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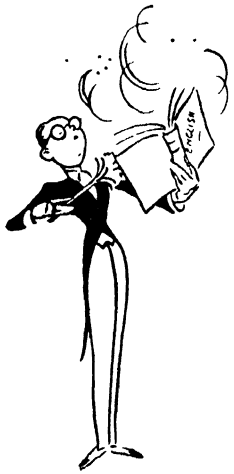

WITH 13 DRAWINGS BY PHYLLIS R. WARD

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This book is intended for ordinary men and women who, having given very little thought to their own language since they left school, find that their capacity for self-expression has suffered. How often one hears people say: 'I know what I mean, but I don't know how to put it!' And so, with the most wonderful language in the world almost at their command, they are balked and baffled when 'called upon to say a few words,' stuck and stilted when they put pen to paper. And all for want of a little brushing up!

Brush up Your Own Language is a book of precepts, examples, and exercises, dealing with the right word and phrase, sentences, stops, and paragraphs, names and emphasis; it tells you how to write a letter, or apply for a job, or act as referee for a friend; how to make a speech in a simple way, or write a précis or report, or describe what you have seen. It will help to improve style and clarify judgment.

MANCHESTER EVENING NEWS: 'Shocks for those who think they can write and delight for those who know they cannot.'

PREFACE

THIS book is not a school-book, nor a text-book, nor a cram-book. It does not aim at creating journalists or public speakers. It will not double your income, or give you a thorough knowledge of the language in three months without a tutor. Yet if it does not aim very high, the intention of this little book is wide and far-reaching. It is intended not for students but for ordinary men and women who, never having given serious thought to the language since they left school, have lost the facility for self-expression in speaking as well as writing—and very much regret it. How often one hears people say, 'I know what I mean, but I don't know how to put it!' or 'I do wish I could write a decent letter!' And so, with the most wonderful language in the world almost at their command, but never quite, they are balked and baffled—hesitant and terrified when 'called upon to say a few words,' stuck and stilted when they put pen to paper.

And why? All for want of a little regular brushing up. The language is all there—it was acquired almost unconsciously in the nursery and the schoolroom years ago. But where is the ease and the facility—the right word and the happy phrase—the amusing letter and the telling argument? These things cannot be got without trouble; but regular brushing up will make an astonishing difference; and this little book will supply a method and a plan.

G. N. P.

1936.

CONTENTS

CLEAR THINKING

(A) Observation

'Be clear, and all the rest will follow.'

NAPOLEON.

You have come to the conclusion that your English needs brushing up. Now why? As you work through this book you will find out; and the very first step to take is to ask yourself this question: 'Is my thinking clear, or is it just a smudge?' Clear thinking is the crux of the whole matter; and if you are thinking smudgingly you must put that right; otherwise you will never shine, for all your brushing.

The basis of it all is accurate observation. This does not mean making mental notes of the number of stairs or lamp-posts, and stuffing your memory with snippets of superfluous information, but simply using EYES and EARS.

Suggestions:

1. Can you distinguish all the common trees, in summer and winter? If not, learn a new one every time you take a walk.
2. Do you know in what order the traffic lights appear, and which pair show together? If not, find out.
3. Do you know how many toes a cat has got? If not, catch one and count.
4. Can you distinguish a swift from a swallow or a martin? If not, look them up in a book and then observe them.
5. Do you study faces? Make mental notes of the people you pass and compare their faces with those of appropriate animals.
6. Find out by observation—if you do not already know

COMPARE THEIR FACES WITH THOSE OF APPROPRIATE ANIMALS

—what each of the following instruments looks like, and the sort of sound it makes:

Violin	Harp
Violoncello	Trumpet
Double-bass	Euphonium
Piccolo	Cymbals
Flute	Triangle
Clarinet	Side-drum
Bassoon	Kettle-drum
Xylophone	Bass-drum
Saxophone	Glockenspiel.

7. What are the signs of approaching Christmas?

8. Do you know whether the moon is waxing or waning? How can you tell?

9. Point to the north. Now to the west. Which way is the wind blowing? Does a north-east wind come from the north-east? What about a north-east current?

10. What queer inn signs have you noticed?

11. How many different sounds can you hear at this moment?

12. Now here is an advanced test in clear thinking, not to be attempted by the novice: There is a rope hanging over a pulley with a weight at one end of the rope and at the other end a monkey of the same weight as the weight. The rope weighs four ounces for every foot, and the age of the monkey and the monkey's mother together is four years, and the weight of the monkey is as many pounds as the monkey's mother is years old, and the monkey's mother is twice as old as the monkey was when the monkey's mother was half as old as the monkey will be when the monkey is three times as old as the monkey's mother was when the monkey's mother was three times as old as the monkey; and the weight of the weight and the weight of the rope are together half as much again as the difference between the weight of the rope and the weight of the monkey.

What is the length of the rope?

(B) Thinking in Words

'Language is the dress of thought.'

DR. JOHNSON.

Accurate observation is not enough. One must get into the way of thinking clearly IN WORDS—*consciously and constantly, so that one can say it aloud or set it down on paper without hesitation. We all have the power of 'hearing in our heads'; and to think accurately in words instead of in smudgy pictures makes for clear thinking and balanced judgment. Moreover it is half the secret of good writing.*

Suggestions for practice:

1. Look out of your window for a quarter of a minute. Turn round, and 'think in words' what you have seen. Then try saying it aloud—if there is no one about!

2. Go outside and observe something alive: a worm turning—an early bird—two in a bush—a stalking cat—and make up a mental word-picture about it.

3. Observe some ACTION: a small boy on a large bicycle—a postman delivering letters—a dog running after a stick—a motorist rounding a corner. Think it in words. Try what it looks like when written down.

and gobbles to his mistress in a most uncouth manner; he hath also a pert and petulant note when he attacks his adversary. When a hen turkey leads forth her young brood she keeps a watchful eye; and if a bird of prey appear, though ever so high in the air, the careful mother announces the enemy with a little inward moan, and watches him with a steady and attentive look; but if he approach, her note becomes earnest and alarming, and her outcries are redoubled!'

Exercise 3. Think of adjectives to take the place of the words in italics:

(*a*) An excuse *that simply won't do.*
(*b*) A child *who has got completely out of hand.*
(*c*) A reputation *which one would not by any means like to have.*
(*d*) An expression *one could not possibly imitate.*
(*e*) This pudding *has a most unpleasing taste.*
(*f*) He is the sort of person *who takes offence at the slightest thing.*
(*g*) The captain is a man *whom nothing can upset.*

DON'T BE VAGUE

' An honest tale speeds best, being plainly told.'

SHAKESPEARE.

(A) Vagueness in Speaking

One of the easiest bad habits to fall into is that of talking vaguely, and leaving the hearer to fill in the blanks and guess what one means. You may be quite unaware of this, for every one tends to be more slipshod in speaking than in writing. The antidote to vagueness is precision; and that means mental effort.

Examine the following examples. Then rewrite the passages, using words with precise meaning.

Exercise 1. I saw old What 's-his-name at the club the other day looking like nothing on earth. I knew something must have happened, so I said: ' What 's up, old man? You 're looking all sort of anyhow.' ' Yes,' he said, ' I 've just been run into by a boy with one of those nondescript what-do-you-call-the-things.' He was still feeling all over the shop, so I took him along and gave him something, and he was soon more like himself, so to speak.

Exercise 2. Something went wrong with the car the other day, and we didn't get home till goodness knows when. John messed about with its inside till his clothes were like nothing on earth, but nothing happened, and, well, there we were! At last an A.A. man came along, just got out a gadget and unscrewed those little what-d'you-call-its, and cleaned them, and everything was O.K.

Exercise 3. Make the following sentences more clear-cut and definite.

(*a*) The woods were beautiful beyond words, defying description.
(*b*) My own opinion is that she 's pretty ugly.
(*c*) The view from my window is like nothing on earth: you might be anywhere.
(*d*) I was feeling all sort of funny, and my work had simply gone to pot.
(*e*) The weather was absolutely rotten.
(*f*) The wound was pretty ugly, and I was feeling perfectly beastly.

(B) Vague Rambling, and 'Getting off the Point'

'Words are like leaves; and where they most abound
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.'

POPE.

A man or woman with a logical mind will keep to the point; your scatterbrains will ramble. Perhaps the best way of emphasizing this is to quote one or two famous literary examples.

Example 1. The first is a scrap of the immortal Mrs. Nickleby's talk:

' "Well, I never saw such people in all my life for time as you are, up here! I declare I never did! I had not the least idea that Nicholas was after his time, not the smallest. Mr. Nickleby used to say—your poor papa, I am speaking of, Kate my dear—used to say that appetite was the best clock in the world, but you have no appetite, my dear Miss Bray, I wish you had, and upon my word I really think you ought to take something that would give you one. I am sure I don't know, but I have heard that two or three dozen native lobsters give an appetite, though that comes to the same thing after all, for I suppose you must have an appetite before you can take 'em. If I said lobsters, I meant oysters, it 's all the same. Though really how you came to know about Nicholas——"

' "We happened to be just talking about him, mamma, that was it."

' " You never seem to me to be talking about anything else, Kate, and upon my word I am quite surprised at your being so thoughtless. You can find subjects enough to talk about sometimes, and when you know how important it is to keep up Miss Bray's spirits, and interest her, and all that, it really is quite extraordinary to me what can induce you to keep on prose, prose, prose, din, din, din, everlastingly, upon the same theme. You are a very kind nurse, Kate, and a very good one, and I know you mean very well; but I will say this—that if it wasn't for me, I really don't know what would become of Miss Bray's spirits, and so I tell the Doctor every day. He says he wonders how I sustain my own, and I am sure I very often wonder myself how I can contrive to keep up as I do. Of course it 's an exertion, but still, when I know how much depends upon me in this house, I am obliged to make it. There 's nothing praiseworthy in that, but it 's necessary, and I do it." '

Example 2. The second example is even more subtle and realistic. It is an example of Miss Bates's rambling talk from Jane Austen's *Emma*:

' " I hope Mrs. Bates and Miss Fairfax are——"

' " Very well, I am much obliged to you. My mother is delightfully well; and Jane caught no cold last night. How is Mr. Woodhouse? I am so glad to hear such a good account. Mrs. Weston told me you were here. ' Oh, then,' said I, ' I must run across; I am sure Miss Woodhouse will allow me just to run across and entreat her to come in: my mother will be so very happy to see her; and now we are such a nice party, she cannot refuse.' ' Ay, pray do,' said Mr. Frank Churchill, ' Miss Woodhouse's opinion of the instrument will be worth having.' ' But,' said I, ' I shall be more sure of succeeding if one of you will go with me.'— ' Oh,' said he, ' wait half a minute, till I have finished my job'; for, would you believe it, Miss Woodhouse, there he is, in the most obliging manner in the world, fastening in the rivet of my mother's spectacles. The rivet came out, you know, this morning; so very obliging!—For my mother had no use of her spectacles—could not put them on. And, by the by, everybody ought to have two pair of spectacles;

they should indeed. Jane said so. I meant to take them over to John Saunders the first thing I did, but something or other hindered me all the morning; first one thing, then another, there is no saying what, you know. At one time Patty came to say she thought the kitchen chimney wanted sweeping. 'Oh,' said I, 'Patty, do not come with your bad news to me. Here is the rivet of your mistress's spectacles out.' Then the baked apples came home; Mrs. Wallis sent them by her boy; they are extremely civil and obliging to us, the Wallises, always. I have heard some people say that Mrs. Wallis can be uncivil and give a very rude answer; but we have never known anything but the greatest attention from them. And it cannot be for the value of our custom now, for what is our consumption of bread, you know? only three of us besides dear Jane at present—and she really eats nothing—makes such a shocking breakfast, you would be quite frightened if you saw it. I dare not let my mother know how little she eats; so I say one thing, and then I say another, and it passes off. But about the middle of the day she gets hungry, and there is nothing she likes so well as these baked apples, and they are extremely wholesome; for I took the opportunity the other day of asking Mr. Perry; I happened to meet him in the street. Not that I had any doubt before. I have so often heard Mr. Woodhouse recommend a baked apple. I believe it is the only way that Mr. Woodhouse thinks the fruit thoroughly wholesome. We have apple dumplings, however, very often. Patty makes an excellent apple dumpling. Well, Mrs. Weston, you have prevailed, I hope, and these ladies will oblige us."

'Emma would be "very happy to wait on Mrs. Bates," etc., and they did at last move out of the shop, with no further delay from Miss Bates than:

'"How do you do, Mrs. Ford? I beg your pardon; I did not see you before. I hear you have a charming collection of new ribbons from town. Jane came back delighted yesterday. Thank ye, the gloves do very well—only a little too large about the wrist; but Jane is taking them in."

'"What was I talking of?" said she, beginning again when they were all in the street.

'Emma wondered on what, of all the medley, she would fix.

'"I declare I cannot recollect what I was talking of. Oh, my mother's spectacles! So very obliging of Mr. Frank Churchill! 'Oh!' said he, 'I do think I can fasten the rivet; I like a job of this kind excessively.' Which, you know, showed him to be so very—Indeed I must say that, much as I had heard of him before, and much as I had expected, he very far exceeds anything—I do congratulate you, Mrs. Weston, most warmly. He seems everything the fondest parent could—'Oh!' said he, 'I can fasten the rivet. I like a job of that sort excessively.' I never shall forget his manner. And when I brought out the baked apples from the closet, and hoped our friends would be so very obliging as to take some, 'Oh!' said he, directly, 'there is nothing in the way of fruit half so good, and these are the finest-looking home-baked apples I ever saw in my life.' That, you know, was so very—And I am sure, by his manner, it was no compliment. Indeed they are very delightful apples, and Mrs. Wallis does them full justice, only we do not have them baked more than twice, and Mr. Woodhouse made us promise to have them done three times; but Miss Woodhouse will be so good as not to mention it. The apples themselves are the very finest sort for baking, beyond a doubt; all from Donwell—some of Mr. Knightley's most liberal supply. He sends us a sack every year; and certainly there never was such a keeping apple anywhere as one of his trees—I believe there is two of them. My mother says the orchard was always famous in her younger days. But I was really quite shocked the other day; for Mr. Knightley called one morning, and Jane was eating these apples, and we talked about them, and said how much she enjoyed them, and he asked whether we were not got to the end of our stock. 'I am sure you must be,' said he, 'and I will send you another supply; for I have a great many more than I can ever use. William Larkins let me keep a larger quantity than usual this year. I will send you some more, before they get good for nothing.' So I begged he would not—for really as to ours being gone, I could not absolutely say that we had a great many left—it was but half a dozen

indeed; but they should be all kept for Jane; and I could not at all bear that he should be sending us more, so liberal as he had been already; and Jane said the same. And when he was gone she almost quarrelled with me—no, I should not say quarrelled, for we never had a quarrel in our lives—but she was quite distressed that I had owned the apples were so nearly gone; she wished I had made him believe we had a great many left. 'Oh,' said I, 'my dear, I did say as much as I could.' However, the very same evening William Larkins came over with a large basket of apples, the same sort of apples, a bushel at least, and I was very much obliged, and went down and spoke to William Larkins, and said everything, as you may suppose. William Larkins is such an old acquaintance! I am always glad to see him. But, however, I found afterwards from Patty that William said it was all the apples of *that* sort his master had; he had brought them all—and now his master had not one left to bake or boil. William did not seem to mind it himself, he was so pleased to think his master had sold so many; for William, you know, thinks more of his master's profit than anything; but Mrs. Hodges, he said, was quite displeased at their being all sent away. She could not bear that her master should not be able to have another apple-tart this spring. He told Patty this, but bid her not mind it, and be sure not to say anything to us about it, for Mrs. Hodges *would* be cross sometimes, and as long as so many sacks were sold it did not signify who ate the remainder. And so Patty told me, and I was excessively shocked indeed! I would not have Mr. Knightley know anything about it for the world! He would be so very—I wanted to keep it from Jane's knowledge; but, unluckily, I had mentioned it before I was aware."'

(C) Don't Apologize

If you know what you are talking or writing about, and have the whole thing sharp and clear-cut in your mind, there is no need for shilly-shallying and apologizing for every word you say.

Examples. Avoid the appearance of indecision suggested by the constant use of words and phrases such as: 'perhaps'—'of course I don't know, but I should say'—'to a certain extent'—'I think one must admit'; and so on.

Exercise. Make a list of as many of these hesitant, apologetic words and phrases as you can call to mind. Make a mental note that they are not to be overdone—should, in fact, be avoided as far as possible.

(D) Avoid Padding

Don't use words just for the sake of filling space or time.

Example. Which is the better of these two sentences?

1. Pandora longed to see what was inside the box, so in the end she opened it.

2. Overcome by an insatiable curiosity, a consuming desire to inspect the problematical contents of the forbidden receptacle, with deplorable lack of self-restraint Pandora allowed herself to be overcome by its almost irresistible attraction.

Exercise 1. Pad out the following to four times its length, just to prove to yourself that padding is tiresome and unnecessary:

She took an immediate dislike to him.

Exercise 2. Express the following concisely:

The ascent of Everest is an undertaking of the most arduous and exacting character, entailing the possibility of a disastrous conclusion in spite of the native genius and superb sportsmanship of the indefatigable climbers.

(E) Avoid Exaggeration

or at least be careful about it. If you habitually speak in superlatives which are not justified you will have no superlatives to fall back on when they are really needed!

Don't always speak of
A toothache as frightfully painful.
A mistake as absolutely inexcusable.
A girl of 5 foot 10 as simply gigantic.
A pleasant view as perfectly marvellous.

Don't speak of millions of fish when you have seen five; nor use the phrase 'with meticulous exactitude' if you do not really know what 'meticulous' means.

THE RIGHT WORD (I)

'How forcible are right words!'

BOOK OF JOB.

Nouns and Adjectives

The English language is so rich and full that for every idea one wants to express there are usually a number of words to choose from—words that will 'do.' But there is only one RIGHT WORD; *and to find the right word instead of making do with a weak substitute is half the secret of effective writing and speaking.*

We will consider (A) the right Noun, and (B) the right Adjective.

(A) THE RIGHT NOUN.

The long word is by no means always the strong word. All the strong words of everyday life, words that mean much to us—life, death, love, wife, son—are short and Anglo-Saxon.

Example 1. 'Then Apollyon straddled quite over the whole breadth of the way, and said: "I am void of fear in this matter; prepare thyself to die; for I swear by my infernal den, that thou shalt go no farther; here will I spill thy soul."'—(BUNYAN: *Pilgrim's Progress.*)

Example 2. 'Finish, good lady: the bright day is done,
And we are for the dark.'
(SHAKESPEARE: *Antony and Cleopatra.*)

Exercise 1. Choose the right noun to express each of the following (make up sentences):

(*a*) Children's feet on the stairs.

(*b*) Light on a bald head.

(*c*) The sound of soda-water coming from a siphon.
(*d*) The face of a fat, heavy man, as being like—something else.
(*e*) A suggestive list of things you would be likely to find in a village store.
(*f*) Musical instruments which suggest the sound they make.

Exercise 2. Fill in the blanks (nouns) in the following newspaper cutting:

'The little town of Westwick witnessed an interesting —— to-day in the hundredth —— of the —— ——. The mayor opened the —— with a —— and then walked to the —— followed by the —— ——. Then the bishop in a few charming —— commended the —— of the people who had shown such —— in attaining their ——. The mayoress, who sat on the bishop's ——, was then presented with a —— of —— by the youngest ——, and after a short —— the —— dispersed for ——.'

Exercise 3. Express in one word:

(*a*) A great number of stars.
(*b*) Inability to take an interest in anything.
(*c*) The habit of refusing to change your mind even when you know you are in the wrong.
(*d*) A number of eggs under a sitting hen.
(*e*) Is there a word for the people watching a silent film? If not, what is the nearest we can get to it?

(B) THE RIGHT ADJECTIVE.

There is a great danger both in speaking and in writing of bolstering up a weak noun with one or more indistinct adjectives. It is like an incompetent artist mixing up a lot of colours on his palette till he thinks he has got the right tone instead of putting on the *right* colour at once by a deft turn of the brush. Be chary of using adjectives; and when you do use them choose them with great care.

Example 1. ' The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls.'—(TENNYSON.)

Example 2. ' Casting a dim religious light.'—(MILTON.)

Example 3. ' They could then see the faint summer fogs in layers, woolly, level, and apparently no thicker than counterpanes, spread about the meadows in detached remnants of small extent.'—(THOMAS HARDY.)

Example 4. ' The boat we were going to relieve swam into our view suddenly, cutting black and sinister into the wake of the morn under a sable wing, while to them our sail must have been a vision of white and dazzling radiance.' —(JOSEPH CONRAD.)

Exercise 1. Make up sentences, using the right adjective to describe the following:

(*a*) A clergyman who is full of jokes.
(*b*) Charles Dickens.
(*c*) The river at night flowing under the bridges.
(*d*) A woman who is always on the look out for slights.
(*e*) Mickey Mouse.
(*f*) A feeling that something important, even dreadful, is going to happen.

Exercise 2. Note the extremely careful choice of adjectives in the following passage from Gilbert White's *The Natural History of Selborne*. Then go on with the subject yourself, describing the sounds made by cocks, hens, small chicks, and so forth.

' The language of birds is very ancient, and, like other ancient modes of speech, very elliptical: little is said, but much is meant and understood. . . . The voice of the goose is trumpet-like, and clanking, and once saved the Capitol at Rome, as grave historians assert: the hiss also of the gander is formidable and full of menace, and protective of his young. Among ducks the sexual distinction of voice is remarkable; for while the quack of the female is loud and sonorous, the voice of the drake is inward and harsh and feeble, and scarce discernible. The cock turkey struts

and gobbles to his mistress in a most uncouth manner; he hath also a pert and petulant note when he attacks his adversary. When a hen turkey leads forth her young brood she keeps a watchful eye; and if a bird of prey appear, though ever so high in the air, the careful mother announces the enemy with a little inward moan, and watches him with a steady and attentive look; but if he approach, her note becomes earnest and alarming, and her outcries are redoubled!'

Exercise 3. Think of adjectives to take the place of the words in italics:

(*a*) An excuse *that simply won't do.*
(*b*) A child *who has got completely out of hand.*
(*c*) A reputation *which one would not by any means like to have.*
(*d*) An expression *one could not possibly imitate.*
(*e*) This pudding *has a most unpleasing taste.*
(*f*) He is the sort of person *who takes offence at the slightest thing.*
(*g*) The captain is a man *whom nothing can upset.*

'HE THAT BLESSETH HIS FRIEND WITH A LOUD VOICE'

(A) DON'T BE A BORE

'He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning—it shall be counted a curse to him.'

PROVERBS.

We all know that hearty breakfast-time bore; he has not changed in two thousand years! Most of us know the club bore who tells pointless Anglo-Indian stories; the railway-carriage bore who talks about the distressing state of his inside; the paterfamilias bore who tells you all the clever things his children have said; and so on and so forth. Now what is the matter with these persons? They all suffer from excessive egoism. A bore has been defined as a person who talks about himself when you want to talk about yourself. That is a point to consider.

Example. You should get out of the library St. John Hankin's great comedy, *The Charity that Began at Home,* and read with special care the part of General Bonsor, whose tragedy was that he did not know he was a bore.

Exercise 1. Where would you draw the line between

'talking shop' and 'boring'? Write down your answer when you have considered it.

Exercise 2. Choose a speaker—a retired colonel—a railway-carriage companion—a sitting-out partner—any one you like, and make up the most boring story you can think of, with plenty of dull, irrelevant detail, but no point.

Exercise 3. What do you mean when you say that a book is 'unreadable'?

(B) **Don't be Pompous**

'I can do the Big Bow-wow strain.'

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Oliver Goldsmith once told Dr. Johnson that if he were to write about little fishes he would make them talk like great whales.

Example 1. '"I know not," said the princess, "whether marriage be more than one of the innumerable modes of human misery. When I see and reckon the various forms of connubial infelicity, the unexpected causes of lasting discord, the diversities of temper, the oppositions of opinion, the rude collision of contrary desire when both are urged by violent impulses, the obstinate conquests of disagreeable virtues, where both are supported by consciousness of good intention, I am sometimes disposed to think with the severer casuists of most nations, that marriage is rather permitted than approved, and that none but by the instigation of a passion too much indulged, entangle themselves with indissoluble compacts." '—(DR. JOHNSON.)

Now the point to note is this: that though nobody ever really talks like that, Dr. Johnson by dint of scholarship, and a wonderful sense of words and prose rhythm, manages to 'get away with it,' as we say. If we tried to do it we should fail lamentably.

Example 2. Compare the following. Which is the better?

(*a*) I have thought it over and discussed it, and, frankly, I don't like it.

(*b*) After considerable cogitation and weighing-up of alternative considerations, and as a result of extensive deliberation, I have reluctantly arrived at the unequivocal conclusion that the course you propose is incompatible with my own sense of rectitude and my colleagues' idea of the general amenity.

Exercise 1. *Evelina's father gives his consent to her marriage with Lord Orville.*

'"Yes, my child, thy happiness is engraved in golden characters upon the tablets of my heart; and their impression is indelible: for, should the rude and deep-searching hand of Misfortune attempt to pluck them from their repository, the fleeting fabric of life would give way; and in tearing from my vitals the nourishment by which they are supported, she would but grasp at a shadow insensible to her touch. Give thee my consent?—Oh, thou joy, comfort, and pride of my life, how cold is that word to express the fervency of my approbation! And oh, my Evelina, hear and assist in one only, humble, but ardent prayer: That the height of bliss to which thou art rising may not render thee giddy!"'—(FANNY BURNEY: *Evelina*.)

How would a modern father put it?

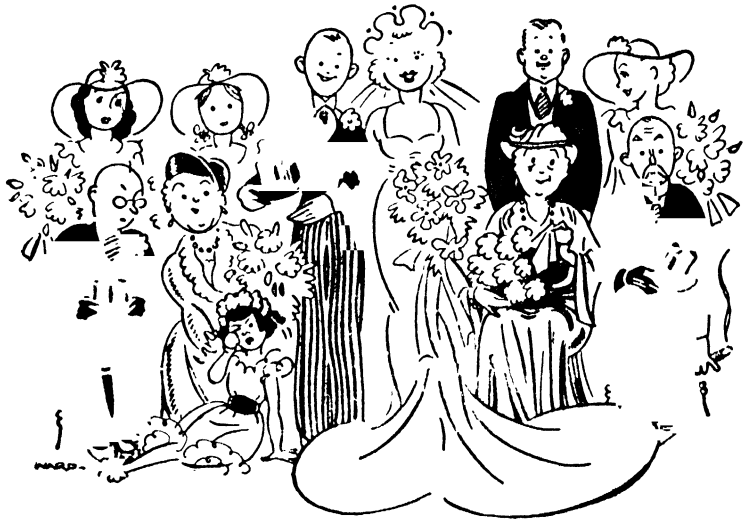
Exercise 2. Write a letter of congratulation on a friend's birthday, *in the pompous style*, and see how it looks in cold blood.

(C) Beware of 'Journalese'

Μηδὲν ἄγαν ('Never overdo it').

SOLON.

'Journalese' does not mean the style of first-rate journalism, which is as virile, terse, and telling as any in literature. It means the jargon of the cheap journalist and reporter, who through lack of education or experience mistakes the



A NOTABLE LOCAL WEDDING

long word for the strong word, and the grandiloquent and worn-out cliché for the telling phrase.

Examples. In this horrid jargon 'a strange chance' becomes 'an unaccountable concatenation of circumstances'; a football becomes 'the leather,' or worse, 'the leather spheroid'; the sun is 'Old Sol'; a crowd is 'a seething mass of humanity'; a thud is always 'sickening'; a shudder, 'convulsive'; a crash, 'reverberating'—and so on and so forth. In a word, the journalist is mistaking affectation for style. Everything is spoken of in the superlative, whether superlatives are justified or not: 'prettiness' becomes 'exquisite beauty,' and 'care,' 'meticulous exactitude.' You will soon get to know journalese at a glance.

Exercise 1. Write an account (imaginary) for the local paper of a notable local wedding. But do not call it 'Marriage Bells,' nor use the word 'radiant,' nor mention the fact that the bride was wearing a *crêpe de Chine* pouf with beige *chevrons au gratin*—or however it is the jargon goes.

Exercise 2. The next time you witness an actual event —a match, a motor smash, a jamboree, or whatever it may be—write a full and straightforward account of it, without any of the journalese jargon.

Exercise 3. What are the 'stock' journalese words or phrases which go with the following words?

(*a*) sin; (*b*) the —— art; (*c*) war to ——; (*d*) the —— board; (*e*) winter held the country in its ——; (*f*) he sleeps the sleep ——; (*g*) he felt that discussion was ——; (*h*) with —— courage; (*i*) dead as ——; (*j*) cool as ——; (*k*) blind as ——.

Why should these and their like be avoided, or at least used sparingly?

THE RIGHT WORD (2)

Verbs and Adverbs

'The ear trieth words as the palate tasteth meat.'

BOOK OF JOB.

The verb is THE *word above all others; hence its name. It is the functioning word in the sentence. It is the word that makes an assertion; that expresses 'being' and 'doing,' and no sentence is complete without one. It is just as important to choose the* RIGHT VERB *as it is to choose the* RIGHT NOUN.

Example 1. (*Bottom the Weaver speaks.*)

'I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass, if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was,—and methought I had,—but man is but a patched fool, if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was; I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream.'—(SHAKESPEARE.)

This solemn fooling, as you will have seen, depends for its fun on the use of the wrong verb.

Example 2. Now read one paragraph from the great 'storm' in *David Copperfield*, and note the tremendous effect of the verbs—finite verbs and participles in -ing.

'The tremendous sea itself, when I could find sufficient pause to look at it, in the agitation of the blinding wind, the flying stones and sand, and the awful noise, confounded me. As the high watery walls came rolling in, and, at their highest, tumbled into surf, they looked as if the least would

engulf the town. As the receding wave swept back with a hoarse roar, it seemed to scoop out deep caves in the beach, as if its purpose were to undermine the earth. When some white-headed billows thundered on, and dashed themselves to pieces before they reached the land, every fragment of the late whole seemed possessed by the full might of its wrath, rushing to be gathered to the composition of another monster. Undulating hills were changed to valleys, undulating valleys (with a solitary storm-bird sometimes skimming through them) were lifted up to hills; masses of water shivered and shook the beach with a booming sound; every shape tumultuously rolled on, as soon as made, to change its shape and place, and beat another shape and place away; the ideal shore on the horizon, with its towers and buildings, rose and fell; the clouds fell fast and thick; I seemed to see a rending and upheaving of all nature.' —(DICKENS.)

Exercise 1. Think of the right verb to express:

(*a*) The sound of a high wind in trees full of leaf.
(*b*) The action of a tortoise.
(*c*) The little noise a dog makes when he is interested.
(*d*) Wireless atmospherics. (Make up a sentence.)
(*e*) The flight of a bat.

Exercise 2. Make your sentences, whether spoken or written, sharper and more concise by the use of single verbs to express the following:

(*a*) He produced this as a final argument, after which there was nothing more to be said.
(*b*) He did the same stroke in front of a looking-glass over and over again in order to get it right.
(*c*) He put out his foot so that the boy should fall over it as he ran past.
(*d*) He absolutely refused to discharge the debt.
(*e*) He scratched out all the names with a knife so that they could not be read.

CAUTION ! Be careful about the use of ' shall ' and ' will.'

' I (we) shall,' implies the future. ' I shall dine at eight,'

but 'he (you, they) shall' implies that you insist that they shall; while, on the other hand, 'I will' means 'I wish,' or 'am willing,' or 'insist upon'; and 'he (you, they) will' implies the future.

There is a great deal more in it than this, really; but for purposes of brushing up this will do.

Here is an old rhyme about it, which you may find in many grammars:

> In the first person simply *shall* foretells;
> In *will* a threat or else a promise dwells;
> *Shall* in the second and the third doth threat;
> *Will* simply then foretells a future feat.

ADVERBS *do for the verb and other parts of speech very much what adjectives do for the noun. They help to define the meaning. They tell you how a thing is done, and when, and where, and even why. Adverbial phrases and clauses do the same. It is just as important to make your adverbs sharp and clear-cut as it was in the case of adjectives.*

Awful example. That 's frightfully nice of you. I 'd like to come most awfully but I 'm so terribly busy.

Example. (*Notice, and underline all the adverbs and adverbial phrases.*)

'It might have been an hour, or thereabouts, after my quitting the smack, when, having descended to a vast distance beneath me, it made three or four wild gyrations in rapid succession, and plunged headlong, at once and for ever, into the chaos of foam below. The barrel to which I was attached sunk very little farther than half the distance between the bottom of the gulf and the spot at which I leaped overboard, before a great change took place in the character of the whirlpool. The slope of the sides of the vast funnel became momently less and less steep. The gyrations of the whirl became gradually less and less violent. By degrees, the froth and rain had disappeared, and the bottom of the gulf seemed slowly to uprise. The sky was clear, the winds had gone down, and the full moon

was setting radiantly in the west, when I found myself on the surface of the ocean, in full view of the shores of Lofoden, and above the spot where the maelstrom had been.'—(EDGAR ALLAN POE: *A Descent into the Maelström.*)

Exercise 1. Suggest good adverbs for the following:

(*a*) The poacher peered —— round.
(*b*) Put it ——.
(*c*) They dashed —— down the slope.
(*d*) —— and —— the time goes by.
(*e*) He hit him —— on the nose.
(*f*) The whole entertainment fell ——.

Exercise 2. Consider the following sentences, and change the adverbial phrases to single adverbs if you think it improves them.

(*a*) He gave the children the apples without making any distinction between them.
(*b*) He went on with his work without any sign of having been upset by the incident.
(*c*) The little garrison then surrendered, accepting whatever terms the general might see fit to impose.
(*d*) In the navy the official formula accounting for the loss of any article is: 'Lost overboard in deep water; unable to recover.' What comprehensive adverb would mean the same thing—more or less?

PUNCTUATION

'Let 's teach ourselves that honourable stop.'

SHAKESPEARE (*Othello*).

EITHERHOWCANSTTHOUSAYTOTHYBROTHERBROTHERLETMEPULLO
UTTHEMOTETHATISINTHINEEYEWHENTHOUTHYSELFBEHOLDESTNOT
THEBEAMTHATISINTHINEOWNEYETHOUHYPOCRITECASTOUTFIRSTT
HEBEAMOUTOFTHINEOWNEYEANDTHENSHALTTHOUSEECLEARLYTO
PULLOUTTHEMOTETHATISINTHYBROTHERSEYE

It is more than probable that you find this passage difficult to read. Yet that is how it was first written in Greek. It was the grammarians of the University of Alexandria who first divided groups of words into sentences and clauses by means of points. These groups of words they called periods and colons, which means 'limbs,' and commas, which means 'bits cut off.' We still use these terms, but apply them not to groups of words, but to the little 'stops' which divide them.

The PERIOD or FULL STOP is put at the end of every completed sentence that is neither exclamatory nor a question. (An incomplete sentence ends with a dash.) Too many full stops tend to make your style jerky and telegraphic; too few, laboured and heavy.

Exercise 1. Why are there so many full stops in this passage? (Is this as it should be?)

'The bear crawled on. And now the stupor of death fell on the doomed man; he saw the open jaws and blood-shot eyes coming, but in a mist. As in a mist he heard a twang. He glanced down. Denys, white and silent as death, was shooting up at the bear. The bear snarled at the twang, but crawled on. Again the crossbow twanged, and the bear snarled and came nearer.'—(CHARLES READE.)

Exercise 2. Punctuate with full stops the following passage from Macaulay.

'The houses were not numbered there would indeed have been little advantage in numbering them for of the coachmen, chairmen, porters, and errand boys of London very few could read it was necessary to use marks which the most ignorant could understand the shops were therefore distinguished by painted or sculptured signs which gave a gay and grotesque aspect to the streets.'—(MACAULAY.)

The COMMA. The use of the comma is a matter of common sense and experience. Do not learn hard-and-fast rules. If it makes your meaning clearer to put in a comma, then put it in; if not, leave it out. It is better to under-stop than over-stop.

A study of modern writers shows the following general usage:

1. The comma is used to mark off a phrase or a clause —when you think it makes the sense clearer to do so.

Examples.

(*a*) Sir Austen, who was wearing the traditional eyeglass, then rose to speak.

But (*b*) People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

2. To mark a series of words, phrases, or clauses.

Examples.

(*a*) 'Rider and horse,—friend, foe,—in one red burial blent!' (BYRON.)

(*b*) 'He was tall, but exceedingly lank, with narrow shoulders, long arms and legs, hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves, and his whole frame most loosely hung together. His head was small, and flat at top, with huge ears, large green glassy eyes, and long snipe nose, so that it looked like a weathercock, perched upon his spindle neck, to tell which way the wind blew.'—(WASHINGTON IRVING.)

(But notice the difference when you take it all in one sweep, such as: 'Look at that queer little black and white pony!')

3. When you place a word out of its natural order for the sake of stress:

Examples.

(*a*) Above, the bells clanged ceaselessly.

(*b*) An egoistic hedonist, that 's what I call him!

4. To avoid confusion of thought.

Example. In came the vicar carrying the buns and Mrs. Smith with Jimmy in her arms.

How about putting a comma after ' buns '?

N.B. It is better to have no hard-and-fast rules about the use of commas with ' and ' and ' or.' It depends on shades of meaning; and experience must decide.

Exercises. Insert commas in the following passages where you think necessary.

1. There he sat the funny little wizened senior clerk scribbling scribbling while the clock ticked on towards seven and the light began to grow dim.

2. In the locker he found an amazing assortment of old junk rope-ends marlin-spikes seizing ring-bolts old blocks and bits of sailcloth and screws and copper nails innumerable everything in fact but the gadget he was looking for.

The SEMICOLON. The semicolon is an important stop, and an interesting stop to use. It is a strong stop—no mere pause-sign like the comma—but it does not imply a complete break like the full stop. It makes a partial break, and is at the same time a link between sentences bearing on the same subject. It is often used unstead of a comma followed by ' and ' or ' or ' or ' but.'

Example. His book was finished; the last word was written; he put down his pen, and sat back in his chair to think about it.

Exercises. Change the stops in the following, when you think an improvement would be effected by doing so.

1. He ordered a chop; and potatoes; and a pint of stout.

2. The sermon was over. The sidesmen went round with the collecting-bags. And still Mr. Robinson slept.

3. Some people go to the stalls in lounge suits, others dress; being punctilious in such matters.

The COLON. This is an abrupt stop. It often implies that what follows explains and amplifies the sentence that comes before it. Hence it is generally used before a quotation, or to take the place of some word such as 'namely.'

Example 1. I feel the picture has something wrong about it: the colours are drab, the perspective faulty, and the whole composition unconvincing.

Example 2. 'One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.'

It is also used when a semicolon has already been put in to imply a different sort of pause.

Example. 'The sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark.'
(COLERIDGE.)

And it is sometimes used to balance parallel sentences —as in the Psalms.

The QUESTION MARK (note of interrogation) is placed after a direct question—even if the question ends in the middle of a sentence.

Examples. How is he to-day?
How is he? you ask.

Indirect questions are not really questions at all, and should not be followed by question marks.

Example. He asked whether I was feeling better.

But sometimes, when a statement is obviously meant as a question, a question mark may be used.

Example. I hope you are feeling better?

The NOTE OF EXCLAMATION expresses surprise, or annoyance, or fear—or a wish or command. Sometimes it is

used for irony ('A charming fellow!'). Do not double it!! or treble it!!!—for the effect is weakening rather than strengthening.

The DASH is the lazy person's stop, taking the place of every other, especially in letters. *Use it sparingly*, as a judicious change from the comma, or your punctuation will become slipshod.

Two dashes are used as a mild form of brackets.

Example. On Tuesday—my birthday, by the way—I go to London.

The APOSTROPHE implying possession is placed inside the 's' in the singular and outside in the plural.

Examples. Queen's College, Oxford (founded by one queen).

Queens' College, Cambridge (founded by two queens).

(N.B. (1) 'Its' is the possessive form of 'it'; 'it's' stands for 'it is.' (2) 'Yours' requires no apostrophe: it is the possessive. 'Your's sincerely' is wrong.

Quotation marks, or QUOTES, are used in quoting a speaker's actual words, for isolating a word in the sentence, or in quoting a passage from another book. Single quotes are generally used for the first quotation, and double quotes for a quotation within a quotation; but this is not the invariable rule, and indeed is sometimes reversed.

Notice carefully whether your final stop should be inside or outside the quotes. You can tell by the sense.

General exercises. Punctuate the following:

1. 'His (Milton's) domestic habits so far as they are known were those of a severe student he drank little strong drink of any kind and fed without excess in quantity and in his earlier years without delicacy of choice in his youth

he studied late at night but afterwards changed his hours and rested in bed from nine to four in the summer and five in the winter the course of his day was best known after he was blind when he first rose he heard a chapter of the Hebrew Bible and then studied till twelve then took some exercise for an hour then dined then played on the organ and sang or heard another sing then studied to six then entertained his visitors till eight then supped and after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water went to bed.'—(DR. JOHNSON.)

2. 'And here Alice began to get rather sleepy and went on saying to herself in a dreamy sort of way do cats eat bats do cats eat bats and sometimes do bats eat cats for you see as she couldn't answer either question it didn't much matter which way she put it she felt that she was dozing off and had just begun to dream that she was walking hand in hand with Dinah and saying to her very earnestly now Dinah tell me the truth did you ever eat a bat when suddenly thump thump down she came upon a heap of dry leaves and the fall was over.'—(LEWIS CARROLL.)

THE RIGHT WORD (3)

Other Parts of Speech

'And for there is so great diversity
In English, and in writing of our tong,
So I pray God that none miswrite thee.'

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

We have still to consider very briefly four other parts of speech—pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections—not as they would be considered in an English grammar, but simply 'as they turn up' in ordinary conversation and everyday writing.

PRONOUNS. Two hints on the use of pronouns. What is wrong and ridiculous about this?—

Example. I knew a man who lived all his life in a house that stood on a hill which overlooks the plain which stretches to the river which at that point is crossed by the bridge which was built by Telford who was a native of the town which stands on its banks.

(The English tendency is to multiply relatives—though not to this extent.)

Avoid *chains of relatives.* Such chains are ugly, and often confusing. *The House that Jack built* pokes fun at this. Next, make it quite clear to whom or what your relative pronoun refers. (Avoid the blunder of inexplicit reference.)

Example. I can't bear lap-dogs pampered by old ladies who whine and scratch and then as likely as not are sick on your carpet.

Don't overdo the indefinite pronouns: one, someone, any one.

Example. One must admit that one would object if one found someone using one's toothbrush—and how could any one blame one?

This is ridiculously exaggerated, of course; but it emphasizes the point.

PREPOSITIONS. There are two special points to consider about prepositions.

1. There is a taboo almost as strong as the split infinitive fetish, which says that you must not end a sentence with a preposition. Why not? A preposition is a very good word to end a sentence with.

Example. Take the first good book you can lay your hands on. It doesn't matter what page you look at; you are pretty sure to find what you are after. That is, the preposition is the natural word to end a sentence with. So that 's what the fetish amounts to! One wonders whom the taboo was first made by—and what he made so much fuss about!

Seriously, you will find examples in the work of every good writer from Shakespeare downwards. There is no hard-and-fast rule: just do what sounds best or reads best, and don't despise a convenient English idiom.

2. There is a growing tendency to give to prepositions and adverbs jobs for which they were not originally intended. The habit comes from America, and you should watch it in your own speech and writing and see that you do not overdo it.

Examples. I should like to be in on that.
There is more to it than I thought.
Now we 're up against it!
That 's up to you.
I 'm through with him.

Think of some more.

CONJUNCTIONS. Do not overwork ' and ' and ' but.' Vary

your conjunctions, or vary the structure of your sentences so as to dispense with some of your conjunctions altogether.

Exercise 1. Rewrite the following so as to vary or get rid of some of the conjunctions:

He opened the gate and I went through, but I did not notice the barbed wire and caught my trousers and tore a great rent, but luckily they were an old pair and I had another pair upstairs; but it was tiresome, and we wasted ten minutes while I went up and changed, but we caught our train after all.

Exercise 2. He said he was quite willing to take the examination but he doubted his capacity; but he would do his best, but I was not to expect too much. (Here 'but' is grossly overworked.)

By way of contrast note how a great writer may use a chain of conjunctions with wonderful effect:

'As each ship crammed with soldiers drew near the battleships, the men swung their caps and cheered again, and the sailors answered, and the noise of cheering swelled, and the men in the ships not yet moving joined in, and the men ashore, till all the life in the harbour was giving thanks that it would go to death rejoicing.'—(JOHN MASEFIELD: *Gallipoli*.)

INTERJECTIONS.

'OTOTOTOTOTOTOTOTOI!'

What is this extraordinary word? Well, you will find it in the Greek tragedies as an expression of grief or dismay. Nobody can say how it was pronounced. Perhaps it is merely a conventional symbol for sobbing. In Kipling's story *The Man who was* one finds the sentence: 'Colonel Sahib, that man is no Afghan, for they weep "Ai! Ai!" Nor is he of Hindustan, for they weep "Oh! Ho!" He weeps after the fashion of the white men, who say "Ow! Ow!"'

The point is that men of all races make characteristic

noises to express emotion, some of the little noises being conventionalized into the form of words. They are in fact vague words, but they are merely 'thrown in,' and take no part in the structure of a sentence. Little phrases may be used to express emotion in the same way.

'Pish!' 'Tush!' 'Pshaw!' and all their kind are obsolete.

The old religious oaths such as 'Snails!' 'Zounds!' ''Ods boddikins!' are long since dead, though we still use 'Good God!' and 'Damn!' as almost meaningless colloquialisms.

Exercise 1. If you were telling a story, what sort of people in your story would use the following interjections?

(*a*) K'hu!
(*b*) Gee!
(*c*) Gosh!
(*d*) Good gracious!
(*e*) Tripe!
(*f*) Upon my soul!

Exercise 2. Look out the derivation of 'Bosh!' 'The dickens!' 'Drat!'

EMPHASIS

'Grant me some wild expression, Heavens, or I shall burst! —Words, words, or I shall burst!'

FARQUHAR: *The Constant Couple.*

There are times when we all of us want to be emphatic; and very sad it is, as one may see from the above quotation, if one doesn't know how! To shout the same thing louder only renders one ridiculous; while in writing, the method of heavily underlining weak words and bolstering them up with notes of exclamation generally has the opposite effect to what is intended—in spite of Queen Victoria's predilection for it. Then what is one to do about it? Here are half a dozen things that you can do to obtain emphasis; and if you ring the changes you need never be at a loss.

POSITION. By far the most natural and effective way of obtaining emphasis, both in speaking and in writing, is simply to place your word in the emphatic position in the sentence: that is, a position in which one cannot help emphasizing it.

Examples. This can be done by leading up to it as Shakespeare does in the passage:—

'. . . that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the world, "This was a Man!"'

Or the order may be inverted so as to call special attention to the word to be marked; thus:

'Great is Diana of the Ephesians!' or
'Pop goes the weasel!'

Try saying these the other way round.

Exercises. Recast these passages, restoring them to their original form so as to bring the emphasis on the right words:

1. 'So secluded is the garden, there is nothing to break the illusion.'—(R. L. STEVENSON.)

2. 'On city and field darkness came down: and Amelia was praying for George who with a bullet through his heart was lying dead on his face.'—(W. M. THACKERAY.)

Or you may *isolate* a short sentence or part of a complex sentence, thus:

Example. 'And we pumped. And there was no break in the weather. The sea was white like a sheet of foam, like a cauldron of boiling milk; and there was not a break in the clouds, no—not the size of a man's hand—no, not so much as ten seconds.'—(JOSEPH CONRAD.)

CLIMAX and ANTI-CLIMAX.

(*a*) CLIMAX. You may emphasize by piling up your points with cumulative effect. Here, for instance, is a great example:

Example. 'In this blessed Conjuncture, when no other Prince thought He wanted any Thing, to compass what He most desired to be possessed of, but the Affection and Friendship of the King of England; a small, scarce discernible Cloud arose in the North; which was shortly after attended with such a Storm, that never gave over raging, till it had shaken, and even rooted up the greatest, and tallest Cedars of the three Nations; blasted all its Beauty and Fruitfulness; brought its Strength to Decay, and its Glory to Reproach, and almost to Desolation; by such a Career, and Deluge of Wickedness, and Rebellion, as by not being enough foreseen, or, in Truth, suspected, could not be prevented.'—(CLARENDON.)

(*b*) ANTI-CLIMAX, when used seriously and not for comic effect, is much more difficult to achieve. If it happens by accident, it means bathos! One of the greatest examples of anti-climax in literature is to be found at the end of

Motley's *Dutch Republic*, where the wonderful story of William the Silent concludes thus:

'As long as he lived he was the guiding star of a great nation, and when he died, the little children cried in the streets.'

EPIGRAM and PARADOX.

(*a*) EPIGRAM. You may catch attention—and so emphasize—by putting something in so terse and pointed a manner that it can't be missed, and is likely to stay in the memory. Here are a few epigrams:

(i) 'Language is fossil poetry.'—(EMERSON.)
(ii) 'Man is a creature who lives not upon bread alone but principally by catch-words.'—(STEVENSON.)
(iii) 'I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.'—(JOB.)
(iv) 'He did not know that a keeper is only a poacher turned inside out, and a poacher a keeper turned outside in.'—(CHARLES KINGSLEY.)
(v) 'If you have a loaf, sell half and buy a lily.'—(CHINESE.)

Exercise. Think of some more; or note them when you read them. Meredith was particularly fond of the epigram.

(*b*) PARADOX surprises one by expressing some truth in an upside-down and unexpected way which at first sight looks absurd and contradictory. G. K. Chesterton loved the paradox.

Example 1. 'Nonsense is a new Literature—we might almost say a new sense.'—(G. K. CHESTERTON.)

Example 2. 'The well-meaning person who, by merely studying the logical side of things, has decided that "faith is nonsense," does not know how truly he speaks; later it may come back to him in the form that nonsense is faith.'

(G. K. CHESTERTON.)

Example 3. 'The wisest fool in Christendom' (*said of James I*).

ANTITHESIS. Still another way of obtaining emphasis is to place two words, phrases, or sentences together for the *sake of contrast.*

Example 1. 'Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer.'
(POPE.)

Example 2. 'More light and light it grows;
More light and light, more dark and dark our woes.'
(SHAKESPEARE: *Romeo and Juliet.*)

Example 3. (*Of Oliver Goldsmith.*)
'Who writes like an angel, and talks like poor Poll.'

Exercise 1. Describe someone's character very briefly by means of antithesis, contrasting his behaviour in public and in private.

Exercise 2. Emphasize the delight of a country holiday by means of antithesis.

THE RIGHT PHRASE

'Words are the dress of thoughts; which should no more be presented in rags, and tatters, and dirt, than your person should.'

LORD CHESTERFIELD.

Just to refresh your memory: A phrase is a group of words which makes sense but not complete sense. A phrase may take the place of an adjective, or an adverb, but it cannot stand all alone and make sense. 'On the stroke of twelve' is a phrase; 'with crimson cheeks' is another; 'birds of a feather' is a third. They are perfectly intelligible, but for all that they don't make complete sense so long as they stand alone.

It is just as important to choose the right phrase as it is to choose the right word. Sometimes it is more emphatic, more telling or convenient, to use a phrase than a single word or a full clause.

Example 1. Speaking of roundabouts, Kenneth Grahame writes: 'Once I had the fortune to bestride the mighty Eclipse himself, in wooden effigy.'

Surely the phrase 'in wooden effigy' is far better from the point of view of emphasis than a clause such as this would have been:

'Once I had the fortune to bestride a wooden effigy which represented the mighty Eclipse himself.' But take another example:

Example 2. 'When the cat 's away (*clause*) the mice will play' is better than 'The mice will play in the absence of the cat' (*phrase*).

Again (3): 'He behaved with complete lack of sympathy'

(*phrase*) is better than 'He behaved completely unsympathetically' (*adverb*). Why is one better than the other?

And (4): 'I noticed one man with a black eye' (*phrase*) is better than 'I noticed one man who had a black eye,' or 'whose eye had been blacked'; while 'I noticed one blackened-eyed man' is not English. ('Black-eyed Susan' means something quite different.)

Examples from literature:

1. 'Slender grasses, branches round about with slenderer boughs, each tipped with pollen and rising in tiers cone-shaped—too delicate to grow tall-cluster at the base of the mound.'—(RICHARD JEFFERIES.)

2. 'For Venus smiles not on a house of tears.'—(SHAKESPEARE.)

3. 'On the west [of Oxford Street was] a meadow renowned for a spring from which, long afterwards, Conduit Street was named. On the east was a field not to be passed without a shudder by any Londoner of that age. There, as in a place far from the haunts of men, had been dug, twenty years before, when the great plague was raging, a pit into which the dead-carts had nightly shot corpses by the score.' —(MACAULAY.)

4. What is the construction of the phrases in the following?

> 'A book of verses underneath the bough—
> A loaf of bread—a jug of wine—and thou
> Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
> Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!'
>
> (FITZGERALD: *Omar Khayyám.*)

Exercise 1. Make up sentences showing the use of the following common phrases:

(*a*) Satisfactory compromise.
(*b*) Easing the situation.
(*c*) Contrary to all expectation.
(*d*) Prevalent attitude.
(*e*) With legitimate pride.
(*f*) Competent to give an opinion.
(*g*) Authorized to negotiate.
(*h*) On unimpeachable evidence.

Exercise 2. Substitute strong single words—abstract for concrete, and so forth—for phrases in the following:

(*a*) He considered it a serious animadversion on his conduct.
(*b*) Invariably overstepping the conventional proprieties.
(*c*) He showed a propensity to procrastination.
(*d*) He was well known as one who invariably simulated indisposition.
(*e*) He used to tell stories which nobody could be expected to find credible.
(*f*) He never has an opinion of his own but wobbles according to circumstances.
(*g*) You will find him capable of fitting without difficulty into any situation.

Exercise 3. Pictures in galleries are often described in the catalogue by means of a phrase. Invent striking or apt phrases to describe the following pictures:

(*a*) Barren country; an Afghan waiting behind a rock, rifle in hand.

(*b*) A quiet evening by a stream; a boy watching a float; a keeper watching the boy.
(*c*) Brilliant sunset on field of poppies and red cabbages.
(*d*) A fisherman's bag and tackle, and a number of fish on grass.
(*e*) Negroes in white 'ducks' playing instruments.
(*f*) The picture on the opposite page.

Exercise 4. Think of single or compound words to express the sense of the following phrases in italics:

(*a*) The milk in the saucepan was *gently boiling.*
(*b*) This creature belongs to the class of animals *without any backbone.*
(*c*) He did good *without allowing anybody to know about it.*
(*d*) He travelled *without letting anybody know his real name.*
(*e*) I had hoped to be rich, but my uncle died *without making a will.*
(*f*) His answer was *completely off the point.*

Now note this. It is in PHRASES rather than in single words, however apt and wonderful, that great minds have crystallized great thoughts for all time. Phrases are the soul of literature. They have decided character and made history. They have become part and parcel of our daily speech and mental make-up.

Examples. Here are a few jotted down at random:

'The golden mean.'—(HORACE.)
'Winged words.'—(HOMER.)
'The good shepherd.'—(BIBLE.)
'Arms and the Man.'—(VIRGIL. Used as title by GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.)
'Hell broke loose.'—(MILTON.)
'A clubbable man.'—(DR. JOHNSON.)
'Damn with faint praise.'—(POPE.)
'An ill-favour'd thing, but mine own.'—(SHAKESPEARE.)
'The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.'—(SHAKESPEARE.)

'Oh, my prophetic soul!'—(SHAKESPEARE.)
'Sermons in stones.'—(SHAKESPEARE.)
'Such stuff as dreams are made on.'—(SHAKESPEARE.)
(And countless others.)
'Et tu, Brute!'—(CAESAR; and SHAKESPEARE.)
'The touch of a vanished hand.'—(TENNYSON.)
'The Slough of Despond,' 'Giant Despair,' etc.—(BUNYAN.)
'Trailing clouds of glory.'—(WORDSWORTH.)
'A leap in the dark.'—(HOBBES.)

Exercise. The foregoing were jotted down while the present writer was travelling in a London bus. Do the same: jot down as many great phrases as occur to you on your next bus journey.

Examples of political phrases:

'Three acres and a cow.'—(JESSE COLLINS.)
'Wait and see.'—(ASQUITH.)

Exercise. Think of some more.

THE RICHNESS OF ENGLISH

'Let foreign nations of their language boast,
What fine variety each tongue affords;
I like our language, as our men and coast;
Who cannot dress it well, want wit, not words.'

GEORGE HERBERT.

'A world-conquering speech,
Which surg'd as a river high descended
That, gathering tributaries of many lands,
Rolls through the plain a bounteous flood.'

ROBERT BRIDGES.

For us who have inherited the richest and fullest language in the world there can be no excuse for using the weak word and the sloppy phrase. Not only have we our basic English—King Alfred's language—and the far greater supply of Latin words which came for the most part through French, but every country under the sun has contributed and is still contributing to the store. We will look into this and consider the sources one by one.

1. BASIC ENGLISH. This, of course, is by far the most important element in the language. We think in English; almost all the words of intimate life are English—short, strong, and packed with meaning—and except when we are deliberately composing our sentences we speak and write in English.

Examples. Such words as these are English: 'heaven,' and 'earth,' and 'sea'; and 'father,' 'mother,' and 'son'; and 'good,' and 'bad'; and 'smith,' and 'baker'; and 'ox,' and 'cow,' and 'sheep'; and all the pronouns and numerals; and most prepositions.

Exercise. Write down twenty or thirty more true English words. Verify these with a dictionary.

2. If you look through your dictionary you will find that the number of longer words derived from Latin—Romance words—is far greater than the number of true English words. But for all that, English is our language, and we can hardly make up a sentence using these Romance words alone. Besides, vast numbers of Romance words are rarely used. What they do is to give our language a wonderful richness and flexibility.

Example. The colonel was enjoying a post-prandial peregrination with the major-general. (*Even here we cannot do without 'English.'*)

Exercise. Write E. over the true English words, and R. over Romance words in the following:

(*a*) The amiable accountant kissed his wife and daughter, and went to the office never realizing that this ridiculous accident had occurred.

(*b*) The professor of science evinced extraordinary activity when the cow butted him.

(*c*) Turn up *any* page in a large dictionary and notice the words you never use by any chance. (On one page opened at random you may find such words as 'plumulaceous,' 'plutonomic,' 'pluviometer,' 'pneumogastric,' and so on.)

3. Now we English are great traders, great travellers, and we have waged wars all over the world. Through travel, trade, peaceful settlement, and war new words have come in from abroad, and have been naturalized as English; and this is still happening. Just at first words such as 'potato,' 'shampoo,' 'chauffeur,' must have sounded queer and remote; but in time they have settled down as 'part of the family.'

Example 1. The old Hottentot fingered the trigger of the blunderbuss.—(*Dutch.*)

Example 2. The connoisseur drank champagne at a restaurant.—(*French.*)

Example 3. The archbishop baptized the philosopher.—(*Greek.*)

Example 4. The admiral sat in an alcove reading a magazine and drinking alcohol.—(*Arabic.*)

Example 5. There was a taboo on killing kangaroos with the boomerang.—(*Australasian.*)

Example 6. He sat on the ottoman eating caviare and talking bosh.—(*Turkish.*)

Exercise 1. Can you think of any words—true words, not slang—which came into use and were naturalized during the Great War or have come in since?

Exercise 2. Make up sentences, using in each one or two words which have been adopted from the following languages:

(*a*) *Hebrew.* Most Hebrew-English words come from the Bible.

(*b*) *Russian.* At least one word of political significance has been adopted.

(*c*) *French.* Remember that the French are a wine-drinking nation; and that they have a great military history.

(*d*) *Italian.* Consider words ending in *-o*; and remember that our musical terms are really Italian.

(*e*) *Spanish.* Think of the history of Spain, and the Spanish in South America; also their national sport.

(*f*) *Dutch.* At the time of the Dutch wars many shipping terms were naturalized.

(*g*) *Irish.* The national emblem, for instance; and the national drink.

(*h*) *Hindu.* Owing to our connection with India a great many words, such as 'bangle' and 'chintz,' have become English.

(*i*) *West Indian.* Names of plants introduced by Sir Walter Raleigh.

(*j*) *Chinese, Japanese, and Malayan.* Think of certain commodities.

Exercise 3. Many place-names have become English words. 'Gipsy' (from 'Egyptian'), for instance, 'morocco,' 'canary,' and so forth. Think of some more.

Exercise 4. What new words, scientific or otherwise, have been 'made up' recently? Are you satisfied with them, or could we have done better?

Now a word about DIALECT. To some of us one of the saddest tendencies in modern times is the standardizing of speech, the blurring of dialects, and the dropping of lovely dialect words. This is what Mr. Walter de la Mare says about dialect words; and he has a word sense second to none: 'They were used and loved by those who were unlearned in books, but had keen and lively eyes in their heads, quick to see the delight and livingness of a thing, and the wit to give it a name fitting close as a skin.'

Examples of dialect words:

Doddiman [1] = a snail.
Tithermer-torter [1] = a see-saw.
Tubban = a clod.
Tew = to overcook.
Scammerins = scrapings of a pot.
Snorl = a kink in a rope.
Stablin = half-grown (a stablin cod).
Domery-kist = an old oak chest.
Fuzz = to get on, or work (*of an implement:* 'How does she fuzz?').
Guddle = to drink greedily.
Glenters = stones at the side of a road to keep off wheels.
Dildrams = tall stories.
Ettle = to intend, or have in mind.

[1] The writer has heard these two words often enough in Norfolk, but never seen them written down.

Exercise. Make a list of all the dialect words you hear in your part of the country, and ask your friends to do the same—before it is too late.

SYNONYMS. That English is astonishingly rich in words you may see if you spend an hour with that extraordinary work Roget's *Thesaurus*. But in every context there is only one right word, however many synonyms there may be.

Exercise. Make up sentences showing the different shades of meaning between the following:

(*a*) Inducement, encouragement, attraction, temptation, enticement, bait, allurement.

(*b*) Humility, diffidence, timidity, bashfulness, shyness, coyness, sheepishness, self-consciousness.

(*c*) Perverse, cross-grained, wayward, naughty, cantankerous, intractable, glum, grim, morose, surly, sulky, splenetic, moody, dogged.

(*d*) What is the difference between:

(i) (*a*) A sad dog and (*b*) a bad egg?
(ii) (*a*) Out of sorts and (*b*) out of heart?
(iii) (*a*) Prophetic and (*b*) oracular?

NAMES: THEIR CHOICE AND USE

'Oh, Amos Cottle! Phoebus! what a name
To fill the speaking trump of future fame!'

BYRON.

Do not just take proper names for granted: their interest and importance are very great. Names are crystallized history; the sound of names may have lifelong effect; while names heavy with association may carry their influence for thousands of years.

1. PERSONAL NAMES. Are you satisfied with your own name? Or do you think that if your parents had given the matter more thought they might have chosen a name more worthy of you? In any case there is nothing to be done about it: it is yours for life.

It will in all probability fall to you—if indeed it has not already done so—to 'name this child'; and it is worth while spending a great deal of time and trouble in the matter before you saddle him or her with a name or two for life.

Choose a name because you like it for its sound, or its family associations, or even its meaning; and before you decide on it consider whether he or she will like it twenty years on.

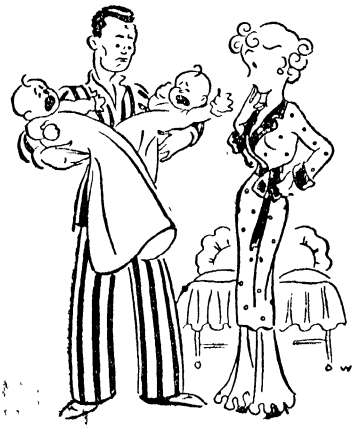
Then read the delicious christening chapter in *Tristram Shandy*: how it came about that the child was not christened Trismegistus.

Do not choose a name because it happens to be popular; avoid exotic and ultra-classical names; and think twice before you christen a boy with a surname. It is not fair,

for instance, to saddle a boy with the Christian name Shufflebottom, even if he has expectations from a godfather of that name.

Exercise 1. Make a list of your favourite names, both masculine and feminine, and ask yourself why you like them, and whether they suit people you know, and if not, why not.

Exercise 2. Would you give twins similar names? There is precedent for it in the Old Testament: Huppim and Muppim; Huz and Buz.



WOULD YOU GIVE TWINS SIMILAR NAMES?

2. PLACE NAMES. There is even more history and atmosphere in place names than in personal names; for every name is a nest of memories or associated ideas.

Exercise 1. What do the following groups of names from Bradshaw suggest to you, and why?

(*a*) Moreton-in-the-Marsh; Stow-on-the-Wold; Bourton-on-the-Water.
(*b*) Glyndyfrdwy; Llanuwchllyn; Drws-y-nant.
(*c*) Birnam; Killiecrankie; Dalwhinnie.
(*d*) Menheniot; Lostwithiel; Gwinear; Marazion.

Exercise 2. Open your Bradshaw and choose groups of names in single journeys, and consider their associations.

Exercise 3. Who wrote the poem from which these two lines are taken, and what does it mean?

'Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Had stolen my heart away.'

3. HOUSE NAMES and PET NAMES.

(*a*) HOUSE NAMES. Ribbon development drags with it a

miserable trail of house names, dull and hackneyed house names that have to do duty in a hundred places at once: The Limes, The Laburnums, The Laurels, Clovelly, Miranda Villa, Kozi Kot, and so on, and so on. If your house has character, give it a characteristic name; if not, let the number do.

Exercise. Make a list of house names at random as you pass, and mark them good or bad according to your taste.

(*b*) PET NAMES. It is the same with pets' names: you will be judged by the names you give your animals.

Exercise 1. Suggest good names for the following: A large dog, a small dog, a tabby cat, a Persian cat, a horse, a donkey, a tortoise, an elephant, a pony.

Exercise 2. Make a list of the names of all the famous animals in history or fiction that you can think of—especially horses and dogs, of course. There are great numbers of them.

4. The cumulative effect of a number of names is very telling—a fact that has been used over and over again by great writers from Homer to the present day.

A string of names carries its own distinctive atmosphere, or cloud of associated ideas:

Example 1. 'The Hivites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Canaanites.'

Example 2. 'Bill Brewer, Jan Stewer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy, Dan Whitton, Harry Hawk, old Uncle Tom Cobley and all.' (Old Devon song, 'Widdecombe Fair.')

Example 3. 'Effingham, Grenville, Raleigh, Drake,
Here 's to the bold and free!
Benbow, Collingwood, Byron, Blake,
Hail to the kings of the sea!'

(NEWBOLT.)

Example 4. A short passage from the 'Catalogue of the Ships' from Homer's *Iliad*:

'Boeotia's troops by Peneleus were led.
And Lëitus, and Prothöenor bold,
Arcesilas and Clonius: they who dwelt
In Hyria, and on Aulis' rocky coast,
Scoenus, and Scolus, and the highland range
Of Etëonus; in Thespeia's vale,
Graia, and Mycalessus' wide-spread plains:
And who in Harma and Eilesium dwelt,
And in Erythrae, and in Eleon,
Hyle, and Peteon, and Ocalea,
In Copae, and in Medeon's well-built fort,
Eutresis, Thisbe's dove-frequented woods,
And Coronea, and the grassy meads
Of Haliartus; and Plataea's plain,
In Glissa, and the foot of Lower Thebes,
And in Anchestus, Neptune's sacred grove;
And who in viny-cluster'd Arne dwelt,
And in Mideia, and the lovely site
Of Nissa, and Anthedon's utmost bounds.
With these came fifty vessels; and in each
Were six-score youths, Boeotia's noblest flow'r.
Who in Aspledon dwelt, and Minyas' realm
Orchomenus, two sons of Mars obey'd,
Ascalaphus, and bold Ialmenus;
Of these came thirty ships in order due.
By Schedius and Epistrophus, the sons
Of great Iphitus, son of Naubolus,
Were led the Phocian forces; these were they
Who dwelt in Cyparissus, and the rock
Of Python, and on Crissa's lovely plain;
And who in Daulis, and in Panopeë,
Anemorea and Hyampolis,
And by Cephisus' sacred waters dwelt,
Or in Lilaea, by Cephisus' springs.
In their command came forty dark-ribb'd ships;
These were the leaders of the Phocian bands,
And on Boeotia's left their camp was pitch'd.'

Example 5. From Walt Whitman:

'Natural breaths, sounds of rain and wind, calls as of birds and animals in the woods, syllabled to us for names: Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez, Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco, Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippéwa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla . . .'

Now read passages in John Masefield's *Reynard the Fox*, in which he uses strings of typical English place names—real or imaginary. Read the lines that begin:

> 'By Clench Brook Mill at Clench Brook Leat,
> Through Cowfoot Pastures to Nonely Stevens,
> And away to Poltrewood St. Jevons.'

And this again:

> 'By Tencombe Regis and Slaughterer's Court,
> Through the great grass square and Roman Fort,
> By Nun's Wood Yews and Hungry Hill,
> And the Corpse Way Stones all standing still . . .'
>
> (And so on.)

5. PRONUNCIATION.

Horrid example. 'In Febuary H.M.S. *Hermy-won* left Giberaltar for the Artic.'

One constantly hears names—quite common, everyday names such as these—shamelessly mispronounced, though perhaps not so shamelessly as in this example. Look up your names before pronouncing them; and, in the matter of place names, ask on the spot. How, for instance, do you pronounce: Cirencester, Winchelsea, Uttoxeter, Pontefract, Machynlleth?

SENTENCES

' How strong an influence works in well-placed words! '

GEORGE CHAPMAN.

So far as the purpose of this book is concerned—that is, for the purpose of Brushing up—there are two kinds of sentences: the simple sentence (using ' simple ' in its own simple, non-technical sense), and the more elaborate or built-up sentence. Between the extremely simple sentence, such as: ' I smoke,' and the complex, rolling periods of Gibbon or Johnson, lie sentences of every grade of simplicity or complexity. Their grammatical names and structure do not concern us here: you learnt all that at school. What we want to do here and now is to practise making them and using them.

The whole business may be treated under two heads: UNITY and VARIETY.

1. UNITY. Say what you mean and mean what you say —and stick to the point. Every sentence, whether simple or more elaborate, must be a UNIT in itself. This does not mean that a sentence must contain only one idea, but that the ideas it expresses must not clash or be incongruous.

Example 1. The following sentences are units in themselves:

(*a*) The boy smoked a cigar.
(*b*) The boy smoked a cigar and was ill.
(*c*) The wretched boy, despite the warnings of his affectionate parents, and in defiance of the rules of the educational establishment to which he was attached, continued to smoke surreptitiously when he got the chance.

These sentences are units because there is nothing incongruous in them.

Example 2. Take these two sentences, both units in themselves:

(*a*) My cousin Matilda was reading *Paradise Lost.*
(*b*) My cousin Matilda wore artificial cherries in her hat.

'MY COUSIN MATILDA, WHO WORE ARTIFICIAL CHERRIES IN HER HAT, WAS READING "PARADISE LOST"'

Can we say: 'My cousin Matilda, who wore artificial cherries in her hat, was reading *Paradise Lost*'? or: 'My cousin Matilda was reading *Paradise Lost,* but she wore artificial cherries in her hat'? It is obvious that we can't: the ideas are incongruous, and the sentence is not a unit.

Exercise. It is worth while stressing this elementary point of UNITY. Consider the following pairs or groups of sentences. Can they be joined so as to form a UNIT? If so, join them.

(*a*) Mary was eighteen last birthday.
Mary is putting in for the post of assistant secretary.

(*b*) Professor Brown has made a special study of barnacles.
Professor Brown is to be married on 5th June.

(*c*) The observer took photographs from a height of 5,000 feet.
The country was wild and rugged in the extreme.

(*d*) Two million five hundred thousand persons passed through St. James's Park at the time of the flood-lighting.
The flood-lighting in St. James's Park gravely disturbed the ducks on the lake.

(*e*) I am going to the Perkins's dance to-night.
I must really get my hair cut.
I shall almost certainly see Amelia there.

2. VARIETY. Now read the following:

George Borrow was a strange creature. He was not a bit like anybody else. He spent his life wandering about England and Wales and Spain. He picked up strange acquaintances. He had quaint adventures. He could speak a dozen languages. He knew Romany. Romany is the gipsies' language. He made great friends with the gipsies. They love the life of the open. He loved it too.

You will see at once that, though this passage makes sense, and each sentence is a unit, it won't do because it LACKS VARIETY. You need variety in your sentences in order to avoid monotony, to bring out the points you want to emphasize, and to fit each sentence into the rhythm of the paragraph.

Ideas may be expressed in a great many different ways, each of which has its own grammatical name—which we need not bother about here. The great thing is to know how to ring the changes.

Example 1. Mr. Smith had never made a speech in public before, and he naturally felt very nervous.

Example 2. Never having made a speech in public before, Mr. Smith naturally felt very nervous.

Example 3. Mr. Smith naturally felt very nervous, for he had never made a speech in public before.

Example 4. Mr. Smith, who had never spoken in public before, was naturally feeling very nervous about it.

Example 5. Seeing that he was making his first public speech, Mr. Smith naturally felt nervous.

Example 6. A feeling of nervousness came over Mr. Smith when he came to make his first public speech.

Example 7. His first public speech naturally made Mr. Smith feel very nervous.

Example 8. Mr. Smith was making his first public speech, and his nervousness was great.

Example 9. How nervous Mr. Smith felt on making this, his first public speech!

Example 10. Nervous? Mr. Smith had never been so nervous before! But this was his first public speech, and it was only natural that he should be.

And so on!

You will see, then, that there are all sorts of ways of expressing an idea, and when you come to build up your paragraph, you choose the way that suits it best.

Exercise. Express each of the following sentences in several different ways:

(*a*) I was taken by surprise and could not answer him.

(*b*) I felt the chair slip. I clutched at the bookcase. The whole thing with its 300 books came down on the top of me.

(*c*) No doubt he mistook my meaning. He certainly never did what I intended he should.

(*d*) Write in prose, several different ways:

> 'How happy could I be with either
> Were t' other dear charmer away!'

Now join the following scrappy phrases and sentences together to make sense and sound pleasant:

1. Behind the house was a garden. The garden was old-fashioned. It was well kept. There were hollyhocks in it. There was sweet-william. There was London pride. There were bees. They loved the garden. They made a comfortable summery sound. The scent of old-fashioned roses. It all made one drowsy.

2. The vicar's wife loves folk-dancing. She does it on the lawn in summer. She does it in the vicarage drawing-room in winter. We all have to go. Nobody can escape. The vicar plays the pipe. The vicar's wife directs while she dances. Miss Savage dances furiously. Like a large windmill. Miss Copple bounces about. Mr. Simms dances in spectacles. He has bells on his ankles. I hate it all. But I have to go.

THE PARAGRAPH

'Make it plain, that he may run that readeth it.'

HABAKKUK

The paragraph applies only to the written word, except in the case of the formal speech, with which we shall be dealing later.

Paragraphs are to the chapter what chapters are to the book. Just as your book is divided into chapters, each dealing with a definite part of the story, a group of persons, or a stage in the sequence of events, and often, especially in old-fashioned books, introduced by a little explanatory heading or quotation, so each chapter is divided again into sections all linked together but each dealing with a separate topic. The object of both is to make your book clear and readable; and if you have ever tried to read that rare thing, a book printed all in a solid block, without division into chapters or paragraphs, you will realize how supremely important this is.

Example. Let us take a paragraph from any first-rate book, and analyse it. The following short paragraph—about Peggotty's house—was taken quite at random:

'If it had been Aladdin's palace, roc's egg and all, I suppose I could not have been more charmed with the idea of living in it. There was a delightful door cut in the side, and it was roofed in, and there were little windows in it; but the wonderful charm of it was, that it was a real boat which had no doubt been upon the water hundreds of times, and which had never been intended to be lived in, on dry land. That was the captivation of it to me. If it had

ever been meant to be lived in, I might have thought it small, or inconvenient, or lonely; but never having been designed for any such use, it became a perfect abode.'—(CHARLES DICKENS.)

Now for an analysis.

This, like every well-constructed paragraph, consists of three parts:

1. The key sentence, giving the topic with which the paragraph will deal. Here, as is usual, though not invariable, it stands first: 'If it had been Aladdin's palace, roc's egg and all, I suppose I could not have been more charmed with the idea of living in it.' What is the topic? Not Peggotty's house, but the *romance* of living in it as felt by the child David Copperfield.

2. Then comes the main sentence: a development of the topic suggested in the key. And it really is a development, as you will see if you read it carefully once more.

3. Lastly, the final sentence: a summing-up, or clinching, of the little topic; and notice particularly—here and elsewhere—how the prose rhythm ends on a closing cadence—'it became a perfect abode.'

4. One more point to notice: the 'hooks' by which it is joined to the previous paragraph: 'If *it* had been . . .' and to the following paragraph: 'perfect abode'—which is now to be described; while within the paragraph little links connect all the sentences together into a complete unit.

Exercise 1. The next paragraph begins: 'It was beautifully clean inside, and as tidy as possible'—and you know you are going to hear about the interior. Turn it up in *David Copperfield*, and analyse it as we have just done.

Exercise 2. Get a copy of Macaulay's *Essays*, in which sentences are comparatively short, and paragraphs always well constructed. Find perfect paragraphs, and analyse them into key, development, and final cadence, until you

are quite sure you understand how a paragraph should be constructed. Paragraphs vary infinitely, of course, in length and form, and rapidity, and so forth; but the underlying structure remains the same.

THE BREWING OF EARLY-MORNING TEA HAS BECOME ALMOST A RITUAL

Exercise 3. Construct paragraphs of which the following are key sentences:

(*a*) The brewing of early morning tea had become almost a ritual.
(*b*) Day after day the rain continued.
(*c*) Then the fog lifted, and Mr. Smith stood motionless, numbed with horror.

Exercise 4. Construct a single paragraph on the following subjects, paying special attention to the rhythm of your final sentences:

(*a*) The aftermath of a pillow-fight.
(*b*) Going home after a successful day's fishing.

Exercise 5. Construct *two* short paragraphs on each of the following:

(*a*) The interrupted tea-party.

(*b*) The job he had, and the job he would have liked.
(*c*) A sailor on a desert island thinks about London.
(*d*) Before the storm. The storm breaks.

Exercise 6. The following is a badly constructed paragraph: that is to say, a good paragraph has been broken up and sentences put in the wrong order.

Reconstruct the paragraph, picking out your key sentence and final sentence, and placing the rest in proper sequence.

'With all our faults, and we are never tired of citing them, it is probable that the British Empire is the greatest achievement of any single race in the history of mankind. The mind that first conceived, nearly four centuries ago, the noble idea of a great British Empire beyond the seas, was the mind of Sir Walter Raleigh. He had his faults: he could stoop to flatter outrageously; he could be cruel and reckless; he could be proud and overbearing. But he was the last hero of the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth: he lived and died a great gentleman, a noble patriot and idealist. Moreover, the highest English ideals of justice and honesty seem likely to outlast an empire itself, and set the tone for civilizations yet unborn.'

N.B. Take down a book by any first-rate writer and note the *cadence* at the end of paragraphs.

DESCRIPTION

'Description is my forte.'

BYRON.

'He best can paint 'em who can feel 'em most.'

POPE.

Description is one of the most important uses to which language can be put—both in speaking and in writing. It all depends on two things: accurate observation, and the right use of the right words. You may see a thing without really and truly looking at it, or hear a thing without really and truly listening. In either case, however carefully you choose and place your words, your description will be a smudge. Alternatively, you may stare at a thing with all the intensity of an omphaloscopos,[1] and if you have no vocabulary, or do not know how to use words, your description will be a failure.

Descriptions are of two kinds: scientific or exact, and artistic or imaginative.

The object of the former is to explain, or make things clear to the reader or hearer: to appeal to his understanding. The object of the latter is to make him see and feel: to appeal to his imagination.

In either case your spoken description is likely to be a good deal shorter and less elaborate than your written description. All the more reason, then, that you should choose the ***right*** words when you describe by word of mouth.

1. EXACT DESCRIPTION. Be sure you yourself understand perfectly what you are talking or writing about, and then try to put it as clearly and concisely as possible.

[1] Fanatics who stared at the pits of their stomachs until they saw visions.

Example 1. 'Notice a candle which has been burning a little while. Observe that a beautiful cup is formed just under the flame. As the air comes to the candle it moves upwards by the force of the current which the heat of the candle produces, and it so cools all the sides of the wax, tallow, or fuel, as to keep the edge much cooler than the part within; the part within melts by the flame that runs down the wick as far as it can go before it is extinguished, but the part on the outside does not melt. If I made a current in one direction, my cup would be lopsided, and the fluid would consequently run over—for the same force of gravity which holds worlds together holds the fluid, in a horizontal position, and if the cup be not horizontal, of course the fluid will run away in guttering. . . .'

(This is a short excerpt from Michael Faraday's *The Chemical History of a Candle.* You should read it all.)

Other examples. We are extraordinarily fortunate in our scientific writers—Lyell, Darwin, Faraday, T. H. Huxley, of an older generation, and such men as Sir James Jeans and A. S. Eddington, to-day. You cannot do better than read their writings if you would see how scientific explanation and description should be done. Their prose is admirable.

Exercise 1. *Oral.* Describe:

(*a*) A penny (from memory—and then test it).
(*b*) An anchor.
(*c*) The simplest form of internal combustion engine.
(*d*) A fountain-pen (written description).
(*e*) A plough (written description).
(*f*) Write to the local builder describing exactly an outhouse which you want built.

Exercise 2. Explain orally, with action: a stroke in cricket; the use of a golf-club.

'English is not so much a rude tongue as they that call it so be false liars.'

ROGER ASCHAM.

2. ARTISTIC DESCRIPTION. This is a question of word-painting; and so using words that your hearers or readers

can—must, indeed—think about whatever it is you describe just as you do; not only seeing, or feeling, or hearing it as you do, but experiencing the same emotions.

Imaginative description of this sort takes innumerable forms. Here are some *examples*, and after each an exercise or two.

1. THE MAN. *Sir Francis Drake.*

'The English general is about thirty-five years of age, short of stature, with a red beard, and one of the best sailors that sail the seas, both in respect of boldness and in capacity for command. His ship, the *Golden Hind*, is of near 400 tons burthen, with a hundred men on board, all young and of an age for battle, and all drilled as well as the oldest veterans of our army of Italy. Each one is bound to keep his arquebus clean. Drake treats them all with affection, and they him with respect. He has also with him nine or ten gentlemen, the younger sons of great people in England. Some of them are in his councils, but he has no favourite. These sit at his table, and he is served in silver plate with a coat-of-arms engraved on the dishes; and music is played at his dinner and supper.'—(From a Spanish letter.)

(Notice how character is *suggested* here.)

Find some more literary portraits. Our own literature is full of them.

Exercise. Describe a schoolmaster or schoolmistress whom you knew well.

2. THE PLACE. (*a*) *Land.*

'Far away on each hand stretch the rich pastures and the patches of dark earth, made ready for the seed of broad-leaved green crops, or touched already with the tint of the tender-bladed autumn-sown corn. There is a remnant still of the last year's golden clusters of beehive ricks rising at intervals beyond the hedgerows; and everywhere the hedgerows are studded with trees: the distant

ships seem to be lifting their masts and stretching their red-brown sails close among the branches of the spreading ash. Just by the red-roofed town the tributary Ripple flows with a lively current into the Floss. How lovely the little river is, with its dark, changing wavelets! It seems to me like a living companion while I wander along the bank and listen to its low, placid voice, as to the voice of one who is deaf and loving. I remember those large, dipping willows. I remember the stone bridge. And this is Dorlcote Mill.'—(GEORGE ELIOT: *The Mill on the Floss.*)

Exercise 1. Describe in 100 words the place where you spent your childhood.

Exercise 2. Describe the country before, during, and after rain.

(*b*) *Sea. Whales at Night.*

'It was while gliding through these latter waters that one serene and moonlight night, when all the waves rolled by like scrolls of silver; and by their soft, suffusing seethings, made what seemed a silvery silence, not a solitude: on such a silent night a silvery jet was seen far in advance of the white bubbles at the bow. Lit up by the moon it looked celestial; seemed some plumed and glittering god uprising from the sea.'—(MELVILLE: *Moby Dick.*)

(*Moby Dick* is perhaps the world's greatest sea story. You will also find outstanding descriptions of the sea in the works of Joseph Conrad and John Masefield.)

Exercise. Describe a windy day at the seaside.

3. THE HOUSE. (*a*) *Within.* (*A Wonderful House in the Island of Hawaii.*)

'As for the house, it was three stories high, with great chambers and broad balconies on each. The windows were of glass, so excellent that it was as clear as water and as bright as day. All manner of furniture adorned the chambers. Pictures hung upon the wall in golden frames: pictures of ships, and men fighting, and the most beautiful

women, and of singular places; nowhere in the world are there pictures of so bright a colour as those Keawe found hanging in his house. As for the knick-knacks, they were extraordinarily fine: chiming clocks and musical-boxes, little men with nodding heads, books filled with pictures, weapons of price from all the quarters of the world, and the most elegant puzzles to entertain the leisure of a solitary man. And as no one would care to live in such chambers, only to walk through and view them, the balconies were made so broad that a whole town might have lived upon them in delight.'—(R. L. STEVENSON: *The Bottle Imp.*)

(*b*) *Without.*

'My dear wife Carrie and I have just been a week in our new house, "The Laurels," Buckfield Terrace, Holloway—a nice six-roomed residence, not counting basement with a front breakfast parlour. We have a little front garden; and there is a flight of ten steps up to the front door; which by the way we keep locked with the chain up. Cummings, Gowing, and our other intimate friends always come to the little side entrance, which saves the servant the trouble of going up to the front door, thereby taking her from her work. We have a nice little back garden which runs down to the railway. We were rather afraid of the noise of the trains at first, but the landlord said we should not notice them after a bit, and took £2 off the rent. He was certainly right; and beyond the cracking of the garden wall at the bottom, we have suffered no inconvenience.'—(GEORGE and WEEDON GROSSMITH: *The Diary of a Nobody.*)

Exercise 1. Describe a comfortable 'general' room in which you can do anything you like.

Exercise 2. Describe an 'attractive bungalow residence.'

4. ACTION. *The Fight in the Wood.*

'I was all as taut as a ship's hawser or the spring of a watch, and as soon as he came within reach of me I had him by the ankle, plucked the feet right out from under him, laid him out, and was upon the top of him, broken leg and all, before he breathed. His Winchester had gone the

same road as my shot-gun; it was nothing to me—I defied him now. I 'm a pretty strong man anyway, but I never knew what strength was till I got hold of Case. He was knocked out of time by the rattle he came down with, and threw up his hands together, more like a frightened woman, so that I caught both of them with my left. This wakened him up, and he fastened his teeth in my forearm like a weasel. Much I cared. My leg gave me all the pain I had any use for, and I drew my knife and got it in the place.'—(R. L. STEVENSON: *On the Beach at Falesá.*)

Exercise. Describe the following: How the Smash was just avoided.

5. BEASTS. *Draught Horses.*

'And now there is the thunder of the huge covered wagon coming home with sacks of grain. That honest wagoner is thinking of his dinner, getting sadly dry in the oven at this late hour; but he will not touch it till he has fed his horses—the strong, submissive, meek-eyed beasts, who, I fancy, are looking mild reproach at him from between their blinkers, that he should crack his whip at them in that awful manner as if they needed that hint! See how they stretch their shoulders up the slope towards the bridge, with all the more energy because they are so near home. Look at their grand shaggy feet that seem to grasp the firm earth, at the patient strength of their necks, bowed under the heavy collar, at the mighty muscles of their struggling haunches! I should like well to hear them neigh over their hardly-earned feed of corn, and see them, with their moist necks freed from the harness, dipping their eager nostrils into the muddy pond. Now they are on the bridge, and down they go again at a swifter pace, and the arch of the covered wagon disappears at the turning behind the trees.'—(GEORGE ELIOT: *The Mill on the Floss.*)

Exercise. Describe your own dog or cat, or any animal in which you have taken a real interest.

6. CHARACTER. (*a*) *Charles I.*

'Charles bore no resemblance to his father. He was not

a driveller, or a pedant, or a buffoon, or a coward. It would be absurd to deny that he was a scholar and a gentleman, a man of exquisite taste in the fine arts, a man of strict morals in private life. His talents for business were respectable; his demeanour was kingly. But he was false, imperious, obstinate, narrow-minded, ignorant of the temper of his people, unobservant of the signs of his times. The whole principle of his government was resistance to public opinion; nor did he make any real concession to that opinion till it mattered not whether he resisted or conceded,—till the nation, which had long ceased to love him or to trust him, had at last ceased to fear him.'—(LORD MACAULAY: *Essay on John Hampden.*)

(*b*) *Charles II.*

'Thus died King Charles II, of a vigorous and robust constitution, and in all appearance promising a long life. He was a prince of many virtues, and many great imperfections; debonair, easy of access, nor bloody nor cruel; his countenance fierce, his voice great, proper of person, every motion became him; a lover of the sea, and skilful in shipping: not affecting other studies, yet he had a laboratory, and knew of many empirical medicines, and the easier mechanical mathematics; he loved planting and building, and brought in a politer way of living, which passed to luxury and intolerable expense. He had a particular talent in telling a story, and facetious passages, of which he had innumerable: this made some buffoons and vicious wretches too presumptuous and familiar, not worthy the favours they abused. He took delight in having a number of little spaniels follow him and lie in his bedchamber, which rendered it very offensive, and indeed made the whole court nasty and stinking. . . .'—(From *Evelyn's Diary*, 1685.)

Exercise. Write your own character — for your own reading only—and be as truthful and introspective as you can.

REPORTING

'The contrary of reports is often the truth.'

LA BRUYÈRE.

You never know when you may be called upon to make a report on—something or other: a motor-car accident, perhaps; or an interview when your chief is away ill; or premises which you have to inspect and advise upon, and so forth. You may have had to do this often enough already, and 'know the ropes'; but in case you have not, here is some advice, and exercises for practice.

As was said at the beginning of this book, success depends first on accurate observation: really and truly looking or listening.

Next, it depends on judgment in choosing and setting down just what matters: the gist and no more.

Example 1. You might read this in the minutes of some committee meeting:

'After some discussion the committee decided to decline General Bloodworthy's kind offer of his collection of stuffed parrots for the municipal library.'

The point here is, obviously, that they did not want the things—and there is no object in keeping a record of the discussion.

Example 2. 'He humm'd and haw'd for ten minutes and then gave way.'

Here again the writer has evidently seen no point in recounting the humming and hawing in detail.

All depends, as has been said, on observation, and judgment. And the procedure to be followed in making a report is always more or less the same. It consists of

MAKING NOTES, SELECTING and ARRANGING them, and then PRESENTING them in the form of a concise report.

If it is 'evidence' of which you have to make a report, or an interview, or conversation, listen with concentrated attention, and make notes of what seem to you to be the salient points; then edit them once more, and write as concisely as you know how.

Exercise 1. Report the following CONVERSATION—and nothing but the conversation. (It is from the *Diary* of Fanny Burney.)

DR. JOHNSON DISCUSSES DAVID GARRICK

'When we were summoned to dinner, Mrs. Thrale made my father and me sit on each side of her. I said that I hoped I did not take Dr. Johnson's place;—for he had not yet appeared.

'"No," answered Mrs. Thrale, "he will sit by you, which I am sure will give him great pleasure."

'Soon after we were seated, the great man entered. I have so true a veneration for him, that the very sight of him inspires me with delight and reverence, notwithstanding the cruel infirmities to which he is subject; for he has almost perpetual convulsive movements, either of his hands, lips, feet, or knees, and sometimes of all together.

'Mrs. Thrale introduced me to him, and he took his place. We had a noble dinner, and a most elegant dessert. Dr. Johnson, in the middle of dinner, asked Mrs. Thrale what was in some little pies that were near him.

'"Mutton," answered she, "so I don't ask you to eat any, because I know you despise it."

'"No, madam, no," cried he, "I despise nothing that is good of its sort, but I am too proud now to eat of it. Sitting by Miss Burney makes me very proud to-day!"

'"Miss Burney," said Mrs. Thrale, laughing, "you must take great care of your heart if Dr. Johnson attacks it; for I assure you he is not often successless."

'"What 's that you say, madam?" cried he. "Are you making mischief between the young lady and me already?"

'A little while after he drank Mrs. Thrale's health and mine, and then added:

'"'Tis a terrible thing that we cannot wish young ladies well without wishing them to become old women!"

'"But some people," said Mr. Seward, "are old and young at the same time, for they wear so well that they never look old."

'"No, sir, no," cried the Doctor, laughing; "that never yet was; you might as well say they are at the same time tall and short. I remember an epitaph to that purpose, which is in——"

'(I have quite forgot what,—and also the name it was made upon, but the rest I recollect exactly:)

> . . . lies buried here;
> So early wise, so lasting fair,
> That none, unless her years you told,
> Thought her a child, or thought her old.

'Mrs. Thrale then repeated some lines in French, and Dr. Johnson some more in Latin. An epilogue of Mr. Garrick's to *Bonduca* was then mentioned, and Dr. Johnson said it was a miserable performance, and everybody agreed it was the worst he had ever made.

'"And yet," said Mr. Seward, "it has been very much admired: but it is praise of English valour, and so I suppose the subject made it popular."

'"I don't know, sir," said Dr. Johnson, "anything about the subject, for I could not read on till I came to it; I got through half a dozen lines, but I could observe no other subject than eternal dullness. I don't know what is the matter with David; I am afraid he is grown superannuated, for his prologues and epilogues used to be incomparable."

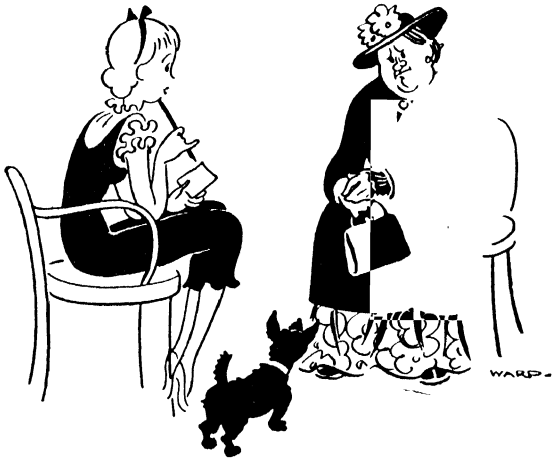
'"Nothing is so fatiguing," said Mrs. Thrale, "as the life of a wit; he and Wilkes are the two oldest men of their ages I know, for they have both worn themselves out by being eternally on the rack to give entertainment to others."

'"David, madam," said the Doctor, "looks much older than he is; for his face has had double the business of any other man's; it is never at rest; when he speaks one minute, he has quite a different countenance to what he assumes the next. I don't believe he ever kept the same look for half

an hour together in the whole course of his life; and such an eternal, restless, fatiguing play of the muscles must certainly wear out a man's face before its real time."

'"O yes," cried Mrs. Thrale, "we must certainly make some allowance for such wear and tear of a man's face."'

Exercise 2. You have been asked by an aunt, who for some reason is unable to come up to town, to INTERVIEW a cook on her behalf. Your aunt is very particular, and



ASKED BY AN AUNT TO INTERVIEW A COOK ON HER BEHALF

has written you a long letter asking you to satisfy yourself on a great number of points.

Write her a full report of your interview with the prospective cook, and make it favourable, unfavourable, or neutral, just as you like. You are supposed to have your aunt's letter, and your own pencil notes made during the interview, as well as your memory of what was said.

Exercise 3. In reporting EVIDENCE one follows the same procedure: pencil notes, and selecting the gist. In a little book such as this it is obviously impossible to quote evidence at sufficient length; but here are a few suggestions:

Report on the evidence at:

(*a*) The trial of the Knave of Hearts (Lewis Carroll).

(*b*) Part of the evidence in Bardell *v.* Pickwick.

(*c*) The evidence at any trial reported in the paper.

(*d*) (*Best of all.*) Make notes at actual trials and work up reports afterwards.

Exercise 4. (*a*) HOUSE. You want to take a house for the summer holidays, and have been down to look over one which you saw advertised. Report fully in a letter to your husband—or wife, as the case may be.

(*b*) PREMISES. The council of a society for befriending destitute children has been offered a large building with grounds, for use as a children's home. You have been asked to have a preliminary look at it, as you live fairly near, and report on it. Do so.

Exercise 5. ACCIDENT. You never know when you may be called upon as witness. Should you be involved in an accident, or happen to be present, observe much and quickly, take rough measurements, and write a report—which may never be called for—as soon as ever you can put pencil to paper.

'Before the news there is one police message. At 11 p.m. on Monday, May 16th, a collision occurred at the junction of Widdicombe Avenue and Park Road, between a motor-cycle combination and a milk-van, as a result of which the driver of the motor-cycle received serious injuries. Will any one who witnessed the accident . . .,' etc. Write your report.

Exercise 6. Reporting on a PUPIL or SUBORDINATE. The value of such reports must depend—as usual—first, on your opportunity for close observation, and secondly, your judgment in seizing and presenting the salient points.

(*a*) Imagine you are a head master or head mistress, and write a full confidential report to a parent about one of your pupils who, through sheer exuberance and with no vicious intent, is being a desperate nuisance to all in authority.

(*b*) In certain business establishments heads of departments have to write confidential reports for the board on those working under them. Choose someone you know well and write a confidential report of this nature.

(*c*) Reverse the process, and write a confidential report about your chief. It is advisable to leave this at home.

For reports on BOOKS and MANUSCRIPTS see CRITICISM, page 113.

LETTERS

'She'll vish there vas more, and that's the great art o' letter-writin'.'

DICKENS: *Pickwick Papers.*

Of all forms of literary composition letter-writing is the one which certainly persists through life. We all have to write letters whether we like it or not; and it is extremely important to be able to write them well. More things are wrought by good letters than this world dreams of; and conversely innumerable opportunities have been lost through incompetent letter-writing.

Letters are of four kinds and we will deal with them one by one.

(A) The Formal Letter

Exercise 1. Answer the following formal invitation, using the third person:

The Governors and Warden of the
Ebenezer Booth Social Settlement
request the pleasure of 's company
at the opening of the new Settlement Swimming Bath
at 7 p.m. on May 26 *R.S.V.P.*

Exercise 2. Write a formal letter to Messrs. Trollope and Cobb, General Stores, complaining that a large haddock has arrived, presumably in mistake for the garden hammock you ordered over the 'phone.

Note that the pitfall in the formal letter in the third person is a tendency to mix the persons under stress of excitement, thus:

Mr. Robinson presents his compliments to Mr. Snooker, and begs to inform him that his cat is causing him sleepless

nights and very great annoyance, and that if you do not take steps to keep it shut up I shall have the beast poisoned.

Exercise 3. Reply to the following formal letter in the first person, giving a suitable reason:

SIR,

I have the honour to inform you that your name has been added to the panel of JURYMEN of this Borough. Should there be any adequate reason why you should not serve on a jury if and when called upon to do so, you are requested to inform the Registrar without delay.

Yr. Obdt. Servt.

THE TOWN CLERK.

Exercise 4. Write a complaint about somebody's loud-speaker.

(B) The Business Letter

'Letters are the soul of trade.'

JAMES HOWELL.

Example 1. SIR,—Your esteemed favour of 3rd inst. duly to hand, and we beg to say we shall give all attention to same.

Example 2. SIR,—I hereby beg to inform you in reply to yours of even date re gent's spring suitings that we can make you a discount of 3 per cent on same as per advertisement. The favour of an immediate reply will oblige.

Now what do you think of *that* for style? This horrid hybrid stuff is called 'commercial English'; thousands of letters are written every day exactly in this style; and the jargon is actually being taught as a necessary part of commercial education!

Nobody likes this nasty fungoid verbiage, and nobody wants it—not even the heads of business houses. So avoid it like the plague.

Exercise 1. Translate the two above letters into ordinary common-sense English.

Exercise 2. Write to the proprietor of a hotel in the country stating precisely what you want in the way of rooms, etc.

Exercise 3. Write to a professor whom you have never met asking him to give a lecture on a certain subject and inquiring about his terms.

Exercise 4. Write to a motor-boat proprietor arranging a river-picnic.

Exercise 5. Write to the Zoo asking whether they will look after your pet monkey while you are abroad.

N.B. 1. Cultivate a LEGIBLE SIGNATURE.

2. Never omit the DATE.

(C) The Informal Letter

The object of the friendly *letter is not merely to give or ask for information, but to give pleasure as well: to convey something of the personal give-and-take of everyday life and intimacy.*

The fewer rules, then, the better.

But a few general 'do's' and 'don't's' may not be out of place.

1. Deal with your friend's letter first, and don't leave questions unanswered.

2. Don't talk about yourself *all* the time.

3. Avoid detailed descriptions, funny stories, and pathological symptoms.

4. Always 'be yourself,' and never be afraid of being natural.

5. Be careful about the little formalities at the close. They give more pleasure or disappointment than you may think.

Exercises (imaginary—just for practice):

1. You have the opportunity of sitting up all night in a 'haunted house.' Write to a friend asking him to join you.

2. You have been invited most urgently by the vicar to take part in a country-dance tea on the vicarage lawn. Write to a friend asking him (or her) to stand by you in a 'previous engagement' fiction.

3. A great friend of yours is ill in hospital, but getting better. Write him (or her) a letter giving an account of some match, or other affair, in which you are both keenly interested.

Delicate situations:

1. Write to an aunt who is abroad, and from whom you have expectations, telling her that you have most unfortunately run over her favourite cat.

2. You have inadvertently accepted two invitations for the same evening. Write to one of your hostesses and explain as best you can.

(D) The Long Letter

In these days of cheap post and quick transport the long letter has become comparatively rare. There was a notable revival during the war, but now they are confined almost entirely to travel letters or 'family' letters from abroad.

There is only one precept which should be borne in mind, and it is, DON'T BE DULL.

Telegrams

There is no question of literary style in telegrams, but they afford excellent practice in getting the most comprehensive message into the fewest possible words.

Exercises. Send the following telegrams, using as few words as possible to convey your meaning:

1. Telegraph to a friend with whom you have been spending the week-end explaining that you have taken the other

friend's suit-case by mistake, and that if he will send the address you will send on the suit-case at once. Also, would he send you yours.

2. You have just arrived in England to hear that a great friend of yours is to be married to-morrow. Telegraph to the stores asking them to forward a wedding-present, which you describe, to your friend's address, and charge it to your account.

Exercise 1. You have before you a number of letters: an author's letter to a publisher (manuscript sent); publisher's acknowledgment; letter to reader; letter from reader with report on manuscript; letter from publisher to author declining manuscript; indignant letter from author to publisher. Make up a suitable *title* for a précis.

Exercise 2. Think of a title for a précis of the account of Noah's Flood as told in Genesis.

Exercise 3. Why would 'Over the hills and far away' be a hopeless précis title, even though it might well do for a book on the same subject?

3. You now know what the matter is all about; you have marked the gist in pencil, and chosen the title. Next comes the very important step of planning out your précis in paragraphs. Now since the whole aim is to be clear, exact, and precise, so that to read your précis is to grasp the whole story in little, it is most important that each paragraph should deal with *one* topic, or one aspect of the story, only.

Go through your underlined passages, then; pick out the main topics—three, four, or five, as a rule—jot them down on paper, and *stick to them* as you write your précis. Now write it.

N.B. *For the structure of paragraphs see pages* 59–62.

Exercise. Try this simple exercise before we go further. Make a précis of the following passage in two or three short paragraphs, with a title:

A FABLE FROM FLORIAN

'Unacquainted with the iron sway of tyrant man, lived a venerable Horse, who had been left a widower, with an only son; he reared him in a meadow, where the streams, the flowers, and the inviting shade offered at once all that was requisite for happiness. Abusing these enjoyments, as is customary with youth, the Colt stuffed himself every day with clover, fooled away the time on the flowery plain,

galloped about without an object, bathed without requiring it, or rested himself without being fatigued. Lazy and fat, the young hermit grew weary, and became tired of wanting for nothing; disgust soon followed; and, seeking his father, he said to him: "For some time I have been unwell; this grass is unwholesome, and kills me; this clover is without smell; this water is muddy; the air we breathe here attacks my lungs; in short, I shall die unless we leave it." "Since it concerns your life, my dear son," replied his parent, "we will instantly take our departure." No sooner said than done—the two immediately set off in search of a new home.

'The young traveller neighed for joy; the old one, less merry, went at a sedate pace, taking the lead, and made his child clamber up steep and arid mountains without a tuft of herbage, and where there was nothing which could afford them the least nourishment.

'Evening came, but there was no pasturage; and our travellers were fain to go to bed supperless. The next day, when nearly exhausted by hunger, they were glad of a few stunted briers. This time there was no galloping on the part of the Colt; and after two days he could scarcely drag one leg after the other.

'Considering the lesson sufficient, the father returned by a road unknown to his son, and reconducted him to his meadow in the middle of the night. As soon as our Colt discovered a little fresh grass, he attacked it with avidity. "Oh! what a delicious banquet! What beautiful grass!" he exclaimed: "was there ever anything so sweet and tender? My father, we will seek no further, let us take up our abode for ever in this lovely spot: what country can equal this rural asylum!"

'As he thus spoke, day began to break; and the Colt recognizing the meadow he had so lately quitted, cast down his eyes in the greatest confusion.

'His father mildly said to him: "My dear child, in future remember this maxim: 'He who enjoys too much, is soon disgusted with pleasure; to be happy, one must be moderate.'"'

When you have done this précis, test it thus. Count the

words. Are there about 150? Does your new title really sum up your précis? Does each paragraph deal with one topic? Are you satisfied that you have told the whole story in brief?

Now that you know how to write a simple précis, there are four other points which you should always bear in mind. Here they are:

1. Be very careful about the spelling of NAMES: surnames such as Philips and Thomson and Eliot especially, and place names such as Ewelme, in which it is very easy to go wrong.

Exercise. Copy out part of a genealogical table from the Old Testament, or of the 'Catalogue of the Ships' from the *Iliad* (quoted on page 53 of this book), and you will see how easy it is to make a slip.

2. Be very careful about DATES, and even on occasion the TIME of day. This applies especially to *evidence*, and *correspondence.*

3. Never add any comments of your own. The précis must be in your own words, of course; but that does not mean that you may express your own opinion. Nobody wants to hear what the précis-writer thinks!

Example. 'Then the ambassador, who was evidently losing his temper, again rose to his feet.'

This is bad précis-writing if the fact that he was losing his temper is simply an inference of your own.

4. REPORTED SPEECH. Remember that everything in the story, or the evidence, or the correspondence of which you are making a précis has already happened. You are reporting what happened, and the gist of what people said. Hence it is all *past*, and you cannot, strictly speaking, use the present or the future tense; and as you are *speaking*

about people and events you cannot use the first or second person—only third. In strict précis-writing conversations are not quoted, but the gist of them is given in the form of reported speech.

Example. 'I am sorry I cannot come: I have another engagement.' This becomes: 'He said he was sorry he could not come as he had another engagement.'

Exercise. Here is a short passage from Boswell's *Life of Dr. Johnson.* Give the gist of it in the form of reported speech.

'EDWARDS: "How do you live, sir? For my part I must have my regular meals and a glass of good wine. I find I require it." JOHNSON: "I now drink no wine, sir. Early in life I drank wine: for many years I drank none, I then for some years drank a great deal." EDWARDS: "Some hogsheads, I warrant you." JOHNSON: "I then had a severe illness and left it off, and I have never begun it again. I never felt any difference upon myself from eating one thing rather than another, nor from one kind of weather rather than another. There are people, I believe, who feel a difference; but I am not one of them. As to regular meals, I have fasted from the Sunday's dinner to the Tuesday's dinner without any inconvenience. I believe it is best to eat just as one is hungry: but a man who is in business, or a man who has a family, must have stated meals. I am a straggler." EDWARDS: "Don't you eat supper, sir?" JOHNSON: "No, sir." EDWARDS: "For my part, now, I consider supper as a turnpike through which one must pass in order to get to bed." '

In a recent school-book on précis-writing the present author made up by way of a mnemonic a number of rhyming couplets stating the chief rules and precepts of précis-writing. They are shocking doggerel, of course; but they serve their purpose, and it may be worth while reproducing them here.

1. Here 's a word that 's well worth heeding:
   All depends on a close first reading!

2. To this a second rule we 're adding:
   Catch the gist and drop the padding.

3. Good titles are not vague and messy,
   But a short précis of a précis.

4. The fourth 's a rule most hard to teach:
   Direct becomes Reported Speech.

5. To each main topic, once it 's spotted,
   One paragraph must be allotted.

6. Only those names should be selected
   By which the story is affected.

7. Watch your dates and times! (A minute
   May hold the fate of nations in it!)

8. The précis-writer must be wary
   Of adding personal commentary.

It is obviously impossible in a small book such as this to include passages for précis-writing practice; but here are a few suggestions:

1. Make a précis of a leading article in your paper.
2. Cut out the correspondence on a definite topic from the paper you take in, and when it is concluded make a précis of it.
3. Near the beginning of *Nicholas Nickleby* you will find a description of a general meeting of the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company. Make a précis of it.

COMMON ERRORS AND COMMON USAGE

'Mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortunes.'

SHAKESPEARE: *King Lear.*

If you listen critically to other people's talk—to your own, too, for that matter—you will find that there are quite a number of common errors into which everybody is liable to fall; and that each of us has certain pet mistakes which he invariably makes. Nor is it simply a question of paying attention and correcting them, for common error has often become common usage, and to speak correctly sounds stilted and pedantic.

Examples. Here are a dozen very common errors, some of them justified by common usage in speaking, though hardly so in writing.

1. 'SORT' and 'KIND.'

(*a*) These are singular, not plural. Yet one constantly hears this kind of sentence: 'I am particularly fond of these sort of flowers.' (One might as well have said: 'One constantly hears these kind of sentences.') Remember, then, to say 'this kind,' 'that sort'—not 'these kind,' 'those sort.' Notice this line from Pope. Is the construction *correct*?

'There are another sort of people who are designed for solitude.'

(*b*) It is unnecessary and incorrect—though perhaps justified by common usage—to use both words at once, thus: 'I will not allow arguing of any sort or kind.'

(*c*) Think twice before you use the article after 'sort' or 'kind': 'He 's a queer sort of a fellow'; 'He gave me a kind of a leer.'

2. 'LIKE' for 'AS.'

Both the following are wrong; but both mistakes are common:

(*a*) All I can say is, you acted as an idiot.

(*b*) You should try to talk like I do.

Correct them.

3. SPLIT INFINITIVE.

Somehow or other this particular error has become a sort of fetish—so much so that 'Splitting the Infinitive' was included among *Punch's* 'Forgotten Sports.' Yet not one person in a thousand knows why you should not split it. (The reason is interesting, and you will find it explained in any good English Grammar.)

Example. 'I told him to carefully pack my bag' is wrong. 'I told him to pack my bag carefully' is right.

On the whole it is desirable not to split your infinitives. But don't be brow-beaten: there are occasions when it is justifiable, and good writers often do it. Do not distort your sentence in order to avoid a split. You may prefer to say: 'He is said to strongly object to smoking,' rather than: 'He is said to object strongly to smoking,' because the rhythm and accenting of the former conveys more exactly what you mean. If so, then do it, right or wrong.

The trouble has been that the terror of splitting the infinitive has spread to include an extra and quite unjustified fear of dividing 'be' from the adverb.

Example. 'My rules are scrupulously to be obeyed' is an unnecessary distortion for: 'My rules are to be scrupulously obeyed'—which, in fact, is correct.

4. 'I' for 'ME'; 'HIM' for 'HE,' etc.

Examples. 'Who 's there? It 's me.'
'Who 's been at my Eno's? It wasn't me.'

Now this is a difficult case. Though grammatically wrong—as confessed in 'The Jackdaw of Rheims'—the use of 'me' (or 'him' or 'them') in such sentences is so

common that the correct use of 'I' (or 'he,' or 'they') sounds embarrassingly pedantic. Perhaps it is that we need another use of the word 'me' on the analogy of the French *C'est moi.* Anyhow, it is not allowed, but you had better do it all the same—in speaking. In writing you must think twice.

There is no such licence for the opposite use of 'I' for 'me.'

Example. Between you and I, she has actually invited my wife and I to dine.

Thirdly, the use of 'I' ('oi') for 'me' is still found in certain rustic dialects; and long may it remain.

5. The possessive case is used before the verbal noun in *-ing.*

Example 1. I hope you will forgive my (NOT *me*) being late.

Example 2. I heard of your son's (NOT *son*) gaining a scholarship.

You need never hesitate about this. Just remember that the word in *-ing* is really a *noun.*

6. One constantly hears the superlative degree used for the comparative, when two things only are referred to.

Example 1. I consider him by far the best of the two. (Should be *better,* of course.)

Example 2. When there are two ways of approach I always choose the shortest. (Wrong.)

7. 'ONLY.'

The word 'only' is constantly misplaced. Be careful to place it so that there can be no doubt as to what it refers to.

Example 1.

(*a*) John and his wife eat meat only in the middle of the day.
(*b*) John and his wife eat meat in the middle of the day only.
(*c*) John and his wife only eat meat in the middle of the day.
(*d*) Only John and his wife eat meat in the middle of the day.

(*e*) John and his wife eat only meat in the middle of the day.

How many different meanings are there here?

Example 2. He only drinks beer at night.

What exactly does this mean?

8. 'WHO,' 'WHOM,' 'WHICH.'

(*a*) Notice the difference in the following:

(i) Who do you take me for? (Wrong.)
(ii) Who do you think I am? (Right.)

Why should it be 'whom' in the first sentence?

(*b*) 'AND WHICH,' 'BUT WHICH.'

You cannot use 'and which' or 'but which' unless another relative clause comes first.

Example. One often hears this sort of thing:

(*a*) He owned many books of great interest but which he had never read.

(*b*) He saw a cake covered with icing sugar and which had evidently been made for his birthday.

Correct these sentences.

9. 'THEIR,' 'HIS,' etc.

The use of 'their' referring to one person is not justified, but it is often so used colloquially.

Example 1. Does any one in their senses think so?

Example 2. No one can be easy in their mind.

Example 3. Every man and woman should mind their own business.

This last is perhaps the most justifiable. Why?

10. Be very careful to place modifying words or phrases so that there can be no question as to whom they refer. One often reads this kind of thing:

Example 1. Antique table offered for sale by lady with vine leaves carved round legs.

Example 2. Or this line from a well-known hymn:

'His watch the temple child, the little Levite, kept.'

SIMILE, METAPHOR, AND SLANG

'All slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry.'

G. K. CHESTERTON.

The English imagination is quick, vivid, and poetical; and as if the language were not already rich enough we constantly vivify and enrich our speech still more by the use of simile and metaphor. Our tendency is to shorten and compress, and partly for this reason, partly because the effect is usually more immediate and telling, we tend to use metaphor more frequently than simile—so often, in fact, that our everyday speech is crammed with delightful metaphors which we use without giving a thought to their original meaning.

All metaphor and simile depend upon *comparison*: we see a fancied likeness between something and something else, and by using the comparison we brighten and vivify whatever it is we are talking or writing about.

'OUR CHARWOMAN IS AN OLD DUCK!'

Example 1. 'The okapi is something like a zebra.'

This is *not* a simile nor a metaphor, but an actual comparison. The two animals are, as a matter of fact, like one another.

Example 2. 'The duck is a plain bird, something like a charwoman.'—(ROBERT LYND.)

This is a simile, for your duck is not actually, but figuratively, like a charwoman.

Example 3. The use of metaphor cuts out a whole step, and applies to one thing or idea words that really belong to another.

'Our charwoman is an old duck!' This, though manifestly untrue to nature, may be perfectly true in a figurative, or metaphorical, sense.

Here are some examples from Literature:

1. SIMILE.

(*a*) 'O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven like ghosts from an enchanted fleeing.'
(SHELLEY.)

(*b*) 'Like violets pale i' the spring o' the year
Came my Love's sad eyes to my youth.'
(JAMES THOMSON.)

(*c*) 'For, like a lobster boil'd, the dawn
From black to red began to turn.'
(BUTLER: *Hudibras.*)

(*d*) Stevenson's prose is full of little terse similes, such as:

(i) 'The dealer struggled like a hen.'

(ii) 'His face was as big as a ham, plain and pale, but intelligent and smiling.'

(iii) 'He fastened his teeth in my forearm like a weasel.'

(*e*) Some authors like the long and elaborate simile in the classical manner. Here is a passage from Matthew Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum*:

'He spoke; and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
And he too drew his sword; at once they rush'd
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west: their shields
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crushing trees: such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hailed.'

2. METAPHOR.

(*a*) See above: 'Sohrab kindled at his taunts.'

(*b*) ' My love is the flaming sword
To fight through the world.
Thy love is the shield to ward . . .'

(JAMES THOMSON.)

(*c*) ' That man . . . whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready . . . to be turned to any kind of work, and spin the gossamers as well as forge the anchors of the mind.'—(T. H. HUXLEY.)

(*d*) Lady Capulet's rather long and laboured metaphor about *books* in *Romeo and Juliet*:

' What say you? can you love the gentleman?
This night you shall behold him at our feast:
Read o'er the volume of young Paris' face,
And find delight writ there with beauty's pen;
Examine every married lineament,
And see how one another lends content;
And what obscured in this fair volume lies
Find written in the margent of his eyes.
This precious book of love, this unbound lover,
To beautify him, only lacks a cover:
The fish lives in the sea; and 'tis much pride
For fair without the fair within to hide:
That book in many's eyes doth share the glory,
That in gold clasps locks in the golden story.'

Exercise 1. Think of suitable brief *similes* for the following:

(*a*) He rapped out his answer like . . .
(*b*) The old lady smiles like . . .
(*c*) He kicks like . . .
(*d*) Remorselessly disposing of his opponent's arguments like . . .
(*e*) Every time he told the story he embellished it a little more, like . . .

Exercise 2. Make up sentences in which the following similes would be appropriate:

(*a*) Like an egg.
(*b*) Like a gobbling turkey-cock.

(*c*) Like a professor of higher mathematics moving in worlds of thought beyond our understanding.

Exercise 3. Make a list of everyday metaphors, such as the following: breaking the ice; a white elephant; swelled head; letting his tongue run away with him; the flotsam and jetsam of the city; wild oats; a bee in his bonnet *or* bats in his belfry.

Exercise 4. Think of metaphors in common use derived from games and sport. Also from the sea.

Caution 1. Be careful not to *mix* your metaphors. Shakespeare can do it ('To take arms against a sea of troubles'), but we cannot. 'Watering the spark of his ambition' is a mixed metaphor.

3. SLANG.

G. K. Chesterton has a delightful chapter, 'In Defence of Slang,' in his book *The Defendant*. It is from this chapter that the quotation at the head of this section is taken: 'All slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry.' Is it true?

Slang is generally ephemeral, here to-day and gone to-morrow; but while it is fresh and surprising it vivifies informal speech, and to that extent is justified.

Example 1. I am afraid my pipe has gone west.
Example 2. Who is the big noise here?
Example 3. It was money for jam.
Example 4. That remark was priceless.

Are these still alive, or are they dying? Think of some more up-to-date slang.

Caution 2. Use terse, apt metaphor—and to a less extent simile—as much as you like, both in speaking and in writing. But be careful not to labour any particular metaphor or simile, for if you 'go on and on' the thing becomes affected and ridiculous. This is a common fault in 'journalese' (see page 19).

Caution 3. Avoid the worn-out metaphor: Don't rest on your laurels while you point the finger of scorn on those who have failed to weather the storm; there is no need when you have found a place in the sun to be intoxicated with success, for the turn of the tide or the swing of the pendulum may alter the whole political horizon!

HOW TO MAKE A SPEECH

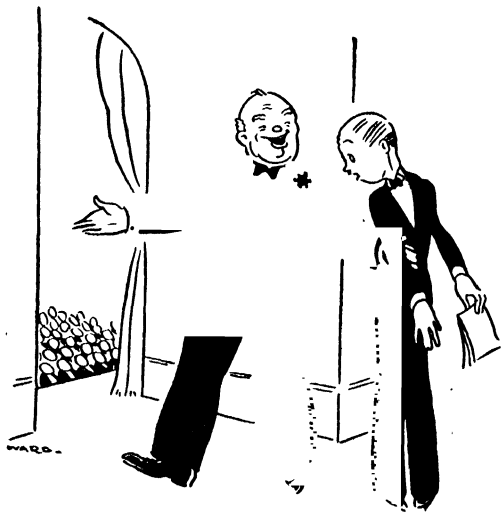
'Even the most timid can deliver a bold speech.'

SENECA.

True enough; but it does not mean that public speaking is 'a gift' which comes without effort. Some people will always speak better than others for a great complex of reasons; but, taking it by and large, the art of speaking is a matter of practice and taking trouble. Here are a few points which may help you, whether you are delivering a prepared lecture, or are suddenly and unexpectedly called upon to 'say a few words.'

(A) The Preliminaries

1. THE STANCE. This is as important as the stance in golf. If you crouch or bunch you tend to mumble and



'EVEN THE MOST TIMID CAN DELIVER A BOLD SPEECH'

become inaudible. If you lean back and stick your stomach out, you don't know what to do with your arms and hands.

Certain statesmen who stand like this hang up their hands on the lapels of their coats! This is the proper stance: hold yourself up, and, without leaning forward, throw your weight on to the fore part of your feet. The result of this is that you are in the best position to control your breath, and observe your audience; and your hands and arms, being quite free, are ready for instant action when you wish to emphasize or draw attention.

Exercise. Practise this in front of a long glass.

2. BREATH CONTROL. Stammering, mumbling, and gabbling generally mean lack of control over breathing. You should do breathing exercises every day; and, if possible, just before you go into the room to make your speech, do this:

Stance as before. Then relax. Place hands on lower ribs; take long, deep breaths in through the nose, and let breath out soundlessly through the mouth—which should be allowed to fall open naturally without the least strain.

Even if you are sitting at table you can do 'deep breathing' before you rise to speak without anybody knowing. It will make all the difference.

3. ENUNCIATION. This is most important of all. It is nothing less than an affront for a person to get on his feet and stammer and mumble, and hum and haw, and fill up the gaps with 'er—er,' while his wretched audience have to endure it all in silence. Learn to speak your words clearly and distinctly, without hesitant mumblings—or don't speak at all. It is simply a MATTER OF PRACTICE.

Here are some points to remember, while practising before a glass—and afterwards when making your speech.

(*a*) Remember your stance, and breath control.

(*b*) You will not be heard any better for shouting.

(*c*) ENUNCIATE your words properly; and do not let your final consonants or your little monosyllables disappear.

(*d*) Pitching your voice to suit the room is a matter of experience. If you address the last person at the back, you can't go wrong.

(*e*) Don't speak too fast (a very common fault). If you do you will not be heard at the back. Pause when you have made a point, and give people time to think.

(*f*) Watch your audience always and all the time. With experience you will be able to adapt your talk to the general 'tone.'

(*g*) Be sure that if you are bored your hearers will be bored!

Exercises. Here are some passages to read for practice in stance and enunciation. Stand where you can see yourself in a long glass; or, better still, get someone to listen and criticize.

1. CHARLES I TO HIS TROOPS

'Gentlemen, you have heard these orders read: it is your part, in your several places, to observe them exactly. The time cannot be long before we come to action, therefore you have the more reason to be careful: and I must tell you, I shall be very severe in the punishing of those, of what condition soever, who transgress these instructions. I cannot suspect your courage and resolution; your conscience and your loyalty have brought you hither, to fight for your religion, your king, and the laws of the land. You shall meet with no enemies but traitors, most of them Brownists, Anabaptists, and atheists; such who desire to destroy both Church and the State, and who have already condemned you to ruin for being loyal to us. That you may see what use I mean to make of your valour, if it please God to bless it with success, I have thought fit to publish my resolution to you in a protestation; which when you have heard me make, you will believe you cannot fight in a better quarrel; in which I promise to live and die with you.'—

(Address to Troops at Wellington, 1642.)

2. 'You shall hear how Hiawatha
Prayed and fasted in the forest.
Not for greater skill in hunting,
Not for greater craft in fishing,
Not for triumphs in the battle
And renown among the warriors,
But for profit of the people,
For advantage of the nations.'

(LONGFELLOW.)

3. Read Cassius's words to Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Act I, Scene ii, beginning at line 93:

'I cannot tell what you and other men . . .'

4. Read the last page of Macaulay's *Essay on Warren Hastings*, beginning: 'With all his faults . . .'

5. Read Roberts's speech to the strikers in Galsworthy's *Strife*, Act II, Scene ii: 'You don't want to hear me, then? . . .'

(B) The Speech

1. Now for the speech itself; and the first essential is to have SOMETHING TO SAY. If you have not, for Heaven's sake don't get up! As a matter of fact one nearly always has sufficient warning to allow one to think of something apt and interesting.

2. The next essential thing is to ARRANGE your ideas. The best plan is to jot down headings on a piece of paper, just like the topics for paragraphs in précis-writing (see page 87), and see that they are in logical sequence. Even if you are taken by surprise, you should spend whatever time you have got, be it only two minutes, in *arranging* three or four ideas in your head.

3. Do not read your speech. To do that is to miss all the fun of playing upon your audience. You will never really hold them with a written speech, either. There have lately been protests in Parliament against the growing practice of reading speeches, partly for the above reasons,

partly because a speech written beforehand is apt to become irrelevant and miss points in the give-and-take of debate. Hold your paper of 'headings' if that gives you confidence; but you will soon be able to do without it.

4. The beginning and end are important, and should not be left to chance. The present writer once heard a wise speaker give this advice to a terrified novice: 'Make up your first sentence—and your last: and keep them as close together as you can.' BEGIN by putting your hearers in a good temper, not by boring them with a long introductory rigmarole. And END quite definitely when you have no more to say—there is nothing more tiresome than beginning again after a false finish.

5. Be humorous if you possibly can; but be brief about it. Tell stories if you like, but let them be *short* and *crisp*. Don't tell long stories or stale stories, and avoid overdone quotations.

6. Be NATURAL. Don't talk about yourself: just be yourself, and your audience will listen.

7. Study your audience, and keep both matter and manner appropriate. You will soon be able to tell if you are 'going down.'

8. Cultivate the art of taking your audience by surprise; and don't be afraid to make them laugh.

Exercise 1. As the new president of the village cricket club, make a short speech on the occasion of the late president's formal retirement after sixteen years of office. This is done at a supper party, and accompanied by a present of a silver cigar-box in the form of a miniature bat.

Exercise 2. The Town Pen and Pencil Club (literary and artistic) are holding their annual guest-night dinner, and you have been selected to reply for the visitors. Prepare a modest and amusing reply lasting three minutes.

Exercise 3. You are acting as chairman on the occasion

of a lecture by Professor Hercules Blunderbore on 'The Habits and Customs of the Pygmies of Central Africa.' Introduce the speaker and the subject.

Exercise 4. You are acting as best man at a friend's wedding. Reply for him after the toast—as he, like a wise man, refuses to say more than: 'Thank you very much.'

More elaborate. Prepare a scheme of headings for:

1. An electioneering speech on behalf of your parliamentary candidate.
2. An appeal for funds on behalf of a National Home for Dogs.

ARGUMENT

'Fools for arguments use wagers.'

BUTLER: *Hudibras.*

'Argeyment is a gift of Natur'.'

DICKENS: *Barnaby Rudge.*

You argue with one of three distinct objects in view. They are:

(A) *To prove.*
(B) *To refute.*
(C) *To persuade.*

It may be that you yourself do all the talking, or writing; or perhaps it is an argument between yourself and somebody else; or there may be several persons all arguing together. In any and every case the arguer tries to do one of these three things: to prove, to refute, or to persuade. We will brush up all three sorts of argument; but first of all remember the general rule:

BE LOGICAL. That is all-important; for the so-called Laws of Thought are not man-made laws, but the very stuff of nature and ultimate truth. Aristotle, who discovered logic, the science of reasoning, did not invent it. He was simply the first man to observe and record systematically how all thinking is done, and *must* be done, by all persons, so long as they do not 'make mistakes.'

(A) To Prove

1. ARGUMENT TO PROVE A STATEMENT OF FACT. To do this it is no good just shouting louder, or making the statement all over again in more emphatic terms. That is just to go on going on—and leads nowhere. In order to prove a statement you must bring EVIDENCE.

Example. 'Oliver Cromwell had a wart on his nose.' Now to prove that statement it is no use yelling: 'Oliver Cromwell *had* a wart on his nose!' Nor is it in the least convincing to say: 'I have always understood that he had a wart on his nose. Of course he had. Everybody knows he had,' and so on. Somebody else may say with every bit as much justification: 'Well, *I* know he hadn't!' You must produce evidence.

(*a*) There is the *indirect* evidence that contemporary portraits, which you can look up and verify, all show Cromwell with a wart on the side of his nose. If this is not enough there is

(*b*) The *direct* evidence that Cromwell's mummified head is in the possession of a clergyman: its authenticity was established by experts some ten years ago, and it was photographed. There is an undoubted wart on the nose.

2. To ESTABLISH A THEORY. This is rather a different matter, though it is still a question of evidence. What your argument has to show is that your theory accounts for all the relevant facts, or that all relevant facts fit the theory. If so, it is *in all probability* true. If there are two theories which account for all the facts, then we naturally accept the simpler.

Example. You say: 'The earth goes round the sun.' Well, does it? How do you know? For many hundreds of years it was held that the earth was the centre of our system, and in this theory, too, all the motions of the heavenly bodies were accounted for. Then how do we know that Copernicus was right, and that the sun is the centre?

If the old theory is true, then the planets have to move in an extraordinarily complicated system of epicycloids (like the path that is taken by a spot of mud on a bicycle tyre). The system of Copernicus is, as everybody knows, infinitely simpler than that. For that reason everybody accepts it, and that is as near as we can get to proof.

(B) To Refute

To refute a statement of fact you must produce EVIDENCE to show that it isn't true. You may show that your opponent's evidence is untrue, or quite insufficient; or that his informant was untrustworthy. Or you may prove that your opponent is ILLOGICAL and that his conclusions 'don't follow'; or that he has deliberately confused the issue with a scent of red herring. You may reduce the argument *ad absurdum*, and your opponent to complete confusion.

Here are some of the ways in which one may be illogical:

1. Because a thing follows *in time*, it may not follow *as a result*.

Example. 'At ten o'clock I saw him come out of a public-house. Five minutes later he was knocked down by a motor. He was obviously drunk.'

2. You may 'jump to conclusions' in other ways, and quite as unjustifiably.

Example 1. 'I see the Rev. Peter Piper has been unfrocked. These parsons—you never can trust 'em!'

Example 2. 'Yes, my dear, I distinctly saw her smile at Mr. Jellaby in the post office. *So now we know!*'

3. 'Begging the question' means assuming what you ought to prove if your argument is to hold.

Example. 'As women are much cooler-headed in emergency than men, it will obviously be wisest to have women in charge of anti-gas units.'

4. You may join several questions in one which cannot be answered as one. The famous example is:

Example. 'Have you left off beating your wife?'

5. The 'middle' word may be used with different

meanings. This may be done on purpose with great effect, as in:

Example. 'We must hang together or hang separately.'

But beware of doing it by accident and being found out!

Now read this paragraph about an illogical mind:

'He does not seem to know what an argument is. He never uses arguments himself. He never troubles himself to answer the arguments of his opponents. It has never occurred to him, that a man ought to be able to give some better account of the way in which he has arrived at his opinions than merely that it is his will and pleasure to hold them. It has never occurred to him that there is a difference between assertion and demonstration, that a rumour does not always prove a fact, that a single fact, when proved, is hardly foundation enough for a theory, that two contradictory propositions cannot be undeniable truths, that to beg the question is not the way to settle it, or that when an objection is raised, it ought to be met with something more convincing than "scoundrel" and "blockhead."'—(MACAULAY: *Essay on 'Southey's Colloquies on Society.'*)

Exercise 1. Prepare an argument to prove that teachers do need long holidays and high pay. Someone has said that they don't.

Exercise 2. Argue that you did not smash the teapot—could not have done so, in fact. Establish an effective alibi.

Exercise 3. Argue in support of a belief in personal survival after death.

(C) To Persuade

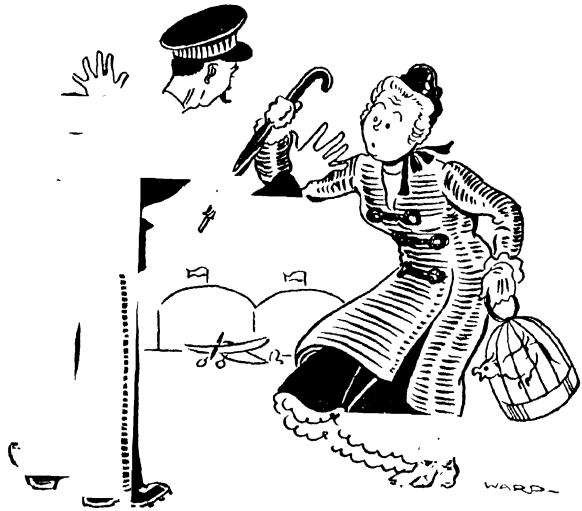
Remember that in order to persuade—or dissuade—you must appeal to feelings and emotions first, and reason second.

Example. Read Brutus's speech to the crowd in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar.* Brutus appeals first to reason.

Then read Antony's speech. He appeals first to feelings and emotion. Observe the result.

Here are some points to observe:

1. *Study your audience:* this is all-important.
2. Say nothing that is likely to offend.



YOUR GRANDMOTHER WISHES TO FLY. DISSUADE HER IF YOU CAN

3. Think out possible objections, and be prepared to REFUTE them.

4. Make up your mind as to whether the crux of your argument is: 'Is it right?' or: 'Is it advisable?' If the former, it is simply a moral point you have to make: right, or wrong. If the latter, you must show your audience that it will be to their *advantage* to do as you suggest. There is no question of 'wrong.'

5. Be tactful. Get your hearer, or hearers, in the right mood and remove possible prejudice before you begin to persuade.

Exercise 1. Persuade a friend to leave his family for once and join you in a Mediterranean cruise.

Exercise 2. Argue that it is worth while learning German.

Exercise 3. Your grandmother wishes to fly. Dissuade her if you can.

Exercise 4. Persuade a friend to go to bed at ten and get up at five, instead of going to bed at one and getting up at eight or even later.

Briefs for argument:

1. A young friend has the offer of a safe job in the City and at the same time a very unsafe job in the colonies. He asks your advice. Work out the pros and cons in the form of two briefs—just to make up your own mind.

2. Make a brief in favour (or against) 'Collective Security' in Europe.

3. Make briefs for the pros and cons of smoking and drinking.

CRITICISM

'A critic is a man whose watch is five minutes ahead of other people's.'

SAINTE-BEUVE.

The very first point to be clear about, because of widespread misunderstanding, is that criticism does not properly imply blame. That is not the meaning of the word; and that is not the sense in which it is used except in popular error. It means appreciation—*using one's experience and judgment to weigh up merits and demerits, and as often as not to state one's opinion as a guide to others.*

The great value of criticism as far as the average man and woman is concerned is the practice it affords in 'appraising' a book, a play, a poem, or whatever it may be—practice which makes for sound judgment and self-confidence. But perhaps that hardly comes within our terms of reference, and belongs rather to another book, the subject of which might be the brushing up of one's reading. As far as this book is concerned, criticism must mean the *expression* of judgment, in speaking or writing.

Briefly, we want to be able to answer the questions:

(A) WHAT DO YOU THINK of the play? or

(B) WHAT IS YOUR OPINION of this book, or poem?

(A) The Play

Suppose you go to the theatre and someone wants a criticism of the play, it is not enough to say that you thought it first-rate, or that you found it rather revolting. That is the expression of personal opinion—not criticism. You must SAY WHY.

Here are some questions you should ask yourself when you get back, or next day, and answer in writing. After a little practice you will be able to set them out in a full-blown critique.

(*a*) Did you really enjoy the play? Would you be prepared to see it again? Can you say WHY in very general terms?

(*b*) What was the plane on which the play was set? Was it the broad comedy plane, or farce, or humour-and-pathos, or tragedy, or what? Did the author succeed in keeping you on that plane without letting you down?

(*c*) What was the author's intention? To amuse, or terrify, or mystify, or what? Was it fulfilled?

(*d*) Was the plot convincing?

(*e*) Were people's motives credible?

(*f*) What of the dialogue: were there good 'speaking parts'?

(*g*) Did the play owe more than was justified to the acting, or did it stand on its own dramatic merits?

(*h*) Was the performance 'level,' or was there 'a tail' in the acting?

(*i*) These are all general questions. You must, of course, make up your particular questions on the spot.

Exercise 1. Next time you go to the theatre write down brief answers to these or similar general questions and to your own particular questions.

Get into the habit of doing this.

Example. Here is an example of good dramatic criticism. Study it carefully.

THE DRAMATIC WORLD

By JAMES AGATE

Duke of York's *Monday, 8th June*

'MISS SMITH'

A Comedy. By Henry Bernard

'Here is a nice, unpretentious, commonplace little play which is continually surprising by never being quite as ordinary and silly as it is continually threatening to be. It has pattern. Miss Smith is a governess who keeps in order a pair of unruly and quarrelsome children. Her employer has a son who, on the strength of a blue shirt and an orange tie, asks us to believe that he is an artist. Were he a real artist he would keep in the background the horrid little chorus girl with whom he has got entangled. But being the kind of artist whose father owns a steel-works in Yorkshire, he brings her home, and it is left to Miss Smith to get him out of the mess. The son, too, is an unruly child.

'Unrulier still is the father and owner of the steel-works, while unruliest of all is that workman who cannot differentiate between striking for a particular reason and breaking up the whole concern on the general Communist issue. Our heroine settles this larger quarrel also, and the only thing she has not been able to manage is her own love affair. Miss Smith is only a *nom de guerre*; it is suggested that actually she is Lady Ermyntrude Snooks, or some such piece of class. The noble lord she has turned down now turns up, but, alas! turns out to be married. A good little fairy-tale conceived in lots of keys and with a nice unhappy ending.

'Acting honours go to Miss Olga Lindo, who succeeds in making something human and likeable out of the stock figure of the governess; there is some wild farce in the scene in which she gets the better of Miss Phyllis Konstam's cleverly depicted little horror. As Mr. Marden, the steel merchant, Mr. Julien Mitchell plays with conviction and a voice loud enough to be heard at the Crystal Palace during the fireworks. There is a good sketch of Mrs. Marden by that invaluable actress, Miss Dora Gregory, though I like

her better when she is using her own intonations rather than Miss Muriel Aked's. Mr. Beckett Bould and Mr. John Boxer contribute two superb studies as the strikers. I am wrong. There is nothing superb about these two performances, one of which reeks of hard times and the other of that bitterness which animates some workers even when times are good.'—(Quoted by kind permission of the Editor of the *Sunday Times* and Mr. James Agate.)

Exercise 2. Next time you go to a play make up a little critique of your own based on your answers to self-set questions, as above.

(B) Books: Reporting and Reviewing

How does one criticize a book, weigh it up, and pass on one's considered opinion? Well, judgment comes with experience, and when one has torn the guts out of scores of books or manuscripts and inspected the entrails with all the earnest concentration of the haruspex of old, one gets to trust one's own judgment. Be sure that such judgment does not come by the light of nature. You may like a book, but you cannot criticize it without long experience backed by wide reading.

1. First read your book with attention, and without any idea of finding fault. Anybody can sling mud at anything. Make a note of passages which you may wish to quote or refer to again.

2. Now ask yourself a number of questions about the book, and answer your own questions on paper. Thus:

(*a*) What is the real subject of the book?

(*b*) What has the author tried to do?

(*c*) Has he succeeded?

(*d*) Does it deserve to be read with care? Why?

(*e*) If a novel, does it show deep insight into character?

(*f*) How does it stand compared with other similar works, or other books by the same author?

(*g*) What about plot, development, or general arrangement and structure?

(*h*) What of the style, and atmosphere?

(*i*) For whom is the book intended; and what type of readers will enjoy it?

You can make up your own questions, of course; but this is the type of question which the would-be critic must set himself.

After long practice one looks for these things instinctively, and no longer has to write them down on paper as a series of notes.

Exercise 1. Next time you read a book and enjoy it, ask yourself WHY you enjoy it. Write down your reasons.

Exercise 2. Read another book, and state briefly on paper what it is about, what the author was aiming at, and whether in your opinion he has succeeded.

Exercise 3. Write two paragraphs of criticism about a third book, one dealing with the matter, the other with the manner.

Exercise 4. Study first-rate literary critiques in the best papers—they are so varied that it seems hopeless to quote them here—and then try writing one yourself.

WRITING FOR PAPERS AND MAGAZINES

'True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest who have learnt to dance.
'Tis not enough no harshness gives offence.
The sound must seem an echo to the sense.'

POPE: *An Essay on Criticism.*

This section is an extra, thrown in, as it were; for in making this little book nothing has been further from the writer's aim than to offer a training in journalism or story-writing. All the same, some readers may by this time have brushed up their own language to such good purpose that they would like to test their capacity in the public press. No harm in that: it is very good practice, and should it prove successful there is pocket-money in it as well.

For the beginner, writing for the press means almost inevitably one of two things: the occasional article or the short story. Here is a word or two about each. But remember that to write an article or a story worthy of publication in a first-rate paper or magazine is a very difficult achievement. You must not expect success at a first or second attempt.

(A) The Occasional Article

Before you attempt an occasional article of your own you are advised to study such articles by leading writers—E. V. Lucas, G. K. Chesterton, Robert Lynd, A. G. Gardiner, E. V. Knox, and many more. Style, you will find, varies as widely as subject; but these two points they all have in common:

(*a*) The occasional article is a unit in itself, dealing with one single subject.

(*b*) Whoever the author may be, it is written in a style peculiar to the occasional article: a blend between the literary style of a book and the colloquial style of a conversation, easy, half-confidential, and compelling. It is, in fact, a blend between speaking and writing, exactly suited to the type of subject and the mood of the reader.

Try to make a blend *of your own.*

1. Select a SUBJECT. There is no such thing as a bad subject: it all depends on what the writer can make of it. Choose a subject to which you feel you can do justice.

2. Make a SCHEME. You *must* make a scheme and stick to it, or your article will be amorphous. The way to do this is to think round and round your main subject, and jot down the topics of your paragraphs before you begin to write (see page 87).

3. No formal introduction is needed: the subject introduces itself. Nor do you want a peroration. Just finish what you have to say, round it off nicely, and leave it at that.

4. When writing your article, make every sentence tell. To do that you must think each sentence in words before you write it down (see page 3).

5. Your TITLE is important. It should be intriguing and inviting, telling little and suggesting much.

6. Beware of 'journalese'! (see page 19).

Examples. Here are a few titles of occasional articles which have appeared in the Press:

1. *Castles in the Air.*
2. *On Keys.*
3. *The Plain Man.*
4. *What Might have Been.*
5. *Ugliness.*
6. *On Being a Gentleman.*
7. *The Bassoon.*
8. *Practical Jokes.*
9. *Grumbling.*
10. *On a Distant View of a Pig.*

(B) The Story

A really good short story is a still more difficult achievement even than the occasional article. The really great story is a rare thing, of course; but even to reach the standard of the ordinary magazine story which is published in its thousands means a knowledge of 'the rules' and a very great deal of brushing up. Here are some hints to help you.

1. THE PLOT. Your story must be a story: that is to say, it must have a plot. If it has no plot, if your 'story' does not develop to a crisis, it will turn out to be a 'sketch' — which is something quite different — more like your occasional article. You cannot begin till you have thought out a plot. And be sure that your plot is new and original. The present writer had to read some hundreds of short stories in typescript last year, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that six out of ten involved a motor-car smash—with or without subsequent ghost.

2. THE SKELETON. When you have decided upon an original plot you must make a scheme or a skeleton just as you did for your occasional article or your précis. The practised writer may work out the whole plan in his head and write it straight away—though it is to be doubted if he does. The aspirant *must* make a skeleton and build up on that.

3. LENGTH. Four thousand words is about the right length. Of course it 'all depends': if the point of your story is focused on one vivid surprise, half that number of words may do. But there is a danger of 'scrappiness.' On the other hand, there are many great short stories that run to 8,000 words and more; but that is not for the beginner. To write at that length inevitably means padding. No, ,000 is about right.

You say that doesn't convey anything to you? Well, it

is about time that it did! Count the words on one sheet of your note-book, or foolscap, or whatever it is you write on. Make a note of the number of words, which will never vary to any appreciable extent.

And this leads to the next point:

4. PADDING. The commonest fault of the beginner is to write 'too long.' The short story is a very exacting form, and there is no time and no room for padding of any sort: irrelevant description or conversation, tautology, lengthy explanation, and so forth. Instead, every sentence, every remark, every epithet even, must tell, and bear directly upon the plot.

When you have written your story in the rough, go through it again and *prune relentlessly*; which leads us to our next point, which is:

5. RAPIDITY. Now when we say that your story must be 'rapid' we do not mean a headlong succession of events, but a steady, quick sequence, one little point following another without any sense of 'drag.' Once your story begins to drag you can never speed it up artificially by phrases such as: 'All of a sudden.' When that happens you must recast and condense.

6. CLIMAX. Unlike your occasional article or your sketch, a story must 'grow to a point.' You may keep it as a surprise till the very last line, as O. Henry is so fond of doing; or you may lead up to it bit by bit with a hanging suspense. In any case there must be a point at which all the lines of your plot focus. That point is your climax or crisis. It is often wise to add a little quiet 'coda' after your climax; but this depends on the story.

Here is a list of a dozen stories which you should read. They are of many different kinds, all of them first-rate, and some of them very great stories indeed:

1. *The Man who Was* — RUDYARD KIPLING
2. *Youth* — JOSEPH CONRAD

(This is rather long for a story—but perhaps the greatest thing Conrad ever wrote.)

3. *Thrawn Janet* — R. L. STEVENSON
4. *The Paupers* — SIR A. T. QUILLER-COUCH
5. *Miss Winchelsea's Heart* — H. G. WELLS
6. *The Lost God* — JOHN RUSSELL
7. *Old Gadgett* — SHEILA KAYE-SMITH
8. *The Pope's Mule* — ALPHONSE DAUDET
9. *The Child Spy* — ALPHONSE DAUDET
10. *Two Friends* — GUY DE MAUPASSANT
11. *Our Lady's Juggler* — ANATOLE FRANCE
12. *The Ill-regulated Destiny of Kin-Yen the Picture-maker* — ERNEST BRAMAH

SPELLING

'"Do you spell it with a W or a V?" inquired the Judge.
'"That depends upon the taste and fancy of the speller, my Lord," replied Sam.'

DICKENS.

That has been half the trouble—that, and the fact that our use of letters is so bewildering—several letters representing the same sound, and other letters superfluous. The Normans naturally spelt sounds in the French manner; the early English writers represented sounds by Latin letters with contemporary Latin pronunciation; the scholars of the Renaissance quite wrongly reinserted letters ('perfect' for 'parfait,' for instance); printing came in, and spelling was stereotyped by the printers; and finally, Dr. Johnson fixed the spelling in his dictionary—and since his time the pronunciation has changed!

So there we are. Our spelling is chaotic. The Americans have done something towards reform; but so far we have done nothing at all. There are a certain number of so-called rules; but to every rule there are great numbers of exceptions.

Then what are we to do about it? You may be naturally a good speller—which probably means that you have a good visual memory. (Aural memory will deceive you.) If not, there is only one thing to do, and that is to get down to it and *learn by heart* the words you commonly misspell—say, five words a day.

Curiously enough, you will find it is always the *same* words that you spell incorrectly. Make a note of them

when any one is good enough to point them out; and look out any word about which you are doubtful.

Five words a day, then, while you are shaving, or doing your hair; and soon your spelling difficulties will disappear. (This statement is not made without very wide experience.)

Here is work, five minutes a day, for four weeks. After that you should collect your own words.

FIRST WEEK

Monday

across
address
mischievous
mortgage
all right
(*not* alright)

Tuesday

temporary *and*
temporarily
gauge
grammar
peninsula (*noun*)
peninsular (*adjective*)

Wednesday

woollen
wholly
aghast
ghastly
vehicle

Thursday

theatre
technical
tariff
propaganda
yacht

Friday

parallel
paraffin
forty
fourteen
farther *and*
father

Saturday

spinach
strait *and*
straight
sieve
symptom
ankle

SECOND WEEK

Monday

chaos
medicine
marvellous
minute
miniature

Tuesday

tobacco
tendency
triumphant
absence
defence

Wednesday

plebeian
pigeon
religion
waggon *or* wagon
welfare

Thursday

fulfil
until *and*
till
already
ecstasy
aisle

Friday

envelop (*verb*)
envelope (*noun*)
colossal
comparison
fascinate

Saturday

exaggerate
embarrass
harassing
committee
comparative

THIRD WEEK

Monday

inveigle
intelligible
vegetable
scissors
scheme

Tuesday

initialled
siege
scythe
science
canvas (*noun*)
canvass (*verb*)

Wednesday

disastrous
balance
battalion
asparagus
quotient

Thursday

February
Michael
Israel
Wednesday
Saturday

Friday

rhubarb
psalm
muscle
apologize
fifth (*not* fith)

Saturday

paid
plausible
picnic
knick-knack
privilege

Monday

singing *and*
singeing
sentence
yield
viscount

Tuesday

goal
gaol *or* jail
exhibition
exasperate
principle (*noun*)
principal (*adjective*)

Wednesday

vehement
sandwich
parable
jeopardy
agreeable

Thursday

diocesan
diphtheria
practice (*noun*)
practise (*verb*)
indict

Friday

repetition
licence (*noun*)
disappoint
dissatisfied
height (*not* heighth)

Saturday

sanatory
sanitary
manœuvre
complement *and*
compliment

Here are some doggerel rhymes and rules which may help you. But beware of exceptions.

1. *i* before *e*
   Except after *c*;
   And, if you please,
   The little word *seize*.

2. Before the ending *-able*
   You drop the final *-e*,
   Unless it 's used for softening
   The letters *c* and *g*.
   Thus: blamable and lovable,
   Deplorable and movable
   (But peaceable and changeable
   Must *keep* the final *-e*).

3. When a verb ends in a consonant
With a vowel just before it,
You can't do better
Than double the letter
When adding *e-d*
Or *i-n-g*;
And you 're wrong if you ignore it.

N.B. *This applies to monosyllables, and verbs accented on the last syllable. Beware exceptions!*

4. A similar rule to keep it 's best,
When adding to adjectives *-er* and *-est.*

5. When your word begins with *s*
You *keep* the *s* in *mis-* and *dis-*.

[Mistake, misstatement; disappoint, dissatisfied.]

6. Compounds of *all* and *full* and *till*
Nearly always drop one *l*.
[Although, already, fulfil, until.]

7. Adjectives that end in *l*
Before *l-y* retain it still.
[Cruel, cruelly; merciful, mercifully.]

8. Most verbs that end in *e*
Drop it before *i-n-g*.
(But notice eyeing, dyeing, singeing,
Hoeing, seeing, shoeing, tingeing.)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