

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

world around us is indeed glorious,' is a sentence grammatically arranged. Irving puts it thus, rhetorically: "Glorious indeed is the order of the world around us."

- 3 — 59. We are here concerned with the rhetorical laws of a sentence. Of the choice of words we have already treated. It remains for us to explain the proper arrangement of a sentence with a view to clearness, beauty, and power of expression. This arrangement requires attention to five points (*Clearness, Precision, Unity, Strength, and Harmony.*)

ARTICLE I. CLEARNESS.

- 4 — 60. (**Clearness** in a sentence enables the reader to seize at once, without effort or hesitation, the meaning intended to be conveyed.) It excludes two faults: (*a*) *Ambiguity*, which leaves a doubt between two possible meanings; and (*b*) *Obscurity*, which fails to exhibit the true meaning at the first glance.

Both faults are exemplified in the following sentence of J. R. Lowell: "The relation of Dante to literature is monumental [what does this mean? — *Obscure*], and marks the era at which the modern begins." [The modern what? relation? literature? era? Dante? — *Ambiguous.*]

- 5 — 61. **General rules** to secure clearness:

Rule 1.—As a man cannot express clearly what he does not clearly understand, let every writer begin by **studying his subject thoroughly**, and let him not attempt to write till he knows well what he wishes to say. This is the most important rule of all.

Rule 2.—Let him express his thoughts with care, striving to make everything he says so clear to his readers that **they cannot help understanding him**. In particular, let

the words and phrases related in sense be so disposed that this relation may at once appear.

62. **Special Rules:** 1. Let **adverbs** obviously qualify the right words. The adverb 'only' is often misplaced, as in this very defective sentence of Addison (*Tatler*, 133): "When one considers this subject only in its sublimity, this great instance could not but occur to me; and since I only make use of it to show the highest example of it, I hope I do not offend in it." Does the first 'only' qualify 'subject' or 'sublimity'? and the second, 'I' or 'make use'?

63. Blair judiciously remarks:

"In regard to such adverbs as '*only*,' '*wholly*,' '*at least*,' the fact is that in common discourse the tone and emphasis we use in pronouncing them generally serve to show their reference and to make the meaning clear; and hence we acquire a habit of throwing them in loosely in the course of a period. But in writing, where a man speaks to the eye and not to the ear, he ought to be more accurate, and so to connect those adverbs with the words which they qualify as to put his meaning out of doubt upon the first inspection."

64. 2. **Circumstances**, and all kinds of clauses and adjuncts, should be so placed that the reader cannot fail to see at first sight where they belong. The following sentence violates this rule: "Say to him, if he is in the wrong, he should retrace his steps." Does the clause, 'If he is in the wrong,' qualify what precedes or what follows it? "Meanwhile the children in the house had been making themselves happy also in their manner."—*Ruskin*. Does 'also' refer to children, or to happy, or to manner? *Ruskin* means it for children.

65. 3. **Pronouns** should at once present to the mind the nouns for which they stand. The relative pronoun is misplaced in this sentence of Dean Swift: "Many, from a habit of saving time and paper, which they acquire at the

university, write in so diminutive a manner that they can hardly read what they have written."

66. 4. **Participles** should be obviously connected with the words to which they refer. Edward Everett violates this rule when he writes:

"By this [the aristocratic] system we mean the aggregate of all the institutions which a people, supposing them to be virtuous and well informed, and meeting together free from all prejudices, to organize themselves into a political community, and capable of foreseeing consequences, would reject as not tending to the greatest happiness of the greatest number."

Who is 'supposing'? 'meeting'? 'tending'? who is 'capable'?

ARTICLE II. PRECISION.

67. **Precision** in sentences requires that we strike out all words and phrases which do not contribute to the clearness, the strength, or the beauty of the sentence. It is, as Blair remarks, the proper opposite to a loose style, which, he says, generally arises from using a superfluity of words.

68. **Avoid in particular:** 1. *Useless relative pronouns:* "The queen, who by this time had entered the hall, proceeded to seat herself upon a throne, which had been prepared for the occasion," may be shortened to "The queen now entered the hall, and seated herself on a throne prepared for the occasion."

69. 2. *Lengthy verbal forms:* "The soldiers of Hannibal, having been enervated by their luxurious winter-quarters in Capua, were no longer able to cope with the Romans." 'Having been' is superfluous.

70. 3. **Tautology**, or the useless repetition of an idea in different terms. A common form of this fault is the coupling of synonyms; as, 'They mutually disliked one another.' 'The Romans sustained a terrible and fearful de-

feat at Cannæ.' 'The consul Paulus Æmilius had fought bravely and courageously.' 'Plain and evident,' 'clear and obvious,' 'joy and satisfaction,' etc.

Another form of tautology consists in repeating a thought in different words for the mere sake of sound; as, "It is impossible for us to behold the divine works with coldness or indifference, or to survey so many beauties without a secret satisfaction and complacency."—*Addison*.

71. Precision is necessary in all kinds of composition; the opposite quality of style, **prolixity**, is always a fault, whether it results from the use of superfluous words or the statement of superfluous details. But precision should not be confounded with **conciseness**, or great brevity of detail and expression. Conciseness is appropriate in certain species of writing, but not in others; its opposite is diffuseness or copiousness of style, which is often a source of great beauty.

72. **Example.**—*Concise:*

"Great actions and striking occurrences, having excited a temporary admiration, often pass away and are forgotten, because they leave no lasting results affecting the prosperity of communities."
—*Webster*.

Copious:

"Of the ten thousand battles which have been fought; of all the fields fertilized with carnage; of the banners which have been bathed in blood; of the warriors who had hoped that they had risen from the field of conquest to a glory as bright and as durable as the stars, how few that continue long to interest mankind! The victory of yesterday is reversed by the defeat of to-day; the star of military glory, rising like a meteor, like a meteor has fallen; disgrace and disaster hang on the heels of conquest and renown; victor and vanquished presently pass away to oblivion, and the world holds on its course with the loss only of so many lives and so much treasure."—*Id.*

ARTICLE III. UNITY.

73. A sentence has **unity** if it presents to the mind a single thought with or without attendant circumstances; as, 'God alone is great.' 'Why do little children remind us of angels but on account of their innocence?'

"Hail, mildly pleasing solitude,
Companion of the wise and good,
But from whose holy, piercing eye
The herd of fools and villains fly."--*Thomson.*

In the last sentence the main thought expressed is a greeting to solitude; and the reason of this greeting is added—namely, the fact that solitude is the companion of the wise and good on the one hand, and the dread of fools and villains on the other. A sentence may thus run through many lines and be clearly the development of a single thought. And, on the other hand, even a short sentence may be wanting in unity by containing two or more thoughts not properly united: as "Washington is the father of his country, and the story of the hatchet is a mere invention."

74. **Rules:** 1. Do not unite in one sentence things which do not combine to present *one main thought*.

2. Avoid *parentheses*, unless they be short and have evidently a happy effect.

3. When the sense is complete and the ear expects a full stop, do not append a remark by way of *a tail to the sentence*. Do not write: "May is the month in which nature appears most enjoyable, on a fine day at least."

4. As the *subject* is the ruling word in a sentence, it should be changed as little as possible. Do not write: "After *we* came to anchor, *they* put me on shore, where *I* was welcomed by all my friends, *who* received me with the greatest kindness." But rather write: "Having come to

anchor, I was put on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends and received with the greatest kindness."

ARTICLE IV. STRENGTH.

75. **Strength** is that quality which gives to a sentence its due weight and force. When the rules regarding clearness, precision, and unity are well observed, a certain strength of expression will result. How this strength may be further promoted is the question to be now considered.

76. **Rule 1.**—Conceive a **strong conviction** of the truth and the real importance of all you write. For as water cannot flow higher than its source, so the expression of thought will not be either clearer or stronger than is the conception of it in the mind. To attain to the firm conviction here spoken of, be ever thoroughly honest with yourself and with your readers; do not advocate what you do not sincerely believe; do not pretend to understand fully what you see only in part; do not urge as necessary what is only advisable; put forth your firm convictions with becoming firmness, and your probable speculations with modest reserve. This earnestness of mind is the fundamental rule for strength of style; without it no other rules will be of great utility.

77. **Rule 2.**—Keep ever before your mind the **purpose** for which you write, and direct all your efforts to its attainment. If your object is to instruct your readers on any point, stick to that point, and study how you can make it clear to them; choose your words, your arrangement, your figures with a view to promote this instruction. If your object is to move your hearers, aim in everything at the exciting of the proper passions. If your object is to please, use freely all the ornaments of style which the subject admits; but remember that good sense is indispensa-

ble. Language, no matter how musical, is worthless if sound sense does not pervade it.

78. *Rule 3.*—Place **the important words** where they will make the most marked impression. The beginning and the end of a sentence, and of any considerable portion of it, are places favorable to emphasis; unusualness of position makes a word most emphatic. Edward Everett tastefully writes:

“On this frozen soil—driven from the ivy-clad churches of their motherland, escaped at last from loathsome prisons—the meek fathers . . . will lay the spiritual basement of their temple.”

The natural order would be:

“The meek fathers, . . . driven from the ivy-clad churches of their motherland, escaped at last from loathsome prisons, will lay the spiritual basement of their temple on this frozen soil.”

79. The Latin and Greek writers were enabled by the genius of their languages to make extensive use of such **inversions**, and thus to write with uncommon beauty and power. Many earlier English writers imitated their constructions, but gradually this practice has been abandoned as not suited to our idiom and to our turn of thought. Still, within certain limits, inversions may be used to great advantage. Even so easy a writer as Longfellow has frequent recourse to them with very pleasing effect. He says:

“Throughout this beautiful and wonderful creation there is never-ceasing motion, without rest by night or day, ever waving to and fro. Swifter than a weaver’s shuttle it flies from birth to death, from death to birth. . . . Of all these forms the highest and most perfect in its God-likeness is the human soul. . . . Into this vast cathedral comes the human soul seeking its Creator. . . . But in the soul of man alone is this longing changed to certainty and fulfilled. . . . Thus is the glory of God made visible. . . . Thus then stands man—a

mountain on the boundary between two worlds—its foot in one, its summit far-rising into the other,” etc.

80. *Rule 4.*—More necessary still than the preceding rule is that which directs us to **simplify our thoughts**, to rid them of all useless details, and then propose them one by one without intricacy or confusion.

81. *Rule 5.*—Let there be **no falling off** in sense or sound towards the end of the sentence. For this reason—

(a) A *stronger assertion* or a nobler thought should never be followed by a weaker member of the sentence; and of two members the longer should come last. Longfellow writes: “It has become a common saying that men of genius are always in advance of their age; which is true.” Speaking generally, the following construction will be better: “It has become a common saying, and it is true, that men of genius are always in advance of their age.”

(b) Get rid of *less important details* and circumstances in a sentence as soon as possible.

(c) Avoid *concluding* it with an insignificant word. Do not say, “It is a mystery which we firmly believe the truth of and humbly adore the depth of”; but rather, “It is a mystery the truth of which we firmly believe, and the depth of which we humbly adore.”

82. *Rule 6.*—When there is a **correspondence or an opposition** in meaning between two sentences or two members, this fact will be brought out more strikingly by a similarity in the construction. Thus Giles, in his “Essay on True Manhood,” contrasts the characters of Lord Bacon and of More, the martyr-chancellor of Henry VIII.:

“More was incorruptible; Bacon was venal. Both More and Bacon served each a great purpose for the world. More illustrated the beauty of holiness; Bacon expounded the infinitude of science. Bacon became the prophet of intellect; More the martyr of con-