Chapter III.

CLEARNESS

SECTION I.

IMPORTANCE OF CLEARNESS

If a writer wishes his readers to understand what he says, he should make his sentences mean to them what they mean to him. He should constantly bear in mind that, important as it is to have clear ideas and to express them in language which is clear to himself, it is no less important to express them in language which is clear to his readers. If his work is to be read by none but those who are thoroughly acquainted with the subject in hand, he may use technical terms in order to give precision to his statements; but if he is writing for the general public, he must (as has already been said[1]), even at the risk of being inaccurate, avoid expressions that, familiar as they may be to experts, are not in good use.

In these days, when readers are so many and leisure is so rare, a writer who wishes to be read must express himself so clearly that his meaning may be caught at once. Few readers have time or inclination to master unfamiliar words, to supply omissions in language, or to unravel tangled thoughts. If they do not get at the meaning of a sentence without trouble, the chances are that they will not get at it at all. A writer should therefore know what words a man of ordinary intelligence and acquirements is likely to understand, and what kind and degree of attention he may reasonably be expected to give.

[1] See pages 28, 187.

Under these restrictions, a writer who wishes to be understood by his readers should strive to make his sentences as clear as is possible within the limitations imposed by the nature of language and by good use. He should (1) seek the words which exactly express his meaning, should (2) use as many words as are needed to convey his meaning easily and fully but not one word more, and should (3) arrange words and clauses in the order in which they may most readily be understood in themselves and in their relations with one another.

SECTION II.

CLEARNESS AS AFFECTED BY CHOICE OF WORDS

Clear or **Obscure Pronouns.** — Obscurity is often caused by the misuse of pronouns.

I.	II.
Down in Blankville there is a boarding-school for young ladies. I don't think the young ladies are particularly bold, but one might imagine so if one believed a story told by one of them.	Down in Blankville there is a boarding-school for young ladies. I don't think the young ladies are particularly bold, but one might imagine so from a story told me by one of its scholars.

To make sure that "its scholars" means the scholars in the Blankville boarding-school, the reader has to go back to the preceding sentence.

Obscurity is sometimes caused by pronouns which stand for no word or group of words in the sentence.

I.	II.
This gentleman may be a good churchman, but all his sympathies are evidently with the enemies of the church.	This gentleman may be a good churchman, but his whole[1] sympathies are evidently with her enemies.

[1] See page 126.

I.	II.
I was so much frightened by my novel-reading propensities that I resolved not to look into a novel for a year.	I was frightened at my novel-reading propensities, and resolved not to look into one for a year.

The writer of these sentences in their original form tried to make a pronoun represent a part of a word, — an offence against both correctness and clearness.

I.	II.
When the inaugural ceremonies were over, General Harrison and Governor Hovey were loudly cheered, — a demonstration which was renewed as they left the Opera House.	After the inaugural ceremonies were over, General Harrison and Governor Hovey were loudly cheered, which was renewed as they left the Opera House.

In this sentence as originally written, the antecedent of "which" can be supplied by an intelligent reader; but the words "a demonstration" make the meaning much plainer, for they sum up what is said in the preceding clause, and at the same time carry the meaning of that clause into the next.

When a pronoun does not immediately and unmistakably point to its antecedent, the antecedent should be repeated in some form.[1] This should be done as a rule when the antecedent consists of several words, or when, though itself but one word, it is separated by several words from the pronoun.

Other examples are —

I.	II.
I replied to his question without asking any in return, — a practice which of course puts an end to talk.	I replied to his question without originating any in return, which of course terminates talk.

[1] See page 209.

I.	II.
Though Hamilton in theory despised the "Code of Honor," he did not show this feeling in action.	Though Hamilton in theory despised the "Code of Honor," he did not show it in action.
Their presence makes all the deeper (or, deepens) the solitude of him who looks in vain into their faces for sympathy.	Their presence makes his solitude all the deeper who looks in vain into their faces for sympathy.

In the last sentence as originally written, there is no grammatical antecedent for "who;" the real antecedent is hidden in "his," — an archaism inexcusable in prose.

I.	II.
Portia shows that the bond does not say that he can take a drop of blood with the pound of flesh, and the Jew is unable to get round the difficulty.	Portia shows that the bond does not say he can take a drop of blood with it, and the Jew is unable to get around it.

In this sentence as originally written, there is nothing for the second "it" to refer to; the first "it" refers grammatically to "bond," but means "the pound of flesh."

Obscurity is sometimes caused by a pronoun which stands grammatically for one word or group of words, but really for another.

I.	II.
Next morning, when the farmer approached with a knife and seized the turkey-cock, the poor bird understood too well what was coming.	Next morning, when the farmer approached with a knife and seized the turkey-cock, he understood too well what was coming.

In this sentence as originally written, "he" might grammatically refer to "farmer," but it really refers to "turkey-cock."

I.

The "Herald" says that the strikes were opposed by working-men of American descent, and were carried on principally by foreigners.

II.

The "Herald" states[1] that American-descended working-men were opposed to the strikes, and that they were carried on principally by foreigners.

In this sentence as originally written, "they" might grammatically refer to "working-men," but it really refers to "strikes."

I.

After Orlando had wandered several days, carving on the trees love-messages to the daughter of the banished duke, he was obliged to go in search of help for Adam, who had become very feeble.

II.

After he had wandered several days, carving love-messages on the trees, to the daughter of the banished duke, Adam became so feeble that Orlando was obliged to leave him and go in search of help.

This sentence as originally written would lead a reader who was not familiar with "As You Like It" to suppose that it was Adam, not Orlando, who carved love-messages on the trees.

I.

The majority (or, Most) of the old families have gradually sunk into genteel poverty, but a few still cling to their wide-fronted homes.

II.

A few old families still cling to their wide-fronted homes, although the majority of them have gradually sunk into genteel poverty.

This sentence as originally written leaves the reader in doubt whether "the majority of them" means a majority of all the "old families," or a majority of the few who still cling to their old homes.

I.

"The Fountain" describes a meeting of friends at the edge of a fountain, and repeats their talk about it.

II.

"The Fountain" describes a meeting of friends at its edge and their talk about it.

[1] See page 114.

In this sentence as originally written, "its" and "it" refer grammatically to the title of Wordsworth's poem, but really to the subject of the poem. The fact that two things are called by the same name does not make them the same.

I.

I saw the announcement of his death in "The Times," a paper which I hardly ever read.

II.

I saw the announcement of his death in "The Times," which I hardly ever read.

"The Times" is not the logical antecedent of "which." "The Times" refers to a particular number of the paper, "which" to the paper in general.

Other examples are —

I.

The ride back was as disagreeable as such rides generally are.

On this land Elizabeth founded a town, calling it at first by the Indian name Calumet, and changing that name later to Taunton.

The New York "Tribune," in an article of pretended news, which has been telegraphed over the country as true, says that the Collector was "surprised."

II.

The ride back was as disagreeable as it generally is.

On this land Elizabeth founded a town, calling it at first by the Indian name Calumet, and changing it later to Taunton.

The New York "Tribune," in an article of pretended news, which has been telegraphed over the country as such, states[1] that the Collector was "surprised."

It would be natural to suppose that "such," in the last sentence as originally written, stands for "pretended news;" the difficulty is removed by the substitution of "true" for "such."

I.

The heart of Orlando must have throbbed with joy at the generosity of his companion in offering him his purse and telling him to use it to supply his wants.

II.

The heart of Orlando must have throbbed with joy at the generous offer of his companion to take his purse and use it to supply his wants.

[1] See page 114.

"His" in "to take his purse" and "to supply his wants" is ambiguous.

Clear or **Obscure Participles.** — Obscurity is often caused by failure to make plain the connection between a participle and the noun or pronoun with which it belongs.

I.	II.
Though he is hemmed in on all sides, and is fighting for his life, his fierce spirit still remains unbroken.	Hemmed in on all sides, fighting for his life, his spirit of fierceness still remains unbroken.

It is "he," not "his spirit of fierceness," that is hemmed in and fighting.

I.	II.
Brought up as she was with her two cousins, she was continually reminded by her Aunt Norris of the difference between their position and hers, and of her great good fortune in being in such a family.	Brought up as she was with her two cousins, her Aunt Norris continually reminded her of the difference between their positions and her great good fortune in being in such a family.

The sentence as originally written might lead a reader who was not familiar with Miss Austen's "Mansfield Park" to suppose that "she" and "Aunt Norris" were the same person.

I.	II.
While those in the boat were attempting to bring it to shore, it was overturned. Had she acted as the characters in realistic novels act, she might have punished her unworthy husband.	While attempting to bring the boat to the shore, it was overturned. Taking her from the realistic point of view, she might have punished her unworthy husband.

Obscure participles abound in all writers except the very best; but they can and should be avoided.

Clear or **Obscure Nouns, Verbs,** etc. — There is no part of speech which may not be so used as to make a sentence obscure.

I.	II.
He looked for something on the floor of the car until (or, so long that) at last all the passengers were leaning over in order to see what he was looking for.	He looked for something on the floor of the car, until the whole[1] car was leaning over endeavoring to discover the object of his search.

It was the persons in the car, not "the car," that leaned over.

I.	II.
While he is asleep, the Lilliputians discover him and bind him with numberless fine threads.	While asleep the Lilliputians discover him and bind him with numberless fine threads.

In the sentence as originally written, "asleep" goes grammatically with "the Lilliputians" but really with "him." The fault is akin to that already noticed.[2]

I.	II.
Though he had no relatives, he had many dear friends to grieve for him.	While he was without relations, he had many dear friends to mourn their loss.

"To mourn their loss" is ambiguous.

I.	II.
The black hill, with the fire at its base, the silence broken only by the crackling of the flames, and, over all, the sky flushed with the sunset, made an impressive scene.	The black hill with the fire at its base, the silence, broken only by the crackling of the flames, and above all the sky, flushed with the sunset — made an impressive scene.

"Above all" is ambiguous.

[1] See page 126.

[2] See page 218.

I.	II.
Though badly written, the book will not fail of (or, will secure) a permanent place in literature.	The book will not fail of a permanent place in literature, because it is badly written.

This sentence as originally written leaves the reader in doubt whether the book is to have a permanent place in consequence, or in spite, of the fact that it is badly written.

I.	II.
I confess that I did not applaud him, for I (or, him; I) was carried away for the moment. Carried away as I was for the moment, I confess that I did not applaud him.	I confess that I did not applaud him because I was carried away for the moment.

"For," though less ambiguous than "because," is not quite clear. The obscurity is removed altogether by the omission of any connective, or by a change in order.

I.	II.
He went to Holland, the country to which his father had just been appointed minister from the United States.	He went to Holland where his father had just been appointed minister from the United States.

The sentence as originally written leads one to believe that the appointment was made in Holland.

I.	II.
They have sacrificed themselves to theses and examinations; they have given up the large leisure which they might have devoted to tranquil and abundant study.	They have sacrificed themselves to theses and examinations; they have given up their large leisure for tranquil and abundant study.

The sentence as originally written leaves the reader in doubt whether they gave up that leisure which enabled them to study, or whether they gave up leisure in order to study.

I.	II.
Wordsworth's sonnet to Toussaint l'Ouverture I admire very much as a whole, in spite of the phrase "deep dungeon's earless den."	In Wordsworth's sonnet to Toussaint l'Ouverture, although I admire it very much, as a whole, he makes use of the phrase deep dungeon's earless den.

This sentence as originally written does not express the writer's meaning.

SECTION III.

CLEARNESS AS AFFECTED BY NUMBER OF WORDS

Sentences may be deficient in clearness because they contain too few words, or because they contain too many.

Omitted Nouns. — Obscurity is sometimes caused by the omission of a noun, either alone or with other words necessary to the construction.

I.	II.
I 'll leave a prescription for a mixture to rub her with. The crime was held in such horror that few ever risked the consequences of detection. He rarely used the elevator till toward the end of his life. So on and on we went, splashing into basins for fun, and consoling ourselves with the thought that it would be easy to bring up the canoe next day.	I 'll leave a prescription to rub her with. The crime was held in such horror that few ever risked the consequences. He rarely used the elevator till toward the end. So on and on we went splashing into basins for the fun of it, and consoling ourselves it would be easy to bring up the canoe the next day.

I.	II.
This plant bears many common names, among them "sago palm;" but this is not the plant that produces the useful article called sago.	This plant bears many common names, among them "sago palm" but it is not this plant that produces that useful article.

The fault of trying to make "that useful article" stand for "sago" is akin to that already noticed.[1]

Omitted Pronouns. — Obscurity is sometimes caused by the omission of a pronoun, either alone or with other words necessary to the construction.

I.	II.
The effect was the same as that which one gets with the stereoscope.	The effect was the same as one gets in the stereoscope.
There is a difference between the duties of a native and those of a stranger.	There is a difference between the duties of a native and a stranger.
"There is no difference," said the elm, "between the sap in our trunks and that in the other trees of the forest."	"There is no difference," said the elm, "between the sap in our trunks and the other trees of the forest."
Those whose faith or whose fanaticism led them to believe themselves soldiers of the Almighty, and who in that dread enlistment feared nothing but to be found unworthy of their calling, — they were gone (or, calling, were gone).	Those whose faith or whose fanaticism led them to believe themselves soldiers of the Almighty, and in that dread enlistment feared nothing but to be found unworthy of their calling, they were gone.
When she met him, he treated her as coldly as he did (or, as did) the others who were there.	When she met him he treated her as coldly as the rest of the people who were there.

In the absence of the context, the last sentence, as originally written, admits two interpretations.

[1] See page 214.

Omitted Verbs. — Obscurity is sometimes caused by the omission of a verb, either alone or with other words necessary to the construction.

I.	II.
With all his exuberance of spirits, he was far from being the rake the world imagined.	With all his exuberance of spirits, he was far from the rake the world imagined.
I imagine that a lighted city seen from above would hardly seem a city.	I imagine a lighted city, from above, would hardly seem a city.
There were but two or three rooms that were habitable, and these were very poorly furnished.	There were but two or three rooms habitable and very poorly furnished.
He was not cleanly in his person, and was notorious for his blunders.	He was not cleanly in his person and notorious for his blunders.
Between Roman Catholics and Protestants there is little hostility, and sometimes there is co-operation for a benevolent purpose.	Between Roman Catholics and Protestants there is little hostility and sometimes co-operation for a benevolent purpose.
The dog, feeling doubtless that he was a culprit for running away, submitted to the blows without making the least resistance.	The dog submitted to the blows without the least resistance, feeling doubtless a culprit for running away.
The scenes and incidents of a child's story should be only such as occur in the experience of a child, or such as come easily within the scope of his imagination (or, as he can easily imagine).	The scenes and incidents of a child's story should be only those that can be duplicated in a child's experience, or easily within the scope of their imagination.
At last he got out of the car and left (or, car, leaving) the suspicious-looking white package on the seat.	He finally left the car and the suspicious-looking white package on the seat.

Other Sins of Omission. — Obscurity is sometimes caused by the omission of an adverb, a preposition, or a conjunction, — either alone or with other words necessary to the construction, — or of a phrase consisting of several words.

I.

Round the corner pell-mell they went to the place where the road dives under the railway track, and there they stopped.

A man who poisons the air by puffing tobacco smoke into it is more contemptible than he who slaps our faces; for against the smoker we have no redress.

II.

Round the corner pell-mell they went to where the road dives under the railway track, and stopped.

A man who poisons the air by puffing tobacco smoke into it is more contemptible than the man who slaps our faces, because we have no redress.

A hasty reader of the last sentence as originally written might suppose that our faces are slapped "because we have no redress."

Redundant Words. — Obscurity is sometimes caused by the presence of unnecessary words.

I.

Sofia is reported to have thirty mosques and ten churches, hot baths, and woollen manufactures.

II.

Sofia is reported to have thirty mosques and ten churches, with hot baths and manufactures of woollens.

Unless the mosques and churches in Sofia are provided with hot baths and woollen manufactures, "with" is misleading.

Other examples are —

I.

When he thought of Lucie, he kept his eyes and his ears open, (or, both eyes and ears open.)

It is unreasonable, I think, to consider education inconsistent with the maintenance of individuality. Even if it were, we should, I think, do better to extend our opportunities for education and let individuality go.

II.

When he thought of Lucie he kept both his eyes and his ears open.

In regard to education I think that it is unreasonable to consider it as inconsistent with the maintenance of individuality; even if it is so, I think that it would be better for us to extend our advantages for education and let individuality go.

For one sentence in which the presence of unnecessary words makes the meaning obscure, there are a hundred in which the meaning is clear if the reader has the patience to force his way through the verbiage that encumbers it. In requiring so much effort to understand them, such sentences sin against clearness; but they also sin, and more seriously, against force. They will, therefore, be considered in the next chapter.

SECTION IV.

CLEARNESS AS AFFECTED BY ORDER.

Position of **Words.** — Obscurity is sometimes caused by the misplacing of a word.

I.

Ladies' black kid gloves $1.25 a pair.

FOR SALE. — A gentleman's handsome blood-bay driving-horse, 7 years old, 16 hands high, perfectly sound.

As his nicknames, Parson Harry and Don Dismallo, would suggest, he was not of a very cheerful disposition.

In consequence of the distress of the times, neither Lord Camden himself nor any of his tenants will shoot before the 4th of October.

If the letter really was a snare, he might at any moment find in himself a dagger that had been designed for the acting governor.

II.

Black ladies' kid gloves $1.25 a pair.

FOR SALE — A handsome blood-bay gentleman's driving horse, 7 years old, 16 hands high, perfectly sound.

As his nicknames would suggest Parson Harry and Don Dismallo he was not of a very cheerful disposition.

Owing to the distress of the times Lord Camden will not shoot himself or any of his tenants before the 4th of October.

If the letter really was a snare, he might find a dagger in him at any moment that had been designed for the acting Governor.

I.	II.
Charles Carroll of Carrollton was the richest of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and was the last survivor.	Charles Carroll of Carrollton was the richest and the last survivor of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

In this sentence as originally written, "richest" belongs with "survivor" in point of grammar, but not in point of sense.

I.	II.
Sights and sounds which should be infinitely suggestive, make sometimes not (or, fail sometimes to make) the slightest impression on our minds.	Sights and sounds which should be infinitely suggestive sometimes do not make the slightest impression on our minds.

A reader of this sentence as originally written might be uncertain whether "sometimes" qualifies the expression before it or that after it. Words so placed are said to be in a "squinting construction;" that is, they look two ways.

I.	II.
The many readers of Fannie Kemble's Records will be interested by the announcement that she has written a novel.	The many readers of her Records will be interested by the announcement that Fannie Kemble has written a novel.

How is a reader of this sentence as originally written to know at once that "her Records" are Fannie Kemble's?

As a rule, clearness demands that a pronoun should follow, not precede, the noun which it represents.

Other examples are —

I.	II.
The remaining six years of Filelfo's life were years of rapid decline. He made them disagreeable for every one.	The remaining six years of his life were years of rapid decline. Filelfo made them disagreeable for every one.

I.	II.
Taking a brazen helmet, he placed it upon his head.	Taking it, he placed upon his head a brazen helmet.
He would eat only when alone; and his food, even after it had been left in his room for hours, was often taken away untouched.	He would eat only when alone; and even after it had been left in his room for hours, his food was often taken away untouched.

If a noun and the pronoun which represents it are separated by only one or two words, the pronoun may come first without causing serious obscurity: *e. g.*, "In his childhood Daniel Webster was lazy." There are cases in which from the point of view of force or of ease this order is the better.

Position of **Phrases** and **Clauses.** — Obscurity is sometimes caused by the misplacing of a phrase or a clause.

I.	II.
A lady with a Roman nose sat threading a needle.	A lady sat threading a needle with a Roman nose.
All yesterday Angelo had run up and down on his naked feet to look for chestnuts.	All yesterday Angelo had run up and down to look for chestnuts on his naked feet.
In the military schools the Czar himself, in full uniform, kisses the cadets.	In the military schools the Czar himself kisses the cadets, in full uniform.
These shoes had not been two minutes on my feet before Larry, in those which I had worn at dinner, was carrying a tray of negus across the room.	These shoes had not been two minutes on my feet before Larry was carrying a tray of negus across the room in those which I had worn at dinner.
In some of these works, a protest in the name of peace is raised against this discussion.	In some of these works a protest is raised against this discussion in the name of peace.
In "Bonaventure," he has added to his creole sketches a set of beautiful pictures in a new but kindred field.	In "Bonaventure" he has added a set of beautiful pictures in a new but kindred field to his creole sketches.

I.

Accompanied by the best wishes of the family, Dr. Primrose now started with the colt for the fair.

We seem almost[1] to see before us this monster of large frame and bulk, fierce expression, and harsh voice.

One evening, John closed with a sigh "Felix Holt," which he had been reading aloud.

I took the opportunity to suggest in an undertone that the motion be adopted.

It was at this election that, to the great loss of subsequent historians, Horace Walpole, to whom we have hitherto been indebted for our fullest accounts of parliamentary proceedings, gave up his seat.

To picture simple human nature in simple every-day words was Wordsworth's theory.

His observations in any other branch of science would have been accepted by the scientific world with implicit confidence.

Amid storms of applause, Mr. Adams was escorted to the chair by Rhett and Williams, both Southerners.

Behind his back, Connor was making vehement signs of disgust at his want of consideration.

For two years, my uncle and I had been planning a visit to Trout Pond.

II.

Dr. Primrose now started for the fair accompanied by the best wishes of the family and the colt.

Of large frame and bulk, fierce expression and harsh voice, we seem to almost[1] see before us this monster.

One evening John closed "Felix Holt" which he had been reading aloud with a sigh.

I took the opportunity, in an undertone, to suggest that the motion be adopted.

It was at this election that Horace Walpole, to whom we have hitherto been indebted for our fullest accounts of parliamentary proceedings, to the great loss of subsequent historians, gave up his seat.

To picture simple, natural human nature was Wordsworth's theory in simple every day words.

His observations in any other branch of science would have been accepted with implicit confidence in the scientific world.

Mr. Adams was escorted to the chair amid storms of applause by Rhett and Williams, both Southerners.

Connor was making vehement signs of disgust at him for his want of consideration behind his back.

My uncle and I had been planning on visiting Trout Pond for two years.

[1] See pages 136–140.

I.

For long hours Anne pondered that look and the glance of intelligence which Miss Thorneley gave her brother.

On pretence of buying a gaudy neckerchief, he called first at the village shop kept by Mrs. Bawtrey, which Jessie had pointed out to him.

By Lance's particular wish, it was nearly finished before Ursula saw it.

On these fine days in May, it is pleasant to stand, like Faust, at a church-door and listen to the roll of an organ.

When he makes out his list of elective courses, he ought to consider prescribed studies as important work which is to be done.

Wanted, a youth who can drive, to look after a horse.

I spoke rarely and asked few questions, for she seldom paused.

II.

Anne pondered over[1] that look and the comprehending glance Miss Thorneley gave her brother for long hours.

He called first at the village shop kept by Mrs. Bawtrey, which Jessie had pointed out to him, on pretence of buying a gaudy neck-kerchief.

It was nearly finished before Ursula saw it, by Lance's particular wish.

It is pleasant to listen at a church-door, like Faust, and hear the roll of an organ from the doorsteps on these fine days in May.

He ought to consider prescribed studies as important work which is to be done, when he makes out his list of electives.

Wanted, a youth, to look after a horse, that can drive.

I spoke rarely, for she seldom paused, and I asked few questions.

If, as seems probable, the "for" clause in the last sentence gives a reason why "I asked few questions" as well as why "I spoke rarely," it should be placed at the end of the sentence.

I.

She looked most severely at the girl as she finished her work.

II.

She looked at the girl as she finished her work most severely.

The writer of the last sentence means to say that "she looked at the girl most severely," not that "she finished her work most severely."

[1] See page 151.

I.	II.
Darcy said that he had been spoiled as a child, having been brought up to believe that there was nothing which he could not get either by his rank or by his money.	Darcy said that he had been raised, and spoiled as a child, to believe that there was nothing which he could not get, either by his rank, or his money.

In this sentence as originally written, "spoiled as a child" is so placed as to obscure the meaning. We may properly speak of "raising" wheat for the market, but not of raising persons to believe.

In the CHOICE, *in the* NUMBER, *and in the* ORDER *of words in a sentence, aim at* CLEARNESS.

Chapter IV.

FORCE

SECTION I.

IMPORTANCE OF FORCE

A WRITER who wishes not only to be understood by his readers, but also to produce an impression upon them, will not content himself with observing the rules of good use, or with making his meaning clear. He will (1) choose the word that drives home his meaning, will (2) omit every clause, word, or syllable that does not help to communicate his meaning, and will (3) so frame every sentence as to throw the emphasis upon what is really emphatic and thus to fix attention upon the main point. Sometimes his purpose may be furthered by a word that suggests an idea rather than by one that states it with precision, by a compact expression rather than by one that develops the thought at length, or by a form of sentence that is a little unusual rather than by one that is more readily understood because familiar, but that is on that very account less impressive.

These things ordinary writers may do, in order to give force to their work; but they have no right to take liberties with the language, as some men of genius have done, — Pope, Carlyle, and Browning, for example. A young writer should never forget that his first duty is to follow good use, and his second to be clear; and he should never sacrifice either correctness or clearness to force of expression. To an intelligent reader nothing is more offensive than feeble or obscure thought masquerading in strong language, — the ass in the lion's skin.