

out into friendship and benevolence towards the person who has so kindly an effect upon it.

“When I consider this cheerful state of mind in its third relation, I cannot but look upon it as a constant habitual gratitude to the great Author of nature. An inward cheerfulness is an implicit praise and thanksgiving to Providence under all its dispensations. It is a kind of acquiescence in the state wherein we are placed, and a secret approbation of the divine will in his conduct towards man.”¹

Another example of methodical arrangement in exposition is taken from an author who has done much to popularize Darwinism:—

THE THEORY OF NATURAL SELECTION.

“The theory of natural selection rests on two main classes of facts which apply to all organised beings without exception, and which thus take rank as fundamental principles or laws. The first is, the power of rapid multiplication in a geometrical progression; the second, that the offspring always vary slightly from the parents, though generally very closely resembling them. From the first fact or law there follows, necessarily, a constant struggle for existence; because, while the offspring always exceed the parents in number, generally to an enormous extent, yet the total number of living organisms in the world does not, and cannot, increase year by year. Consequently every year, on the average, as many die as are born, plants as well as animals; and the majority die premature deaths. They kill each other in a thousand different ways; they starve each other by some consuming the food that others want; they are destroyed largely by the powers of nature — by cold and heat, by rain and storm, by flood and fire. There is thus a perpetual struggle among them which shall live and which shall die; and this struggle is tremendously severe, because so few can possibly remain alive — one in five, one in ten, often only one in a hundred or even one in a thousand.

“Then comes the question, Why do some live rather than others? If all the individuals of each species were exactly alike in every respect, we could only say it is a matter of chance. But they are not

¹ The Spectator, No. 381.

alike. We find that they vary in many different ways. Some are stronger, some swifter, some hardier in constitution, some more cunning. An obscure colour may render concealment more easy for some, keener sight may enable others to discover prey or escape from an enemy better than their fellows. Among plants the smallest differences may be useful or the reverse. The earliest and strongest shoots may escape the slug; their greater vigour may enable them to flower and seed earlier in a wet autumn; plants best armed with spines or hairs may escape being devoured; those whose flowers are most conspicuous may be soonest fertilised by insects. We cannot doubt that, on the whole, any beneficial variations will give the possessors of it [*sic*] a greater probability of living through the tremendous ordeal they have to undergo. There may be something left to chance, but on the whole *the fittest will survive*.

“Then we have another important fact to consider, the principle of heredity or transmission of variations. If we grow plants from seed or breed any kind of animals year after year, consuming or giving away all the increase we do not wish to keep just as they come to hand, our plants or animals will continue much the same; but if every year we carefully save the best seed to sow and the finest or brightest coloured animals to breed from, we shall soon find that an improvement will take place, and that the average quality of our stock will be raised. This is the way in which all our fine garden fruits and vegetables and flowers have been produced, as well as all our splendid breeds of domestic animals; and they have thus become in many cases so different from the wild races from which they originally sprang as to be hardly recognisable as the same. It is therefore proved that if any particular kind of variation is preserved and bred from, the variation itself goes on increasing in amount to an enormous extent; and the bearing of this on the question of the origin of species is most important. For if in each generation of a given animal or plant the fittest survive to continue the breed, then whatever may be the special peculiarity that causes ‘fitness’ in the particular case, that peculiarity will go on increasing and strengthening *so long as it is useful to the species*. But the moment it has reached its maximum of usefulness, and some other quality or modification would help in the struggle, then the individuals which vary in the new direction will survive;

and thus a species may be gradually modified, first in one direction, then in another, till it differs from the original parent form as much as the greyhound differs from any wild dog or the cauliflower from any wild plant. But animals or plants which thus differ in a state of nature are always classed as distinct species, and thus we see how, by the continuous survival of the fittest or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life, new species may be originated."¹

In exposition, as in other kinds of composition, clearness is not an absolute term. An exposition of a recent discovery in science that would be readily understood by a specialist might be unintelligible to the ordinary reader. An exposition of theological doctrine that would be perfectly clear to a convocation of ecclesiastical dignitaries might be far from clear to an ordinary congregation. An exposition of the facts and principles in a suit at law that would be clear to a judge might not be clear to a jury. An exposition that would be clear to one jury might not be clear to another; and if, as usually happens, some members of a jury should have more knowledge or more intelligence than others, the lawyers would have to adjust their remarks to the needs of the ignorant or the unintelligent. In every case, an exposition should be adapted to the probable hearer or reader. In exposition, indeed, more than in any other kind of composition, clearness is a relative quality.² From description or narration a reader may get something, even though he does not fully understand what is meant; but an exposition that is but half understood by those to whom it is addressed fails of its purpose.

¹ Alfred Russel Wallace: *Darwinism, an Exposition of the Theory of Natural Selection*, chap. i.

² See pages 90-92.

Closely allied to clearness in exposition, and perhaps more difficult of attainment, is unity. Dr. Phelps once asked an association of clergymen what was their chief difficulty in expository preaching. ^{Unity an ally of clearness.} The almost unanimous answer was, "The want of unity." "For this reason," says Dr. Phelps, "they could not interest in that kind of preaching either their hearers or themselves. The problem is how to interweave the textual materials into one fabric. The sermon is apt to be a string of beads with nothing but the string to make them one."¹ Preachers are not the only expositors whose work suffers from the fact that as a whole it conveys an obscure or a confused impression, and this though each part may be clear in itself. To obviate this difficulty the subject of discourse should be kept constantly in view, irrelevant matter should be excluded, and the laws of proportion should be duly observed.² These principles are exemplified in the following passage:—

THE GRAND STYLE IN POETRY.

"For those, then, who ask the question, — What is the grand style? — with sincerity, I will try to make some answer, inadequate as it must be. For those who ask it mockingly I have no answer, except to repeat to them, with compassionate sorrow, the Gospel words: *Moriemini in peccatis vestris*, — Ye shall die in your sins.

"But let me, at any rate, have the pleasure of again giving, before I begin to try and define the grand style, a specimen of what it is.

'Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,
More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged
To hoarse or mute, though fall'n on evil days,
On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues' . . .

¹ Austin Phelps: *The Theory of Preaching*, lect. xiii.

² See pages 239-243.

There is the grand style in perfection; and any one who has a sense for it, will feel it a thousand times better from repeating those lines than from hearing anything I can say about it.

“Let us try, however, what *can* be said, controlling what we say by examples. I think it will be found that the grand style arises in poetry, *when a noble nature, poetically gifted, treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject.* I think this definition will be found to cover all instances of the grand style in poetry which present themselves. I think it will be found to exclude all poetry which is not in the grand style. And I think it contains no terms which are obscure, which themselves need defining. Even those who do not understand what is meant by calling poetry noble, will understand, I imagine, what is meant by speaking of a noble nature in a man. But the noble or powerful nature — the *bedeutendes Individuum* of Goethe — is not enough. For instance, Mr. Newman¹ has zeal for learning, zeal for thinking, zeal for liberty, and all these things are noble, they ennoble a man; but he has not the poetical gift: there must be the poetical gift, the ‘divine faculty,’ also. And, besides all this, the subject must be a serious one (for it is only by a kind of license that we can speak of the grand style in comedy); and it must be treated *with simplicity or severity.* Here is the great difficulty: the poets of the world have been many; there has been wanting neither abundance of poetical gift nor abundance of noble natures; but a poetical gift so happy, in a noble nature so circumstanced and trained, that the result is a continuous style, perfect in simplicity or perfect in severity, has been extremely rare. One poet has had the gifts of nature and faculty in unequalled fulness, without the circumstances and training which make this sustained perfection of style possible. Of other poets, some have caught this perfect strain now and then, in short pieces or single lines, but have not been able to maintain it through considerable works; others have composed all their productions in a style which, by comparison with the best, one must call secondary.

“The best model of the grand style simple is Homer; perhaps the best model of the grand style severe is Milton. But Dante is remarkable for affording admirable examples of both styles; he has the grand style which arises from simplicity, and he has the grand

¹ Mr. Francis William Newman, a translator of “The Iliad.”

style which arises from severity; and from him I will illustrate them both. In a former lecture I pointed out what that severity of poetical style is, which comes from saying a thing with a kind of intense compression, or in an allusive, brief, almost haughty way, as if the poet's mind were charged with so many and such grave matters, that he would not deign to treat any one of them explicitly. Of this severity the last line of the following stanza of the Purgatory is a good example. Dante has been telling Forese that Virgil had guided him through Hell, and he goes on:

‘Indi m’han tratto su gli suoi conforti,
Salendo e rigirando la Montagna
Che drizza voi che il mondo fece torti.’¹

‘Thence hath his comforting aid led me up, climbing and circling the Mountain *which straightens you whom the world made crooked.*’ These last words, ‘la Montagna *che drizza voi che il mondo fece torti,*’ — ‘the Mountain *which straightens you whom the world made crooked,*’ — for the Mountain of Purgatory, I call an excellent specimen of the grand style in severity, where the poet's mind is too full charged to suffer him to speak more explicitly. But the very next stanza is a beautiful specimen of the grand style in simplicity, where a noble nature and a poetical gift unite to utter a thing with the most limp plainness and clearness:

‘Tanto dice di farmi sua compagna
Ch’io sarò là dove fia Beatrice;
Quivi convien che senza lui rimagna.’²

‘So long,’ Dante continues, ‘so long he (Virgil) saith he will bear me company, until I shall be there where Beatrice is; there it behoves that without him I remain.’ But the noble simplicity of that in the Italian no words of mine can render.

“Both these styles, the simple and the severe, are truly grand; the severe seems, perhaps, the grandest, so long as we attend most to the great personality, to the noble nature, in the poet its author; the simple seems the grandest when we attend most to the exquisite faculty, to the poetical gift. But the simple is no doubt to be preferred. It is the more *magical*: in the other there is something intellectual, something which gives scope for a play of thought

¹ Dante: Il Purgatorio, xxiii. 124.

² Ibid., xxiii. 127.

which may exist where the poetical gift is either wanting or present in only inferior degree: the severe is much more imitable, and this a little spoils its charm. A kind of semblance of this style keeps Young going, one may say, through all the nine parts of that most indifferent production, the *Night Thoughts*. But the grand style in simplicity is inimitable."¹

A striking example of exposition without unity is given by Dr. Phelps:—

"A Presbyterian clergyman in a Southern city once preached a sermon on these words, 'It containeth much.' The text was a fragment broken from a verse in the Book of Ezekiel, 'Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup: . . . it containeth much.' The passage is a comminatory one addressed to the ancient people of God. The preacher, probably in that vacuity of thought which is apt to dilute the beginnings of sermons, pounced upon the word 'it,' which had the distinction of heading the text. He remarked, that, as the context indicated, 'the word had for its antecedent the word "cup." "Thy sister's cup: it containeth much:" thou shalt drink of it; of thy sister's cup shalt thou drink; it containeth much: a full cup, brethren, it containeth much: yes, thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup; it containeth much,—these are the words of our text.'

"I give you in the rough my impressions of the sermon after thirty years, not claiming verbal accuracy. The impression of the exposition, however, which has remained in my mind, justifies this inane mouthing of the text as the preliminary to the following exposition. The exegesis of the word 'cup' was the burden of it. I do not exaggerate in saying that he told us of the great variety of senses in which the word 'cup' is used in the Scriptures. A marvellous word is it. The Bible speaks of the 'cup of salvation,' and, again, of the 'cup of consolation;' then it is the 'cup of trembling,' and the 'wine-cup of fury.' Babylon is called a 'golden cup.' The cup of Joseph which was hidden in the sack of Benjamin was a 'silver cup.' The Pharisees, we are told, 'made clean the outside of the cup;' and, 'he shall not lose his reward who giveth a cup of

¹ Matthew Arnold: *Essays in Criticism*; On Translating Homer, Last Words.

cold water in the name of a disciple.' And therefore in the text we are told, 'Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup: it containeth much.' The preacher rambled on in this manner, with his finger on the right page of the concordance, till at last the sound of the word 'cup' was made familiar to the audience; and having accumulated, as I have in this paragraph, a respectable bulk of 'sounding brass,' the preacher announced as his subject of discourse the future punishment of the wicked."¹

Clearness and unity are essential to every exposition: clearness that lights up every part of the subject, unity that keeps the subject constantly in view. The principles that govern all good writing apply to exposition. These qualities are, however, not enough for exposition in its highest form. A writer who expects to interest his readers should comply with the principles that govern all good writing. He should avoid prolixity as well as excessive conciseness: while taking care not to leave a topic until he has made himself understood, he should not dwell on it after he has made himself understood. He should never explain that which does not need explanation. He should never move so slowly as to make his hearers or his readers impatient.

"'Mr. Jones,' said Chief Justice Marshall on one occasion, to an attorney who was rehearsing to the Court some elementary principle from Blackstone's Commentaries, 'there are some things which the Supreme Court of the United States may be presumed to know.' Many an audience would give the same reproof to some expository preachers, if they could. Their defenceless position should shield them from assumptions of their ignorance which they can not resent. Be generous, therefore, to the intelligence of your hearers. Assume sometimes that they know the Lord's Prayer. Do not quote the Ten Commandments as if they had been revealed to you, instead of to Moses. The Sermon on the Mount is a very ancient specimen of moral philosophy: do not cite it as if it were an

¹ Austin Phelps: *The Theory of Preaching*, lect. xiii.

enactment of the last Congress. The Parables are older than the 'Meditations' of Aurelius Antoninus: why, then, rehearse them as if from the proof-sheets of the first edition? In a word, why suffer the minds of your audience to be more nimble than your own, and to outrun you?

"It degrades exposition to putter over it in a pettifogging way, trusting nothing to the good sense of an audience, and assuming nothing as already known to them. On the text, 'I am the good shepherd,' said a preacher in the chapel of this Seminary, — and that after twenty years of experience in the pulpit, — 'a sheep, my brethren, is a very defenseless animal. A shepherd is one who takes care of sheep.' If a New England audience can not be supposed to know what a sheep is, what do they know?"¹

In exposition, as in other kinds of composition, a writer should stimulate interest by variety in expression. He may avail himself of every means by which he can explain or illustrate his thought, — comparison, contrast, antithesis, climax, epigram, figure of speech, — but he should never forget that these are means to the end of exposition and are useful so far and so far only as they conduce to that end.

Except in the most abstruse writing, exposition may be, and usually is, accompanied by passages of description or of narration that give life and variety to the composition and at the same time help to communicate the meaning intended. Exposition may prepare the way for a description or a narrative; it often serves to explain what the descriptive writer or the narrator is talking about; and it sometimes uses description or narration as a means to its own end.²

¹ Austin Phelps: *The Theory of Preaching*, lect. xiii.

² See the passage from Taine (pp. 305, 306), and that from Webster (pp. 308-310).

In the following passage, both description and narration are used in the service of exposition, the exposition of a woman's personality: —

"Mrs. Peacocke, in her line, succeeded almost as well [as her husband]. She was a woman something over thirty years of age when she first came to Bowick, in the very pride and bloom of woman's beauty. Her complexion was dark and brown, — so much so, that it was impossible to describe her colour generally by any other word. But no clearer skin was ever given to a woman. Her eyes were brown, and her eye-brows black, and perfectly regular. Her hair was dark and very glossy, and always dressed as simply as the nature of a woman's head will allow. Her features were regular, but with a great show of strength. She was tall for a woman, but without any of that look of length under which female altitude sometimes suffers. She was strong and well made, and apparently equal to any labour to which her position might subject her. When she had been at Bowick about three months, a boy's leg had been broken, and she had nursed him, not only with assiduity, but with great capacity. The boy was the youngest son of the Marchioness of Altamont; and when Lady Altamont paid a second visit to Bowick, for the sake of taking her boy home as soon as he was fit to be moved, her ladyship made a little mistake. With the sweetest and most caressing smile in the world, she offered Mrs. Peacocke a tenpound note. 'My dear madam,' said Mrs. Peacocke, without the slightest reserve or difficulty, 'it is so natural that you should do this, because you cannot of course understand my position; but it is altogether out of the question.' The Marchioness blushed, and stammered, and begged a hundred pardons. Being a good-natured woman, she told the whole story to Mrs. Wortle. 'I would just as soon have offered the money to the Marchioness herself,' said Mrs. Wortle, as she told it to her husband. 'I would have done it a deal sooner,' said the Doctor. 'I am not in the least afraid of Lady Altamont; but I stand in awful dread of Mrs. Peacocke.' Nevertheless Mrs. Peacocke had done her work by the little lord's bed-side, just as though she had been a paid nurse.

"And so she felt herself to be. Nor was she in the least ashamed of her position in that respect. If there was aught of

shame about her, as some people said, it certainly did not come from the fact that she was in receipt of a salary for the performance of certain prescribed duties. Such remuneration was, she thought, as honourable as the Doctor's income; but to her American intelligence, the acceptance of a present of money from a Marchioness would have been a degradation."¹

Among examples of successful exposition that are too long to quote are: the lecture on "Idealism and Naturalism," in Mr. Otto Pfeleiderer's "Philosophy and Development of Religion;" the chapter on "Intellectual Education," in Mr. Herbert Spencer's "Education;" the chapter on "Money," in Mill's "Principles of Political Economy;" the chapter on "Sweetness and Light," in Matthew Arnold's "Culture and Anarchy;" the report of the Committee on Secondary School Studies to the National Council of Education; Walter Bagehot's "English Constitution;" Mr. A. R. Wallace's "Darwinism."²

¹ Anthony Trollope: Dr. Wortle's School, part i. chap. ii.
² Other examples are given in "Specimens of Exposition," selected and edited by Hammond Lamont.

CHAPTER IV.

ARGUMENT.

ARGUMENT, like exposition, addresses the understanding; but there is an important difference between the two. Exposition achieves its purpose if it makes the persons addressed understand what is said; argument achieves its purpose if it makes them believe that what is maintained is true: exposition aims at explaining, argument at convincing. The difference between an argument and an exposition may be shown by a comparison between the address of an advocate to the jury and the charge of the judge. The advocate tries to convince the jury that his client has the right on his side; the judge, if he has the truly judicial spirit, tries to make the jury understand the question at issue exactly as it is.

The work of argument is sometimes done by exposition. Thus, Cardinal Newman¹ expounds the distinction between true and false education so skilfully that the reader draws for himself the conclusion suggested, but not proved, by the author; and Webster² points out so plainly the evils that would result from an attempt to nullify a law of the United States that the inference from what he says is unmistakable. Argument which thus takes the form of expo-

¹ See pages 312, 313.

² See pages 308-310.