Chapter VI.

UNITY

SECTION I.

IMPORTANCE OF UNITY

A WELL-CONSTRUCTED sentence contains one and but one leading thought, and presents it from one and but one point of view. Being free from heterogeneous matter, it does not confuse; being complete in itself, it is easily grasped. Words ceasing to be individual words merge their separate existence in the life of the sentence, and the reader, instead of toiling from word to word, takes in the whole thought at a glance.

The importance of unity can hardly be over-estimated. Other qualities are useful to a writer; but without this he can never achieve the highest success. With it, he will certainly be clear, and he may be effective.

Unity in expression grows out of unity in thought. A writer who is in the habit of keeping together in his mind things which belong together is more likely to form his sentences on a similar principle than one whose mind is a scene of confusion. He, then, who would secure unity in his language must have it in his thought.

SECTION II.

UNITY IN POINT OF FORM

A sentence that contains but one leading thought, and is therefore a unit in substance, may be so arranged that it seems to contain more than one leading thought, and is therefore not a unit in form.

Change in **Point** of **View**. — Sometimes a sentence lacks unity of form because it is so arranged as to force, or seem to force, the reader to change his point of view.

I.	II.
Darcy, without the slightest doubt that his great wealth was an inducement to marriage which no young lady would resist, approached Miss Bennet as if he were[1] making[2] a great sacrifice.	Without the slightest doubt but that he would be accepted, and that his great wealth would be an inducement which no young lady would refuse, Darcy approached Miss Bennet as if a great sacrifice was[1] being[2] made upon his part.

This sentence as originally written suffers not only from redundancy, weakness, and clumsiness, but also from lack of unity caused by a change of construction in the "as if" clause. Up to this point, the writer, by making Darcy the principal subject, has kept him before the reader's mind; but when, after mentioning Miss Bennet, he begins to speak of a "sacrifice," it is not at first clear by whom it is to be made. When the reader gets to "his," he finds out that Darcy is to make the sacrifice; but the momentary perplexity destroys the unity of impression which a writer should produce.

Other examples are —

I.	II.
Allston, though generally thought of as a painter only, was a man of more than one gift.	Although we generally think of Allston only as a painter, he was a man of more than one gift.
As I came home by Holmes Field, I was struck by the view of the field in the darkness.	As I came home by Holmes Field, the view of the field in the darkness struck me.

[1] See pages 99–100.

[2] See pages 235–238.

Other Forms of **Incoherence.** — A change in the point of view is a serious sin against unity of form; but it is not the only one.

I.

Rosalind carries out her part to the very end, — to the scene in which she declares that she has love "for no woman."

II.

Rosalind carries out her part to the very end making her apparent refusal as to marrying in her reply, "And I no woman."

In the last example, by beginning the second clause with "to the scene," we carry on and explain the idea of the first clause. In the sentence as originally written, the connection between what precedes and what follows "end" is far from clear.

I.

Salmon and trout abound, — a fact duly appreciated by several of our party.

II.

Salmon and trout abound and this fact was duly appreciated by several of our party.

In this example, by omitting "and," and by putting "a fact" in apposition with the clause "salmon and trout abound," we show that "a fact" sums up this clause.

I.

Going nearer, he was astonished to find that the ghost of his father-in-law was restlessly wandering up and down.

II.

He went nearer and was astonished to find that the ghost of his father-in-law was restlessly wandering up and down.

In this example, the principal idea is expressed by "was astonished to find," etc. "He went nearer" is subordinate in thought, but not in form; "going nearer" is subordinate in both thought and form. A sentence in which a subordinate idea is treated as if it were on the same level of importance with the leading idea is deficient in clearness and force,[1] as well as in unity.

[1] See pages 232–234.

Other examples are —

I.

The plan of explaining an elaborate sentence by a diagram that looks like a railway map or a genealogical tree seems to me more ingenious than useful.

It is amusing to see that[1] the proverb, "Monkeys imitate their masters," is, as some very recent events go to show, often exemplified in life.

A young lady who entered cheerfully and took a seat in front of me, fainted within less than half an hour in consequence of the excessive heat.

When Orlando, driven from home by the cruelty of his brother, and Rosalind, disguised as a boy and unknown to her fond lover, meet by accident, Orlando admits that he has cut the name of Rosalind in the bark of the trees, and that he is the author of the verses hanging upon their boughs.

When Mrs. Bennet, disgusted with her daughter, called her a wilful girl, Mr. Collins showed that he was not without sense by observing that, if she were such, he doubted whether she would make a suitable wife for a man in his position.

II.

An elaborate sentence when expressed by a diagram presents an appearance suggestive of a railway map or a genealogical tree and the system seems to me more ingenious than useful.

It is amusing to see how[1] the proverb that "Monkeys imitate their masters" is often exemplified in life and some very recent events form a case in point.

A young lady entered cheerfully and took a seat in front of me; but within less than half an hour she fainted in consequence of the excessive heat.

Orlando, driven from home by the cruelty of his brother and Rosalind disguised as a boy and unknown to her fond lover meet by accident and Orlando acknowledges the authorship[2] of the verses hung upon the boughs and that[2] he has cut the name of Rosalind upon the bark of the trees.

Mrs. Bennet was disgusted with her daughter and called her a wilful girl who wanted to have her own way, to which Mr. Collins showed that he did have some sense, by observing that, in that case, he did not know as she would make a suitable wife for a man in his position.

[1] See page 154.

[2] See page 206.

I.	II.
The author, who is very seldom serious in anything he says, more than half intended his theme as a jest.	The author more than half intended his theme as a jest, and is very seldom serious in anything he says.
As he left the stage, he remarked, "You don't know what you have missed."	He retired from the stage and remarked, "You don't know what you have missed."
As I had been cooped up in the house all the morning, I started in the middle of the afternoon for a walk.	I had been cooped up in the house all the morning and so started out in the middle of the afternoon for a walk.

In these sentences as originally written, the use of "and" to connect clauses of unequal importance is an offence against both force [1] and unity.

I.	II.
This problem I have tried to solve; but it is one thing to explain, another thing to suggest a remedy.	This question I have tried to solve, but it is one thing to explain, but it is another thing to suggest a remedy.

It is not easy for a reader of this sentence as originally written to get hold of its meaning as a whole. By removing the second "but," we make the sentence a unit.

I.	II.
For Swift's action in leaving his first charge in the church no motives but mercenary ones can be found.	When Swift left his first charge in the church one can see no other than mercenary motives which should influence him to do so.

In this sentence as originally written, "when" leads a reader to expect information about what Swift did at the time of leaving his first church, or where he went afterward, not about his motives in leaving. Unity requires that the first word in a sentence should give a correct notion of what is to follow, or at least that it should not give an incorrect one.

[1] See pages 232–234.

I.	II.
Darcy could not but [1] notice that she seemed to be a woman of sense, that she impressed others favorably, that, in short, she was one of those rare beings near whom the mind unconsciously delights to linger.	Darcy could but [1] notice that she seemed sensible, that she had made a very fair exhibition and impression, in short, that she was one of those mortals who are few to any one individual, and upon whom the mind dwells with pleasure without really thinking, only just wandering about without definite point or purpose leaving only a vague trail behind, yet very pleasing to the senses.

This sentence as originally written is "without form and void." It exemplifies the worst sort of writing, — that in which the author, not knowing what to say, pours out a flood of words. The meaning of several clauses can only be guessed; and the participles at the end of the sentence are like a mob without a leader.

SECTION III.

UNITY IN POINT OF SUBSTANCE

Too Much in a **Sentence.** — A sentence that contains more than one leading thought is not a unit in substance.

I.	II.
(*a*) Professor Benjamin Owen, the Swedish composer who has just died in Michigan, came to America with Ole Bull more than thirty years ago.	Professor Benjamin Owen, who has just died in Michigan, was a composer of some note, a native of Sweden, and came to America with Ole Bull over thirty years ago.
(*b*) Professor Benjamin Owen, who has just died in Michigan, was a native of Sweden, and a composer of some note. He came to America with Ole Bull more than thirty years ago.	

[1] See pages 161–162.

If the writer of the original sentence wished to emphasize the fact that Professor Owen came to America with Ole Bull, he should have mentioned parenthetically, not only that Professor Owen has just died in Michigan, but also, as in I. (*a*), that he was a native of Sweden, and that he was a composer. If the writer meant to convey two ideas, — (1) what Professor Owen was, and (2) what he did, — he should, as in I. (*b*), have put each of these ideas into a separate sentence.

I.

John possessed a small amount of book-learning, but had seen little of the world. He was conceited and arrogant, but withal obsequious to the rich.

II.

John had received a small amount of book-learning; but had seen little of the world, and was conceited and arrogant, but withal obsequious before the rich.

The sentence given under II. lacks unity of substance. Since there is no apparent connection between John's book-learning and ignorance of the world on the one hand and his traits of character on the other, there is no sufficient reason for putting what is said about the former into the same sentence with what is said about the latter.

I.

This is only one of Mr. Smith's schemes for making himself the next President. To accomplish this end, he is willing to adopt any scheme that his friends may invent.

II.

This is only one of Mr. Smith's schemes to become the next President and to accomplish this end he is willing to adopt any scheme that his friends may invent.

In the sentence given under II., "and," at first sight, appears to connect "to become the next President" with "to accomplish this end;" but in fact the two expressions mean the same thing. By beginning a new sentence with "to accomplish," we separate what is said about one of

Mr. Smith's schemes from what is said about his general purpose, and thus secure unity.

I.

Opposite Lilliput was another city with which it was constantly at war. Just before Gulliver arrived, this city had prepared a large fleet with the express intention of annihilating Lilliput.

II.

Opposite Lilliput there was another city, which was constantly at war with them and a large fleet had been prepared, just before Gulliver arrived, by them with the express intention of annihilating Lilliput.

The writer of the sentence under II., by putting into one sentence both what he says in general about the city opposite Lilliput and what he says in particular about the doings of that city just before Gulliver's arrival, violates the principle of unity. The general remark should be in one sentence; the particular remark, in another.

I.

Swift's ways were coarse and vulgar. He would irritate a man by making fun of him just for the pleasure of putting him under his feet.

II.

Swift was coarse and very vulgar in his ways and would displease some one by making vile fun of him just for the pleasure he got from seeing some one crushed under his foot.

Swift's general characteristics belong in one sentence; the particular manifestations of them, in another.

I.

At the accession of Henry IV. of Germany, Paul was a canon of Ratisbon. Falling, somehow, under the displeasure of his monarch, he was banished from his see.

II.

Paul was a canon of Ratisbon at the accession of Henry IV. of Germany and somehow fell under the displeasure of his monarch and was banished from his see.

The assertion that Paul was a canon belongs in one sentence; the remark about his banishment, in another.

I.

He bore the scar to his grave. At his funeral many of his old friends gathered to honor the memory of a gallant soldier and beloved comrade.

II.

He bore the scar to his grave, where many of his old friends gathered to pay their last tribute to the memory of a gallant soldier and well beloved comrade.

The remark about the scar belongs in one sentence; the account of the funeral, in another.

I.

The shepherd promised to bring Rosalind to Orlando the next day. In case this were done — and Orlando doubted very much whether it would be — Orlando agreed to marry Rosalind if she were willing.

II.

The shepherd promised to produce Orlando's Rosalind the next day; if such a thing occurred, and Orlando doubted very much that it would occur, Orlando would marry Rosalind, she being willing.[1]

The attempt to put into one sentence both what the shepherd said to Orlando and what Orlando said to the shepherd is not successful. We secure unity by giving a sentence to each.

I.

Iago thought that the surest way to take vengeance on Othello was to put a stop to his marriage with Desdemona. Accordingly, on the night fixed for the elopement, he told his friend Roderigo about it, and persuaded him to wake up Brabantio; but it was too late, — Othello was already married.

II.

Iago thought that the surest way to take vengeance on Othello, was to interrupt the marriage between Desdemona and him, and, accordingly, on the night of the elopement, he aroused Brabantio, not himself, but he persuaded Roderigo a friend of his to do it for him, and told him the fact of the elopement; but Iago was too late that time, for Othello was already married.

[1] See page 205.

The sentence given under II. is an unsuccessful attempt to tell in one breath the whole story of Iago's effort to prevent Othello's marriage. We secure unity by putting into one sentence all that relates to Iago's purpose, and into another all that relates to his scheme for carrying out his purpose.

I.

The myth on which this story is founded is[1] that the hero Taras, while upon a voyage of colonization, was saved from shipwreck by a dolphin sent by his father, and was borne safely to the spot where Tarentum now stands. There, out of gratitude for his escape, he founded the city.

II.

The myth on which this story is founded was[1] that the hero Taras when upon a voyage of settlement was saved from shipwreck by a dolphin sent by his father Neptune and borne into safety to the spot where Tarentum now stands and there out of gratitude for his escape he erected the city.

In trying to tell the whole story of the myth in a single sentence, the writer puts together two remotely connected facts. The account of the hero's landing is enough for one sentence.

Sentences which try to tell everything at once tell nothing clearly or effectively. They violate unity of time, of place, of subject, — one or all.

Other examples are —

I.

Far from taking his refusal to heart, he made, within a week, the acquaintance of a young lady in the neighborhood and proposed to her. He was accepted; for though the lady had passed what might be called the marriageable age, she wanted to marry for the sake of a home.

II.

He did not take his refusal to heart, but within a week, became acquainted with a young lady in the neighborhood, who was past what might be called the marriageable age, but who wanted to marry for the sake of a home, and having proposed to her, was accepted.

[1] See page 94.

I.

When Mr. Collins heard that Elizabeth was stubborn in disposition, he was on the point of refusing to marry her; but Mrs. Bennet did not give him time to say anything. She hurried off to persuade Elizabeth to accept him; but Elizabeth would not be persuaded.

In less than a month he was again at sea, with a letter of marque which would open to him the French harbors in all parts of the world. He soon captured in the mouth of the Channel a large vessel which was sailing without a convoy.

Shortly afterward, while on a visit to the Bentleys, he proposed a second time to Elizabeth and was accepted. In a few weeks they were married. They lived long and happily together.

The Fay house has a good record. In years gone by, it served the country, I believe, by lodging a general of the Revolution. He, doubtless, found it large enough; but the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women, though it began work in a way much less pretentious than its name, outgrew the Fay house soon after moving in. Two summers ago, the house had to be very much enlarged and improved.

II.

When Mr. Collins heard that Elizabeth was stubborn in disposition he was on the point of refusing to marry her, but Mrs. Bennet did not give him time to say anything but immediately hastened to persuade Elizabeth; but Elizabeth would not be persuaded.

He had a letter of marque which would open the French harbors to him in all parts of the world; and in less than a month he was again at sea and had captured a large vessel in the mouth of the channel, which was sailing without a convoy.

Shortly after he visited the Bentleys and proposed a second time to Elizabeth and his proposition [1] was accepted and in a few weeks they were married, and lived a long and happy life together.

The Fay house has a good record. In the years gone by it served its country, I believe, by lodging a Revolutionary General, or something like that; and he, doubtless, found it plenty large enough but, though the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women began work in a way much less pretentious than its name, it was not long in the Fay house before it outgrew it; and two summers ago the house was very much enlarged and improved.

[1] See page 56.

I.

I was reading it to Mrs. Cole. After she went away I was reading it again to my mother, for it is such a pleasure to her — a letter from Jane — that she can never hear it often enough. So I knew it could not be far off; and here it is, only just under my huswife; and since you are so kind as to wish to hear what she says — But, first of all, I really must, in justice to Jane, apologize for her writing so short a letter, — only two pages you see, hardly two. Generally she fills the whole paper and crosses half.

II.

I was reading it to Mrs. Cole, and, since she went away, I was reading it again to my mother, for it is such a pleasure to her — a letter from Jane — that she can never hear it often enough; so I knew it could not be far off, and here it is, only just under my huswife, — and since you are so kind as to wish to hear what she says; but, first of all, I really must, in justice to Jane, apologize for her writing so short a letter, only two pages you see, hardly two, and in general she fills the whole paper and crosses half.

The last sentence given under II. lacks unity in every respect and from every point of view. It fell from the lips of Miss Bates, — a character in Jane Austen's "Emma," — who is as slipshod in mind as she is tedious and confusing in speech.

In each of the foregoing sentences as originally written, the offence against unity consists in putting into one sentence things that do not belong together.

Too Little in a **Sentence.** — A lack of unity is sometimes caused by scattering through two or more sentences a thought which belongs in a single sentence.

I.

Finding in the bed a person whom he supposed to be his brother, he got a pail of water and poured it over the unlucky sleeper.

II.

He found a person in the bed and supposed it to be his brother. He accordingly got a pail of water and poured it over the unfortunate sleeper.

In this example, the important fact is that "he" poured a pail of water over a person whom he mistook for his brother. In the passage as originally written, a part of this fact is put into one sentence, a part into another. Unity is promoted by putting the whole story into a single sentence.

Other examples are —

I.

Though I have the greatest respect for Mrs. Tinsel, she seems to me an affected woman, — an impression caused, perhaps, by some feminine gossip which I overheard a few days ago.

Last night I heard a missionary from India relate an incident that illustrates very well the position of women among the Brahmins.

The reported attempt of a New York paper to dissuade parents from sending their sons to Harvard and Yale because the political economy taught in these institutions tends[1] to propagate free-trade doctrines sheds a strong light on the Protectionist position,—the position that there can be only one side to the question: the Protectionist, or so-called American, side.

"Rosalie" and his satirical poems — which remind you of Pope — are his best work.

II.

Though I have the greatest respect for Mrs. Tinsel, she seems to me an affected woman. Perhaps my impression is due to some feminine gossip which I overheard a few days ago.

Last night I heard an address by a missionary who has taught in India. He related an incident that illustrates very well the position of women among the Brahmins.

The report to the effect that a New York paper sought to dissuade parents from sending their sons to Harvard and Yale because the political Economy taught in these institutions tended[1] to propagate free trade doctrines, is illustrative of the protectionist position. He here maintains that there can be only one side to the question and that of course is the so called American or Protectionist's side.

"Rosalie" and his satirical poems are his best work. In the latter he reminds you of Pope.

[1] See page 94.

I.

There was a shaking of dry bones at Oxford, particularly at Oriel, which had already won a sort of intellectual supremacy in the University.

The value of railway property in the United States, which in 1891 was estimated at $10,697,817,239, is unparalleled in the history of any other industry.

In one of the tenement districts, across which I was taking a short cut, dirty, half-clad children were playing on the sidewalks and almost under the feet of the horses in the street.

In one of my childish impulses to do the romantic, I left my brothers in the library, crept upstairs to the garret, took the ladder that I found there, and placing it against the eaves, climbed to[1] the tower roof.

II.

There was a shaking of dry bones in Oxford and particularly in Oriel. Oriel had already won a sort of intellectual supremacy in the University.

The value of railway property in the United States in 1891 was estimated at $10,697,817,239. This capital is unparalleled in the history of any other industry.

I was taking a short cut across one of the tenement districts. Dirty, half-clad children were playing on the sidewalks and in the street almost under the feet of the horses.

It was only one of my childish impulses to do the romantic. I left my brothers in the library and crept upstairs to the garret, took the ladder that I found there and climbed on to[1] the tower roof. I stood the ladder against the eaves and climbed to the roof.

In each of the foregoing passages as originally written, the offence against unity consists in scattering through two or more sentences that which belongs in one.

Aim at UNITY *in* FORM *and in* SUBSTANCE.

[1] See page 146.