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A REFRESHER COURSE IN ENGLISH

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PREFACE

THIS book is one of the REFRESHER SERIES. The books in the series will very likely recall your former lessons. At the time you probably paid but scant attention to the lessons. Perhaps their value was not apparent to you. Still they made some impression, and the REFRESHER SERIES of books seeks to deepen that impression and turn it into real knowledge.

In using these books please do not content yourself with a mere reading and an acquiescence. Be active in your learning. Make each Study a mere prelude to the Exercises. Your working of the Exercises is what really counts. Master the Study ; tackle the Exercises with quiet confidence ; consult the Answers only when you are quite satisfied that you can do no more with those Exercises.

We hope that you will enjoy the books, we hope, too, that they will bring you to a thorough and lasting knowledge of the topics with which they deal.

W. J. W.

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Study I

GOOD ENGLISH

THE QUESTION

Wherein lies the goodness of "Good English"? What must I do in order to be a writer of that Good English?

THE ANSWER

There is the question to ask, a sensible one, too. "What is my real aim in my effort to write good English? What are the matters of importance to which I must apply my mind?" Along with that question goes its corollary, its natural successor: "In my study, am I spending a too great part of my limited time upon what are only minor points?" It is a foolish allocation of time to give more to incidentals and less to essentials.

You will, we think, agree that "good English" consists in right words rightly arranged. Very well; in order to write good English two things are essential. The first is this: we must have at our command an adequate supply of English words and an ability to choose wisely from that supply. The second is this: we must have skill in arranging those words so that our readers may reach our intended meaning without a great expense of time and thought.

In other words, the essence is this: get a **vocabulary** ample for your wants and give yourself abundant **practice** in the use of that vocabulary. Those other things upon which the school teacher called you to spend so much time—the parsing and analysis, the formal grammar, the spelling of words, the punctuation of sentences, the definitions that figure so largely in examination papers—are only incidentals. To be sure, we are foolish if we ignore incidentals like spelling and punctuation and formal grammar. But

the main problem for your tackling is how to acquire and use a good English vocabulary.

Examination of a Passage

Examination of passages that are beyond question "good English" will convince you that this is so. Ask yourself, for instance, why the paragraph below can be classed as good English. It is a paragraph from Mr. Churchill's *Marlborough*; it introduces to us the French leader at the Battle of Blenheim:

At the moment of his setting out upon his fatal expedition Tallard was one of the most distinguished figures in the circle of Louis XIV. Not only was he reputed an excellent soldier with recent exploits to his credit, but his diplomatic qualities and experiences had raised him to the highest Ambassadorial posts. He combined a knowledge of war with a wide outlook upon European politics. He might have been a Foreign Minister of France if he had not been needed as a Marshal. He was a great gentleman of polish, taste, and learning, who wielded the pen, though at too great length, as readily as the sword. It was with deep misgivings that he obeyed the commands of the King to proceed to the rescue of Bavaria. He had protested that neither the policy nor the force supplied him was suited to the occasion. He was reluctant and perplexed as he entered his coach, and with his son at his side journeyed towards his ruin.

Now, you need not read that paragraph more than once in order to know what manner of man Marshal Tallard was. But you would profit by reading it a good many times in order to appreciate fully the clarity and dignity of style. These are among the questions you ask in regard to the passage:

Has the writer at his command such a stock of words as enables him to select the words that will embody his thoughts?

Do the words selected enable you to share his thoughts with him?

Does he put the words together into sentences that are neither obscure nor ambiguous? Do you get a headache in your efforts to interpret the words in the sense intended?

Is there variety in the build and length of the sentences? Is a humdrum monotony avoided?

Doubtless, after your careful examination, you will say "Yes" to all these questions. Now examine the paragraph with this question in your mind, "Does the paragraph carry on the thought firmly and logically from 'the moment of his setting out' to 'his ruin'?" You have in the first sentence "most distinguished"; and you naturally ask, "In what way?" The second sentence supplies an answer, and the third explains. The fourth, in epigram, reiterates the explanation; and so on.

You will not grumble either at the term "happiness of choice" applied to the words.

A Second Passage

Deal with the passage below in the way suggested above. That is, read it with attention until you are able to answer with confidence the questions you answered upon the Churchill paragraph.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as the final resting-place of those who here gave their lives that that nation might live.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here; but it can never forget

what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work they have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

President Lincoln at Gettysburg, November 19th, 1863.

Getting a Vocabulary

We shall return again and again to this aim of obtaining an ample supply of words. Here you are invited to consider one way of doing this, a way that you can yourself apply to whatever favourite passage you like. You leave out from a sentence one of the important words, substituting for it the meaning or an alternative word. After a while you try to restore the original word.

Thus in these sentences, also from Mr. Churchill's *Marlborough*, suggest a word for the required meaning; that required meaning is given in brackets:

1. No one can — the movements leading up to the battle of Blenheim, unless he realizes that Eugene and Marlborough were working like two lobes of the same brain. (*grasp in all their details, understand completely*)
2. They were in — touch with one another. (*uninterrupted, ever-standing*)
3. Sometimes there was a — of three or four days. (*interval, space*)
4. One facet of the art of war is the disregarding of — forfeits, however painful or disastrous in themselves. (*less weighty, subordinate, not the first*)
5. Earlier messages had —. (*gone astray, been lost in transit*)
6. Bavaria would desert to the Allies unless — help came at once. (*able to make a difference, substantial*)
7. Tallard decided, no doubt rightly, to — the particular for the general situation. (*leave, give up*)

The words in the original are : (1) *comprehend*, (2) *constant*, (3) *gap*, (4) *secondary*, (5) *miscarried*, (6) *effective*, (7) *abandon*.

Do not be greatly depressed upon finding that your word is not the author's word. Your word may be a quite good one for the purpose ; and you need not suppose that the author's is the one and only suitable word. Your modesty should, indeed, prompt you to think the word better than yours. In writing English, however, you are not as a rule faced with a question of right or wrong, but rather with a question of better or worse. Try then to fill the gaps in this paragraph from a *Times* leading article :

Self-determination, though it cannot be applied in the ... (1) ... detail which was aimed at by the peacemakers of 1919, is a ... (2) ... of good government. It is an ... (3) ... in that "consent of the governed" from which, in the words of the American declaration of independence, the "just powers of government are ... (4) ..." American experience is ... (5) ... against interpreting it as unqualified ... (6) ... to secession. Small units can enjoy self-determination only within ... (7) ... limits. Larger units cannot enjoy it ... (8) ... and unconditionally. But the limits placed on it must be such as ... (9) ... to rearm and commonsense.

(1) *fearfully careful over minute details*, (2) *general law as a guide to action*, (3) *an essential part*, (4) *drawn from, originally*, (5) *forcible in expression*, (6) *liberty, permission*, (7) *restricted, not broad*, (8) *without bounds, perfectly*, (9) *call upon for a favourable decision*.

[Words used by *The Times* writer are : (1) *meticulous*, (2) *principle*, (3) *element*, (4) *derived*, (5) *emphatic*, (6) *licence*, (7) *narrow*, (8) *absolutely*, (9) *appeal*.]

YOUR EXERCISE

Supply the words wanted ; the meaning is below :

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| (a) And the — ships go on | (1) |
| To their — under the hill. | (2) |

But O, for the touch of a — hand, (3)
And the sound of a voice that is still.

(1) *magnificent, imposing, grand*, (2) *harbour, place of refuge*, (3) *gone away, lost*.

(b) A deference to the wishes of others, a wish to make oneself agreeable, is —. (4)

A pleasure in one's own achievements, a feeling of self-satisfaction, is —. (5)

(*Complacence or complaisance?*)

(c) Ah, Love, couldst thou and I with Fate — (6)
To grasp the sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we — it to bits—and then (7)
Re— it nearer to the Heart's Desire. (8)

(6) *agree together*, (7) *break thoroughly*, (8) *shape*.

(d) Whate'er the —, the Maiden sang, (9)
As if her song could have no ending :
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the — bending : (10)
I listened, — and still (11)
And, as I — up the hill (12)
The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.

(9) *topic of the song*, (10) *reaping instrument*, (11) *without movement*, (12) *climbed*.

(e) It is a custom
More honoured in the — than the observance. (13)

[The words are : (1) *stately*, (2) *haven*, (3) *vanished*,
(4) *complaisance*, (5) *complacence*, (6) *conspire*, (7) *shatter*,
(8) *mould*, (9) *theme*, (10) *sickle*, (11) *motionless*, (12) *mounted*,
(13) *breaking*.]

Study II

NOUN INFLECTIONS

THE QUESTION

The English language has lost most of its inflections. Some few remain however, and these are important. What word changes are we to be careful about?

THE ANSWER

Custom is Mistress

Whether or not we are aware of doing so, we do note how people use words ; and we find that educated people agree in the manner. They say "you were" and not "you was". They say "He and I are a pair," not "Him and me is a pair." Now, a rule of grammar is simply a statement of the agreement among educated people ; and "correct English" means no more than the manner in which the Archbishop in the pulpit, the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, and the Lord Chief Justice on the bench talk and write. The old books told us that grammar teaches how to speak and write correctly. It is the converse that is true : by our observance (and imitation) of those who do speak and write good English we learn grammar. "For a man to write well", Ben Jonson said long ago, "there are required three necessities : to read the best authors, observe the best speakers, and have much exercise of his own style."

The trouble about English Grammar, the reason why to so many it is a name of weariness and (as they think) a study helping little, is this : we have tried to adapt Latin grammar to the English language ; and we have failed because Latin makes great use of word-changes (or **inflections**), whereas in English word-changes give way to

Prepositions and Auxiliary Verbs. Only scanty remains of our once elaborate word-changes are with us. Two of these remnants—the first group to mark number in the naming words, or nouns, the second group to mark time in the verbs—are of much importance. Some inflections of minor importance also remain with us.

The Plural Inflections

The changes to make clear whether one or more than one is intended—to distinguish, that is, between Singular and Plural—appear chiefly in the naming words, the Nouns and the Pronouns. But *this* and *that*, being used along with a naming word, also have special forms for the Plural: “Oh! this learning, what a thing it is”; “Within these three hours will fair Juliet wake.” [*This* and *these* indicate a thing or things present or near, especially a thing or things just mentioned.] “That time I laughed him out of patience”; “Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree’s shade”. [*That* and *those* indicate a thing or things pointed to afar.]

The naming words, Nouns, almost always derive the Plural from the Singular by adding *s*, the added sound (the sound of *s* as in *ships*, the sound of *z* as in *charms*) sometimes causing a sound change in the body of the Noun. Thus *wife* becomes *wives*, the *z* sound added for the Plural turning the *f* into the *v*. So, too, when the Singular ends in a sibilant (a hissing sound), euphony calls for an added syllable to denote the Plural. So *kiss* becomes *kisses*, *box* becomes *boxes*, and *crutch* becomes *crutches*. The change of *y* into *i* when the Plural is formed is only one of the many curiosities of our spelling: you note that, though we have *ladies*, *rubies*, *soliloquies* as the Plurals of *lady*, *ruby*, *soliloquy*, we have *keys*, *boys*, *days* as the Plurals of *key*, *boy*, *day*. A few, a very few, Nouns diverge from this general rule, reminding us of formations almost wholly lost; *men*, *feet*, *mice*,

children still retain their Old English Plurals. We have some foreign Plurals, too: *radii*, *strata*, *ellipses*, *beaux*, *phenomena* (the Singulars being *radius*, *stratum*, *ellipsis*, *beau*, *phenomenon*), and others.

A knowledge of these exceptional forms is really a matter of vocabulary, of learning words rather than learning rules about words. So it is with our Pronouns, where we usually have quite different words for Singular and Plural. Thus, it seems absurd to call *we* the Plural of *I*. Of course, in one very real sense *I* has no Plural: there is only one *I*; the division of things in each one's mind is "I and the universe". *We* is "I and another or others with me"; and *we* has an origin different from the origin of *I*.

To the foreign student—it would be to us if we were not early made familiar with it—the verbal inflection for number is surprising. For here the added *s* denotes the Singular; its omission denotes the Plural: it is "He swims" but "They swim".

Difficulty about Collective Nouns

A Common Noun may be the name of a group or collection of similar things: and it is then called a COMMON COLLECTIVE NOUN, or, simply, a COLLECTIVE NOUN. Thus, we say that the *staff* of the Post Office consists of over a hundred thousand men, women, and boys; that *Parliament* is made up of King, Lords, and Commons; we call a selection of flowers a *bouquet*; and a gathering of of people is a *crowd* or a *mob* or a *congregation* or an *audience*, according to the purpose for which they have assembled and the manner in which they behave. And, as we may think of separate groups, Collective Nouns are sometimes used in the Plural Number: we say that *armies* are composed of *regiments*; that the *leagues* are made up of *teams*; and that the *libraries* contain many *species* of books.

Minor points about the number of Nouns are these :

1. Compound Nouns like *brother-in-law* present difficulty : to which part are we to add the Plural sign ? The rule is : add the sign to the principal word, unless the parts have really become one word. Thus we have : *fathers-in-law*, *lookers-on*, *men-of-war*, *courts-martial* ; but *spoonfuls*, *spendthrifts*.
2. A name, a title (even when in a Plural form), is a Singular Noun : thus, “ ‘ The Adventures of Roderick Random ’ was written by Smollett.” (*was*, not *were*.)
3. The Collective Noun is to be looked on as a Singular when *unity* is foremost (“ The jury is agreed upon its verdict ”), but as a Plural when the individuals comprising the collection are in mind (“ The jury are considering their verdict ”).
4. Names of sciences (like *ethics*, *politics*, *mechanics*) are usually looked on as Singulars.

YOUR EXERCISES

- (a) We are not consistent in our ways of denoting Plurals : give the Plurals of *Dutchman*, *Norman*, *Frenchman*, *German* ; *staff*, *hoof*, *cargo*, *potato*, *folio*, *hero*, *echo* ; *dwarf*, *knife* ; *colloquy* ; *fly* ; *Lord Mayor*.
- (b) Are these Nouns Singular or Plural ? *sixpence*, *thanks*, *optics*, *eaves*, *tidings*, *news*, *riches*, *innings*, *barracks*, *means*.

[You will do well to obtain from your dictionary quotations that will fix the various words in your mind. Thus for *summons* you might have Banquo’s “ A heavy summons lies like lead upon me ” ; for *means* you might note that *by this means* is at times better than *by these means*.]

- (c) For some Singulars we have two Plurals : can you distinguish between *geniuses* and *genii* (as Plurals of *genius*), *indexes* and *indices* (as Plurals of *index*),

pennies and *pence* (as Plurals of *penny*), *brothers* and *brethren* (as Plurals of *brother*) ?

- (d) Is there any difference in meaning between “ hands full of flour ” and “ handfuls of flour ” ?

ANSWERS

- (a) *Dutchmen, Normans, Frenchmen, Germans ; staffs, hoofs* (but now and then *hooves*), *cargoes, potatoes, folios, heroes, echoes ; dwarfs, knives ; colloquies ; flies* (but *fly* in the sense of conveyance has *flies*) ; *Lord Mayors*.

- (b) *Sixpence* is a Noun in the Singular Number : we say “ He found a crooked sixpence against a crooked stile.” So we say “ He hit a six and a four from successive balls.” Where unity is present the Noun, though Plural in form, is used as a Singular : we say “ The eight was out early this morning ” (not *were*) for it is one crew of which we speak.

Thanks is now used as a Plural : “ Prayers precede and thanks succeed the benefit.”

Optics, the name of the science of light, is used as a Singular : so we say “ Economics deals with supply and demand ” (the Singular verb *deals*, not the Plural *deal*).

Eaves is now looked on as Plural.

Tidings, at times a Singular, is usually a Plural : “ Give to a gracious message a host of tongues, but let ill-tidings tell themselves.” (*themselves* you notice, not *itself*.)

News is better as a Plural : “ Ill news fly fast ” (the Plural Verb *fly*, not the Singular *flies*). Yet we need not quarrel with such expressions as “ The news to-day is better ”.

Riches, though at first *Singular*, is now always

Plural: “ If riches increase, set not your heart upon them ”: “ Riches are for spending ”: but you would be at a loss to find a Singular Noun to correspond.

Innings is used both as a Singular and a Plural Noun: we speak of “ a good innings ” and also of “ a two innings match ”.

Barracks is usually Plural.

Means in the sense of resources is Plural (“ My means were somewhat broken into ”), in the sense of medium is often Singular (“ By this strange means he succeeded ”).

- (c) Consult your dictionary for the differences, and consider the illustrative quotations.
- (d) In “ hands full of flour ” the Noun is *hands*, and *full of flour* is descriptive; in “ handfuls of flour ” the Noun is *handfuls*, and *of flour* denotes material.

Study III

VERB INFLECTIONS

THE QUESTION

English Verbs are subject to changes : how are we to be certain of using the required form ?

THE ANSWER

As with others of your questions about English, the answer can only be this : You will, in the main, use the appropriate form if you will listen to good speakers and read good writers, and if your listening and reading is attentive. These studies help in that they give direction to your attention.

Verb Inflections

An important group of changes (inflections) in English words concerns the **Tenses of Verbs**. Here again, however, so far as regards the Verbs in most common use, we need to learn words rather than the rules whereby words are altered. We are faced, that is, with the problem of gaining a vocabulary.

We must, for instance, learn the whole paradigm (the name given to the complete collection of variations) of our most-used Verb, the verb *to be* : *I am, I was, I have been, He is, We are, We were*, and so on. No readily applied rule can enable us to deduce *was* from *am*, or *were* from *are*. We do say that *am* is the First Person Singular of the Verb, and that *is* is the Third Person Singular of the Verb. This is, however, for convenience only ; for in fact *am* and *is* are distinct Verbs. The paradigm of the Verb gives the example or pattern ; and from the pattern you

apply the right form to your particular purpose : you say, " Were you there ? " and not " Was you there ? "

Other Verbs for ever on our tongues, besides this Verb *to be*, effect changes peculiar to themselves : '*I eat*' is the present tense, *I ate* is the past tense, *I have eaten* is the past perfect tense. For some reason, these Verbs that undergo internal changes, the vowel sounds usually altering, are called " Strong Verbs " : it is they that prove obstacles to the learner of English. There is little trouble about what are called " Weak Verbs ", the class to which the mass of our Verbs belong. These have as inflections the dental letters *t* and *d* usually written with *e* : *I walk* (present, *I walked* (past), *I have walked* (past perfect).

Consider a few instances of the use of Strong Verbs. They will serve to show you that care is needed, and that the care consists of being sure of words rather than of changes in words. *Lie* (" to lie down ") is troublesome, for confusion with the weak Verb *lay*, (" lay the book down "), is frequent. The principal parts of *lie* are *lie*, *lay*, *lain* : " There lies your way " ; " The vessel lay alongside the quay " ; " This land has lain fallow two years." *Lay* is, however, the present tense of the transitive verb, meaning " cause to lie " : " The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head " (Present) ; " Her arms across her breast she laid " (Past) ; " They have laid waste the city " (*laid* is the past participle as well as the past tense). *Lie* is also a Weak Verb (" to tell a falsehood ") forming its Past Tense by the appending of *d*.

Some of the older Verbs, the " Strong Verbs ", have two forms for the past participle. As so often, however, the instinct for economy in language gives a special sense to one of the forms. *Behold* (Present), has *beheld* for Past, and *beheld* also for past participle. But *beholden* (now restricted to the meaning of " indebted ") is also used as a past participle : " I am greatly beholden to you." You notice,

though, that the use of the word smacks of affectation. Better say "obliged" or "indebted". *Drink* has for past tense *drank* and for past participle *drunk*: but *drunken* is also used as a descriptive word ("Stephano, my drunken butler"). *Sink* has the past participle *sunken* as well as *sunk*, *sunken* being restricted to the adjectival use (we speak of "sunken cheeks", "a sunken ship", and so on). Note, too, the following: *stricken* ("Let the stricken deer go weep"), along with *struck* as past participle of *strike*; *bounden* ("Our bounden duty and service"), along with *bound* as past participle of *bind*; *gotten* ("Take your ill-gotten gains"), along with *got* as past participle of *get*. An appendix on pages 155-158 gives a list of the strong Verbs.

Verb Idioms

We call the peculiarities of a language **idioms**. Some of the Verb idioms are opposed to strict grammar; yet we must consider them to be good English. In the sentence "I go to town tomorrow", the Verb *go*, which in strictness indicates present time, being used in conjunction with the adverb *tomorrow*, indicates future time.

A similar idiom is sometimes called "the historic present": in order that his picture may be more living, the writer describes the past as though it were happening before your eyes. Carlyle is fond of this idiom: he writes about Abbot Samson:

On the morrow after his instalment he brings in a load of money-bonds, all duly stamped, sealed with this or the other Convent seal; frightful, unmanageable, a bottomless confusion of Convent finance. These they are,—but there at least they all are; all that shall be of them. Our Lord Abbot demands that all the official seals in use among us be now produced and delivered to him.

You will know these two things:

1. The number of the Verb is that of its nominative:

you write " They see the aeroplane ". (*They* is Plural and *see* is also Plural); you write, too, " He and she see the aeroplane " (the Conjunction *and* makes the nominative Plural).

2. The Verb *to be* (the copulative verb, it is called) joins nouns or pronouns of the same case : " This is he of whom I spoke " (*he*, not *him*).

Consider these sentences, therefore, and correct them where they need correction :

- (a) A foreigner, be she whom she may, will never do.
- (b) I hope it isn't him.
- (c) Art thou proud yet? Ay, that I am not thee.
- (d) The plan is faulty for two reasons, neither of which are noticed by the proposer.
- (e) He asked whether either of the ladies were at home.
- (f) A lampoon or a satire do not carry in them robbery and murder.
- (g) Nothing but dreary dykes, muddy and straight, appear to break the monotony of the landscape.
- (h) This is one of the most interesting books that has appeared on the subject.

Do you agree that in (a) *whom* should be *who*

(b) that *him* should be *he*

(c) *Thee* should be *thou*

(d) *are* should be *is*

(e) *were* should be *was*

(f) *do* should be *does*, and *them* should be *it*

(g) *appear* should be *appears*

(h) *has* should be *have*?

The joining Verb sometimes couples Nouns or Pronouns of differing numbers. Modern custom makes the Verb agree in number with the Noun or Pronoun *preceding* the verb. Thus :

Our followers are but a handful. (not *is*)

His statements were the subject of much comment. (not *was*)

You need, therefore, a correction in these sentences :

A special feature of the exhibition were the workshops.

The pages that relate the occurrence is a capital piece of description.

YOUR EXERCISES

1. In the sentences below, place the form needed of the Verb :

1. There I ——— worse than the mutineers in the chains. (*lie, lay, lain*)
2. My head should be ——— off. (*strike, struck, struck or stricken*)
3. Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had ——— the play. (*begin, began, begun*)
4. All the birds have matins said and ——— their thankful hymns. (*sing, sang, sung*)
5. Underneath this sable hearse
—— the subject of all verse, (*lies, lay, lain*)
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother ;
Death, ere thou hast ——— another (*slay, slew, slain*)
Fair and learned and good as she,
Time shall ——— a dart at thee. (*throw, threw, thrown*)
6. The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone : He cannot ——— but hear. (*choose, chose, chosen*)
7. It ——— the food it ne'er had ———. (*eat, ate, eaten or eat*)
8. With my cross-bow I ——— the Albatross. (*shoot, shot, shot*)

[The words needed are : *lay, struck, begun, sung, lies, slain, throw, choose, ate, eat, shot.*]

2. Examine these sentences and consider the words in italics ; say why it is advisable to alter the words.

1. I *would* not like to go and I *shall* not.
2. *Will* I lay the table now ?
3. *Can* I have the pleasure of seeing you ?
4. If he had *writ* me word by the next post, this *had* been just and civil.
5. I *shall* have much pleasure in accepting your kind invitation.
6. It would have been wrong to *have* refused his kindness.

7. He resembles one of those animals that *has* been forced from the forest to gratify human curiosity.
8. There is no hope that ever I *will* stay,
If the first hour I shrink and run away.
9. We must reconcile what we *would* like to do with what we can do.
10. If you refuse medicine in health, it *shall* be too strong for your body when you will need it.

[ANSWER

2. 1. In the First Person *I shall* and *I should* are preferable unless there is an added expression of wish or of resolution. Here *I should like* is better, for *would* implies "*should like*": look at this example:

Yet sang she, "Brignall banks are fair,
And Greta woods are gay,
I would I were with Edmund there,
To reign his Queen of May."

And resolution appears in the second statement, therefore write *I will not*.

2. *Shall I* is the better expression.
3. *Can* denotes power, ability; but here it is permission that is sought, and *may* is better.
4. The old-fashioned words had better be replaced:
"If he had written to me by the next post, this would have been just and civil."
5. You accept *now*, therefore write "I have much pleasure".
6. Replace *to have refused* by *to refuse*: when the Principal Verb and the dependent Infinitive refer to the same tone, the Simple Infinitive is wanted.
7. Here the Relative Pronoun *that* refers to animals and is therefore in the Plural Number. Write, therefore, "that have been forced".
8. Replace *will* by *shall*. (See 1 above.)
9. *Should* is better here than *would*. (See 1 above.)
10. *Will* in the Third Person is better here than *shall*.]

Study IV

CASES OF NOUNS AND PRONOUNS

THE QUESTION

How are we to know whether a noun or pronoun is in the Nominative or the Possessive or the Objective case?

THE ANSWER

Position of Words in a Statement

In some languages we are able to tell from the look of a Noun whether it stands for

1. that about which our statement is made ;
2. the person spoken to ;
3. a part of the statement made.

In the Latin language, for instance, we may say, without leaving any scope for misunderstanding, “*Puer puellam amat*”, or “*Puellam puer amat*”. However we put the words, the sentence admits of a single meaning : “The boy likes the girl”. We could not understand it as “The girl likes the boy”. If we wished to say this, we should be obliged to alter the forms of the Nouns and say, “*Puella puerum amat*.”

Now, in English, where a word seldom has many forms, if we say, *The boy the girl likes*, we are at a loss for the meaning. The sentence is, we say, *ambiguous*. Does it mean, “The girl likes the boy”, or “The boy likes the girl”, or are we to understand that the liking is reciprocated? We could not in Latin put the ambiguous question—

Would you rather a lion ate you or a tiger?

We should be obliged to indicate, by the form of the words employed, whether the tiger was the eater or the eaten.

Even the well-known line in Gray's *Elegy* : “And all the

air a solemn stillness holds," is ambiguous. It is only after some thought that we decide on the meaning: "A solemn stillness holds all the air".

The Pronouns are much better off than the Nouns in this respect: *he* and *him*, *she* and *her*, are employed in accordance with the meaning intended. There is no ambiguity (though there is awkwardness and therefore bad English) in the sentences: *She him likes* or *Her likes he*.

There are, you see, in our speech, perils of ambiguity such as are absent from highly inflected languages like Latin. It behoves us, therefore, to be careful about the position of the words and phrases in our sentences. We make position indicate the relation of one thing to another.

Thus, read these two sentences:

1. Henry addressed his soldiers.
2. His soldiers heard Henry.

The two things mentioned, *Henry* and *soldiers*, are the same in each sentence; but the relation in which they stand to one another is different. In (1) Henry does something to his soldiers; in (2) his soldiers do something to Henry. Other relations may exist between them; soldiers follow AFTER Henry; flock ROUND Henry; value praise FROM Henry; Henry bestows rewards ON soldiers; feels pity FOR soldiers.

These latter relations are expressed by Prepositions: the former by Position.

The name of the thing about which we make a statement—the SUBJECT OF OUR SENTENCE—is said to be in the NOMINATIVE CASE.

(The Nominative Case names the Subject of the Sentence. In—

The Russians attacked in the Crimea,
Russians is in the Nominative Case.)

The name of the person addressed, uttered as a kind of

Exclamation to attract attention, is also described as being in the Nominative Case (of Address). A better term is Vocative Case. (Vocative is connected with the words *vocal*, meaning "sounding by the voice"; *invocation*, "a calling on"; *provoke*, "to call forth"; and *vociferation*, "a loud calling".) In—

Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition,

Cromwell is in the Nominative of Address (or Vocative) Case.

Some Verbs, it must be noted carefully, join or couple a Noun to the Subject, rather than express doing. Thus, note the distinction between—

Tom grew a big boy ;

and

Tom grew potatoes.

Evidently *boy* and *potatoes* stand in different relations towards Tom. We may with no loss of meaning invert the first sentence and say, *A big boy grew Tom* ; inversion of the second sentence would produce nonsense. So—

She became queen.

The bonnet became her.

The name of that which is the Object of a Verb or of a Preposition is said to be in the OBJECTIVE CASE. In—

I beheld a rainbow in the sky,

sky is in the Objective Case, because it is the Object of the Preposition *in*.

A name standing for the person or thing remotely (or indirectly) affected by an action is said to be an Indirect Object ; and is described as in the Case of the Indirect Object or Dative Case.

(Dative is connected with "giving" and is akin to *date*, "a given point of time"; and *data*, "the facts given, by means of which we are to solve a problem".)

The name was chosen probably because the typical example is with Verbs of giving. In—

He gave the youth a post in his office.

Youth is indirectly affected by the Verb *gave*, and is, therefore, the Indirect Object (or Dative Case). Notice these instances of the Dative Case—

Heaven send *the prince* a better companion !
 Heaven send *the companion* a better prince !
 Give *sorrow* words.

A Noun will sometimes be placed alongside another Noun or Pronoun in order to limit the application of the latter. The limiting Noun is then said to be in APPPOSITION with the first. Thus, in—

William the *Norman* defeated *Harold* the *Saxon*,

Norman is Nominative Case in Apposition with *William* ;
Saxon is Objective Case in Apposition with *Harold*. In—

Lo ! where the rosy-bosomed Hours,
 Fair Venus' train, appears,

Fair Venus' train is Nominative Case in Apposition with *rosy-bosomed Hours*.

A Noun or Pronoun is sometimes used apart from the rest of the sentence and along with an indefinite form of the Verb. It is then said to be in the NOMINATIVE ABSOLUTE (i.e. "apart from" the remainder). Thus in—

The enemy demurring to these terms, the battle was renewed,

enemy is in the Nominative Absolute. This construction seems to be disappearing from among us ; and indeed, it

gives a constrained, stilted look to a sentence. Modern usage prefers—

When the sun had risen we set out. (time indicated)
to—

The sun having risen, we set out. („ „)

The Possessive Case

The inflection for Case still survives to mark the POSSESSIVE CASE—the form of the Noun used to show that the person named is a possessor. The old termination to mark the Possessive was *es*: the modern representative of this is *'s*.

The Apostrophe ('), as it is called, stands for the omitted vowel; it means “a turning away”—that is, a turning away of a letter. It was once used in plurals, and is still used in cases like—

There are too many and's in the sentence.
Dot your i's and cross your t's.

The mark denotes omission also in words like *can't* (for *cannot*), *don't* (for *do not*).

Perhaps the commonest, though a very slight, fault in writing English occurs in connection with the Possessive Case. The rules are simple enough—

- (1) We always add the apostrophe for the Possessive, and, whenever we can, the *s* also.
- (2) We do not add the *s* when its addition would result in a disagreeable sound.

Thus: *the writer's pens* (where we mean *one writer*); *the writers' pens* (where we mean *several writers*); the addition of another *s* sound to *writers'* would produce an ill-sounding hiss; *the men's service* (the *s* is attached to the Plural); *the ladies' department* (the Noun is made Plural before being made Possessive).

When Proper Nouns are put into the Possessive, modern usage inclines to the apostrophe *and* the *s* ; thus, *Mr. Jones's message* ; *St. Thomas's Church* ; *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*.

When a Compound Possessive is used, it perhaps sounds better to place the sign of the Possessive after the last word only of the compound—

The Lord High Admiral's ship. (not *Lord's*)
Smith the butcher's wife. (not *Smith's*)

In cases where this cannot well be done, the Preposition *of* should take the place of the Possessive. Thus—

Sunday is Sun's day, the god of light and life upon the earth,

would sound better if expressed as—

Sunday is the day of the Sun, the god of light and life upon the earth.

The last of these troublesome little rules is this.

We use the Possessive Case usually in reference to persons, sometimes in reference to animals, but very seldom in reference to lifeless things. For the last it is replaced by the Preposition *of*. Thus :

the mother's love ;
the height of the tower (not *the tower's height*).

[As will be seen, these " rules " are pretty much matters of taste. The test is the resulting sound ; the more pleasing to the ear is the preferable. Some will say *for conscience's sake* ; others, *for conscience's sake*.]

YOUR EXERCISES

I. Examine these sentences and answer the questions put upon them :

1. Little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth. For a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love. (Which is the only Noun here

not in the Nominative Case? Why is "*cymbal*" in the Nominative Case?)

2. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed; that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. (In what case is "*virtue*", "*that*", and "*heat*"?)
3. Let thy speech be short, comprehending much in few words. (In what case is *speech*?—Why?)
4. In what cases are the Nouns in italics :
 He will reign sole *king*.
 If music be the *food* of love, play on.
 So full of shapes is *fancy*.
 I am sure care's an *enemy* to life.
 He hath known you but three *days*.

[*Days* in this sentence is what is sometimes called the Adverbial Object. It denotes extent either of Time or of Space. Similar Adverbial Objects are the words italicised in : "An *hour* they sat in council"; "I would I were a *mile* hence"; "She was eight *years* old, she said."]

I marvel your *ladyship* takes *delight* in such a barren rascal.
 My *story* being done, she gave me for my pains a world of sighs.

[1. *Pictures*. *Cymbal* is Nominative because coupled with *talk*, the verb *is* being understood. 2. *Virtue* : Objective; *that* : Nominative, its verb being *sallies*; *heat* : Objective, its governing preposition being *without*. 3. Objective, the governing verb being *let*. 4. Nom., Nom., Nom., Nom., Obj., Nom., Obj., Nom.]

2. To complete the quotations below, select the appropriate Noun or Pronoun :

1. Sir, you have but two topics, yourself and —. I am sick of both. (*I* or *me*)
2. A — preaching is like a — walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all. (The Possessive Case of *woman* and the Possessive Case of *dog*)

3. 'Twixt kings and tyrants, there's this difference known ;
Kings seek their — good : tyrants their own.
(Possessive case of *subjects*)
4. My essays come home to — business and bisons.
(Possessive case of *men*)
5. The Lord watch between — and —, when we are
absent one from another. (*I* or *me*, *thou* or *thee*)
6. Touch me with noble anger
And let not — weapons, water-drops,
Stain my — cheeks. (Possessive case of *women* and *men*)
7. He is drowned — thus we stray to find ; and the sea mocks
Our frustrate search on land. (*who* or *whom*)
8. And in these fits I leave them, whilst I visit Young Ferdinand
— they suppose is drowned—And his and my loved dar-
ling. (*who* or *whom*)

[1. *me* ; 2. *woman's*, *dog's* ; 3. *subjects'* ; 4. *men's* ;
5. *me*, *thee* ; 6. *women's*, *man's* ; 7. *whom* ; 8. *who*.]

3. Amend this bit of faulty English :

England's team is the best for several years, and if they
continue their form there are bright prospects of them
winning the trophy.

[First of all, *team* is a Collective Noun, and it may be,
as in the passage, used in the Singular. But the following
Pronouns, *they* and *their*, treat the noun as a Plural. In
the one sentence we ought to be consistent. The more
serious error, however, is in the phrase " of them winning ".
Winning is here as Noun : " winning the trophy " is a way
of saying " victory " or " success ". The preceding Pro-
noun, therefore, should be the Possessive, *their* (or better
its), not the Objective, *them* or *it*. And perhaps, the
Adjective *English* is better than the Possessive Noun
England's. Write the sentence, " The English team is the
best for several years ; and if it keeps its present form
there are bright prospects of its winning the trophy."]

Study V

PREPOSITIONS

THE QUESTION

The Preposition seems to play a great part in the building up of English sentences : what particular points are we to note about these Prepositions ?

THE ANSWER

First, make clear to yourself when a word is a Preposition. Two things spoken of in a sentence may stand towards each other in many different ways ; they may have, we say various relations towards one another. Thus :

My *road* TO the *station* may lead ACROSS the *bridge*, or BY the *bridge*, or UNDER the *bridge*.

The words, *across*, *by*, *under*, indicate the relation in which the *bridge* stands to the *road*. (They show relations between things.)

Similarly an action may take place in various ways with reference to a particular thing.

I may *walk* BESIDE the *river*, *plunge* INTO the *river*, *draw* FROM the *river*, or nowadays even *fly* OVER the *river*.

The words, *beside*, *into*, *from*, *over*, indicate the relation in which *river* stands to the actions of *walking*, *plunging*, and so on. (They show the relation between an action and the thing affected by the action.)

The Words that show Relations are called Prepositions

They are so called because their POSITION is usually in front (*pre*) of NOUNS or PRONOUNS.

THEY ARE SAID TO GOVERN THE NOUN OR PRONOUN IN THE OBJECTIVE CASE.

Prepositional Phrase

The group of words introduced by a Preposition is a **Prepositional Phrase**. The group is used for various purposes. In—

I visited the chapel *on the hill*,

on the hill distinguishes *chapel*, and is, therefore, equivalent to an ADJECTIVE. In—

The chapel is built *on the hill*,

the prepositional phrase tells WHERE, and is therefore equivalent to an ADVERB (of place) modifying the Verb *is built*.

These Prepositions, one or more of which you find in nearly every sentence, are modern substitutes for the old word-changes (or inflections). The foreigner finds them troublesome. Why, the perplexed Frenchman may ask, say “different from”, but “indifferent to”? Why say “The man was murdered *by* a robber,” but “He was killed *with* a knife”? Why say “I content myself *with* giving you the money,” but “I content you *by* giving the money”? And if we say “different from”, why do we change the Preposition and say “disagree *with*” or “adverse to”? Since we say “the money *in* his possession”, why must we vary the Preposition with *disposal*, and say “the money *at* his disposal”?

In more instances than not we are able to give no very convincing reason. We can only say that it is the custom of good writers to use particular Prepositions in particular circumstances. It is a matter on which rules are not available; and we can become acquainted with the usage only by noting with care actual examples in the work of writers and speakers. For *grammatical propriety*—THE WRITING AND SPEAKING OF “CORRECT” ENGLISH—is no more than

the established usage of a body of people at a definite time in their history.

The Sense of the Passage may call for a Special Preposition

Thus, *in* implies a state of being, *into* implies an act : therefore we enter *into* the room and, being there, have our dinner *in* the room. *Between* (*by-twain*) refers to two things only, *among* refers to any number (the word is connected with *mingle*) : therefore we select *among* many sea-side resorts the two that appeal to us most strongly, and we then decide *between* the two.

The sense of the passage dictates change of Prepositions in these sentences :

The Italian universities were forced to send for their professors from Spain and France. (Change *from* to *to*.)

(We obtain bananas *from* the West Indies, we send *to* the West Indies cotton-goods.)

The wisest princes need not think it any diminution to their greatness to rely upon counsel. (Change *diminution to* to *diminution of*, and *rely upon* to *rely on*.)

(There is *loss of* dignity when quarrels arise in the House of Commons, and a *diminution of* the respect felt for it results.

We climb *upon* a ledge out of the reach of the tide, and, being there, we rely *on* that security.)

Often the Preposition agrees with the Prefix of the word on which it is dependent. *Involved* (rolled *in*) will naturally be followed by *in* (*to be involved in difficulties*) ; *absolve* (to loosen *from*) will take *from* (*to absolve a person from blame*) ; *comply* (to fold up *with*, to agree) will take *with* (*to comply with a request*).

The following, therefore, should be modified—

Such were the difficulties *with which* the question was involved. (*in which*)

They cannot be absolved *of* their responsibilities.

(It is usual to say "relieved *of* responsibility", but "absolved *from* offences".)

Again, *sym* is the Greek prefix meaning *with*; so that *sympathy* is accompanied by the Preposition *with*. ("The world is wrought to sympathy *with* hopes and fears.")

Still, it is not wise to depend on "rules" for the use of Prepositions; constant noting of the usage of good authors is the one method of achieving correctness in this matter. The prefix may, indeed, lead one astray. *Con* means *with*, but we say "the contemporaries of Shakespeare"; *dis* means *apart from*, but yet we say "disagree *with*", though we do say "dissent *from*". *Compassion*, which is the Latin equivalent of the Greek word *sympathy* just mentioned, implies, like it, "a feeling with another"; but we say "compassion for the sufferings of men".

Since different Prepositions are needed in different connections, we shall often require to use two Prepositions instead of one. In—

He was eager and anxious *for* the news,
for is quite sufficient, as it suits both *eager* and *anxious*.
 But in—

The other works of the author do not add but rather detract *from* his reputation,
 the Preposition *to* is called for after *add*: *from* is suitable *to detract*, but not *to add*: therefore insert *to* after *add*.

From the pier you can see all the large merchantmen, coming and going, *from* all parts of the world. ("coming *from*" but "going *to*")

Other Instances of Special Prepositions

Amenable (subject to) has *to*: "The sovereign of this country is not *amenable to* any form of trial known to the laws"; *conversant* (acquainted with) has *with*, in accordance with

its prefix : “ Moral action is *conversant* almost wholly *with* evidence which in itself is only probable ” (but *in* is also found, “ The learning and skill which he had by being *conversant in* their books ”) ; *disqualified* by its prefix would lead us to expect *from*, and this we find—

Men are not *disqualified* by their engagements in trade *from* being received in high society.

But we have *for* also—

Ill-health *disqualifies* the body *for* labour and the mind *for* study.

Notice, too : *insensible* TO, but *unconscious* OF ; *indifferent* TO, but *oblivious* OF ; *consent* TO, but *acquiesce* IN.

Is there a difference between “ a taste of the pleasures of life ” and a “ taste for the pleasures of life ” ? Yes. “ Taste of ” is equivalent to a “ sample ”, it is something of a test. “ A taste of the pleasures of life ” is a participation in them. “ Taste for ” implies a liking, a propensity towards : “ A taste for the pleasures of life ” is a desire to enjoy them.

Look, too, at the manner in which a Preposition modifies meaning. You consult a solicitor when you seek his advice ; you consult with your friends when you consider a matter in their company and with their help. You attend school when you make attendances ; you attend to your lesson when you give your attention to it. You lecture to an appreciative audience, and your words are welcome ; you lecture a lazy student and your words may not be so welcome. You witness an accident when you see it ; you witness to a man’s honesty when you testify to it. You own a book ; it is your property. You own to a fault ; you acknowledge it. You swear fidelity, when you make a promise for the future ; you swear to an occurrence that

you have seen in the past. You have finished your paper, when you have done what you can with it in the time allotted to you; you have finished with the paper, when you have read all you want to read in it.

Here is a pretty full list of words followed by suitable Prepositions :

- abhorrence of : access to :
- accommodate to ("accommodate the eye to different distances")
- accommodate with ("accommodate a person with lodgings")
- accompanied by ("accompanied by his wife")
- accompanied with ("a word accompanied with a blow")
- accord with : accuse of : acquiesce in : adapted to : adept in : affinity to *or* between : averse to : blame for : coincide with : compare with *or* to : compatible with : conformable with : conversant with :
- correspond with ("silver penny supposed to correspond with a pennyweight")
- correspond to ("the body corresponds to external conditions")
- destitute of : differ from ("one star differeth from another star in glory") (But the preposition *with* is found with persons : "We'll never differ with a crowded pit".)
- different from (but *to* is quite usual and is probably encroaching)
- disappointed of ("miserably disappointed of his expectations")
- disappointed in ("I am disappointed in him")
- divide between ("divide with reason between self-love and society")
- divide among ("He divided Canaan among the Israelites")
- emerge from : enjoin upon : foreign to : healed of : hatred of *or* for : impose upon : independent of : militate against :
- necessary to ("light so necessary is to life")
- opposite to : prevail upon : reconcile to *or* with : reflect upon : rely upon : replete with : sensible of *but* insensible to : thirst after *or* for :

Various Senses of the Common Prepositions

When you consider the various senses of the common Prepositions, you are not surprised at the great trouble that foreign learners of English have with these little words. *With* and *by* and *on*, for example, once denoted *direction* or *place* merely. But see how they have diverged from the physical meaning. You go to law *with* your adversary (contend against him in the Courts); you stand well *with* your employer (are high in his estimation); you compete *with* or vie *with*, or contend *with* your rival; you rise *with* the lark (at the same hour as). And look at these quotations: "It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands." (That is what Lady Macbeth's Gentlewoman says); "He that is not with me is against me" (*with* is here *on the side of*); "Ah!" said John Silver, "it's a fine dance. . . . I'm with you there" (*with you* is here *of the same opinion*); "The burden of proof lies with the prosecution" (*with* is here *in the hands of*).

Look at *of* as another instance. In "I have of late lost all custom of exercise"; *of late* is *since some little time past*; in "What little town is emptied of its folk this pious morn?", *of* denotes privation, as it does in the phrases *poor of thanks*, *void of merit*; in "Don't take it ill of me that I offer advice", *of me* indicates *origin or source*; in "It was kind of you, Harry, to come", *of you* is *on your part*; in "He built a house of cards", *of* denotes *material or substance*; in "Sing a song of sixpence", *of* denotes *subject matter*; in "Be of good cheer", *of* denotes *quality*.

See, too, how the physical sense (in *on*, for example, "A city built on a hill cannot be hid") becomes transferred to a figurative sense: *on the cards* (liable to turn up); *on the carpet* (under consideration); *on the fence* (undecided in action); *on the nail* (at once); *on the rack* (in keen

suspense); *go on the stump* (make political speeches about the country); *be on tenterhooks* (in a state of painful impatience).

YOUR EXERCISES

1. Improve the following by altering Prepositions—

1. He was killed with kindness.
2. They spoke of the favourable reception of their writings with the public.
3. The cat jumped on the chair.
4. He saw several rusty guns lying upon the bottom.
5. Bestow your favours to the most deserving.
6. I beg to differ with you.
7. Losses in the rear rendered it indispensable for the French army to move.
8. Do not interfere with other men's affairs.
9. He wrote a testimonial of my ability.
10. He urged that it was undesirable to be always tinkering with this particular trade.
11. We must content ourselves by saying that he is unworthy of the honour.

[The phrases wanted are : *by kindness, by the public, on to the chair, on the bottom, upon the most deserving, differ from you, to the French army, in other men's affairs, to my ability, at this particular trade, with saying.*]

2. Supply the suitable Prepositions so as to complete the quotations below :

- (i) The explanation he gave was different — the real one.
- (ii) They depend — the fluctuating profits of trade.
- (iii) The legacy made him independent — further aid.
- (iv) He dressed suitably — the occasion.
- (v) The only liberty I mean is a liberty connected — order ; that not only exists along — order and virtue, but which cannot exist at all — them.

[(i) *from*, but you at times find *to* ; (ii) *upon* or *on* ; (iii) *of* ; (iv) *to* or *for* ; (v) *with, with, without.*]

Study VI

ADJECTIVES

THE QUESTION

How are Adjectives and Adverbs used in the English language?

THE ANSWER

When you put your words together so as to make a sentence the important words are the Nouns and the Verbs. An Adjective helps the Noun, an Adverb helps the Verb to express the meaning you intend. In this Study, consider the Adjective.

The Adjective is attached to a Noun or a Pronoun in order—

(i) to *describe things* :

Thy palate then didst deign
The roughest berry on the rudest hedge.
(Note *roughest* and *rudest*.)

(ii) to *point out things* :

Would I might sleep out this great gap of time
My Antony is away : (Note *this*.)

(iii) to express (a) *number* :

Three kings I had newly feasted.
(Note *three*.)

(b) *order* in a series :

We shall embattle
By the second hour i' the morn.
(Note *second*.)

(c) *quantity* :

Bring in the banquet quickly ; wine
enough
Cleopatra's health to drink.
(Note *enough*.)

The Adjective is like the Verb in this, that it gives us information about a thing. The Verb, however, states the information definitely (*explicitly*, we say); the Adjective enables us to gather the information ourselves, but does not state it definitely (the statement is made *implicitly*). Thus, in the statement,

The *woods please* the visitor,

the Verb *please* makes an assertion about the woods. If however, we have the statement,

They visited the *pleasant woods*,

the Adjective *pleasant* implies a statement about the *woods*, and this implied statement we are ourselves to unfold. That-the-woods-please is, in the first sentence, an explicit statement; it is implicit in the second sentence.

We often apply the Adjective to the Noun in such a manner as to make a kind of compound name. Thus in—

In *this still place, remote from men*,
Sleeps Ossian,

we may regard the name of Ossian's resting-place as made up of the Noun *place*, the Demonstrative Adjective *this*, and the Adjectives of Quality *still* and *remote* (on which depends the phrase *from men*). Its name is *this-still-remote-from-men place*. AN ADJECTIVE USED THUS TO MAKE A COMPOUND NAME IS SAID TO BE USED ATTRIBUTIVELY. In Falstaff's statement,

Three misbegotten rogues in Kendal green came at my back and let drive at me,

the Definite Numeral *three* and the Adjective of Quality *misbegotten* form with the Noun *rogues* the full name of his assailants.

Adjectives used Attributively *enlarge* our knowledge of the thing spoken of, but they *narrow* or limit the

class to which reference is made. The Adjective, we say,

Enlarges the *Connotation* of the Noun,
but limits the *Denotation* of the Noun.

(The connotation of a Noun is the full meaning of it ; the denotation is the number of things to which the Noun can be applied.)

An adjective that *forms part of a statement made about a subject* is said to be used PREDICATIVELY—

Fulvia perchance is *angry*.

Here the statement made about *Fulvia* is conveyed by the joining Verb *is* and the Adjective *angry* used Predicatively. So in—

Better *fifty years of Europe* than a cycle of Cathay,
better is the statement made about *fifty years of Europe*, and so is an Adjective used Predicatively.

Certain Adjectives can be used Predicatively, but not Attributively. Such are *aware*, *afraid*, *sorry*, *ill* (if we speak of “a sorry hack” or “an ill wind”, we use the Adjectives in other than the usual meaning), *glad* (but note the special phrase “glad news”), *alone*, *alike*.

Similarly, some Adjectives have a different sense when used Predicatively from that which they have when used Attributively. Compare the sentences : *The whole army feared*, and *The army is still whole*.

<i>Aware</i> ,	Predicative,	becomes	<i>wary</i>	if used	Attributively
<i>Afraid</i>	„	„	<i>frightened</i>	„	„
<i>Alone</i>	„	„	<i>lonely</i>	„	„
<i>Alike</i>	„	„	<i>like or similar</i>	if used	Attribu-
				tively	

Notice the Predicative use of the Adjective in these sentences—

He *looked angry*. (Contrast this with the Adverb *angrily*

in *He looked angrily around*. The first belongs to the Noun Substitute *he*, the second to the Verb *looked*.)

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. (Contrast the Adverb *sweetly* in such a sentence as : *Sweetly* tolls the evening chime.)

The meat cuts *tender*. They thought him *clever*. (Compare the adverbs in *Take her up tenderly* and *How cleverly you contrived it !*)

Position of the Adjective

An adjective used attributively usually precedes its Noun in English prose. Thus :

When bad men combine, the good must associate ; else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle. (Burke.)

Look at this broad-shouldered man with the bare, muscular arms and the thick, firm hair, tossed about like trodden meadow-grass whenever he takes off his paper cap, and with the strong, baritone voice bursting every now and then into loud and solemn psalm tunes. (George Eliot : *Adam Bede*.)

When, however, a phrase is dependent on the Adjective, then the Attribute sounds perhaps better after its Noun—

The city, radiant in the glow of sunset, lay below.

We can hardly place *radiant-in-the-glow-of-sunset* in front of *city*. So in—

He has not attempted a fruitless struggle against a defect inherent-in-the-nature-of-that-species of-composition.

Here were forests ancient-as-the-hills.

Then reached the caverns measureless-to-man.

Degrees of Comparison

Some qualities that belong to persons and things are fixed and invariable ; there can be no more or less in them. A thing is *square* or *not square*, *dead* or *not dead*, *woollen* or *not woollen*. Other qualities may occur in a greater or less

degree of intensity ; and we may require to consider together—or COMPARE—two or more things possessed of the one quality.

When I say :

Music, when sweet voices die,
Vibrates in the memory,

I am using the Adjective *sweet* to express clearly an attribute belonging to *voices*. It is the simple—the POSITIVE—form of the Adjective. It is not really a Degree of Comparison, unless we suppose that a Comparison is involved between the voices possessed of sweetness and others devoid of sweetness.

If, however, I say :

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are *sweeter* ; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on

I am expressing a Comparison between the tunes that appeal to the ear and those that the imagination calls up. The form of the Adjective, like *sweeter*, used to express a COMPARISON BETWEEN TWO, is the COMPARATIVE DEGREE. The two groups may indeed be formed of *one thing* and *all other things of its kind* : in this case, too, we use the Comparative—

No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went.

If I say :

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not :
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught,

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought,

I am comparing sad songs with all other kinds of songs. The form of the Adjective, like *sweetest*, used to express the third step (or Degree) of the attribute, is the SUPERLATIVE DEGREE.

Formation of the Comparative and Superlative

I. THE COMMONEST WAY OF FORMING THE COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE IS BY THE ADDITION OF THE SYLLABLES "er" and "est".

The spelling of some Adjectives is affected by the addition of these syllables—

- (i) Silent *e* is dropped ; *wise*, *wis-er*, *wis-est*.
- (ii) As in the formation of Noun Plurals, the vowel *y* becomes *i* ; *jolly*, *jolli-er*, *jolli-est*.
- (iii) A consonant following a short vowel is usually doubled ; *sad*, *sadd-er*, *sadd-est*.

These inflections ("er", "est") are two of the very few LIVING inflections in English ; inflections, that is, that may be applied to newly-formed or newly-introduced words. WHEN ADDED "er" or "est" would result in an awkward or an unpleasing sound, the Comparative and Superlative are formed by means of the Adverbs of Degree, "more" and "most".

You may, indeed, find such a Superlative as *wholesomest*. But modern usage would put *most wholesome*. We cannot, of course, call the first "incorrect", it is quite in accordance with the customs of speech. We can only call it unusual, and that because to modern ears it sounds clumsy.

The choice between the two methods varies. Wordsworth, for instance, uses *more clear* for *clearer*—

Nature's old felicities,
Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes *more clear* than glass
Untouched, unbreathed upon.

Farther is the word used where distance is in question ; *further* in processes of reasoning. Thus Ruskin has : "Let us pass farther towards the north until we see the orient colours change gradually into a vast belt of rainy green." (Here *farther* has reference to distance.) But, "It is further to be noted". (*Further* has reference to a mental process.)

Then we have some Latin Comparatives : *exterior*, *interior*,

junior, senior, inferior, superior. We have also some remnants of old formations, like *inmost, hindmost, foremost, uppermost.*

2. SOME OF OUR MOST USED ADJECTIVES FORM THEIR DEGREES OF COMPARISON IN OTHER WAYS.

POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
<i>much</i> (Quantity) and <i>many</i> (Number).	<i>more</i>	<i>most</i>
<i>old</i> has two forms in Comparative and Superlative. We use <i>elder</i> exclusively for persons, and always with some sense of priority of right.	<i>older, elder</i>	<i>oldest, eldest</i>
<i>late</i> also has two forms, and the economising instinct of language applies them in varying uses.	<i>latter, later</i>	<i>last, latest</i>
<i>bad, evil or ill.</i>	<i>worse</i>	<i>worst</i>
<i>good.</i>	<i>better</i>	<i>best</i>
<i>nigh.</i>	<i>nigher</i>	<i>next or highest</i>
<i>little.</i>	<i>less (lesser, a double Comparative also is used)</i>	<i>least</i>
<i>far</i> , used as an Adjective only in special phrases like "a far city."	<i>farther and further</i>	<i>farthest and furthest</i>

YOUR EXERCISES

1. What form of the Indefinite Article (*a, an*) do you use before the words *history, historical, honour, ewe, urn, house, European, usual, unique, humble, hour, ewer*? What dictates your choice?

[We use *an* for *a* before words that begin with a vowel or with a silent *h*, as in *honest, heiress*. "But", said Mr. Squeers, "when the *h* is sounded, the *a* only is to be used, as a 'and, a 'art, a 'ighway." The doubt about *a* or *an* results from the fact that people play all kinds of pranks with their language. The *n* was originally always present ;

it was often omitted when a consonant sound followed, so that *an year* became *a year*. Sometimes the *n* was attached to the following noun; *an ickname* became *a nickname*, just as *mine Ann* became *my Nan* and *mine Ellen* became *my Nell*. *Y* is, however, preceded by *a* (a year), and so is *u* when it has the sound of *y* (note: "an unusual event," but "a usual thing"). In the Adjectives *habitual* and *hospitable* the *h* is hardly sounded, so that it seems better to say *an habitual offender*, *an hospitable family*.]

2. Affix three appropriate descriptive Adjectives to each Noun (use your dictionary when you are doubtful of the meaning of the Noun): *citadel*, *symphony*, *prairie*, *phalanx*, *canopy*, *sheikh*, *galleon*.

3. Examine these sentences and improve them:

- (i) He finished the work like he had been ordered to do.
- (ii) At this meeting he said publicans detested drunkards as much as teetotallers. (Did the teetotallers detest, or were they detested?)
- (iii) Thou art a girl as much brighter than her,
As he was a poet sublimer than me.
- (iv) Of London and Paris, the former is the wealthiest.
- (v) Either of the exercises is good, but John's is a little the best.
- (vi) This course of action is more preferable than the other.
- (vii) It was the most amicable, although the least dignified, of all the party squabbles by which it had been preceded.

[(i) Change *like* to *as*. (ii) Add "detested them" after "teetotallers." (iii) Grammar asks for "she" at the end of the first line, and "I" at the end of the second. (iv) "Wealthier" is the Comparative. (v) "Better", not "best". (vi) The Adjective "preferable" is already a Comparative, therefore omit "more". (vii) Recast the sentence, "It was more amicable, though less dignified, than any of the party squabbles by which it had been preceded."]

Study VII

ADVERBS

THE QUESTION

How do Adverbs help to carry a meaning from one mind to another?

THE ANSWER

The Adverb, like the Adjective, is always in close attendance upon some other word.

As its name implies, the Adverb is most frequently attendant upon a Verb. Most Verbs refer to action; and an action may take place in many ways, at many times, and in many places. We say,

The *current runs*,

and the Verb *runs* makes an assertion about the *current*.

If we add *swiftly*, we know something more about the current. We extend the meaning of the Verb, but it is not now applicable to currents that run *sluggishly* or to those that run at a moderate speed. If we add *here*, we still further limit the Verb, but extend its meaning.

The *current runs* is applicable to all currents; it is a part of the definition of a current. *Swiftly running* denotes a smaller class. *Very swiftly running* denotes a still smaller. Just as with the Adjective—which adds to the meaning of a Noun, but limits its application—so the Adverb extends the meaning of a Verb, but limits its application.

Limiting an Adjective

Words other than Verbs, phrases, and even sentences may be modified and limited in their meaning by the addition of Adverbs. In the lines,

Oh, *darkly, deeply, beautifully* blue,
As some one somewhere sings about the sea;

the meaning of the Adjective *blue* is extended by the Adverbs *darkly*, *deeply*, *beautifully*; but the Adjective becomes applicable to far fewer things. The class of things to which we apply the Noun *eyes* is a large one, that of *blue eyes* is smaller, and as we limit the Adjective by the addition of successive Adverbs, *beautifully*, *deeply*, and so on, the class becomes more and more limited.

Limiting an Adverb

An Adverb may change the meaning of another Adverb also. When the poet consoles himself by saying

He that is down can fall no lower,

he completely changes the meaning of the Adverb of Place (*lower*) by placing before it the Negative Adverb *no*.

Prepositional Phrases

As a substitute for an Adjective or an Adverb, we may have what is called a Prepositional Phrase. Thus, instead of saying "robin red-breast" ("red-breasted robin"), Wordsworth says—

The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast.

The phrase *of the ruddy breast* is a poetical variant of *red-breasted*. *On many occasions he was late* is a needless expansion of *Often he was late*: *on many occasions* is a Prepositional Phrase substituted for the Adverb *often*.

A phrase such as those instanced may be modified in meaning by an Adverb. In the lines,

Sometimes walking, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great Sun begins his state,

right is an Adverb referring to the whole phrase *against the*

eastern gate : right there would be a very inelegant (American) rendering of the line.

A Wise Choice conduces to Brevity

The substitution of the Adverb for the phrase makes in "right there" so ugly a combination that even the excuse of brevity does not justify it. In other instances, the substitution causes no loss of efficiency ; our statement is as strong as it was before, and we have produced a desirable shortening. Thus—

In many cases, the answers lacked care,
is put more shortly and not less strongly as—

Often the answers lacked care.

(*Many answers lacked care*, where an Adjective is substituted for the phrase, is perhaps better.)

She was dressed elegantly,
is briefer than, and not weaker than—

She was dressed in an elegant manner.

Whence? is not too old-fashioned to be a good substitute for *from what place?* Nor *whither?* for *to what place?*

Sometimes a whole sentence may, without loss, be replaced by an Adverb—

Evidently he was dismayed at the news,
says as much as—

It was evident that he was dismayed at the news.

Comparison of Adverbs

Some Adverbs admit of comparison. The Comparative and Superlative Degrees are formed from the Positive by the same terminations ("er" and "est"), as in the case of Adjectives. The Adverbs of Degree *more* and *most* are also similarly used ; more often, however, in the case of

Adverbs, since these have usually a syllable more than the corresponding Adjectives. Thus we have the Adjective—

Positive, *happy*; Comparative, *happier*; Superlative, *happiest*;

but the Adverb—

Positive, *happily*; Comparative, *more happily*; Superlative, *most happily*.

Adverb sometimes formed from Adjective

The end syllable *ly*, you note, often makes an Adjective into an Adverb. The Adjective *bold* becomes the Adverb *boldly*. The Adjective *high* ("The beauty of Israel is slain in thy high places") becomes the Adverb *highly* ("We here highly resolve").

But *ly* is not always the sign of the Adverb. Some Adjectives end in *ly*. In "The daily paper", *daily* is an Adjective, but is an Adverb in "With bended knees I daily beseech God". In Wordsworth's "Choice word and measured phrase, a stately speech", *stately* is an Adjective; to Shakespeare's "A figure appears before them and with solemn march goes slow and stately by them", *stately* is an Adverb. *Statelyly* is possible for the Adverb, but what an awkward word to say.

Note that in many instances the one word serves both as Adjective and Adverb. In the proverb "Fast bind, safe find", *fast* is the Adverb. It would be silly to write *fastly* because *fast* is an Adjective in "England must be the fast friend of France". In "She is well", *well* is an Adjective; in "She sings well", *well* is an Adverb. And do you notice a difference in meaning when the Adverb *hard* ("He was hard hit by the failure of his crop") becomes the Adverb *hardly* ("He was hardly affected by the failure")? Isn't *heavily* the synonym for *hard*, and *lightly* the synonym for *hardly*? And *right* in "Keep right" differs in meaning from *rightly* in "He cannot see rightly".

ADVERBS

YOUR EXERCISES

1. State clearly and fully the work of the Adverbs *now*, *then*, *surely*, *never*, *hardly*, *more*, *just*. To what words are they attached ?

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles ; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in—glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendour, and joy.

2. Alter the position of the Adverbs so that they are closer to the words they modify :

1. The general ordered the deserters to be shot *indignantly*.
2. He wept in passing that tomb *often*.
3. Do you take the medicine that I send you *regularly* ?
4. *Luckily* the monks had recently given away a couple of dogs, which were returned to them or the breed would have been lost.
5. He was shot by a secretary under notice to leave, with whom he was finding fault—*very fortunately without effect*.
6. I was *rather* impressed by the manner of the orator than by his matter.
7. His use of alliteration can *only* in many cases be forgiven by the hero worshippers.

3. Explain the different meanings by altering the position of the Adverb *only*—

Only the address to be written here ; the address to be *only* written here ; the address to be written here *only*.

Why would any other position be ambiguous ?

4. What words or phrases do the Adverbs in italics limit ? State the exact meaning of each Adverb.

Hard by yon wood. *Full* many a gem. The echoing horn *no more* shall rouse them. *How* jocund did they drive their team afield ! It is *but too* true. *Even* these men. ~~*No farther*~~, seek his merits to disclose.

5. In the extract below are the Prepositional Phrases, *over my head*, *beneath my feet*, and *before me*. Try the effect of substituting for each phrase a single Adverb :

Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking ! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lonely heaths.

[ANSWERS to 2, 3, 4 and 5]

2. 1. indignantly ordered 2. often wept 3. regularly take 4. which luckily 5. shot—very fortunately without effect— 6. rather than 7. only by

3. Nothing but ; and not printed or otherwise produced ; and nowhere else.

4. *Hard* (i.e. close) limits *by*

Full (i.e. very) limits *many*

No more (i.e. never again) limits *shall rouse*

How (i.e. greatly) limits *jocund*

But too (i.e. only too) limits *true*

Even limits *these* and serves to emphasise

No farther limits *seek to disclose*.

5. Perhaps *above*, *below*, *ahead* might serve.]

Study VIII

CONJUNCTIONS

THE QUESTION

What are the joining words in the English language and how are they used?

THE ANSWER

Consider the matter. Here is one sentence, "Men may come"; here is another, "Men may go"; and here another, "I go on for ever". Join the isolated sentences and we get a firmer grasp of the writer's thought: "Men may come and men may go, but I go on for ever."

The joining words *and* and *but* are Conjunctions. In the shortened sentence, "He is cheerful, though ill"; *though* links on to the main statement the word that you expand into "he is ill".

The Conjunction in some instances joins words or phrases: we could hardly expand into two full sentences such a statement as—

A great empire and a little mind go ill together.

(Here *and* joins the term *great empire* to the term *little mind*.) Nor could we expand the statement:

The green and white costume well becomes her.

(Here *and* joins the Adjectives *green* and *white*; we do not assert that the green costume becomes her *and* the white costume becomes her; but that she looks well in a judicious mingling of the two colours.)

A Relative Pronoun besides being a substitute for a Noun, also joins sentences. It does the work of a Conjunction. Thus in—

Surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision.

Which is nearly equivalent to *and it*. Note, too, that when a Relative Pronoun is used, a Conjunction in addition is not needed. Thus the following would be improved by omission of the Conjunction *and*—

Shakespeare frequently has passages in a strain quite false, *and* which are entirely unworthy of him.

(But perhaps *which are* is to be supplied before *quite false*, in which case the Conjunction *and* is quite in order.)

The work of joining the dependent clause to its principal clause is done by the Relative ; a Conjunction such as *and* or *but* is needed only when two or more dependent sentences are attached to the principal one. Here, for instance, is a sentence from Burke :

The people of a free commonwealth cannot suffer their executory system to be composed of persons [on whom they have no dependence] *and* [whom no proofs of the public love and confidence have recommended to power.]

We have here two clauses descriptive of persons who should not be allowed to become Ministers of the Crown ; and the two clauses are, naturally, connected by *and*—

Persons { on whom they have no dependence
AND
whom no proofs have recommended to power.

A conjunction will be in its natural position when it comes between the two sentences it connects. Thus—

God made the country, *and* man made the town.

Yet often we have a dependent sentence placed, for the sake of emphasis, before the sentence on which it depends
Thus—

If doughty deeds my lady please,
Right soon I'll mount my steed.

The Conjunction *if* here introduces the condition under which the bold acts will be performed ; and though it opens the statement, yet the sentence before which it stands is dependent on the principal statement, *Right soon I'll mount my steed.*

Similarly, the Relative Pronoun may come at the opening. Thus :

Who tells me truth, though in his tale lie death,
I hear him as he flattered.

(*Who*, Relative Pronoun, precedes its Correlative *him*.)

Work of the Conjunction

The Conjunction, as a rule, does more than join. It may usher in a contrast ; an antithesis it is sometimes called. Look, for example, at *but* in Cowper's lines :

Slaves fight for what were better cast away—
Thè chain that binds them, and a tyrant's sway ;
But they that fight for freedom undertake
The noblest cause mankind can have at stake.

It may, like *for* and *since*, usher in a reason : “ I am no orator as Brutus is. . . . For I have neither wit nor words nor worth.” It may, like *or*, usher in an alternative : “ Bless your honour ! ” cried Trim, advancing three steps as he spoke, “ does a man think of his Christian name when he goes upon the attack ? ”—“ Or when he stands in the trench, Trim ? ” cried my uncle Toby, looking firm.—“ Or when he enters a breach ? ” said Trim, pushing in tween two chairs.—“ Or forces the lines ? ” cried my uncle, rising up, and pushing his crutch like a pike.

A Note on Coherence

Some consider it a blemish to begin a sentence with a Conjunction ; they object to a conjunction immediately after a full stop. The practice of good writers, and of good

speakers, gives no countenance to the objection. After all, if your speech or your writing is to be a connected whole, there must be some way or other of carrying on the thought from one sentence to the next ; and it may well be argued that the beginning of a sentence is a quite natural place for the Conjunction. You will find examples in plenty. Look at this passage of Macaulay's. He is writing of Addison :

As an observer of life, of manners, of all the shades of human character, he stands in the first class. And what he observed he had the art of communicating in two widely different ways. He could describe virtues, vices, habits, whims, as well as Clarendon. But he could do something better. He could call human beings into existence, and make them exhibit themselves. If we wish to find anything more vivid than Addison's best portraits, we must go either to Shakespeare or to Cervantes.

But what shall we say of Addison's humour, of his sense of the ludicrous, of his power of awakening that sense in others, and of drawing mirth from incidents which occur every day and from little peculiarities of temper and manner, such as may be found in every man ? We feel the charm : we give ourselves up to it ; but we strive in vain to analyse it.

Macaulay, you notice, begins sentences with *And*, *But* and *If* in the one paragraph ; he even links a following paragraph to its predecessor by the Conjunction *But*.

Two other points concerning Conjunctions should be noted. In English they are at times omitted. In—

I used to think their slender tops,
Were close against the sky,

that, introducing the Noun Clause, *their slender . . . sky*, is to be understood.

When in enumeration the Conjunction *and* is left out, its place is supplied by a comma, as in—

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears ;

or as in Herrick's lines—

Thou art my life, my love, my heart,
The very eyes of me,
And hast command of every part,
To live and die for thee.

The commas in the first line indicate the omission of *and*.

The second point is that certain words need special Conjunctions. *Though* requires *yet* (though deep, YET clear ; though gentle, YET not dull) ; *whether* requires *or* ; *either*, *or* ; *neither*, *nor* ; *both*, *and* ; *or*, *or* ; *nor*, *nor*. Such pairs are called Correlatives. Similarly *more* is followed by *than* ; *such as*, and *so* are followed by *as*. ("We are such stuff *as* dreams are made on.")

YOUR EXERCISES

1. Pick out the joining words in this paragraph of Stevenson's :

All through my boyhood and youth, I was known and pointed out for the pattern of an idler ; and yet I was always busy on my own private end, which was to learn to write. I kept always two books in my pocket, one to read in, one to write in. As I walked, my mind was busy fitting what I saw with appropriate words : when I sat by the road-side I would either read, or a pencil and a penny version book would be in my hand, to note down the feature of the scene or commemorate some halting stanzas. Thus I lived with words. And what I thus wrote was for ulterior use ; it was written consciously for practice. It was not so much that I wished to be an author (though I wished that, too) as that I had vowed that I would learn to write. That was a proficiency that tempted me ; and I practised to acquire it, as men learn to whittle, in a wager with myself. Description was the principal field of my exercise ; for any one with senses there is always something worth describing, and town and country are but one continuous subject. But I worked in other ways, too ; often accompanied my walks with dramatic dialogues, in which I played many parts ; and often exercised myself in writing down conversations from memory.

[The words are : *and, which, as, what, when, or, or, and, what, that, though, that, that, that, and, as, for, but, which, and.*]

2. Explain the sense in which “but” is used in these sentences :

- (a) There is none here but hates me.
- (b) He would have died but for me. (How does the omission of *but* alter the meaning of the sentence ? Is *but* here equivalent to *except* ?)
- (c) He is all but perfect. (Expand the elliptical sentence.)
- (d) There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings.
- (e) It is but gossip's talk. (Consider what difference the omission of *but* makes.)

[In (a) *but* = who + not : “There is none here who does not hate me.”

(b) *but* = except.

(c) *but* introduces “he is not perfect.”

(d) *but* = which + not

(e) *but* = only.]

3. Insert the suitable Conjunctions :

- (a) He loves no plays — thou dost, Antony. (The Conjunction joins and also introduces a comparison.)
- (b) He was my friend, faithful and just to me — Brutus says he was ambitious. (The Conjunction joins and also introduces a contrast.)
- (c) I promised, — you'd watch a dinner out
We'd see truth dawn together.
(The Conjunction joins and also introduces a condition.)
- (d) I am no orator — I have neither wit nor words nor worth. (The Conjunction joins and also introduces a reason.)
- (e) The night is far spent, the day is at hand : let us —
cast off the works of darkness. (The Conjunction joins and also introduces a conclusion.)

[The Conjunctions are : (a) *as* ; (b) *but* or *yet* ; (c) *if*, which the lawyer might expend into *provided that* ; (d) *for* or *since* ; (e) *therefore*.]

Study IX

CORRECT ENGLISH

THE QUESTION

What is meant by "correct English"? And how is one to be sure of being correct?

THE ANSWER

There you touch upon a question to which no satisfying answer is possible. Consider a while. It comes to this, doesn't it? When people are concerned about what is or is not "correct English", they are concerned about fashion, about convention. Isn't it much as with behaviour? Your mentor says, for example, "That isn't done": you must not eat peas with your knife, you must wear a white tie with tails, a black tie with a dinner-jacket. So "That isn't said", is your mentor's warning when you err in your use of English: you must not say "I like these kind of books" but, "I like this kind of book"; you must have a plural verb when your subject is made up of two singulars joined by *and* ("Jack and Jill go up the hill"), a singular verb when your subject is made up of two singulars in the alternative ("Either he or I has her favour"); you must not say "Them's them" but "Those are they".

How the usage established itself may be difficult to trace; and neither reason nor logic may justify it. Still, if people think the usage is correct, you had better conform to it. "I go to town next Friday" is correct, though there is a yoking of the present tense *go* with the future tense *next Friday*. It is correct because people think it correct.

One other point is this: the fashion to which (unless you are a very important person indeed) you had better

defer is present-day fashion. Thus Chaucer of old wrote that, Spring coming,

Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages
And palmers for to seken straunge strondes.

“For to seek”, you note. And you all know the text, “But what went ye out for to see? A prophet! Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.” These old examples, however, are not defence adequate for the prefixing of “for” to *your* infinitives.

Nor would David (in Barrie’s play, *What Every Woman Knows*) have found comfort in being able to point to Chaucer as his authority. You remember the little passage. David had been Chairman of the meeting at which John Shand had caused some trouble. “You see,” said David, “I *cannot* get started on a speech without saying things like ‘In rising *for* to make a few remarks’.” “What’s wrong with it?” asked James. But David, depressed, went on, “He mimicked me, and said, ‘Will our worthy chairman come for to go for to answer my questions?’ and so on; and they roared.”

This modern rule, that two negatives make an affirmative, is a further instance. “I am not unwilling to help” is another, and maybe a little stronger way of saying “I am willing to help”. And, because we have this rule, a trap for the unwary is in words having a negative sense,—words like “deny” (say no), “undeterred” (not hindered), “under-value” (not to value enough), “discontinuous” (not continuous). You need, for instance, to modify these sentences :

- (i) You cannot deny that this tax will not be a burden upon industry.
- (ii) He was not in the least undeterred by his defeat from making another attempt.
- (iii) It would be hard to underestimate the effect of early education.

- (iv) I heartily support the movement ; no one yields to me in appreciation of its importance.
- (v) New Year's Day is a milestone which the least observant of us can hardly fail to pass unnoticed.

(In (i) take out *not* ; in (ii) change the negative *undeterred* into the affirmative *deterred* ; in (iii) change *under* into *over* ; in (iv) say " I yield to no one " ; in (v) change the negative " to pass unnoticed " into the affirmative " to notice ".)

Some Blunders in the Writing of English

A writer in *The Times* has a little fun in discussing some prevalent blunders. You had better transfer into good English the final sentence, where he gathers together a bunch of expressions that you should shun :

There is a temptation to forgive every honest blunder—everything, perhaps, except affectation, such as the favourite archaism, the decorative use of " You shall find " and so on, where humbler minded writers would put " will ". An Englishman, perhaps, must be rather truculently English not to find something prettily pleasing in the confusion between " shall " and " will " in the speech of his Scottish, and still more of his Irish, friends ; and his lenience extends to the same slip in their writing. That is not right. The offence should be regarded as sternly as the mistake of " who " and " whom ", for which apologists may plead Shakespeare and the Authorized Version in vain, since both the poet and the translators deserve to be sent to the bottom of the class. The blunder, made in writing, grates as harshly on the mind as the " like I did " of which an indignant correspondent has accused a woman novelist. Unfortunately, it is with writing as with motoring. There are many people writing for print, and by no means all of them even moderately well equipped for the task ; and therefore there are many more offences against the language than the defenders of the right can prevent or punish. It is too late, probably, now to take action against the confusion of " if " and " whether " which is rapidly driving a beautiful word out of use ; and it will soon be too late to prevent an adjectival use of substantives, which is spreading like a fire in Ashdown Forest. We read

again and again of the "England team" instead of the "English team"; and British naval officers have lately appeared on a bill as "British Navy Officers". If these sort of things go on, whom will say if in time the English language shall not be nothing but a string of nouns, like some savage dialects are?

Do you agree that the last sentence should read: "If this kind of things goes on, who shall say whether in time the English language will be anything but a string of nouns, as some savage dialects are?"?

One more curious instance of the conventions to which you do well to conform is furnished by the fashionable mode of addressing those people that are removed from the ordinary. If, unluckily, you are involved in litigation and you come into Court, it is the custom to address the Magistrate as "Your Worship", the County Court Judge as "Your Honour", the High Court Judge as "My Lord". The dignitaries of the Church, too, have their appropriate titles. You address your letter to the "Venerable Archdeacon", to the "Very Reverend Dean", to the "Very Reverend Chief Rabbi" also; to the "Right Honourable and Most Reverend Archbishop" (who is spoken to as "Your Grace"). A Cardinal is "Your Eminence", and an Apostolic Delegate, like an Ambassador, is "Your Excellency". The chief civic officer of your borough is a "Lord Mayor" if you live in the City of London or in one of these ten other boroughs, Birmingham and Bradford and Bristol, Hull and Leeds and Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham and Sheffield; but he is no more than a "Mayor" in the other boroughs. So, too, you will not address a "Lord Provost" as "Provost". How the mode of address arose and became the custom is, very likely, uncertain. Yet sensible people adhere to that custom.

So it is with what is perhaps more important, the method

of combining our words into sentences : the correct way is what people think the correct way.

YOUR EXERCISES

1. Bring the sentences below into line with present custom and make them express clearly the intended meaning :

1. You and I are both agreed upon these sort of questions.
2. The magistrate said he would try to administer justice without leaning either to partiality on the one hand or to impartiality on the other.
3. He only wrote on one side of the paper.
4. The ox has two horns on each side of its head.
5. Our tea is absolutely injurious to health.
6. He was the universal favourite of all the boys in the school.
7. I am sorry to say that my brother is recovering from a serious illness.
8. She wore a diamond pin in her hair which she had bought in New York.
9. Do you take the medicine that I send you regularly ?
10. The Home Guard band played the hymns as well as the organ.
11. If the smallest hole appears after six months' wear, we will make another absolutely free.
12. His death was despaired of.
13. I doubt if the Socialists want power.
14. These sort of things annoy me greatly.

[1. Omit *both* ; change *these* to *this*. 2. Write *without partiality*, and leave out all the other words after *justice*. 3. Transfer *only* and place after *side*. 4. Insert *one* after *horns*. 5. The negative of *injurious* is *non-injurious*. 6. Omit *universal*. 7. Change *recovering* to *suffering*. 8. Transfer *in her hair* and place after *wore*. 9. Transfer *regularly* and place alongside *take*. 10. Transfer *played the hymns* to the end of the sentence. 11. Insert *garment* after *another*. 12. Change *death* to *life*. 13. Change *if* to *whether*. 14. Change *these* to *this*, or else *sort* to *sorts*.]

8 A REFRESHER COURSE IN ENGLISH

2. Supply the word having the meaning indicated : the number of letters is also given :

1. When he felt ill, tobacco always lost its ——. (*agreeable taste*, 6)
2. Our short-lived connection with existence, we fondly flatter ourselves, is an indissoluble and lasting union,—a ——— that knows neither coldness, jar, nor separation. (*holiday before settling down at home*, 9)
3. Perhaps you have even now said as much to encourage my suit as would be ——— with the true delicacy of the female character. (*in keeping*, 10)
4. Though fond of many acquaintances, I desire an ——— only with a few. (*close familiarity*, 8)
5. As soon as the sermon is finished, nobody ——— to stir till Sir Roger is gone out of the church. (*dares without permission*, 8)
6. I must touch upon the ——— of my kinswoman with a gentle hand, for Bridget does not like to be told of her faults. (*weak points, failings*, 7)
7. What I write is not written on slate, and no finger, not of Time himself, who dips it in the clouds of years, can ——— it. (*erase, obliterate*, 6)
8. Here's the smell of the blood still : all the ——— of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. (*scents*, 8)
9. The bed was made, the room was fit,
By punctual eve the stars were lit ;
The air was still, the water ran,
No need was there for maid or man,
When we put up, my ass and I,
At God's green ———.
(*camp, resting-place for travellers*, 12)

[*Savour, honeymoon, consistent, intimacy, presumes, foibles, delete, perfumes, caravanserai.*]

Study X

IDIOMATIC ENGLISH

THE QUESTION

What is meant by idiomatic English? Is that the kind I should try to speak and write? And is "idiomatic English" the same as "correct English"?

THE ANSWER

An idiom is a form of speech peculiar to a people; and idiomatic English is the form of speech that English people are in the habit of using. Certainly it is this idiomatic English that must be your aim. Perhaps, though, it is as well to note that the idiom of educated, not of illiterate people, however entertaining the latter may be, is meant. [The mother's historic present and her double negatives are not to be your pattern :

"And I sez to 'er, I sez, 'You oughter be ashamed of yerself,' I sez, 'wicked creature,' I sez, 'teachin' my boy such things, and 'im only a kid,' I sez; and wot do you think she sez to me? 'Teach 'im,' she sez, 'I couldn't teach 'im nothin',' she sez, 'and no more could no-one else.'"]

Idiom and the custom of literate people are in effect one. That is, the answer to your last question above is Yes: "Correct English", if you accept the definition given in the Study preceding this, is no other than "Idiomatic English". Examine the matter. Here is a colloquy :

"Take some more tea," said the March Hare to Alice very earnestly.

"I've had nothing yet," Alice replied in an offended tone, "so I can't take more."

"You mean you can't take less," said the Hatter; "it's very easy to take more than nothing."

If we are to be rigidly accurate in our talk—if we are always “to speak by the card”—the Mad Hatter was justified in his rude criticism of Alice’s speech. But then we are, when using language, not rigidly accurate. Language is not a matter of mathematics; it is a matter of what custom dictates; and the words that are current sometimes run about the streets and market-places without carrying a precise meaning. Custom declares that “more”, in the March Hare’s invitation, implies addition; and addition to “nothing” is “some”. “Take some tea,” is the interpretation Alice put upon the invitation; and that, in spite of the Hatter’s severe logic, is the correct interpretation.

We all use words, in our writing as well as in our talk, with no acute sense of the strict meaning that should be attached to them; and, like Alice in the story, we are surprised and a little confused when we are challenged about them. We need not be greatly distressed by the challenge. The answer to it is that our use conforms to the practice of our fellows, and that the sense in which they will interpret the words is the correct sense. The words may have had a different sense at their first entry into this language. Yet, for ever so many of our words, to use the word in the old sense would lead to confusion.

In some old phrases, recognised by us as old, we are prepared to accept a modified meaning. This word “prevent”, for instance, bears its primary meaning in the words of the prayer, “Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour”, and in “Thy grace may always prevent and follow us”. There it means “to go before”—go before to prepare the way and make it plain. We invite misunderstanding, however, when we use the word in that sense now: you are, for example, pulled up short when Milton, speaking of the kings on the way to Bethlehem, says, “O run! prevent them with thy humble ode”—make your gift before they make theirs. We should be

wrong to copy in our ordinary talk those old-fashioned uses.

Look, for instance, at this curious collocation, "permanent wave". Now the very essence of a wave is that it is for ever altering :

When you do dance I wish you
A wave o' the sea that you might ever do
Nothing but that.

And "permanent" means "remaining"—remaining through all changes and chances. "Permanent" is opposed to "temporary". A "permanent wave" is, therefore, neither permanent nor a wave. Yet, since those who say the words and those who hear them attach the one meaning to them, they must be regarded as the correct way of naming a setting of the hair into temporary curls. The hairdresser who attracts customers by advertising "Double Life Perms" is using correct language—correct because the readers of the advertisement interpret the words in the sense intended by him : he is offering to produce curls that have a rigidity more lasting than the ordinary.

Where custom speaks with its imperious voice, it is unwise to go counter because of an assumed greater correctness. Strict grammar must at times bow before idiom, "Heedless of grammar, they all cried, 'That's him.'"

Errors themselves, being condoned by custom, become good English ; for custom in language is all-powerful. You may know, for instance, that *assets* was originally a singular noun : the French *assez* is "enough", and "assets" meant "enough to discharge the burden of debts". Yet you would be foolish to use *assets* as a noun of Singular Number (as Bacon does) and use *it* for the corresponding pronoun, and *is* for the verb. We must now look on *assets* as a plural and, when we do want a singular, use the word *asset*. And, as you will have noted, the original sense is absent when we speak of the "assets" of a bankrupt. The very

meaning of "bankrupt" is having not enough to pay debts.

Riches was another of the foreign importations where the *s* was mistaken for the plural ending. The French *richesse*, one forerunner of the word, is singular; and early writers used the word as a singular. Cassio says of Desdemona:

O, behold,
The riches of the ship is come on shore!

You will now, however, regard *riches* as a plural. But we have not yet—as we have with *assets*—coined a singular noun.

A perversion in the opposite direction is our regarding an original plural noun as a singular—sometimes, indeed, giving it a new plural. Such a word is *invoice*, meaning a list of goods sent with their prices and charges. This was once the French *envois* (the French verb, you remember, is *envoyer*, "to send"). We must now look on *invoice* as a singular noun, its plural being *invoices*.

YOUR EXERCISES

I. Below is a little about the preposition "*with*". Explain in the same way the varied senses of the preposition "*of*".

Many of our words have acquired idiomatic senses that diverge greatly from the primary sense. The preposition "*with*" is a good example. *With* meant "opposite to." The original sense remains in many of our phrases. You contend *with* an enemy; you compete *with* (or *against*) a rival; you vie *with* your competitor; you *withstand* an onslaught. But in the advice that was given to the unlucky Malvolio, "Be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants", the word implies no relation of physical position; it is transferred to a mental attitude. Notice, too, these developments.

In phrases like "She had a tongue with a tang" or in Milton's line "Now glowed the firmament with living sapphires", the word denotes accompaniment. In the

patriotic sentiment, "England, with all thy faults, I love thee still", the word means "in spite of".

Then we have phrases like—

"I sympathise with you." (We have even, without any logic for it, "I disagree with you".)

"The lady with the camellias" (where "with" signifies characterised by always carrying).

"He writes with a fountain pen" (by means of).

"I'll do it with pleasure" (i.e. accompaniment).

"I can do nothing with him" (i.e. I am unable to influence him).

You have, too, the expressions, curious enough when you examine them—

"I have parted with my best friend."

"I can dispense with the money" (where "with" implies not company but separation).

"With the best intentions he failed" (i.e. in spite of the best intentions).

Well, look at *of* in these phrases and explain its meaning :

Two miles north of the river : the town is emptied of its folk : I am poor of thanks : don't take it ill of me that I offer advice : one child of the marriage : I wish him joy of her : being warned of God in a dream : a house of cards : rather hard of hearing : a Justice of the King's Bench : of age : what do you want of him ?

[Note that in "north of the river" the preposition "of" is pretty well equal to "from"; that "emptied of its folk" is "emptied so far as regards its folk"; "poor of thanks" is "poor in respect of thanks"; "ill of me" is "ill on my part"; "of the marriage" is "resulting from the marriage". You can yourself expand the other examples.]

2. The verb "get" plays a great part in English idiom : write the passage below without using the word :

"I'll get along," he said, "I've got to get through an

English Study before I get to bed.” So he got his hat on, got along the road at a good pace and got to the station in time to get the quick train. He got a paper on his way and, getting a corner seat, got interested in an article, “We’ve got to get prepared.” He got home before blackout. His landlady had got fish for supper and then he got going with his exercise, getting one passage by heart. When getting washed before getting undressed he got thinking: “I’ll get a haircut to-morrow and, if the barber’s got any, I’ll get some razor-blades. And I’d better get shot of this tie and get a smarter one, or I’ll get it from Lucy, who likes me well got up.”

3. Show that these sentences may be improved by altering the Number of the Verb or by making other changes :

- (i) “The Idylls of the King” were written by Tennyson.
- (ii) Humanity, as well as expediency, demand it.
- (iii) Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace to-night.
- (iv) An immense amount of confusion and indifference prevail in these days.
- (v) He asked whether either of the ladies were at home.
- (vi) Unfortunately there seems to be spread abroad certain misconceptions.
- (vii) The jury were unanimous in its verdict.

[ANSWER.]

3. (i) Substitute *was* for *were* : “The Idylls of the King” is a shorter form of “The poem called ‘The Idylls of the King’” and is a Singular.
- (ii) *Demands* is better, even though the Nominative is logically a Plural one.
- (iii) Here again the logical Subject is “Heaven and earth”; but perhaps *has* is better than *have*.
- (iv) The Subject is “An immense amount”, therefore substitute the Singular *prevails* for *prevail*.
- (v) *Either* is *one of the two*, therefore substitute *was* for the Plural *were*.
- (vi) *Seem* is better than *seems* : the writer chose his Verb before the Subject *misconception*.
- (vii) Substitute *was* for *were* (see page 18).]

Study XI

GETTING A STOCK OF WORDS

THE QUESTION

Acquisition of a vocabulary is a slow but ever-continuing process ; how are we to quicken the process ?

THE ANSWER

You need a good vocabulary in order to speak and write well ; and it is not one, or a dozen, half-hour lessons that will give you the vocabulary you should have. The acquisition is a continuous process from the day when we first said “ Mam-mam ” to the very onset of decrepit age. And the acquisition is not in the main by way of task-work. You are for the most part unaware of effort, unaware, indeed, of the fact that you are adding to your stock of words ; and you obtain a deal of delight in the acquisition. But it is quite certain that you are wise in supplementing effortless acquisition, quite certain, too, that you can so supplement it.

New Senses to Old Words

You will not forget this, though : one way of supplementing your stock of words is to learn new uses for old words. Isn't that the marvel about Shakespeare's stock of words ? He wrests an old word to a new purpose, and he thereby extends the English language. You know, for instance, Cleopatra's comment after the smooth and plausible Caesar had left her :

He words me, girls, he words me that I should not
Be noble to myself.

This use of “ words ” as a verb, as a more effective way of saying “ tries to deceive ”, “ makes specious promises ”,

is, you agree, an adding to vocabulary. Look at these other instances from the play. Here is the use of "boy" as a verb: "I shall see some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness". Part of her penalty in captivity would be, she fears, the spectacle of a boy-actor playing Cleopatra. The Queen, again, wished to suggest that Antony's professed reason for leaving her was not the real reason. Could she have found a better word than "colour"?

Nay, pray you, seek no colour for your going,
But bid farewell and go.

"Colour" says all that its expansion—"a show of reason, which is indeed but show"—says, and says it with great effect.

A Matter of Imitation

Your store of words is augmented by imitation, conscious or mostly unconscious. At the moment, for example, the word "definitely" has spread like bindweed in a neglected garden. 'Witness after witness comes and, being questioned, answers, "Definitely," under the absurd idea that "Yes" is a less effective answer; and you will note many another occurrence of a passing fashion in words. You will, for example, have noticed how fond some people are of "intriguing" used as an adjective. They wish to say that a person or a thing interests them greatly and clamours for examination. Don't you think that "puzzling" or "perplexing" or "fascinating" is a much better word?

The Method Suggested

Imitation is the main means of getting the vocabulary you want; but it is wisdom to exercise care in selecting our patterns. You listen carefully to good speakers, you read good writers without impatience, you note the words used and refuse to be content with a vague notion of the intended meaning; you pull yourself up at a novel or

striking phrase and, by the help of a dictionary, you make sure about the meanings of the words composing the phrase. Get into the habit of consulting a good dictionary ; you will find the consultation an ever-growing delight. And you learn by heart passages, of prose as well as of poetry, in which the striking phrases come. Very likely your memory of the passages will not be tenacious. But that does not matter much ; for, doubtless, the word and its meaning will remain with you.

By doing these things you are bound to add to your passive vocabulary, to the words known without resort to a dictionary. Get the passive vocabulary extensive enough and your active vocabulary will extend itself.

May we add a note about this dictionary that you must have at hand ? It should be one that shows you how a word is used as well as give its meanings ; it should, that is, contain quotations. Such a dictionary will enable you to decide between the alternatives for completion of the sentences below :

- (i) His hand trembled so much that his writing was almost —. (*illegible, unreadable*)
- (ii) There were some — reasons for the choice. (*weighty, ponderous*)
- (iii) He should be ashamed of his — behaviour. (*feminine, effeminate*)
- (iv) His actions were prompted by a — of pity. (*sentiment, feeling*)
- (v) In the Attic Commonwealth it was the — of every citizen to address the people. (*right, privilege*)
- (vi) He would not have paid the money except under —. (*obligation, compulsion*)
- (vii) The ship has now its full — of officers. (*compliment, complement*)
- (viii) He may be chosen ; for, clearly, he is —. (*eligible, illegible*)

The words needed are : *illegible, weighty, effeminate, feeling, right, compulsion, complement, eligible*.

An interesting exercise of your own is to use the rejected word in a suitable way.

YOUR EXERCISES

1. We speak of the *discovery* of the law of gravitation, but of the *invention* of the steam-engine. For Newton drew aside (dis-covered) the veil that, till he came, had prevented men from perceiving the law; whereas Watt caused something that before him had no existence, to come into being. You will not always be able to give a reason for the choice of one word rather than another. There is, for instance, no reason except custom for saying "that our money has *run* short", rather than "*flown* short", that "we made *merry* at the party", rather than "made *joyful*"; that "our friends *mustered* strong", rather than "*collected* strong". Still you are at times able to give a reason. Well, substitute for the italicised words a more suitable word :

- (i) I bought a *quantity* of books at the sale.
- (ii) This is an *abbreviated* edition of the book.
- (iii) I *constantly* see him in the mornings.
- (iv) I could never *mind* dates.
- (v) I consider that his opinion should be wholly *discounted*.
- (vi) *Can* I trouble you for the paper?
- (vii) I *propose* to take a holiday on Saturday.
- (viii) Sir, I have a *contemptible* opinion of you. [The answer was : "That does not surprise me, for all your opinions are contemptible."]
- (ix) I *expect* you had poor weather there.
- (x) A *worthwhile* task; a *nearby* village; an *awful* day.

[The words suggested are : *number, shortened, often, remember, disregarded, may, purpose, contemptuous, imagine, worthy, neighbouring, stormy or rainy or tempestuous.*]

2. Suggest a word for the meaning indicated :

- A. 1. Through the drifts the snowy cliffs did send a — sheen.
(*gloomy, frightening*)

2. It cracked, and growled, and roared and howled, like —— in a swoond. (*disagreeable sounds*)
3. For all —— I had killed the bird that made the breeze to blow. (*asserted as a truth*)
4. The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, the —— followed free. (*channel, trench*)
5. The Sun's rim dips: the stars rush out:
At one —— comes the dark. (*long step*)
6. The moving Moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did —— . (*remain fixed*)
7. Upon the —— where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round. (*eddy, rapid circling movement*)
8. Hark, the little —— bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer. (*evening*)
9. The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is —— is gone. (*grey with age*)
10. He went like one that hath been —— . (*made unconscious by a blow*)

[The words wanted, all in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, are: 1. *dismal*, 2. *noises*, 3. *averred*, 4. *furrow*, 5. *stride*, 6. *abide*, 7. *whirl*, 8. *vesper*, 9. *hoar*, 10. *stunned*.]

B. Try to supply the words that Thackeray used in these sentences.

1. Dr. Tusher was one of the officiants, and read from the eagle in an —— voice. (*as of a dictator*, 13)
2. When he looked up there were two sapphire beams out of his eyes, such as no painter's —— has the colour to match, I think. (*The flat thin tablet on which the artist mixes his colours*, 7)
3. Esmond felt his whole face flush, and his heart —— as that dear lady beheld him once more. (*beating strongly*, 9)
4. Young Castlewood came —— over the stalls before the clergy were fairly gone, and running up to Esmond, eagerly embraced him. (*climbing over obstacles*, 10)
5. His heart was very full, and —— at all this tenderness on the lad's part. (*thankful*, 8)
6. He was fearful about that other —— which was now to take place. (*a meeting face to face*, 9)

7. The quarrel was all over. The year of grief and —— was past. (*a keeping apart from acquaintance, 12*)
8. Mr. Tom had —— himself of his alb or surplice, and came forward habited in his cassock and great black periwig. (*taken off, 8*)
9. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy ; and he that goeth forth and weepeth, shall doubtless come home again with rejoicing, bringing his —— with him. (*bundles of corn, 7*)
10. The depth of this pure devotion (which was, for the first time —— to him quite) smote upon him, and filled his heart with thanksgiving. (*made clear, 8*)

[The quotations are from Chapter VI of *Henry Esmond* : the words Thackeray used are :

authoritative, palette, throbbing, clambering, grateful, interview, estrangement, divested, sheaves, revealed]

C. Try to supply the words that Stevenson used in this extract :

To be honest, to be kind,—to earn a little and to —1— a little less, to make upon the whole a family happier for his —2—, to —3— when that shall be —4— and not be embittered, to keep a few friends, but these without —5— here is a task for all that a man has of —6— and delicacy.

1. *lay out* ; 2. *being with them* ; 3. *give things up* ; 4. *called for* ; 5. *sacrificing one's principles* ; 6. *courage and endurance*.

[Stevenson's words are : *spend, presence, renounce, necessary, capitulation, fortitude*.]

Study XII

CHOOSING YOUR WORDS

THE QUESTION

What should be my guide when choosing words in which to embody my thoughts?

THE ANSWER

Language enables one person's mind to share in the thoughts of another person's mind. Very well, the words that can carry the thoughts best are what you want. Get the words that express your thought clearly, and consider whether the words you choose will be interpreted by your hearer or reader in the sense you intend.

It is not enough to have a copious stock of words at your disposal. That, indeed, as has more than once been said, is desirable. But the copious stock is dangerous if not accompanied by accurate knowledge. More important than the possession of a great number of words is a clear understanding of the meanings of those we employ. We may, unwisely, be content with a vague knowledge of our passive vocabulary ; we must certainly clearly understand our active one. To use a big full-sounding word in a wrong sense or improper connection is affectation, a pretence that we do well to shun.

How much better the simpler *speeches* would have been than the more pretentious *soliloquies* in—

This was said by Macbeth in one of his soliloquies to his wife.

A soliloquy is, as you are aware, the method by which a playwright makes known to his audience the secret thoughts of his characters ; and these thoughts would be supposed uttered neither to wife nor to any one else.

Inexact knowledge of the words we use is likely to make us look—and feel—ridiculous. Thus—

She : It's really wonderful how this part of the world suits old people ! There's my grandfather ; he's eighty-nine next month.

He : Really ! Almost a nonentity, isn't he ?

(No doubt the old man made it very evident that he was not yet a nobody, though he would shortly be a *nonagenarian*.)

A memorial battle was fought at Quebec in 1759.

(Battles have been fought for very slight reasons, but never surely simply to commemorate a past occurrence. Such a battle would indeed be *memorable*.)

If you should be sufficiently interested to pay a personal visit to the farm, you will be welcome, and every facility will be shown you.

(Write either “every facility will be given you”, or “every civility will be shown you”.)

Lack of definite knowledge of the meanings may lead to an unlucky choice even in the case of common and simple words. *Either*, for instance, means *one out of two* ; so that in the lady's exclamation—

A convent, a lunatic asylum, a husband—either will do, we should substitute *any* (one out of a number). Similarly, we cannot properly talk of *three or four alternatives* ; there can be only *two* alternatives, though three or four different courses of action.

Centre is another word at times wrongly used ; the centre is a single point, so that the word must be replaced by *middle* in—

He parts his hair in the centre,
and

The procession passed up the centre aisle.

Between sometimes occurs in a sentence of which the diction may be improved. For instance—

A pear tree was planted between each pair of apple trees.

But it is better to rearrange the sentence—

Apple and pear trees were planted alternatively.

The same applies to—

A strip of garden runs *between* each of the houses.

Between each pair of houses, or better, perhaps,

The houses are separated from one another by strips of garden.

Doubt used instead of *fear* has the example of Shakespeare to justify it, “I doubt some foul play”; but it seems a mistake to use it in sentences like, “I doubt he is too old for the post.”

Ignorance of the full meaning of a word leads often to a waste of words. Here are some sentences containing needless repetitions—

His future prospects were full of promise.

(*Prospects* cannot be other than future; they are *the things looked for in the future*, so that we have here a double expression of time.)

He had the entire *monopoly* of the whole trade.

(*Monopoly* implies possession of the whole trade, so that both *entire* and *whole* are uncalled-for additions to the sentence.)

The soldiers were too exhausted to take *the proper care* they ought of their horses.

(The *proper care* is *the care they ought*. Therefore, omit either *proper* or *they ought*.)

“ A new discovery ” is repetition ; “ to restore again ” and “ to return again ” repeat themselves, for the prefix *re* means *again* ; in “ the first aggressors ”, the idea of *first* is repeated, since the aggressor is he that attacks first. In these and many similar instances, accurate knowledge of the words used tends to an economy of words ; and most people, business men particularly, look on brevity as a virtue in composition.

We might easily multiply instances ; but, even from these few, some practical directions emerge—

- (i) Enlarge your vocabulary by careful study of good MODERN patterns, so that you may possess the word that most fitly expresses your meaning.
- (ii) Make certain that you know the full meaning of the words you use.

Then, since we are not to assume that our readers are prepared to take excessive pains in order to discover our meaning, we must select those words that most clearly and simply convey that meaning. Not that the reader may understand if he wishes to, but that he **MUST** understand whether he wishes or not—that should be our aim when we write. We shall, therefore, select familiar rather than far-fetched, and simple rather than difficult words. Because Milton writes *yclept*—

Come, thou Goddess fair and free,
In heaven *yclept* Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,

we are not to suppose *yclept* a good substitute for “ called ” for *our* purpose. Nor are we to write *rathe* for “ early ” because we find the line—

Bring the *rathe* primrose that forsaken dies.

Some words, too, once in good repute, have sadly degenerated. “ Blooming ”, for instance, meant “ healthy and

handsome". But we should hesitate long before we write "a blooming girl", though Wordsworth has the lines—

And turning from the grave, I met,
Beside the churchyard yet,
A blooming Girl whose hair was wet,
With pearls of morning dew.

YOUR EXERCISE

Simplify these passages :

1. I am under the impression that your peregrinations in this metropolis have not as yet been extensive, and that you might have some difficulty in penetrating the arcana of the Modern Babylon in the direction of the City Road.
(Mr. Micawber himself obligingly simplifies this : 'In short, I thought that you might lose yourself in London.')
2. He has been made the recipient of a gold medal.
3. Pitt breathed his last in indigent circumstances.
4. *Cabman* (holding up coin to fare): Is this, Sir, the pecuniary recompense to which you think I am justly entitled?

Fare to Cabman : In truth, honest Charioteer, you have gauged my meaning.

(Would this do : *Cabman* : 'Ere, what's this?

Fare : A shilling, and you're dear at that.)

Suggest one word for the phrases in italics :

5. The remarks of the speaker were *not loud enough to be heard*.
6. His conduct is *not capable of explanation*.

Improve the wording of these sentences :

7. That moiety of the population wont to be termed the gentler sex has created much stir of late.
8. The man is a party who has lately risen to eminence.
9. Drill will transpire to-day in barracks.
10. Where there are plenty of boys, there is plenty of fun.
11. One should always give an action a moment's thought before putting it into execution and so saving a great deal of unpleasantness.

12. The meaning of the phrase, *Look before you leap*, is that before attempting to do anything to think over the best way, and then to give those thoughts practical experience.

[2. *given* for *made the recipient of*; 3. *died poor* for *breathed his last in indigent circumstances*; 5. *inaudible*; 6. *inexplicable*; 7. *Women have made much stir lately*; 8. *one* for *a party*; 9. *take place* for *transpire*; 10. *Many boys, much fun*; 11. *Think before you act*; 12. *Plan with care, then act with vigour*.]

Your choice of words will, in great measure, depend upon your expected readers. Here are two passages both written by Macaulay, the first to a little girl, the second (in his *History*) for the general public. Which words in the second passage, do you think, would have been simplified by Macaulay for his first correspondent?

(a)

Thank you for your very pretty letter. I am always glad to make my little girl happy, and nothing pleases me so much as to see that she likes books, for when she is as old as I am she will find that they are better than all the tarts and cakes, toys and plays and sights in the world. If anyone would make me the greatest king that ever lived, with palaces and gardens and fine dinners, and wines and coaches, and beautiful clothes, and hundreds of servants, on condition that I should not read books—I would not be a king.

(b)

On the best lines of communication the ruts were deep, the descents precipitous, and the way often, such as it was, hardly possible to distinguish in the dark from the uninclosed heath and fen which lay on both sides. It was only in fine weather that the whole breadth of the road was available for wheeled vehicles. Often the mud lay deep on the right and on the left; and only a narrow track of firm ground rose above the quagmire.

Study XIII

THE MEANING OF WORDS

THE QUESTION

*If we understand a word it brings an idea into mind :
how comes it about that the same word may be attended
with more than one idea ?*

THE ANSWER

Active and Passive Vocabularies

A word is a sign, a sound for the ear or a mark for the eye. If you can interpret the sign in the sense intended it belongs to your stock of words ; if you yourself use the word in your speaking or writing, it belongs not only to the passive stock of words but also to the much smaller active stock. One result of your English studies should be to bring about the passage of many words from your passive stock to your active stock.

Read these delightful lines of Herrick's :

Why I tie about thy wrist,
Julia, this silken twist ;
For what other reason is't,
But to show thee how, in part,
'Thou my pretty captive art ?
But thy bond-slave is my heart :

'Tis but silk that bindeth thee,
Knap the thread and thou art free :
But 'tis otherwise with me :
—I am bound and fast bound, so
That from thee I cannot go ;
If I could, I would not so.

You interpret all the words that Herrick uses ; you interpret them in the sense he intended. They belong at

all events to your passive stock. Unless you are familiar with cotton-spinning, though, you do not use "twist" in Herrick's sense ; and, very likely, "snap" is your word for "knap". "Twist" and "knap" are not in your active stock of words. Nor, except on the rare occasions when you venture on poetry, do you use "thou" and "thee" and "thy".

Will you examine for a while the meanings of a few words from that little poem ? It is, you note, a contrast : Julia is bound by a material bond ; the poet is bound by an immaterial, though stronger bond. Notice, too, a further development in "bondslave" : a man may be enslaved though no fetters are visible. If, for every idea, we had to remember a separate word, we should have a heavy burden. Our language grows, our stock of words becomes enlarged, in a better way. For most of our ideas are expressed by words transferred from other ideas. Some real or fancied likeness makes for the swing in the words.

Consider that question of transfer of meaning before further examination of the poem. Here is the verb "run". In its simple physical sense you would give its meaning, "go forward by advancing each foot in turn, both feet never being on the ground together". But from this physical meaning you have a number of what may be called figurative meanings.

The transfer is obvious enough in a running fight, the retreating ships continuing to fire on the pursuers ; in running up to town, though the train is the actual agent ; in the fount ran dry (when it ceased to flow) ; in your life runs smoothly (your lot is cast in pleasant places). Less obvious are extensions like "the King's Writ did not run in Alsatia" (was treated there with scant respect) ; "the play ran a hundred nights" (kept the stage) ; "he hit the ball six times running" (in succession) ; "he ran brandy" (by dodging the Customs). Then we have such expressions as

“to run the blockade” (to evade ships that are trying to prevent access to a port); “to run risks”; “to run an account”. And, in combination with other words, we have “a runaway marriage” (an elopement); “to run into” (attain: “the book ran into six editions”); “to run over” (review or read); “run down a person” (to detract from his character), and several others. And the lawyer delights in a “running down action”, though wheels, not feet, are involved. Perhaps “run it”, in the sense “I manage a business”, “I run the show”, has not yet quite emerged from slang into standard English.

Our words, as you see, are flexible, and they adapt themselves to many purposes. Write down for yourself the number of meanings a little word like “put” can bear: “put off your holiday”, “put it on”, “put on your mettle”, and so on.

“Fast” in the poem is another instance of this transfer of meanings. It means there “so that I cannot free myself”; and that sense is far from the intended sense in phrases like “the fast express”, “a fast runner”,

And broader still becomes the blaze, and louder still the din,
As fast from every village round the horse came spurring in,
The first sense of the word, “firm, immovable” (as in phrases like: “stand fast”, “make fast”, “fast bind”, “safe find,” “fasten him as a nail in a sure place”) has been transferred to “rapid in movement”. Strength and persistence are common to the two meanings: to stand fast needs both; to travel fast needs both.

You notice that “would” in the last line of the poem is to be interpreted “I should wish”. It has the same meaning as in the sorrowful confession,

The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I
would not; that I do.

This development of meaning is due at times to a kind

of saving instinct in language. For we have borrowed words when we already had in the language words for the ideas. Sometimes both words, the home product and the imported, survive. The English *whole* persists with the Danish *hale*; but *hale*, as in the expression "hale and hearty", is restricted to one sense of good (i.e. robust and vigorous), while *whole* remains the general term. The English *thatch*, the covering of a cottage or a stack, accompanies the Dutch *deck*, the covering of a ship. English *ridge*, *bridge*, and *church* are often replaced in northern dialects by Danish *rig*, *brig* (Briggate is a well-known street in Leeds), and *kirk*. The English *east*, the quarter of sunrise, is kin to the Latin *aurora*, the dawn; English *eight* to Latin *octo* (seen in October, once the eighth month); English *hundred* to Latin *cent*. The Latin *maternal* lives along with English *motherly*, *cordial* with *hearty*, *beef* with *cow*, *rectitude* with *righteousness*, *juvenile* with *young*, *longitude* with *length*, and *grain* with *corn*.

You would do well to state clearly to yourself the distinction, so far as any exists, between the words of each pair. One curious feature of our language that you may have noticed is the frequency with which we prefer the foreigner when we need to use other than the simple noun, verb, or adjective. Thus, we use the English noun *ear*, but go to Latin for the adjectives *audible* (that can be heard), *auricular* (told in the ear, secret), and *aural* (belonging to the ear), and for the noun *aurist* (an ear specialist). The English verb *sit* is replaced by its Latin cognate in the adjective *sedentary*: *two* has as its corresponding adjective *dual* and its corresponding noun *duplicity*, in both of which words we have the Latin *duo*; *foot* has *pedal* for "belonging to the foot", and we say "pedestrian" rather than "foot-goer"; the English pronoun *I* has the Latin *egoist* for the person always using I and the Latin *egotist* for the person always thinking about himself.

YOUR EXERCISES

1. Select the suitable adjective from those given :

- (1) He is — to be called upon. (*apt, liable*)
- (2) The — news of the war is very depressing. (*last, latest*)
- (3) We may have a — friend : and two people may have a — friendship. (*mutual, common*)
- (4) He had — chances of learning. (*exceptionable, exceptional*)

Use the word you reject so as to show that you know its meaning.

2. Here are four adjectives with a similar meaning : *aged, ancient, antique, archaic*. Insert the suitable adjective in the following sentences :

- (1) There were forests — as the hills.
- (2) This — prince was flourishing in peace.
- (3) An — expression is one strange in modern times, though common enough in times long past.
- (4) Some people have a curious taste for — furniture.

3. The general word is “ sound ”. But a skilful artist in words needs more specific words in various contexts. Examine here, for instance, Matthew Arnold's choice of substitutes :

- (1) We are here as on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarm of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.
(*alarm, clash*)
- (2) So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vexed garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze ;
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I.
(*cry, volleying*)
- (3) Some good survivor with his flute would go,
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate.
(*Piping*)
- (4) Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar
Let in thy voice a whisper often come
To chase fatigue and fear.
(*roar, whisper*)

- (5) Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill ;
 Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes !
 No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
 Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats.

(*call, bawl*)

Give a word to denote the sound of : (a) rain on the leaves, on the window, on a lake : (b) waves against a rock, on a shingly beach : (c) a brook : (d) a waterfall : (e) oars : (f) a motor-cycle.

4. " Lectures adapted to a juvenile auditory " are " Lectures suitable for boys and girls ". For these nouns, which a great editor disliked, substitute in like manner simpler ones :

aggregate, balance, commencement, conclusion, decade, devouring element, inauguration, interment, jubilation, juvenile, lady (for wife), parties (for persons), portion, residence, sensation, vicinity.

Though we call the use of pretentious terms " journalese ", journalists themselves mock at it. Here is an instance :

Suppose yourself up for an examination in journalism. Question one : " The house was soon on fire ; much sympathy is expressed with the sufferers." Can you translate that into newspaper English ? How would this do : " In a moment the edifice was enveloped in shooting tongues of flame ; the appalling catastrophe has plunged the whole street into the gloom of night " ?

Barrie : *When a Man's Single*.

- [1. Liable, latest, common, mutual, exceptional.
2. Ancient, aged, archaic, antique.
3. (a) lisp or rustle, tapping, ripple ; (b) thudding or beating, grinding or roaring ; (c) babble, (d) crash, (e) splash, (f) chug.
4. Total, remainder, beginning, close or end, ten years, fire, beginning, burial, joy, bog, wife, persons, part, house, noteworthy event, neighbourhood.]

Study XIV

SYNONYMS

THE QUESTION

We have in the English language many groups of words that may replace one another : do these substitute words serve any purpose ?

THE ANSWER

The question is, perhaps, not quite accurate. For it is not easy to find words that are, for all purposes, interchangeable. You remember Fluellen's outburst. His question was :

"What call you the town's name where Alexander the Pig was born?"

"Do you mean," said his companion, "Alexander the Great?"

"Why, I pray you," said Fluellen, "is not pig great? The pig, or the great, or the mighty, or the huge, or the magnanimous, are all one reckonings, save the phrase is a little variations."

Now, though *big*, *great*, *mighty*, and the others have something in common, you can discriminate.

The name given to the group—the name *synonyms*—suggests, indeed, that the words do mean the same. *Syn* is the Greek prefix for *alike*, and *onym* is what is left of the Greek word for *name*. "Begin" and "commence", "behaviour" and "deportment", "snapdragon" and "antirrhinum" are pairs of synonyms.

In a language like ours, however, ever developing and changing as it does, the words (maybe identical in meaning at first) diverge. One of the pair takes on a special shade of meaning, one is used in a particular connection, and one

becomes restricted in use. Even synonyms as close as "wide" and "broad" are not always interchangeable. Each has "narrow" as its opposite; each is suitable in phrases like "a wide road" or "a broad stretch". But we say "wide mouth", but "broad back"; and custom calls for "wide" in "wide intervals", "a wide ball", "a wide-open window", but for "broad" in "broad daylight", and "a broad hint". "Thin" and "lean" are much alike; but the barber commiserates with you because you are getting "thin on top" (not "lean"), and the "lean meat" is not of necessity from the thin beast. And of which is "fat" the opposite, of which "thick"?

Instances of Synonyms

Look at a few of the groups, in which the English language is peculiarly rich. "Proud", "dignified", "haughty", "arrogant", "supercilious"—all these express satisfaction in oneself or one's achievements. Yet you can distinguish. "The proud peacock", you say, as you see him spreading his gay feathers. It is not "the dignified peacock"; for you are amused, not awed, by the display. "Proud" you may be of your achievements, proud that you have overcome difficulties that daunted others; but there is no need to be "haughty" (aloof from) or "arrogant" (imposing your will) or "supercilious" (contemptuous) of those others in their failure.

"Knowledge" and "wisdom" are something of the same; yet you can understand Cowper's lines:

Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much,
Wisdom is sorry that he knows no more.

Shakespeare has "The uncertain glory of an April day". Isn't "uncertain" in that connection better than "fickle" or "changeable" or "passing" or "transitory"? The prayer is: "Deliver us from all sedition, privy conspiracy,

and rebellion". You can discriminate here, too. "Sedition" is a sitting apart in order to revile the Government; "privy conspiracy" is the plotting together that is born of such reviling; "rebellion" is the open action resultant from the plotting.

Synonyms do enable you to express finer shades of meaning; they do enable you to have a variety agreeable to yourself and your hearers or your readers. Here, for instance, is Burke's sentence:

If he should be obliged to blame the favourites of the people, he will be considered as the tool of power; if he censures those in power, he will be looked upon as the instrument of faction.

(Note how, in this balanced sentence, "blame" in the first half becomes "censures" in the second; "considered" becomes "looked upon"; and "tool of power" becomes "instrument of faction".) Again, in his sentence:

I know the diligence with which my observations on our public disorders has been made; I am very sure of the integrity of the motives on which they are published; I cannot be equally confident in any plan for an absolute cure of those disorders.

(Note the variants, "I know", "I am sure", "I am confident".)

One chief reason for our having so many synonyms is that our language has had additions from many sources. Here is Macbeth's lament:

But now I am cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in,
To saucy doubts and fears.

You have four terms to emphasise the sense of imprisonment: "cabined" from Late Latin, "cribbed" from Old English, "confined" from classical Latin, and "bound" from Old English. (Compare the verse, "At her feet he

bowed, he fell, he lay down ").) A similar emphasis is this of old Burton : " In sober sadness marriage is a bondage, a thralldom, a yoke, a hindrance to all good enterprises, a drag to all preferment ". Which, if any, of these substitutes is fittest ?

English may have had a suitable word for an idea, yet another word came from abroad. Thus *hearty* is the Old English, *cordial* is from the Latin ; *deadly* is the Old English, *mortal* from the Latin. So with *motherly* and *maternal* ; *lively* and *vivacious* ; *watery* and *aqueous*. At times the interloper has quite ousted the native. Thus, the negative in Old English of *hope* was *wanhope*. Now *despair* has replaced *wanhope*. Note, too, how we have gone to Latin for Adjectives to keep company with Old English Nouns : *ocular* to accompany *eye* ; *domestic* to accompany *house* ; *agrarian* to accompany *land* ; *mental* to accompany *mind* ; *lunar* to accompany *moon* ; *solar* to accompany *sun* ; *epistolary* to accompany *letter*.

Finish this study by thinking upon a line of Shelley's and a paragraph of John Bright's. Shelley writes :

Rough wind that moanest loud.

You feel that no other word implying *to cry in pain* would be a satisfactory substitute for *moan*. Try *groan*, *cry*, *shriek*, *howl*, *sob*, *mourn*, *sigh*, *lament*. All have some defect : *groan* suggests too hollow a sound ; *cry* is too general, is not definite enough ; *shriek* suggests a startled outcry rather than the dismal wail of the wind ; and so on.

John Bright said :

I cannot but notice that an uneasy feeling exists as to the news which may arrive by the very next mail from the East. I do not suppose that your troops are to be beaten in actual conflict with the foe, or that they will be driven into the sea ; but I am certain that many homes in England in which there now exists a fond hope that the distant one may return—

many such homes may be rendered desolate when the next mail shall arrive. The Angel of Death has been abroad throughout the land ; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as when the first-born were slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on ; he takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy, and the cottage of the poor and the lowly.

Debate on the Crimean War.

In the impressive sentence beginning “ The Angel of Death ”, why does the speaker—who always carefully prepared his speeches and had a reason for the words he used—say *beating* rather than *flapping* or *whirring* or *noise* or *fluttering* ? Substitute one of the words and note how the sentence is marred. *Flapping* is low and commonplace ; *noise* is vague and calls up no definite idea ; *whirring* makes us think of hurried motion with no clear object ; *fluttering* is too slight for the dignified, relentless progress spoken of.

Here, for your enjoyment, is a paragraph in which a *Times* writer has a deal of fun over the enforced use of expressions meaning the same as another but less offensive :

“ It is an absolute lie,” says the M.P. ; and at once THE SPEAKER intervenes, “ The right hon. member is in order in expressing his opinions. At the same time it is not in order to accuse another member of making a deliberate and conscious false statement.” The member must find an alternative. He may say that the statement is inaccurate, or that it is unfounded, or that it is terminological inexactitude. Yes ; and no hon. member is allowed to say : “ There is a great deal of humbug on the part of the Front Opposition Bench.” The word “ humbug ” is not a Parliamentary expression. The hon. member anxious to state that in his humble opinion the indignant protests made by fractious opposition were all sham, that they were meant to dupe trustful listeners, that they were in fact uttered for the sake of effect only, must find a substitute for “ humbug ”.

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YOUR EXERCISES

1. Compose sentences so as to distinguish between : *Abbreviate* and *abridge* (Is *Ltd.* an *abbreviation* or an *abridgement* ?) ; between *redemption* and *ransom* (Which denotes the price paid for buying back ?) ; between *pauper* and *poor*, *captive* and *caitiff*, *diurnal* and *journal*, *secure* and *sure*, *fragile* and *frail*, *insulate* and *isolate*, *scandal* and *slander*, *blaspheme* and *blame*, *phantasy* and *fancy*, *iota* and *jot*.

2. (i) Which is the more dignified ?

(a) You are a barber ?

(b) I follow the profession of hairdressing.

(ii) " You lie " is crude : which of these is the better substitute ?

(a) My right honourable friend has all the qualities of a picturesque but incorrect historian.

(b) I said nothing of the kind : it is a pure effort of imaginative fabrication.

(iii) Which of the two versions is the more effective ?

(a) The Viceroy's speech made an excellent impression upon his audience.

(b) His hearers liked the Viceroy's speech.

3. Try to select from each group of synonyms the word Thackeray used :

The sun was (*gleaming, shining, glowing*) though 'twas November ; he had seen the market carts (*proceeding, wheeling, rolling*) into London, the guard (*freed, relieved, rested*) at the palace, the labourers (*plodding, walking, trudging*) to their work in the gardens between Kensington and the City—the (*itinerant, wandering, travelling*) merchants and hawkers filling the air with their (*calls, cries, shouts*). The world was going to its (*business, affairs, occupation*) again, although dukes lay dead and ladies (*grieved, sorrowed, mourned*) for them ; and kings, very likely, lost their (*opportunities, chances*). So night and day (*pass, go, fade*) away, and to-morrow (*comes, arrives, appears*), and our place knows us not.

[Thackeray's words were : *shining, rolling, relieved, trudging, wandering, cries, business, mourned, chances, pass, comes.*]

Study XV

HOME-MADE OR IMPORTED WORDS ?

THE QUESTION

I have been told to use words that have come from Old English instead of words that have come from Latin and Greek : is that a good rule ?

THE ANSWER

Perhaps you should not trouble yourself about such rules as guides to your choice of words. Certainly, the one above expresses a truth ; but it is not the whole truth. Consider the matter a while.

For one thing you cannot, unless you know a great deal about the origin of words, be sure whether the word presenting itself to you has come from Old English or from another source. Here is a sentence :

Their bodies are buried in peace ; but their name liveth for evermore.

You look at the words and you decide, quite rightly, that only *peace* comes from a source other than Old English. But what word would you use instead of *peace* ? It is a word that came into English with William the Conqueror along with ever so many other indispensable words : these law terms, for instance, *court*, *assize*, *judge*, *jury*, *justice*, *prison*, *gaol*. Old English has been edited by a French family.

Look now at this little extract (it is from one of Mr. Churchill's speeches) :

History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes, and kindle with pale gleams the passions of former days.

What is the worth of all this? The only guide to a man is his conscience; the only shield to his memory is the rectitude and sincerity of his actions. It is very imprudent to walk through life without this shield, because we are so often mocked by the failure of our hopes and the upsetting of our calculations; but with this shield, however the fates may play, we march always in the ranks of honour.

Mr. Winston Churchill.

Now, there are several words there about the origin of which, it is pretty certain, you could not decide with certainty. Look at a few. What about *lamp*? That looks English enough, though it did come from Greek by way of Latin and Norman French. What about *trail* and *mocked* and *shield*? Look up these and others in the extract in your dictionary: you will be greatly interested; and you will agree that only a long and deep study of the origin of words (of *etymology* as it is called) will enable you to answer the question "Old English or not?"

The second thing, the more important thing, is this: you choose words that, you have reason to think, will be understood by those for whom you use them in the sense you intend. Does this collection of words express my meaning? Will they be readily interpreted in that meaning? There are your questions. You never ask, "What is the origin of this word?"

Some words, indeed, bear unmistakable marks of their origin. There are long-tailed words in *-osity* and *-ation* that loudly proclaim their Latin origin. There are others still retaining some reminiscences of French pronunciation, even written at times with the accents they have in French—*promenade*, *croquet*, *rouge*, *debris*, *adieu*, *beau*, *café*, *corps*, *précis*, and the like. There are others that retain a Greek spelling, like *phantasy* (but *fancy*, too, is of far-off Greek origin), *phenomenon*, *chasm*. You may perhaps pause a while before you use such. But even of these unmistakable words of foreign origin there are some with which we could ill

dispense. At times, they have quite ousted the English word. The Latin *very* (akin to *verity*, "truth", and *veracious*, "truthful") is used in place of the old English *swithé*; the Latin *part* has relegated *dole* to a quite subordinate function; the Latin *autumn* has replaced the native *harvest* as the name of one of the seasons, so that the latter word now denotes only the distinctive operation of the season. *Cry*, *button*, *battle*, *improve*, *chance*, and hundreds of others constantly heard among us are of foreign origin; yet you have no qualms in using them.

To select or to coin words from native ore to replace foreigners may indeed be affectation. You hear argument about a person's *domicile*: you would be unwise, in your contribution to the argument, to substitute in that particular connection the word *home*. You may tolerate the old English word *wain* as the poetical variant of *wagon*; but for sensible people *folkswain* is hardly likely to supersede *omnibus* (or its contraction '*bus*'). *Preface* is too well established to be supplanted by *foreword*, *consecration* by *holying*, *ornithology* by *birdlore*, *patriarch* by *high-father*, *merciful* by *mild-hearted*: and you would hardly substitute *meeting-of-the-wits* (*witenagemot*) for *parliament*, or *ungothroughsomeness* for *impenetrability*.

You will enjoy reading again this talk of Wamba, the jester, and Gurth the swineherd; it comes from Scott's *Ivanhoe* and it illustrates what has been said:

"Gurth, I advise thee to call off Fangs, and leave the herd to their destiny, which, whether they meet with bands, of travelling soldiers, or of outlaws, or of wandering pilgrims, can be little else than to be converted into Normans before morning, to thy no small ease and comfort."

"The swine turned Normans to my comfort!" quoth Gurth: "expound that to me, Wamba, for my brain is too dull, and my mind too vexed, to read riddles."

"Why, what call you those grunting brutes running about on their four legs?" demanded Wamba.

"Swine, fool, swine," said the herd: "every fool knows that."

"And swine is good Saxon," said the jester. "But how call you the sow when she is flayed, and drawn, and quartered, and hung up by the heels like a traitor?"

"Pork," answered the shepherd.

"I am very glad every fool knows that too," said Wamba; "and pork, I think, is good Norman-French; and so when the brute lives, and is in the charge of a Saxon slave, she goes by her Saxon name, but becomes a Norman and is called 'pork' when she is carried to the castle-hall to feast among the nobles. What dost thou think of this, friend Gurth, ha?"

"It is too true doctrine, friend Wamba, however it got into thy fool's pate."

"Nay, I can tell you more," said Wamba, in the same tone. "There is old Alderman Ox continues to hold his Saxon epithet while he is under the charge of serfs and bondsmen such as thou, but becomes Beef, a fiery French gallant, when he arrives before the worshipful jaws that are destined to consume him. Mynheer Calf, too, becomes Monsieur de Veau in the like manner; he is Saxon when he required tendance, and takes a Norman name when he becomes matter of enjoyment."

YOUR EXERCISES

I. Try to supply the words of the original. Afterwards look up in your dictionary the origin and history of the word:

1. Though nature hath given us wit to — at fortune, hath not fortune sent in this fool to cut off the argument? (*mock*, 5)
2. Let your fair eyes and gentle wishes go with me to my trial: wherein if I be — there is but one shamed that was never gracious. (*repulsed*, *defeated*, 6)
3. Wear this for me—one out of suits with fortune,
That would give more but that her hand — means.
(*wants*, *is deficient of*, 5)
4. Sweet are the uses of —
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.
(*distress*, *affliction*, 9)

5. This our life, exempt from public —,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.
(meeting-place, 5)
6. A poor sequestered stag,
That from the hunters' aim had ta'en a hurt ;
Did come to —.
(droop, grow weak, 8)
7. Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky.
Thou dost not bite so nigh,
As — forgot.
(kind deeds, 7)
8. To say ay and no to these particulars is more than to
answer in a —. *(course of question and answer, 9)*
9. Time travels in divers paces with divers persons : I'll tell
you who Time — withal, who Time trots withal, who
Time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal.
(moves smoothly and slowly, 6)
10. If it be true, that "good wine needs no bush", 'tis true,
that a good play needs no —. *(speech after a play, 8)*

These ten quotations are from "As You Like It".

1. Little nameless, unremembered —
Of kindness and of love.
(things done, 4)
2. "Sir," said Doctor Johnson, "I have found you an
argument : I am not obliged to find you an —. *(in-*
telligence, 13)
3. Though this be madness, yet there is — in it. *(a*
reasoned plan, 6)
4. Some men are born great, some — greatness, and some
have greatness thrust upon them. *(gain by effort, 7)*
5. There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than — from blown roses on the grass.
(leaves of a flower, 6)
6. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to
the — of thy rising. *(radiant light, 10)*
7. This be the verse you grave for me :
Here he lies where he — to be ;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.
(wished greatly, 6)

8. "Nay, sweet," she said, "Let be ;
Wert thou more — than the restless sea,
Still should I love thee, knowing thee for such."
(*unworthy of trust*, 6)
9. Government of the people, for the people, and by the
people, shall not — from the earth. (*die out*, 6)

[The words in the original are : *flout* ; *foiled* ; *lacks*,
adversity ; *haunt* ; *languish* ; *benefits* ; *catechism* ; *ambles* ;
epilogue ;] [*acts* ; *understanding* ; *method* ; *achieve* ; *petals* ;
brightness ; *longed* ; *fickle* ; *perish*.]

2. Here is a very short speech of President Lincoln's at a railway station. Which words in it do you think to be of other than Old English origin ? Test your answer by means of your dictionary :

"Ladies and Gentlemen—I have no speech to make to you, and no time to speak in. I appear before you that I may see you, and that you may see me ; and I am willing to admit that, so far as the ladies are concerned, I have the best of the bargain, though I wish it to be understood that I do not make the same acknowledgement concerning the men."

Study XVI

LONG WORDS OR SHORT ?

THE QUESTION

I am told that the shorter my words are the better. Is that the best guide in choosing words ?

THE ANSWER

It is sound counsel ; but it is hardly exhaustive. There is not the least reason why you should not use long words if only these two questions can be answered Yes : (1) do the words accurately express your intended meaning ? (2) will your audience or your readers be able and willing to interpret the words in that intended meaning ? The answer " Yes " will come more readily for short words than for long words. " Years have elapsed since I had an opportunity of ocularly perusing your lineaments," wrote Mr. Micawber. That isn't so swiftly interpreted as " Years have gone since I saw you ". Good manners, as well as good sense, tell you to make your meaning easy of access.

Where choice does present itself you follow the example of the best users of language in choosing the short word rather than the long. Not that great writers are afraid of long words. They may introduce a long word into a flight of short words and thereby produce great effect. Here is Macbeth's outburst :

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand ? No ; this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Are not the polysyllables, *multitudinous* and *incarnadine* awe-inspiring ? And you may think that some writers—good writers, too—are fond of long-tailed words : This is how Macaulay writes of Judge Jeffreys :

Tenderness for others and respect for himself were feelings alike unknown to him. He acquired a boundless command of the rhetoric in which the vulgar express hatred and contempt. The profusion of maledictions and vituperative epithets which composed his vocabulary could hardly have been rivalled in the fishmarket or the beargarden.

In the main, though, the short word has preference. Examine two little passages. This of prose is from Stevenson's *Will o' the Mill*.

(a) Up in Will's valley only the wind and seasons made an epoch; the fish hung in the swift stream, the birds circled overhead, the pinetops rustled underneath the stars, the tall hills stood over all; and Will went to and fro, minding his wayside inn, until the snow began to thicken on his head. His heart was young and vigorous; and if his pulses kept a sober time, they still beat strong and steady in his wrists. He carried a ruddy stain on either cheek, like a ripe apple: he stooped a little, but his step was still firm, and his sinewy hands were reached out to all men with a friendly pressure.

The passage contains 113 words, of which four only (*overhead*, *underneath*, *vigorous*, and *sinewy*) have more than two syllables. Of these the first two are double words, and the last two are adjectives made from the nouns, *vigour* and *sinew*. Twenty-two words are of two syllables (including the double word, *pine-trees*). The rest, 87 of them, are monosyllables.

The poetry is from *Antony and Cleopatra*.

- (b) 1 Give me my robe, put on my crown: I have
Immortal longings in me; now no more
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.
Yare, yare, good Iras: quick. Methinks I hear
5 Antony call; I see him rouse himself
To praise my noble act; I hear him mock
The luck of Caesar, which the gods give men
To excuse their after wrath: Husband I come:
Now to that name my courage prove my title!
10 I am fire and air; my other elements
I give to baser life. So; have you done?

- Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips.
 Farewell, kind Charmian ; Iras, long farewell.
 Have I the aspic in my lips ? Dost fall ?
 15 If thou and nature can so gently part,
 The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,
 Which hurts, and is desired. Dost thou lie still ?
 If thus thou vanishest, thou tell'st the world
 19 It is not worth leave-taking.

Here the lines 1 and 12 consist of ten monosyllables ; in the others the only lines with two words not monosyllables are 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11. Moreover, the Proper Nouns, *Egypt*, *Iras*, *Antony*, *Caesar*, *Charmian*, account for several of the longer words.

You agree that a passage may be very effective though its words are short. Look at this epitaph of Housman's—

Here dead lie we because we did not choose
 To live and shame the land from which we sprung.
 Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose ;
 But young men think it is, and we were young.

Only *because* and *nothing* have more than one syllable ; yet there is no failing of force.

Lewis Carroll gets some fun out of newspaper words :

"You're a *very* poor *speaker*," said the King.

Here one of the guinea-pigs cheered, and was immediately suppressed by the officers of the court. (As that is rather a hard word, I will just explain to you how it was done. They had a large canvas bag, which tied up at the mouth with strings : into this they slipped the guinea-pig, head first, and then sat upon it.) "I'm glad I've seen that done," thought Alice, "I've often read in the newspapers, at the end of the trials 'There was some attempt at applause, which was immediately suppressed by the officers of the court,' and I have never understood what it meant till now."

YOUR EXERCISES

1. "In that case," said the Dodo, solemnly rising to its feet, "I move that the meeting adjourns for the immediate adoption of more energetic remedies——"

"Speak English!" said the Eaglet. "I don't know the meaning of half those long words, and what's more, I don't believe you do either."

Well, simplify the Dodo's speech.

2. Write the following in simpler language :

Perhaps, from a presentiment of calves' brains, you refrain from any lacteal addition, and rasp your tongue with unmitigated bohea.

We called into requisition the services of the family physician, who prescribed an emollient cataplasm.

a terminological inexactitude,	solar effulgence,
a multitudinous assemblage,	an inebriated individual,
a professor of the tonsorial art,	assume the prone position.

3. The two renderings below of much the same thought are both admirable. But which is the more suitable for a speech, which for an economic textbook : what differences in style do you see ?

At times it seemed possible that the issue of the war would resolve itself into a race between the tortoise and the hare, the plough and the submarine. Had the tortoise been left to face the hare in this contest, there were some of us who were prepared to guarantee that the issue would have been as it was in the fable. But the great majority believed that the hare would have won ; and even the most sanguine backers of the tortoise would have admitted that, unless the course of the hare received prolonged checks, their champion must be defeated.

So long as outside supplies were imperilled by enemy action, we all realised the vital importance of extracting from our own soil the largest possible amount of the food on which man can subsist. Now that the contest has been cut short there is no object in speculating whether in fact the plough or the submarine would have prevailed. But the strongest supporters of the plough must admit that, even if the efforts of the Food Production Department had been successful in averting actual starvation, the gruel of the British people would have been very thin if the war had been prolonged for several years.

Study XVII

LENGTH OF SENTENCE

THE QUESTION

Is there any easy test whereby I can tell when to put a full stop and begin another sentence?

THE ANSWER

No cut-and-dried rule is available: here, as in other aspects of English, the study of good patterns and much practice of your own are the requisites. A note or two upon the build of English sentences will, however, help.

Usually it is well that such statements as can do stand alone. In other words, it is desirable, as a rule, that the distance between Full Stops should not be great. Yet often statements, though complete in themselves, are so closely connected that they form but a single thought. Separation would then be loss instead of gain. How jerky and short-winded do the sentences following sound! it is as though a person suffering severely from asthma were speaking—

It is now sixteen or seventeen years ago. I then saw the Queen of France. She was then the dauphiness. I saw her at Versailles. Surely never lighted on this orb a more delightful vision. She hardly seemed to touch this orb. I saw her just above the horizon. She was decorating the elevated sphere. She was cheering it. In it she just began to move. She was glittering like the morning star. She was full of life. She was full of splendour. She was full of joy.

A succession of such sentences as those instanced would become most monotonous and wearisome. How much better is what Burke actually wrote!—

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles; and surely

never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she had just begun to move in—glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendour, and joy.

Modern writers shrink from long-drawn out sentences—most modern writers, at all events. The short sentence makes less demand upon the reader's attention ; but, when two or more thoughts are blended into one, you need not shrink from a long sentence. After all, you are entitled to ask for some attention from your reader ; for all language is a matter of co-operation. One of the co-operators puts words into an ordered group, the other interprets that group. You will be disappointed, though, if you demand a great deal of attention from your reader. Let your long sentence, therefore, be the exception.

You get a great deal of interest from pulling apart sentences in your favourite authors, and this pulling apart—formal analysis, if you like—will make you careful in building your own sentences. These below are a little difficult to analyse : but you should be able to pick out the dependent part of the sentence and to show how it is related to the principal part :

1. The very day he landed, he came to see me.
2. I leave you to answer the question whether that is a right decision.
3. Oh ! that it were possible to recall the past !
4. What applies to him applies also to you in a greater degree.
5. Much as I had distrusted him, I had never suspected this.

(1) *He landed* is evidently an elliptical expression for *on which he landed*, defining the Noun *day*. The subordinate clause, therefore, doing the work of a Distinguishing Adjective, is an Adjectival Clause.

(2) *Whether . . . decision* is in Apposition with, is really

the same as, *question* in the Principal Clause. It is therefore a Noun Clause in Apposition with *question*.

(3) The Principal Clause is to be supplied from the exclamation *Oh!* This Interjection is the inarticulate utterance of the statement *How I wish*. The rest of the sentence, the clause *that . . . past*, is the Object of this unexpressed Verb *wish*: it is therefore a Noun Clause.

(4) *What* is a portmanteau word, from which must be understood both the Antecedent and its Relative. We allot the Antecedent to the Principal Clause, the Relative to a clause defining the Antecedent and, therefore, an Adjectival Clause. The sentence so dealt with becomes—

what

The thing / that applies to him / applies also to you in
a greater degree.

(5) The subordinate statement, *Much as . . . him*, gives an accompanying circumstance or condition of the main statement, *I had . . . this*. The first clause is, therefore, an Adverbial Clause of Condition.

Whether a sentence is long or short is less important than other distinctions among sentences. Examine the structure of a few. Here is a Simple Sentence: “Astonished grief had swept over the country”. It contains one Subject, “Astonished grief”, and one Predicate, “had swept over the country”.

Now extend that sentence by adding an answer to the question *When?*: a clause to indicate time, “When, two days previously, the news of the approaching end had been made public, astonished grief had swept over the country”. The added, the subordinate part, is called an Adverbial Clause and makes, along with its Principal Clause, a Complex Sentence.

Here again is a Complex Sentence where the first part

(a Noun Clause it is called) serves as Subject to the second part :

(That they were about to lose her) (appeared a scarcely possible thought)

SUBJECT

PREDICATE

We may have, too, before the Full-Stop comes, two or more Sentences that might have stood separate. Thus, a writer describing Paris after its liberation has :

The first excitement is over ; the city is quiet, orderly, and dignified ; life there, in face of extreme material difficulties, is beginning to return to its normal course.

The sentences separated by semi-colons are, you agree, parts of the one picture.

More important, from the point of view of practice, is the distinction between a sentence loosely put together and one tightly joined so that the mind cannot come to rest till the end is reached. Here is a rambling, a loose sentence :

He will succeed at the bar if he works hard and if great good luck attends him.

Invert the sentence and you make it into what is sometimes called a periodic sentence, one that must be grasped as a whole :

If he works hard and if great good luck attends him he will succeed at the bar.

To call a sentence loose is not to condemn it. Such a sentence, rambling on in a pleasant and leisurely way, may be quite in keeping with its topic. In your more formal writing, though, the periodic sentence is the better.

YOUR EXERCISES

r. Break this up into short sentences :

Thou hast corrupted the youth of the land in erecting a grammar school ; and whereas, before, our forefathers had no other books but the score and tally, thou hast caused

printing to be used. It will be proved to thy face that thou hast men about thee that usually talk of a noun and a verb, and such abominable words as no Christian ear can endure to hear.

Shakespeare : *Henry IV.*

2. The sentences below need correction either because the words are in disorder or because unsuitable words are used ; correct them :

- (i) Why, her and me were the best of friends before him and her met. Of course, this is between you and I.
- (ii) The lady was threading beads with the Roman nose.
- (iii) The new Spring styles are so varied that no one can fail to get a hat that will not suit them.
- (iv) Either you or I are the one who they have chosen.
- (v) Every inch of Belgium will be fought for foot by foot.

3. What differences do you see between these two versions ? Which do you prefer : and why ?—

In large bodies the circulation of power must be less vigorous at the extremities. Nature has said it. The Turk cannot govern Egypt and Arabia and Kurdistan as he governs Thrace : nor has he the same dominion in Crimea and Algiers which he has in Brusa and Smyrna. Despotism itself is obliged to truck and barter.

The Sultan gets such obedience as he can. He governs with a loose rein that he may govern at all : and the whole of the force and vigour of his authority in his centre is derived from prudent relaxation in all his borders. (Burke.)

In all the despotisms of the East, it has been observed that the further away any part of the Empire is removed from the capital the more do its inhabitants enjoy some sort of rights and privileges : the more ineffacious is the power of the monarch : and the more feeble and easily decayed is the organisation of the government. (Brougham.)

4. Here is a fine sentence-paragraph in which Mr. A. J.

Balfour speaks of the British Empire ; write the paragraph in short sentences :

I cannot help thinking that we shall build up something which the world has never yet seen, which political dreamers in the past have never yet dreamed of, a coalition of free and self-governing communities who feel that they are never more themselves, never more masters of their own fate, than when they recognize that they are parts of a greater whole, from which they can draw inspiration and strength ; and that each lives its own life and is most itself when it feels itself in the fullest sense a self-governing entity which yet has a larger whole to look to, whose interests are not alien to it, on whom it can rest in time of trouble, from whom it can draw experience, to whom it can look, to whom it can give aid, and from whom it can receive aid.

5. Break this sentence into four short sentences :

Even as we speak, Time, the churl, has been hasting away ; or snatch the sleeve of to-day, leaving till to-morrow as little as you may.

6. Combine these three sentences into one :

They go across the sea in search of change. But they only change their sky. They do not change their soul.

[ANSWER. 2. (i) Why, she and I were the best of friends before he and she met. Of course, this is between you and me. (ii) The lady with the Roman nose was threading beads. (iii) Take out *not* before *suit*, and change *them* to *her*. (iv) Either you are or I am the one whom they have chosen. (v) Change *inch* to *piece*.]

Study XVIII

PARAPHRASING A PASSAGE

THE QUESTION

My wish is to become competent as a speaker and writer of English : does paraphrasing help me much ?

THE ANSWER

Paraphrasing helps greatly. Thought has been put into one form of words ; you paraphrase when you put the thought into another form. And, very wisely, you are constantly doing this. The first draft of your letter does not satisfy you : it does not read well ; it may, you think, be interpreted in a sense unintended by you. You re-draft the letter. You replace a word by one better able to carry your meaning, you guard against possible misunderstanding, you take out a discourteous expression, you re-arrange an awkward sentence. Consideration of your expected reader is with you, as it should be ; and this consideration tells you to make changes whereby your own writing becomes more intelligible, more forcible, more pleasing.

As an exercise, a very good exercise, in English, however, your paraphrase will usually be the writing your own version of what another has written. Now, to do this, you are bound to study the passage closely ; you get a useful corrective of the habit of skimming over writings and of being content with a hazy idea of the meaning. Try, for instance, to put into your own words, the lines :

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin ;
That all with one consent praise newborn gauds,

and you must probe into the meaning.

And the exercise puts you on your mettle : you strive

to call up expressions of your own that are adequate to carry the writer's meaning. So doing you will summon many words from your passive vocabulary into your active vocabulary. You force yourself to study ways of expression and you get clear notions about words and their application. Quite likely, almost certainly, you will be ill-content with your version. All the better for that: the desirable attitude for a student, of English or anything else, is modesty—a modesty that makes you set about improvement.

Second Version not Always the Better

Perhaps the exercise has its dangers; but if you are sensible, you will avoid them. You will not think that "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" is adequately paraphrased by "Can you not help a lunatic?" You will not think that Doctor Johnson's version, "The proverbial oracles of our parsimonious ancestors have informed us that the fatal waste of fortune is by small expenses, by the profusion of sums too little singly to alarm our caution, and which we never suffer ourselves to consider together", is better than "Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves".

Which of these versions is the better, the prose,

Consider the lilies how they grow : they toil not, they spin not : and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

or Thomson's verse ?

Observe the rising lily's snowy grace,
Observe the various vegetable race ;
They neither toil, nor spin, but careless grow,
Yet see how warm they blush ! how bright they glow !
What regal vestments can with them compare !
What king so shining ! or what queen so fair !

Surely, you say, the poetical paraphrase is labour thrown away.

Varied Versions

There is fun at times in an expanded version, as when Dickens paraphrases "Then we sang together 'Auld Lang Syne'" into "Then Mrs. Micawber and myself had the honour of uniting our voices to yours in the well-known strain of the immortal bard nurtured beyond the Tweed". And perhaps it was for fun that Doctor Johnson paraphrased his first judgment. He said, speaking of a comedy called "The Rehearsal", "It has not wit enough to keep it sweet". "This", his biographer relates, "was easy. He therefore caught himself, and pronounced a more rounded sentence: It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction."

To Mr. Churchill, in the very early years of his career as a Minister of the Crown, was assigned the task of explaining why the Government had lied in regard to native labour in the South African mines. He said, "It cannot, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, be classified as slavery in the extreme acceptance of the term without some risk of terminological inexactitude."

The roundabout version may for some purposes be better: "this perversion of the truth" may be better than "this lie". Usually, however, you must agree that the plain, straightforward way is the more effective. Which of these do you prefer? "In the case of both boys and girls there were many spelling mistakes" or "Both boys and girls made many mistakes in spelling"; "The climatic conditions were not conducive to the enjoyment of our picnic" or "Bad weather spoiled our picnic"; "The answer is in the negative" or "The answer is No"; "He expired in necessitous circumstances" or "He died poor". And would you recognise as "Cheshire Cheese" the

poet's "That which Cestria sends, Tenacious paste of solid milk" ?

A Prose and A Verse Description

Finish this study by careful reading—dictionary at hand for consultation when certainty of interpretation is absent—of these two versions. Both are Shelley's, the first a piece of capital prose, the second lines of memorable poetry. Here is the prose account of buried Pompeii :

Above and between the multitudinous shafts of sunshining columns was seen the sea, reflecting the purple heaven of noon above it, and supporting, as it were, on its line the dark lofty mountains of Sorrento, of a blue inexpressibly deep, and tinged towards their summits with streaks of new-fallen snow. Between was one small green island. Behind was the single summit of Vesuvius, rolling forth volumes of thick white smoke, whose foam-like column was sometimes darted into the clear dark sky, and fell in little streaks along the wind. Between Vesuvius and the nearer mountains, as through a chasm, was seen the main line of the loftiest Apennines, to the east. The day was radiant and warm. Every now and then we heard the subterranean thunder of Vesuvius ; its distant deep peals seemed to shake the very air and light of day, which interpenetrated our frames, with the sullen and tremendous sound.

The Tombs were the most impressive things of all. The wild woods surround them on either side ; and along the broad stones of the paved road which divides them you hear the late leaves of autumn shiver and rustle in the stream of inconstant wind, as it were, like the steps of ghosts.

And here is the poetry :

I stood within the city disinterred,
And heard the autumnal leaves like light foot-falls,
Of spirits passing through the streets, and heard
The mountain's slumbrous voice at intervals
Thrill through those roofless halls.

The oracular thunder penetrating shook
The listening soul in my suspended blood,
I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke ;
I felt, but heard not. Through white columns glowed,
The isle-sustaining ocean-flood.

YOUR EXERCISE

Write the passage from *Morte d'Arthur* in modern English :

"But my time hieth fast," said King Arthur unto Sir Bedivere, "therefore take thou Excalibur, my goodsword, and go with it unto yonder waterside ; and when thou comest there, I charge thee, throw my sword into that water, and come again and tell me what thou shalt see there."

"My lord," said Sir Bedivere, "your command shall be done, and lightly bring you word again."

And so Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, where the pommel and the haft were all of precious stones. And then he said to himself, "If I throw this rich sword into the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss."

And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree, and as soon as he might he came again unto King Arthur, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword into the water.

"What sawest thou there ?" said the King.

"Sir," said he, "I saw nothing but waves and wind."

[It will be little to the purpose to write a prose paraphrase for comparison with yours. But here is Tennyson's verse :

"I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn,
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur, . . .
And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."
To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
"It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm—
A little thing may harm a wounded man
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see and lightly bring thee word."

So saying from the ruined shrine he stepped,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He stepping down
By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.
There drew he forth the brand Excalibur
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth,
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt ;
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw : but at last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
There in the many-knotted water-flags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.
Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere :
" Hast thou performed my mission which I gave ?
What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ? "
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
" I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."

The Passing of Arthur.]

Study XIX

ANALYSIS OF SENTENCES

THE QUESTION

What is analysis of sentences and how does the exercise help towards good English?

THE ANSWER

At school you spent a good deal of time in analysing sentences—in breaking them up so as to show how the parts were related to one another. Very useful the exercise was. Not because it enabled you to put the parts of a sentence each into its little pen, but because it forced you to examine closely the build of the sentence. Such an examination was bound to make the build of your own sentences better.

Besides, you can rarely be sure of the significance of a word without this breaking up. For it is not a single word but a combination of words that expresses thought. The word *long*, for example, will in one sentence be a verb, a word expressing action (“ I long for repose ”); in another sentence an adjective, a word expressing quality (“ The long vacation lasts over two months ”); in another sentence an adverb, a word expressing time (“ Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long ”).

These combinations of words that we call sentences are of many kinds, differing not in length only but in purpose. Thus, one sentence will be a statement :

Every man hath business and desire ;

another a question :

Is anybody there ?

another a command :

Come unto these yellow sands.

Whether conscious of doing so or not, you analyse when you examine a sentence in order to get at the meaning intended ; you ask yourself, " About what is the sentence concerned ? " (What is the *Subject* ?) ; and having the Subject in mind, you ask yourself, " What is intended about that Subject ? " (What is the *Predicate* ?). Indeed, in many a complicated sentence, you must analyse to get at the meaning.

Examples

You know, for instance, the fine sonnet that Shelley wrote :

I met a traveller from an antique land,
 Who said : " Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
 Stand in the desert. *Near them, on the sand,
 Half-sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
 And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read,
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
 The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed ;*
 And on the pedestal these words appear :
 " My name is Ozymandias, king of kings :
 Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair."
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Now, it is pretty safe to say that you did not, at your first reading, fully grasp the sense of the sentence in italics. Break it up, though, and look at the elements separately ; and the sense emerges clearly.

Arrange first in separate sentences, and indicate by underlining the Subject and the Predicate of each. Thus :

1. A shattered, half-sunk VISAGE LIES near them on the sand.
2. Whose (i.e. of the visage) FROWN and wrinkled LIP and SNEER of cold command TELL.

3. THAT its SCULPTOR well READ (i.e. interpreted) those passions.
4. WHICH (i.e. those passions), stamped on those lifeless things, SURVIVE yet the hand and the heart.
5. THAT (i.e. the hand) MOCKED (i.e. imitated in his sculpture) them and
6. THAT (i.e. the heart) FED them.

Consider, in the same way, this little paragraph of Macaulay's, and analyse the sentences of which it is made up :

(1) The mirage misleads the traveller in the Arabian desert.
 (2) Beneath the caravan all is dry and bare ; but far in advance, and far in the rear is the semblance of refreshing waters.
 (3) The pilgrims hasten forward and find nothing but sand where, an hour before, they had seen a lake. (4) They turn their eyes and see a lake where, an hour before, they were toiling through sand.

(1) is a Simple Sentence divisible into *Subject*, "The mirage," and *Predicate* consisting of the Transitive Verb, "misleads", the *Object* of that Transitive Verb, "the traveller", and the Prepositional Phrase, "in the Arabian desert" (expanding the information given by the Verb, and being usually called an Extension of the Predicate).

(2) is a combination of two Simple Sentences put into contrast with one another by the Conjunction "but". Each limb of the contrast—the **antithesis** it is sometimes called—has its own Subject and its own Predicate.

(3) is a Compound of two sentences joined by the Conjunction "and". The first is a Simple Sentence ; the second is a Complex Sentence : in it a clause, "Where an hour before, they had seen a lake", does duty as an Adverb of Place.

(4) is a Compound Sentence, similar in build to (3).

You will enjoy tackling this long sentence from a sonnet of Shakespeare's : you first show in a summary way how the clauses are more or less closely linked to the main statement, "So runn'st thou after that". Then you make

a table into which you can distribute the elements of the other sentences that you examine.

1. Lo ! as a careful housewife runs to catch
One of her feathered creatures broke away, |
- 2, 3. Sets down her babe, | and | makes all swift despatch
4. In pursuit of the thing | she would have stay, |
5. Whilst her neglected child holds her in chase,
- 6, 7. Cries to catch her | whose busy care is bent
8. To follow that | which flies before her face,

Part of 6. Not prizing her poor infant's discontent :

- 9, 10. So runn'st thou after that | which flies from thee, |
 11. Whilst I, thy babe, chase thee afar behind. |
- Shakespeare : Sonnet cxliii.

9 is the Principal Clause. Those with a single line under are dependent on 9 ; those with a double line are dependent on a subordinate clause ; and so on.

1. Adverbial Clause of Comparison explaining the Adverb
so in 9.
2. " " " " explaining the Adverb
so in 9.
3. " " " " explaining the Adverb
so in 9.
4. Adjectival Clause descriptive of *thing* in 3.
5. Adverbial Clause of Time limiting the Verbs *runs, sets,*
makes in 1, 2, 3.
6. " " " " limiting the Verbs *runs, sets,*
makes in 1, 2, 3.
7. Adjectival Clause descriptive of *her* in 6.
8. " " " " *that* in 7.
10. " " " " " in 9.
11. Adverbial Clause of Time limiting the Verb *runn'st* in 9.

In our Tabular Scheme of Analysis we need to add, for Complex and Compound sentences, two columns : one for the KIND OF CLAUSE, the other for the LINK. Thus, a clear

and convenient way of arranging the passage from Shakespeare would be as follows on pages 126-127.

YOUR EXERCISES

1. Analyse the Passage :

'Tis a common proof
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face ;
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend.

(Note that here we have two Principal Clauses contrasted by means of the Conjunction *but*. It (i.e. *that lowliness is young ambition's ladder*) is a common experience ; and *he unto the ladder turns his back, looks . . .*)

2. Name the various clauses in the following sentences :

- (i) What every one wanted to know was, why he behaved so ill that he was always in disgrace.

(What = the thing that. The sentence may then be arranged :

that every one wanted to know
↑
The thing was
↓
why he behaved so ill
↙
that he was always in disgrace.)

- (ii) This being so, when I have leisure I shall do as you desire.
(iii) That he might win the esteem of those he served, he was always punctual.

3. Write out in your own words the meaning of the following passage. Break up the portion enclosed in brackets into its component sentences ; state the nature of each sentence (e.g. Principal, Adverbial, etc.), and give its Subject.

It is natural to suppose—the wish is father to the thought—that the credulity and superstition incident to primitive

Sentence or Clause	KIND	Link	SUBJECT Enlarge- ment	PREDICATE			
				Verb	Comple- ment	Object Enlargement	Extension
1	Adverbial of Comparison to "so" in 9	as	housewife a careful	runs			to catch one of her feathered creatures broke away (reason)
2	Adverbial of Comparison to "so" in 9	(as)	housewife a careful	sets		babe her	down (Place)
3	Adverbial of Comparison to "so" in 9	and (as)	(housewife) (a careful)	makes		despatch in all swift in pursuit of the thing	
4	Adjectival descriptive "thing" in 3	of (that)	she	would have		(that) to stay	

5	Adverbial of Time to "runs", "sets", "makes", in 1, 2, 3	Whilst	child her neglected	holds	her	in chase (Manner)
6	Adverbial of Time to "runs", "sets", "makes", in 1, 2, 3	whilst	(child) (her neglected)	cries		to catch . . . discontent (Reason)
7	Adjectival, descriptive of "her" in 6	whose	care whose busy	is bent		to follow that (Reason)
8	Adjectival, descriptive of "that" in 7	which	which	flies		before her face (Place)
9	PRINCIPAL		thou	runn'st		So (Manner) after that (10) (Place) 1, 2, 3, 11
10	Adjectival, descriptive of that in 9	which	which	flies		from thee (Place)
11	Adverbial of Time, limit- ing "runn'st" in 9	whilst	I thy babe	chase	thee	afar behind (Place)

stages of culture have disappeared before the growth of science. Yet, now and again, this comfortable optimism receives a rude shock. We learn that almanacs, containing curious survivals of mediaeval astrology, sell by thousands among the lower social strata of our countrymen. The advertisement columns of not a few journals of repute show how readily people swallow, with this or that quack medicine, the most incredible tales of its supposed power to cure by a few doses some conglomeration of ailments that has defied doctors for years [or how, ignoring the teaching of experience that high interest means bad security, they will commit hard-earned savings to any one who assures them that he will treble their capital or their income].

4. Set these pieces together so as to make two sentences beginning with *Puck* and *Ariel* :

Ariel is a minister of retribution. He is touched with a sense of pity at woes. Yet he inflicts these woes. Puck is a madcap spright. He is full of wantonness and mischief. He laughs at his victims. He misleads them.

[What Hazlitt wrote was : “ Ariel is a minister of retribution who is touched with a sense of pity at the woes he inflicts. Puck is a madcap spright, full of wantonness and mischief, who laughs at those whom he misleads.”]

Study XX

PATTERNS FOR YOUR PROSE

THE QUESTION

I wish to write good English prose : what writer—or writers—shall I take as my model ?

THE ANSWER

That is a formidable question. For the field of choice in our English is vast ; we all have our favourites, and, at times maybe, we weary our hearers by dilating upon the merits of those favourites. The suggestion of a pattern may be dictated by private fancy instead of public approval. Still, we may well essay an answer to the question.

Models Beyond Reach

First, though, this is to be noted : we read, and rejoice in, many English writers that we can hardly take as patterns for our own imitation. We are well aware that the style diverges from present-day fashion, or we, in our modesty, recognise them as far beyond our reach. There is Milton, for example, who has passages of glorious prose, alternating, indeed, with terrible paragraphs thrown together without the least mercy for the labouring reader. An instance of the first is this grand sentence :

Lords and Commons of England, consider what nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are the governors, a nation not slow and dull but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any height the human spirit can soar to.

Perhaps you hardly recognised yourself under the description. Another fine sentence is this :

A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.

We need not instance contrasts ; you can find them in abundance if you care to look at any of Milton's prose works.

Shakespeare, too, has a deal of prose. Here is Hamlet's :

What a piece of work is a man ! How noble in reason !
How infinite in faculty ! In form and moving, how express
and admirable ! In action how like an angel ! In apprehension
how like a god ! The beauty of the world ! The paragon
of animals ! And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust ?

And here is Falstaff persuading himself that " the better part of valour is discretion " :

" Honour pricks me on," he says. " Yes, but how if honour prick me off when I come on ! How then ? Can honour set to a leg ? No ; or an arm ? No. What is honour ? A word. What is in that word honour ? What is that honour ? Air. A trim reckoning ! Who hath it ? He that died on Wednesday. Doth he feel it ? No. Doth he hear it ? No. It is insensible then ? Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living ? No. Why ? Detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it : honour is a mere scutcheon : and so ends my catechism."

But, if we tried to emulate Shakespeare we should be so daunted by our obvious failure that we might give up the effort to improve our way of writing. Better reach at something accessible.

The Requirements

Consider then. What do you ask of a good prose style ? Apt choice of words is one requirement. Those chosen express your meaning and express it exactly : there is nothing affected about them, no casting about for imposing words and no rejection of an imposing word where that is the best. A second requirement is that the chosen words are so arranged that the intended meaning is easily reached by the reader, and reached with certainty. These are the essentials. If we can add of a prose style that it gives

pleasure, that the structure of the sentences is so varied as to avoid monotony, and that it is well suited to its matter, why then we have a prose such as you would gladly copy. What writers satisfy those requirements? Of the very many that do, we note two only.

Does Robert Louis Stevenson answer your requirements? Surely he does. Put your questions to this paragraph in which he ushers in one of the best short stories we have. It is a story of Villon, and Stevenson calls it "A Lodging for the Night":

It was late in November 1456. The snow fell over Paris with rigorous, relentless persistence; sometimes the wind made a sally and scattered it in flying vortices; sometimes there was a lull, and flake after flake descended out of black night air, silent, circuitous, interminable. To poor people, looking up under moist eyebrows, it seemed a wonder where it all came from. Master Francis Villon had propounded an alternative that afternoon, at a tavern window; was it only Pagan Jupiter plucking geese upon Olympus? Or were the holy angels moulting? He was only a poor Master of Arts, he went on; and as the question somewhat touched upon divinity, he durst not venture to conclude. A silly old priest from Montargis, who was among the company, treated the young rascal to a bottle of wine in honour of the jest and the grimaces with which it was accompanied, and swore on his own white beard that he had been just such another irreverent dog when he was Villon's age.

Thackeray is another writer that will pass your examination, and pass it with high marks. Study closely this passage from *Vanity Fair* and apply your testing questions to it:

All our friends took their share and fought like men in the great fight. All day long, whilst the women were praying ten miles away, the lines of the dauntless English infantry were receiving and repelling the furious charges of the French horsemen. Guns which were heard at Brussels were ploughing up their ranks, and comrades falling, and the resolute survivors closing in. Towards evening, the attack of the

French, repeated and resisted so bravely, slackened in its fury. They had other foes besides the British to engage or were preparing for a final onset. It came at last : the columns of the Imperial Guard marched up the hill of St. Jean, at length and at once to sweep the English from the height which they had maintained all day, and spite of all : unscared by the thunder of the artillery, which hurled death from the English line—the dark rolling column pressed on and up the hill. It seemed almost to crest the eminence, when it began to wave and falter. Then it stopped, still facing the shot. Then at last the English troops rushed from the post from which no enemy had been able to dislodge them, and the Guard turned and fled.

No more firing was heard at Brussels—the pursuit rolled miles away. Darkness came down on the field and city : and Amelia was praying for George, who was lying on his face, dead, with a bullet through his heart.

Which of us wouldn't rejoice if we could write like that ?

Do not overlook the fact, though, that much of current writing, in our newspapers and other periodicals, is vigorous and effective English prose. The leading article of your daily is, very likely, no bad pattern. Look at this, for example, where a writer in *The Times* comments gaily upon a new fashion in the British soldier's dress :

Civilized man cannot in these days be happy for long without his collar and tie, and the British soldier will welcome the official concession which puts him in these articles of dress on an equality with his fellows of the R.A.F. and of the American Army. A few dissenting voices may be raised in lament for a lost cause. Some soldiers, mostly entitled to distinguish themselves from other soldiers by embracing the epithet "old", have always held the collar and tie to be scarcely more military in character than a boot cross-laced. They wish they were old enough to have worn the uniforms in which it was scarcely advisable to sit down, and they will naturally observe the spread of the soft khaki collar to the ranks with sadness. Again, those who concern themselves with sartorial niceties may fancy that the appearance of a soldier in battle-dress is not improved by the addition of collar and tie. To them such essentially symbolic and

decorative fripperies are shockingly out of harmony with a garment which is nothing if not utilitarian. They would wish the severities to be preserved right up to the last hook and eye and any consequent discomfort endured for the sake of aesthetic rightness. But such small holding actions as these cannot affect the main triumphant sweep of collar and tie. Insults are of no avail to stay its conquering progress. Some who like all things to be "endu'd with sanctity of reason" have often asked what purpose the collar served but to support the unnecessary tie. It is a question which glances harmlessly off the superior sanctity of fashion.

It is needless to add further instances. It would be impertinent, too; for you yourself can find them in abundance. Only put this to yourself. "The writer has doubtless spent time and thought in choosing his words and in so arranging them that I can enter into his thoughts. I owe it to him that I should read his writing with care and attention." Long ago the great Lord Bacon wrote: "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." Make the books you select for your patterns come into the third class, and read them with diligence and attention.

YOUR EXERCISES

1. *The paragraph below is from "A Lodging for the Night": you are invited to an effort to supply the words Stevenson used:*

On the right, Villon and Guy Tarbary, were (1. *crowded uncomfortably*, 7) together over a scrap of (2. *skin upon which to write*, 9); Villon making a ballade which he was to call the "Ballade of Roast Fish", and Tarbary spluttering (3. *wonder mingled with praise*, 10) at his shoulder. The poet was a (4. *fragment*, 3) of a man, dark, little, and lean, with hollow cheeks and thin black (5. *tufts of hair*, 5). He carried his four-and-twenty years with feverish (6. *liveliness*, 9).

His hands were small and (7. *able to grasp tightly*, 10) with fingers knotted like a cord; and they were continually (8. *waving to and fro like a flame*, 10) in front of him in violent and expressive (9. *expression of one's meaning by way of gesture*, 9).

[The words in the story are : 1. *Huddled* ; 2. *Parchment* ; 3. *Admiration* ; 4. *Rag* ; 5. *Locks* ; 6. *Animation* ; 7. *Pre-hensile* ; 8. *Flickering* ; 9. *Pantomime*.]

2. Deal with this of Thackeray's—it is from *The New-comer*—in the same way. Don't be disappointed if you should fail to hit upon the words Thackeray used. For it is not often that we are obliged to say, "That is the only possible word in that connection."

The (1. *habit, accustomed course*, 6) of the school is that on the 12th of December, the (2. *of him who established*, 8) Day, the head gown-boy shall recite a Latin (3. *formal speech*, 7) in praise *Fundatoris Nostri*, and upon other subjects ; and a goodly (4. *assembly, gathering*, 7) of old Cistercians is generally brought together to attend this (*see* 3.) : after which we go to (5. *college or school, place of worship*, 6) and hear a sermon ; after which we (6. *come away, retire*, 7) to a great dinner, where old condisciples meet, old (7. *wishes for good fortune and good health*, 6) are given : and speeches are made. The (8. *superintendents*, 8) of the day's dinner, according to old-fashioned (9. *ceremony*, 4), have wands put into their hands, walk to church at the head of the (10, *orderly march*, 10), and sit there in places of honour.

[The words in the novel are : 1. *custom* ; 2. *Founder's* ; 3. *oration* ; 4. *company* ; 5. *chapel* ; 6. *adjourn* ; 7. *toasts* ; 8. *stewards* ; 9. *rite* ; 10. *procession*.]

Study XXI

LANGUAGE IS ESSENTIALLY SOUND

THE QUESTION

Is it wise to give much heed to the sound of what we say or write?

THE ANSWER

Well, you do not wish to repel your hearers or your readers; you should wish to give them pleasure. Therefore it is that you avoid disagreeable sounds and seek agreeable sounds. Examine the question for a while; and will you please read the various examples *aloud*.

One of Shakespeare's sonnets begins:

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
For as you were when first your eye I eyed
Such seems your beauty now.

Doesn't the ending of the second line—"eye I eyed"—make you shudder? Or this, "We live in an enlightened age"; isn't "in an en" an awkward collection? Or this, "Lazy people seldom gather riches"; isn't the repetition of the words of two syllables a dreary one? Or this, "As he had been fearing the winter was nearing and the birds disappearing"; isn't the jingle disagreeable?

To be sure the repetition of sounds, disagreeable being ill-managed, gives delight being well managed. Read these three lines:

By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,
The wood-nymphs decked with daisies trim,
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep.

You are not annoyed at the recurring sound *im* (dimpled, brim, nymphs, trim) and of the teeth-letters *d* and *t*

(dimpled, decked, daisies, trim). You rejoice in the cunningly arranged repetition, so different from repetition in a tongue-twister like "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickling pepper". That, you agree, has no beauty of sound; difficult to say, it is disagreeable to hear. The difficulty comes, you note, because you are obliged to change quickly from the lip-sound *p* to the throat-sound *k*. Now listen to the contrast in these lines, where great play is made of that same lip-letter *p* along with its companion *b*:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burned on the water: the poop was beaten gold,
Purple the sails and so perfumed that,
The winds were love-sick with them.

The lines tell how Cleopatra goes on her way to meet Antony. Read them aloud. "How well they sound!" you say, "the repetition of the *b*'s and *p*'s are as if one is smacking the lips over a morsel of the three-ounce ration of chocolate." Don't you think that one test to apply to your own sentence is this: *does it read well?* Does it come trippingly from the tongue?

One of our treasures in English prose is a book, tiny in size though great in value, called *Urn-Burial*. Its learned titled is *Hydriotaphia* (*hydria* is the Greek for jar or pitcher, and you recognise *taph*, *tomb* that is, to be the same as *cenotaph*), and it was written by a contemporary of Milton. The chance discovery in Norfolk of some funeral urns a few feet below the surface prompted the writer to a discourse on mortality and immortality. Would you examine how some of its sentences sound? Read them aloud till you appreciate the music in them. Here is one:

Now, since these dead bones have already out-lived the living ones of Methuselah, and in a yard under ground, and thin walls of clay, out-worn all the strong and specious buildings above it, and quietly rested under the drums and

tramlings of three conquests; what prince can promise such diuturnity to his relics?

Note the recurrence of the *l* sound in the phrase ending with the imposing name *Methuselah*; note how well the pair of adjectives sound, *strong and specious* (*handsome and showy*, that is); note how *quietly* has its echo in *conquests, drums* in *tramlings*, *prince* in *promise*. But the whole sentence is full of music; and you do well to linger over it.

Look at another:

We cannot excusably decline the consideration of that duration which maketh pyramids pillars of snow, and all that's past a moment.

And another:

The iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men without distinction to merit of perpetuity.

The book is not easy to read but, with a little patient study, you will thoroughly enjoy it.

In your delight at the sounds you may even, for a little while, neglect the sense, the meaning of the sentence. Thus, Tennyson tells you that twice a day the tide runs up Severn and Wye, so that the downward rush of the Wye is stayed. In reading the lines, though, you hardly trouble about the matter; you find the sounds so attractive as to make the sense recede into the background.

There twice a day the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

You are told at times, "Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves." But you need not accept that without reserve. The sense, the matter of your speaking and writing is important—maybe very important; the sound, the manner, is important too.

YOUR EXERCISES

1. If you think the sentences below disagreeable in sound, modify them.

- (a) The account is full of picturesqueness and vividity.
- (b) The party departed in the early part of the day.
- (c) It was a bright moonlight night.
- (d) But the odd thing that they do—and I hope they do not often do it, because it is likely to make considerable difficulties if they do—is that they sent different notes to the buyer and to the seller.
- (e) He sketches Scott's early education in Edinburgh.

[(a) Isn't "picturesqueness" a terrible word? And isn't the repetition of the short *i* in vividity sound a distressing one? (b) Consider the repetition of "part." Your reading aloud of (c), (d) and (e) is bound to suggest improvements.]

2. What is noteworthy in the sounds of these expressions?—

- (a) The lisp of leaves and the ripple of rain.
- (b) The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free,
We were the first that ever burst,
Into that silent sea.
- (c) Pipes of the misty moorlands,
Voice of the glens and hills,
The droning of the torrents,
The treble of the rills.
- (d) Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.
- (e) Lulled by the coils of his crystalline streams.

Study XXII

EMBELLISHING OUR LANGUAGE

THE QUESTION

To say things in the simplest and clearest way is very desirable ; why then do writers and speakers adorn their language ?

THE ANSWER

“ More matter and less art,” begged the Queen ; and old Polonius protested, “ Nay, madam, I use no art.” Like another famous character, he was a plain blunt man. No tricks or artifices for him ; he only spoke right on. But, of course, as every practised speaker does, he did use artifices. That disclaimer of Antony’s, “ I have neither wit nor words nor worth, action nor utterance nor the power of speech to stir men’s blood ” , was itself a most effective artifice.

So you will find a writer, too, declaring that he presents his thoughts in the first words that come to mind—*ex tempore*—without study and meditation. “ I brought forth this confused lump as a bear doth her whelps ; I had not time to lick it into form, as she doth her young ones, but even so to publish it as it was first written.” That was Burton. But his writing is a never-wearying delight, for this among other reasons, that adornment is in plenty. You would, for instance, need to search long to find a piece of alliterative writing to vie with his catalogue below. He counsels not to love for beauty only. For

modest Matilda, pretty-pleasing Peg, sweet-singing Susan, mincing merry Moll, dainty dancing Doll, neat Nancy, jolly Joan, nimble Nell, Kissing Kate, bouncing Bess with black eyes, fair Phyllis with fine white hands, fiddling Frank, tall

Tib, slender Sib, will quickly lose this grace, and all at last grow out of fashion.

The Wish to Adorn is Natural

In truth, all of us would be other than commonplace, plain, ordinary. Very likely, a wish to adorn one's person preceded, in the minds of our far-off ancestors, a wish to clothe oneself against winter and rough weather. And the delight that children have in rhyme and other toys of language shows that a wish to adorn our speech—our writing even more—is inherent in all of us. Nor should we try to subdue the wish, but rather to satisfy it, and in satisfying it gives a pleasure to those about us. We owe it as a duty to our fellows not, so far as we are able, to be repellent in appearance ; we also owe it to our fellows not to be wearisome in our speech, not to be as tedious as a twice-told tale. A little embellishment may enable us to set out quite dull matter, and rescue it from tedium. Shall we then examine some of those departures from straightforward speech whereby the attention is kept alert and, sometimes, the admiration kindled ?

Comparisons add to Clearness

The suggestion of likeness and of difference is constant in the earliest as in the latest writings. Here is the Old Testament : " Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided ; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions ". And here is Virgil : " As in the forests the leaves fall thick from the trees at the first frosts of autumn, or as the birds flock shorewards from the deep when the cold of the year sends them fleeing over the sea to sunny lands, so the shades stood, each praying for the first passage over, and they stretched out their hands in longing for the farther shore ". And how a well-chosen comparison makes

us take more notice ; how it pleases us by its fitness, or its ingenuity ! Look at some. You have above “ as tedious as a twice-told tale ”. Do you think Hotspur’s comparisons more to the point ? He was commenting, in his vigorous way, upon one that had uttered “ such a deal of skimble-scamble stuff as puts me from my faith ” ; he was grumbling, that is, not so much about the manner as about the matter of the speech. At any rate the speaker was “ as tedious as a tired horse, a railing wife ; worse than a smoky house ”. Hotspur was, clearly, fond of comparisons. You remember how he described the King’s spruce emissary ?

Came there a certain lord, neat, and trimly dressed.
Fresh as a bridegroom ; and his chin new reaped,
Showed like a stubble-land at harvest home ;
He was perfumed like a milliner.

Burke was speaking of the dazzling beauty of the Queen of France, whom he saw as the Dauphiness. She shone in the Court. What comparison would you choose for one of whom the orator said, “ Surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision ” ? Burke’s was *the morning star* : “ I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in ; glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour, and joy.”

We have, indeed, a natural bent to sacrifice exactness in order to become more impressive in our language. We use, for instance, cards—those cards that take up so much time of so many of us—as implied illustrations. We speak of a hazardous plan as “ a house of cards ” ; we say that we are giving up our project by saying that “ we are throwing in our cards ”. We “ play our cards well /or badly ” when we deserve to succeed (or to fail) ; “ we show our cards ” or “ put our cards on the table ” when we

reveal our strength; and "a sure card" is a person or project bound to succeed. "To play for a great stake", "within an ace", "turn up trumps"—we use such phrases in other than their strict sense.

Adornment should be Restrained

You are not, in this little talk on ornament, being invited to show-off merely for the sake of showing-off. That is distasteful—in language as in other things. The peacock spreads his tail of many hues, and we admire. We admire the bird making its display; we are inclined to despise the man and the woman making a needless display, whether of wealth or of knowledge or of achievements. In speech, at any rate, affectation—even when there is a real basis for the showing-off—irritates the hearer far more often than it impresses him.

"One scene greatly intrigued me," said the parson in his sermon; and at least one of his audience resented the affront to English. "Why ever did he use that word 'intrigued'?" was the question, to which the domestic mentor replied, "You go to hear the sermon, not to find fault with its language." But thought is free, and when one puts himself forward—writes a book or plays a part or makes a speech—he invites your criticism. As Burton said of his book: "Be it therefore as it is, I have essayed, put myself upon the stage; I must abide the censure, I may not escape it." We are not precluded from criticism in whatever audience we find ourselves; and, indeed, "intrigued" as a variant for "interested" is deplorable. "Puzzled, mystified, whetted my curiosity, drew my attention"—all good English expressions that could not grate upon anyone's ears—were available. "O day and night, but this is wondrous strange," says Horatio in the play. Would it better if he said, "This ghost intrigues me"? "Intrigued", besides, has its English sense of "plotted",

“schemed in an underhand way”. Why then, in a serious discourse, use the word in its French sense. Slang, in being learned slang, is nonetheless slang, the base coin of language. It has its place in trivial talk among intimates, and not a great place there.

There is, one must hasten to say, no harm in using the learned slang for the fun of the thing, or perhaps when you have nothing worth saying. Certainly, it would seem desirable, however, when matters of great moment are being uttered, that no frills or frisks should divert attention from those matters. It is, indeed, akin to impertinence when the speaker, or the writer, commands you to observe his cleverness, thrusting thereby the matter of weight into the background. The words, the manner of expressing, are because of the matter, not the matter because of the words ; the thing we are called upon to say is not to be a mere pretext for showing how cleverly we can say it. In other words, our primary concern is what to say ; how to say it is only secondary. If you have something worth saying, you need not worry about finding apt ways of saying it. Say it in the simplest, the most straightforward, way you know ; and ten to one, that way will be the best.

YOUR EXERCISES

1. In the comparisons below a word is omitted : supply it.

1. The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers ; and anon

Like — upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

2. We are such stuff,
As — are made on, and our little life,
Is rounded with a sleep.

3. Beautiful is old age—beautiful as the slow-dropping
mellow — of a rich, glorious summer.

4. The sound of church bells, that peculiar creation of medieval age, which falls upon the ear like the — of a vanished world.
5. The worthy Gentleman, who has been snatched from us at the moment of the election and in the middle of the contest, whilst his desires were as warm and his hopes as eager as ours, has feelingly told us what — we are, and what — we pursue.
6. The Assyrian came down like the — on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold.
7. Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
 Nor the furious winter's rages ;
 Thou thy worldly task hast done,
 Home art gone and ta'en thy wages :
 Golden lads and girls all must,
 As — come to dust.
8. He is gone on the mountain,
 He is lost to the forest,
 Like a summer-dried —
 When our need was the sorest.

[The words used by the writers of these passages are :

1. *snow* ; 2. *dreams* ; 3. *autumn* ; 4. *echo* ; 5. *shadows* ;
6. *wolf* ; 7. *chimney-sweepers* ; 8. *fountain*.]

2. (a) Complete the similes : as thin as — ; As true as — ; as proud as — ; as clear as — ; as strong as — ; as patient as — ; as quick as — .
- (b) In the phrase, " As busy as a bee," the bee is the symbol of industry. Of what things are these the symbols : a lamb, a sword ; a lily ; a violet ; a blindfold person holding a balance ?

Study XXIII

SPELLING

THE QUESTION

In spelling we represent a word by means of letters : what are these letters supposed to indicate ?

THE ANSWER

" Alpha, Beta ", said the Greeks, beginning their list of symbols representing sounds ; " A, B, C," say we, beginning our list. When we write *dog* we do not draw the picture of a dog, as we should if we wrote in hieroglyphics. We write " *d* " to signify the consonant sound made by jerking the tongue against the upper teeth ; we write " *o* " to signify the vowel sounded with lips wide open and rounded, the point of the tongue drawn back ; and we write " *g* " to signify the consonant sound made at the back of the throat. In short, we seek to guide the reader to the sound of the whole word. We express this sometimes by saying that our spelling is " meant to be phonetic " : each sound has its symbol ; and each symbol has its sound. And we pay a great deal of respect to the symbols, so much so that we are all inclined to pronounce words as the spelling seems to indicate.

Defects of our Alphabet

Now, one great difficulty in regard to spelling comes from these two facts : first, that we have more than one symbol for certain of our sounds ; second, that a symbol does not always represent the one sound. Moreover, even if we used our alphabet in the most effective way, we should fail in our effort to represent sounds with certainty. For we have no way (unless we improvise a way) of showing which

syllable of a word is stressed : we write "invalid" when a noun ("The invalid is rapidly recovering") and also when an adjective ("This claim was invalid from the beginning"). Yet in the noun, the stress is on the first, in the adjective on the second syllable : we need the context, that is, as a guide to the sound.

Nor have we a reliable way of showing when a vowel is long, when short : we do make a limited use of the silent "e" as a means of distinction ("cut" differs from "cute"), and we have a doubled consonant to signify a preceding short vowel (words like "pudding", "offered", and "copper"). We are not, however, consistent, and spelling is no trustworthy guide to length ; and we do represent long and short vowels in the one way. Thus "read" in the sentence "In Nature's infinite book of secrecy a little I can read" and in "When I am dead, I hope it may be said : 'His sins were scarlet, but his books were read,'" is written in the one way. But, of course, in the first sentence "read" rhymes with "speed", in the second with "sped".

Then, too, we have for some sounds more than one symbol. Neither of the letters "c" and "q" are really needed. For "c", in words like "grocer", "offence", "price", "source", "pace", could be replaced by "s" ; and, in words like "can", "corn", "creep", "clear", "c" could be replaced by "k". And "q", which we have only in the combination "qu" (*quality*, *equal*, and *cheque*) could be replaced by "kw" or "k". Moreover, some English sounds have no symbol, and we are forced to devise expedients. The "sh" of "she" is not a simple combination of the two sounds "s" and "h" ; it is a separate sound, and we are obliged to show it as "sh" ("shake", "bishop", "cushion", "cash") and, in combination with the "t" sound as "ch" ("child", "chief", "achieve", "bachelor"). A third sound for which we

have no special sign is represented by “*ng*” in “sing”, and “length”, by “*n*” when in front of “*k*”, or “*q*” or “*x*”, “think”, “thank”, “conquer”, “conquest”, “anxious”.

Defects in our Practice

The deficiencies of our alphabet are a great handicap ; our unskilful use of such means as we have is perhaps more serious. Thus, we represent the “*k*” sound by “*k*” in “kiss” and “book”, by “*c*” in “catch” and “act”, by “*ch*” in “echo” and “ache”, by “*ck*” in “thick”, “wick”, by “*q*” in “queen” and “squadron”, and (in combination with “*s*”) by “*x*” in “example” and “fox”. And ask a Frenchman intent on learning English to pronounce “Though the tough cough and hiccough plough me through”. He will marvel that *ough* represents such varied sounds. And how many of these words would he (regarding the spelling only) be able to pronounce as we do?—*busy, colonel, debt, does, English, knife, said, two, women.*

Examine these lines of Shakespeare’s song :

Take, O take those lips away,
That so sweetly were foresworn,
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn,
But my kisses bring again,
Bring again—
Seals of love, but sealed in vain,
Sealed in vain.

Count how many times the long vowel “*a*” occurs ; and then count the ways in which that vowel is represented. Do you agree that long “*a*” occurs nine times and that it is represented in four different ways ? (In the two words *take*, the vowel is shown to be long by the added silent “*e*” : compare *fat* and *fate*, *hat* and *hate*. In the words

away and *day* long "a" is represented by "ay". In *break* long "a" is represented by "ea". And in the two *again's* and *vain*, long "a" is represented by "ai".)

Now count the long "e's"; you have five, in *sweetly*, *mislead*, *seals*, *sealed*, *sealed*, and they are represented in two ways, "ee" and "ea". And you notice that whereas "ea" in *break* stands for long "a", in *seals* "ea" stands for long "e".

(Compare the variety of ways in representing the surname made of the liquid consonant "l" and the long vowel "e": *lea*, the poet's variant for meadow. "So might I, standing on this pleasant lea, Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn." Being used as a surname, the sounds have the forms *Lea*, *Lee*, *Ley*, *Leigh*.)

So you have, in *eyes*, *lights*, *my*, three long "i's" in three different spellings. Every now and then we get a flood of protests against what is called the "riot of unreason" shown in English spelling. The great value attached to "correct" spelling, the prevalent idea that divergence from the recognised spelling betokens a lack of culture (a lack even of intelligence), and the conservatism of printers make the flood pass without lasting effect.

Traps for the Unwary

If you yourself are weak in spelling, you will do well to consider for a while the distinction between *their* and *there*, *were* and *where*, *here* and *hear*. For these are among the most prolific sources of mistakes.

Their is a Pronoun—a Possessive Pronoun. Perhaps *heir* and *heiress* (both of which have the same vowel sound as *their* and represented in the same way) will help you to remember the fact; and you know Tennyson's

Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die.

Notice too, that *their*, *heir*, *heiress*, *heirloom* are all exceptions to the rule, "i before e except after c". Compare *thief*, *thieves*, *belief*, *grief*.

There is an Adverb denoting place: "There sleeps Titania"; "For many miles about there's scarce a bush"; "But for the grace of God there goes John Bradford". The words *here* and *where*, also referring to place, have the same ending: *here*, *there*, and *everywhere*.

Were is the Verb, "We were a motley crew". Note the difference, in these lines of Robert Bridges, between the Verb *were* and the Adverb *where*:

Were I a cloud I'd gather
My skirts up in the air,
And fly I well know whither
And rest I well know where.

As regards *hear*, the Verb, and *here*, the Adverb, it may be that *ear*, the organ of *hearing*, will bear company in your mind with the Verb, and *there* with the Adverb. Note the difference in:

Here will we sit and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears

and

I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

YOUR EXERCISES

- I. Which words in the following have a "k" sound?

Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense.
With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned,
(Albeit labouring for a scanty band
Of white-robed Scholars only) this immense
And glorious work of fine intelligence!
Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more.

[*Tax*, *expense*, *Architect*, *scanty*, *Scholars*, *work*, *canst*, *rejects*, *calculated*.]

2. Get a friend to dictate the words below : if you make fewer than three mistakes in the twenty words, you are among the " good spellers " :

acquiesce, aqueduct, embarrass, committee, moccasin, enforce-able, collapsible, inveigle, concede, proceed, disastrous, separate, gauge, banister, disappoint, truly, seize, belief, leisure, desiccated.

3. Supply the right word :

1. The suit was of — cloth. (*coarse* or *course*)
2. We shall — this to-morrow. (*practice* or *practise*)
3. O, what can ail thee, — -at-arms? (*night* or *knight*)
4. He performed several — of hand tricks. (*sleight* or *slight*)

[1. coarse ; 2. practise ; 3. knight ; 4. sleight]

4. Complete the words :

emba—ass (*r* or *rr*) ; ski—ful (*l* or *ll*) ;
 inter—ede (*c* or *s*) ; super—ede (*c* or *s*) ;
 co—ittee (*m* or *mm*) ; di—a—oint (*s* or *ss*, *p* or *pp*) ;
 ant—date (*e* or *i*) ; reminis—es (meaning recollections) ;
 ces—n (meaning stopping) ;
 idios—ies (meaning personal peculiarities)
 mis—l—ous (meaning of several kinds) ;
 subt—ean (meaning underground).

[*Embarrass, skilful, intercede, supersede, committee, disappoint, antedate, reminiscences, cessation, idiosyncrasies, miscellaneous, subterranean*]

5. Write sentences so as to make plain the difference between *lie* and *lay* ; *mayor* and *major* ; *but* and *butt* ; *dout* and *doubt* ; *recourse* and *resource*.

[Consult your dictionary, and consider the illustration given under each word.]

Study XXIV

PUNCTUATION

THE QUESTION

What is the purpose and what are the rules of modern punctuation ?

THE ANSWER

Purposes of Punctuation :

Punctuation is the practice of inserting “points” or “stops” in order to give help towards the correct interpretation of writing or of printing. The stops indicate the groups of words into which the writer intends his sentences to be divided. The comma after “merry” in the carol, for example, prevents you from the absurd misreading of which carol-singers seem to be obsessed. It is ‘God rest you merry, Gentlemen’—not, “God rest you, merry Gentlemen”.

The varied stops also help, though in a less measure, to indicate the tone in which he would like his words to be read: “Yes”, for example, may be read as a statement meaning “It is so” or as a question meaning “Is it so?”. Sensible punctuation, in other words, saves the reader’s time, and guards him against possible mis-interpretation. Reading would be difficult if, as in the old manuscripts, the writing were continuous. We are accustomed to helps nowadays. The sentence following, for instance, easily grasped when heard, clamours when written for indications of how its words are to be grouped :

Unquestionably as a general proposition when an offer is made it is necessary in order to make a binding contract not only that it should be accepted but that the acceptance should be notified.

True, a little patience will determine the matter ; but the stops are welcome :

Unquestionably, as a general proposition, when an offer is made, it is necessary, in order to make a binding contract, not only that it should be accepted, but that the acceptance should be notified.

So, too, even if you wrote without troubling about stops, your reader would in the end be able to place into proper groups these words—

Ill tell you how I came to think of it said the Knight you see I said to myself the only difficulty is with the feet the head is high enough already now first I put my head on the top of the gate then the heads high enough then I stand on my head then the feet are high enough you see then Im over you see

Yes I suppose you'd be over when that was done Alice said thoughtfully but don't you think it would be rather hard

I haven't tried it yet the Knight said gravely so I can't tell for certain but Im afraid it would be a little hard

The devices of the printer in order to economise the reader's attention enable the reader to group the words, and so to grasp the intended meaning, much more speedily—

"I'll tell you how I came to think of it," said the Knight. "You see, I said to myself, the only difficulty is with the feet ; the head is high enough already. Now, first I put my head on the top of the gate—then the head's high enough—then I stand on my head—then the feet are high enough,—you see—then I'm over, you see."

"Yes, I suppose, you'd be over when it was done," Alice said thoughtfully, "but don't you think it would be rather hard?"

"I haven't tried it yet," the Knight said gravely, "so I can't tell for certain—but I'm afraid it *would* be a little hard."

The stops were adapted mostly from Greek writings. The Greek denoting a question became, however, our semi-

colon. We, needing a mark to indicate that a question is intended, use one originating in the Latin word *Quaestio*. The lawyer, if he should report a decision that seems to be opposed to other, perhaps better, authorities, indicates his doubt by adding *sed quaere* (" But you had better look further into the matter "). So the Latin writer would write at the end of a question the letters *Qo*, the initial and final letters of *Quaestio*. In time the letters became merged into the sign ? You will find the uses of the various stops fully detailed in the Refresher *Spelling and Punctuation*.

Stops as Guides

In speech, the different voices, the changes in the single voice, the pauses made, all help towards understanding. You could, for example, utter the words " Come now " so that they are a peremptory command : you do so when you utter them with a rising emphasis, making *now* the emphatic word. You could utter them so that they will be more or less a gentle remonstrance : you do so when you utter them with a falling emphasis, making *come* the emphatic word. The stops are not perfect substitutes for the graduations of voice. They help, however. And in English, as compared with other languages, the various stops are called upon to do much work. For, when speaking English, we use differences of tone to express variations in meaning where other peoples use clearly uttered words.

He who reads what we write receives no help from our gestures or our intonations. The absence of these aids to understanding must be compensated by judicious punctuation : we read " cock's comb " and interpret it " comb of a cock ", " cockscomb " and interpret it " the fool's cap ", and " coxcomb " and interpret it " a fop ".

Below are sentences deficient in punctuation. Supply the missing stops.

YOUR EXERCISE

1. The Chief Justice was rich quiet and infamous
2. We have heard it said that five per cent is the natural interest of money
3. They know luxury they know beggary but they never know comfort
4. The Puritan hated bear-baiting not because it gave pain to the bear but because it gave pleasure to the spectators
5. When all is done human life is at the greatest and the best but like a froward child that must be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep and then the care is over
6. Very well cried I thats a good girl I find you are perfectly qualified for making converts and so go help your Mother to make the gooseberry pie
7. Sir I have two very cogent reasons for not printing any list of subscribers one that I have lost all the names the other that I have spent all the money

- [1. The Chief Justice was rich, quiet, and infamous.
2. We have heard it said that five per cent. is the natural interest of money.
3. They know luxury ; they know beggary ; but they never know comfort.
4. The Puritan hated bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators.
5. When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over.
6. "Very well," cried I, "that's a good girl, I find you are perfectly qualified for making converts, and so go help your Mother to make the gooseberry pie."
7. "Sir, I have two very cogent reasons for not printing any list of subscribers ;—one, that I have lost all the names,—the other, that I have spent all the money."]

APPENDIX

Strong Verbs

* The seven parts marked with the asterisk are now mostly used as VERBAL ADJECTIVES.

The following is a complete list of strong verbs :

PRESENT	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
(i) Vowels <i>a : e : a—</i>		
draw	drew	drawn
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
slay	slew	slain
(ii) Vowels <i>o : e : o—</i>		
behold	beheld	{ beheld
		{ beholden (= indebted)
blow	blew	blown
grow	grew	grown
hold	held	held
know	knew	known
throw	threw	thrown
(iii) Vowels <i>i : a : u—</i>		
begin	began	begun
drink	drank	{ drunk
		{ drunken*
ring	rang	rung
shrink	shrank	{ shrunk
		{ shrunken*
sing	sang	sung
sink	sank	{ sunk
		{ sunken*
spring	sprang	sprung
stink	stank	stunk
swim	swam	swum

* *drunken* man ; *shrunken* garment ; *sunken* ship

	PRESENT	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
(iv)	Vowels <i>i</i> : <i>u</i> : <i>u</i> —		
	cling	clung	clung
	dig	dug	dug
	fling	flung	flung
	sling	slung	slung
	slink	slunk	slunk
	spin	spun	spun
	stick	stuck	stuck
	sting	stung	stung
	string	strung	strung
	strike	struck	{ struck stricken*
	swing	swung	swung
	wring	wrung	wrung

(v)	Vowels <i>i</i> : <i>ou</i> : <i>ou</i> —		
	bind	bound	{ bound bounden*
	fight	fought	fought
	find	found	found
	grind	ground	ground
	wind	wound	wound

* *stricken* deer ; *bounden* duty

(vi)	Vowels <i>ea</i> : <i>o</i> : <i>o</i> —		
	bear	bore	borne (carry)
	bear	bore	born (produce)
	break	broke	broken
	forbear	forbore	forborne
	speak	spoke	spoken
	steal	stole	stolen
	swear	swore	sworn
	tear	tore	torn
	tread	trod	trodden, ^f trod
	wear	wore	worn
	weave	wove	woven

(vii)	Vowels <i>i</i> : <i>a</i> : <i>i</i> —		
	bid	{ bade bid	{ bidden bid
	give	gave	given
	lie	lay	lain

	PRESENT	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
(viii)	Vowels <i>a</i> : <i>o</i> : <i>a</i> —		
	forsake	forsook	forsaken
	shake	shook	shaken
	take	took	taken
(ix)	Vowels <i>i</i> : <i>o</i> : <i>i</i> —		
	arise	arose	arisen
	drive	{drove } {drave }	driven
	ride	rode	ridden
	rise	rose	risen
	shrive	shrove	shriven
	smite	smote	smitten, smit
	stride	strode	strode
	strive	strove	striven
	write	wrote	written
(x)	Vowels <i>e</i> : <i>o</i> : <i>o</i> —		
	beget	begot, begat	begotten, begot
	forget	forgot	forgotten
	get	got	gotten*, got
		* ill-gotten wealth	
(xi)	Vowels <i>i</i> : <i>i</i> : <i>i</i> —		
	bid	{bid {bade	{bid {bidden
	bite	bit	{bit {bitten
	chide	chid	{chid {chidden
	hide	hid	{hidden* {hid
	slide	slid	{slidden {slid
		* a hidden treasure	

Miscellaneous

(xii)

choose	chose	chosen
freeze	froze	frozen
fly	flew	flown
go }	went	gone
wend }		
see	saw	seen
come	came	come
become	became	become

Miscellaneous—continued

(xii)

PRESENT	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE
run	ran	run
sit	sat	sat
stand	stood	stood
win	won	won
abide	abode	abode
shine	shone	shone
wake	woke	woken

Mixed or Strong-Weak Verbs

beat	beat	beaten
cleave	clave, cleft	cloven*, cleft
climb	clomb, climbed	climbed
crow	crew, crowed	crowed, crown (rare)
do	did	done
grave	graved	graven*, graved
hang	hung, hanged	hung, hanged
hew	hewed	hewn*, hewed
lade	laded	laden
melt	melted	molten*, melted
mow	mowed	mown
prove	proved	proven, proved
rive	rived	riven
rot	rotted	rotten*, rotted
saw	sawed	sawn
seethe	seethe	sodden*, seethed
sew	sewed	sewn*, sewed
shape	shaped	shapen, shaped
shave	shaved	shaven
shear	sheared	shorn*, sheared
show	showed	shown
sow	sowed	sown
stave	stove, staved	stove, staved
strew	strewed	strewn, strown
swell	swelled	swollen
thrive	throve, thrived	thriven, thrived
wash	washed	washen*, washed
writhe	writhed	writhen, writhed

* *cloven* tongues ; a *graven* image ; a *hewn* tree ; *molten* lead ; *rotten* wood ; *sodden* flesh ; a *well-sewn* garment ; a *shorn* sheep ; *unwashen* hands.

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