PART II.

SENTENCES

Book I.

SENTENCES GOOD AND BAD

Chapter I.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD SENTENCE

A WELL-CONSTRUCTED sentence consists of "proper words in proper places." In such a sentence, words that conform to the requirements of good use and express the exact shade of meaning intended are so arranged that each clause, each word, helps to carry the sentence as a whole into the reader's mind. Such a sentence has five merits: —

1. It conforms in all respects to the established usage of the language: it has CORRECTNESS.

2. It is completely and immediately understood by every one who knows the meaning of the words employed: it has CLEARNESS.

3. It is so framed as to produce a strong impression on the reader: it has FORCE.

4. It is so framed as to be agreeable to the ear: it has EASE.

5. It expresses but one principal thought, and expresses that thought as one: it has UNITY.

Sentences possessing all these merits in due measure are rare. In the effort to be grammatically correct, an inexperienced writer may become obscure or weak or clumsy; in the effort to be clear, he may become diffuse or stiff; in the effort to be forcible, he may become obscure or harsh; in the effort to acquire ease, he may become flippant, or

weak and wordy; in the effort to make every sentence a unit, he is in danger of becoming artificial, and of sacrificing substance to form; in the effort to succeed in all respects, he may fail in all, for he may forget his subject in himself.

If he forgets himself in his subject, if he knows what he wants to say, and fixes his attention on what he is saying rather than on forms of expression, his sentences will, to a great extent, make themselves. It is wiser to write with fury and correct with phlegm than to write with phlegm and correct with fury.[1]

[1] See Pope's Essay on Criticism.

Chapter II.

CORRECT AND INCORRECT SENTENCES

To be correct, a sentence must not only contain no word that does not in all respects conform to the requirements of good use, but it must also follow the English idiom in the collocation of words and of groups of words.

Translation-English. — In translating from foreign languages, a student should give English equivalents for foreign idioms, as well as for foreign words and phrases. He should say "We were admired by all the Greeks," not "We by all the Greeks were admired;" "A German who lived on a boat had made a fortune by selling milk in Philadelphia," not "A German who lived on a boat had through the milk business in Philadelphia made a fortune."

I.

Give glory to me, to him, to my children, and to my august wife.

The presence of a multitude of citizens prevented the Numidians from scaling the walls.

They put to flight and scattered some who were half asleep, and others who were in the act of taking up arms.

The best plan seemed to be to go to Nestor and ask him if he could think of some way of averting destruction from the Greeks.

Do not destroy me.

II.

Give me, him, my children, and my august wife, glory.

A multitude of citizens was there which prevented the Numidians scaling the walls.

They put to flight and scattered a part half asleep and others taking up arms.

This plan seemed best, to go to Nestor, if perchance he might arrange some plan that destruction should not come to all the Greeks.

Do not you destroy me.

I.	II.
The old man filled the mixing-bowl with sweet wine for those who were coming; then, pouring it out, he prayed long to Athena.	The old man filled the mixing-bowl for those coming with sweet wine, and, pouring it out prayed much to Athena.
I should not wish to see Greece, which is now free, enslaved.	Instead of Freedom, I would not wish to see Greece enslaved.
The leaders had gone to rest near the ship, and had fallen into a pleasant sleep.	The leaders had gone to rest near the ship merged in pleasing sleep.
After hearing these things, they immediately followed Nestor's advice.	They, when they had heard these things, immediately followed Nestor's advice.
On their arrival, Alexander spoke to them as follows.	And to them, having arrived, Alexander spake as follows.
These things, it is said, gave much spirit and courage to the soldiers.	Thus from all these things, much spirit and courage is said to have possessed the soldiers.
It was difficult for the leaders to keep the soldiers from pushing on to the front.	It was work to the leaders to hinder the soldiers pushing on to the front.
Brave men, when the fight is over, lay aside with their arms the hatred which accompanies strife.	Brave men place with war itself and arms, that hatred of contention.
They sent the herald home to announce the great victory, and to proclaim that not one of the Lacedæmonians had fallen, but that a very great number of the enemy were dead.	They sent the herald home to announce the greatness of the victory and that of the Lacedæmonians no one fell, but a very great number of the enemy.
After this man had died, Lucius Cæsar, in order to get the utmost advantage from his death, called a council of the people and delivered a harangue in which he urged them to open the gates; for he hoped much, he said, from the clemency of Cæsar.	This man having perished, Lucius Cæsar, that he might get aid to himself from this thing, the people being called together, a council being held, he harangued all that they should open the gates, saying he had great hopes in the clemency of Cæsar.

The best comment on these specimens of students' attempts to translate Cæsar, Cicero, or Homer is a remark in one of Mr. Swinburne's recent essays: "A phrase or a construction which makes very good Latin may make very bad English."

The injurious effects of translating good Latin or Greek into bad English too often appear in "English" compositions.

I.	II.
Orlando would marry Rosalind if she were willing.	Orlando would marry Rosalind, she being willing.

In this sentence as originally written, the influence of the Latin ablative absolute is apparent.

Other examples are —

I.	II.
When Darcy was informed of this trouble, he at once interested himself in removing the difficulty.	Darcy being informed concerning this trouble interested himself in removing the difficulty.
The King of Lilliput applied to Gulliver, who told him to be of good cheer, but did not tell him what his plan was.	The King of Lilliput applied to Gulliver, who told him to be of good cheer, not making known his design.

Other Incorrect Constructions. — The origin of some incorrect constructions is hard to discover.

I.	II.
She had not said a word to Edith of the change which had been imperceptibly wrought, — chiefly during the long, sleepless night on the railway journey.	She had not said a word of the change which had worked imperceptibly, and chiefly in the long sleepless night on the railway journey to Edith.
The true principles of contract forbid allowing an action to a third party, from whom no consideration moves, and who is in no way privy to the agreement.	The true principles of contract forbid the allowing a third party, from whom no consideration moves and who is in no way privy to the agreement an action.

It is hard to say on what model these sentences as originally written were constructed; but it certainly was not an English one.

I.	II.
He at last devised the scheme of wading over to the island where the enemy lived, and of drawing off their fleet.	He at last devised the scheme of wading over to the island where the enemy dwelt, and to draw off their fleet.

In this sentence as originally written, two expressions that are not in the same construction are treated as if they were.

Other examples are —

I.	II.
He finds that he is bound by thousands of threads, and that little men six inches high are all round[1] him.	He finds himself bound by thousands of threads, and that little men six inches high are all around[1] him.
He finds himself bound by thousands of threads, and surrounded by little men six inches high.	
The charm of these "Travels" is due in part, no doubt, to Swift's pure, plain style; but more, I think, to the intense gravity with which Gulliver's adventures are described.	The charm of these travels is due no doubt, in part, to Swift's pure, plain style but more I think on account of the intense gravity with which Gulliver's adventures are described.
Eager to make voyages (or, to travel) and to see more of the world, Gulliver sets out on a sea voyage.	Gulliver is a man eager for voyaging and to see more of the world, so he sets out on a sea voyage.
The character of Addison is a pleasant one to contemplate. It is one of those which we love to read of and which we never tire of admiring.	The character of Addison is one of pleasure to contemplate. It is one of those of which we love to read and never tire of admiring.

[1] See page 142.

I.	II.
It was the first time that I read verse, not only intelligently, but with avidity.	It was the first time that I read verse not only intelligently but devoured it.
I told them, as well as I could, that I wished to have my head at liberty, and that I was suffering from hunger and thirst.	I requested them, as best I could, that I wished to have my head freed and that I was suffering from hunger and thirst.

"I requested them that I wished" is not an English construction.

I.	II.
He is the son of the woman who takes the swill.	He is the woman as takes the swill's boy.
"Vestibuled" trains, lighted by electricity and heated by steam, leave Chicago daily.	Electric lighted, steam heated, vestibuled trains leave Chicago daily.

Vulgar speakers and "ready writers" alike invent compound expressions which are not good English.

I.	II.
Too little is told of his actions to enable one to judge of his military abilities.	Too little is told of his actions to pass any remark on his military abilities.

In this sentence as originally written, words grammatically necessary to the construction are omitted.

I.	II.
Whoever wants soft hands or a clear complexion can have both.	Whoever wants soft hands or a clear complexion, he and she can have both.

In this sentence as originally written, the introduction of superfluous words makes the construction incorrect.

I.	II.
Portia informs him that the property of any man who plots against the life of a citizen is, by the laws of Venice, confiscated.	Portia informs him that whoever plots against the life of any citizen, his property, by the laws of Venice, are confiscated.

This sentence as originally written is obscure as well as ungrammatical.

The "And Which" Construction. — Among constructions that have been widely condemned is the use of "and," "but," "or," or "nor" to connect parts of a sentence that are not co-ordinate.

I.	II.
The grocer who sells a cheap and inferior flavoring extract, which proves unsatisfactory to his customers, is blamed, and his trade is damaged.	The grocer who sells a cheap and inferior flavoring extract and which proves unsatisfactory to his customers, the blame comes on him and his trade is damaged.
He was watching me with his sharp, sleepy eyes, which always reminded me of those of a cat shamming sleep.	He was watching me with his sharp, sleepy eyes, and which always reminded me of a cat shamming sleep.
Sharp words had ensued from Joan, who had offered to leave at once.	Sharp words had ensued from Joan, and who had offered to leave at once.
I am in receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, containing certain inquiries to which a categorical answer is expected. In reply, I beg to observe that when a correspondence of this nature is originated, which (or, one which) concludes with the intimation, etc.	I am in receipt of your letter of the 7th instant, containing certain inquiries to which a categorical answer is expected from me, and in reply I beg to observe that when a correspondence of this nature is originated, and which concludes with the intimation,[1] &c.

[1] From a letter by the Duke of Marlborough, Minister of Education, quoted by W. B. HODGSON: Errors in the Use of English. Appleton & Co., New York, 1882.

"And," when used, as in these sentences in their original form, to connect "which" or "who" with its antecedent, really separates the two: *e. g.*, "Bucephalus and which Alexander rode was a fine animal." To give "which" an antecedent we must remove "and": *e. g.*, "Bucephalus, which (or, Bucephalus, the horse which) Alexander rode, was a fine animal."

I.	II.
The principal and distinguishing excellence of Virgil — which (or, that which), in my opinion, he possesses beyond all other poets — is tenderness.	The principal and distinguishing excellence of Virgil and which in my opinion he possesses beyond all poets is tenderness.
The order signed by Mr. Frick, to the effect that men who returned to work would be insured against removal,— an order which was given in the despatches of last night, — is regarded as the final peace-offering of the firm to the strikers.	The order signed by Mr. Frick to the effect that men returning to work would be insured against removal, and which was given in the despatches of last night, is regarded as the final peace-offering of the firm to the strikers.

The incorrectness in the last two sentences as originally written is removed by the excision of "and;" clearness is promoted by repeating the antecedent in a condensed form.

I.	II.
We were ushered into a gallery which was one hundred feet long, and which (or, gallery one hundred feet long which) occupied a great portion of the northern side of the castle.	We were ushered into a gallery one hundred feet long, and which occupied a great portion of the northern side of the castle.

In the last example, it is necessary, in order to enable "and" to do its proper work as a connective, to insert

"which was" in the preceding clause. A better way of mending the sentence is to omit "and."

I.	II.
(*a*) The Cotes family is an old and good one, which has long been established in Shropshire, and which has for years been returned to Parliament in the person of one of its members.	
(*b*) The Cotes family is an old and good one, long established in Shropshire, and has for years been returned to Parliament in the person of one of its members.	The Cotes family is an old and good one, long established in Shropshire, and which has for years been returned to Parliament in the person of one of its members.
(*c*) The Cotes family, long established in Shropshire, is an old and good one, which has for years been returned to Parliament in the person of one of its members.	

In this example, in order to enable "and" to do its proper work as a connective, we may either (*a*) insert three words in the preceding clause, — an addition which makes the sentence long and heavy; or we may (*b*) omit "which," and thus enable "and" to connect "is an old and good one" with "has for years been returned;" or we may (*c*) omit "and," and change the order so as to make "one" the direct antecedent of "which." It is obvious that, though in the three forms the meaning of the sentence as a whole remains the same, there is a change in the relative importance of the several facts mentioned.

I.	II.
He tells the world of the star which he has discovered, and which he believes will guide the ship of state.	He tells the world of the star he has discovered and which he believes will guide the ship of state.

In this sentence as originally written, "and" may be regarded as a connective between the expressed "which" and an omitted "which" in the preceding clause. Sentences of this class are much less objectionable than those cited above; but inexperienced writers should carefully avoid them.

I.	II.
Sometimes they plunged into a labyrinth of lanes teeming with life, in which the dog-stealer and the pickpocket found a sympathetic multitude.	Sometimes they plunged into a labyrinth of lanes teeming with life and where the dog-stealer and the pick-pocket found a sympathetic multitude.
Discipline is needed to fit us for active life after our graduation, when we shall have no rules and masters to compel us to use our time to advantage.	Discipline is needed to fit us for active life after our graduation and when we shall have no rules and masters to compel us to use our time to advantage.

What has been said about "and which" applies with equal force to "and where," "and when," etc.

In translations from foreign languages and in original compositions, avoid constructions that are not in accordance with the English idiom.