The following paragraph contains heterogeneous matter, and is therefore not a unit:—

"Soon her absorbing desire was to be altogether shut up with Mary, except on Sundays and at practising times. For this purpose she gave herself the worst cold she could achieve, and cherished diligently what she proudly considered to be a racking cough. But Miss Frederick was deaf to the latter, and only threatened the usual upstairs seclusion and senna-tea for the former, whereupon Marcella in alarm declared that her cold was much better and gave up the cough in despair. It was her first sorrow and cost her some days of pale brooding and silence, and some nights of stifled tears, when during an Easter holiday a letter from Miss Frederick to her mother announced the sudden death of Mary Lant." [1]

The first three sentences, which deal with incidents connected with Marcella's devotion to Mary Lant during her lifetime, belong in one paragraph; the last sentence, which speaks of Marcella's sorrow at Mary's death, belongs in another. The reader's difficulty in getting at the meaning is increased by the fact that "it" at the beginning of the last sentence at first sight seems to refer to what precedes, but really refers to what follows.

It is sometimes impracticable to give to a paragraph clearness, force, and ease in an equally high degree; for, as the relative importance of these qualities varies with subject-matter and purpose, it may be difficult in a given case to secure in full measure the quality most needed without sacrificing something from one or both of the others. Unity, on the other hand, is essential to the excellence of every paragraph, whatever the subject-matter or purpose; without it a collection of sentences may be a paragraph in form, but it cannot be one in substance.

[1] Mrs. Humphry Ward: Marcella, book i. chap. i.

SECTION VII.

WHOLE COMPOSITIONS.

The general principles on which WHOLE COMPOSITIONS should be framed are the same for a paper of two or three pages as for a book of several volumes.

To secure clearness and force in a composition as a whole, it is necessary not only to make each paragraph clear and forcible, but also to arrange all the paragraphs in a clear and effective order,—the order that accords with the sequence of thought and that holds the reader's interest from beginning to end. If this order is followed, each paragraph will be in the place where it belongs, the only place in which it can stand without injury to the total impression.

Clearness and force.

To secure ease in a composition as a whole, it is necessary not only to give ease to each paragraph, but also to make the transition from paragraph to paragraph without jar. Too much attention can hardly be paid to the manner of getting from one paragraph to another. A master of the art of transition begins and ends each paragraph so as to make it grow out of the last and into the next; he moves so easily and naturally that the reader follows without being aware of the steps he is taking.

Ease.

To secure unity in a composition as a whole, it is necessary not only to make each paragraph a unit, but also to make all the paragraphs together constitute a whole, as all the sentences in each paragraph constitute a smaller whole.

Unity.

"Every man, as he walks through the streets," says De Quincey, "may contrive to jot down an independent thought, a shorthand

memorandum of a great truth. . . . Standing on one leg you may accomplish this. The labour of composition begins when you have to put your separate threads of thought into a loom; to weave them into a continuous whole; to connect, to introduce them; to blow them out or expand them; to carry them to a close."[1]

A good writer sees his subject as a whole and treats it as a whole. However abundant his material (and the more of it he has the better), he presents it as a unit. Sometimes he effects this by giving prominence to one idea, and grouping other ideas about that in subordinate positions, — digressions, if made at all, being distinctly marked as digressions. Always he observes the laws of proportion, and thus gives to each part the space it should occupy relatively to every other part and to the whole.

"True proportion in a building," writes Mr. Palgrave, "answers to the general scheme or plot of a poem (as exemplified especially in narrative or dramatic works), and, further, to the sense of unity which all good art conveys; whilst the ornamental details in each should always be felt by eye and mind to bud and flower out, as if by necessity, from the main object of the design."[2]

Unity means one thing in one kind of composition, another in another; but every piece of writing which purports to be complete in itself should, whatever its length, its subject-matter, or its purpose, be a whole. Essays like those of Montaigne, in which no pretence of composition is made, the writer rambling on as he would do in familiar conversation or in family letters, are the only writings which do not require unity, or rather which

[1] De Quincey: Essay on Style. Examples both of the evil effects of shirking the "labour of composition," and also of the excellent effects of performing that labor, are to be found in De Quincey's own writings.

[2] F. T. Palgrave: Poetry compared with the other Fine Arts. The National Review, July, 1886, p. 635.

require no unity except that created by the personality of the writer. It is the personality of the writer that binds together Emerson's least consecutive pages. This kind of unity we should not expect to find in the great majority of compositions. What we have a right to look for in them is unity in the conception of the subject and in its treatment: unity of thought and unity of expression.

"Composition," says Ruskin, "means, literally and simply, putting several things together, so as to make *one* thing out of them; the nature and goodness of which they all have a share in producing. Thus a musician composes an air, by putting notes together in certain relations; a poet composes a poem, by putting thoughts and words in pleasant order; and a painter a picture, by putting thoughts, forms, and colours in pleasant order.

"In all these cases, observe, an intended unity must be the result of composition. A paviour cannot be said to compose the heap of stones which he empties from his cart, nor the sower the handful of seed which he scatters from his hand. It is the essence of composition that everything should be in a determined place, perform an intended part, and act, in that part, advantageously for everything that is connected with it."[1]

What unity is not, every teacher of composition knows by sad experience. Every teacher has had papers pass through his hands not unlike the following composition, which purports to be written by young Mr. Brown and is printed by Cardinal Newman as a typical example of writing only too common in schools and colleges: —

"'FORTES FORTUNA ADJUVAT.'

"'Of all the uncertain and capricious powers which rule our earthly destiny, fortune is the chief. Who has not heard of the poor being raised up, and the rich being laid low? Alexander the Great said he envied Diogenes in his tub, because Diogenes could have nothing less. We need not go far for an instance of fortune.

[1] Ruskin: The Elements of Drawing, letter iii.

Who was so great as Nicholas, the Czar of all the Russias, a year ago, and now he is "fallen, fallen from his high estate, without a friend to grace his obsequies."[1] The Turks are the finest specimen of the human race, yet they, too, have experienced the vicissitudes of fortune. Horace says that we should wrap ourselves in our virtue, when fortune changes. Napoleon, too, shows us how little we can rely on fortune; but his faults, great as they were, are being redeemed by his nephew, Louis Napoleon, who has shown himself very different from what we expected, though he has never explained how he came to swear to the Constitution, and then mounted the imperial throne.

"'From all this it appears, that we should rely on fortune only while it remains, — recollecting the words of the thesis, "Fortes fortuna adjuvat;" and that, above all, we should ever cultivate those virtues which will never fail us, and which are a sure basis of respectability, and will profit us here and hereafter.'

"Mr. Black, to whom the boy's admiring father submits the composition for criticism, comments upon it as follows: —

"'There 's not one word of it upon the thesis; but all boys write in this way. . . .

"'Now look here,' he says, 'the subject is "Fortes fortuna adjuvat;" now this is a *proposition;* it states a certain general principle, and this is just what an ordinary boy would be sure to miss, and Robert does miss it. He goes off at once on the word "fortuna." "Fortuna" was not his subject; the thesis was intended to *guide* him, for his own good; he refuses to be put into leading-strings; he breaks loose, and runs off in his own fashion on the broad field and in wild chase of "fortune," instead of closing with the subject, which, as being definite, would have supported him.

"'It would have been very cruel to have told a boy to write on "fortune;" it would have been like asking him his opinion of "things in general." Fortune is "good," "bad," "capricious," "unexpected," ten thousand things all at once (you see them all in the Gradus), and one of them as much as the other. Ten thousand things may be said of it: give me *one* of them, and I will write upon it; I cannot write on more than one; Robert prefers to write upon all. . . .

[1] "Here again Mr. Brown prophesies. He wrote in June, 1854."

"'They [boys] do not rouse up their attention and reflect: they do not like the trouble of it: they cannot look at any thing steadily; and, when they attempt to write, off they go in a rigmarole of words, which does them no good, and never would, though they scribbled themes till they wrote their fingers off. . . .

"'Now, I know how this Theme was written,' he says, 'first one sentence, and then your boy sat thinking, and devouring the end of his pen; presently down went the second, and so on. The rule is, first think, and then write: don't write when you have nothing to say; or, if you do, you will make a mess of it. A thoughtful youth may deliver himself clumsily, he may set down little; but depend upon it, his half sentences will be worth more than the folio sheet of another boy, and an experienced examiner will see it. . . .

"'Now, I will prophesy one thing of Robert, unless this fault is knocked out of him,' continues merciless Mr. Black. 'When he grows up, and has to make a speech, or write a letter for the papers, he will look out for flowers, full-blown flowers, figures, smart expressions, trite quotations, hackneyed beginnings and endings, pompous circumlocutions, and so on: but the meaning, the sense, the solid sense, the foundation, you may hunt the slipper long enough before you catch it.'"[1]

Cardinal Newman's method of securing unity holds for us all. We should "first think, and then write:" think till we have thoroughly assimilated our materials and have determined what we would say, and then write as rapidly as possible, with minds not occupied with choice of word or turn of phrase but intent on the subject. After the first draught has been made, we may at leisure attend to matters of detail, criticise from various points of view, curtail here, amplify there, until each part has its due proportion of space and effectiveness; but unless we have a conception of the whole before beginning to write, and unless we write with an eye to that whole, there is little likelihood that our work will be a unit.

[1] Cardinal Newman: The Idea of a University; University Subjects, Elementary Studies.

The principle that underlies all rhetorical rules is (as has been hinted more than once in the foregoing pages) the principle of all art, — the principle of unity in design conjoined with manifold variety in expression.

Unity with variety.

"A great author," says Cardinal Newman, "is not one who merely has a *copia verborum*, whether in prose or verse, and can, as it were, turn on at his will any number of splendid phrases and swelling sentences; but he is one who has something to say and knows how to say it. . . .

"He writes passionately, because he feels keenly; forcibly, because he conceives vividly; he sees too clearly to be vague; he is too serious to be otiose; he can analyze his subject, and therefore he is rich; he embraces it as a whole and in its parts, and therefore he is consistent; he has a firm hold of it, and therefore he is luminous.[1] When his imagination wells up, it overflows in ornament; when his heart is touched, it thrills along his verse. He always has the right word for the right idea, and never a word too much. If he is brief, it is because few words suffice; when he is lavish of them, still each word has its mark, and aids, not embarrasses, the vigorous march of his elocution."[2]

Not that a writer should expect to be the "perfectly-endowed man" of whom Mr. Herbert Spencer[3] dreams. "To have a specific style," says Mr. Spencer, "is to be poor in speech;" but to have in no sense and in no degree "a specific style" is to be "faultily faultless," to be devoid of that individuality which is at once the spring and the charm of genius. Emerson teaches a sounder doctrine in giving the "essential caution to young writers, that they shall not in their discourse leave out the one thing which

[1] Another instance of several short sentences united in one. See page 212.

[2] Cardinal Newman: The Idea of a University; University Subjects, Literature.

[3] The Philosophy of Style.

the discourse was written to say," but shall each "obey" his "native bias." "To each his own method, style, wit, eloquence."[1]

. . . "in each rank of fruits, as in each rank of masters, one is endowed with one virtue, and another with another; their glory is their dissimilarity, and they who propose to themselves in the training of an artist that he should unite the colouring of Tintoret, the finish of Albert Dürer, and the tenderness of Correggio, are no wiser than a horticulturist would be, who made it the object of his labour to produce a fruit which should unite in itself the lusciousness of the grape, the crispness of the nut, and the fragrance of the pine."[2]

If Thackeray had published his "Roundabout Papers" a little later, he might be supposed to have had Mr. Spencer's "perfectly-endowed man" in mind while writing the following paragraph: —

"And this, I must tell you, was to have been a rare Roundabout performance — one of the very best that has ever appeared in this series. It was to have contained all the deep pathos of Addison; the logical precision of Rabelais; the childlike playfulness of Swift; the manly stoicism of Sterne; the metaphysical depth of Goldsmith; the blushing modesty of Fielding; the epigrammatic terseness of Walter Scott; the uproarious humour of Sam Richardson; and the gay simplicity of Sam Johnson; — it was to have combined all these qualities, with some excellences of modern writers whom I could name: but circumstances have occurred which have rendered this Roundabout Essay also impossible."[3]

If Shakspere approaches Mr. Spencer's ideal, it is because he speaks through many voices; but even Shakspere, when he ceases to be Iago or Juliet, shows traces of "a specific style."

[1] Emerson: Letters and Social Aims; Greatness.

[2] Ruskin: Modern Painters, vol. iii. part iv. chap. iii.

[3] Thackeray: Roundabout Papers; On Two Roundabout Papers which I intended to Write.

The unity which every young writer should seek is not the unity of perfection, but the unity which comes from the conception of a discourse as a whole, and from the harmonious arrangement of the parts in conformity with that conception. Every composition that he writes should be "a body, not a mere collection of members,"[1] — a living body. Its life must come partly from the writer's natural qualities, and partly from his acquired resources whether of matter or of language. Familiarity with good authors will stimulate his powers of expression, and constant practice under judicious criticism will train them.

A writer should interest his readers.

Whatever a writer's materials, whatever his gifts, he must, if he hopes to be read, awaken interest at the beginning and hold it to the end. Unless he succeeds in doing this, his work, whatever its merits in other respects, fails, — as a picture fails which nobody cares to look at, or a sonata which nobody cares to hear. A student of composition can receive no higher praise from his teacher than this: "I enjoyed reading your essay."

[1] Non solum composita oratio, sed etiam continua. — Quintilian: Inst. Orator. vii. x. xvii.

PART II.

KINDS OF COMPOSITION.

FOUR KINDS DISCRIMINATED.

THUS far we have discussed the general principles that apply in varying degrees to all kinds of composition: we have now to consider the special principles that apply to each kind.

The four kinds of composition that seem to require separate treatment are: DESCRIPTION, which deals with persons or things; NARRATION, which deals with acts or events; EXPOSITION, which deals with whatever admits of analysis or requires explanation; ARGUMENT, which deals with any material that may be used to convince the understanding or to affect the will. The purpose of description is to bring before the mind of the reader persons or things as they appear to the writer. The purpose of narration is to tell a story. The purpose of exposition is to make the matter in hand more definite. The purpose of argument is to influence opinion or action, or both.

In theory these kinds of composition are distinct, but in practice two or more of them are usually combined. Description readily runs into narration, and narration