I.

Landing near San Juan del Sur, they made for two days and nights forced marches, through a pelting storm, over wretched roads. In all — including a small troop of native soldiers — they numbered one hundred and sixty-five men.

This little force marched on Rivas, which was held by six hundred men, made a brave charge, and drove the Serviles through the narrow streets of the town to the Plaza.

II.

Landing near San Juan del Sur they made for two days and nights forced marches through a pelting storm over wretched roads. With them hurried a small troop of native soldiers making in all a force of 165 men. Waiting their attack in Rivas were 600 men.

The Americans charged bravely and drove the Serviles through the narrow streets of the town to the Plaza.

These passages as originally written show the serious disadvantages of changing the point of view.

Make the transition FROM SENTENCE TO SENTENCE *as plain as possible.*

Beware of changing the POINT OF VIEW.

Chapter III.

PARAGRAPHS BY THEMSELVES AND IN SUCCESSION

What a Paragraph Should Contain. — One way of showing what a paragraph is, is to show what it is not.

Mr Darcy was invited by Mr Bingley to make him a visit at his place.

It happened that, early one morning, Elizabeth Bennet had taken a walk, and on her way had visited the Bingleys.

Here she met Mr Darcy, and at first sight took a dislike to him.

She took cold on account of her walk and was not able to go home for two days; so her sister came and took care of her.

The sister of Bingley wanted to marry Mr Darcy on account of his money, although she could not consider herself poor.

It seems that Mr Darcy was struck at the first sight by the handsome face of Elizabeth and Mr Bingley also was not slow to acknowledge that he liked Jane, Elizabeth's sister.

Soon after the malady was cured, the sisters returned home.

In a few days Mr Bennet invited Mr Darcy and Bingly to a dinner.

Here also Mr Darcy showed a desire for Elizabeths company.

At this time there was quatred at Longbourn a regiment.

This was a very pleasing addition to the pleasures of the Bennet's, for there was always some entertainiment going on, in which they generally took part.

A Mr Wickham made his appearance here in order to join the regiment.

He was very handsome, and could keep up a lively conversation so that he was liked by everyone, especially the Bennets.

One day Mr Darcy with Mr Bingley were riding through Longbourn when they met the Bennets who were with Mr Wickham. As soon as Wickham saw Darcy he turned colour and passed on. Elizabeth noticed this and related it to her sister and they two had a great amount of gossip over the event.

The next time Elizabeth met Wickham she enquired of him when he and Mr Darcy had met before.

He told her a story that threw a dark light on Mr Darcy and made himself out as a very wronged man.

This was believed by all who heard of it untill Wickham eloped with Lydia Bennet leaving great many debts behind him.

These Mr Darcy paid and found out where the eloped couple were staying, and reported his find to Mr Bennet's brother.

This transaction was found out by Elizabeth, who immediately had to admit to her sister that she liked Mr Darcy more than ever.

This soon grew into love which finally resulted in her marriage.[1]

It is hard to say which is worse, — the fault exemplified in this essay, that of making nearly every sentence "a paragraph by itself, so that a page, except for its untidiness, might be taken from a primer," [1] or the fault of cramming a whole essay into a single paragraph, as is done in the essay which follows.

The oriental method of administering justice, in days gone by, is neatly travestied in a little story of which I have recently seen several versions. As a burglar was trying to break into the house of a citizen of Cairo, the frame-work of the second story window to which he clung, gave way and he fell to the street, breaking a leg. Limping before the Cadi, he indignantly demanded that the owner of the house be punished. "You shall have justice," said the judge. The owner being summoned claimed that the accident was due to the poor wood-work and that the carpenter not he was to blame. "That sounds reasonable," said the Cadi, "let the carpenter be called." The carpenter admitted that the window was defective "but how could I do any better," said he, "when the mason-work was out of plumb?" "To be sure," replied the judge and he sent for the mason. The mason could not deny that the coping was crooked. He explained that while he was placing it in position, his attention was distracted from his work by a pretty girl, in a blue tunic, who

[1] This composition, which was written in the examination room by a candidate for admission to Harvard College, is copied from a paper on "The Harvard Admission Examination in English" by Professor L. B. R. Briggs (The Academy: Syracuse, September, 1888).

passed on the other side of the street. "Then you are blameless," said the Cadi, and the girl was sent for. "I admit," said she, "that I am pretty, but that's not my fault; and if my blue tunic attracted the mason's attention, the dyer, not I, is responsible." "That's good logic," said the judge, "let the dyer be called." The dyer came and pleaded guilty. "Take the wretch," said the Cadi, to the thief, "and hang him from his own door-post." The people applauded this wise sentence and hurried off to carry it out. Soon they returned and reported that the dyer was too tall to be hung from his door-post. "Find a short dyer and hang him instead" said the Cadi, with a yawn; "let justice be done though the heavens fall."

Well told as this familiar story is, it loses much by being put into a single paragraph. Much of it is dialogue, and clearness requires that each speech of each speaker in a dialogue should make a separate paragraph. In the absence of this means of rapidly connecting each speech with the speaker, a reader's eye and mind are soon tired by the additional effort unnecessarily imposed upon him. Some space is saved, but more time is lost.

I.

It is not the intellectual part of men, they urge, that directs the course of their lives. It is not their opinions but their character.[1]

How wide of the mark this popular prepossession is! To ascertain a man's opinions on certain subjects is often one of the best modes of detecting his character; for, usually, opinions grow out of character.

II.

It is not the intellectual part of men, they urge, that directs the course of their lives. It is their character, not their opinions.[1] But how wide of the mark this popular prepossession is. One's opinions very commonly grow out of one's character, and it is often one of the best modes of detecting the character to ascertain, on certain subjects, the opinions.

The thought in this passage consists of two parts, — (1) the statement of a proposition, and (2) the answer to it.

[1] See page 250.

Obviously each part should be put into a separate paragraph, as it would be if the two sides of the argument were presented in the form of a dialogue.

I.

Blankborough is a small country village of Massachusetts, about thirty miles from Boston. It consists of little more than a few scattered wooden houses, owned by New England farmers; but having a truly American idea of its own importance, it has selectmen, coroners, and notary-publics enough for a town three times its size.

In the middle of the village, on a little rise of land, stands a brick town-hall, almost large enough to contain all the citizens' houses together. Opposite this enormous structure rises a large soldiers' monument, on which are six names and a long dedication. Near by stands the inevitable "meeting-house," with its white steeple towering proudly over a modest little Episcopal church by its side.

II.

Blankborough is a little country village of Massachusetts, about thirty miles from Boston. It is little more than a collection of scattered wooden houses, owned by typical New England farmers; but having a truly American idea of its own importance it provides selectmen, coroners, and notary publics enough for a town three times its size. A brick town-hall, almost large enough to contain all the citizens' houses, stands on a little rise of land in the middle of the village, and is fronted by a large soldiers' monument on which are six names and a long dedication. Near by stands the inevitable "meeting-house," the white steeple of which towers proudly over a modest little Episcopal church by its side.

The general description of Blankborough properly forms one paragraph; the detailed account of the buildings in the centre of the village, another.

I.

Henry Clay was born April 12, 1777, in Hanover County, Virginia. His family laid no claim to illustrious pedigree, but

II.

Henry Clay was born on April 12th, 1777, in Hanover County, Virginia. His family was distinguished for sterling worth, virtue,

I.

was distinguished for integrity, virtue, and sterling worth.[1] Inheriting few worldly advantages, he alone, like Napoleon, was "the architect of his fortune."

His father, John Clay, was a Baptist clergyman, who was remarkable, etc.

II.

and integrity; but laid no claim to illustrious pedigree.[1] By birth he received few worldly advantages, and like Napoleon "he alone was the architect of his fortune." His father, John Clay, was a Baptist clergyman, who was remarkable etc.

A statement of the general facts relating to Clay's birth, ancestry, and circumstances belongs in one paragraph; a detailed account of his father's career in another.

A further advantage of the division of this passage into two paragraphs is that it puts the emphatic words "architect of his fortune" in a prominent position. What has already been said about the advantage of ending a sentence with a strong expression[2] applies, with tenfold force, to the ending of a paragraph. Words so placed seem to stand out from the page.

I.

For my G. theme, I have written a story from real life, in which I have tried, so far as possible, to suppress the ideal, in order to strengthen the real.

In my hero I have depicted not a remarkably lovable character, but a simple every-day veteran of the poorer class with no strong virtues to enlist the reader's sympathies. In Mary, the other principal character, I have tried to represent a thrifty, loveless, outspoken housewife, with a truthful but sharp tongue, which

II.

For my G. theme I have written a story taken from real life. I have tried so far as possible to suppress the ideal for the sake of strengthening the realism of it. My hero I have depicted as a not remarkably lovable character but a simple everyday veteran of the poorer class; he has no strong virtues to enlist the reader's sympathies. Mary, the other principal character, is a thrifty, loveless outspoken housewife. It is the cutting truth of her remarks that eventually

[1] See page 250.

[2] See page 243.

I.

eventually drives the old man to his death.

In the first part of the theme, I have "stood in with" the old man, assuming acquaintance with his feelings and thoughts. In the second part, taking the landlady's point of view, I have put the old man at a distance, beyond the circle of sympathy, my object being, of course, to represent the old man's loneliness in the world, — a loneliness which is emphasized by the somewhat ideal speech at the end of Part I.

If, with all this array of realism, I succeed in winning my reader's sympathy and holding his attention, I shall consider my story successful.

II.

drive the old veteran to his death. Through the first part the writer has "stood in with" the old man, assumed acquaintance with his feelings and thoughts. In the second, he takes the point of view of the landlady putting the old man at a distance, out of the circle of sympathy. This is, of course, to present the old man's loneliness in the world. The somewhat ideal speech at the end of Part I. has its raison d'être in the fact that it emphasizes and strengthens this loneliness. If with all this array of realism I succeed in getting my reader's sympathy and holding his attention, I shall consider my story successful.

In this passage as originally written, the train of thought is not easy to follow; but the difficulty disappears when the passage is broken into four paragraphs. The first of the four speaks of the general plan of the story; the second, of the characters represented; the third, of the author's point of view in the first and in the second part; and the fourth, of the probability of his success.

I.

The "Fable for Critics" is one of the poems of the late Mr. Lowell with which the public is most familiar. In easy verse which flows on, never stagnating, obstructed by no rhyme however difficult, it gives brief, witty cri-

II.

The Fable for Critics is one of the poems of the late Mr. Lowell with which the public is most familiar. In easy verse which flows on, never halting, balked by no rhyme however difficult, it gives brief, witty critiques of

I.

tiques of poets then noteworthy. The passages which relate to Emerson, Whittier, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Holmes, and Lowell himself interest us most nowadays; for the lustre of these authors is as bright now as ever. Others who are deemed worthy of a place in this catalogue are, to the present generation, hardly more than names.

Of these last one of the best examples is James Fenimore Cooper. In him we have a novelist of the old school, one who rapidly attained popularity both here and abroad, won the flattering title of "The American Scott," and was counted the best novelist that up to his time America had produced, but who was, when he died, one of the most cordially hated men in the country, because, in the height of his popularity, he dared to criticise his native land.

II.

poets then noteworthy. The passages which interest us the most nowadays are those which relate to Emerson, Whittier, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Holmes, and Lowell himself, authors whose lustre is as bright now as ever; but there are other writers deemed worthy of a place in this catalogue who are hardly more than names to the present generation. Of these one of the best examples is James Fenimore Cooper.

Here we have a novelist of the old school, one who rapidly attained popularity both here and abroad, won the flattering title of "The American Scott" and was considered the best novelist America had yet produced, but who dared in the height of his popularity to criticise his native land in some respects and died one of the most cordially hated men in the country.

In this passage as originally written, the sentence, "Of these one of the best examples is James Fenimore Cooper," comes at the end of a paragraph which speaks of other American authors; but it evidently belongs at the beginning of the next paragraph, which deals with Cooper himself.

From Paragraph to Paragraph. — A good writer helps his reader to get from paragraph to paragraph, as from sentence to sentence, with as little friction as possible.

I.

At the desire of the colonists, or, at least, with their consent, negroes were introduced into all the other colonies soon after their foundation.

What was the cause of this rapid growth of slavery?

II.

Negroes were introduced into all the other colonies soon after their foundation, at the desire of,[1] or at least with the consent of[1] the colonists.

What was the cause of this rapid growth of slavery?

The first paragraph as originally written ends with a reference to the circumstances attending the introduction of negroes into the colonies; but it is the fact of introduction, not these circumstances, which leads to the question asked in the succeeding paragraph.

I.

His style was bright, sparkling, and incisive, and his writings were always wholesome.

This last quality was doubtless due in part to his genuine passion for outdoor life; for the eyes of a man who loves to face the openness of sea and sky must be tolerably clear.

II.

His style was bright sparkling and incisive, and his writings always wholesome.

Doubtless his genuine passion for outdoor life helped to give him this last quality. A man's eyes must be tolerably clear if he can love to face the openness of sea and sky.

In this passage as originally written, the words "this last quality," which point back to the first paragraph, stand at the end of the first sentence of the second. In the passage as amended, these words are so placed as to make the connection plain.

I.

These grievances cannot be reformed by simple preaching and protesting against them, such as is indulged in every day,

II.

There can be no reform by simple preaching and protesting against these grievances, as is done every day, not only by

[1] See page 265.

I.

not only by newspapers and ministers but also by politicians when they are canvassing for their party, and promising what they never intend to perform. Some more effectual remedy must be resorted to.

Action is necessary, — action by the scholar, whose advantages over the ignorant man are too obvious to be enumerated. He must oppose those who by clever management and bribery are ascending, step by step, to high public office, where their influence will be exercised for evil.

II.

newspapers and ministers but also by politicians when they are canvassing for their party and promising what they never intend to perform. Some more effectual remedy must be resorted to. The advantages which a scholar has over an ignorant man are too obvious to be enumerated; and so he must be the one to institute a reform, not by simple preaching but by action; he must oppose those who by clever management and bribery are ascending, step by step, to high public office where their influence will be exercised for evil.

This passage, originally written as a single paragraph, naturally divides itself into two, — the first setting forth the uselessness of talk, the second the importance of action.

By bringing "these grievances" to the beginning of the first paragraph, we show its connection with the preceding paragraph (not quoted). By beginning the second paragraph with "action," we indicate the subject of this paragraph, and at the same time suggest an antithesis[1] with the "preaching and protesting" spoken of in the first.

I.

Psychology tells us that when all but one of the avenues to the brain — hearing, sight, etc. — have been cut off, an idea conveyed by the one remaining avenue is intense.

This fact explains why one

II.

Psychology tells us that when all the avenues to the brain, — hearing, sight, etc., have with one exception been cut off, any idea conveyed by the one remaining avenue is very intense. I suppose, then, that this fact ex-

[1] See pages 248–249.

I.

can read more understandingly late at night; for then there is nothing, or next to nothing, to attract eye or ear. Then not only the understanding but also the imagination is at its strongest. Then pictures made by the memory are as strong as those of reality, and perhaps stronger; for they idealize the real. Often, too, they are as pleasant as real pictures would be.

For those who cannot form these mental pictures I am heartily sorry. If, as is sometimes said, the ability to form them fades as education advances, I pray never to be fully educated.

II.

plains why one can read more understandingly, late at night; for the sounds have all gone, and there is no new sight to attract the eyes. Surely, then one can best "fade away into the forest dim." The imagination is as strong as the reality would be. Perhaps it is stronger; for with most of us a memory picture is an idealistic picture. It is often as pleasant; and I am sorry for those who cannot form those mental pictures. The ability to do so fades, they say, as education advances. Then let me never be fully educated.

This passage as originally written puts into a single paragraph what is much more clearly expressed in three, — the first stating what "psychology tells us," the second using what "psychology tells us" to explain certain common phenomena, the third making a personal application of what has been said in the second.

"This fact" at the beginning of the second paragraph points back to the first; "For those who cannot form these mental pictures" at the beginning of the third paragraph points back to the second.

I.

Finally, if eccentricity has always, and in every community, been a matter of reproach, it is not proper to say that any particular society which is intolerant of eccentricity is not in a whole-

II.

Finally, if eccentricity has always, and in every community, been a matter of reproach, it is not proper to say that any particular society is not in a wholesome state because intole-

I.

some state; for every quality is relative, and a society cannot be altogether wholesome or the reverse any more than it can be wholly civilized or wholly barbarous. Mill's statement, then, is not true.

Even if true, was the statement worth making? Would it not be much better if the leading minds of the day (and Mill certainly was one of them) would cease declaiming against the essential qualities of society, and would condescend to the humble office of correcting particular abuses?[1]

II.

rant of eccentricity; for every quality is relative, and all societies can be neither wholesome nor the opposite any more than they can all be civilized or all barbarous; hence Mill's statement is not true.

I would add here, as a little moral, that it would be much better if the leading minds of the day (and Mill certainly was one of them) would condescend to the humble station of correcting particular abuses, and cease declaiming against the essential qualities of society.[1]

In this passage as originally written, there is nothing to connect the second paragraph with the first. In the passage as revised, the missing link is supplied.

I.

For what do we value Newman? What was his great service to those of us who have no part or lot in the faith of his communion? What was his contribution to the stock of ideas which is the common possession of the world? Is there nothing beyond an exalted character and a beautiful life for which Newman is permanently memorable?

These questions not a few of Newman's admirers would, I suspect, find it somewhat difficult to answer.

II.

For what do we value Newman? What was his great service to those of us who have no part or lot in the faith of his own communion? What was his contribution to the stock of ideas which is the common possession of the world? Is there nothing beyond an exalted character and a beautiful life for which Newman is permanently memorable? Not a few of his admirers, I suspect, would be somewhat hard put to it to answer.

[1] See page 250.

This passage naturally divides itself into two paragraphs, — one asking certain questions, the other dwelling upon the difficulty of answering them.

The words "These questions," at the beginning of the second paragraph point back to the first paragraph. They supply the missing link between what precedes and what follows.

I.

Reference is often made to "the child's imagination," as if all children were equally gifted with the power of personifying objects and of changing in fancy their own personality. This supposition is altogether too sweeping; for many children have so little imagination that they look at everything from a severely practical point of view, and many others who join in games in which imagination plays a great part do so almost entirely in imitation of their playmates.

There are children, however, who do not imitate others, but who have imagination, the real actor's instinct, — as when a boy says to his brother, "Play you're a horse, and I'll drive you." With some, this desire to play they are something or somebody else begins at a very early age.

II.

People often refer to "the child's imagination" as if all children were gifted with the same great powers of personification of objects and fancied changes of personality. This is altogether too sweeping; many children have so little that they look at everything from a severely practical point of view, and many others who join in games where imagination plays a great part, do so almost entirely in imitation of their playmates.

In some children the desire to "play they are somebody else" begins at a very early age. It is not merely imitation but the real actor's instinct when a boy says to his brother "Play you're a horse and I'll drive you."

In this passage as originally written, the connection between the second paragraph and the first is far from plain. By re-arranging the second paragraph, and by inserting "however," we show what the connection really is.

Make every paragraph a UNIT.

Make the transition FROM PARAGRAPH TO PARAGRAPH *as plain as possible.*

We have seen that a paragraph is something more than a sentence and something less than an essay; and that it is an important means of marking the natural divisions of a composition, and thus making it easier for a reader to understand the composition as a whole. We have seen that in an ideal paragraph the sentences fit into one another as closely as the nature of language permits, and that taken together they constitute a whole. We have seen, too, that an ideal paragraph begins with the word or words that are most closely connected with what precedes, and ends with the word or words that are most closely connected with what follows.

If a paragraph complies with these fundamental requirements, it matters not whether it contain one sentence or twenty. In paragraphs, as in sentences, differences in subject matter and in manner of presentation necessarily result in differences of form; in paragraphs as in sentences, the principle of unity faithfully applied leads to variety.

To write a single sentence in which proper words shall be in proper places is no slight task; to write a single paragraph that shall be good at all points is far from easy: but to write a succession of paragraphs that shall fulfil all the conditions of excellence is what few students of the art of composition can expect to accomplish. It is only by constant practice under intelligent and stimulating criticism, and by constant study of the best work of the best authors, that even moderate success can be achieved.