APPENDIX:

CONTAINING RULES AND OBSERVATIONS FOR ASSISTING YOUNG PERSONS TO WRITE WITH PERSPICUITY AND ACCURACY. TO BE STUDIED AFTER THEY HAVE ACQUIRED A COMPETENT KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

See the third, *or any subsequent edition of the* Octavo Grammar.

PERSPICUITY

Is the fundamental quality of style: a quality so essential in every kind of writing, that for the want of it nothing can atone. It is not to be considered as merely a sort of negative virtue, or freedom from defect. It has higher merit: it is a degree of positive beauty. We are pleased with an author, and consider him as deserving praise, who frees us from all fatigue of searching for his meaning; who carries us through his subject without any embarrassment or confusion; whose style flows always like a limpid stream, through which we see to the very bottom.

The study of perspicuity and accuracy of expression consists of two parts: and requires attention, first, to *Single Words and Phrases;* and then, to the *Construction of Sentences.*

PART I.

Of Perspicuity *and* Accuracy *of* Expression, *with respect to single Words and Phrases.*

These qualities of style, considered with regard to words and phrases, require the following properties: purity, propriety, and precision.

CHAPTER I.

Of Purity.

Exercises, p. 169. Key, p. 141.

Purity of style consists in the use of such words, and such constructions, as belong to the idiom of the language which we

speak; in opposition to words and phrases that are taken from other languages, or that are ungrammatical, obsolete, new-coined, or used without proper authority. All such words and phrases as the following, should be avoided: *Quoth he; I wist not; erewhile; behest; selfsame; delicatesse*, for delicacy; *politesse*, for politeness; *hauteur*, for haughtiness; *incumberment, connexity, martyrised*, for encumbrance, connexion, martyred.

Foreign and learned words, unless where necessity requires them, should never be admitted into our composition. Barren languages may need such assistance, but ours is not one of these. A multitude of Latin words, in particular, have, of late, been poured in upon our language. On some occasions, they give an appearance of elevation and dignity to style; but they often render it stiff and apparently forced. In general, a plain, native style, is more intelligible to all readers; and, by a proper management of words, it can be made as strong and expressive as this Latinised English, or any foreign idioms.

CHAPTER II.

Of Propriety.

Exercises, p. 171. Key, p. 143.

Propriety of language is the selection of such words as the best usage has appropriated to those ideas, which we intend to express by them; in opposition to low expressions, and to words and phrases which would be less significant of the ideas that we mean to convey. Style may be pure, that is, it may be strictly English, without Scotticisms or Gallicisms, or ungrammatical, irregular expressions of any kind, and may, nevertheless, be deficient in propriety: for the words may be ill chosen, not adapted to the subject, nor fully expressive of the author's sense.

To preserve propriety, therefore, in our words and phrases, we must avoid *low expressions; supply words that are wanting;* be careful not to *use the same word in different senses;* avoid *the injudicious use of technical phrases, equivocal or*

ambiguous words, unintelligible expressions, and all such words and phrases as are not adapted to our meaning.

1. Avoid *low expressions:* such as, "Topsy turvy, hurly burly, pellmell; having a month's mind for a thing; currying favour with a person; dancing attendance on the great," &c.

"Meantime the Britons, left to shift for themselves, were forced to call in the Saxons for their defence." The phrase "*left to shift for themselves,*" is rather a low phrase, and too much in the familiar style to be proper in a grave treatise.

2. *Supply words that are wanting.* "Arbitrary power I look upon as a greater evil than anarchy itself, as much as a savage is a happier state of life than a slave at the oar:" it should have been, "as much as *the state* of a savage is happier than *that* of a slave at the oar." "He has not treated this subject liberally, by the views of others as well as his own;" "By *adverting* to the views of others," would have been better. "This generous action greatly increased his former services;" it should have been, "greatly increased *the merit* of his former services." "By the pleasures of the imagination or fancy (which I shall use promiscuously) I here mean," &c. This passage ought to have had the word "terms" supplied, which would have made it correct: "*terms* which I shall use promiscuously."

It may be proper in this place to observe, that articles and prepositions are sometimes improperly omitted; as in the following instances: "How immense the difference between the pious and profane!" "Death is the common lot of all; of good men and bad." They should have had the article and preposition repeated: "How immense the difference between *the* pious and *the* profane!" "Death is the common lot of all; *of* good men and *of* bad."

The repetition of articles and prepositions is proper, when we intend to point out the objects of which we speak, as distinguished from each other, or in contrast; and when we wish that the reader's attention should rest on that distinction: as, "Our sight is at once *the* most delightful, and *the* most useful of all our senses."

3. *In the same sentence, be careful not to use the same word too frequently, nor in different senses.* "One may have an air *which* proceeds from a just sufficiency and knowledge of the matter before him, *which* may naturally produce some motions of his head and body, *which* might become the bench better than the bar."

The pronoun *which* is here thrice used, in such a manner as to throw obscurity over the sentence.

"Gregory favoured the undertaking, for no other reason than this, that the manager, in countenance, favoured his friend." It should have been, "resembled his friend."

"Charity expands our hearts in love to God and man: it is by the virtue of charity that the rich are blessed, and the poor supplied." In this sentence, the word "charity" is improperly used in two different senses; for the highest benevolence, and for almsgiving.

4. *Avoid the injudicious use of technical terms.* To inform those who do not understand sea-phrases, that "We tacked to the larboard, and stood off to sea," would be expressing ourselves very obscurely. Technical phrases not being in current use, and only the peculiar dialect of a particular class, we should never use them but when we know they will be understood.

5. *Avoid equivocal or ambiguous words.* The following sentences are exceptionable in this respect. "As for such animals as are *mortal* or noxious, we have a right to destroy them." "I long since learned to like nothing but what you *do*." "He aimed at *nothing less* than the crown," may denote either, "Nothing was less aimed at by him than the crown," or "Nothing inferior to the crown could satisfy his ambition." "*I will have mercy*, and not sacrifice." The first part of this sentence denotes, "I will exercise mercy;" whereas it is in this place employed to signify, "I require others to exercise it." The translation should therefore have been accommodated to these different meanings. "They were both much more ancient among the Persians, than Zoroaster

or Zerdusht." The *or* in this sentence is equivocal. It serves either as a copulative to synonymous words, or as a disjunctive of different things. If, therefore, the student should not know that Zoroaster and Zerdusht mean the same person, he will mistake the sense. "The rising tomb a lofty column bore;" "And thus the son the fervent sire addrest." Did the tomb bear the column, or the column the tomb? Did the son address the sire, or the sire the son?

6. *Avoid unintelligible and inconsistent words or phrases.* "I have observed," says Steele, "that the superiority among these coffeehouse politicians, proceeds from an opinion of gallantry and fashion." This sentence, considered in itself, evidently conveys no meaning. First, it is not said whose opinion, their own, or that of others: Secondly, it is not said what opinion, or of what sort, favourable or unfavourable, true or false, but in general, "an opinion of gallantry and fashion," which contains no definite expression of any meaning. With the joint assistance of the context, reflexion, and conjecture, we shall perhaps conclude that the author intended to say; "That the superiority among these politicians was determined by the opinion generally entertained of the rank, in point of gallantry and fashion, that each of them had attained."

"This temper of mind," says an author, speaking of humility, "keeps our understanding tight about us." Whether the author had any meaning in this expression, or what it was, is not easy to determine.

Sometimes a writer runs on in a specious verbosity, amusing his reader with synonymous terms and identical propositions, well-turned periods, and high sounding words; but at the same time, using those words so indefinitely, that the reader can either affix no meaning at all to them, or may affix to them almost any meaning he pleases.

"If it is asked," says a late writer, "whence arises the harmony, or beauty of language? what are the rules for obtaining it? the answer is obvious. Whatever renders a period sweet and pleasant, makes it also graceful. A good

ear is the gift of nature; it may be much improved, but not acquired by art. Whoever is possessed of it, will scarcely need dry critical precepts to enable him to judge of a true rhythmus, and melody of composition. Just numbers, accurate proportions, a musical symphony, magnificent figures, and that decorum which is the result of all these, are unison to the human mind.

The following is a poetical example of the same nature, in which there is scarcely a glimpse of meaning, though it was composed by an eminent poet.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony,
Thro' all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.

In general, it may be said, that in writings of this stamp, we must accept of sound instead of sense; being assured, that if we meet with little that can inform the judgment, we shall at least find nothing that will offend the ear. And perhaps this is one reason that we pass over such smooth language, without suspecting that it contains little or no meaning. In order to write or speak clearly and intelligibly, two things are especially requisite: one, that we have clear and distinct ideas of our subject; and the other, that our words be approved signs of those ideas. That persons who think confusedly, should express themselves obscurely, is not to be wondered at; for embarrassed, obscure, and feeble sentences, are generally, if not always, the result of embarrassed, obscure, and feeble thought; but that persons of judgment, who are accustomed to scrutinize their ideas, and the signification of their words, should sometimes write without any meaning, is, at first sight, matter of admiration. This, however, when further considered, appears to be an effect derived from the same cause indistinctness of conception, and inattention to the exact import of words. The occasions on which we are most

apt to speak and write in this unintelligible manner, are the three following.

The *first* is, when there is an exuberance of metaphor. Writers who are fond of the metaphoric style, are generally disposed to continue it too long, and to pursue it too far. They are often misled by a desire of flourishing on the several properties of a metaphor, which they have ushered into the discourse, without taking the trouble to examine whether there are any qualities in the subject, to which these properties can, with justice and perspicuity, be applied. The following instance of this sort of writing, is from an author of considerable eminence. "Men must acquire a very peculiar and strong habit of turning their view inward, in order to explore the interior regions and recesses of the mind, the hollow caverns of deep thought, the private seats of fancy, and the wastes and wildernesses, as well as the more fruitful and cultivated tracts of this obscure climate." A most wonderful way of telling us, that it is difficult to trace the operations of the mind. The author, having determined to represent the human mind under the metaphor of a country, revolved in his thoughts the various objects which might be found in a country, without considering whether there are any things in the mind properly analagous to these. Hence the strange parade he makes with *regions* and *recesses*, *hollow caverns* and *private seats*, *wastes* and *wildernesses*, *fruitful* and *cultivated tracts;* words which, though they have a precise meaning, as applied to country, have no definite signification, as applied to mind.

The *second* occasion of our being apt to write unintelligibly, is that wherein the terms most frequently occurring denote things which are of a complicated nature; and to which the mind is not sufficiently familiarised. Of these the instances are numberless in every tongue; such as government, church, state, constitution, power, legislature, jurisdiction, &c.

The *third* and principal occasion of unintelligible writing, is, when the terms employed are very abstract, and consequently of very extensive signification. Thus the word

lion is more distinctly apprehended by the mind than the word *beast*, *beast* than *animal*, *animal* than *being*.

The 7th and last rule for preserving propriety in our words and phrases, is, *to avoid all those which are not adapted to the ideas we mean to communicate; or which are less significant than others, of those ideas*. "He feels any sorrow that can *arrive at* man;" better "*happen to* man." "The *conscience* of approving one's self a benefactor, is the best recompense for being so;" it should have been "*consciousness*." "He firmly believed the divine *precept*, 'There is not a sparrow falls to the ground,'" &c. It should have been "*doctrine*."

"It is but opening the eye, and the scene enters." A *scene* cannot be said *to enter:* an *actor* enters; but a scene *appears* or *presents itself*.

"We immediately assent to the beauty of an object, without inquiring into the causes of it:" it is proper to say, that we *assent* to the truth of a proposition, but it cannot so well be said, that we *assent to the beauty of an object*. *Acknowledge* would have expressed the sense with propriety.

"The sense of feeling, can, indeed, give us a notion of extension, shape, *and all other ideas* that enter at the eye, except colours." *Extension* and *shape* can, with no propriety, be called *ideas;* they are properties of matter. Neither is it accurate, to speak of any sense *giving us a notion of ideas:* our senses give us the ideas themselves. The meaning of the sentence would have been proper, and much clearer, if the author had expressed himself thus: "The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us the idea of extension, figure, and all the other properties of matter, which are perceived by the eye, except colours."

"The covetous man never has a sufficiency; although he has what is enough for nature," is much inferior to, "The covetous man never has *enough;* although he has what is *sufficient* for nature."

"A traveller observes the most striking objects he sees; a general remarks all the motions of his enemy;" better thus; "A traveller *remarks*," &c.; "A general *observes*." &c.

"This measure enlarged his school, and obliged him to increase the buildings;" it should be, "*increased* his school;" and "*enlarge* the buildings."

"He applied a medicine before the poison had time to work;" better thus: "He applied an *antidote*," &c.

"The poison of a suspicious temper frequently throws out its bad qualities, on all who are within its reach;" better "throws out its *malignant* qualities."

"I will go, except I should be ill;" "I saw them all unless two or three:" corrected thus: "*unless* I should be ill;" "*except* two or three."

A selection of words and phrases, which are peculiarly expressive of the ideas we design to communicate; or which are as particular and determinate in their signification, as is consistent with the nature and the scope of the discourse; possesses great beauty, and cannot fail to produce a good effect.

CHAPTER III.

Of PRECISION.

Exercises, p. 179. Key, p. 151.

PRECISION is the third requisite of perspicuity, with respect to words and phrases. It signifies retrenching superfluities, and pruning the expression, so as to exhibit neither more nor less than an exact copy of the person's idea who uses it.

The words used to express ideas may be faulty, in three respects. 1st, They may not express the idea which the author intends, but some other which only resembles it; secondly, They may express that idea, but not fully and completely; thirdly, They may express it, together with something more than is intended. Precision stands opposed to these three faults, but chiefly to the last. Propriety implies a freedom from the two former faults. The words which are used may be *proper;* that is, they may express the idea intended, and they may express it fully; but to be *precise*, signifies that they express *that idea and no more.*

The use and importance of precision may be deduced from the nature of the human mind. It never can view, clearly and distinctly, more than one object at a time. If it must look at two or three together, especially objects that have resemblance or connexion, it finds itself confused and embarrassed. It cannot clearly perceive in what they agree, and in what they differ. Thus, were any object, suppose some animal, to be presented to my view, of whose structure I wished to form a distinct notion, I should desire all its trappings to be taken off, I should require it to be brought before me by itself, and to stand alone, that there might be nothing to divide my attention. The same is the case with words. If, when any one would inform me of his meaning, he also tells me more than what conveys it; if he joins foreign circumstances to the principal objects; if, by unnecessarily varying the expression, he shifts the point of view, and makes me see sometimes the object itself, and sometimes another thing that is connected with it, he thereby obliges me to look on several objects at once, and I lose sight of the principal. He loads the animal he is showing me, with so many trappings and collars, that I cannot distinctly view it; or he brings so many of the same species before me, somewhat resembling, and yet somewhat differing, that I see none of them clearly. When an author tells me of his hero's courage in the day of battle, the expression is precise, and I understand it fully: but if, from the desire of multiplying words, he should praise his courage and fortitude; at the moment he joins these words together, my idea begins to waver. He means to express one quality more strongly, but he is in truth expressing two: courage resists danger; fortitude supports pain. The occasion of exerting each of these qualities is different; and being led to think of both together, when only one of them should be considered, my view is rendered unsteady, and my conception of the object indistinct.

All subjects do not equally require precision. It is sufficient, on many occasions, that we have a general view of the

meaning. The subject, perhaps, is of the known and familiar kind, and we are in no hazard of mistaking the sense of the author, though every word which he uses is not precise and exact.

Many authors offend against this rule of *precision*. A considerable one, in describing a bad action, expresses himself thus: "It is to remove a good and orderly affection, and to introduce an ill or disorderly one; to commit an action that is ill, immoral, and unjust; to do ill, or to act in prejudice of integrity, good nature, and worth."

A crowd of unmeaning or useless words is brought together by some authors, who, afraid of expressing themselves in a common and ordinary manner, and allured by an appearance of splendour, surround every thing which they mean to say with a certain copious loquacity.

The great source of a loose style in opposition to precision, is the injudicious use of the words termed *synonymous*. They are called synonymous, because they agree in expressing one principal idea; but, for the most part, if not always, they express it with some diversity in the circumstances.

The following instances show a difference in the meaning of words reputed synonymous, and point out the use of attending, with care and strictness, to the exact import of words.

Custom, habit.—Custom, respects the action; habit, the actor. By custom, we mean the frequent repetition of the same act: by habit, the effect which that repetition produces on the mind or body. By the custom of walking often in the streets, one acquires a habit of idleness.

Pride, vanity.—Pride makes us esteem ourselves; vanity, makes us desire the esteem of others. It is just to say, that a man is too proud to be vain.

Haughtiness, disdain.—Haughtiness is founded on the high opinion we entertain of ourselves; disdain, on the low opinion we have of others.

Only, alone.—Only, imports that there is no other of the same kind; alone, imports being accompanied by no other. An only child, is one that has neither brother nor sister. a child alone, is one who is left by itself. There is a difference,

therefore, in precise language, between these two phrases: "Virtue only makes us happy;" and "Virtue alone makes us happy."

Wisdom, prudence.—Wisdom leads us to speak and act what is most proper. Prudence prevents our speaking or acting improperly.

Entire, complete.—A thing is entire, by wanting none of its parts: complete, by wanting none of the appendages that belong to it. A man may have an entire house to himself, and yet not have one complete apartment.

Surprised, astonished, amazed, confounded.—I am surprised with what is new or unexpected; I am astonished at what is vast or great; I am amazed at what is incomprehensible; I am confounded by what is shocking or terrible.

Tranquillity, peace, calm.—Tranquillity respects a situation free from trouble, considered in itself; peace, the same situation with respect to any causes that might interrupt it; calm, with regard to a disturbed situation going before or following it. A good man enjoys tranquillity, in himself; peace, with others; and calm, after the storm.

These are some of the numerous instances of words, in our language, whose significations approach, but are not precisely the same. The more the distinction in the meaning of such words is attended to, the more clearly and forcibly shall we speak or write. It may not, on all occasions, be necessary to pay a great deal of attention to very nice distinctions; yet the foregoing instances show the utility of some general care to understand the distinct import of our words.

While we are attending to precision, we must be on our guard, lest, from the desire of pruning too closely, we retrench all copiousness. Scarcely in any language are there two words that convey precisely the same idea; a person thoroughly conversant in the propriety of the language, will always be able to observe something that distinguishes them. As they are like different shades of the same colour, an accurate writer can employ them to great advantage, by using them so as to

heighten and complete the object which he presents to us. He supplies, by one, what was wanting in the other, to the strength, or to the finishing, of the image which he means to exhibit. But, for this purpose, he must be attentive to the choice of his words, and not employ them carelessly, merely for the sake of filling up a period, or of rounding or diversifying his language, as if their signification were exactly the same, while in truth it is not. To unite copiousness and precision, to be full and easy, and at the same time, correct and exact in the choice of every word, is no doubt one of the highest and most difficult attainments in writing.

PART II.

Of Perspicuity *and* Accuracy *of* Expression, *with respect to the* Construction *of* Sentences.

Sentences, in general, should neither be very long nor very short: long ones require close attention to make us clearly perceive the connexion of the several parts; and short ones are apt to break the sense, and weaken the connexion of thought. Yet occasionally they may both be used with force and propriety; as may be seen in the following sentences.

"If you look about you, and consider the lives of others as well as your own; if you think how few are born with honour and how many die without name or children: how little beauty we see, and how few friends we hear of; how much poverty and how many diseases there are in the world; you will fall down upon your knees, and instead of repining at one affliction, will admire so many blessings which you have received from the Divine hand." This is a sentence composed of several members linked together, and hanging upon one another, so that the sense of the whole is not brought out till the close. The following is an example of one in which the sense is formed into short, independent propositions, each complete within itself. "I confess, it was want of consideration that made me an author. I wrote because it amused me

I corrected, because it was as pleasant to me to correct as to write. I published, because I was told I might please such as it was a credit to please."

A train of sentences, constructed in the same manner, and with the same number of members, should never be allowed to succeed one another. A long succession of either long or short sentences should also be avoided; for the ear tires of either of them, when too long continued. Whereas, by a proper mixture of long and short periods, and of periods variously constructed, not only the ear is gratified; but animation and force are given to our style.

We now proceed to consider the things most essential to an accurate and a perfect sentence. They appear to be the four following: 1. clearness. 2. unity. 3. strength. 4. a judicious use of the figures of speech.

CHAPTER I.

Of the Clearness *of a* Sentence.

Exercises, p. 180. Key, p. 152.

Purity, propriety, and precision, in words and phrases separately considered, have already been explained, and shown to be necessary to perspicuous and accurate writing. The just relation of sentences, and the parts of sentences, to one another, and the due arrangement of the whole, are the subjects which remain to be discussed.

The first requisite of a perfect sentence, is *Clearness*.

Whatever leaves the mind in any sort of suspense as to the meaning, ought to be avoided. Obscurity arises from two causes; either from a wrong choice of words, or a wrong arrangement of them. The choice of words and phrases, as far as regards perspicuity, has been already considered. The disposition of them comes now under consideration.

The first thing to be studied here, is grammatical propriety. But as the grammar of our language is comparatively not extensive, there may be an obscure order of words, where there is no transgression of any grammatical rule. The re-

lations of words, or members of a period, are, with us, ascertained only by the position in which they stand.

Hence a capital rule in the arrangement of sentences is, that the words or members, most clearly related, should be placed in the sentence as near to each other as possible, so as to make their mutual relation clearly appear. It will be proper to produce some instances, in order to show the importance of this rule.

1. *In the position of adverbs.* "The Romans understood liberty, *at least*, as well as we." These words are capable of two different senses, according as the emphasis, in reading them, is laid upon *liberty*, or upon *at least*. The words should have been thus arranged: "The Romans understood liberty as well, at least, as we."

"Theism can only be opposed to polytheism, or atheism." Is it meant that theism is capable of nothing else besides being opposed to polytheism, or atheism? This is what the words literally import, through the wrong placing of the adverb *only*. It should have been, "Theism can be opposed only to polytheism or atheism."

"By the pleasures of the imagination, I mean only such pleasures as arise originally from sight." When it is said, "*I mean only such pleasures*," it may be remarked, that the adverb *only* is not properly placed. It is not intended here to qualify the word *mean*, but *such pleasures;* and therefore should have been placed in as close connexion as possible with the word which it limits or qualifies. The style becomes more clear and neat, when the words are arranged thus: "By the pleasures of the imagination, I mean such pleasures only as arise from sight."

In the following sentence, the word *more* is not in its proper place. "There is not perhaps, any real beauty or deformity *more* in one piece of matter than another." The phrase ought to have stood thus: "Beauty or deformity in one piece of matter more than in another."

2. *In the position of circumstances, and of particular members.*

An author, in his dissertation on parties, thus expresses himself: "Are these designs which any man, who is born a Briton, in any circumstances, in any situation, ought to be ashamed or afraid to avow?" Here we are left at a loss, whether these words, "in any circumstances, in any situation," are connected with "a man born in Britain, in any circumstances or situation," or with that man's "avowing his designs, in any circumstances or situation into which he may be brought." As it is probable that the latter was intended, the arrangement ought to have been conducted thus: "Are these designs which any man, who is born a Briton, ought to be ashamed or afraid, in any situation, in any circumstances, to avow?"

The following is another instance of a wrong arrangement of circumstances. "A great stone that I happened to find, after a long search, by the sea shore, served me for an anchor." One would think that the search was confined to the sea shore; but as the meaning is, that the great stone was found by the sea shore, the period ought to have run thus: "A great stone, that, after a long search, I happened to find by the sea shore, served me for an anchor."

It is a rule, too, never to crowd many circumstances together, but rather to intersperse them in different parts of the sentence, joined with the principal words on which they depend. For instance: "What I had the opportunity of mentioning to my friend, some time ago, in conversation, was not a new thought." These two circumstances, "*sometime ago*," and "*in conversation*," which are here put together, would have had a better effect disjoined, thus: "What I had the opportunity, sometime ago, of mentioning to my friend, in conversation, was not a new thought."

Here follows an example of the wrong arrangement of a member of a sentence. "The minister of state who grows less by his elevation, like a little statue placed on a mighty pedestal, will always have his jealousy strong about him." Here, so far as can be gathered from the arrangement, it is doubtful whether the object introduced by way of simile

relates to what goes before, or to what follows. The ambiguity is removed by the following order. "The minister of state who, like a little statue placed on a mighty pedestal, grows less by his elevation, will always," &c.

Words expressing things connected in the thought, ought to be placed as near together as possible, even when their separation would convey no ambiguity. This will be seen in he following passages from Addison. "For the English are naturally fanciful, and very often disposed, by that gloominess and melancholy of temper, which are so frequent in our nation, to many wild notions and extravagancies, to which others are not so liable." Here the verb or assertion is, by a pretty long circumstance, separated from the subject to which it refers. This might have been easily prevented, by placing the circumstance before the verb, thus: "For the English are naturally fanciful, and by that gloominess and melancholy of temper which are so frequent in our nation, are often disposed to many wild notions," &c.

"For as no mortal author, in the ordinary fate and vicissitude of things, knows to what use his works may, some time or other, be applied," &c. Better thus: "For as, in the ordinary fate and vicissitude of things, no mortal author knows to what use, some time or other, his works may be applied," &c.

From these examples, the following observations will occur: that a circumstance ought never to be placed between two capital members of a period; but either between the parts of the member to which it belongs, or in such a manner as will confine it to its proper member. When the sense admits it, the sooner a circumstance is introduced, generally speaking, the better, that the more important and significant words may possess the last place, quite disencumbered. The following sentence is, in this respect, faulty. "The emperor was so intent on the establishment of his absolute power in Hungary, that he exposed the empire doubly to desolation and ruin for the sake of it." Better thus: "That, for the sake of it, he exposed the empire doubly to desolation and ruin."

This appears to be a proper place to observe, that when different things have an obvious relation to each other, in respect to the order of nature or time, that order should be regarded, in assigning them their places in the sentence; unless the scope of the passages require it to be varied. The conclusion of the following lines is inaccurate in this respect "But still there will be such a mixture of delight, as is proportioned to the degree in which any one of these qualifications is most conspicuous and prevailing." The order in which the two last words are placed, should have been reversed, and made to stand, *prevailing* and *conspicuous*.—They are *conspicuous*, because they *prevail*.

The following sentence is a beautiful example of strict conformity to this rule. "Our sight fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, and continues the longest in action, without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments." This passage follows the order of nature. First, we have the variety of objects mentioned, which sight furnishes to the mind; next, we have the action of sight on those objects; and lastly, we have the time and continuance of its action. No order could be more natural or exact.

The order which we now recommend, is, in single words especially, frequently violated, for the sake of better sound; but, perhaps in no instances, without a deviation from the line of strict propriety.

3. *In the disposition of the relative pronouns*, who, which, what, whose, *and of all those particles which express the connexion of the parts of speech with one another.*

A small error in the position of these words may cloud the meaning of the whole sentence; and even where the meaning is intelligible, we always find something awkward and disjointed in the structure of the sentence, when these relatives are out of their proper place. "This kind of wit," says an author, "was very much in vogue among our *countrymen*, about an age or two ago; *who* did not practise it for any oblique reason but purely for the sake of being witty."

We are at no loss about the meaning here; but the construction would evidently be mended by disposing the circumstance, "about an age or two ago," in such a manner as not to separate the relative *who* from its antecedent, *our countrymen;* in this way: "About an age or two ago, this kind of wit was very much in vogue among our countrymen, who did not practise it," &c.

The following passage is still more censurable. "It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, by heaping up treasures, *which* nothing can protect us against, but the good providence of our Creator." *Which* always refers grammatically to the substantive immediately preceding; and that, in the instance just mentioned, is "treasures." The sentence ought to have stood thus: "It is folly to pretend, by heaping up treasures, to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, which nothing can protect us against," &c.

With regard to relatives, it may be farther observed, that obscurity often arises from the too frequent repetition of them, particularly of the pronouns *who* and *they*, and *them* and *their*s, when we have occasion to refer to different persons; as in the following sentence of Tillotson. "Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that *their* reputation obscures *them*, and *their* commendable qualities stand in *their* light; and therefore *they* do what *they* can to cast a cloud over *them*, that the bright shining of *their* virtues may not obscure *them*." This is altogether careless writing. When we find these personal pronouns crowding too fast upon us, we have often no method left, but to throw the whole sentence into some other form, by which we may avoid those frequent references to persons who have before been mentioned.

To have the relation of every word and member of a sentence marked in the most proper and distinct manner, not only gives clearness to it, but makes the mind pass smoothly and agreeably along all the parts of it.

See the APPENDIX *to the Exercises*, p. 219, &c.

CHAPTER II.

Of the UNITY *of a* SENTENCE.

Exercises, p. 187. Key, p. 159.

THE SECOND requisite of a perfect sentence, is its *Unity*.

In every composition, there is always some connecting principle among the parts. Some one object must reign and be predominant. But most of all, in a single sentence, is required the strictest unity. For the very nature of a sentence implies that one proposition is expressed. It may consist of parts, indeed, but these parts must be so closely bound together, as to make the impression upon the mind of one object, not of many. To preserve this unity of a sentence, the following rules must be observed.

In the *first* place, *During the course of the sentence, the scene should be changed as little as possible.* We should not be hurried by sudden transitions from person to person, nor from subject to subject. There is commonly, in every sentence, some person or thing which is the governing word. This should be continued so, if possible, from the beginning to the end of it.

The following sentence varies from this rule: "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." In this sentence, though the objects contained in it have a sufficient connexion with each other, yet, by this manner of representing them, by shifting so often both the place and the person, *we* and *they*, and *I* and *who*, they appear in so disunited a view, that the sense of connexion is much impaired. The sentence is restored to its proper unity, by turning it after the following manner. "Having come to an anchor, I was put on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends, and received with the greatest kindness."

Here follows another instance of departure from the rule. "The sultan being dangerously wounded, they carried him to his tent; and, upon hearing of the defeat of his troops, they put him into a litter, which transported him to a place

of safety, at the distance of about fifteen leagues." Better thus: "The sultan being dangerously wounded, was carried to his tent; and, on hearing of the defeat of his troops, was put into a litter, and transported to a place of safety about fifteen leagues distant."

A *second* rule under the head of unity, is, *Never to crowd into one sentence, things which have so little connexion, that they would bear to be divided into two or three sentences.*

The violation of this rule tends so much to perplex and obscure, that it is safer to err by too many short sentences, than by one that is overloaded and embarrassed. Examples abound in authors. "Archbishop Tillotson," says an author, "died in this year. He was exceedingly beloved by king William and queen Mary, who nominated Dr. Tennison, bishop of Lincoln, to succeed him." Who would expect the latter part of this sentence to follow in consequence of the former? "He was exceedingly beloved by both king and queen," is the proposition of the sentence. We look for some proof of this, or at least something related to it to follow; when we are on a sudden carried off to a new proposition.

The following sentence is still worse. The author, speaking of the Greeks under Alexander, says: "Their march was through an uncultivated country, whose savage inhabitants fared hardly, having no other riches than a breed of lean sheep, whose flesh was rank and unsavoury, by reason of their continual feeding upon sea-fish." Here the scene is changed upon us again and again. The march of the Greeks, the description of the inhabitants through whose country they travelled, the account of their sheep, and the cause of their sheep being ill-tasted food, form a jumble of objects, slightly related to each other, which the reader cannot, without much difficulty, comprehend under one view.

These examples have been taken from sentences of no great length, yet very crowded. Writers who deal in long sentences, are very apt to be faulty in this article. Take, for an instance, the following from Temple. "The usual acceptation takes profit and pleasure for two different things, and not

only calls the followers or votaries of them by the several names of busy and idle men; but distinguishes the faculties of the mind, that are conversant about them, calling the operations of the first, *Wisdom;* and of the other, *Wit;* which is a Saxon word, used to express what the Spaniards and Italians call *Ingenio*, and the French *Esprit*, both from the Latin, though I think wit more particularly signifies that of poetry, as may occur in remarks on the Runic language." When the reader arrives at the end of this perplexed sentence, he is surprised to find himself at so great distance from the object with which he set out.

Long, involved, and intricate sentences, are great blemishes in composition. In writers of considerable correctness, we find a period sometimes running out so far, and comprehending so many particulars, as to be more properly a discourse than a sentence. An author, speaking of the progress of our language after the time of Cromwell, runs on in this manner: "To this succeeded that licentiousness which entered with the restoration, and, from infecting our religion and morals, fell to corrupt our language; which last was not like to be much improved by those who at that time made up the court of king Charles the Second; either such as had followed him in his banishment, or who had been altogether conversant in the dialect of these times, or young men who had been educated in the same country: so that the court, which used to be the standard of correctness and propriety of speech, was then, and I think has ever since continued, the worst school in England for that accomplishment; and so will remain, till better care be taken in the education of our nobility, that they may set out into the world with some foundation of literature, in order to qualify them for patterns of politeness."

The author, in place of a sentence, has here given a loose dissertation upon several subjects. How many different facts, reasonings, and observations, are here presented to the mind at once! and yet so linked together by the author, that they all make parts of a sentence, which admits of no greater