: 'force' effects, while 'strength' sustains; 'reasonable' men use reason, 'rational' men have reason. 3. Some are *positive*, others negative: a 'fault' is positively bad, a 'defect' is a want of something needed. 4. Some differ in *degree*: 'damp,' 'moist,' 'wet'; 'angry,' 'furious.' 5. Some relate more *to nature*, others to art: a 'gentle,' a 'tame' animal. 6. Some regard more what is *inward*, others what is outward: 'dignity,' 'decorum,' 'form,' 'feature'; 'detract,' 'disparage.' (See Kerl's *Treatise on the English Language*, p. 460.)

§ 2. *Proper to be used in polite society.*

41. The Latins called every object by the name which most directly recalled it to the mind. Shakspeare and most of his contemporaries often made their characters

discourse in similar language. But in our days there are many words and phrases that are universally banished from polite conversation, and others that are often used familiarly, but are considered out of place in dignified composition. The former are called **vulgar**; they should always be avoided: the latter are familiar or **colloquial**, and may be used on proper occasions.

"Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar."—*Shakspeare.*

Some young people contract the habit of using vulgar words and slang phrases to such an extent that they are ignorant of the proper terms. Others go to the opposite extreme, and, through a false notion of propriety, fastidiously avoid excellent English words used by the best writers. They would think it vulgar to name 'arms,' 'legs,' and 'knees,' calling all these 'limbs.' This is not propriety, but prudery.

42. Some writers on Rhetoric give the name of "low expressions" to such terms as hurly-burly, topsy-turvy, currying favor, dancing attendance, left to shift for one's self, had as lief, not a whit better, half an eye, self-same, it irks me, etc. All these, however, are **good old English idioms**, which it would be a pity to lose from our language, as they are more expressive than any substitutes yet proposed for them. (See *Every-Day English*, by Richard Grant White, c. xxx.) Some would even discard our good Saxon 'women' and 'mothers,' and give us 'ladies' and 'mammas' instead.

§ 3. *Proper or suited to the intelligence of readers and hearers.*

43. Many terms are appropriate before a learned audience and in books written for educated men and women which would be unintelligible to children and to the unedu-

cated. Words of **Saxon origin** are the simplest and the most likely to be generally understood. Scientific terms should be confined to scientific audiences.

44. In addressing persons of slow mind, or in addressing any person on abstruse matters, it is well to express the same idea, whenever it recurs, by the same word, so as not to confuse; but with more intelligent readers, and on easier topics, such repetitions would convey the impression of poverty of language in the writer, except when special beauty results from the repetition, as will be explained further on. It is never proper to use the same word in different meanings in the same sentence. Do not write, "It soon *appeared* that these diplomatic courtesies meant more than *appeared* on the surface"; nor, "Wellington was *anxious* to be relieved from *anxiety* in that quarter."

§ 4. *Proper to the subject.*

45. Language is the dress of thought. As different dress becomes different persons and different occasions, so the language will **vary with the subject.** We shall here consider how this will affect the choice of words.

When the thoughts are remarkably beautiful, smoothness and beauty are desired in the expression. Now, as Blair correctly remarks, words are most agreeable to the ear which are composed of smooth and liquid sounds, in which there is a proper intermixture of vowels and consonants, without too many harsh consonants rubbing against each other. Too many open vowels in succession cause a hiatus or a disagreeable aperture of the mouth. Sounds hard to pronounce are harsh and painful to the ear. Vowels give softness, consonants strength, to the sound of words. The music of language requires a just proportion of both. Of long words those are the most

musical in which long and short syllables are properly intermixed, as 'independent,' 'impetuosity,' 'adoration.'

46. Long words bestow dignity upon style; this is the chief reason why those of Latin and Greek origin are preferred by many writers to the more expressive and forcible, but less harmonious, Saxon.

Still, for sweetness of sound we need not have recourse to the learned languages. Notice the beauty of these Saxon lines:

> "There is sweet music here that softer falls
> Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
> Or night dews on still waters between walls
> Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
> Music that gentler on the spirit lies
> Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
> Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
> Here are cool mosses deep,
> And through the moss the ivies creep,
> And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
> And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep."
>
> —*Tennyson.*

> "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
> Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
> Creep in our ears; soft stillness and the night
> Become the touches of sweet harmony.
> Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
> There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still choiring to the young-eyed cherubins.
> Such harmony is in immortal souls;
> But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."
>
> —*Shakspeare.*

See also Shenstone's Pastoral, II. "Hope":

> "My banks they are furnished with bees," etc.

See also the well-known songs of Tom Moore, "Sweet Vale of Avoca" and "'Tis the Last Rose of Summer."

Exercise.—Write in soft and pleasing words a description of a quiet scene, such as 'a boat-ride,' 'an evening scene in autumn,' 'a morning of spring,' 'midnight in summer,' 'the stillness of a city on Sunday,' etc.

Article III. Precision.

47. Precision here means the selection of such words as mean nothing vague, or too much, or too little, but just what we desire to express. For example, we should not say, unless we mean to use a figure, 'The boy broke a *window*,' when he broke a *pane* only; nor, 'The *room* is full of water,' when it is only the *floor* that is covered with water; nor speak of 'courage and fortitude,' when we mean only one of these virtues. Vagueness, as opposed to precision, is exemplified by the use of general instead of particular terms. There are persons whose stock of words appears to be very scanty; every object with them is *great* or *small, beautiful* or *ugly, good* or *bad.* They should distinguish various degrees of such qualities. We have elsewhere pointed out several terms expressive of size (No. 13); we shall here add some varieties of beauty and ugliness: Beautiful, handsome, fine, pretty, lovely, graceful, elegant, delicate, refined, fair, comely, seemly, bonny, shapely, well-formed, well-proportioned, symmetrical, becoming, neat, spruce, brilliant, splendid, gorgeous, superb, magnificent, sublime, grand; Ugly, gross, homely, unsightly, unseemly, unprepossessing, etc.

48. The use of the general term for a particular one, as 'ugly' for 'clumsy' or 'squalid,' would be a violation of precision; the use of one particular term for another, as of 'gross' instead of 'homely,' offends against **propriety.**

(See Roget's *Thesaurus of English Words*, a work of great utility in its way to the students of our language.)

49. **Not every subject requires the same attention** to precision; but all those compositions should excel in it which are intended to instruct the reader. Such are all philosophical and critical works, histories, essays, text-books, etc.

50. That an author may write with precision, he must have a clear and exact **knowledge of his subject;** such knowledge is not as common as many imagine. Besides, he must have a distinct conception of the exact meaning of all his words. But even these two conditions are not sufficient. He must, besides, be so devoted to truth as to select his words with great care and strive to say exactly what he means.

51. Some writers are so given to **habits of exaggeration** as hardly to be able to state the sober truth, even in matters of importance. Such, for instance, is Lord Macaulay, whose style is unusually brilliant, but who is fond of saying more than he means. He deliberately studied a style of exaggeration, on the theory that men will not be impressed except by what is uncommonly striking. For instance, he says of Livy:

> "No historian with whom we are acquainted has shown so complete an indifference to truth. He seems to have cared only about the picturesque effect of his book and the honor of his country. On the other hand, we do not know, in the whole range of literature, an instance of a bad thing so well done. The painting of the narrative is beyond description vivid and graceful. The abundance of interesting narratives and splendid imagery is almost miraculous," etc., etc. ("Essay on History").

Such use of superlatives is injurious to precision; it does for the understanding what sensational literature does for the imagination and the heart; it corrupts men's relish for

the real and makes them sensible to nothing but what is striking. Macaulay's style is oratorical, and beautiful as such; but it has not the precision expected in the critic and the historian: it is therefore ill-suited to impart correct knowledge to the young.

52. Precision is of great importance **in the transaction of business**; in fact, for mercantile transactions it is, perhaps, the most necessary quality of style. It will be useful, therefore, to practise pupils for some time on such familiar exercises as the following:

53. **Exercise 1.**—Write an advertisement for insertion in a newspaper, offering a reward for the return of a lost article.

54. **Exercise 2.**—Write an advertisement of a house to let; one for a bookkeeper, a gardener, a private tutor.

CHAPTER III.

SENTENCES.

1 — 55. (A *sentence* is a collection of words making complete sense) as, 'In all climes spring is beautiful.' 'Wisely improve the present hour.' 'Where are the great conquerors now?' 'Hurrah for the Red, White, and Blue!'

The first example contains an assertion; the second, a command; the third is a question; the fourth, an exclamation: each makes complete sense, and is therefore a sentence. But the following words, 'As if the death angel in passing had touched them and made them holy,' do not make complete sense, and therefore they do not form a sentence.

56. **Exercise 1.**—Write a short sentence about every article in the room, every State in the Union, every hour of the day, etc.

57. **Exercise 2.**—Write a sentence of more than twenty words about each of the four seasons, about the soul, about angels, flowers, birds, fishes, a river, a mountain, the ocean, eternity, time, England, Ireland, France, Italy.

2 — 58. Both Grammar and Rhetoric lay down laws for sentences: (**Grammar** considers the form and the position of the words with a view to the correct expression of the thought; **Rhetoric,** the choice and the position of the words with a view to clearness, beauty, and power of expression.) The rhetorical arrangement may be quite different from the grammatical. 'The order of the