

A

GRAMMAR

OF THE

English Language,

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

INTENDED FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS AND
OF YOUNG PERSONS IN GENERAL; BUT,
MORE ESPECIALLY FOR THE USE
OF SOLDIERS, SAILORS, &c.

By WILLIAM COBBETT.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

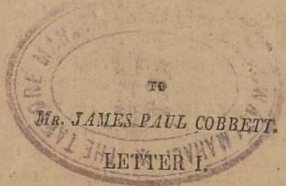
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;—1819.

MADRAS:

RE-PRINTED AT THE GAZETTE PRESS:

1821.

Subsashedamuttu May 1828



INTRODUCTION.

North Hempstead, Long Island, Dec. 6, 1817.

MY DEAR LITTLE JAMES,

YOU have now arrived at the age of fourteen years, without ever having been bidden, or even advised, to look into a book; and all you know of reading or of writing you owe to your own unbiassed taste and choice. But while you have lived unpersecuted by such importunities, you have had the very great advantage of being bred up under a roof, beneath which no cards, no dice, no gaming, no senseless pastime of any description, ever found a place. In the absence of these, books naturally became your companions during some part of your time: you have read and have written because you saw your elders read and write, just as you have learned to ride and hunt and shoot, to dig the beds in the garden, to trim the flowers, and to prune the trees. The healthful exercise, and the pleasures, unmixed with fear, which you have derived from these sources, have given you "a sound mind in a sound body," and these, says an English writer, whose works you will by-and-by read, "are the greatest blessings that God can give to man."

It is true, that these are very great blessings; but, mere soundness of mind, without any mental acquirements, is possessed by millions; it is an ordinary possession; and it gives a man no fair pretensions to merit, because he owes it to accident, and

not to any thing done by himself. But knowledge, in any art or science, being always the fruit of observation, study or practice, gives, in proportion to its extent and usefulness, the possessor a just claim to respect. We do, indeed, often see, all the outward marks of respect bestowed upon persons merely because they are rich or powerful; but these, while they are bestowed with pain, are received without pleasure. They drop from the tongue or beam from the features, but have no communication with the heart. They are not the voluntary offerings of admiration or of gratitude; but are extorted from the hopes, the fears, the anxieties, of poverty, of meanness, or of guilt. Nor is respect due to honesty, fidelity, or to any such qualities; because, dishonesty and perfidy are crimes. To entitle a man to respect there must be something of his own doing, beyond the bounds of his well known duties and obligations.

Therefore, being extremely desirous to see you, my dear James, an object of respect, I now call upon you to apply your mind to the acquiring of that kind of knowledge which is inseparable from an acquaintance with books: for, though knowledge, in every art and science, is, if properly applied, worthy of praise in proportion to its extent and usefulness, there are some kinds of knowledge which are justly considered as of a superior order, not only because the possession of them is a proof of more than ordinary industry and talent, but because the application of them has naturally a more powerful influence in the affairs and on the condition of our friends, acquaintances, neighbours, and country. BLAKE, the Titchfield thatcher, who broke his leg into splinters in falling from a wheat-rick, was, on account of the knowledge which he possessed beyond that of labourers in general, an object of respect; but, in its degree, and in the feelings from which it arose, how different was that respect from

the respect due to our excellent neighbour Mr. BLUNDELL, who restored the leg to perfect use, after six garrison and army surgeons had declared that it was impossible to preserve it, and that, if the leg were not cut off, the man must die within twenty-four hours. It is probable, that the time of Mr. Blundell was not, on this occasion, occupied more, altogether, than four days and four nights; yet, the effect was, a great benefit to be enjoyed by Blake for probably thirty or forty years to come: and while we must see, that this benefit would necessarily extend itself to the whole of his numerous family, we must not overlook those feelings of pleasure, which the cure would naturally produce amongst friends, acquaintances, and neighbours.

The respect due to the profession of the Surgeon or Physician is, however, of an order inferior to that which is due to the profession of the Law; for, whether in the character of Counsellor or of Judge, here are required, not only uncommon industry, labour, and talent, in the acquirement of knowledge, but, the application of this knowledge, in defending the property of the feeble or incautious against the attacks of the strong and the wiles of the crafty, in affording protection to innocence and securing punishment to guilt, has, in the affairs of men and on their condition in life, a much more extensive and more powerful influence than can possibly arise from the application of Surgical or Medical knowledge.

To the functions of Statesmen and Legislators is due the highest respect which can be shown by man to any thing human; for, not only are the industry, labour, and talent, requisite in the acquirement of knowledge, still greater and far greater here, than in the profession of the Law; but, of the application of this knowledge the effects are so transcendant in point of magnitude as to place them beyond all the bounds of comparison. Here

it is not individual persons with their families, friends, and neighbours, that are affected ; but whole countries and communities. Here the matters to be discussed and decided on, are peace or war, and the liberty or slavery, happiness or misery, of nations. Here a single instance of neglect, a single oversight, a single error, may load with calamity millions of men, and entail that calamity on a long series of future generations.

But, my dear James, you will always bear in mind, that, as the degree and quality of our respect rise in proportion to the influence, which the different branches of knowledge naturally have in the affairs and on the condition of men ; so, in cases of an imperfection in knowledge, or of neglect of its application, or of its perversion to bad purposes, all the feelings which are opposite to that of respect, rise in the same proportion. To ignorant pretenders to Surgery and Medicine we award our contempt and scorn ; on time-serving or treacherous Counsellors, and on cruel, or partial Judges, we inflict our detestation and abhorrence ; while, on rapacious, corrupt, perfidious, or tyrannical Statesmen and Legislators, the voice of human nature cries aloud for execration and vengeance.

The particular path of knowledge, to be pursued by you, will be of your own choosing ; but, as to knowledge connected with books, there is a step to be taken before you can fairly enter upon any path. In the immense field of this kind of knowledge, innumerable are the paths, and GRAMMAR is the gate of entrance to them all. And, if grammar be so useful in the attaining of knowledge, it is absolutely necessary in order to enable the possessor to communicate, by writing, that knowledge to others, without which communication the possession must be comparatively useless

to himself in many cases, and, in almost all cases, to the rest of mankind.

The actions of men proceed from their *thoughts*. In order to obtain the co-operation, the concurrence, or the consent of others, we must communicate our thoughts to them. The means of this communication are *words*; and grammar teaches us *how to make use of words*. Therefore, in all the ranks, degrees, and situations of life, a knowledge of the principles and rules of grammar must be useful; in some situations it must be necessary to the avoiding of really injurious errors; and in no situation, which calls on a man to place his thoughts upon paper, can the possession of it fail to be a source of self-gratulation, or the want of it a cause of mortification and sorrow.

But, to the acquiring of this branch of knowledge, my dear son, there is one motive, which, though it ought, at all times, to be strongly felt, ought, at the present time, to be so felt in an extraordinary degree: I mean, that desire, which every man, and especially every young man, should entertain to be able to assert with effect the rights and liberties of his country. When you come to read the history of those laws of England, by which the freedom of the people has been secured, and by which the happiness and power and glory of our famed and beloved country have been so greatly promoted; when you come to read the history of the struggles of our forefathers, by which these sacred Laws have, from time to time, been defended against despotic ambition; by which they have been restored to vigour when on the eve of perishing; by which their violators have never failed, in the end, to be made to feel the just vengeance of the People; when you come to read the history of these struggles in the cause of freedom, you will find, that tyranny has no enemy so formidable as the pen. And, while you will see with exultation

the long-imprisoned, the heavily-fined, the banished WILLIAM PRYNNE, returning to liberty, borne by the people from Southampton to London, over a road strewed with flowers; then accusing, bringing to trial and to the block, the tyrants, from whose hands he and his country had unjustly and cruelly suffered; while your heart and the heart of every young man in the kingdom will bound with joy at the spectacle, you ought all to bear in mind, that, without a knowledge of *grammar*, Mr. PRYNNE could never have performed any of those acts, by which his name has been thus preserved, and which have caused his memory to be held in honour.

Though I have now said what, I am sure, will be more than sufficient to make you entertain a strong desire to take this first step in the road to literary knowledge, I cannot conclude this introductory letter, without observing, that you ought to proceed in your study, not only with diligence, but with *patience*; that, if you meet with difficulties, you should bear in mind, that, to enjoy the noble prospect from Port's-Down Hill, you had first to climb slowly to the top; and that, if those difficulties gather about you and impede your way, you have only to call to your recollection any one of the many days that you have toiled through briers and brambles and bogs, cheered and urged on by the hope of at last finding and killing your game.

I have put my work into the form of Letters, in order that I might be continually reminded, that I was addressing myself to persons, who needed to be spoken to with great clearness. I have *numbered* the Letters themselves, and also the *paragraphs*, in order that I might be able, in some parts of the work, to *refer* you to, or *tell you where to look at*, other parts of the work. And here I will just add, that a *sentence*, used as a term in grammar, means one of those portions of words, which is divided from

the rest by a *single dot*, which is called a *period*, or full point ; and that a *paragraph* means, one of those collections, or blocks, of *sentences*, which is divided from the rest of the work by beginning a *new line* a little *further in* than the lines in general ; and, of course, all this part, which I have just now written, beginning with “ *I have put my work into the form,*” is a *paragraph*.

In a confident reliance on your attentiveness, industry, and patience, I have a hope not less confident of seeing you a man of real learning, employing your time and talents in aiding the cause of truth and justice, in affording protection to defenceless innocence, and in drawing down vengeance on lawless oppression ; and, in that hope, I am your happy as well as affectionate father,

WILLIAM COBBETT.



LETTER II.

DEFINITION OF GRAMMAR AND OF ITS DIFFERENT BRANCHES OR PARTS.

MY DEAR JAMES,

1. IN the foregoing Letter I have laid before you some of the inducements to the study of Grammar. In this, I will define, or describe, the thing called *Grammar*; and also its different *Branches* or *Parts*.

2. Grammar, as I observed to you before, teaches us *how to make use of words*; that is to say, it teaches us how to make use of them in a proper manner, as I used to teach you how to sow and plant the beds in the garden; for you could have thrown about seeds and stuck in plants of some sort or other, in some way or other, without any teaching of mine; and so can any body, without rules or instructions, put masses of words upon paper; but to be able to choose the words which ought to be employed, and to place them where they ought to be placed, we must become acquainted with certain principles and rules; and these principles and rules constitute what is called Grammar.

3. Nor must you suppose, by-and-by, when you come to read about *Nouns* and *Verbs* and *Pro-nouns*, that all this tends to nothing but mere ornamental learning, that it is not altogether necessary, and that people may write to be understood very well without it. This is not the case; for without a pretty perfect knowledge relative to these same *Nouns* and *Verbs*, those who write are never sure that they put upon paper what they mean to put upon paper. I will, before the close of these

letters, show you, that even very learned men have frequently written and caused to be published, not only what they did not mean, but the very contrary of what they meant; and if errors, such as are here spoken of, are sometimes committed by learned men, into what endless errors must those fall, who have no knowledge of any principles or rules, by the observance of which the like may be avoided? Grammar, perfectly understood, enables us, not only to express our meaning fully and clearly, but so to express it as to enable us to defy the ingenuity of man to give to our words any other meaning than that which we ourselves intend them to express. This, therefore, is a science of substantial utility.

4. As to the different *Branches* or *Parts*, of Grammar, they are usually divided into *four*; and they are thus named: *Orthography*, *Prosody*, *Ety-mology*, and *Syntax*.

5. There are two of these branches, on which we have very little to say, and the names of which have been kept in use from an unwillingness to give up the practice of former times; but, as it is usual to give them a place, in books of this kind, I will explain to you the nature of all the four Branches.

6. ORTHOGRAPHY is a word made up of two Greek words, which mean *word-making*, or *spelling*. The use of foreign words, in this manner, was introduced at the time when the English Language was in a very barbarous state; and, though this use has been continued, it ought to be a rule with you, always, when you either write or speak, to avoid the use of any foreign or uncommon word, if you can express your meaning as fully and clearly by an English word in common use. However, *Orthography* means neither more nor less than the very humble business of putting *Letters* together properly, so that they shall form *Words*. This is

so very childish a concern, that I will not appear to suppose it necessary for me to dwell upon it; but, as you will, by-and-by, meet with some directions, under the head of Etymology, in which directions *Vowels* and *Consonants* will be spoken of, I will here, for form's sake, just observe, that the letters A, E, I, O, and U, are *Vowels*. Y, in certain cases, is also a *Vowel*. All the rest of the letters of the alphabet are *Consonants*.

7. **PROSODY** is a word taken from the Greek Language, and it means neither more nor less than what is expressed by the more common word **PRONUNCIATION**; that is to say, the business of using the proper *sound* and employing the due *length of time*, in the uttering of syllables and words. This is a matter, however, which ought not to occupy much of your attention; because *pronunciation* is learnt as birds learn to chirp and sing. In some counties of England many words are pronounced in a manner different from that in which they are pronounced in other counties; and, between the pronunciation of Scotland and that of Hampshire the difference is very great indeed. But, while all inquiries into the causes of these differences are useless, and all attempts to remove them are vain, the differences are of very little real consequence. For instance, though the Scotch say *coorn*, the Londoners *cawn*, and the Hampshire folks *carn*, we know that they all mean to say *corn*. Children will pronounce as their fathers and mothers pronounce; and if, in common conversation, or in speeches, the matter be good and judiciously arranged, the facts clearly stated, the arguments conclusive, the words well chosen and properly placed, hearers, whose approbation is worth having, will pay very little attention to the accent. In short, it is sense, and not sound, which is the object of your pursuit; and, therefore, I have said enough about *Prosody*.

8. **ETYMOLOGY** is a very different matter ; and, under this head, you will enter on your study. This is a word, which has been formed out of two Greek words ; and it means, the *pedigree*, or *relationship of words*, or, the manner in which one word grows out of, or comes from, another word. For instance, the word *walk* expresses an action, or movement, of our legs ; but, in some cases, we say *walks*, in others *walked*, in others *walking*. These three latter words are all different from each other, and they all differ from the original word, *walk* ; but, the action, or movement, expressed by each of the four, is precisely the same sort of action, or movement, and the three latter words grow out of, or come from, the first. The words here mentioned differ from each other with regard to the letters of which they are composed. This difference is made in order to express differences as to the *Persons* who walk, as to the *Number* of persons, as to the *Time* of walking. You will come, by-and-by, to the principles and rules, according to which the varying of the spelling of words is made to correspond with these and other differences ; and these principles and rules constitute what is called *Etymology*.

9. **SYNTAX** is a word, which comes from the Greek. It means, in that language, the *joining of several things together* ; and, as used by grammarians, it means those principles and rules, which teach us how to put words together so as to form sentences. It means, in short, *sentence-making*. Having been taught by the rules of *Etymology*, what are the relationships of words, how words grow out of each other, how they are varied in their letters in order to correspond with the variation in the circumstances to which they apply, *Syntax* will teach you how to give to all your words their *proper* situation or place, when you come to put them together into sentences. And

here you will have to do with *points* as well as with words. The *points* are four in number, the *Comma*, the *Semi-Colon*, the *Colon*, and the *Period*. Besides these *Points*, there are certain *marks*, such as the *mark of interrogation*, for instance; and, to use these points and marks properly is, as you will by-and-by find, a matter of very great importance.

10. I have now given you a description of Grammar and of its separate Branches, or Parts. I have shown you, that the two first of these Branches may be dismissed without any further notice; but, very different indeed is the case with regard to the two latter. Each of these will require several Letters; and those Letters will contain matter, which it will be impossible to understand without the greatest attention. You must read soberly and slowly, and you must think as you read. You must not hurry on from one Letter to another, as if you were reading a history; but you must have patience to get, if possible, at a clear comprehension of one part of the subject before you proceed to another part. When I was studying the French language, the manner in which I proceeded, was this: when I had attentively read over, three times, a lesson, or other division of my Grammar, I wrote the lesson down upon a loose sheet of paper. I then read it again several times in my own handwriting. Then I copied it, in a very plain hand, and without a blot, into a book, which I had made for the purpose. But, if, in writing my lesson down on a loose sheet of paper, I committed one single error, however trifling, I used to tear the paper, and write the whole down again; and, frequently, this occurred three or four times in the writing down of one lesson. I, at first, found this labour very irksome; but, having imposed it on myself as a duty, I faithfully discharged that duty; and long before I had proceeded half the way

through my grammar, I experienced all the benefits of my industry and perseverance.

LETTER III.

ETYMOLOGY.

The different Parts of Speech, or, Sorts of Words.

MY DEAR JAMES,

11. IN the second Letter I have given you a description of *Etymology*, and shown you, that it treats of the *pedigree*, or *relationship*, of words, of the nature of which relationship I have given you a specimen in the word, *walk*. The next thing is to teach you the *principles* and *rules*, according to which the spelling and employing of words is varied in order to express the various circumstances attending this relationship. But, before I enter on this part of my instructions, I must inform you, that there are several *distinct sorts* of words, or, as they are usually called, *Parts of Speech*; and, it will be necessary for you to be able, before you proceed further, to distinguish the words, belonging to each of these *Parts of Speech*, from those, belonging to the other *Parts*. There are *Nine Parts of Speech*, and they are named thus:

ARTICLES,
NOUNS,
PRONOUNS,
ADJECTIVES,
VERBS,
ADVERBS,
PREPOSITIONS,
CONJUNCTIONS,
INTERJECTIONS.

12. Before the serjeant begins to teach young soldiers their *exercise* of the musket, he explains to them the different parts of it; the butt, the stock, the barrel, the loops, the swivels, and so on; because, unless they know these by their names, they cannot know how to obey his instructions in the handling of the musket. Sailors, for the same reason, are told which is the tiller, which are the yards, which the shrouds, which the tacks, which the sheets, which the booms, and which each and every part of the ship. Apprentices are taught the names of all the tools used in their trade; and Plough-boys the names of the various implements of husbandry. This species of preliminary knowledge is absolutely necessary in all these callings of life; but not more necessary than it is for you to learn, before you go any further, how to know the sorts of words one from another. To teach you this, therefore, is the object of the present Letter.

13. ARTICLES. There are but *three* in our language; and these are, the, an and a. Indeed, there are but two, because *an* and *a* are the same word, the latter being only an abbreviation, or a shortening, of the former. I shall by-and-by, give you rules for the using of these Articles; but, my business in this place is only to teach you how to know one sort of words from another sort of words.

14. NOUNS. The word *noun* means *name*, and nothing more; and *Nouns* are the *names of persons and things*. As far as persons and other animals and things that *we* can see go, it is very easy to distinguish *Nouns*; but, there are many *Nouns*, which express what we can neither see, nor hear, nor touch. For example: *Conscience, Vanity, Vice, Sobriety, Steadiness, Valour*: and a great number of others. Grammarians, anxious to give some easy rule, by which the scholar might dis-

tinguish *nouns* from other words, have directed him to put the words, *the good*, before any word; and have told him, that, if the three words make sense, the last word is a *noun*. This is frequently the case; as, the good *house*, the good *dog*; but, the good *sobriety* would not appear to be very *good sense*. In fact, there is no rule of this kind that will answer the purpose. You must employ your *mind* in order to arrive at the knowledge here desired.

15. Every word which stands for a person or any animal, or for any thing of *substance*, dead or alive, is a *Noun*. So far the matter is very easy. Thus, *man*, *cat*, *tree*, *log*, are Nouns. But, when we come to the words which are the names of things, and which things are *not substances*, the matter is not so easy; and it requires a little sober thought. This word, *thought*, for example, is a *Noun*.

16. The only sure rule is this: that a word, which stands for any thing that has an *existence*, is a *Noun*. For example, *Pride*, *Folly*, *Thought*, *Misery*, *Truth*, *Falsehood*, *Opinion*, *Sentiment*. None of these have any *substance*. You cannot see them, or touch them; but, they all have an *existence*. They all *exist* in the world; and, therefore, the words which represent them, or stand for them, are called Nouns. If you be still a little puzzled here, you must not be impatient. You will find the difficulty disappear in a short time, if you exert your powers of thinking. Ask yourself what *existence* means. You will find that the words *very*, *for*, *think*, *but*, *pretty*, do not express any thing which has an *existence*, or a *being*; but, that the words, *motive*, *zeal*, *pity*, *kindness*, do express things which have a *being*, or *existence*.

17. PRONOUNS.—Words of this sort stand in the place of *Nouns*. Their name is from the Latin

and it means *For-nouns*, or *For-names*; that is to say, these words, called Pronouns, are used *for*, or *instead of*, Nouns. *He, She, Her, Him, Who*, for example, are Pronouns. The use of them is to prevent the repetition of Nouns, and to make speaking and writing more rapid and less encumbered with words. An example will make this clear to you in a minute. Thus:

18. A woman went to a man, and told *him*, that *he* was in great danger of being murdered by a gang of robbers, *who* had made preparations for attacking *him*. *He* thanked *her* for *her* kindness, and, as *he* was unable to defend *himself*, *he* left his house, and went to a neighbour's.

19. Now, if there were no pronouns, this sentence must be written as follows:—A woman went to a man, and told *the man*, that *the man* was in great danger of being murdered by a gang of robbers; as *a gang of robbers* had made preparations for attacking *the man*. *The man* thanked *the woman* for *the woman's* kindness, and, as *the man* was unable to defend *the man's self*, *the man* left *the man's* house, and went to a neighbour's.

20. There are several different classes of Pronouns; but, of this, and of the manner of using Pronouns, you will be informed by-and-by. All that I aim at here is, to enable you to form a clear idea with regard to the difference in the sorts of words, or Parts of Speech.

21. ADJECTIVES. The word *Adjective* comes from the word *Adject*, which means, to *add to*, to *join to*, to *put to*; and the word *Adjective*, in its full literal sense, means, *something added to something else*. Therefore this term is used in grammar as the name of that Part of Speech, which consists of words, which are added, or put, to Nouns, in order to express something relating to the Nouns, which something could not be expressed without the help of *Adjectives*. For instance, there are

several turkeys in the yard, some black, some white, some speckled; and, then, there are large ones and small ones of all the colours. I want you to go and catch *a turkey*; but I also want you to catch a *white* turkey, and not only a white turkey, but a *large* turkey. Therefore, I add, or *put to* the Noun, the words *white* and *large*, which, therefore, are called *Adjectives*.

22. Adjectives sometimes express the *qualities* of the Nouns to which they are put; and this being very frequently their use, some grammarians have thrown aside the word Adjective, and have called words of this sort, *Qualities*. But, this name is not sufficiently comprehensive; for there are many words, which are Adjectives, which have nothing to do with the *quality* of the Nouns to which they are put. *Good* and *bad* express qualities, but *long* and *short* merely express dimension, or duration, without giving any intimation as to the quality of the things expressed by the Nouns to which they are put; and yet, *long* and *short* are Adjectives. You must read very attentively here, and consider soberly. You must keep in mind the above explanation of the *meaning* of the word Adjective; and, if you also bear in mind, that words of this sort always express some quality, some property, some appearance, or some distinctive circumstance, belonging to the Nouns to which they are put, you will very easily, and in a very short space of time, be able to distinguish an Adjective from words belonging to any other Part of Speech.

23. VERBS. Grammarians appear to have been at a loss in discovering a suitable appellation for this important sort of words, or Part of Speech; for, the word, *Verb*, means nothing more than *Word*. In the Latin it is *verbum*, in the French it is *verbe*; and the French in their Bible, say *La Verbe*, where we say *The Word*. The truth is, that there are so many properties and circum-

stances, so many and such different powers and functions, belonging to this Part of Speech, that the mind of man is unable to bring the whole of them into any short and precise description. The first grammar that I ever looked into told me, that "a *Verb* is a word which signifies, to *do*, to *be*, or to *suffer*." What was I to understand from this laconic account?

24. Verbs express all the different *actions* and *movements* of all creatures and of all things, whether alive or dead. As, for instance, to *speak*, to *bark*, to *grow*, to *moulder*, to *crack*, to *crumble*, and the like. In all these cases there is *movement* clearly understood. But, in the cases of, to *think*, to *reflect*, to *remember*, to *like*, to *detest*, and in an infinite number of cases, the *movement* is not so easy to perceive. Yet these are all *verbs*, and they do indeed express *movements* which we attribute to the *mind* or the *heart*. But what shall we say in the cases of to *sit*, to *sleep*, to *rot*, and the like? Still these are all *verbs*.

25. Verbs are, then, a sort of words, the use of which is to express the *actions*, the *movements*, and the *state or manner of beings*, of all creatures and things, whether animate or inanimate. In speaking with reference to a man, to *fight* is an action; to *reflect* is a movement; to *sit* is a state of being.

26. Of the manner of using verbs you will hear a great deal by-and-by; but, what I have here said will, if you read attentively, and take time to consider, be sufficient to enable you to distinguish Verbs from the words which belong to the other Parts of Speech.

27. ADVERBS are so called because the words which belong to this part of Speech are *added* to *verbs*. But this is an inadequate description; for, as you will presently see, they are sometimes otherwise employed. You have seen, that Verbs

express *actions, movements, and states of being*; and it is very frequently the use of adverbs to express *the manner* of actions, movements, and states of being. Thus: the man fights *bravely*; he reflects *profoundly*; he sits *quietly*. In these instances the adverbs perform an office and are placed in a situation which fully justify the name that has been given to this sort of words. But there are many adverbs, which do not express the manner of actions, movements, or states of being, and which are not added to Verbs. For instance: "*When* you sow small seeds, make the earth *very* fine, and if it have, *of late*, been dry weather, take care to press the earth *extremely* hard upon the seeds." Here are four adverbs, but only the last of the four expresses any thing connected with a verb. This shows, that the name of this class of words does not fully convey to our minds a description of their use.

28. However, with this name you must be content; but, you must bear in mind, that there are adverbs of *time*, of *place*, and of *degree*, as well as of manner; and that their business is to express, or describe, some circumstances in addition to all that is expressed by the Nouns, Adjectives, and Verbs. In the above sentence for example, the words *when*, *very*, *of late*, and *extremely*, add greatly to the precept, which, without them, would lose much of its force.

29. PREPOSITIONS. The prepositions are *in, to, for, from, of, by, with, into, against, at*, and several others. They are called *Prepositions*, from two Latin words, meaning *before* and *place*; and this name is given them because they are in most cases *placed before* Nouns and Pronouns: as, "Indian Corn is sown *in* May. In June and the three following months, it is carefully cultivated. When ripe, *in* October, it is gathered *in* the field, *by* men who go *from* hill to hill *with* bas-

“kets, into which they put the ears. The leaves
“and stalks are then collected for winter use ;
“and, they not only serve as food for cattle and
“sheep, but are excellent in the making of sheds
“to protect animals against the inclemency of the
“weather.”

30. Prepositions are not very numerous, and, though you will be taught to be very careful in using them, the above sentence will be quite sufficient to enable you to know the words belonging to this Part of Speech from the words belonging to any other Part of Speech.

31. CONJUNCTIONS are so called, because they *conjoin* or *join together*, words, or parts of sentences ; as, “Peas *and* Beans may be severed
“from the ground before they be quite dry ; *but*
“they must not be put into stacks or barns until
“perfectly dry ; *for*, if they be, they will mould.” The word *and* joins together the words Peas and Beans, and, by the means of this *junction*, makes all the remaining part of the sentence apply to both. The word *but* connects the first with the second member of the sentence. The word *for*, which is sometimes a conjunction, performs, in this case, the same office as the word *but* ; it continues the connexion ; and thus does every part of the sentence apply to each of the two nouns, which are the subject of it.

32. INTERJECTIONS. This name comes from two Latin words : *inter*, which means *between*, and *jection*, which means *something thrown*. So that, the full literal meaning of the word is, *something thrown between*. The Interjections are *Ah ! Oh ! Alas !* and such like, which, indeed, are not words, because they have no definite meaning. They are mere *sounds*, and they have been mentioned by me, merely because other grammarians have considered them as being a Part of Speech.

But, this one notice of them will be quite sufficient.

33. Thus, then, you are now able to distinguish, in many cases, at least, to what Part of Speech belongs each of the several words which may come under your observation. I shall now proceed to the Etymology of each of these Parts of Speech. As we have done with the *Interjections*, there will remain only *eight* Parts to treat of, and this I shall do in eight Letters, allotting one Letter to each Part of Speech.

LETTER IV.

ETYMOLOGY OF ARTICLES.

MY DEAR JAMES,

34. IN Letter III. paragraph 13, you have seen what sort of words ARTICLES are; that is to say, you have there learnt how to distinguish the words belonging to this Part of Speech from words belonging to other Parts of Speech. You must now turn to Letter II, paragraph 8. Having read what you find there under the head of *Etymology*, you will see at once, that my business, in this present Letter, is, to teach you those principles and rules, according to which Articles are varied in order to make them suit the different circumstances which they are used to express.

35. You have seen, that there are but *three* articles; namely A or AN, and THE. The two former are, in fact, the *same word*, but, of this, I shall say more presently. They are called *indefinite* Articles, because they do *not define*, or *determine*, what particular object is spoken of. The Nouns, to which they are prefixed, only serve to

point out the sort of person or thing spoken of, without defining *what* person or *what* thing ; as, *a tree is blown down*. From this we learn that *some* tree is blown down, but not *what* tree. But, the definite Article, **THE**, determines the particular object of which we speak ; as, *the tree, which stood close beside the barn, is blown down*. In this last instance, we are not only informed that a tree is blown down, but the sentence also informs us what particular tree it is. This article is used before nouns in the plural as well as before nouns in the singular number. It is sometimes used before words expressive of degrees of comparison ; as, *the best, the worst, the highest, the lowest*. When we use a noun in the singular number to express a whole species, or sort, we use the definite article : thus, we say, *the oak* is a fine tree, when we mean, that oaks are fine trees.

36. The Article **A** becomes **AN** when this article comes immediately before *any* word which begins with a vowel. This is for the sake of the sound ; as, *an adder, an elephant, an inch, an oily seed, an ugly hat*. The word *an* is also used before words which begin with an *h* which is *mute*, that is to say, which, though used in writing, is *not* sounded in speaking ; as, *an hour*. This little variation in the article is, as I said before, for the sake of the sound ; for, it would be very disagreeable to say, *a adder, a elephant, a inch, a oily seed, a ugly hat, a hour*, and the like. But, *a* is used, in the usual way, before words, which begin with an *h* which is sounded in speaking ; as, *a horse, a hair*, and the like. The indefinite article can be used before nouns in the singular number only. There is a seeming exception to this rule in cases where the words *few* and *many* come before the noun : as *a few horses ; a great many horses* : but, in reality, this is not an exception, because the words *few* and *many*, mean *number* ; thus : *a small*

number of horses; a *great number* of horses; and the indefinite article agrees with this word *number*, which is understood, and which is in the singular.

LETTER V.

ETYMOLOGY OF NOUNS.

37. **THIS**, my Dear James, is a letter of great importance, and, therefore, it will require great attention from you. Before you proceed further, you will again look well at Letter II, paragraph 8, and then at Letter III, paragraphs 14, 15, and 16, and there read carefully every thing under the head of *Nouns*.

38. Now, then, as Letter III. has taught you how to distinguish Nouns from the words which belong to the other Parts of Speech, the business here is to teach you the principles and rules, according to which Nouns are to be varied in the letters of which they are composed, according to which they are to be used, and according to which they are to be considered in their bearings upon other words in the sentences in which they are used.

39. In a noun there are to be considered, the *branches*, the *numbers*, the *genders*, and the *cases*; and all these must be attended to very carefully.

40. **THE BRANCHES.** There are two; for Nouns are some of them **PROPER** and some **COMMON**. A Noun is called *proper*, when it is used to distinguish one particular individual from the rest of the individuals of the same species, or kind; as, *James*, *Botley*, *Hampshire*. The Noun is called *common*, when it applies to all individuals of a kind; as *Man*, *Village*, *County*. *Botley* is a proper Noun, because all villages have not this name; but *Vil-*

Village is a common Noun, because all villages are called by that name: the name is common to them all. Several persons have the name of *James*, to be sure, and there is a *Hampshire* in America as well as in England; but, still, these are proper names, because the former is not common to all men, nor the latter to all counties. Proper nouns take no articles before them, because the extent of their meaning is clearly pointed out in the word itself. In *figurative* language, of which you will know more by-and-by, we sometimes, however, use the article; as, "Goldsmith is a very pretty poet, but not to be compared to *the* Popes, *the* Drydens, or *the* Otways." And, again; "I wish I had the wit of *a* Swift." We also use the definite article before proper nouns when a common noun is understood to be left out; as, *The Delaware*; meaning the *River Delaware*. Also when we speak of more than one person of the same name; as, "*the* *Henries*, *the* *Edwards*."

41. THE NUMBERS. These are the *Singular* and the *Plural*. The singular is the original word; and, in general, the Plural is formed by adding an *s* to the singular; as *dog*, *dogs*. But, though the greater part of our Nouns form their plurals from the singular in this simple manner, there are many which do not; while there are some Nouns which have no plural number at all, and some which have no singular. Therefore, considering the above to be the FIRST RULE, I shall add other rules with regard to the Nouns which do not follow that rule.

—THE SECOND RULE. Nouns, the singular numbers of which end in *ch*, *sh*, *s*, or *x*, require *es* to be added in order to form their plural number; as *church*, *churches*; *brush*, *brushes*; *lass*, *lasses*; *fox*, *foxes*.—THE THIRD RULE is, that Nouns, which end in *y*, when the *y* has a consonant coming immediately before it, change the *y* into *ies* in forming their plurals; as, *quantity*, *quantities*. But, you

must mind, that, if the *y* be not immediately preceded by a consonant, the words follow the *First Rule*, and take only an *s* in addition to their singular; as, *day, days*. I am the more anxious to guard you against error as to this matter, because it is very common to see men of high rank and profession writing, *vallies, vollies, attornies, correspondencies, conveniencies*, and the like, and yet all these are erroneous. THE FOURTH RULE is, that Nouns which end in a single *f*, or in *fe*, form their plurals by changing the *f*, or *fe*, into *ves*; as, *loaf, loaves; wife, wives*. But, this rule has exceptions in the following words, which follow the *First Rule*: *Dwarf, mischief, handkerchief, chief, relief, grief*. The two last are seldom used in the plural number; but, as they sometimes are, I have included them.—THE FIFTH RULE is, that the following Nouns have their plural in *en*: *man, men; woman, women; ox, oxen; child, children*. And *brethren* is used sometimes as the plural of *brother*.—THE SIXTH RULE is, that all which nature, or art, or habit, has made plural has no singular; as *ashes, annals, bellows, bowels, thanks, breeches, entrails, lungs, scissors, snuffers, tongs, wages*, and some others. There are also some nouns which have no plural, such as those which express the qualities or propensities or feelings of the mind or heart; as, *honesty, meekness, compassion*. There are, further, several names of herbs, metals, minerals, liquids, and of fleshy substances, which have no plurals; to which may be added the names of almost all sorts of grain. There are exceptions here; for, while *Wheat* has no plural, *Oats* have seldom any singular. But all these words, and others which are irregular in a similar way, are of such very common use, that you will hardly ever make a mistake in applying them; for I will not suppose it possible for my dear James to fall into either the company or the language of those per-

sons, who talk, and even write, about *Barleys, Wheats, Clovers, Flours, Grasses, and Malts*.—There remain to be noticed, however, some words, which are too irregular in the forming their plurals to be brought under any distinct head even of irregularity. I will, therefore, insert these as they are used in both numbers.

SINGULAR.	PLURAL.	SINGULAR.	PLURAL.
Die,	Dice.	Goose,	Geese.
Mouse,	Mice.	Penny,	Pence.
Louse,	Lice.	Tooth,	Teeth.
Deer,	Deer.	Foot,	Feet.

42. THE GENDERS. In the French language, and many other languages, every noun is of the masculine or of the feminine gender. *Hand*, for instance, is of the feminine and *arm* of the masculine, *pen* of the feminine and *paper* of the masculine. This is not the case with our language, which, in this respect, has followed the order of nature. The names of all *males* are of the masculine gender; the name of all *females* are of the feminine gender; and all other nouns are of the *neuter* gender. And, you must observe, that, even in speaking of living creatures, of which we do not know the gender, we consider them to be of the *neuter*. In strictness of language, we could not, perhaps, apply the term *gender* to things destitute of all sexual properties; but, as it is applied with perfect propriety in the case of males and females, and, as the application in the case of inanimate or vegetable matter can lead to no grammatical error, I have thought it best to follow, in this respect, the example of other grammarians. It may be said, that the rule, which I have here laid down, as being without any exception, has many exceptions; for, that, in speaking

of a *ship*, we say *she* and *her*. And, you know, that our country folks in Hampshire call almost every thing *he* or *she*. Sailors have, for ages, called their vessels *shes*, and it has been found easier to adopt, than to eradicate, the vulgarism; which is not only tolerated but cherished by that just admiration, in which our country holds the species of skill and of valour, to which it owes much of its greatness and renown. It is curious to observe, that country labourers give the feminine appellations to those things only which are more closely identified with themselves, and by the qualities and condition of which their own efforts and their character as workmen are affected. The mower calls his scythe a *she*; the ploughman calls his plough a *she*; but a prong, or a shovel, or a harrow, which passes promiscuously from hand to hand, and which is appropriated to no particular labourer, is called a *he*. It was, doubtless, from this sort of habitual attachment that our famous maritime solecism arose. The deeds of labourers in the fields and of artisans in their shops, are not of public interest sufficiently commanding to enable them to break in upon the principles of language; if they were, we should soon have as many *hes* and *shes* as the French, or any other nation in the world.

43. While, however, I lay down this rule as required by strict grammatical correctness, I must not omit to observe, that the licence allowed to figurative language enables us to give the masculine or feminine gender to inanimate objects. This has been justly regarded as a great advantage in our language. We can, whenever our subject will justify it, transform into masculine or feminine, nouns which are, strictly speaking, neuter; and, thus, by giving the functions of life to inanimate objects, enliven and elevate our style, and give

to our expressions great additional dignity and force.

44. THE CASES OF NOUNS. The word *case*, as applied to the concerns of life, has a variety of meanings, or of different shades of meaning; but, its general meaning is, *state of things*, or *state of something*. Thus we say, "in *that case*, I agree with you." Meaning, "that being *the state of things*, or that being *the state of the matter*, I agree with you." Lawyers are said "to make out *their case*; or not to make out *their case* : meaning the *state of the matter*, which they have undertaken to prove. So, when we say, that a horse is in *good case*, we mean that he is in a *good state*. Nouns may be in different *states*, or *situations*, as to other nouns, or other words. For instance, a noun may be the name of a person who *strikes* a horse, or of a person who *possesses* a horse, or of a person whom a horse *kicks*. And these different situations, or states, are, therefore, called *cases*.

45. You will not quite fully comprehend the use of these directions till you come to the Letter on *Verbs*; but, it is necessary to explain here the nature of these *cases*, in order that you may be prepared well for the use of the terms, when I come to speak of the *Verbs*. In the Latin language each noun has several *different endings*, in order to denote the different Cases in which it may be. In our language there is but one of the Cases of nouns which is expressed or denoted by a change in the ending of the noun; and of this change I will speak presently.

46. There are three Cases; the *Nominative*, the *Possessive*, and the *Objective*. A noun is in the *Nominative* case, when it denotes a person, or thing, which *does* something or *is* something; as, *Richard strikes*; *Richard is good*.

47. A noun is in the *Possessive* case when it names a person or thing which *possesses* some other

person or thing, or when there is one of the persons or things *belonging to* the other ; as, *Richard's hat* ; the *mountain's top* ; the *nation's fleet*. Here *Richard*, *mountain*, and *nation*, are in the *possessive case*, because they denote persons or things which *possess* other persons or things, or have other persons or things *belonging to* them. And here is that change in the ending of the noun, of which I spoke above. You see that *Richard*, *mountain*, and *nation*, has, each of them, an *s* added to it, and a mark of *elision* over ; that is to say, a *comma*, placed above the line, between the last letter of the word and the *s*. This is done for the purpose of distinguishing this case from the plural number ; or, at least, it answers this purpose in all cases where the plural of the noun would end in an *s* ; though there are different opinions as to the origin of its use. In nouns, which do not end their plurals in *s*, the mark of elision would not appear to be absolutely necessary. We might write *mans* mind, *womans* heart ; but it is best to use the mark of elision. When plural nouns end with *s*, you must not add an *s* to form the possessive case, but put the elision mark only after the *s*, which ends the noun ; as, *mountains' tops* ; *nations' fleets* ; *lusses' charms*. Observe, however, that, in every instance, the possessive case may be expressed by a turn of the words ; as, *the hat of Richard* ; *the top of the mountain* ; *the fleet of the nation* ; *the mind of man* ; and so on. The nouns, notwithstanding this turn of the words, are still in the possessive case ; and, as to when one mode of expression is best, and when the other, it is a matter which must be left to taste.

48. A noun is in the *objective case*, when the person or thing that it names or denotes is the *object*, or *end*, of some act or of some movement, of some kind or other ; *Richard strikes Peter* ;

Richard gave a blow to *Peter* ; Richard goes after *Peter* ; Richard hates *Peter* ; Richard wants arms ; Richard seeks after *fame* ; falsehood leads to *mischief* ; oppression produces *resistance* ; idleness is the nurse of *vice*. Here you see, that all these nouns in the objective case, are the *object*, the *end*, or the *effect*, of something *done* or *felt* by some person or thing, and which other person, or thing, is in the nominative case.

LETTER VI.

ETYMOLOGY OF PRONOUNS.

MY DEAR JAMES,

49. YOU will now refer to paragraphs 17, 18 and 19, in Letter III ; which paragraphs will refreshen your memory as to the general nature and use of *Pronouns*. Then, in proceeding to become well acquainted with this part of speech, you will first observe, that there are four classes, or descriptions, of Pronouns : first, the *Personal* ; second, the *Relative* ; third, the *Demonstrative* ; and fourth, the *Indefinite*.

50. In PERSONAL PRONOUNS there are four things to be considered ; the person, the number, the gender, and the case.

51. There are *three persons*. The pronoun which represents, or stands in the place of the name of the person who speaks, is called the *first person* ; that which stands in the place of the name of the person who is spoken to, is called the *second person* ; that which stands in the place of the name of the person who is spoken of, is called the *third person*. For example : “ I am asking *you* about *him*.” This circumstance of *person* you will,

by-and-by, find to be of great moment ; because, as you will see, the *verbs* vary their endings sometimes to correspond with the *person* of the pronoun ; and, therefore, you ought to pay strict attention to it at the outset.

52. The *number* is either singular or plural, and the pronouns vary their spelling to express a difference of number ; as in this table, which shows, at once, all the persons and all the numbers.

	SINGULAR.	PLURAL.
First Person.	I,	We.
Second Person.	Thou,	You.
Third Person.	He,	They.

53. The next thing is the *gender*. The pronouns of the first and second person have no changes to express gender ; but the third person singular has changes for that purpose ; *he, she, or it* ; and I need not point out to you the cases where one of these ought to be used in preference to the other.

54. The *Case* is the last thing to be considered in personal pronouns. The meaning of the word *case*, as used in the rules of grammar, I have fully explained to you in Letter V, paragraph 44. In paragraphs 45, 46, 47 and 48, in that same Letter, I have treated of the distinction between the cases. Read all those paragraphs again before you proceed further : for now you will find their meaning more clearly explained to you ; because the personal pronouns, and also some of the other pronouns, have *different endings*, or are composed of *different letters*, in order to point out the different cases in which they are : as ; *He, His, Him*.

55. The personal pronouns have, like the nouns, three cases ; the *nominative*, the *possessive*, and the *objective*. The following table exhibits the

whole of them at one view, with all the circumstances of person, number, gender, and case.

SINGULAR NUMBER.

		Nominative.	Possessive.	Objective
First person,		I,	My, Mine,	Me.
Second person,		Thou,	Thy, Thine,	Thee.
Third pers.	Mas. Gen.	He,	His,	Him.
	Femin.	She,	Her, Hers,	Her.
	Neuter.	It,	Its,	It.

PLURAL NUMBER.

		Nominative.	Possessive.	Objective
First person,		We,	Our, Ours,	Us.
Second person,		You,	Your, Yours,	You.
Third pers.	Mas. Gen.	They,	Their,	Them.
	Femin.	They,	Theirs,	
	Neuter.	They,		

56. Upon this table there are some remarks to be attended to. In the possessive cases of *I*, *Thou*, *She*, *We*, *You*, and *They*, there are two different words; as, *My* or *Mine*; but, you know, that the former is used when followed by the name of the person or thing possessed; and that the latter is used when not so followed: as, "this is *my* pen; this pen is *mine*." And, it is the same with regard to the possessive cases of *Thou*, *She*, *We*, *You*, and *They*.

57. *Thou* is here given as the *second person singular*; but, common custom has set aside the rules of Grammar in this case; and, though we, in particular cases, still make use of *Thou* and *Thee*, we generally make use of *You* instead of either of them. According to ancient rule and custom this is not correct; but, what a whole people adopts and universally practises, must, in such cases, be deemed

correct, and to be a superseding of ancient rule and custom.

58. Instead of *you* the ancient practice was to put *ye*, in the nominative case of the second person plural; but, this practice is now laid aside, except in cases, which very seldom occur; but, whenever *ye* is made use of, it must be in the *nominative*, and *never* in the *objective*, case. I may, speaking to several persons, say, “*Ye* have injured me;” but not, “*I* have injured *ye*.”

59. The word *self* and *selves* are sometimes added to the personal pronouns; as, *myself*, *thyself*, *himself*: but, as these compounded words are liable to no variations that can possibly lead to error, it will be useless to do any thing further than just to notice them.

60. The Pronoun *it*, though a *personal* pronoun, does not always stand for, or, at least, appear to stand for, any *noun* whatever; but is used in order to point out a *state of things*, or the *cause* of something produced. For instance: “*It* froze hard last night, and *it* was so cold, that *it* was with great difficulty the travellers kept on their journey.” Now, *what* was it that froze so hard? Not the *frost*; because frost is the effect, and not the cause, of freezing. We cannot say, that it was the *weather* that froze; because the freezing constituted in part the weather itself. No: the pronoun *it* stands, in this place, for *state of things*, or *circumstances*; and this sentence might be written thus: “The freezing was so hard last night, and the cold was so severe, that the travellers found great difficulty in keeping on their journey.” Let us take another example or two. “*It* is a frost this morning. *It* will rain to-night. *It* will be fine to-morrow.” That is to say, “A state of things called frost exists this morning; a state of things called rain will exist to-night; and to-morrow a state of things called fine weather.”

Another example : “ *It* is delightful to see brothers
“ and sisters living in uninterrupted love to the end
“ of their days.” That is to say ; “ The state of
“ things, which exhibits brothers and sisters living
“ in uninterrupted love to the end of their days,
“ is delightful to see.” The pronoun *it* is, in this
its impersonal capacity, used in a great variety of
instances ; but I forbear to extend my remarks on
the subject here, because those remarks will find
a more suitable place, when I come to another part
of my instructions. I have said enough here to
prevent the puzzling that might have arisen from
your perceiving, that the pronoun *it* was some-
times used without your being able to trace its con-
nexion with any noun either expressed or under-
stood.

61. In order, however, further to illustrate this
matter in this place, I will make a remark or two
upon the use of the word *there*. Example : “ *There*
“ are many men, who have been at Latin-Schools
“ for years, and who, at last, cannot write six sen-
“ tences in English correctly.” Now, you know,
the word *there*, in its usual sense, has reference to
place ; yet it has no such reference here. The
meaning is : that “ many men *are in existence*, who
“ have been at Latin-Schools.” Again ; “ *There*
“ never was any thing so beautiful as that flower.”
That is to say ; “ Any thing so beautiful as that
“ flower *never existed*, or *never was in being*.”

62. We now come to the RELATIVE PRO-
NOUNS, of which class there are only *three* ;
namely, *who*, *which*, and *that*. The two latter al-
ways remain the same, through all numbers, gen-
ders, and cases ; but, the pronoun *who*, changes its
ending, in order to express the possessive and ob-
jective cases ; as, *who*, *whose*, *whom*.

63. These pronouns are called *relative*, because
they always *relate* directly to some noun or some
personal pronoun, or to some combination of

words, which is called the *antecedent*; that is to say, the person or thing *before going*. Thus; "The *soldier*, *who* was killed at the seige." *Soldier* is the antecedent. Again: "The *men*, if I am rightly informed, *who* came hither last night, *who* went away this morning, *whose* money you have received, and to *whom* you gave a receipt, are natives of South America." *Men* is here the *antecedent*: and, in this sentence, there are all the variations to which this pronoun is liable.

64. *Who*, *whose*, and *whom*, cannot be used correctly as relatives to any nouns or pronouns, which do not represent *men*, *women*, or *children*. It is not correct to say, the horse or the dog or the tree, *who* was so and so; or, to *whom* was done this or that; or, *whose* colour, or any thing else, was such or such. But, the word *That*, as a relative pronoun, may be applied to nouns of all sorts; as, the *boy that* ran; the *horse that* galloped; the *tree that* was blown down.

65. *Which*, as a relative pronoun, is confined to irrational creatures, and here it may be used, as a relative, indifferently with *that*; as, the *horse, which* galloped; the *tree, which* was blown down. This application of the relative *which* solely to irrational creatures is, however, of modern date; for, in the Lord's Prayer, in the English Church service, we say; "Our Father *which* art in Heaven." In the American Liturgy this error has been corrected; and they say, "Our Father, *who* art in Heaven."

66. I cannot, even for the present, quit these relative pronouns without observing to you, that they are words of vast importance, and that more errors, and errors of greater consequence, arise from a misapplication of them, than from the misapplication of almost all the other classes of words, put together. The reason is this: they are *relatives*, and they frequently stand as the repre-

sentative of that which has gone before, and which stands in a distant part of the sentence. This will be more fully explained when I come to the *Syntax* of pronouns; but the matter is of such great moment, that I cannot refrain from giving you an intimation of it here.

67. The DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS are so called, because they more particularly mark, or demonstrate, the nouns, before which they are placed, or for which they sometimes stand. They are, *This, These, That, Those, and What*. The use of them is so well known, and is liable to so little error, that my chief object in giving them this separate place, is, to show you the difference between *That*, when a *relative* and when not a *relative*. Take an example; “*That* man is not the man, as far as I am able to discover, *that* came hither last night.” The first of these *Thats* does not *relate* to the man: it merely points him out; but the latter *relates* to him, carries you back to him, and supplies the place of repetition. This same word, *That*, is sometimes a *Conjunction*: as, “*That* man is not the man, as far as I can discover, *that* came hither last night, and *that* was so ill *that* he could hardly walk.” The *relative* is repeated in the third *That*: but, the fourth *That* is merely a *conjunction*, serving to connect the effect of the illness with the cause.

68. Perhaps a profound examination of the matter would lead to a proof of *That* being always a pronoun; but, as such examination would be more curious than useful, I shall content myself with having clearly shown you the difference in its offices as a *relative*, as a *demonstrative*, and as a *conjunction*.

69. *What*, together with *who, whose, whom* and *which*, are employed in asking questions, and are, sometimes, ranged under a separate head, and called *interrogative* pronouns. I have thought this

unnecessary ; but, here is an observation of importance to attend to ; for *which*, though, as a *relative* it cannot be applied to the intellectual species, is, as an interrogative, properly applied to that species : as, “ *which* man was it who spoke to you ? ”

70. *What* sometimes stands for both noun and relative pronoun : as, “ *What* I want is well known.” That is to say, “ *The thing which* I want is well known.” Indeed, *what* has, in all cases, this extended signification ; for, when, in the way of inquiry as to words which we have not clearly understood, we say, *what* ? Our full meaning is : “ repeat to us *that which* you have said, or the words *which* you have spoken.”

71. The INDETERMINATE PRONOUNS are so called, because they express their objects in a general and indetermined manner. Several of them are also *adjectives*. It is only where they are employed alone ; that is to say, without nouns, that they ought to be regarded as pronouns. For instance ; “ *One* is always bearing of the unhappiness of *one* person or *another*.” The first of these *ones* is a pronoun ; the last is an adjective, as is also the word *another* ; for a noun is *understood* to follow, though it is not expressed. These pronouns are as follows : *One, any, each, none, some, other, every, either, many, whoever, whatever, neither*, and some few others, but all of them words invariable in their orthography, and all of very common use.

LETTER VII.

ETYMOLOGY OF ADJECTIVES.

MY DEAR JAMES,

72. IN Letter III, paragraph 21, I have described what an *Adjective* is. You will, therefore, now read that paragraph carefully over, before you proceed in studying the contents of the present Letter.

73. The adjectives have no changes to express gender, or case; but, they have changes to express *degrees of comparison*. As adjectives describe the qualities and properties of nouns, and as these may be possessed in a degree higher in one case than in another, the adjectives have degrees of comparison; that is to say, changes in their endings, to suit these varying circumstances. A tree may be *high*, but another may be *higher*, and a third may be the *highest*. Adjectives have, then, these three degrees: the first degree, or rather, the primitive word, is called the *Positive*; the second, the *Comparative*; the third, the *Superlative*. For the forming of these degrees I shall give you *four rules*; and, if you pay strict attention to these rules, you will need be told very little more about this part of speech.

74. *First Rule*. Adjectives in general, which end in a consonant, form their comparative degree by adding *er* to the positive, and form their superlative degree by adding *est* to the positive: as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
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Rich,	Richer,	Richest.
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75. *Second Rule.* Adjectives, which end in *e*, add, in forming their comparative, only an *r*, and in forming their superlative, *st* : as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Wise,	Wiser,	Wisest.

76. *Third Rule.* When the positive ends in *d*, *g*, or *t*, and when these consonants are, at the same time, preceded by a *single vowel*, the consonant is doubled in forming the comparative and superlative : as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Red,	Redder,	Reddest.
Big,	Bigger,	Biggest.
Hot,	Hotter,	Hottest.

But, if the *d*, *g*, or *t*, be preceded by another consonant, or by more than one vowel, the final consonant is not doubled in the forming of the two latter degrees : as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Kind,	Kinder,	Kindest.
Neat,	Neater,	Neatest.

77. *Fourth Rule.* When the positive ends in *y*, preceded by a consonant, the *y* changes to *ie* in the other degrees.

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Lovely,	Lovelier,	Loveliest.
Pretty,	Prettier,	Prettiest.

78. There are some adjectives which can be reduced to no rule, and which must be considered as irregular : as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Good,	Better,	Best.
Bad,	Worse,	Worst.
Little,	Less,	Least.
Much,	More,	Most.

79. Some adjectives can have no degrees of comparison, because their signification admits of no augmentation : as, *all, each, every, any, several, very, some* ; and all the numerical adjectives ; as, *one, two, three ; first, second, third*.

80. Adjectives which end in *most*, are superlative, and admit of no change : as, *utmost, uppermost*.

81. However, you will observe, that all adjectives which admit of comparison, may form their degrees by the use of the words *more* and *most* : as,

POSITIVE.	COMPARATIVE.	SUPERLATIVE.
Rich,	More rich,	Most rich.
Tender,	More tender,	Most tender.

When the positive contains but *one syllable*, the degrees are usually formed by adding to the positive according to the four rules. When the positive contains *two syllables*, it is matter of taste which method you shall use in forming the degrees. The ear is, in this case, the best guide. But, when the positive contains *more than two syllables*, the degrees must be formed by the use of *more* and *most*. We may say *tender* and *tenderest, pleasanter*.

and *pleasantest*, *prettier*, and *prettiest*; but who can endure *delicater* and *delicatest*?

LETTER VIII.

ETYMOLOGY OF VERBS.

MY DEAR JAMES,

82. THE first thing you have to do in beginning your study as to this important part of speech, is to read again very slowly and carefully paragraphs 23, 24, 25, and 26, in Letter III. Having, by well attending to what is said in those paragraphs, learnt to distinguish *Verbs* from the words belonging to other parts of speech, you will now enter, with a clear head, on an inquiry into the variations, to which the words of this part of speech are liable.

83. SORTS OF VERBS. Verbs are considered as *active verbs*, *passive*, or *neuter*. A verb is called active when it expresses an *action* which is produced by the nominative of the sentence: as, "Sidmouth *imprisoned* Benbow." It is passive, when it expresses an action, which is received, or endured, by the person or thing which is the nominative of the sentence: as, "Benbow *is imprisoned*." It is neuter, when it expresses simply the state of being, or of existence, of a person or thing: as, "Benbow *lies* in irons;" or, when it expresses an action *confined within the actor*.

84. It is of great consequence, that you clearly understand these distinctions, because I shall, by-and-by, use these terms very frequently. And, in order to give you a proof of the necessity of attending to these distinctions, I will here give you a specimen of the errors, which are sometimes com-

itted by those who do not understand Grammar. This last mentioned Verb, *to lie*, becomes in the past time, *lay*. Thus: "Benbow *lies* in irons now, but, until his refusal to enter into recognisances, he *lay* with his limbs unironed." This verb is often confounded with the verb *to lay*, which is an *active* verb, and which becomes, in its past time, *laid*. Thus: "I *lay* my hat on the table to-day, but, yesterday, I *laid* it on the shelf." Let us take another instance in order the more clearly to explain this matter. A verb may, sometimes, be what we call a *neuter* verb, though it express an *action*; but this happens when the action is *confined within the actor*;—that is to say, when there is no object *to which the action passes*. *Strike* is clearly an active verb, because something is *stricken*; a stroke is *given to*, or *put upon*, something. But, in the case of *to rise*, though there is an *action*, it passes on to no object; as, I *rise* early. Here is no object to which the action passes. But, *to raise* is an active verb because the action passes on to an object: as, I *raise a stick*, I *raise my hand*, I *raise my head*, and also, I *raise myself*; because, though in this last instance, the action is confined to me, it is understood, that my mind gives the motion to my body. These two verbs are, in speaking and writing, incessantly confounded; though one is a neuter, and the other an active verb, though one is regular and the other irregular, and though they are not, in any person, time, or mode, composed of the same letters. This confusion could never take place, if attention were paid to the principle above laid down.

85. Having thus given you the means of distinguishing the sorts of Verbs, I now proceed to matters, which are common to all the sorts. There are four things to be considered in a Verb; the *person*, the *number*, the *time*, and the *mode*.

86. THE PERSON.—Read again Letter VI. on the Etymology of Pronouns. You will there clearly see the use of this distinction about *persons*; and, as I have told you, you will find that it is a matter of great consequence; because, it will now, at once, be evident to you, that, unless the distinction of person be attended to, almost every sentence must be erroneous.

87. The verb must *agree in person* with the *noun* or the *pronoun*, which is the nominative of the sentence. Look back at Letter V, and at paragraphs 44, 45, 46, and 47, in order to refresh your memory as to the *nominative* and other cases. The verb, then, must *agree* with the nominative; as, “*I write*; he *writes*.” To say, “*I writes*; he *writes*,” these would be both erroneous.

88. Look back at the explanation about the *persons* in the etymology of pronouns in Letter VI. There are *three persons*; but, our verbs have no variation in their spelling, except for the *third person singular*. For we say, “*I write*, you *write*, “*we write*, they *write*,” and only “*he, she, or it writes*.” This, then, is a very plain matter.

89. NUMBER is a matter equally plain, seeing that our verbs do not, except in one or two instances, vary their endings, to express number. But, when several nouns, or pronouns, come together, care must be taken to make the verb *agree* with them: as, “*Benbow and the two Evanses resist* the tyrants.” Not *resists*. But this will be more fully dwelt on in the Syntax.

90. THE TIME. The verb has variations to express the *time* of an action: as, “*Sidmouth writes* a Circular Letter; *Sidmouth wrote* a Circular Letter; *Sidmouth will write* a Circular Letter.” Again: “*Evans defies* the tyrants; *Evans defied* the tyrants; *Evans will defy* the tyrants.” The *Times* of a verb are, therefore, called the *present*, the *past*, and the *future*.

91. THE MODES.—The *Modes* of verbs are the *different manners* of expressing an action, or a state of being, which manners are sometimes *positive*, sometimes *conditional*, and sometimes *indeterminate*; and there are *changes*, or *variations*, in the spelling, or writing, of the verb, or of the little words used with the verb, in order to express this difference in *manner* and sense. I will give you an instance: “He *walks* fast.” “If he *walk* fast, he will fatigue himself.” In most other languages, the verb changes its form very often and very much to make it express the different modes. In ours it does not; because we have little words called *signs*, which we use with the verbs instead of varying the form of the verbs themselves. To make this matter clear, I will give you an example of the English compared with the French language in this respect.

E.

F.

I march,

Je marche,

I marched,

Je marchois,

I may march,

Je marchasse,

I should march,

Je marcherois.

There are other variations in the French verb; but we effect the purposes of these variations by the use of the *signs*, *shall*, *may*, *might*, *could*, *would*, and others.

92. The modes are four in number; the *infinitive*, the *indicative*, the *subjunctive*, and the *imperative*. Besides these there are the two *participles*, of which I shall speak presently.

93. The *Infinitive* mode is the verb in its primitive state: as, *to march*. And this is called the *infinitive*, because it is without bounds or limit. It merely expresses the action of marching, without

any constraint as to person or number or time. The little word, *to*, makes, in fact, a part of the verb. This word, *to*, is, of itself, a preposition; but, as prefixed to verbs, it is merely a sign of the Infinitive Mode. In other languages, there is no such sign. In the French, for instance, *aller*, means, *to go*; *écrire*, means, *to write*. Thus, then, you will bear in mind, that, in English, the *to* makes a part of the verb itself, when in the *infinitive mode*.

94. The *Indicative Mode* is that, in which we express an action, or state of being, positively; that is to say, without any condition, or any dependant circumstance. It merely indicates the action or state of being, without subjoining any thing which renders the action or state of being dependant on any other action or state of being. Thus: "He writes." This is the indicative.

95. But, the *Subjunctive Mode* comes into use, when I say: "if he write, the guilty tyrants will be ready with their dungeons and axes." In this case, there is something subjoined; and, therefore, this is called the *subjunctive mode*. Observe, however, that, in our language, there is no very great use in this distinction of modes; because, for the most part, our little signs do the business, and they never vary in the letters of which they are composed. The distinction is useful only as regards the employment of verbs without the signs, and where the signs are left to be understood; as in the above case; "If he should write, the guilty tyrants would be ready." And, observe, further, that, when the signs are used, or understood, the verb retains its original, or primitive, form, throughout all the persons, numbers, and times.

96. The *Imperative Mode* is mentioned here merely for form's sake. It is that state of the verb which commands, orders, bids, calls to, or

invokes : as, "*Come* hither ; *be* good ; *march* away ; *pay* me." In other languages there are changes in the spelling of the verbs to answer to this mode ; but in ours there are none of these ; and, therefore, the matter is hardly worth notice, except as a mere matter of form.

97. The *Participles*, however, are different in point of importance. They are of two sorts, the *active* and *passive*. The former ends always in *ing*, and the latter is generally the same as the *past time* of the verb out of which it grows. Thus : *working* is an active participle, and *worked* a passive participle. They are called participles because they *partake* of the qualities of other parts of speech as well as of verbs. For instance : " I am *working* ; *working* is laudable ; a *working* man is more worthy of honour than a titled plunderer who lives in idleness." In the first instance, *working* is a *verb*, in the second, a *noun*, in the third, an *adjective*. So, in the case of the passive participle ; I *worked* yesterday ; that is *worked* mortar. The first is a *verb*, the last an *adjective*.

98. Thus have I gone through all the circumstances of change to which verbs are liable. I will now give you the complete *conjugation* of a verb. To *conjugate*, in its usual acceptation, means, to *join together* ; and, as used by grammarians, it means, to place under one view all the *variations* in the form of a verb ; beginning with the Infinitive Mode and ending with the Participle. I will now lay before you, then, the *conjugation* of the verb to *work*, exhibiting that verb in all its persons, numbers, times and modes.

INFINITIVE MODE.

To Work.

INDICATIVE MODE.

	<i>Singular.</i>	<i>Plural.</i>
Present Time.	{ 1st Person. I work,	We work.
	{ 2d Person. Thou workest,	You work.
	{ 3d Person. He, she, or it, works.	They work.
Past Time.	{ ——— I worked,	We worked.
	{ ——— Thou workedst,	You worked.
	{ ——— He worked.	They worked.
Future Time.	{ ——— I shall or will work,	We shall or will work.
	{ ——— Thou shalt or wilt work,	You shall or will work.
	{ ——— He shall or will work.	They shall or will work.

SUBJUNCTIVE MODE.

If I work, or may, might, could, would, or should, work.
 If thou work, or may, ————— work.
 If he, she, or it work, or mayest, ————— work.
 If we work, or may, ————— work.
 If you work, or may, ————— work.
 If they work, or may, ————— work.

IMPERATIVE MOOD.

Let me work,
 Work thou,
 Let him work.

Let us work,
 Work you,
 Let them work.

PARTICIPLES.

Active.—Working.*Passive.*—Worked.

99. Some explanatory remarks are necessary here. The third person singular of the Indicative used to be written with *eth*: as *worketh*; but this spelling has long been disused. The *past time* may be formed by *did*: as *did work*, instead of *worked*; and *do work* may be used in the present time; but, in fact, these little words are a great deal more than mere marks of the *times*. They are used in one time to express the negative of another, or, to affirm with more than ordinary emphasis.

100. Grammarians generally make a present and a past time under the subjunctive mode; but, the truth is, that any of the *signs* may apply to the present, past, or future of that Mode. These are little words of vast import and of constant use; and, though that use is so very difficult to be learned by foreigners, we ourselves never make mistakes with regard to it. The verb *to be* alone changes its form in order to make a past time in the Subjunctive Mode.

101. As to the *Imperative Mode*, where the pronouns *Thou* and *You* are put after the verb, we seldom do this. We make use of the verb only, which is quite sufficient.

102. Some Grammarians put in their conjugations what they call the *compound times*: as, *I have worked*, *I had worked*, *I shall have worked*, *I may have worked*, and so on. But this can only serve to fill up a book; for all these consist merely in the introduction and use of the verb *to have* in its various parts. In the above conjugation all the *changes* or *variations* of the verb are exhibited; and it is those changes and variations, which, under the present head, form the important object of our enquiry.

103. The verbs *to have* and *to be* are of great use in our language. They are called *auxiliary verbs*. *To let* and *to do* are also called auxiliaries:

but they are of far less importance than *to have* and *to be*. Before, however, I say more on the subject of these auxiliaries, I must speak of all the verbs as *regular* or *irregular*, just observing here, that the word *auxiliary* means *helper*, or *helping*.

104. Verbs are called *regular*, where they have their changes or variations according to a certain rule, or manner. Thus: "I *walk*, I *walked*; I *work*, I *worked*." But, I cannot say, "I *writed*." I must say, "I *wrote*." Now, observe, that we call *regular* verbs all those which end their *past time* of the *Indicative* and their *passive participle* in *ed*: and, if you now look back at the conjugation of the verb *to work*, you will find that that is a regular verb. Indeed, this is the case with almost all our verbs. But, there are some little *irregularities* even here, and they must be very well attended to, because a want of attention to them leads to very great errors even as to spelling.

105. These little irregularities I shall notice under five separate heads; and, if you should forget, at any time, what has been said on the subject, a reference to these will, in a moment, set you right. I. The verb *to work* is perfectly regular, for, it has *ed* added to it, in order to form the *past time*, and also in order to form the *passive participle*. It is the same with the verbs *to walk*, *to turn*, *to abandon*, and numerous others. But, if the *infinitive*, that is to say, the primitive or original word, end in *e*, then *d* only is added, in the past time and participle, and *st* instead of *est* after *Thou*: as, in the case of *to move*, which becomes *moved* and *movest*. You have seen also, in the case of the verb *to work*, that we add only an *s* to form the third person singular of the present of the *indicative*: *he works*. But if the infinitive end in *h*, *s*, *x*, or *z*, then *es* must be added; as, *to wish*, *he wishes*; *to toss*, *he tosses*; *to box*, *he boxes*; *to*

buzz, he buzzes.—II. When the infinitive ends in *y*, and when that *y* has a consonant immediately before it, the *y* is changed into *ie* to form the third person singular of the present of the indicative: as, *to reply, he replies.* But, (and I beg you to mark it well) if the ending *y* have a vowel immediately before it, the verb follows the general rule, in the formation of the third person singular of the present of the indicative: as, *to delay, he delays*; and not *he delaies*. It is the same in the second person singular; as, *to reply, thou repliest*; *to delay, thou delayest*.—III. When the infinitive ends in *y*, with a consonant immediately before it, the past time of the indicative and the passive participle are formed by using an *i* instead of the *y*: as, *to reply, he replied*; *to deny, it was denied*. But, if the *y* be preceded by a vowel, *ed* is added to the *y* in the usual manner: as, *to delay, he delayed*.—IV. The active participle, which always ends in *ing*, is, in general, formed by simply adding the *ing* to the infinitive: as, *to work, working*; *to talk, talking*. But, if the infinitive end in a single *e*, the *e* is dropped; as, *to move, moving*. The verb *to be* is an exception to this: but, then that is an irregular verb. It is when the infinitive ends in a single *e* mind; for, if the *e* be double, the general rule is followed: as, *to free, freeing*. When the infinitive ends in *ie*, those letters are changed into *y* in the forming of the active participle: as *to lie, lying*.—V. When the infinitive ends in a single consonant, which has a single vowel immediately before it, the final consonant is doubled, not only in forming the active participle, but also in forming the past time of the indicative, and the passive participle: as, *to rap, rapping, I rapped, it was rapped*. But, observe well, this rule holds good only as to words of one syllable; for, if the infinitive of the verb have more than one syllable, the consonant is not doubled unless the accent be on

the last syllable ; and the accent means the main force, or weight, or sound of the voice in pronouncing the word. For instance, in the word *to open*, the accent is on the *first* syllable ; and, therefore, we write, *opening, opened*. But, when we come to the verb *to refer*, where we find the accent on the last syllable, we write *referring, referred*.

106. These irregularities, though very necessary to be attended to, do not prevent us from considering the verbs, which are subject to them, as *regular verbs*. The mark of a regular verb, is, that its *past time* and *passive participle* end in *ed*: every verb, which does not answer to this mark, is *irregular*.

107. There are many of these *irregular verbs*, of which I shall here insert a complete list. All the irregularities, (except the little irregularities just mentioned) which it is possible to find in an English verb (the *auxiliary verbs* excepted) are in the *past time* and the *passive participle* only. Therefore, it will be sufficient to give a List, showing, in those two instances, what are the irregularities of each verb ; and, in order to render this List convenient, and to shorten the work of referring to it, I shall make it alphabetical. With the past time of the several verbs I shall use the first person singular of the pronoun in order to make my examples as clear as possible.

LIST OF IRREGULAR VERBS.

INFINITIVE.	PAST TIME.	PARTICIPLE.
To abide,	I abode,	abode.
to be,	I was,	been.
to bear,	I bore,	borne.
to beat,	I beat,	beaten.
to become,	I became,	become.
to befall,	It befell,	befell.

to beget,	I begot,	begotten.
to begin,	I began,	begun.
to behold,	I beheld,	beheld.
to bend,	I bent,	bent.
to be-eech,	I besought,	besought.
to bid,	I bade,	bidden.
to bind,	I bound,	bound.
to bite,	I bit,	bitten.
to bleed,	I bled,	bled.
to break,	I broke,	broken.
to breed,	I bred,	bred.
to bring,	I brought,	brought.
to buy,	I bought,	bought.
to catch,	I caught,	caught.
to choose,	I chose,	chosen.
to cleave,	I clove,	cloven.
to come,	I came,	come.
to cost,	I cost,	cost.
to cut,	I cut,	cut.
to die,	I died,	dead.
to do,	I did,	done.
to drink,	I drank,	drunk.
to drive,	I drove,	driven.
to eat,	I ate,	eaten.
to fall,	I fell,	fallen.
to feed,	I fed,	fed.
to feel,	I felt,	felt.
to fight,	I fought,	fought.
to find,	I found,	found.
to flee,	I fled,	fled.
to fling,	I flung,	flung.
to fly,	I flew,	flown.
to forbear,	I forbore,	forborn.
to forbid,	I forbade,	forbidden.
to forget,	I forgot,	forgotten.
to forgive,	I forgave,	forgiven.
to forsake,	I forsook,	forsaken.
to get,	I got,	gotten.
to give,	I gave,	given.

To go,	I went,	gone.
to grind,	I ground,	ground.
to have,	I had,	had.
to hear,	I heard,	heard.
to hide,	I hid,	hidden.
to hit,	I hit,	hit.
to hold,	I held,	held.
to hurt,	I hurt,	hurt.
to keep,	I kept,	kept.
to know,	I knew,	known.
to lay,	I laid,	laid.
to lead,	I led,	led.
to leave,	I left,	left.
to lend,	I lent,	lent.
to let,	I let,	let.
to lie,	I lay,	lain.
to lose,	I lost,	lost.
to make,	I made,	made.
to meet,	I met,	met.
to overcome,	I overcame,	overcome.
to overdo,	I overdid,	overdone.
to pass,	I passed,	past.
to pay,	I paid,	paid.
to put,	I put,	put.
to read,	I read,	read.
to rend,	I rent,	rent.
to ride,	I rode,	ridden.
to ring,	I rang,	rung.
to rise,	I rose,	risen.
to run,	I ran,	run.
to say,	I said,	said.
to see,	I saw,	seen.
to seek,	I sought,	sought.
to sell,	I sold,	sold.
to send,	I sent,	sent.
to set,	I set,	set.
to shake,	I shook,	shaken.
to shear,	I sheared,	shorn.
to shed,	I shed,	shed.

To show,	I showed,	shown.
to shrink,	I shrank,	shrank.
to shoe,	I shod,	shod.
to shoot,	I shot,	shotten.
to shut,	I shut,	shut.
to sing,	I sang,	sung.
to sink,	I sank,	sunken.
to sit,	I sat,	sitten.
to slay,	I slew,	slain.
to sleep,	I slept,	slept.
to slide,	I slid,	slidden.
to slit,	I slit,	slit.
to smite,	I smote,	smitten.
to speak,	I spoke,	spoken.
to speed,	I sped,	sped.
to spend,	I spent,	spent.
to spin,	I span,	spun.
to spit,	I spat,	spitten.
to spread	I spread,	spread.
to stand,	I stood,	stood.
to steal,	I stole,	stolen.
to stick,	I stuck,	stuck.
to stink,	I stunk,	stunk.
to strike,	I struck,	struck.
to swear,	I swore,	sworn.
to take,	I took,	taken.
to teach,	I taught,	taught.
to tear,	I tore,	torn.
to tell,	I told,	told.
to think,	I thought,	thought.
to tread,	I trod,	trodden.
to understand,	I understood,	understood.
to wear,	I wore,	worn.
to win,	I won,	won.
to wind,	I wound,	wound.
to write,	I wrote,	written.

108. It is usual with grammarians to insert several verbs in their *List of Irregulars*, which I have

not inserted here. But, I have, in the above List, placed every verb in our language which is really irregular. However, I will here subjoin a list of those verbs, which are, by some grammarians, reckoned irregular; and, then, I will show you, not only, that they are not irregular, strictly speaking; but, that you ought, by all means, to use them in the regular form.

LIST OF VERBS, WHICH, BY SOME PERSONS, ARE
ERRONEOUSLY DEEMED IRREGULARS.

INFINITIVE.	PASSED TIME.	PARTICIPLE.
To awake,	I awoke,	awaked.
to bereave,	I bereft,	bereft.
to blow,	I blew,	blown.
to build,	I built,	built.
to burn,	I burnt,	burnt.
to burst,	I burst,	burst.
to cast,	I cast,	cast.
to chide,	I chid,	chidden.
to cling,	I clung,	clung.
to creep,	I crept,	crept.
to crow,	I crew,	crowed.
to curse,	I curst,	curst.
to dare,	I dared,	dared.
to deal,	I dealt,	dealt.
to dig,	I dug,	dug.
to dip,	I dipt,	dipt.
to draw,	I drew,	drawn.
to dream,	I dreamt,	dreamt.
to dwell,	I dwelt,	dwelt.
to freeze,	I froze,	frozen.
to geld,	I gelt,	gelt.
to gild,	I gilt,	gilt.
to gird,	I girt,	girt.
to grow,	I grew,	grown.
to hang,	I hung,	hung.

To help,	I helpt,	helpt.
to hew,	I hewed,	hewn.
to kneel,	I knelt,	knelt.
to knit,	I knit,	knit.
to lade,	I loaded,	laden.
to leap,	I leapt,	leapt.
to light,	I light,	light.
to load,	I loaded,	loaden.
to mean,	I meant,	meant.
to mow,	I mowed,	mown.
to overflow,	I overflowed,	overflown.
to saw,	I sawed,	sawn.
to shave,	I shaved,	shaven.
to shred,	I shred,	shred.
to shine,	I shone,	shone.
to sling,	I slung,	slung.
to slink,	I slunk,	slunk.
to slip,	I slipt,	slipt.
to smell,	I smelt,	smelt.
to snow,	It snowed,	snown.
to sow,	I sowed,	sown.
to spell,	I spelt,	spelt.
to spill,	I spilt,	spilt.
to spit,	I spat,	spitten.
to split,	I split,	split.
to spring,	I sprang,	sprung.
to stamp,	I stamp't,	stamp't.
to sting,	I stung or stang,	stung.
to strew,	I strewed,	strewn.
to strow,	I strowed,	strown.
to stride,	I strode,	stridden.
to string,	I strung,	strung.
to strip,	I stript,	stript.
to strive,	I strove,	striven.
to sweep,	I swept,	swept.
to swell,	I swelled,	swollen.
to swim,	I swam,	swum.
to swing,	I swung or swang,	swung.
to thrive,	I throve,	thriven.

to throw,	I threw,	thrown.
to thrust,	I thrust,	thrust.
to wax,	I waxed,	waxen.
to weave,	I wove,	woven.
to weep,	I wept,	wept.
to whip,	I whipt,	whipt.

109. The greater part of these verbs have become irregular by the bad practice of *abbreviating*, or *shortening*, in writing. We are always given to cut our words short; and, with very few exceptions, you find people writing *lov'd*, *mov'd*, *walk'd*; instead of *loved*, *moved*, *walked*. They wish to make the *pen* correspond with the *tongue*; but, they ought not, then, to write the word *the* at full length, nor the word *of*, nor any other little word; for, scarcely ever are these words *fully sounded* in speaking. From *lov'd*, *mov'd*, *walk'd*, it is very easy to slide into *lovt*, *movt*, *walkt*. And this has been the case with regard to *curst*, *dealt*, *dwelt*, *leapt*, *helpt*, and many others in the last inserted list. It is just as proper to say *jumpt* as it is to say *leapt*, and just as proper to say *walkt* as either; and thus we might go on, till the orthography of the whole language were changed. When the love of contraction came to operate on such verbs as *to burst* and *to light*, it found such a clump of consonants already at the end of the words, that it could add none. It could not enable the organs even of English speech, to pronounce *burst'd*, *light'd*. It, therefore, made really short work of it, and, dropping the last syllable altogether, wrote, *burst*, and *light*, in the past time and passive participle. But, is it not more harmonious, as well as more correct, to say, "the bubble is almost *burst-ed*," than it is to say, "the bubble is almost *burst*"? And as to *hang*, is it not better to say, *hanged* than *hung*? "I will be *hanged* if I do,"

is a very common phrase ; and is it not better than it would be to say, “ I will be *hung* if I do ” ? Many of these verbs, by being very difficult to contract, have, as in the case of *to hang*, *to swing*, and the like, reduced the shorteners to the necessity of changing almost all the letters of the words : as, *to dare*, *durst* ; but, is it not better to say I *dared* than I *durst* ? This habit of contracting, or shortening, is a very mischievous habit. It leads to the destruction of all propriety in the use of letters ; and, instead of *a saving of time*, it produces, by the puzzling that it gives rise to, a great *loss of time*. Hoping that what I have here said, will be a warning to you against the cutting of words short, I have only to add, on the subject of *irregular Verbs*, that those in the last list are to be used in the regular form, and that the only real irregulars are those of the first list. Nay, I have, after all, left some verbs in the first list, which *may* be used in the regular form : as, *past*, which may be, in the participle, *passed*, and with full as much propriety.

110. AUXILIARY VERBS.—In the present Letter, paragraph 103, I opened this part of my subject. The word *let*, is the passed time and the passive participle of the verb *to let*. It is used as an auxiliary, however, in the *present time* ; and only in the *imperative mode* : as, *let me go* ; *let us go* ; *let him go*. That is to say, *leave me to go*, *leave us to go*, *leave him to go*. Perhaps, the meaning, *fully expressed*, would be, act in such a way that I may be left to go, or suffered to go.

111. The auxiliary *do*, which, for the past time, becomes *did*, is part of the verb *to do*, which in its past time is *did*, and in its passive participle *done*. In this sense, it is not an *auxiliary*, but a *principal verb*, and its meaning is equal to that of *to execute*, or *to perform* : as, *I do my work*, *I execute my work*, *I perform my work*. As an auxiliary

or *helper*, it seems to denote the *time* of the principal verb; as, I *do* walk; I *did* walk; and, we may say, I *do execute my work*, or, I *do do my work*. In this last example the first *do* is an auxiliary, and the last *do* a principal verb. However, as I said before, *do* and *did*, used as auxiliaries, do a great deal more than merely express *time*. In fact, they are not often used for that purpose only, they are used for the purpose of affirming or denying in a manner peculiarly strong: as, I *do* work, means, that I work, notwithstanding all that may be, or may have been, said, or thought, to the contrary; or it means, that I work *now*, and have not done it at some other stated, or supposed, time. It is, with the exception of time, the same as to the use of *did*. These are amongst those little words of vast import, the proper force and use of which foreigners scarcely ever learn, and which we learn from our very infancy.

112. The verbs *to have* and *to be* are the two great auxiliaries. These words demand an extraordinary portion of your attention. They are *principal* verbs as well as auxiliaries. The verb *to have*, as a principal verb, signifies *possession*: as I *have a pen*; that is to say, I *possess a pen*. Then, this is a word of very great use indeed in its capacity of principal verb; for we say, I *have a headache*, I *have a hatred* of such a thing, I *have a mind to go*; and hundreds of similar phrases. I *possess a headache*, has the same *meaning*; but, the other is more agreeable to the natural turn of our language. As *auxiliary* this verb is absolutely necessary in forming what are called the *compound times* of other verbs, and those times are called *compound*, because they are formed of *two or more verbs*. Suppose the subject to be of *my working*; and, that I want to tell you, that my work is *ended*; that I have *closed my work*. I cannot, in a short manner, tell you this without the *help* of the verb

to have. To say *I work*, or *I worked*, or *I will work*: these will not answer my purpose. No: I must call in the *help* of the verb *to have*, and tell you *I have worked*. So, in the case of the past time, I must say, *I had worked*: in the future, *I shall have worked*; in the subjunctive mode, I must say, *I may, might, could, or should have worked*. If you reflect a little you will find a *clear reason* for employing the verb *to have* in this way; for, when I say, "*I have worked*," my words amount to this; that the *act of working* is now in my possession. It is completed. It is a thing I own, and, therefore, I say, *I have it*.

113. The verb *to be* signifies *existence* when used as a principal verb. "*To be ill, to be well, to be rich, to be poor*," mean, to *exist* in illness, in health, in riches, in poverty. This verb, in its *compound times* requires the *help* of the verb, *to have*, as, *I have been, I had been, I shall have been*, and so on. As *auxiliary*, this verb is used with the *participles* of other verbs: as, *to be working, he is working, it is worked*. Now, you will perceive, if you reflect, that these phrases mean as follows: *existing in work, he exists in work, it exists in a worked state*. Both these verbs are sometimes used, at one and the same time, as *auxiliaries* to other *principal verbs*: as, *I have been writing; I have been imprisoned*; and so on; and, upon patient attention to what has already been said, you will find, that they retain, upon all occasions, their full meaning of *possession* in the one case, and of *existence* in the other.

114. Now, my dear James, if I have succeeded in making clear to you the *principle*, out of which the use of these words, as *auxiliaries*, has arisen, I have accomplished a great deal; for, if well grounded in that *principle*, all the subsequent difficulties will speedily vanish before you.

115. I now proceed to close this long and im-

portant Letter by presenting to you the conjugation of these two verbs, both of which are *irregular*, and every irregularity is worthy of your strict attention.

INFINITIVE MODE.

To have.

INDICATIVE MODE.

Singular.

Plural.

Pr. Time.	{	1st Person, I have,	We have,
		2d Person, Thou hast,	You have,
		3d Person, He, she, or it has or hath.	They have.
Past Ti.	{	— I had,	We had,
		— Thou hadst,	You had,
		— He, she, or it had.	They had.
Fu. Time.	{	— I shall, or will, have,	We shall, or will, have,
		— Thou shalt, or wilt, have,	You shall, or will, have,
		— He, she, or it, shall or will, have.	They shall, or will, have.

SUBJUNCTIVE MODE.

If I have, or may, might, would, could, or should, have.
 If thou have, or may, _____ have.
 If he, she, or it, have, or mayest, _____ have.
 If we have, or may, _____ have.
 If you have, or may, _____ have.
 If they have, or may, _____ have.

IMPERATIVE MODE.

Let me have,	Let us have,
Have thou,	Have you,
Let him, her, or it have.	Let them have.

PARTICIPLES.

Active.—Having.

Passive.—Had.

116. Though I have inserted *hath* in the third person singular of the present of the indicative, it is hardly ever used. It is out of date, and ought to be wholly laid aside.

117. The verb *to be* is still more irregular, but, a little attention to its irregularities will prevent all errors in the use of it.

INFINITIVE MODE.

To be.

INDICATIVE MODE.

Singular.

Plural.

Pres. Time.	{	1st Person, I am,	We are,
		2nd Person, Thou art,	You are,
		3d Person, He, she, or it is.	They are.
Past Time.	{	— I was,	We were,
		— Thou wast,	You were,
		— He, she, or it, was.	They were.
Future Time.	{	— I shall, or will, be,	We shall, or will, be,
		— Thou shalt, or wilt, be,	You shall, or will, be,
		— He, she, or it, shall, or will, be.	They shall, or will, be.

SUBJUNCTIVE MODE.

Pres. Time.	{	If I be, or may, might, would, could, or should, be	
		If Thou be, or may,	be.
		If He, she, or it, be, or mayest,	be.
		If We be, or may,	be.
		If you be, or may,	be.
	{	If They be, or may,	be.

Past Time.	{	If I were,	
		If Thou wert,	
		If He, she, or it were,	
		If We were,	
		If You were,	
	{	If They were,	

IMPERATIVE MODE.

Let me be,	Let us be,
Be thou,	Be you,
Let him, she, or it, be.	Let them be;

118. In the Subjunctive Mode, I have made use of the conjunction *if*, throughout all the conjugations of verbs. But, a verb may be in that Mode without an *if* before it. The *if* is only one of the marks of that mode. A verb is always in that Mode, when the *action* or *state of being* expressed by the verb is expressed *conditionally*; or when the action or state of being is, in some way or other, *dependent* on some other action or state of being. But, of this I shall speak more at large when I come to the *Syntax* of Verbs.

119. There remain a few words to be said about the signs, the *defective verbs*, and the *impersonal verbs*. The signs, *may*, *might*, *can*, *could*, *will*, *would*, *shall*, *should*, and *must*, have all, originally, been verbs, though they are now become defective in almost all their parts, and serve only as signs to other verbs. *Will*, indeed, is part of a regular verb: as, *to will*, *they willed*, *they are willing*, *they will be willing*. The word *would* is certainly the past time and passive participle of the same verb; and, indeed, it is used as a principal verb now, in certain cases: as, "I *would* he were rich." That is to say, I *desire*, or, am *willing*, or, it is *my will*, that he *should be* rich. But, deep enquiries regarding the origin of these words are more curious than useful. A mere idea of the nature of their origin is enough. The word *ought* is a verb, defective in most of its parts. It certainly, however, is no other than a part of the verb *to owe* and is become *ought* by corruption. For instance; "I *ought* to write to you," means, That "I *owe* the performance of the act of writing to you." *Ought* is made use of only in the *present time*, and, for that reason, a great deal has been lost to our language by this corruption. As to the verbs, which some Grammarians have called *impersonal*, there are, in fact, no such things in the English Language. By *impersonal verb* is meant, a verb that has no noun or

pronoun for its nominative case: no person or thing that is the actor, or receiver of an action, or that is in being. Thus: "*It rains,*" is by some called an *impersonal* verb; but the pronoun *it* represents the person. Look again at Letter VI, and at paragraphs 60 and 61. You will there find what it is that this *it*, in such cases, represents.

120. Thus I have concluded my Letter on the Etymology of verbs, which is by far the most important part of the subject. Great as have been my endeavours to make the matter clear to you, I am aware, that, after the *first reading* of this Letter, your mind will be greatly confused. You will have had a glimpse at every thing in the Letter, but will have seen nothing clearly. But, my dear James, lay the book aside for a day or two. Then read the whole Letter again and again. Read it early, while your mind is clear, and while sluggards are snoring.^o Write it down. Lay it aside for another day or two. Copy your own writing. *Think* as you proceed; and, at the end of your copying, you will understand clearly all the contents of the Letter. Do not attempt to study the Letter *piece by piece*. In your readings as well as in your copyings go clean throughout. If you follow these instructions, the remaining part of your task will be very easy and pleasant.

LETTER IX.

ETYMOLOGY OF ADVERBS.

121. IN Letter III, and in paragraphs 27 and 28, you will find a description of this part of speech. Read again those two paragraphs, in order to refresh your memory. There is not much to be said about adverbs under the head of Etymo-

logy. They are words liable to few variations. Adverbs are very numerous, and may be divided into five principal classes; that is to say, Adverbs of *time*, of *place*, of *order*, of *quality*, and of *manner*. This last class, which is the most numerous, is composed of those which are derived, immediately, from adjectives, and which end in *ly*: as, *especially*, *particularly*, *thankfully*.

122. These adverbs, ending in *ly*, are, for the most part, formed by simply adding *ly* to the adjective: as *especial* becomes *especially*; but, if the adjective end in *y*, that *y* is changed into *i* in forming the adverb: as, *happy*, *happily*; *steady*, *steadily*. If the adjective end in *le*, the *e* is dropped in forming the adverb: as, *possible*, *possibly*.

123. Some few adjectives have *degrees of comparison*: as, *often*, *oftener*, *oftenest*; and those which are derived from irregular adjectives, are irregular in forming their degrees of comparison: as *well*, *better*, *best*.

124. Some adverbs are *simple*, or *single*; others *compound*. The former consist of *one word*, the latter of *two*, or more words: as, *happily*, *at present*, *now-a-days*; which last means, *at the days that now are*. Another adverb of this description is, *by-and-by*; which is used to express, *in a short time*; and literally it means *near and near*; because *by* itself, as an adverb, means *near*, *close beside*. When adverbs are compound, the words composing them ought to be connected by a *hyphen*, or *hyphens*, as in the above examples of *now-a-days* and *by-and-by*.

LETTER X.

ETYMOLOGY OF PREPOSITIONS.

125. LETTER III, paragraphs 29 and 30, has taught you of what description of words *Prepositions* are. The chief use of them is to express the different *relations* or *connexions*, which nouns have with each other, or, in which nouns stand with regard to each other : as, John gives money *to* Peter ; Peter receives money *from* John. It is useless to attempt to go into curious enquiries as to the *origin* of prepositions. They never change their endings ; they are always written in the same manner. Their *use* is the main thing to be considered ; and that will become very clear to you, when you come to the syntax.

126. There are two *abbreviations*, or *shortenings*, of prepositions, which I will notice here, because they are in constant use, and may excite doubts in your mind. They are *a* and *o'* : as, I am *a* hunting ; he is *a* coming : it is one *o'*clock. The *a*, thus added, is *at*, without doubt ; as, I am *at* hunting ; he is *at* coming. Generally this is a vulgar and redundant manner of speaking ; but it is *in use*. In mercantile accounts you will frequently see this *a* made use of in a very odd sort of way : as, "six bales marked 1 *a* 6." The merchant means, "six bales marked from 1 *to* 6." But, this I take to be a relick of the Norman French, which was once the law and mercantile language of England ; for, in French, *à*, with an accent, means *to* or *at*. I wonder that merchants, who are generally men of sound sense, do not discontinue the use of this mark of affectation. And, I beg you, my dear James, to bear in mind, that the *only* use of words is to cause our meaning to be clearly understood ; and that the best words are those, which are fa-

miliar to the ears of the greatest number of persons. 'The *o*' with the mark of elision, means, *of*, or *of the*, or *on*, or *on the*: as, *two o'clock*, is the same as to say *two of the clock*, or *two according to the clock*, or *two on the clock*.

127. As to the prepositions, which are joined to verbs or other words: as to *outlive*, to *undervalue*, to be *overdone*, it would be to waste our time to spend it in any statements about them; for, these are *other words* than to *live*, to *value*, to be *done*. If we were to go, in this way, into the subject of the *composition* of words, where should we stop? *Thankful*, *thankless*, *without*, *within*. These are all *compound words*; but, of what *use* to us to enter on, and spend our time in, inquiries of mere curiosity? It is for monks, and for Fellows of English Colleges, who live by the sweat of other people's brows, to spend their time in this manner, and to call the result of their studies *learning*: for you, who will have to earn what you eat and what you drink and what you wear, it is to avoid every thing that tends not to real utility.

LETTER XI.

ETYMOLOGY OF CONJUNCTIONS.

128. IN Letter III, paragraph 31, you have had a description of this sort of words, and also some account of the *uses* of them. Some of them are called *copulative* conjunctions, and others *disjunctive*. They all serve to *join together* words, or parts of sentences: but, the former express an *union* in the actions, or states of being, expressed by the verb: as you *and* I talk. The latter a *disunion*: as, you talk, *but* I act. The words of this part of speech never vary in their endings. They are al-

ways spelled in one and the same way. In themselves they present no difficulty; but, as you will see by-and-by, to use them properly, with other words, in the forming of sentences, demands a due portion of your attention and care.

LETTER XII.

CAUTIONARY REMARKS.

MY DEAR JAMES,

129. BEFORE we enter on SYNTAX, let me give you a *caution* or two with regard to the contents of the foregoing LETTERS.

130. There are some words, which, under different circumstances, belong to more than one part of speech, as, indeed, you have seen, in the *Participles*. But, this is by no means confined to that particular description of words. I *act*. Here *act* is a verb; but the *act* performed by me shows the very same word in the capacity of a noun. The message was sent *by* him; he stood *by* at the time. In the first of these examples *by* is a preposition; in the last an adverb. Mind, therefore, that it is the *sense in which the word is used*, and *not the letters of which it is composed*, that determines what is the part of speech to which it belongs.

131. Never attempt to *get by rote* any part of your instructions. Whoever falls into that practice soon begins to esteem the powers of *memory* more than those of *reason*; and the former are despicable indeed when compared to the latter. When the fond parents of an eighth wonder of the world call him forth into the middle of the parlour to repeat to their visitors some speech of a play, how angry would they be, if any one were to tell

them, that their son's endowments equalled those of a parrot or a bull-finch ! Yet, a German bird-teacher would make either of these more perfect in this species of oratory. It is this mode of teaching, which is practised in the great schools, that assists very much in making dunces of Lords and Country Squires. They "*get their lesson* ;" that is to say, they repeat the *words* of it ; but, as to its *sense* and *meaning*, they seldom have any understanding. This operation is sometimes, for what reason I know not, called getting a thing *by heart*. It must, I should think, mean *by hear't* ; that is to say, *by hear it*. That a person may get and retain and repeat a lesson in this way, without any effort of the mind, is very clear from the fact, of which we have daily proof, that people sing the words and tune of a song with perfect correctness, at the very time when they are most seriously thinking and debating in their minds about matters of great importance to them.

132. I have cautioned you before against studying the foregoing instructions piece-meal ; that is to say, *a little bit* at a time. Read a Letter *all through* at once ; and, now that you have come to the end of my instructions on Etymology, read all the Letters through at once ; do this repeatedly ; taking care to proceed slowly and carefully ; and, at the end of a few days, all the matters treated of will form a connected whole in your mind.

133. Before you proceed to the Syntax, *try yourself a little*, thus : copy a short sentence from any book. Then write down the words, one by one, and write against each what part of speech *you think* it belongs to. Then look for each word in the dictionary, where you will find the several parts of speech denoted by little letters after the word : *s.* is for substantive, or noun ; *pro.* for pronoun ; *a.* for article ; *v. a.* for verb active ; *v. n.* for verb neuter *adj.* for adjective ; *adv.* for ad-

verb; *pre.* for preposition; *con.* for conjunction; *int.* for interjection. It will give you great pleasure and encouragement when you find that you are right. If you be sometimes wrong, this will only urge you to renewed exertion. You will be proud to see, that, without any one at your elbow, you have really acquired something which you can never lose. You will begin, and with reason, to think yourself learned; your sight, though the objects will still appear a good deal confused, will dart into every part of the science; and, you will pant to complete what you will be convinced you have successfully begun.

LETTER XIII.

SYNTAX GENERALLY CONSIDERED.

MY DEAR JAMES,

134. IN Letter II, paragraph 9, I shortly explained to you the meaning of the word *SYNTAX*, as that word is used in the teaching of grammar. Read that paragraph again.

135. We are, then, now entering upon this branch of your study; and it is my object to teach you how to give all the words you make use of their proper situation when you come to put them into sentences. Because, though every word that you make use of may be correctly spelled; that is to say, may have all the letters in it that it ought to have, and no more than it ought to have; and though all the words may, at the same time, be the fit words to use in order to express what you wish to express; yet, for want of a due observance of the principles and rules of *Syntax*, your sentences may be incorrect, and, in some cases,

they may not express what you wish them to express.

136. I shall, however, carry my instructions a little further than the construction of independent sentences. I shall make some remarks upon the manner of *putting sentences together*; and on the things necessary to be understood, in order to enable a person to write a series of sentences. These remarks will show you the use of figurative language, and will, I hope, teach you how to avoid the very common error of making your writing confused and unintelligible.

LETTER XIV.

SYNTAX.

The Points and Marks made use of in Writing.

MY DEAR JAMES,

137. THERE are, as I informed you in paragraph 9, Letter II, *Points* made use of in the making, or writing, of sentences; and, therefore, we must first notice these; because, as you will soon see, the sense, or meaning, of the words is very much dependant upon the points which are used along with them. For instance: "*you will be rich if you be industrious, in a few years.*" Then again: "*you will be rich, if you be industrious in a few years.*" Here, though in both sentences, the words and also the order of the words are precisely the same, the meaning of one of the sentences is very different from that of the other. The first sentence means, that you will, *in a few years' time*, be rich, if you be industrious *now*. The second means, that you will be rich, *some time or other*, if you be industrious *in a few years from this time*. And all this great difference in meaning is, as you must

see, produced solely by the difference in the situation of the *comma*. Put another comma after the last word *industrious*, and the meaning becomes *dubious*. A memorable proof of the great importance of attending to *points* was given to the English nation in the year 1817. A Committee of the House of Lords made a report to the House, respecting certain political clubs. A secretary of one of those clubs presented a petition to the House, in which he declared positively, and offered to prove at the bar, that a part of the report was *totally false*. At first their Lordships blustered: their high blood seemed to boil: but at last, the Chairman of the Committee apologized for the report by saying, that there ought to have been a *full point* where there was only a *comma*! and that it was this, which made that false, which would otherwise have been, and which was intended to be, true!

138. These points being, then, things of so much consequence in the forming of sentences, it is necessary that I explain to you the use of them, before I proceed any further. There are four of them: the *Full-Point*, or *Period*; the *Colon*; the *Semi-Colon*; the *Comma*.

139. The *Full-Point* is a single dot, thus [.], and it is used at the end of every complete sentence. That is to say, at the end of every collection of words, which makes a full and complete meaning, and is not necessarily connected with other collections of words. But a sentence may consist of several *members*, or *divisions*, and then it is called a *compound* sentence. When it has no division, it is called a *simple* sentence; Thus: "The people suffer great misery." This is a simple sentence; but, "The people suffer great misery, and daily perish for want," is a compound sentence; that is to say, it is compounded, or made up, of two simple sentences.

140. The *Colon*, which is written thus [:], is

next to the Full-Point in requiring a complete sense in the words. It is, indeed, often used when the sense is complete, but when there is something still behind, which tends to make the sense fuller or clearer.

141. The *Semi-Colon* is written thus [;], and it is used to set off, or divide, simple sentences, in cases where the Comma is not quite enough to keep the meaning of the simple sentences sufficiently distinct.

142. The *Comma* is written thus [,], and is used to mark the shortest pauses in reading, and the smallest divisions in writing. It has, by some grammarians, been given as a rule, to use a comma to set off every part of a compound sentence, which part has in it a *verb* not in the infinitive mode; and, certainly, this is, in general, proper. But, it is not always proper: and, besides, commas are used, in numerous cases, to set off parts which have no verbs in them; and even to set off single words, which are not verbs; and of this the very sentence, which I am now writing, gives you ample proof. The comma marks the shortest pause that we make in speaking; and it is evident, that, in many cases, its use must depend upon taste. It is sometimes used to give *emphasis*, or *weight*, to the word after which it is put. Observe, now, the following two sentences: "I was very well and cheerful last week; *but* am rather feeble and low-spirited now." "I am very willing to yield to your kind requests; *but*, I will set your harsh commands at defiance." Commas are made use of, when phrases, that is to say, portions of words, are thrown into a sentence, and which are not absolutely necessary to assist in its grammatical construction. For instance: "There were, *in the year* 1817, petitions from a million and a half of men, who, *as they distinctly alleged*, were suffering the greatest possible hardships." The two

phrases, in *italicks*, may be left out in the reading, and still the sentence will have its full grammatical construction.

143. Let us now take a compound sentence or two, containing all the four points. “ In a land of
“ liberty it is extremely dangerous to make a dis-
“ tinct order of the profession of arms. In abso-
“ lute monarchies this is necessary for the safety
“ of the prince, and arises from the main principle
“ of their constitution, which is that of governing
“ by fear ; but in free states the profession of a
“ soldier, taken singly and merely as a profession,
“ is justly an object of jealousy. In these no man
“ should take up arms, but with a view to defend
“ his country and its laws ; he puts off the citizen
“ when he enters the camp ; but it is because he is
“ a citizen, and would continue so, that he makes
“ himself for a while a soldier. The laws therefore
“ and constitution of these kingdoms know no such
“ state as that of a perpetual standing soldier, bred
“ up to no other profession than that of war : and
“ it was not till the reign of Henry VII, that the
“ kings of England had so much as a guard about
“ their persons.”

This passage is taken from Blackstone's Commentaries, Book I. Chapter 13. Here are four complete sentences. The first is a simple sentence. The other three are compound sentences. Each of these latter has its members, all very judiciously set off by points. The word *so*, in the third sentence, ought to be *such*, or the words *a citizen* ought to be repeated. But, with this trifling exception, these are very beautiful sentences. Nothing affected or confused in them : all is simple, clear, and harmonious.

144. You will now see, that it is quite impossible to give any *precise rules* for the use of these several points. Much must be left to taste : something must depend upon the weight which we

may wish to give to particular words, or phrases; and something on the seriousness, or the levity, of the subject, on which we are writing.

145. Besides these points, however, there are certain grammatical signs, or marks, which are made use of in the writing of sentences: the mark of *parenthesis*, the mark of *interrogation*, the mark of *exclamation*, the *apostrophe*, otherwise called the mark of elision, and the *hyphen*.

146. The mark of *parenthesis* consists of two curved strokes drawn across the line of writing, or of print. Its use is to enclose a phrase, thrown in hastily to assist in elucidating our subject, or to add force to our assertions or arguments. But, observe, the parenthesis ought to be very sparingly used. It is necessarily an *interrupter*: it breaks in upon the regular course of the mind: it tends to divert the attention from the main object of the sentence. I will give you, from Mr. TULL, Chap. XIII, an instance of the omission of the parenthesis, and also of the proper employment of it. "PALLADIUS thought also, with others of the ancients, that Heaven was to be frightened with red cloth, with the feathers or the heart of an owl, and a multitude of such ridiculous scare-crows, from spoiling the fruits of the fields and gardens. The ancients, having no rational principles or theory of agriculture, placed their chief confidence in magical charms and enchantments, which he, who has the patience or curiosity to read, may find, under the title aforementioned, in CATO, in VARRO (and even COLUMELLA is as fulsome as any of them), all written in very fine language; which is most of the erudition that can be acquired, as to field husbandry, from the Greek and Latin writers, whether in verse or prose." For want of the mark of parenthesis in the first of these sentences, we almost think, at the close of it, that the author is speaking of the crows, and

not of *Heaven*, being frightened from spoiling the fruits of the fields and the gardens. But, with regard to the use of the parenthesis, I shall speak, perhaps, more fully by-and-by ; for, the employment of it is a matter of some importance.

147. The mark of *interrogation*, which is written thus [?], is used when a question is asked : as, “ *Who has my pen ? What man is that ?* ” In these and numerous other cases, the mark is not necessary to our clearly comprehending the meaning of the writer. But, this is not always the case. “ *What does he say ? Put the horse into the stable.* ” Again : “ *What does he say ? Put the horse into the stable ?* ” In *speaking*, this great difference in the meaning, in this instance, would be fully expressed by the voice and manner of the speaker ; but, in *writing*, the mark of interrogation is, you see, absolutely necessary in order to accomplish the purpose.

148. The mark of *exclamation*, or *admiration*, is written thus [!], and, as its name denotes, is used to distinguish words or sentences that are exclamatory, from such as are not : “ *What do you say ! What do you say ?* ” The difference in the sense is very obvious here. Again : “ *He is going away to-night ! He is going away to-night.* ” The last simply states the fact ; but, the first, besides stating the fact, expresses *surprise* at it.

149. The *Apostrophe*, or mark of *elision*, is a comma, placed above the line, thus [']. Elision means a *cutting off* ; and this mark is used for that purpose : as *don't*, for *do not* ; *tho'*, for *though* ; *lov'd*, for *loved*. I have mentioned this mark, because it is used properly enough in *poetry* ; but, I beg you never to use it in *prose* in one single instance during your whole life. It ought to be called the mark not of *elision*, but of *laziness* and *vulgarity*. It is necessary as the mark of the possessive case of nouns, as you have seen in

Letter V, paragraph 47. That is its use, and any other employment of it is an abuse.

150. The *Hyphen* or *Conjoiner*, is a little line, drawn to connect words, or parts of words: as in *sea-fish*; *water-rat*. For, here are two distinct words, though they, in these instances, make but one. Sometimes the *Hyphen* is used to connect many words together: "The never-to-be forgot-
"ten cruelty of the Borough-tyrants." When, in writing or in printing, a line ends with part of a word, a hyphen is placed after that part, in order to show that that part is to be joined, in the reading, with that which begins the next line.

151. These are all the *grammatical* marks; but, there are others, used in writing for the purpose of saving time and words. The mark of *quotation*, or of *citing*. This mark consists of *two commas* placed thus "There were many men." It is used to enclose words, taken from other writings, or from other persons' discourse; and, indeed, it is frequently used to enclose certain sentences, or words, of the writer, when he wishes to mark them as wholly distinct from the general course of any statement that he is making, or of any instruction that he is giving. I have, for instance, in the writing of these Letters to you, set off many of my examples by marks of *quotation*. In short, its use is to notify to the reader that such and such words, or such and such sentences, are not to be looked upon as forming part of the regular course of those thoughts which are at the present time coming from the mind of the writer.

152. This mark [¶] is found in the Bible. It stands for *Paragraph*. This [§] is sometimes used instead of the word *Section*. As to stars [*] and the other marks which are used for the purpose of leading the eye of the reader to *Notes*, in the same page, or at the end of the book, they are perfectly arbitrary. You may use for this purpose

any marks that you please. But, let me observe to you here, that *Notes* ought seldom to be resorted to. Like parentheses, they are *interrupters*, and much more troublesome interrupters, because they generally tell a much longer story. The employing of them, arises, in almost all cases, from confusion in the mind of the writer. He finds the matter *too much for him*. He has not the talent to work it all up into one lucid whole; and, therefore, he puts part of it into *Notes*. *Notes* are seldom read. If the text; that is to say, the main part of a writing, be of a nature to engage our earnest attention, we have not time to stop to read the notes; and, if our attention be not earnestly engaged by the text, we soon lay down the volume, and, of course, read neither notes nor text.

153. As a mark of *Abbreviation*, the full point is used: as, "Mr. Mrs." But, I know of hardly any other words that ought to be abbreviated; and if these were not, it would be all the better. People may indulge themselves in this practice, until at last, they come to write the greater part of their words in single letters. The frequent use of abbreviations is always a mark of slovenliness and of vulgarity. I have known Lords abbreviate almost the half of their words: it was, very likely, because they did not know how to spell them to the end. Instead of the word *and*, you often see people put &. For *what reason* I should like to know. But to this & is sometimes added a c; thus: &c. *And* is, in Latin, *et*, and c is the first letter of the Latin word *cetera*, which means, *the like*, or *so on*. Therefore this &c. means *and the like*, or *and so on*. This abbreviation of a foreign word is a most convenient thing for such writers as have too much indolence or too little sense to say fully and clearly what they ought to say. If you *mean* to say *and the like*, or, *and so on*, why not say it? This abbreviation is very frequently made use of without

the writer having any idea of its import. A writer on grammar says; "When these words are joined to *if*, *since*, &c. they are adverbs." But, where is the *like* of *if*, or of *since*? The best way to guard yourself against the committing of similar errors is *never* to use this abbreviation.

154. The use of CAPITALS and *italicks* I will notice in this place. In the books, printed before the middle of the last century, a capital letter was used as the first letter of *every noun*. Capitals are now used more sparingly. We use them at the beginning of every paragraph, let the word be what it may; at the beginning of every sentence, which follows a full-point; at the beginning of all *proper names*; at the beginning of all adjectives growing out of the names of countries, or nations: as, the *English* language; the *French* fashion; the *American* government. We use capitals, besides, at the beginning of *any* word, when we think the use of it likely to assist in elucidating our meaning, but in general, we use them as above stated. The use of *italick* characters, in print, is to point out, as worthy of particular attention, the words distinguished by those characters. In writing with a pen, a stroke is drawn under such words as we wish to be considered to be in *italicks*. If we wish words to be put in SMALL CAPITALS, we draw two strokes under them; if in FULL CAPITALS, we draw three strokes under them.

155. The last thing I shall mention, under this head, is the *caret* [Δ], which is used to point upwards to a part which has been omitted, and which is inserted between the line, where the caret is placed, and the line above it. Things should be called by their right names, and this should be called the *blunder-mark*. I would have you, my dear James, scorn the use of this thing. *Think* before you write; let it be your *custom* to write *correctly* and in a *plain hand*. Be as careful that

neatness, grammar, and sense prevail, when you write to a blacksmith about shoeing a horse, as when you write on the most important subjects and when you expect what you write to be read by persons whose good opinion you are most anxious to obtain or secure. Habit is powerful in all cases ; but its power in this case is truly wonderful. When you write, bear constantly in mind, that some one is to *read* and to *understand* what you write. This will make your hand-writing, and also your meaning, *plain*. Never think of *mending* what you write. Let it go. No patching ; no *after-pointing*. As your pen moves, bear constantly in mind, that it is making strokes which are to remain *for ever*. Far, I hope, from my dear James, will be the ridiculous, the contemptible, affectation, of writing in a slovenly or illegible hand ; or, that of signing his name otherwise than in plain letters.

156. In concluding this Letter let me caution you against the use of what, by some, is called the *dash*. The dash is a stroke along the line : thus, " I am rich—I was poor—I shall be poor again." This is wild work indeed ! Who is to know what is intended by the use of these *dashes* ? Those who have thought proper, like Mr. Lindley Murray, to place the *dash* amongst the *grammatical points*, ought to give us some rule relative to its different longitudinal dimensions in different cases. The *inch*, the *three-quarter-inch*, the *half-inch*, the *quarter-inch* : these would be something determinate ; but, " *the dash*," without measure, must be a most perilous thing for a young grammarian to handle. In short, " *the dash*" is a cover for ignorance as to the use of points, and it can answer no other purpose. A dash is very often put, in crowded print, in order to save the room that would be lost by the breaks of distinct paragraphs. This is another matter. Here the dash comes

after a full point. It is the using of it in the body of a sentence against which I caution you.

LETTER XV.

SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO ARTICLES.

MY DEAR JAMES,

157. BEFORE you proceed to my instructions relative to the employing of articles, you will do well to read again all the paragraphs in Letter IV. Our articles are so few in number, and they are subject to so little variation in their orthography, that very few errors can arise in the use of them. But, still, errors may arise; and it will be necessary to guard you against them.

158. You will not fall into very gross errors in the use of the articles. You will not say, as in the erroneous passage cited by Doctor Lowth, "and I persecuted this way unto *the* death," meaning *death generally*; but, you may commit errors less glaring. "The Chancellor informed the Queen of it, and she immediately sent for *the* Secretary and Treasurer." Now, it is not certain, here, whether the Secretary and Treasurer be not one and the same person; which uncertainty would have been avoided by a repetition of the article: "*the* Secretary and *the* Treasurer:" and, you will bear in mind, that, in every sentence, the very first thing to be attended to, is *clearness as to meaning*.

159. Nouns which express the whole of a species do not, in general, take the definite article: as, "*grass* is good for horses, and *wheat* for men." Yet, in speaking of the appearance of the face of the country, we say, "*the grass* looks well; *the*

"wheat is blighted." The reason of this, is, that, we are, in this last case, limiting our meaning to *the* grass and *the* wheat, which are on the ground at this time. "How do *hops* sell? *Hops* are dear; but *the* hops look promising." In this respect there is a passage in Mr. TULL, which is faulty. "Neither could weeds be of any prejudice to *corn*." It should be "*the* corn;" for, he does not mean corn universally, but *the* standing corn, and *the* corn amongst which weeds grow; and, therefore, the definite article is required.

160. "Ten shillings *the* bushel," and like phrases, are perfectly correct. They mean, "ten shillings *by the* bushel, or *for the* bushel." Instead of this mode of expression we sometimes use, "ten shillings *a* bushel;" that is to say, ten shillings *for a* bushel, or a bushel *at a time*. Either of these modes of expression is far preferable to *per* bushel; for, the *per* is not English, and is, to the greater part of people, a mystical sort of word.

161. The indefinite article *a*, or *an*, is used with the words day, month, year, and others: as, once *a* day; twice *a* month; *a* thousand pounds *a* year. It means *in a* day, *in a* month; *in*, or *for*, *a* year; and though *per annum* means the same as this last, the English phrase is, in all respects, the best. The same may be said of *per cent*. that is *per centum*, or, in plain English *the hundred* or *a hundred*: by ten *per centum* we mean *ten for the hundred*, or, *ten for a hundred*; and why can we not, then, say, in plain English, what we mean?

162. When there are several nouns following the indefinite article, care ought to be taken, that it *accord with them*: "*a* dog, cat, owl, and sparrow." *Owl* requires *an*; and, therefore, the article must be repeated in this phrase: as, "*a* dog, *a* cat, *an* owl, and *a* sparrow."

163. Nouns signifying fixed and settled collections of individuals : as, *thousand, hundred, dozen, score*, take the indefinite article, though they are of plural meaning. It is a certain *mass, or number, or multitude*, called a *score* ; and so on ; and the article agrees with these understood words, which are in the singular number.

LETTER XVI.

SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO NOUNS.

MY DEAR JAMES,

164. READ again Letter V, the subject of which is the Etymology of Nouns. Nouns are *governed*, as it is called, by verbs and prepositions ; that is to say, these latter sorts of words *cause nouns to be in such or such a case* ; and there must be a *concord*, or an *agreement*, between the nouns and the other words, which, along with the nouns, compose a sentence.

165. But these matters will be best explained when I come to the *Syntax of Verbs* ; for, until we take the verb into account, we cannot go far in giving rules for the forming of sentences. Under the present head, therefore, I shall content myself with doing little more than to give some further account of the manner of using the *Possessive Case* of nouns ; that being the only case to denote which our nouns *vary their endings*.

166. This possessive case was pretty fully spoken of by me in the Letter just referred to ; but, there are certain other observations to make with regard to the using of it in sentences. When the noun, which is in the possessive case, is expressed by a

circumlocution; that is to say, by many words in lieu of one, the sign of the possessive case is joined to the last word : as, “ *John, the old farmer’s, wife.*” “ *Oliver, the spy’s, evidence.*” It is, however, much better to say, “ the wife of *John, the old farmer.*” “ The evidence of *Oliver, the spy.*”

167. When two or more nouns in the possessive case follow each other and are joined by a conjunctive conjunction, the sign of the possessive case is, when the thing possessed is the same, put to the last noun only : as, “ *Peter, Joseph, and Richard’s estate.*” In this example the thing possessed being one and the same thing, the sign applies equally to each of the three possessive nouns. But, “ *Peter’s, Joseph’s, and Richard’s estate,*” implies that *each* has an estate ; or, at least, it will admit of that meaning being given to it, while the former phrase will not.

168. Sometimes the sign of the possessive case is left out, and a *hyphen* is used in its stead : as, “ *Reynolds, the government-spy.*” That is to say, “ the government’s spy ;” or “ the spy of the government.” These two words, joined in this manner, are called a *compound noun* ; and, to this compounding of nouns our language is very much prone. We say, “ *chamber-floor, horse-shoe, dog-collar ;*” that is to say *chamber’s floor, horse’s shoe, dog’s collar.*

169. This is an advantage peculiar to our language. It enables us to say much in few words, which always gives strength to language ; and, after *clearness*, strength is the most valuable quality that writing or speaking can possess. “ *The Yorkshire-men flew to arms.*” If we could not compound our words, we must say, “ the men of the shire of York flew to arms.” When you come to learn French, you will soon see how much the English language is better than the French in this respect.

170. You must take care, when you use the possessive case, not to use after it words which create a confusion in meaning. HUME has this sentence: "They flew to arms and attacked Northumberland's house, *whom* they put to death." We know what is *meant*, because *whom* can relate to *persons* only; but, if it had been an attack on Northumberland's *men*, the meaning would have been, that the *men were put to death*. However, the sentence, as it stands, is sufficiently incorrect. It should have been: "They flew to arms, attacked the house of Northumberland, and put him to death."

171. A passage from DOCTOR HUGH BLAIR, the author of *Lectures on Rhetoric*, will give you another instance of error in the use of the possessive case. I take it from the 24th Lecture: "In comparing Demosthenes and Cicero, most of the French critics are disposed to give the preference to the latter. P. Rapin the jesuit, in the parallels which he has drawn between some of the most eminent Greek and Roman writers, uniformly decides in favour of the Roman. For the preference which he gives to Cicero, he assigns, and lays stress on one reason of a pretty extraordinary nature, viz. that Demosthenes could not possibly have so clear an *insight* as Cicero *into* the manners and passions of men; Why? because *he* had not the advantage of *perusing Aristotle's Treatise of Rhetoric*, wherein, says our critic, *he* has fully laid open *that mystery*; and to support this weighty argument, *he* enters into a controversy with A. Gellius, in order to prove that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was not published till after Demosthenes had spoken, *at least*, his most considerable orations." It is surprising that the Doctor should have put such a passage as this upon paper, and more surprising that he should leave it in this state after having

perused it with that care, which is usually employed in examining writings that are to be put into print, and especially writings in which every word is expected to be used in a proper manner. In Bacon, in Tull, in Blackstone, in Hume, in Swift, in Bolingbroke; in all writers, however able, we find errors. Yet, though many of their sentences will not stand the test of strict grammatical criticism, the *sense* generally is clear to our minds: and we read on. But, in this passage of Doctor Blair, *all is confusion*: the mind is puzzled: we, at last, hardly know *whom* or *what* the writer is talking about; and we fairly come to a stand.

172. In speaking of the many faults in this passage, I shall be obliged to make here observations which would come under the head of pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and prepositions. The first two of the three sentences are, in themselves, rather obscure, and are well enough calculated for ushering in the complete confusion that follows. The *he* which comes immediately after the word *because* may relate to Demosthenes; but to what noun does the second *he* relate? It would, when we first look at it, seem to relate to the same noun as the first *he* relates to; for, the Doctor cannot call *Aristotle's Treatise of Rhetoric* a *he*. No: in speaking of this the Doctor says, "*wherein*;" that is to say, *in which*. He means, I dare say, that the *he* should stand for *Aristotle*; but it does not stand for *Aristotle*. This noun is not a *nominative* in the sentence; and it cannot have the pronoun relating to it as such. This *he* may relate to *Cicero*, who may be supposed to have laid open a mystery in the perusing of the treatise; and the words which follow the *he* would seem to give countenance to this supposition; for, *what* mystery is meant by the words "*that* mystery?" Is it the mystery of *Rhetoric*, or the mystery of the manners

and passions of men? This is not all, however; for the Doctor, as if bewitched by the love of confusion, must tack on another long member to the sentence, and bring forward another *he* to stand for *P. Rapin*, whom and whose argument we have, amidst the general confusion, wholly forgotten. There is an error also in the use of the active participle, *perusing*. “Demosthenes could not have so complete an insight as Cicero, because he *had not* the advantage of *perusing*.” That is to say, the advantage of being engaged in *perusing*. But this is not what is meant. The Doctor means, that he *had not had* the advantage of *perusing*; or, rather, that he *had not* the advantage of *having perused*. In other words, that Demosthenes could not have, or possess, a certain kind of knowledge, at the time when he made his orations, because, at that time, he had not, or did not possess, the advantage of *having perused*, or having *finished to peruse*, the treatise of Aristotle. Towards the close of the last sentence the adverb, “*at least*,” is put in a wrong place. The Doctor means, doubtless, that the adverb should apply to *considerable*, and not to *spoken*; but, from its being wrong placed, it applies to the latter, and not to the former. He means to say, that Demosthenes had spoken the most considerable, *at least*, of his orations; but, as the words now stand, they mean, that he had *done the speaking part to them*, if he had done nothing more. There is an error in the use of the word “*insight*,” followed, as it is, by “*into*.” We may have a *look*, or *sight*, *into* a house; but not an *insight*. This would be to take an *inside view of an inside*.

173. We have, here, a pretty good proof, that a knowledge of the Greek and Latin is not sufficient to prevent men from writing bad English. Here is a *profound scholar*, a teacher of rhetoric, discussing the comparative merits of Greek and

Latin writers, and disputing with a French critic : here he is, writing English in a manner more incorrect than you will, I hope, be liable to write it at the end of your reading of this little book. Lest it should be supposed, that I have taken great pains to hunt out this erroneous passage of Doctor Blair, I will inform you, that I have hardly looked into his book. Your brothers, in reading it through, marked a great number of erroneous passages, from amongst which I have selected the passage just cited. With what propriety, then, are the Greek and Latin languages called the "*learned languages*?"

LETTER XVII.

SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO PRONOUNS.

MY DEAR JAMES,

174. YOU will now read again Letter VI. It will bring you back to the subject of pronouns. You will bear in mind that personal pronouns *stand for*, or in the *place of*, nouns ; and, that the greatest care ought always to be taken in using them ; because, being small words, and in frequent use, the proper weight of them is very often unattended to.

175. You have seen, in the passage from Doctor Blair, quoted in the foregoing Letter, what confusion arises from the want of taking care, that the pronoun relate *clearly* to its nominative case, and that it be not left to be understood to relate to any thing else. Little words, of great and sweeping influence, ought to be used with the greatest care ; because errors in the using of them make such great errors in point of meaning. In order to im-

press, at the out-set, these precepts on your mind, I will give you an instance of this kind of error from ADDISON; and, what is well calculated to heighten the interest you ought to feel upon the occasion, is, that the sentence, which contains the error, is, by Doctor Blair, held forth to students of language, in the University of Edinburgh, as a *perfect model of correctness and of elegance*. The sentence is from Addison's Spectator, Number 411. "There are, indeed, but very few, who know how to be idle and innocent, or have a relish of any pleasures that are not criminal; every diversion *they* take, is at the expense of some one virtue or other, and *their* very first step out of business is into vice or folly." Doctor Blair says: "Nothing can be more elegant, or more finally turned, than this sentence. It is neat, *clear*, and musical. We could hardly alter one word, or displace one member, without spoiling it. Few sentences are to be found more finished, or more happy." See Blair's 20th Lecture on Rhetoric.

176. Now, then, my dear little James, let us see whether we, plain English scholars, have not a little more judgment than this professor in a *learned* University, who could not, you will observe, be a *Doctor*, until he had preached a Sermon in the Latin language. What does the pronoun *they* mean in this sentence of Mr. Addison? What noun does it *relate to*, or *stand for*? What noun is the *nominative* of the sentence? The nominative of the sentence is the word *few*, meaning *few persons*. Very well, then, the pronoun, *they*, relates to this nominative; and the meaning of the sentence is this: "that but few persons know how to be idle and innocent; that *few persons* have a relish of any pleasures that are not criminal; that every diversion *these few persons* take is at the expense of some one virtue or other, and that the very first

“step of *these few persons* out of business is into “vice or folly.” So that the sentence says *precisely the contrary* of what the author meant; or, rather, the whole is perfect nonsense. All this arises from the misuse of the pronoun, *they*. If, instead of this word, the Author had put, *people in general*, or *most people*, or *most men*, or any word, or words, of the same meaning, all would have been right.

177. I will take another instance of the consequence of being careless in the use of personal pronouns. It is from JUDGE BLACKSTONE, Book II. Chapter 6: “For, the custom of the manor has, “in both cases, so far superseded the will of the “Lord; that, provided the services be performed, “or stipulated for by fealty, he cannot, in the first “instance, refuse to admit the heir of *his* tenant “upon *his* death; nor, in the second, can *he* remove *his* present tenant so long as *he* lives.” Here are *lord*, *heir*, and *tenant*, all confounded. We may guess at the Judge’s meaning; but, we cannot say, that we *know* what it is: we cannot say that we are *certain whose* life, or *whose* death, he is speaking of.

178. Never write a personal pronoun, without duly considering *what noun* it will, upon a reading of the sentence, be *found to relate to*. There must be a noun, expressed or understood, to which the pronoun clearly relates, or you will not write sense. “The *land-holder* has been represented as a monster which must be hunted down, and the *fund-holder* as a still greater evil, and both have been “described as rapacious creatures, who take from “the people fifteen pence out of every quatern “loaf. *They* have been told that Parliamentary “Reform is no more than a half-measure, changing “only one set of thieves for another: and that *they* “must go to the land, as nothing short of that would “avail *them*.” This is taken from the memorable report of a committee of the House of Lords, in

1817, on which report the cruel *dungeon-bill* was passed. Now, to *what nouns* do these pronouns relate? Who are the *nominatives* in the first sentence? The *land-holder* and the *fund-holder*, to be sure; and, therefore, to them do the pronouns relate. These Lords mean, doubtless, that the *people* had been told, that the *people* must go to the land; that nothing else would avail the *people*: but, though they *mean* this, they do not *say* it; and this part of their report is as false in *Graminar* as the whole of the report was in fact.

179. When there are two or more nouns, connected by a copulative conjunction, and when a personal pronoun is made use of to relate to them, or stand for them, you must take care that the personal pronoun *agree* with them in number. "He was fonder of nothing than of *wit* and *raillery*; but, he is far from being happy in *it*." This Doctor Blair, in his XIXth Lecture, says of Lord Shaftesbury. Either *wit* and *raillery* are one and the same thing, or they are different things: if the former, one of the words is used unnecessarily; if the latter, the pronoun ought to have been, *them*, and not *it*.

180. When, however, the nouns take the disjunctive conjunction, *or*, the pronoun must be in the singular: as, "When he shoots a partridge, a pheasant, or a woodcock, he gives *it* away."

181. Nouns of number, or multitude, such as *Mob*, *Parliament*, *Rabble*, *House of Commons*, *Regiment*, *Court of King's Bench*, *Den of Thieves*, and the like, may have pronouns agreeing with them either in the singular or in the plural number; for, we may, for instance, say of the House of Commons, "*they* refused to hear evidence against Castlereagh," when Mr. Maddox accused him of having sold a seat; or, *it* refused to hear evidence." But, we must be uniform in our use of the pronoun in this respect. We must not, in the same sentence, and

applicable to the same noun, use the singular in one part of the sentence and the plural in another part. We must not, in speaking of the House of Commons, for instance, say, "*they*, one year, voted unanimously, that cheap corn was an evil, and, the next year, *it* voted unanimously, that dear corn was an evil." There are persons, who pretend to make very nice distinctions as to the cases when these nouns of multitude ought to take the singular, and when they ought to take the plural, pronoun; but, these distinctions are too nice to be of any real use. The rule is this: that nouns of multitude *may* take *either* the singular, or the plural, pronoun; but not *both* in the same sentence.

182. As to *gender*, it is hardly possible to make a mistake. There are no terminations to denote gender, except in the third person singular, *he*, *she*, or *it*. We do, however, often *personify* things. Speaking of a *nation* we often say *she*; of the *sun*, we say *he*; of the *moon*, we say *she*. We may personify things at our pleasure; but, we must take care to be consistent, and not call a thing *he*, or *she*, in one part of a sentence, and *it* in another part. The occasions when you ought to personify things, and when you ought not, cannot be stated in any *precise rule*. Your own taste and judgment will be your best guides. I shall give you my *opinion* about figures of speech in a future Letter.

183. Nouns which denote sorts, or kinds, of living creatures, and which do not of themselves distinguish the male from the female, such as *rabbit*, *hare*, *hog*, *cat*, *pheasant*, *fowl*, take the neuter pronoun, unless we happen to know the gender of the individual we are speaking about. If I see you with a cock-pheasant in your hand, I say, "where did you shoot *him*," but, if you tell me you have shot a *pheasant*, I say, "where did you shoot *it*."

184. The personal pronouns in their *possessive*

case must, of course, agree in number and gender with their correspondent nouns or pronouns: "John and Thomas have been so foolish as to sell *their* land and to purchase what is called stock; but their sister, who has too much sense to depend on a bubble for her daily bread, has kept *her* land: *theirs* is gone for ever; but *hers* is safe." So they must also, in their *objective case*: "John and Thomas will lose the interest of their money, which will soon cease to be paid to *them*. The rents of their sister will regularly be paid to *her*; and, Richard will also enjoy his income, which is to be paid to *him* by *his* sister." If there be nouns of both genders used before pronouns, care must be taken, that no confusion, or obscurity arise from the misuse of the pronoun. HUME says: "they declared it treason to attempt, imagine, or speak evil of the king, queen, or *his* heirs." This has, at least, a meaning, which shuts out the heirs of the queen. In such cases the noun should be repeated.

185. Take care, in using the personal pronouns, not to employ the *objective case* where you ought to employ the *nominative*; and take care also of the *opposite error*. "Him strikes I: Her loves he." These offend the ear at once. But, when a number of words come in between the discordant parts, the ear does not detect the error. "It was some of those, who came either last night, and went away this morning, who did the mischief, and not my brother and *me*." It ought to be "my brother and *I*." For, I am not, in this instance, the *object*, but the *actor*, or supposed actor. "Who broke that glass? It was *me*." It ought to be *I*; that is to say, "it was *I who broke it*." Fill up the sentence with all the words that are understood; and, if there be errors you will soon discover them. After the words *than* and *as* this error, of putting the *objective* for the *nominative*,

is very frequently committed : as, " John was very rich, but Peter was richer than *him* ; and, at the same time, as learned as *him* or any of his family." It ought to be richer than *he* : as learned as *he* : for, the full meaning here, is, " richer than *he was* : as learned as *he was*." But, it does not always happen, that the nominative case comes after *than*, or, as : " I love you more than *him* : I give you more than *him* : I love you as well as *him*." That is to say, I love you more than *I love him* : I give you more than *I give to him* : I love you as well as *I love him*. Take away *him* and put *he*, in all these cases, and the grammar is just as good, only the meaning is quite different. " I love you as well as *him*," means that I love you as well as *I love him* ; but, " I love you as well as *he*," means, that I love you as well as *he loves you*.

186. You see, then, of what importance this distinction of cases is. But, you must not look for *this word*, or *that word*, coming before or coming after, to be *your guide*. It is *reason* is to be your sole guide. When the person or thing represented by the pronoun is the *object*, then it must be in the objective case : when it is the *actor*, or when it is merely the person or thing said to be this or that, then it must be in the nominative case. Read again paragraphs 46, 47, and 48, of Letter III.

187. The errors, committed with regard to the confounding of cases, arise most frequently, when the pronouns are placed, in the sentences, at a great distance, from the words which are connected with them, and which determine the case. " *He* and his sister, and not their uncle and cousins, the estate was given *to*." Here is nothing that *sounds* harsh ; but, bring the pronoun close to the preposition that demands the objective case : say, the estate was given *to he* ; and, then, you perceive the grossness of the error in a moment. " The work of national ruin was pretty

“effectually carried on *by* the ministers; but more
“effectually by the paper-money makers than
“*they*.” This does not hurt the ear; but, it
ought to be *them*: “more effectually than *by*
“*them*.”

188. The pronouns *mine, thine, theirs, yours, hers, his*, stand frequently by themselves; that is to say, not followed by any noun. But, then, the noun is *understood*. “This is *hers*.” That is to say, her *property*; her *hat*, or whatever else. No difficulty can arise in the use of these words.

189. But, the use of the personal pronoun *it* is a subject of considerable importance. Read again paragraphs 60 and 61, Letter VI. Think well upon what you find there; and, when you have done that, proceed with me. This pronoun, with the verb *to be*, is in constant use in our language. To say; “your uncle *came* hither last night,” is not the same thing as to say “*it was* your uncle *who came* hither last night,” though the *fact* related be the same. “*It is I who write*,” is very different from “*I write*,” though, in both cases, my being writing is the fact very clearly expressed, and is one and the same fact. “*It is those men, who deserve well of their country*,” means a great deal more than, “*Those men deserve well of their country*.” The principal verbs are the same: the prepositions are the same; but the real meaning is different. “*It is the dews and showers that make the grass grow*,” is very different from merely observing, that “*Dews and showers make the grass grow*.”

190. DOCTOR LOWTH has given it as his opinion, that it is *not correct* to place plural nouns, or pronouns, after the *it*, thus used; an opinion which arose from the want of a little more reflection. The *it* has nothing to do, grammatically speaking, with the rest of the sentence. The *it*, together with the verb *to be*, express *states of being*, in some

instances, and in others this phrase serves to mark, in a strong manner, *the subject*, in a *mass*, of what is about to be affirmed, or denied. Of course, this phrase, which is in almost incessant use, may be followed by nouns and pronouns in the singular, or in the plural, number. I forbear to multiply examples, or to enumerate the various ways in which this phrase is used, because one grain of reasoning is worth whole tons of memory. The *principle* being once in your mind, it will be ready to be applied to every class of cases, and to every particular case of each class.

191. For want of a reliance on principles, instead of examples, how the latter have swelled in number, and grammar-books in bulk! But, it is much easier to quote examples than to lay down principles. For want of a little thought, as to the matter immediately before us, some grammarians have found out "*an absolute case*," as they call it; and Mr. LINDLEY MURRAY gives an instance of it in these words: "Shame *being* lost, all virtue is lost." The full meaning of this sentence is this: "*It being*, or *the state of things being such*, that shame is lost, all virtue is lost."

192. Owing to not seeing the use and power of this *it* in their true light, many persons, after long puzzling, think they must make the pronouns, which immediately follow, conform to the cases, which the verbs and prepositions of the sentence demand. "It is *them*, and not the people, whom I address myself *to*." "It was *him*, and not the other man, that I sought *after*." The prepositions, *to* and *after*, demand an objective case; and they have it in the words *whom* and *that*. The pronouns which follow the *it* and the verb *to be*, must *always* be in the *nominative* case.

193. This *it* with its verb *to be* is sometimes employed with the preposition *for*, which singular force and effect. "*It is for* the guilty to live in fear, to

“ skulk and to hang their heads ; but *for* the innocent *it* is to enjoy ease and tranquillity of mind, to scorn all disguise, and to carry themselves erect.” This is much more forcible than to say : “ The guilty generally live in fear,” and so on, throughout the sentence. The word *for*, in this case, denotes appropriateness, or fitness ; and, the full expression would be this : “ To the *state of being*, or *state of things* called guiltiness, to live in fear is *fitting*, or is *appropriate*.” If you pay attention to the *reason*, on which the use of these words is founded, you will never be at a loss to use them properly.

194. The word *it* is the greatest troubler that I know of in language. It is so small, and so convenient, that few are careful enough in using it. Writers seldom spare this word. Whenever they are at a loss for either a nominative or an objective, to their sentence, they, without any kind of ceremony, clap in an *it*. A very remarkable instance of this pressing of poor *it* into actual service, contrary to the laws of grammar and of sense, occurs in a piece of composition, where we might, with justice, insist on perfect correctness. This piece is on the subject of grammar ; it is a piece written by a *Doctor of Divinity*, and read by him to students in grammar and language in an academy ; and the very sentence that I am now about to quote is selected by the author of a grammar, as testimony of high authority in favour of the excellence of his work. Surely, if correctness be ever to be expected, it must be in a case like this. I allude to two sentences in the “ Charge of the REVEREND DOCTOR ABERCROMBIE to the senior class of the Philadelphia Academy, published in 1806,” which sentences have been selected and re-published by Mr. LINDLEY MURRAY, as a testimonial of the *merits* of his Grammar ; and which sentences are, by Mr. MURRAY, given to us in the following words :

"The unwearied *exertions* of this gentleman *have*
 "done more towards elucidating the obscurities,
 "and embellishing the structure, of our language,
 "than any *other writer* on the subject. *Such a*
 "*work* has long been wanted; and, from the suc-
 "cess with which *it* is executed, cannot be too
 "highly appreciated."

195. As, in the learned Doctor's opinion, obscurities can be elucidated, and, as, in the same opinion, Mr. Murray is an able hand at this kind of work, it would not be amiss were the grammarian to try his skill upon this article from the hand of his dignified eulogist: for, here is, if one may use the expression, a constellation of obscurities. Our poor, oppressed *it*, which we find forced into the Doctor's service, in the second sentence, relates to "*such a work*," though this work is nothing that has an existence, notwithstanding it is said to be "*executed*." In the first sentence, the "*exertions*" become, all of a sudden, a "*writer*:" the *exertions* have done more than "*any other writer*:" for, mind you, it is not the *gentleman* that has done any thing; it is "*the exertions that have done*" what is said to be done. The word *gentleman* is in the possessive case, and has nothing to do with the action of the sentence. Let us give the sentence a turn, and the Doctor and the Grammarian will hear how it will sound. "*This gentleman's exertions have done more than any other writer.*" This is upon a level with, "*this gentleman's dog has killed more hares than any other sportsman.*" No doubt, DOCTOR ABERCROMBIE meant to say: "*the exertions of this gentleman have done more than those of any other writer. Such a work as this gentleman's has long been wanted; his work, seeing the successful manner of its execution, cannot be too highly commended.*" Meant! No doubt at all of that! And, when we hear a Hampshire plough-boy say: "*Poll Cherry-*

"cheek have giv'd I thick hañkecher," we know very well that he *means* to say, "Poll Cherry-cheek has given me this handkerchief;" and yet, we are but too apt to *laugh at him*, and to call him *ignorant*; which is wrong; because he has no pretensions to a knowledge of grammar, and he may be very skillful as a plough-boy. However, we will not laugh at DOCTOR ABERCROMBIE, whom I knew, many years ago, for a very kind and worthy man, and who baptized your elder brother and elder sister. But, if we may, in any case, be allowed to laugh at the ignorance of our fellow creatures, that case certainly does arise, when we see a professed grammarian, the author of voluminous precepts and examples on the subject of grammar, producing, in imitation of the possessors of invaluable medical secrets, testimonials vouching for the efficacy of his literary panacea, and when, in those very testimonials, we find most flagrant instances of bad grammar.

196. However, my dear James, let this strong and striking instance of the misuse of the word *it* serve you in the way of caution. Never put an *it* upon paper without thinking well of what you are about. When I see many *its* in a page, I always tremble for the writer.

197. We now come to the second class of pronouns; that is to say, the RELATIVE PRONOUNS, of which you have had some account in Letter VI. paragraphs, 62, 63, 64, 65, and 66; which paragraphs you should now read over again with attention.

198. *Who*, which becomes *whose* in the possessive case, and *whom* in the objective case, is, in its use, confined to rational beings: for, though some writers do say; "the country *whose* fertility is great," and the like, it is not correct. We must say; "the country, the fertility *of which*." But, if we *personify*; if, for instance, we call a

nation a *she*, or the sun a *he*, we must then, if we have need of relative pronouns, take these, or the word *that*, which is a relative applicable to rational as well as irrational and even inanimate beings.

199. The errors which are most frequent, in the use of these relative pronouns, arise from not taking care to use *who* and *whom* when they are respectively demanded by the verbs or prepositions. “*To who* did you speak? *Whom* is come to day?” These sentences are too glaringly wrong to pass from our pens to the paper. But, as in the case of personal pronouns, when the relatives are placed, in the sentence, at a distance from their antecedents, or verbs, or prepositions, the ear gives us no assistance. “*Who*, of all the men in the world, do you think I saw, the other day. *Who*, for the sake of his numerous services, the office was given to.” In both these cases it ought to be *whom*. Bring the verb, in the first, and the preposition in the second, case closer to the relative; as, *who* I saw; *to who* the office was given; and, you see the error at once. But, take care! “*Whom* of all the men in the world, do you think was chosen to be sent as an ambassador? *Whom*, for the sake of his numerous services had an office of honour bestowed upon him.” These are nominative cases, and ought to have *who*; that is to say, “*who* was chosen; *who* had an office.” I will not load you with numerous examples. Read again about the *nominative* and *objective* cases in Letter V. Apply your reason to the subject. *Who* is the nominative, and *whom* the objective. Think well about the matter, and you will want no more examples.

200. There is, however, an erroneous way of employing *whom* which I must point out to your particular attention, because it is so often seen in very good writers, and because it is very deceiv-

ing. "The duke of Argyle, *than whom* no man
"was more hearty in the cause. Cromwell, *than*
"*whom* no man was better skilled in artifice." A
hundred such phrases might be collected from
HUME, BLACKSTONE, and even from Doctors BLAIR
and JOHNSON. Yet, they are bad grammar. In
all such cases, *who* should be made use of: for, it
is *nominative* and not *objective*. "No man was
"more hearty in the cause *than he was*: no man
"was better skilled in artifice *than he was*." It is
a very common parliament-house phrase, and,
therefore, presumptively *corrupt*; but, it is a
Doctor JOHNSON phrase, too: "Pope, *than whom*
"few men had more vanity." The Doctor did
not say, "Myself, *than whom* few men have been
"found more base, having, in my Dictionary, de-
"scribed a pensioner as a slave of state, and hav-
"ing afterwards myself become a pensioner."

201. I differ, as to this matter, from Bishop
Lowth, who says, that "the relative *who*, having
"reference to no verb or preposition understood,
"but only to its antecedent, when it follows *than*, is
"*always in the objective case*; even though the pro-
"noun, if substituted in its place, would be in the
"nominative." And, then, he gives an instance from
Milton. "*Beelzebub, than whom*, Satan except, none
"higher sat." It is curious enough, that this sentence
of the Bishop is, itself, ungrammatical! Our poor,
unfortunate *it* is so placed as to make it a matter of
doubt whether the Bishop meant *it* to relate to
who, or to *its antecedent*. However, we know his
meaning; but, though he says, that *who*, when it
follows *than*, is always in the objective case, he
gives us no reason for this departure from a clear
general principle: unless we are to regard as a
reason, the example of Milton, who has com-
mitted many hundreds, if not thousands, of gram-
matical errors, many of which the Bishop himself
has pointed out. There is a sort of side-wind at-

tempt at a reason in the words, "having reference to no *verb* or *preposition* understood." I do not see the *reason* even if this could be; but, it appears to me impossible, that a noun or pronoun can exist in a grammatical state without having reference to some *verb* or *preposition*, either expressed or understood. What is meant by Milton? "Than Beelzebub none *sat* higher, except Satan." And, when, in order to avoid the repetition of the word Beelzebub, the relative becomes necessary, the full construction must be, "no devil *sat* higher than *who* *sat*, except Satan;" and not, "no devil *sat* higher than *whom* *sat*." The supposition, that there can be a noun, or pronoun, which has reference to no *verb*, and no *preposition*, is certainly a mistake.

202. *That*, as a relative, may, as we have seen, be applied either to persons or things; but it has no possessive case, and no change to denote the other two cases. We say, "The man *that* gives," and the man *that* a thing is given to." But, there are some instances, when it can hardly be called proper to use *that* instead of *who*, or *whom*. Thus; directly after a proper name, as in HUME: "The queen gave orders for taking into custody the Duke of Northumberland, who fell on his knees to the Earl of Arundel, *that* arrested him." *Who* would have been much better, though there was a *who* just before in the sentence. In the same author: "Douglas, *who* had prepared his people, and *that* was bent upon taking his part openly." This never ought to be, though we see it continually. *Either* may do; but *both* never ought to be relatives of the same antecedent in the same sentence. And, indeed, it is very awkward, to say the least of it, to use *both* in the same sentence, though relating to different antecedents, if all these be names of rational beings. "The Lords, *who* made the first false report, and the

“ Commons, *that* seemed to vie with their Lordships in falsehood, became equally detested.” *That*, as a relative, cannot take the preposition or verb immediately before it : as, “ the man, *to whom* I gave a book ;” but I cannot say, “ the man *to that* I gave a book ; nor the knife *to that* I put a handle.” “ Having defeated *whom*, he remained quiet ;” but, we cannot, in speaking of persons, say, “ having defeated *that*, he remained quiet.”

203. *Which*, as a relative pronoun, is applied to irrational beings only, and, as to those beings, it may be employed indifferently with *that*, except in the cases, where the relative comes directly after a verb or a preposition, in the manner just spoken of. We say “ the town, the horse, the tree, *which* ; or *to which* ;” and so on. And we say, “ the town, the tree, the horse, *that* ;” but not *to* or *for that*.

204. We may, in speaking of nouns of multitude, when the multitude consists of rational creatures, and when we choose to consider it as a singular noun, make use of *who* or *whom*, or of *which*, just as we please. We may say, “ the crowd, *which* was going up the street ; or, the crowd, *who* was going up the street ;” but, we cannot make use of both in the same sentence and relating to the same noun. Therefore, we cannot say, “ the crowd *who* was going up the street and *which* was making a great noise.” We must take the *who*, or the *which*, in both places. If such noun of multitude be used in the plural number, we then go on with the idea of the rationality of the individuals in our minds ; and, therefore, we make use of *who* and *whom*. “ The assembly, *who* rejected the petition, but, *to whom* another was immediately presented.”

205. *Who*, *whose*, *whom*, and *which* are employed in asking questions ; to which, in this capacity, we must add, *what*. “ *Who* is in the

“house? *Whose* gun is that? *Whom* do you love best? *What* has happened to-day?” *What*, means generally, as a relative, “*the thing which*,” as, “give me *what* I want.” It may be used in the nominative and in the objective case: “*What* happens to-day, may happen next week; but I know not *to what* we shall come at last:” or, “*the thing which* happens to-day, may happen next week; but I know not *the thing which* we shall come to at last.”

206. *Which*, though, in other cases, it cannot be employed as a relative with nouns which are the names of rational beings, is, with such nouns, employed in asking questions: as, “the tyrants allege, that the petition was disrespectful. *Which* of the tyrants?” Again: “one of the petitioners had his head cleaved by a soldier: *Which*?” That is to say, “which of the petitioners was it?”

207. *What*, when used in asking for a repetition of what has been said: as, *what*? means, “tell me *that which*, or *the thing which*, you have said.” This word is used, and with great force, in the way of exclamation: “*What!* rob us of our right of suffrage, and, then, when we pray to have our right restored to us, shut us up in dungeons!” The full meaning is this: “*What* do *they* do? They rob us of our right.”

208. It is not, in general, adviseable to crowd these relatives together; but, it sometimes happens that it is done. “*Who*, *that* has any sense, can believe such palpable falsehoods? *What*, *that* can be invented, can disguise these falsehoods? *Whom*, *that* you ever heard of, was a pardon obtained by from the mercy of a tyrant? Some men’s rights have been taken from them by force and by genius, but *whose*, *that* the world ever heard of before, were taken away by ignorance and stupidity?”

209. *Whosoever, whosoever, whomsoever, whatsoever, whichsoever*, follow the rules applicable to the original words. The *so* is an adverb, which, in its general acceptation, means *in like manner*; and *ever*, which is also an adverb, means, *at any time, at all times, or always*. These two words, thus joined in *whosoever*, mean, *who, in any case that may be*; and so of the other three words. We sometimes omit the *so*, and say, *whoever, whomever, whatever*, and even *whosever*. It is a mere abbreviation. The *so* is understood; and, it is best not to omit to write it. Sometimes the *soever* is separated from the pronoun: "*What man soever he might be.*" But, the main thing is, to understand the *reason* upon which the use of these words stands; for, if you understand that, you will always use the words properly.

210. The DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS have been described in Letter VI, paragraph 67; and, I have very little to add to what is there said upon the subject. They never change their endings, to denote gender or case; and the proper application of them is so obvious, that it requires little to be said about it. However, we shall hear more of these pronouns, when we come to the syntax of verbs. One observation I will make here, however, because it will serve to caution you against the commission of a very common error. You will hardly say, "*Them that write*;" but, you may say, as many do, "*We ought always to have a great regard for them, who are wise and good.*" It ought to be, "*for those, who are wise and good*;" because, the word *persons* is understood: "*those persons who are wise and good*;" and, it is bad grammar to say, "*them persons who are wise and good.*" But, observe, in *another sense*, this sentence would be correct. If I am speaking of *particular persons*, and, if my object be to make you understand, that they are *wise and good*, and also, that *I love them*.

Then, I say, very correctly, "I love *them*, who
 "are wise and good." Thus: "The father has
 "two children: he loves *them*, who are wise and
 "good; and they love him, who is very indulgent."
 It is the *meaning* that must be your guide; and *rea-*
son must tell you what is the meaning. "*They*,
 "who can write, save a great deal of bodily labour,"
 is very different from "*Those* who can write, save
 "a great deal of bodily labour." The *those* stands
 for *those persons*; that is to say, *any persons, per-*
sons in general, who can write; whereas, the *they*,
 as here used, relates to some particular persons;
 and, the sentence means, that these particular per-
 sons *are able to write*, and, by that means, *they* save
 a great deal of bodily labour. DOCTOR BLAIR, in
 his 21st Lecture, has fallen into an error of this
 sort: thus, "These two paragraphs are extremely
 "worthy of Mr. ADDISON, and exhibit a style,
 "which *they*, who can successfully imitate, may
 "esteem themselves happy." It ought to be *those*
 instead of *they*. But, this is not the only fault in
 this sentence. Why say "*extremely* worthy?"
Worthiness is a quality which hardly admits of *de-*
grees, and, surely, it does not admit of *extremes*.
 Then again, at the close: to *esteem* is to *prize*, to
set value on, to *value highly*. How, then, can men
 "*esteem* themselves happy?" How can they "*prize*
 "*themselves* happy?" How can they "*highly value*
 "*themselves* happy?" My Dear James, let cham-
 ber-maids and members of the House of Commons,
 and learned Doctors, write thus: be you content
 with plain words which convey your meaning: say
 that a thing is *quite worthy* of a man; and that men
 may *deem* themselves happy.

211. The INDETERMINATE PRONOUNS have been
 enumerated in Letter VI, paragraph 71. They are
 sometimes *adjectives*, as is stated in that paragraph.
Whoever, *Whatever* and *Whichever* (that is, *whoso-*
ever, *whatsoever*, *whichsoever*) though *relatives*, are

indeterminate too. But, indeed, it signifies little how these words are *classed*. It is the *use* of them that we ought to look to. *Every*, which I have reckoned amongst these pronouns, is never, now-a-days, used *without* a noun, and is, therefore, in fact, an *adjective*. The error that is most frequently committed in using these pronouns is, putting the *plural* verb, or plural pronoun, after nouns preceded by *every*, *each* or *either*; especially in the case of *every*: as “*every man*; *every body*; *every house*.” These are understood to mean, all the *men*, all the *people*, all the *houses*; but, only *one man*, *one body*, *one house*, is spoken of, and, therefore, the verb ought to be in the singular: as, “*every body is* disgusted;” and not “*every body are* disgusted.”

212. Before you use any of these words, you should think well on their *true meaning*; for, if you do this, you will seldom commit errors in the use of them. Doctor Johnson, in his *Rambler*, Number 177, has this passage. “*Every one* of these *virtuosos* looked on all his associates as wretches of depraved taste and narrow notions. *Their* conversation was, *therefore*, fretful and waspish, *their* behaviour brutal, *their* merriment bluntly sarcastic, and *their* seriousness gloomy and suspicious.” Now these *theirs* certainly relate to *every one*, though the author meant, without doubt, that they should relate to *the whole body of virtuosos* including the *every one*. The word *therefore* adds to the confusion. The *virtuosos* were, *therefore*, fretful and waspish. *What for*? Was it because *every one* saw his associates in a bad light? How can my thinking meanly of others make *their* conversation fretful? If the Doctor had said: “*These virtuosos looked on each other . . .*” The meaning would have been clear.

213. The pronoun *either*, which means *one of two*, is very often improperly employed. It is used to denote *one of three or more*, which is always in-

correct. We say, "*either* the *dog* or the *cat*;" but not, "*either* the *dog*, the *cat*, or the *pig*." Suppose some one to ask me, which I choose to have, mutton, veal, or woodcock, I answer *any one* of them; and not *either* of them. Doctor Blair has used *any one* where he ought to have used *either*. "The *two words* are not altogether synonymous yet, in the present case, *any one* of them would have been sufficient."

214. In concluding this Letter on the Syntax of Pronouns, I must observe, that I leave many of these indeterminate pronouns unnoticed in a particular manner. To notice every one individually could answer no purpose except that of swelling the size of the book; a thing which I most anxiously wish to avoid.

LETTER XVIII.

SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO ADJECTIVES.

215. By this time, my dear James, you will hardly want to be reminded of the nature of Adjectives. However, it may not be amiss for you to read again attentively the whole of Letter VII.

216. Adjectives, having no relative effect, containing no representative quality, have not the dangerous power possessed by pronouns of throwing whole sentences into confusion, and of preventing or totally destroying the writer's meaning. For this reason, there is little to be said respecting the using of Adjectives.

217. When you make use of an Adjective in the way of comparison, take care that there be a congruity, or fitness, in the things or qualities compared. Do not say that a thing is *deeper* than it is *broad* or *long*; or that a man is *taller* than he is

wise or *rich*. HUME says, "The principles of the Reformation were *deeper* in the prince's mind than to be *easily eradicated*." This is no comparison at all. It is nonsense.

218. When Adjectives are used as *nouns*, they must, in all respects, be treated as nouns. "The guilty, the innocent, the rich, the poor, are mixed together." But, we cannot say, "*a guilty*," meaning to use the word *guilty* as a noun.

219. If two or more Adjectives are used as applicable to the same noun, there must be a comma, or commas, to separate them: as, "a poor, unfortunate man;" unless *and* or *or* be made use of, for then a comma, or commas may be omitted: as, "a lofty and large and excellent house."

220. Be rather sparing than liberal in the use of Adjectives. One, which expresses your meaning, is better than two, which can, at best, do no more than express it, while the additional one may, possibly, do harm. But, the error most common in the use of Adjectives, is the endeavouring to strengthen the Adjective by putting adverbs before it, and which adverbs convey the notion, that the quality or property expressed by the Adjective admits of degrees: as, "*very honest, extremely just*." A man may be *wiser* than another *wise* man, an act may be *more wicked* than another *wicked* act; but, a man cannot be *more honest* than another: every man, who is *not honest*, must be *dishonest*; and every act which is *not just*, must be *unjust*. "*Very right*," and "*very wrong*," are very common expressions, but they are both incorrect. Some expressions may be *more common* than others; but, that which is *not right* is *wrong*; and that which is *not wrong* is *right*. There are here no intermediate degrees. We should laugh to hear a man say: "you are *a little right*," "I am *a good deal wrong*;" that person is *honest* "in *a trifling degree*;" that act was *too just*." But, our ears are accustomed to the adverbs of ex-

aggeration. Some writers deal in these to a degree that tries the ear and offends the understanding. With them, every thing is *excessively* or *immensely* or *extremely* or *vastly* or *surprisingly* or *wonderfully* or *abundantly*, or the like. The notion of such writers is, that these words give *strength* to what they are saying. This is a great error. Strength must be found in the *thought*, or, it will never be found in the *words*. Big-sounding words, without thoughts corresponding, are effort without effect.

221. Care must be taken, too, not to use such Adjectives as are improper to be applied to the nouns along with which they are used. "Good" virtues; *bad* vices; *painful* tooth-achs; *pleasing* "pleasures." These are staringly absurd; but, amongst a select society of empty heads, "*moderate* Reform" has long been a fashionable expression; an expression which Major Cartwright, in one of his essays, ridicules by asking the gentlemen who use it, how they would like to obtain *moderate justice* in a court of law, or to meet with *moderate chastity* in a wife.

222. To secure yourself against the risk of committing such errors, you have only to take care to ascertain the full meaning of every word you employ.

LETTER XIX.

SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO VERBS.

223. LET us, my dear James, get well through this Letter; and, then, we may, I think, safely say, that we know something of Grammar: a little more, I hope, than is known by the greater part of those, who call themselves Latin and Greek scholars, and who dignify their having studied those

languages with the name of "*Liberal Education.*"

224. There can be no sentence, there can be no sense in words, unless there be *a verb*, either expressed or understood. Each of the other parts of speech may, alternately, be dispensed with; but the verb never can. The verb being, then, of so much importance, you will do well to read again, before you proceed further, paragraphs 23, 24, 25, and 26 in Letter III, and the whole of Letter VIII.

225. Well, then, we have now to see how verbs are used in sentences, and how a misuse of them affects the meaning of the writer. There must, you will bear in mind, always be a verb, expressed or understood. One would think, that this was not the case in the direction, written on a post letter. To John Goldsmith, Esq. Hambledon, Hampshire. But, what do these words really mean? Why, they mean: "*This letter is to be delivered to John Goldsmith, who is an Esquire, who lives at Hambledon, which is in Hampshire.*" Thus, there are no less than five verbs, where we thought there was no verb at all. "*Sir, I beg you to give me a bit of bread.*" The sentence, which follows the *Sir*, is complete; but the *Sir* appears to stand wholly without connection. However, the full meaning is this: "*I beg you, who are a Sir, to give me a bit of bread.*" "*What, Hunt?*" That is to say, "*what is said by you, whose name is Hunt?*" Again, in the date of a letter: "*Long Island, 25 March, 1818.*" That is: "*I am now writing in Long Island; this is the twenty-fifth day of March, and this month is in the one thousand eight hundred and eighteenth year of the Christian era.*"

226. Now, if you take time to reflect a little on this matter, you will never be puzzled for a moment by those detached words, to suit which gram-

marians have invented *vocative cases* and *cases absolute*, and a great many other appellations, with which they puzzle themselves, and confuse and bewilder and torment those who read their books.

227. We *almost always*, whether in speaking or in writing, leave out some of the words, which are necessary to a *full expression* of our meaning. This leaving out is called the *Ellipsis*. *Ellipsis* is, in geometry, an *oval figure*; and, the compasses, in the tracing of the line of this figure, do not take their full sweep all round, as in the tracing of a *circle*, but they make *skips* and *leave out* parts of the area, or surface, which parts would be included in the circle. Hence it is, that the *skipping over*, or *leaving out*, in speaking or in writing, is called the *Ellipsis*; without making use of which, we, as you will presently see, scarcely ever open our lips or move our pens. “He told me, that he had given John the gun, which the gunsmith brought the other night.” That is: “He told *to* me, that he had given *to* John the gun, which the gunsmith brought *to this* place, or hither, *on* the other night.” This would, you see, be very cumbrous and disagreeable; and, therefore, seeing that the *meaning* is quite clear without the words, marked by italicks, we *leave these words out*. But, we may easily go too far in this elliptical way, and say: “He told me, he had given John the gun, the gunsmith brought the other night.” This is leaving the sentence too bare, and making it to be, if not nonsense, hardly sense.

228. Reserving some further remarks, to be made by-and-by, on the *Ellipsis*, I have now to desire, that, always, when you are examining a sentence, you will take into your view the words that are *left out*. If you have any doubt as to the correctness of the sentence, fill it up by putting in the

left-out words; and, if there be an error, you will soon discover it.

229. Keeping in mind these remarks on the subject of *understood words*, you will now listen attentively to me, while I endeavour to explain to you the manner in which *verbs* ought to be used in sentences.

230. The first thing is, to come at a clear understanding with regard to the *cases* of nouns and pronouns as connected, in use, with *verbs* and *prepositions*; for, on this connexion, depends a great deal. Verbs *govern*, as it is called, nouns and pronouns; that is to say, they sometimes cause, or make, nouns or pronouns to be in a certain case. *Nouns* do not vary their endings to denote different cases; but *pronouns* do; as you have seen in Letter VI. Therefore, to illustrate this matter, I will take the pronoun personal of the third person singular, which in the nominative case, is, *he*, possessive case, *his*, objective case, *him*.

231. When *a man* (it is the same with regard to any other person or thing) is the *actor*, or *doer*, the *man* is in the nominative case, and the corresponding pronoun is, *he*: "*He strikes*." The same case exists when the man is the *receiver* or *endurer*, of an action. "*He is stricken*." It is still the same case when the man is said *to be* in any state or condition. "*He is unhappy*." Indeed, there is no difference in these two latter instances; for, "*he is stricken*," is no other than to say that "*he is in a state, or condition, called stricken*." Observe, too, that, in these two latter instances, the *he* is followed by the verb *to be*: *he is stricken*, *he is unhappy*; and, observe, moreover, that whenever the verb *to be* is used, the *receiver*, or *be-er*, (if I may make a word) is, and must be, in the *nominative case*. But, now, let me stop a little to guard you against a puzzle. I say, "*the verb to be*;" but, I do not mean *these two words* always. When I say,

the verb *to be*, I may mean as in the above examples, *is*. This is the verb *to be*, in the third person singular. “*I write.*” I should say, that here is the pronoun *I* and the verb *to write*; that is to say, it is the verb *to write* in one of its forms. The *to* is the sign of the infinitive mode; and the verb in that state, is the root, or the foundation, from which all the different parts or forms proceed. Having guarded ourselves against this puzzler, let us come back to our nominative case. The *actor*, the *doer*, the *receiver of an action*, the *be-er*, must always be in the nominative case; and, it is called nominative case, because it is that state, or situation, or case, in which the person, or thing, is *named* without being pointed out as the *object*, or *end*, of any foregoing action or purpose: as, “*he strikes; he is striking; he is happy.*” This word *nominative* is not a good word; *acting and being* case, would be much better. This word, *nominative*, like most of the terms used in teaching grammar, has been taken from the Latin. It is bad; it is inadequate to its intended purpose; but, it is *used*; and, if we understand its meaning, or, rather, what it is designed to mean, its intrinsic insufficiency is of no consequence. Thus, I hope, then, that we know what the *nominative* is. “*He writes; he sings; he is sick; he is well; he is smitten; he is good;*” and so on, always with a *he*.

232. But (and now pay attention) if the *action* pass from the *actor to a person or thing acted upon*, and, if there be no part of the verb, *to be*, employed; then the person or thing acted upon is in the *objective* case: as, “*he smites him; he strikes him; he kills him.*” In these instances we wish to show, not only an action that is performed and the person who performs it, but also the person upon whom it is performed. Here, therefore, we state the *actor*, the *action*, and the *object*; and, the person or thing which is the object, is in the *objec-*

tive case. The verb is said, in such instances, to govern the noun or pronoun ; that is to say, to make it, or force it, to be in the objective case ; and, to make us use *him* instead of *he*.

233. However, I remember, that I was very much puzzled on account of these cases. I saw, that when "*Peter was smitten,*" Peter was in the *nominative case* ; but, that, when any person or thing "*had smitten Peter,*" Peter was in the *objective case*. This puzzled me much ; and the loose and imperfect definitions of my grammar-book yielded me no clue to a disentanglement. Reflection on the *reason* for this' apparent inconsistency soon taught me, however, that, in the first of these cases, Peter is merely *named*, or *nominated*, as the receiver of an action : and that, in the latter instance, Peter is mentioned as the *object* of the action of some other person or thing, expressed or understood. I perceived, that, in the first instance, "*Peter is smitten,*" I had a complete sense. I was informed as to the person who had received an action, and also as to what sort of action he had received. And, I perceived, that, in the second instance, "*John has smitten Peter,*" there was an actor who took possession of the use of the verb, and made Peter the object of it : and that this actor, *John*, now took to the *nominative*, and put Peter in the objective case.

234. This puzzle was, however, hardly got over, when another presented itself : for, I conceived the notion, that Peter was in the *nominative only* because no actor was mentioned at all in the sentence ; but, I soon discovered this to be an error : for, I found that, "*Peter is smitten by John,*" still left Peter in the *nominative* ; and that, if I used the pronoun, I must say, "*he is smitten by John ;*" and not "*him is smitten by John.*"

235. Upon this puzzle I dwelt a long time : a whole week, at least. For, I was not content unless

I could reconcile every thing to *reason*; and, I could see no reason for this. Peter, in this last instance, appeared to be the *object*, and there was the *actor*, John. My *ear*, indeed, assured me, that it was right to say, "*he* is smitten by John;" but my reason doubted the information and assurances of my ear.

236. At last, the little insignificant word, *by*, attracted my attention. This word, in this place, is a *preposition*. Ah! That is it! prepositions govern nouns and pronouns: that is to say, *make them to be in the objective case!* So that, John, who had plagued me so much, I found to be in the objective case; and, I found, that, if I put him out, and put the pronoun in his place, I must say, "Peter is smitten *by him*."

237. Now, then, my dear James, do you clearly understand this? If you do not, have patience. Read and think, and weigh well every part of what I have here written: for, as you will immediately see, a clear understanding with regard to the *cases* is one of the main inlets to a perfect knowledge of grammar.

238. Verbs, of which there must be one at least, expressed or understood, in every sentence, must *agree* in *person* and in *number* with the nouns or pronouns, which are the *nominatives* of the sentence; that is to say, the verbs must be of the same person and same number as the nominatives are. Verbs frequently change their forms and endings to make themselves *agree* with their *nominatives*. How necessary is it, then, to know what is, and what is not, a nominative in a sentence? Let us take an example. "John smite Peter." What are these words? *John* is a noun, *third person*, singular number, nominative case. *Smite* is a verb, *first person*, singular number. *Peter* is a noun, *third person*, singular number, *objective case*. Therefore the sentence is incorrect; for

the *nominative*, *John*, is in the *third* person, and the verb is in the *first* ; while both ought to be in the *same person*. The sentence ought to be, “ *John smiles Peter* ;” and not “ *John smite Peter*.”

239. This is, to be sure, a very glaring error ; but still it is no more than an error, and is, in fact, as excusable as any other grammatical error. “ *The men lives in the country*.” Here, the verb, *lives*, is in the *singular* number, and the noun, *men*, which is the *nominative*, is in the *plural* number. “ *The men live in the country*,” it ought to be. These errors stare us in the face. But, when the sentences become longer, and embrace several *nominatives* and verbs, we do not so readily perceive the errors that are committed. “ *The intention of the act of parliament, and not its several penalties, decide the character of the corrupt assembly by whom it was passed*.” Here the noun, *penalties*, comes so near to the verb, *decide*, that the ear deceives the judgment. But, the noun, *intention*, is the *nominative* to the verb, which therefore, ought to be, *decides*. Let us take a sentence still more deceiving. “ *Without the aid of a fraudulent paper money, the tyrants never could have performed any of those deeds, by which their safety have been endangered, and which have, at the same time, made them detested*.” *Deeds*, is the *nominative* to the *last have* and its principal verb ; but *safety* is the *nominative* to the *first have* ; and, therefore, this first *have* ought to have been *has*. You see, that the error arises from our having the plural noun, *deeds*, in our eye and ear. Take all the rest of the sentence away, and leave “ *safety have been*” standing by itself, and then the error is as flagrant as “ *John smite Peter*.” Watch me, now, in the next sentence. “ *It must be observed, that land fell greatly in price as soon as the cheats began to draw in their paper money. In such cases the quantity and quality of the land is*

“ the same as it was before ; but, the price is reduced, all of a sudden, by a change in the value and power of the money, which becomes very different from what it was.” Here are two complete sentences, which go very glibly off the tongue. There is nothing in them that offends the ear. The first is, indeed, correct ; but, the last is a mass of error. *Quantity and quality*, which are the *nominative* in the first member of the sentence, make, together, a *plural*, and should have been followed, after the word *and*, by *are* and not by *is* ; and, the *it was*, which follows, should, of course, have been, *they were*. In the second member of the sentence, *value and power* are the *nominative* of *becomes*, which, therefore, should have been, *become* ; and, then, again, there follows an *it was* instead of *they were*. We are misled, in such cases, by the nearness of the singular noun, which comes in between the nominatives and the verbs. We should not be likely to say, “ quantity and quality is ; value and power becomes.” But when a singular noun comes in between such nominatives and the verbs, we are very apt to be thinking of that noun, and to commit error. When we once begin, we keep on ; and, if the sentence be long, we get together, at last, a fine collection of verbs and pronouns, making as complete nonsense as heart can wish. Judge Blackstone in the 4th Book, Chapter 33, says, “ The very *scheme and model* of the administration of common justice between party and party, *was* entirely settled by this king ; and *has* continued nearly the same to this day.” *Administration of common justice* was full upon the Judge’s ear : down he clapped, *was* ; and, *has*, naturally followed : and, thus, my dear son, in grammar, as in moral conduct, one fault almost necessarily produces others.

240. Look, therefore, at your *nominative*, before you put a *verb* upon paper ; for, you see, it may

be *one word*, or *two*, or *more words*. But, observe, if there be two, or more singular nouns or pronouns, separated by *or*, which, you know is a *disjoining* conjunction; then, the verb must be in the singular; as, “a soldier *or* a sailor, who *has* served his country faithfully, *is* fairly entitled to a pension; but who will say, that a prostituted peer, a pimp, *or* a buffoon, *merits* a similar provision from the public?”

241. It sometimes happens, that there are, in the nominative, two or more nouns, or pronouns, and that they are in *different numbers*, or in *different persons*: as, “*The minister, or the Borough-tyrants.*” These nouns cannot have the verb to agree with them *both*. Therefore, if it be the conspiring of these wretches against the liberties of the people, of which we have to speak, we cannot say, “*The minister, or the borough-tyrants, conspire* ;” because the verb would then not agree in number with the noun, *minister* : nor can we say, *conspires* ; because the verb would not agree with the noun, *borough-tyrants*. Therefore, we must not write such sentences: we must say, “*The minister conspires, or the borough-tyrants conspire* against the liberties of the people.” Repetition is, sometimes, disagreeable to the ear; but, it is better to repeat, be it ever so often, than to write bad grammar, which is only another term for nonsense.

242. When nominatives are separated by *nor*, the rule of *or* must be followed. “Neither man *nor* beast is safe in such weather ;” and not *are* safe. And, if nominatives of different numbers present themselves, we must not give them a verb which *disagrees* with either the one or the other. We must not say: “Neither the halberd *nor* the bayonets *are* sufficient to prevent us from obtaining our rights.” We must avoid this bad grammar by using a different form of words: as, “We

“are to be prevented from obtaining our rights by
“neither the halter nor the bayonets.” And, why
should we *wish* to write bad grammar, if we can ex-
press our meaning in good grammar?

243. If *or* or *nor* disjoin nouns and pronouns of
different *persons*, these nouns and pronouns, though
they be all of the same *number*, cannot be the nomi-
native of one and the same verb. We cannot say
“They or I *am* in fault; I, or they, or he, *is* the
“author of it; George or I *am* the person.” Mr.
Lindley Murray says, that we *may* use these phra-
ses; and, that we have only to take care that the
verb agree with that person, which *is placed near-*
est to it; but, he says also, that it would be *better* to
avoid such phrases by giving a different turn to our
words. I do not like to leave any thing to chance
or to discretion, when we have a clear principle
for our guide. Fill up the sentences; and, you
will see what pretty work here is. “They *am* in
“fault or I *am* in fault; I *is* the author, or they *is*
“the author, or he *is* the author: George *am* the
“person, or I *am* the person.” Mr. Murray gives
a similar latitude as to the verbs used with a mix-
ture of plurals and singulars, as mentioned in the
foregoing paragraph. The truth, I suspect, is, that
Mr. Murray, observing that great writers frequently
committed these errors, thought it prudent to give
up the cause of grammar, rather than seem to set
himself against such formidable authority. But,
if we follow this course, it is pretty clear, that we
shall very soon be left with no principle and no rule
of grammar.

244. The nominative is frequently a noun of
multitude; as *mob*, *parliament*, *gang*. Now, where
this is the case, the verb is used in the singular or in
the plural, upon precisely the same principles, that
the pronouns are so used; and as these principles,
together with ample illustrations in the way of ex-
ample, have been given you in Letter XVII, para-

graph 181, I need say nothing more of the matter. I will just observe, however, that *consistency*, in the use of the verb, in such cases, is the main thing to keep in view. We may say : “ The gang of bo-
 “ rough-tyrants *is* cruel : ” or, that “ the gang of bo-
 “ rough-tyrants *are* cruel ; ” but, if we go on to speak of their notoriously brutal ignorance, we must not say : “ The gang of borough tyrants *is* cruel, and
 “ *are* also notoriously as ignorant as brutes.” We must use *is* in both places, or *are* in both places.

245. In looking for the nominative of a sentence, take care that the *relative pronoun* be not a stumbling block, for relatives have no changes to denote *number* or *person* ; and, though they may sometimes appear to be, of themselves, nominatives, they never can be such. “ The men *who are* here : the man
 “ *who is* here ; the cocks *that* crow, the cock *that*
 “ *crow*s.” Now, if the relative be the nominative, why do the verbs *change*, seeing that here is *no change in the relative* ? No : the verb, in pursuit of its nominative, runs through the relatives to come at their antecedents, *men, man, cocks, cock*. Bishop Lowth says, however, that “ the relative is the nominative
 “ when no other nominative comes between it and
 “ the verb ; ” and Mr. Murray has very faithfully copied this erroneous observation. “ *Who is* in the
 “ house ? *Who are* in the house ? *Who strike* the
 “ iron ? *Who strike* the iron ? *Who was* in the street ?
 “ *Who were* in the street ? ” Now, here is, in all these instances, no other nominative between the relative and the verb ; and yet the verb is continually varying. Why does it vary ? Because it disregards the relative and goes and finds the antecedent, and accommodates its number to that antecedent. The antecedents are, in these instances, understood ;
 “ What *person is* in the house ? What *persons are*
 “ in the house ? What *person strike* the iron ?
 “ What *persons strike* the iron ? What *person was*
 “ in the street ? What *persons were* in the street ? ”
 The Bishop seems to have had a misgiving in his mind,

when he gave this account of the nominative functions of the *relative* ; for he adds, “ the relative is “ of the *same person* as the antecedent : and the verb “ *agrees with it accordingly.*” Oh, oh ! But, the relative is *always the same*, and is of *any* and of *every number* and *person*. How, then, can the verb, when it makes *its changes* in number and person, be said to *agree* with the relative ? Disagree, indeed, with the relative the verb cannot any more than it can with a preposition ; for the relative has, like the preposition, no changes to denote cases ; but, the danger is, that, in certain instances, the relative may be *taken for a nominative*, without your looking after the antecedent, which is the real nominative, and that, thus, not having the number and person of the antecedent clearly in your mind, you may give to the verb a wrong number or person. It is very seldom, that those who lay down erroneous rules furnish us with examples by the means of which we are enabled to detect the error of these rules : yet, Mr. Murray has, in the present case, done this most amply. For, in another part of his book, he has these two examples : “ I am the general, *who* “ *give* the orders to day. I am the general, *who* “ *gives* the orders to day.” Here the antecedents as well as the relatives are precisely the same ; the order of the words is the same ; and yet the verbs are different. *Why ?* Because, in the first example, the pronoun *I* is the nominative, and, in the second, the noun *general*. The first means, “ I, “ who am the general here, *give* the orders to- “ day.” The second means, “ The general, who “ *gives* the orders to-day, is I.” Nothing can more clearly show, that the relative cannot be the nominative, and that, to consider it as a nominative must lead to error and confusion. You will observe, therefore, that, when I, in the Etymology and Syntax as relating to relative pronouns, speak of relatives as *being in the nominative case*, I mean,

that they relate to *nouns* or to *personal pronouns*, which are in that case. The same observation applies to the other cases.

246. We are sometimes embarrassed to fix precisely on the nominative, when a sort of *addition* is made to it by words expressing persons or things that accompany it: as, "Sidmouth, with Oliver the spy, *have* brought Brandreth to the block." We hesitate to determine, whether *Sidmouth* alone, is the nominative, or whether the nominative includes *Oliver*; and, of course, we hesitate which to employ, the *singular* or the *plural* verb; that is to say, *has*, or *have*. The meaning must be our guide. If we mean, that the act has been *done* by Sidmouth *himself*, and that the spy has been a mere *involuntary* agent, then we ought to use the singular; but, if we believe, that the spy has been a *co-operator*; an *associate*; an *accomplice*; then, we must use the plural of the verb. "Sidmouth, with his Circular Letter, *has* produced great oppression and flagrant violations of law." *Has*, by all means, in this case; because the Letter is a mere instrument. Give the sentence a turn: "Sidmouth *has* produced great oppression and flagrant violations of the law with his Circular Letter." This is good; but, Sidmouth "*has* brought Brandreth to the block *with* Oliver the spy," is bad. It sounds badly; and it is bad sense. It does not say what we mean it should say. "A leg of mutton, with turnips and carrots, *is* very good." If we mean to say, that a leg of mutton, when cooked with these vegetables, is good, we must use *is*; but, if we are speaking of the goodness of a leg of mutton *and* these vegetables taken all together, we must use *are*. When *with* means *along with*, *together with*, in *company with*, and the like, it is nearly the same as *and*; and then the plural verb must be used. "He, with his bare hand, *takes* up hot iron." Not "he, with his bare hand, *take*

"up." "He, with his brothers, *are* able to do much." Not "*is* able to do much." If the pronoun be used instead of *brothers*, it will be in the objective case: "He, with *them*, are able to do much." But, this is no impediment to the including of the noun (represented by *them*) in the nominative. *With*, which is a preposition, takes the objective case after it; but, if the persons, or things, represented by the words coming after the preposition, form part of the actors in a sentence, the understood nouns make part of the nominatives. "The bag, with the guineas and dollars in it, *were* stolen." For, if we say, *was* stolen, it is possible for us to mean, that *the bag only* was stolen. "Sobriety, with great *industry* and *talent*, enable a man to perform great deeds." And not *enables*; for, sobriety *alone* would not enable a man to do great things. "The borough-tyranny, with the paper-money makers, *have* produced misery and starvation." And not *has*; for we mean that the two have *co-operated*. "Zeal, with discretion, *do* much;" and not "*does* much;" for, we mean, on the contrary, that it *does nothing*. It is the meaning that must determine which of the numbers we ought, in all such cases, to employ.

247. The verb *to be* sometimes comes between two nouns of different numbers. "The great evil *is* the borough-debt." In this instance there is nothing to embarrass us; because *evil* and *borough-debt* are both in the singular. But: "the great evil *is* the *taxes*," is not so clear of embarrassment. The embarrassment is the same, when there is a singular noun on one side and two or more singulars or plurals on the other side: "as the curse of the country *is* the profligacy, the rapacity, the corruption of the law-makers, the base suberviency of the administrators of the law, and the frauds of the makers of paper-money." Now, we mean, here, that these things *constitute*, or *form*,

or *make up*, a curse. We mean, that the curse *consists* of these things ; and, if we *said* this, there would be no puzzling. "The evil *is* the taxes." That is the taxes constitute the evil ; but, we cannot say, "the evil *are* the taxes ;" nor can we say, that "the curse *are* these things." Avoid, then, the use of the verb *to be*, in all such cases. Say, the curse of the country consists of, or arises *from*, or is produced *by*. Doctor Blair, in his 19th Lecture, says : "a feeble, a harsh, or an obscure style, *are* always faults." The *or* required the singular verb, *is* ; but, *faults* required *are*. If he had put *is* and *faulty*, there would have been no doubt of his being correct. But, as the sentence now stands, there is great room for doubt, and that, too, as to more than one point : for fault means *defect*, and a style, which is a *whole*, cannot well be called a *defect*, which means a want of goodness in a *part*. Feebleness, harshness, obscurity, are *faults*. But, to call the style itself, to call the *whole thing*, a *fault*, is more than the Doctor meant. The style may be *faulty*, and yet it may not be a fault. The Doctor's work is *faulty* : but, surely, the work is not a *fault* !

248. Lest you should be, in certain instances, puzzled to find your nominative case, which, as you must now see, constitutes the main spring and regulator of every sentence, I will here point out to you some instances, wherein there is used, apparently, neither verb nor nominative. "In general, "I dislike to drink wine." This *in general* is no more, in fact, than *one word*. It means *generally*. But, sometimes, there is a verb comes in ; "generally speaking." Thus : "The borough-tyrants, generally speaking, are great fools as well as rogues." That is to say, "when we speak generally ;" or, "if we are speaking generally ;" or, "when men, or people, speak generally." For observe, that there *never can be* a sentence without a

verb, expressed or understood, and that there *never can be* a verb without a nominative case expressed or understood.

249. Sometimes not only two or more nouns, or pronouns, may be the nominative of a sentence ; but *many other words* along with them may assist in making a nominative : as, “ Pitt, Rose, Steel, and “ their associates’ giving to Walter a sum of the “ public money as a reward for libelling the sons of “ the king *was* extremely profligate and base.” That is to say, this act of Pitt and his associates *was* extremely profligate and base. It is, when you come to inquire, the *act* which is the nominative, and all the other words only go to describe the origin and end of the act.

250. You must take care, that there *be* a nominative, and that it *be* clearly expressed or understood. “ The Attorney General, Gibbs, whose “ malignity induced him to be extremely violent, “ and *was* listened to by the Judges.” The first verb, *induced* has a nominative, namely, the *malignity* of the Attorney General, Gibbs ; but the *was* has no nominative, either expressed or clearly understood ; and, we cannot, therefore, tell, what or whom it was that was listened to : whether the *malignity* of Gibbs, or *Gibbs himself*. It should have been, and *who*, or, and *he*, was listened to ; and then we should have known, that it was Gibbs himself that was listened to. The omitting of the nominative, five hundred instances of which I could draw from Judge Blackstone and Doctor Johnson, arises very often from a desire to avoid a repetition of the noun or pronoun ; but, repetition is always to be preferred before obscurity.

251. Now, my dear James, I hope, that I have explained to you sufficiently, not only *what the nominative* is, but what are its powers in every sentence ; and that I have imprinted deeply on your mind the necessity of keeping the nominative con-

stantly in your eye. For want of doing this, Judge Blackstone has, in Book IV, Chap. 17, committed some most ludicrous errors. "Our ancient Saxon laws nominally punished theft with death, if above the value of twelvepence; but the criminal was permitted to redeem *his* life by a pecuniary ransom; as among *their* German ancestors." What confusion is here! Whose ancestors? *Theirs*. Who are *they*? Why the *criminal*. *Theirs*, if it relate to any thing, must relate to *laws*; and then the *laws* have *ancestors*. Then, *what* is it that was to be of above the value of twelvepence? The *death* or the *theft*? By, "*if above the value of twelvepence*," the Judge without doubt, meant, "*if the thing stolen were above the value of twelvepence*;" but he says no such thing; and the meaning of the words is, if *the death* were above the value of twelvepence. The sentence should have stood thus: "Our ancient Saxon laws nominally punished theft with death, if the thing stolen were above the value of twelvepence; but the criminals were permitted to redeem their lives by a pecuniary ransom; as amongst their German ancestors." I could quote, from the same author, hundreds of examples of similar errors; but, were there only this one to be found in a work, which is composed of matter, which was read, in the way of Lectures, by a professor of law to students in the University of Oxford, even this one ought to be sufficient to convince you of the importance of attending to the precepts, which I have given you relative to this part of our subject.

252. As to the *objective case* it has nothing to do with *verbs*; because, a noun which is not in the *nominative* must be in the *objective*; and because verbs do never vary their endings to make themselves *agree* with the objective. This case has been sufficiently explained under the head of *personal pronouns*, which have endings to denote it,

253. The *possessive case*, likewise, has nothing to do with verbs, only, you must take care, that you do not, in any instance, look upon it as a *nominative*, “The quality of the apples *were* good.” No: it must be *was*; for *quality* is the *nominative* and apples the *possessive*. “The want of learning, talent, and sense, *are* more visible in the two houses of parliament, than in any other part of the nation.” Take care upon all such occasions. Such sentences are, as to grammatical construction, very deceiving. It should be “*is* more visible;” for *want* is the *nominative*; and *learning, talent, and sense*, are in the *possessive*. The want of learning, and so on.

254. You now know all about the *person* and *number* of verbs. You know the reasons upon which are founded their variations with regard to these two circumstances. Look, now, at the *conjugation* in Letter VIII, paragraph 98; and, you will see, that there remain the *Times* and *Modes* to be considered.

255. Of *Times* there is very little to be said here. All the fanciful distinctions of, *perfect, present, more past, and more perfect past*, and numerous others, only tend to bewilder, confuse, and disgust the learner. There can be but *three* times, the *present*, the *past*, and the *future*; and, for the expressing of these, our language provides us with words and terminations the most suitable that can possibly be conceived. In some languages, which contain no little words such as our signs, *will, shall, may*, and so on, the verbs themselves change their form in order to express what we express by the help of these signs. There are *two past times* in French, for instance: I will give you an example in order to explain this matter. “The people every day *gave* money to the tyrants, who, in return, *gave* the people dungeons and axes.” Now here is our word *gave*, which is the *past time* of the

verb *to give*. It is the same word, you see, in both instances ; but you will see it different in the French. “ Tous les jours le peuple *donnoient* de l’argent aux tyrans, qui, en retour, *donnèrent* au peuple des cachots et des haches.” You see, that, in one place, our *give* is translated by *donnoient*, and, in the other place, by *donnèrent*. One of these is called, in French, the *past imperfect*, and the other, the *past perfect*. This distinction is necessary in the French ; but similar distinctions are wholly unnecessary in English.

256. In the Latin language, the verbs change their endings so as *to include in the verbs themselves* what we express by our auxiliary verb *to have*. And they have as many changes, or different endings, as are required to express all those various circumstances of time that we express by, *work, worked, shall work, may work, might work, have worked, had worked, shall have worked, may have worked, might have worked* ; and so on. It is, therefore, necessary for the Latins to have distinct appellations to suit these various circumstances of time, or states of an action ; but, such distinction of appellations can be of no use to us, whose verbs never vary their endings, to express time, except the single variation from the *present* to the *past* ; for, even as to the *future*, the *signs* answer our purpose. In our compound times, that is to say, such as, *I have worked*, there is the verb *to have*, which becomes *had*, or *shall have*, and so on.

257. Why, then, should we perplex ourselves with a multitude of artificial distinctions ; which cannot, by any possibility, be of any use in practice ? These distinctions have been introduced from this cause : those who have written English Grammars, have been taught Latin ; and, either unable to divest themselves of their Latin rules, or unwilling to treat with simplicity that, which, if made somewhat of a mystery, would make them appear more learn-

ed than the mass of the people, they have endeavoured to make our simple language turn and twist itself so as to become as complex in its principles as the Latin language is.

258. There are, however, some few remarks to be made with regard to the *times* of verbs ; but, before I make them, I must speak of the *participles*. Just cast your eye again on Letter VIII, paragraphs 97 and 102. Look also at the conjugations of the verbs, *to work*, *to have* and *to be*, in that same letter. These *participles*, you see, with the help of *to have* and *to be*, form our *compound times*. I need not tell you, that *I was working* means the same as *I worked*, only that the former supposes that something else was going on at the same time, or that something happened at the time I was working, or that, at least, there is some circumstance of action or of existence *collateral with my working* : as, “ I was working *when he came* ; *I was sick while I was working* ; *it rained while I was working* ; *she scolded while I was working*.” I need not tell you the use of *do* and *did* ; I need not say, that *I do work* is the same as, *I work*, only the former expresses the action more positively, and adds some degree of force to the assertion ; and that *did work* is the same as *worked*, only the former is, in the past time, of the same use as *do* is in the present. I need not dwell here on the uses of *will*, *shall*, *may*, *might*, *should*, *would*, *can*, *could* and *must* ; which uses, various as they are, are as well known to us all as the uses of our teeth and our noses ; and to misapply which words argues, not only a deficiency in the reasoning faculties, but almost a deficiency in instinctive discrimination. I will not, my dear James, in imitation of the learned doctors, pester you with a philological examination into the origin and properties of words, with regard to the use of which, if you were to commit an error in conversation, your brother Richard, who is four

years old, would instantly put you right. Of all these little words I have said quite enough before ; but, when the verbs *to have* and *to be* are used as *auxiliaries to principal verbs*, and, especially when the sentences are long, errors of great consequence may be committed ; and, therefore, against these it will be proper to guard you.

259. *Time* is so plain a matter ; it must be so well known to us, whether it be the *present*, the *past* or the *future* that we mean to express, that, we shall hardly say “ we *work*,” when we are speaking of our *having worked last year*. But, you have seen, in Letter XVI, paragraph 171 (look at it again,) that Doctor Blair could make a mistake in describing *the time of an action*. Doctor Blair makes use of, “ it *had* been better omitted.” Meaning, that it “ *would have been* better to omit it.” This is a sheer vulgarism, like, “ I *had* as lief be killed as enslaved.” Which ought to be, “ I *would* as lief.” But, the most common error is, the using of the verb *to have* with the passive participle, when the *past time*, simply, of the verb ought to be used. “ Mr. Speaker, I *expected*, from the former language, and positive promises of the Noble Lord and the Right Honorable the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to *have seen* the Bank paying in gold and silver.” This is House-of-Commons’ language. Avoid it as you would avoid all the rest of their corruptions. I *expected to see*, to be sure, and not to *have seen*, because the *have seen* carries *your act of seeing back beyond the period*, within which it is supposed to *have been expected to take place*. “ I *expected to have ploughed* my land last Monday.” That is to say, “ I last Monday was in the act of expecting to have ploughed my land before that day.” But, this is not what the writer means. He means to say, that, last Monday, or before that day, he was in the act of expecting

to plough his land on that day. "I called on him and wished to have submitted my manuscript to him." Five hundred of such errors are to be found in Doctor Goldsmith's works. "*I wished, then and there, to submit my manuscript to him.*" I wished *to do something there*, and did not *then* wish that I had *done* something before.

260. When you use the *active participle*, take care that the *times* be attended to, and that you do not, by mis-application, make confusion and nonsense. "I had not the pleasure of *hearing* his sentiments, when I wrote that letter." It should be *of having heard*; because the *hearing* must be supposed to have been wanted *previous* to the act of writing. This word *wanted*, and the word *wanting*, are frequently misused. "All that was *wanting* was honesty." It should be *wanted*. "The Bank is weighed in the balance and found *wanting*," and not *wanted*. Found to be *wanting*, or *in want*: in want of money to pay its notes.

261. I will not fatigue your memory with more examples relating to the *times* of verbs. Consider well what you *mean*; what you *wish to say*. Examine well into the true meaning of your words; and you will never make a mistake as to the times. "*I thought to have heard* the Noble Lord produce something like proof." No! My dear James will never fall into the use of such senseless gabble! You would think of *hearing* something; you would think of *to hear*, not *to have heard*. You would be *waiting to hear*, and not, like these men, *be waiting to have heard*. "*I should have liked to have been informed* of the amount of the Exchequer Bills." A phraseology like this can be becoming only in those Houses, where it was proposed to relieve the distresses of the nation by setting the labourers to dig holes one day and fill them up the next.

262. It is erroneous to confound the *past time* with the *passive participle* of the verb. But, now,

before I speak of this very common error, let us see a little more about the *participles*. You have seen, in Letter VIII, what the participles are: you have seen, that *working* is the active participle, and *worked* the passive participle. We shall speak fully of the active by-and-by. The passive participle and the verb *to be*, or some part of that verb, make what is called the *passive verb*. This is not a verb which, in its origin, differs from an active verb in like manner as a *neuter* verb differs from an active verb. *To sleep* is neuter in its origin, and must, in all its parts be neuter; but, every active verb may become a *passive verb*. The passive verb is, in fact, that state of an active verb which expresses, as we have seen above, the action as being *received*, or *endured*; and it is called *passive*, because, the receiver or endurer of the action is *passive*; that is to say, *does nothing*. "John *smiles*; John is *smitten*." Thus, then, the passive verb is no other than the passive participle, used along with some part of the verb *to be*.

263. Now, then, let us see a specimen of the errors, of which I spoke at the beginning of the last paragraph. When the verb is *regular*, there can be no error of this sort; because the past time and the passive participle are written in the same manner; as, "John *worked*; John is *worked*." But, when the verb is *irregular*, and when the past time and the passive participle are written in a manner different from each other, there is room for error, and error is often committed: "John *smote*; John is *smote*." This is gross. It offends the ear; but, when a company, consisting of men who have been enabled, by the favour of the late William Pitt, to plunder and insult the people, meet under the name of a Pitt Club, to celebrate the birth-day of that corrupt and cruel minister, those who publish accounts of their festivities, always tell us, that such and such *toasts were drank*; instead of *drunk*. I *drank* at

my dinner to-day ; but the milk and water, which I *drank*, were drunk by me. In the lists of irregular verbs, in Letter VIII, the differences between the past times and the passive participles are all clearly shown. You often hear people say, and see them write, “ We *have spoke* ; it *was spoke* in my hearing ; But, we *have came* ; it *was did* ; ” are just as correct.

264. *Done* is the passive participle of *to do*, and it is very often misused. This *done* is frequently a very great offender against Grammar. *To do* is the *act of doing*. We often see people write : “ I *did* not speak, yesterday, so well as I wished to *have done*.” Now, what is meant by the writer ? He means to say, that he *did* not speak so well as he then *wished*, or was wishing, *to speak*. Therefore, the sentence should be : “ I did not speak yesterday so well as I wished *to do*.” That is to say, “ so well as I wished to do it ; ” that is to say, to do, or to perform, *the act of speaking*.

265. Take great care not to be too free in your use of the verb *to do*, in any of its times or modes. It is a nice little *handy* word, and, like our oppressed *it*, it is made use of very often, when the writer is at a loss, for what to put down. *To do* is to *act*, and, therefore, it never can, in any of its parts, supply the place of a *neuter* verb. Yet, to employ it for this purpose is very common. Dr. Blair, in his 23rd Lecture says : “ It is somewhat “ unfortunate, that this Number of the Spectator “ did not *end*, as it might very well have *done*, “ with the former beautiful period.” That is to say, “ *done it*.” And, then, we ask : done what ? Not the *act of ending* ; because, in this case, there is no action at all. The verb means *to come to an end* ; *to cease* ; *not to go any further*. This same verb, *to end*, is, sometimes, an active verb : “ I *end* “ my sentence ; ” and then the verb *to do* may supply its place : as, “ I have not ended my sentence

“ so well as I might have *done* ;” that is, *done it* ; that is, *done*, or *performed*, the *act of ending*. But, the Number of the Spectator was no *actor* : it was expected to *perform* nothing : it was, by the Doctor, wished to have *ceased* to proceed. “ Did not *end*, “ as it very well might have *ended*,” This would have been correct ; but the doctor wished to avoid the *repetition*, and thus he fell into bad grammar. “ Mr. Speaker, I do not *feel* so well “ satisfied as I should have *done*, if the Right Hon- “ ourable Gentleman had explained the matter more “ fully.” You constantly hear talk like this amongst the babblers, whom corruption makes law-givers. To *feel* satisfied is, when the satisfaction is to arise from conviction produced by fact or reasoning, a senseless expression ; and to supply its place, when it is, as in this case, a neuter verb, by *to do*, is as senseless. *Done what ? Done the act of feeling ?* “ I do not *feel* so well satisfied as I “ should have *done*, or *executed*, or *performed*, the “ act of feeling !” What incomprehensible words ! Very becoming in the creatures of corruption, but ridiculous in any other persons in the world.

266. But, do not misunderstand me. Do not confound *do* and *did*, as parts of a *principal* verb with the same words, as parts of an *auxiliary*. Read again Letter VIII, paragraph 111. *Do* and *did*, as *helpers*, are used with neuter as well as with active verbs ; for here it is not their business to *supply the place* of other verbs, but merely to add strength to affirmations and negations, or to mark time : as “ ‘ The sentence *does end* ; I *do feel* easy.” But *done*, which is the passive participle of the active verb *to do*, can never be used as an auxiliary. The want of making this distinction has led to the very common error, of which I spoke in the last paragraph, and against which I am very desirous to guard you.

267. In sentences, which are *negative*, or *inter-*

rogative, do and did express time : as, "You *do* not sleep ; *did* you not feel ?" But they do not here supply the place of other verbs : they merely help ; and their assistance is useful only as to the circumstance of time ; for we may say ; "you sleep not ; *felt* you not ?" And if, in answer to this question, I say, " I *did*," the word *feel* is understood : " I *did* feel."

268. Well, then, I think, that, as far as relates to the active verb, the passive verb, and the passive participle, enough has now been said. You have seen, too, something of the difference between the functions of the active verb and those of the *neuter* ; but, there are a few remarks to be made with regard to the latter. A *neuter* verb cannot have a noun or pronoun in the objective case after it ; for though we say, " I *dream* a dream," it is understood that my mind has been engaged in a dream. " I *live* a good life," means that I am living in a good manner. " I *walk* my horse about," means, that I *lead*, or conduct my horse in the pace called a *walk*. Nor, can a *neuter* verb become *passive* ; because a *passive* verb is no other than a verb describing an action received, or endured. " The Noble Earl, on returning to town, found that the Noble Countess *was eloped* with his Grace." I read this very sentence in an English newspaper not long ago. It should be *had eloped* ; for, *was eloped*, means that somebody had *eloped* the Countess : it means, that she had *received*, or *endured*, from some actor, the act of *eloping*, whereas, she is the actress, and the act is confined to *herself*. The verb is called *neuter* because the action does not pass over to any thing. There are verbs which are *inactive* : such as to *sit*, to *sleep*, to *exist*. These are also *neuter* verbs, of course. But, *inactivity* is not necessary to the making of a verb *neuter*. It is sufficient,

for this purpose, that the action do not pass from the actor to any object.

269. In the instance just mentioned the error is flagrant ; “ *Was eloped* ” is what few persons would put down in writing : yet, any body might do it *upon the authority of Doctor Johnson* : for he says, in his Dictionary, that *to elope* is an *active verb*, though, he says that it is synonymous, with *to run away*, which in the same Dictionary, he says is a *neuter verb*. However, let those who prefer Doctor Johnson’s authority to the dictates of reason and common sense, say, that “ his Grace *eloped the Countess* ; and, that, accordingly the *Countess was eloped.* ”

270. The danger of error, in cases of this kind, arises from the circumstance of there being many verbs, which are active in one sense and neuter in another. The verb *to endure*, for instance, when it means to *support*, to *sustain*, is active : as, “ I *endure pain.* ” But, when it means *to last*, to *continue*, it is neuter : as, “ The earth *endures* from age to age. ” In the first sense we can say, the pain is *endured* ; but, in the last, we cannot say, the earth is *endured* from age to age. We say, indeed, *I am fallen* ; the colt is *grown*, the trees are *rotten*, the stone is *crumbled*, the post is *mouldered*, the pitcher is *cracked* ; though *to grow*, *to rot*, *to crumble*, *to moulder*, *to crack*, are, all of them, *neuter verbs*. But it is clearly understood here, that we mean, that, the colt is *in a grown*, or *augmented state* ; that the trees are *in a rotten state* ; and so on : and, it is equally clear, that we could not mean, that the Countess was *in an eloped state*. “ The Noble Earl found that the Countess *was gone.* ” This is correct, though *to go* be a neuter verb. But, *gone*, in this sense, is not the participle of the verb *to go* : it is merely an *adjective*, meaning *absent*. If we put any word after it, which gives it a verbal signification, it becomes erroneous,

“ He found that the Countess *was gone out of the house.*” This is to say, *was absent out of the house* ; and this is nonsense. It must, in this case, be, “ He found, that the Countess *had gone out of the house.*”

271. Much more might be said upon this part of my subject ; many niceties might be stated and discussed ; but, I have said quite enough on it to answer every useful purpose. Here, as every where else, take time to *think*. There is a *reason* for the right use of every word. Have your *meaning* clear in your mind ; know the *meaning* of all the words you employ ; and, then, you will seldom commit errors.

272. There remains to be noticed the use of the *active participle*, and then we shall have a few, and only a few, words to say upon the subject of the *Modes* of verbs. As to the active participle, paragraph 97, in Letter VIII, will have told you nearly all that is necessary. We know well, that *I am working*, means that *I work*, and so on. There is great nicety in distinguishing the circumstances which call for the use of the one from those which call for the use of the other ; but, like many other things, though very difficult to explain by words, these circumstances are perfectly well understood, and scrupulously attended to, by even the most illiterate persons. The active participle is, you know, sometimes a *noun* in its functions : as, “ *working* is good for our health.” Here it is the *nominative case* to the verb *is*. Sometimes it is an adjective, as, “ the *working* people.” As a noun it may be in either of the three cases : as, “ *Work-
ing* is good ; the advantage of *working* ; I like
working.” It may be in the singular, or in the plural : “ The *working* of the mines : the
workings of corruption.” Of course it requires *articles* and *prepositions* as nouns require them. More need not be said about it ; and, indeed, my

chief purpose in mentioning the active participle in this place is to remind you, that it may be a *nominative case* in a sentence.

273. The *Modes* have been explained in Letter VIII. paragraphs 92, 93, 94, 95, and 96. Read those paragraphs again. The *infinitive mode* has, in almost all respects, the powers of a *noun*. "To work is good for our health." Here it is the *nominative* of the sentence. "To eat, to drink, and to sleep are necessary." It cannot become a plural ; but it may be, and frequently is, in the *objective case* ; as, "I want to eat." The *to* is, in some few cases, omitted, when the infinitive is the *objective case* : "as, I dare write." But, "I dare to write," is just as neat, and more proper. The *to* is omitted by the use of the *Ellipsis* : as, "I like to shoot, hunt, and course." But, care must be taken not to leave out the *to*, if you thereby make the *meaning doubtful*. Repetition is, sometimes, disagreeable, and tends to enfeeble language ; but, it is always preferable to obscurity.

274. If you cast your eye once more on the *conjugation* of the verb *to work* in Letter VIII, you will see that I have there set down the three other *Modes* with all their persons, numbers, and times. The *Imperative Mode* I dispatched very quietly by a single short paragraph ; and, indeed, in treating of the other two *Modes*, the *Indicative* and the *Subjunctive*, there is nothing to do but to point out the trifling variations that our verbs undergo in order to make them suit their forms to the differences of *Modes*. The *Indicative Mode* is that manner of using the verb which is applied when we are speaking of an action without any other action being at all connected with it so as to make the one a *condition* or *consequence* of the other. "He works every day ; he rides out ;" and so on. But, there may be a condition or a consequence dependent on this working and riding ; and, in

that case, these verbs must be in the subjunctive mode ; because the action they express *depends* on something *subjoined*. “ If he *work* every day, “ he *shall be paid* every day ; if he *ride* out, he “ will not be at home by supper-time.” The *s* is dropped at the end of the verbs here ; and the true cause is this, that there is a sign understood. If filled up, the sentence would stand thus : “ if he “ *should work* ; if he *should ride* out.” So that, after all, the verb has, in reality, *no change of termination to denote what is called mode*. And all the fuss, which Grammarians have made about the *potential* modes and other fanciful distinctions of the kind, only serve to puzzle and perplex the learner.

275. Verbs in general, and, indeed, all the verbs, except the verb *to be*, have always the same form in the *present time of the indicative* and in that of the *subjunctive*, in all the persons, save the second and third person singular. Thus we say, in the present of the indicative, *I work, we work, you work, they work* ; and, in the subjunctive the same. But, we say, in the former, *thou workest, he work* ; while, in the subjunctive we say, *thou work, he work* ; that is to say, *thou mayest work*, or *mightest*, or *shouldest* (and so on) *work* ; and *he may work*, or *might*, or *should* ; as the sense may require. Therefore, as to all verbs, except the verb *to be*, it is only in these two persons that any thing can happen to render any distinction of mode necessary. But, the verb *to be*, has more of variation than any other verb. All other verbs have the same form in their indicative *present time* as in their *infinitive mode*, with the trifling exception of the *st* and *s* added to the second and third person singular : as, *to have, to write, to work, to run* ; *I have, I write, I work, I run*. But, the verb *to be*, becomes in its present time of the indicative ; *I am, thou art, he is, we are, you are, they are* ; which

are great changes. Therefore, as the subjunctive in all its persons, takes the infinitive of the verb without any change at all, the verb *to be* exhibits the use of this mode most clearly ; for, instead of *I am*, thou *art*, he *is*, we *are*, the subjunctive requires, *I be*, thou *be*, he *be*, we *be* : that is to say, *I may be*, or *might be* ; and so on. Look now at the conjugation of the verb *to be*, in Letter VIII, paragraph 117 ; and then come back to me.

276. You see, then, that this important verb, the verb *to be*, has a form, in some of its persons, appropriated to the *subjunctive mode*. This is a matter of consequence. Distinctions, without differences in the things distinguished, are fanciful, and, at best, useless. Here is a real difference ; a practical difference ; a difference in the form of the word. Here is a *past time* of the subjunctive ; a past time distinguished, in some of its persons, by a different manner of spelling, or writing, the word. If *I be* ; if *I were* ; if he *were* : and not if *I was*, if he *was*. In the case of other verbs, the past of the indicative is the same as the past of the subjunctive ; that is to say, the verb is written in the same letters ; but, in the case of the verb *to be*, it is otherwise. If *I worked*, if *I smote*, if *I had*. Here the verbs are the same as in, *I worked*, *I smote*, *I had* ; but, in the case of the verb *to be*, we must say, in the past of the indicative, *I was*, and in that of the subjunctive, if *I were*.

277. The question, then, is this : *What are the cases*, in which we ought to use the subjunctive form ? Bishop Lowth, and on his authority, Mr. Lindley Murray, have said, that *some* conjunctions have a *government* of verbs ; that is to say, *make them or force them to be in the subjunctive mode*. And then these gentlemen mention particularly the conjunctions, *if*, *though*, *unless*, and some others. But (and these gentlemen allow it) the verbs which follow these conjunctions are not *always* in the sub-

junctive mode ; and, the using of that mode must depend, *not upon the conjunction*, but upon the sense of the whole sentence. How, then, can the conjunctions govern the verb ? It is the sense, the meaning of the whole sentence, which must govern : and of this you will presently see clear proof. “ *If it be dark, do not come home. If eating is necessary to man, he ought not to be a glutton.*” In the first of these sentences, the matter expressed by the verb *may be or may not be*. There exists an *uncertainty* on the subject. And, if the sentence were filled up, it would stand thus : “ *If it should be dark, do not come home.*” But, in the second sentence, there exists no such uncertainty. We know, and all the world knows, that *eating is necessary to man*. We could not fill up the sentence with *should*. And, therefore, we make use of *is*. Thus, then, the conjunction *if*, which, you see, is employed in both cases, has nothing at all to do with the government of the verb. It is the *sense* which governs.

278. There is a great necessity for care as to this matter ; for, the meaning of what we write is very much affected, when we make use of the modes indiscriminately. Let us take an instance. “ *Though her chastity be right and becoming, it gives her no claim to praise ; because she would be criminal, if she were not chaste.*” Now, by employing the subjunctive in the first member of the sentence, we leave it *uncertain* whether it be *right*, or *not*, for her to be chaste ; and, by employing it, in the second, we express a *doubt as to the fact* of her chastity. We mean neither of these ; and, therefore, notwithstanding here are a *though* and an *if*, both the verbs ought to be in the indicative. “ *Though her chastity is right and becoming, it gives her no claim to praise ; because, she would be criminal, if she was not chaste.*” Fill up with the signs “ *Though her chastity may be right ; if she should*

"*not be chaste :*" and, then, you see, at once, what a difference there is in the meaning.

279. The subjunctive is necessarily always used where a *sign* is *left out*: as, "Take care, that *he* come to-morrow, that *you be* ready to receive him, that *he be* well received, and that *all things be* duly prepared for his entertainment." Fill up with the signs, and you will see the *reason* for what you write.

280. The verb *to be* is sometimes used thus: "*Were he* rich, I should not like him the better. "*Were it* not dark, I would go." That is to say, *if he were ; if it were*. "*It were* a jest indeed, to consider a set of seat-sellers and seat-buyers as a lawful legislative body. *It were* to violate every principle of morality to consider honesty as a virtue, when not to be honest is a crime which the law punishes." The *it* stands for a great deal here. "Ridiculous, indeed, would the state of our minds be, *if it were* such as to exhibit a set of seat-sellers and seat-buyers as a lawful legislative body." I mention these instances, because they appear *unaccountable* ; and, I never like to slur things over. Those expressions, for the using of which we cannot give a *reason*, ought not to be used at all.

281. As to instances, in which authors have violated the principles of Grammar, with respect to the use of the modes, I could easily fill a book much larger than this with instances of this kind from Judge Blackstone and Doctor Johnson. One only shall suffice. I take it from the Judge's first Book. "Therefore, *if* the king *purchases* lands of the nature of gavelkind, where all the sons *inherit* *equally* ; yet, upon the king's demise, *his eldest son* shall succeed to these lands *alone*." Here is fine confusion, not to say something inclining towards high treason ; for, if the king's son be to inherit these lands *alone*, he, of course, is *not to inherit the crown*. But, it is the verb *purchases*, with

which we have to do at present. Now, it is very notorious, that the king *does not* purchase lands in gavelkind, nor any other lands; whereas, from the form of the verb, it is taken for granted, that he does it. It should have been, "If the king *purchase* lands;" that is to say, if *he were to purchase*, or if he *should purchase*.

282. Thus, my dear James, have I gone through all that appeared to me of importance, relating to verbs. Every part of the Letter ought to be carefully read, and its meaning ought to be well weighed in your mind; but, always recollect, that, in the using of verbs, that which requires your first and most earnest care, is the ascertaining of the *nominative* of the sentence; for, out of every hundred grammatical errors, full fifty, I believe, are committed for want of due attention as to this matter.

LETTER XX.

SYNTAX, AS RELATING TO ADVERBS, PREPOSITIONS,
AND CONJUNCTIONS.

283. AFTER what has been said, my dear James, on the subject of the verb, there remains little to be added. The *Adverbs*, *Prepositions*, and *Conjunctions* are all words, which never *vary their endings*. Their uses have been sufficiently illustrated in the letters on the SYNTAX of Nouns, Pronouns, and Verbs. In a Letter, which is yet to come, and which will contain specimens of *false grammar*, the misuse of many words belonging to these inferior parts of speech will be noticed; but, it would be a waste of your time to detain you by an elab-

rate account of that which it is, by this time, hardly possible for you not to understand.

284. Some grammarians have given *lists* of adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions. For what reason I know not, seeing that they have not attempted to give lists of the words of other parts of speech. These lists must be *defective*, and, therefore, worse than no lists. To find out the meaning of single words, the *Dictionary* is the place. The business of grammar is to show the connection between words, and the manner of using words properly. The sole cause of this dwelling upon these parts of speech appears to me to have been a notion, that they would seem to be *neglected*, unless a certain number of pages of the book were allotted to each. To be sure each of them is a part of speech, as completely as the little finger is a part of the body ; but, few persons will think, that, because we descant very frequently, and at great length, upon the qualities of the head and heart, we ought to do the same with regard to the qualities of the little finger.

285. I omitted in the Letter on verbs, to notice the use of the word *thing* ; and I am not sorry that I did, because, by my noticing it in this concluding paragraph, the matter may make a deeper impression on your mind. *Thing* is, of course, a *noun*. A *pen* is a thing, and every animal, or creature, animate or inanimate, is a *thing*. We apply it to the representing of every creature in the universe, except to men, women, and children ; and a *creature* is that which has been *created*, be it living, like a *horse*, or dead like *dirt*, or *stones*. The use of the word *thing* as far as this goes, is plainly reconcilable to reason ; but, “ to get drunk is a beastly *thing*.” Here is neither human being, irrational, animal, nor inanimate creature. Here is merely *an action* : Well, then, this action is the *thing* ; for, as you have seen in Letter XIX, pa-

paragraph 273, a verb in the infinitive mode, has, in almost all respects, the functions and powers of a noun. "It was a most atrocious *thing* to uphold the Bank of England in refusing to give gold for its promissory notes, and to compel the nation to submit to the wrong that it sustained from that refusal." The meaning is, that the whole of these measures, or transactions, constituted a most atrocious *deed* or *thing*.

LETTER XXI.

SPECIMENS OF FALSE GRAMMAR, TAKEN FROM THE WRITINGS OF DOCTOR JOHNSON AND FROM THOSE OF DOCTOR WATTS.

MY DEAR JAMES,

THE chief object of this Letter is to prove to you the necessity of using great care and caution in the construction of your sentences. When you see writers like Doctor Johnson and Doctor Watts committing grammatical errors, and, in some instances, making their words amount to nonsense, or, at least, making their meaning doubtful; when you see this in the author of a grammar and of a dictionary of the English Language, and in the author of a work on the subject of Logic; and when you are informed that these were two of the most learned men that England ever produced, you cannot fail to be convinced, that constant care and caution are necessary to prevent you from committing not only similar, but much greater, errors.

Another object, in the producing of these specimens, is to convince you, that a knowledge of the Latin and Greek Languages does not prevent men from writing bad English. Those Languages are,

by impostors and their dupes, called “the *learned* languages;” and those who have paid for having studied them are said to have received “a *liberal* education.” These appellations are false, and, of course, they lead to false conclusions. *Learning*, as a noun, means *knowledge*, and *learned* means *knowing*, or, *possessed of knowledge*. Learning is, then, to be acquired by *conception*; and, it is shown in *judgment*, in *reasoning*, and in the various modes of employing it. What, then, can *learning* have to do with any particular tongue? Good grammar, for instance, written in Welsh, or in the language of the Chipewan Savages, is more *learned* than bad grammar written in Greek. The learning is in the *mind* and not on the *tongue*: learning consists of *ideas*, and not of the *noise* that is made by the mouth. If, for instance, the Reports, drawn up by the House of Commons, and which are compositions discovering, in every sentence, ignorance the most profound, were written in Latin, should we then call them *learned*? Should we say, that the mere change of the words from one tongue into another, made that learned which was before unlearned? As well may we say, that a falsehood written in English would have been truth if written in Latin; and as well may we say, that a certain hand-writing is a *learned* hand-writing, or that certain sorts of ink and paper, are *learned* ink and paper, as that a language, or tongue, is a learned language, or tongue.

The cause of the use of this false appellation, “learned languages,” is this, that those who teach them in England have, in consequence of their teaching, *very large estates in house and land*, which are public property, but which are, by abuse, seized on by, and used for the sole benefit of, those teachers, who are the relations or dependents of the all-devouring Aristocracy. In order to give a colour of reasonableness to this act of plunder, the

languages taught by these spoilers are called “the *learned* languages ;” and, which appellation is, at the same time, intended to cause the mass of the people to believe, that the professors and learners of these languages are, in point of wisdom, far superior to other men ; and, to establish the opinion that all but themselves are *unlearned* persons. In short, the appellation, like many others, is a trick which fraud has furnished for the purpose of guarding the plunderers against that just punishment, which the people, if not deceived, would, long ago, have inflicted on them.

It is curious enough, that this appellation of “learned languages” is confined to the English nation, and the American, which inherits it from the English. Neither in France, in Spain, in Italy, nor in Germany, is this false and absurd appellation in use. The same motives have not existed in those countries. There the monks and other priests have plundered by open force. They had not any occasion to resort to this species of imposture. But, in England, the plunder required to be glossed over. There was something or other required in that country as an apology for taking many millions a year from the public to keep men to do no apparently useful thing.

Seeing themselves unable to maintain the position, that the Latin and Greek are more “*learned*, “languages” than others, the impostors and their dupes tell us, that this is not what they mean. They mean, they say, not that those languages are, *in themselves*, more learned than others ; but that, to possess a knowledge of them is a proof that the possessor is a *learned man*. To be sure, they do not offer us any argument in support of this assertion ; while it would be easy to show, that the assertion must, in every case, be false. But, let it suffice, for this time, that we show, that the possession of the knowledge of those languages,

does not prevent men from committing numerous grammatical errors when they write in their native language.

I have, for this purpose, fixed upon the writings of Doctor Johnson and of Doctor Watts; because, besides its being well known, that they were deeply skilled in Latin and Greek, it would be difficult to find two men with more *real* learning. I take also the two works, for which they are, respectively, the most celebrated: the *RAMBLER* of Doctor Johnson and the *LOGIC* of Doctor Watts. These are works of very great learning. The *RAMBLER*, though its general tendency is to spread a gloom over life and to damp all enterprize, private as well as public, displays a vast fund of knowledge in the science of morals; and the *LOGIC*, though the religious zeal of its pious, sincere, and benevolent author, has led him into the very great error of taking his examples of self-evident propositions from amongst those, many of which, great numbers of men think not to be self-evident, is a work wherein profound learning is conveyed in a style the most simple and in a manner the most pleasing. It is impossible to believe that the *Logic* was not revised with great care; and, as to the *Rambler*, the biographer of its author tells us, that the Doctor made *six thousand* corrections and alterations before the work was printed in volumes.

The *RAMBLER* is in *Numbers*; therefore, at the end of each extract from it, I shall put the letter *R*, and the *Number*. The *LOGIC* is divided into *Parts* and *Chapters*. At the end of each extract from it, I shall put *L*.; and then add the *Part* and *Chapter*. I shall range the extracts under the names of the *Parts* of Speech, to which the erroneous words respectively belong.

ARTICLES.

"I invited her to spend a day in viewing a seat and gardens."—R. No. 34.

"For all our speculative acquaintance with things should be made subservient to our better conduct in the civil and religious life."—L. Introduction.

The indefinite Article, *a*, cannot, you know, be put before a plural noun. We cannot say *a gardens*; but, this is, in fact, said in the above extract. It should have been "a seat and its gardens." "*Civil and religious life*" are general and indefinite in the second extract. The article, therefore, was unnecessary, and is improperly used. Look back at the use of Articles, Letter IV.

NOUNS.

"Among the innumerable historical authors, who fill every nation with accounts of their ancestors, or undertake to transmit to futurity the events of their own time, the greater part, when fashion and novelty have ceased to recommend them, are of no other use than chronological memorials, which necessity may sometimes require to be consulted."—R. No. 122.

This is all confusion. *Whose* ancestors? The nation's ancestors are meant; but, the *author's* are expressed. The two *theirs* and the *them* clearly apply to the same noun. How easily all this confusion would have been avoided by considering the nation as a singular, and saying *its* ancestors! In the latter part of the sentence, the *authors* are called *chronological memorials*; and though we may, in some cases, use the word *author* for *author's work*; yet, in a case like this, where we are speaking of the authors as *actors*, we cannot take such a liberty.

"Each of these classes of the human race has desires, fears, and conversation, peculiar to itself;

“ cares which *another* cannot feel, and pleasures which *he* cannot partake.”—R. No. 160.

The noun of multitude, *classes*, being preceded by *sach*, has the pronoun, *itself*, properly put after it; but the *he* does not correspond with these. It should have been *it*. With regard to these two extracts, see paragraph 181.

“ His great ambition was to shoot flying, and he, therefore, spent whole days in the woods, pursuing *game*, which, before he was near enough to see *them*, his approach frightened away.”—R. No. 66.

Game is not a noun of *multitude*, like *Mob*, or *House of Commons*. There are different *games*, or *pastimes*; but, this word, as applied to the describing of *wild animals*, has no plural; and, therefore, cannot have a plural pronoun to stand for it.

“ The obvious duties of piety towards God and love towards man, with the *governments* of all our inclinations and passions.”—L. Part 4.

This plural is so clearly wrong, that I need not show *why* it is wrong.

“ And by *this mean* they will better judge what to choose.”—L. Part 4.

Mean, as a noun, is never used in the *singular*. It, like some other words, has broken loose from all principle and rule. By universal acquiescence, it is become always a plural, whether used with singular or plural pronouns and articles, or not. Doctor Watts, in other instances, says, *this means*.

“ Having delayed to buy a coach myself, till I should have the lady’s *opinion*, for *whose* use it was intended.”—R. No. 34.

We know that *whose* relates to *lady*, according to the Doctor’s meaning; but, grammatically, it does not. It relates to *opinion*. It should have been “ the opinion of the *lady*, for whose use.” See Syntax of Nouns, Letter XVI, paragraphs 170 and 171.

PRONOUNS.

“Had *the opinion* of my censurers been unanimous, *it* might have upset my resolution; but, since I find *them* at variance with each other, I can, without scruple, neglect *them*, and follow my own imagination.”—R. No. 23.

You see, the Doctor has, in the last member of the sentence, the *censurers* in his eye, and he forgets his nominative, *opinion*. It is the opinion that was *not unanimous*, and not the censurers who were not unanimous; for, they were unanimous in censuring.

“*They* that frequent the chambers of the sick, will generally find the sharpest pains, and most stubborn maladies, among *them* whom confidence in the force of nature formerly betrayed to negligence or irregularity; and that superfluity of strength, which was at once *their* boast and their *snare*, has often, in the end, no other effect, than that it continues *them* long in impotence and anguish.”—R. No. 38.

The *They* and the first *them* ought to be *those*; the *to* ought to be *into*. The two *theirs* and the last *them* are not absolutely faulty, but they do not clearly enough relate to their antecedent.

“METISSA brought with her an old maid, recommended by her mother, *who* taught *her* all the arts of domestick management, and was, on every occasion, her chief agent and directress. *They* soon invented one reason or other to quarrel with all my servants, and either prevailed on me to turn *them* away, or treated *them* so ill, that *they* left me of themselves, and always supplied *their* places with some brought from my wife’s family.”—R. No. 35.

Here is perfect confusion and pell-mell! *which* of the two, the *old maid* or the *mother*, was it that taught the arts of domestic management? And

which of the two was taught, *Metissa* or the *old maid*? “*They* soon invented.” Who are *they*? Are there two, or all the three? And, *who* supplied the places of the servants? The meaning of the words clearly is, that *the servants themselves supplied the places*. It is very rarely that we meet with so bad a sentence as this.

“I shall not trouble you with a history of the
“stratagems practised upon my judgment, or the
“allurements tried upon my heart, which, if you
“have, in any part of your life, been acquainted
“with *rural politicks*, you will easily conceive.
“*Their* arts have no great variety, *they think* no-
“thing worth *their care* but money.”—R. No. 35.

“*Their* arts:” but *whose* arts? There is no antecedent, except “*rural politicks*;” and, thus, all this last sentence is perfect nonsense.

“But the fear of not being approved as just co-
“piers of human manners is not the most important
“concern that *an author* of this sort ought to have
“before him.”—R. No. 4.

An author cannot be said to fear not to be approved as just copiers. The word *author* ought to have been in the plural and *him* ought to have been *them*.

“The wit, whose vivacity condemns slower
“tongues to silence; the *scholar*, whose knowledge
“allows *no man* to think *he* instructs *him*.”—R.
No. 188.

Which of the two is allowed? The *scholar*, or the *no man*? Which of the two does *he* relate to? Which of the two does the *him* relate to? By a little reflection we may come at the Doctor’s meaning; but, if we must stop to discover the grammatical meaning of an author’s words, how are we to imbibe the science which he would teach us?

“The state of the possessor of humble virtues,
“to the affecter of great excellences, is that of a
“small cottage of stone, to the palace raised with

“ice by the empress of Russia ; *it* was for a time,
“splendid and luminous, but the first sunshine
“melted it to nothing.”—R. No. 21.

Which, instead of *it*, would have made clear that
which is now dubious ; for *it* may relate to cottage
as well as to palace ; or it may relate to state.

“The *love of retirement* has, in all ages, ad-
“hered closely to those minds, which have been
“most enlarged by knowledge, or elevated by ge-
“nius. Those who enjoyed *every thing* generally
“supposed to confer happiness, have been forced to
“seek *it* in the shades of privacy.”—R. No. 7.

To seek *what* ? The *love of retirement*, or *every
thing* ? The Doctor means *happiness*, but his
words do not mean it.

“Yet there is a certain race of men, *that* make it
“their duty to hinder the reception of every work
“of learning or genius, *who* stand as centinels in
“the avenues of fame, and value themselves upon
“giving ignorance and envy the first notice of a
“prey.”—R. No. 3.

That, or *who*, may, as we have seen, be the re-
lative of a noun, which is the name of a rational be-
ing or beings ; but *both* cannot be used, as applica-
ble to the same noun in the same sentence. Nor is
“a prey” proper. Prey has no singular. It is
like *fat*, *meat*, *grease*, *garbage*, and many other
words of that description.

“For, among all the *animals*, upon *which* nature
“has impressed *deformity* and *horror*, there was
“none *whom* he durst not encounter rather than a
“beetle.”—R. No. 126.

Here are *whom* and *which* used as the relatives
to the same noun ; and, besides, we know, that
whom can, in no case, be a relative to irrational
creatures, and, in this case, the author is speaking
of such creatures only. “Horror” is not a thing
that can be impressed upon another thing so as to
be seen. Horror is a *feeling of the mind* ; for,

though we say, "horror was *visible on his countenance*," we clearly mean, that, the outward signs of horror were visible. We cannot see horror as we can deformity. It should have been "*deformity and hideousness*."

"To cull from the mass of *mankind* those individuals, upon *which* the attention ought to be most employed."—R. No. 4.

The antecedent belongs to *rational* beings, and, therefore, the *which* should have been *whom*.

"This determination led me to Metissa, the daughter of Chrysophilus, *whose person* was at least without deformity."—R. No. 35.

The person of *which* of the two? Not of the old Papa, to be sure; and yet this is what the words mean.

"To persuade *them who* are entering the world, that all are equally vicious, is not to awaken judgment."—R. No. 119.

Those persons, who are entering the world, and not any particular persons of whom we have already been speaking. We cannot say, *them persons*; and, therefore, this sentence is incorrect.

"Of these pretenders it is fit to distinguish *those who* endeavour to deceive from *them who* are deceived."—R. No. 189.

"I have, therefore, given a place to what may not be useless to *them whose* chief ambition is to please."—R. No. 34.

The *thems* in these two sentences should be *those*. But, *them who are deceived* has another sort of error attached to it, for the *who*, remember, is not, of itself, a *nominative*. The antecedent, as you have seen, must be taken into view. This antecedent, must be, *the persons*, understood; and then we have *them persons are deceived*.

"Reason, as to the power and principles of it, is the common gift of God to man."—L. Introduction.

The *it* may relate to *power* as well as to *reason*. Therefore, it would have been better to say, "Reason, as to *its* power and principles;" for if clearness is always necessary, how necessary must it be in the teaching of Logic!

"All the prudence that *any man* exerts in his common concerns of life."—L. Introduction.

Any man means, here, the same as *men in general*, and the concerns mean, the concerns common to men in general; and, therefore, the article *the* should have been used instead of the pronoun *his*.

"It gives pain to the mind and memory, and exposes the unskilful *hearer* to mingle the superior and inferior particulars together; it leads *them* into a thick wood instead of open day-light, and places *them* in a labyrinth instead of a plain path."—L. Part 4. Chap. 2.

The *grammar* is clearly bad; and the *rhetorick* is not quite free from fault. *Labyrinth* is the opposite of *plain path*, but *open day-light* is not the opposite of a *thick wood*. *Open plain* would have been better than *open day light*; for open day-light may exist along with a thick wood.

VERBS.

"There are many things which we every day see others unable to perform, and, perhaps, have even miscarried ourselves in attempting; and yet *can* hardly allow to be difficult."—R. No. 122.

This sentence has in it one of the greatest of faults. The *nominative case* of *can* allow is not clear to us. This is a manner too elliptical. "*We can* hardly allow *them*," is what was meant.

"A man's eagerness to *do that good, to which he is not called*, will betray him into crimes."—R. No. 8.

The man is not called *to the good*, but to *do* the good. It is not my business, at this time, to criti-

cise the *opinions* of Doctor Johnson ; but, I cannot refrain from just remarking upon this sentence, that it contains the sum total of *passive obedience* and *non-resistance*. It condemns all disinterested zeal and every thing worthy of the name of patriotism.

“ We are not compelled to toil through half a folio to be convinced, that the author has *broke* his promise.”—R. No. 1.

“ The Muses, when they *sung* before the throne of Jupiter.”—R. No. 3.

In the first of these, the *passed time* is used where the *passive participle* ought to have been used ; and, in the second, the *passive participle* is used in place of the *passed time*. *Broken* and *sang* were the proper words.

“ My purpose *was*, after ten months more spent in commerce, to *have withdrawn* my wealth to a safer country.”—R. No. 120.

The *purpose* was *present*, and, therefore, it *was* his purpose to *withdraw* his wealth.

“ A man may, by great attention, persuade others, that he really has the qualities that he presumes to boast ; but, the hour *will come* when he *should* exert them, and then whatever he *enjoyed* in praise, he *must suffer* in reproach.”—R. No. 20.

Here is a complete confounding of *times*. Instead of *should*, it should be *ought to* ; and instead of *enjoyed*, it should be, *may have enjoyed*. The sense is bad too ; for, how can a man *suffer* in reproach what he has *enjoyed* in praise ?

“ He had taught himself to think riches more valuable than nature *designed* them, and to expect from them”—R. No. 120.

“ I could prudently *adventure* an inseparable union.”—R. No. 119.

“ I propose to *endeavour* the entertainment of my countrymen.”—R. No. 1.

“ He may, by *attending the remarks*, which every paper will produce.”—R. No. 1.

In each of these four sentences, a *neuter* verb has the powers of an *active* verb given to it. “ Design-
“ ed them *to be* ; adventure *on* ; endeavour to en-
“ *tertain* ; attending *to*.” To *design a thing* is to draw it ; to *attend a thing* is to wait on it. No case occurs to me at present, wherein *adventure* and *endeavour* can be active verbs ; but, at any rate, they ought not to have assumed the active office here.

“ I was not *condemned* in my youth to solitude,
“ either by indigence or deformity, nor *passed* the
“ earlier part of life without the flattery of court-
“ ship.”—R. No. 119.

The verb cannot change from a *neuter* to an *ac-
tive* without a repetition of the *nominative*. It
should have been : nor *did I pass* ; or, nor *passed I*.

“ ANTHEA was content to call a coach, and *cross-
“ ed the brook*.”---R. No. 34.

It should be “ *she crossed the brook*.”

“ He will be welcomed with ardour, *unless he
“ destroys* those recommendations by his faults.”—
R. No. 160.

“ If he *thinks* his own judgment not sufficiently
“ enlightened, he may rectify his opinions.”—R.
No. 1.

“ If he *finds*, with all his industry, and all his
“ artifices, that he cannot deserve regard, or can-
“ not obtain it, he may let the design fall.”---R.
No. 1.

The subjunctive mode ought to be used in all these three sentences. In the first, the meaning is, “ unless he *should* destroy.” In the two last, the Doctor is speaking of his own undertaking ; and, he means, “ the author, if he *should* think, if he
“ *should* find ; may then rectify his opinions ; may
“ then let fall his design.” He therefore, should have written, “ if he *think* ; if he *find*.”

“ Follow solid argument wherever *it leads* you.”
 ---L. Part 3.

Wherever it *may lead* you, or *shall lead* you, is meant; and, therefore, the subjunctive mode was necessary. It should have been: “ wherever it *lead* you.”

“ See, therefore, that your general definitions, or descriptions *are* as accurate as the nature of the thing will bear: see that your general divisions and distributions *be* just and exact: see that your axioms *be* sufficiently evident: see that your principles *be* well drawn.”---L. Part 4.

All these members are correct, except the first, where the verb is put in the indicative mode instead of the *Subjunctive*. All the four have the same turn: they are all in the same mode, or manner: they should, therefore, all have had the verb in the *same form*. They all required the *Subjunctive form*.

PARTICIPLES.

“ Or, it is *the drawing* a conclusion, which was before either unknown, or dark.”---L. Introduction.

It should be, “ the drawing *of* a conclusion;” for, in this case, the active participle becomes a *noun*. “ The *act* of drawing” is meant, and clearly understood; and we cannot say, “ the *act drawing* a conclusion.” When the article comes before, there must be the preposition after the participle. To omit the preposition in such cases is an error very common, and, therefore, I have noticed the error in this instance, in order to put you on your guard.

ADVERBS.

“ For thoughts are *only* criminal, when they are first *chosen*, and then voluntarily *continued*.”
 R. No. 8.

The *station*, or *place*, of the adverb is a great matter. The Doctor does not mean here that which his words mean. He means that "thoughts are criminal, *only when* they are first chosen and "then voluntarily continued." As the words stand, they mean, that "thoughts are *nothing else*, "or *nothing more*, than criminal," in the case supposed. But, here are other words not very properly used. I should like to be informed *how* a thought *can* be *chosen*; how that is possible: and also, *how* we can *continue* a thought, or how we can *discontinue* a thought, at our *will*. The science here is so very profound that we cannot see the bottom of it. Swift says, "whatever is *dark* "is *deep*. Stir a puddle, and it is deeper than a "well." Doctor Johnson deals too much in this kind of profundity.

"I have heard *how* some criticks have been pacified with claret and a supper, and others laid asleep with the soft notes of flattery."—R. No. 1.

How means the *manner in which*. As, "*how* do you do?" That is, "*in what manner* do you carry yourself on." But, the Doctor tells us here, in other words, the precise *manner in which* the Criticks were pacified. The *how*, therefore, should have been *that*.

"I hope *not much* to tire those whom I shall not happen to please."---R. No. 1.

He did not mean that he did not *much hope*, but that he hoped not to *tire much*. "I hope I shall "not *much tire* those whom I may not happen to "please." This was what he meant; but he does not say it.

"And it is a good judgment alone can dictate "how *far* to proceed in it and *when* to stop."---L. Part 4.

Doctor Watts is speaking here of writing. In such a case an adverb, like *how far*, expressive of longitudinal space, introduces a *rhetorical figure*;

for the plain meaning is, that judgment will dictate *how much to write on it*, and not *how far to proceed in it*. The figure, however, is very proper, and much better than the literal words. But, when a figure is *begun* it should be carried on throughout, which is not the case here; for, the Doctor begins with a figure of longitudinal space, and ends with a figure of *time*. It should have been, "*where to stop.*" Or, "*How long to proceed in it and when to stop.*" To tell a man *how far* he is to go into the Western Countries of America, and *when* he is to stop, is a very different thing from telling him *how far* he is to go and *where* he is to stop. I have dwelt, thus, on this distinction, for the purpose of putting you on the watch, and guarding you against confounding figures. The less you use them the better, till you understand more about them.

" *In searching out matters of fact in times past*
 " *or in distant places, in which case moral evidence*
 " *is sufficient, and moral certainty is the utmost*
 " *that can be attained, here we derive a greater*
 " *assurance of the truth of it by a number of per-*
 " *sons, or multitude of circumstances concurring to*
 " *bear witness to it.*---L. Part 3,

The Adverb, *here*, is wholly unnecessary, and it does harm. But, what shall we say of the *of it* and the *to it*? What is the *antecedent* of the *it*? Is *matters of fact* the antecedent? Then *them*, and not *it*, should have been the pronoun. Is *evidence* the antecedent? Then we have circumstances bearing *witness to evidence*! Is *certainty* the antecedent? Then we have the *truth of certainty*! Mind, my dear James, this sentence is taken from a treatise on Logic! How necessary is it, then, for you to be careful in the use of this powerful little word, *it*!

PREPOSITIONS.

“ And, as this practice is a commodious subject
 “ of raillery *to* the gay, and of declamation *to* the
 “ serious, it has been ridiculed”---R. No.
 123.

With the gay ; for, *to* the gay, means, that the
 raillery is *addressed* to the gay, which was not the
 author's meaning.

“ When I was deliberating *to* what new qualifi-
 “ cations I should aspire.”---R. No. 123.

With regard to, it ought to have been ; for, we
 cannot *deliberate a thing*, nor *to a thing*.

“ If I am not commended *for* the beauty of my
 “ works, I may hope to be pardoned *for* their bre-
 “ vity.”---R. No. 1.

We may commend him *for* the beauty of his
 works ; and we may *pardon* him *for* their brevity,
 if we deem the brevity *a fault* ; but, this is not
 what he means. He means, that, at any rate, he
 shall have the *merit* of brevity : “ If I am not com-
 “ mended for the beauty of my works, I may hope
 “ to be pardoned *on account of* their brevity.”
 This was what the Doctor meant ; but this would
 have marred a little the *antithesis* : it would have
 unsettled a little the balance of that *see-saw*, in
 which Dr. Johnson so much delighted, and which,
 falling into the hands of novel-writers and of Mem-
 bers of Parliament, has, by moving unencumbered
 with any of the Doctor's reason or sense, lulled so
 many thousands asleep ! Doctor Johnson created a
 race of writers and speakers. “ Mr. Speaker, that
 “ the state of the nation is very critical, all men
 “ must allow ; but, that it is wholly desperate, few
 “ men will believe.” When you hear, or see, a
 sentence like this, be sure that the person who
 speaks, or writes it, has been reading Doctor John-
 son, or some of his imitators. But, observe, these
 imitators go no further than the frame of the sen-

tences. They, in general, take special care not to imitate the Doctor in knowledge and reasoning.

I have now lying on the table before me forty-eight errors in the use, or omission, of Prepositions, by Doctor Watts. I will notice but two of them; the first is an error of commission, the second, of omission.

“When we would prove the importance of any scriptural doctrine, or duty, the multitude of texts, wherein it is *repeated* and *inculcated upon* the reader, seems naturally to instruct us, that it is a matter of greater importance than other things which are but slightly or singly mentioned in the Bible.”—L. Part 3.

The words *repeated* and *inculcated* both apply to *upon*; but we cannot *repeat* a thing *upon* a reader, and the words, here used, mean this. When several verbs, or participles, are joined together by a copulative conjunction, care must be taken that the act described by each verb or participle, be such as can be performed by the agent, and, performed, too, in the manner, or for the purpose, or on the object, designated by the other words of the sentence.

The other instance of error in the use of the *Preposition* occurs on the very first sentence in the treatise on Logic.

“Logic is the art of using reason well in our enquiries after truth, and the communication of it to others.”—L. Introduction.

The meaning of the words is this: that “*Logic* is the art of using reason well in our enquiries after truth, and *is also* the communication of it to others.” To be sure we do *understand* that it means, that “Logic is the art of using reason well in our enquiries after truth, and *in* the communication of it to others;” but, surely, in a case like this, no room for doubt or for hesitation ought to have been left. Nor is “using reason *well*” a well-

chosen phrase. It *may* mean *treating* it well ; not *ill-treating* it. " Using reason *properly*," or " *employing* reason well," would have been better. For, observe, Doctor Watts is here giving a *definition* of the thing of which he was about to treat ; and he is speaking to persons unacquainted with that thing ; for, as to those acquainted with it no definition was wanted. Clearness, every where desirable, was here absolutely necessary.

CONJUNCTIONS.

" *As*, notwithstanding all that wit, or malice, or pride, or prudence will be able to suggest, men and women must, at last, pass their lives together, I have never, *therefore*, thought those writers friends to human happiness, who endeavour to excite in either sex a general contempt or suspicion of the other."—R. No. 119.

The *as* is unnecessary ; or the *therefore* is unnecessary.

" But the happy historian has no *other* labour than of gathering what tradition pours down before him."—R. No. 122.

" Some have advanced without due attention to the consequences of this notion, that certain virtues have their correspondent faults, and *therefore*, to exhibit either apart is to deviate from probability."—R. No. 4.

" But, if the power of example is so great as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, care ought to be taken, *that*, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited ; and *that which* is likely to operate so strongly, should not be mischievous or uncertain in its effects."—R. No. 4.

It should have been, in the first of these extracts, " than *that* of gathering :" in the second, " and *that* therefore :" in the third, " and that *that* which is

“likely.” If the Doctor wished to avoid putting *two thats* close together, he should have chosen another form for his sentence. The *that which* is a *relative*, and the conjunction *that* was required to go before it.

“It is, therefore an useful thing, when we have a fundamental truth, we use the synthetick method to explain it.”—L. P. 4.

It should have been, *that* we use.

WRONG PLACING OF WORDS.

Of all the faults to be found in writing this is one of the most common, and, perhaps, it leads to the greatest number of misconceptions. All the words may be the proper words to be used upon the occasion; and yet, by a *misplacing* of a part of them, the meaning may be wholly destroyed; and, even made to be the contrary of what it ought to be.

“I asked the question with no other intention than to set the gentleman free from the necessity of silence, and give him an opportunity of mingling on equal terms with a polite assembly, from which, *however uneasy*, he could not then *escape*, by a kind introduction of the only subject on which I believed him to be able to speak with propriety.”—R. No. 126.

This is a very bad sentence altogether. “*However uneasy*” applies to *assembly*, and not to *gentleman*. Only observe how easily this might have been avoided. “From which *he, however uneasy*, could not then *escape*.” After this we have “*he could not then escape, by a kind introduction*.” We know what is *meant*; but, the Doctor, with all his *commas*, leaves the sentence confused. Let us see whether we cannot make it clear. “I asked the question with no other intention than, by a kind introduction of the only subject on which I

“believed him to be able to speak with propriety,
 “to set the gentleman free from the necessity of
 “silence, and to give him an opportunity of ming-
 “ling on equal terms with a polite assembly, from
 “which he, however uneasy, could not then
 “escape.”

“Reason is the glory of human nature, and one
 “of the chief eminences whereby we are raised
 “above our fellow-creatures, the brutes, *in this*
 “*lower world.*”—L. Introduction.

I before showed an error in the *first* sentence of Doctor Watts’ work. This is the *second* sentence. The words, “*in this lower world*” are not words *misplaced* only: they are wholly *unnecessary*, and they do great harm; for, they do these two things: first, they imply, *that there are brutes in the higher world*; and, second, they excite a doubt, *whether we are raised above those brutes.*

I might, my dear James, greatly extend the number of my extracts from both these authors; but, here, I trust, are enough. I had noted down about two hundred errors in Doctor Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*; but, afterwards, perceiving, that he had revised and corrected the *RAMBLER* with *extraordinary care*, I chose to make my extracts from that work rather than from the *Lives of the Poets*.

DOUBLE NEGATIVE AND ELLIPSIS.

Before I dismiss the Specimens of Bad Grammar, I will just take, from TULL, a sentence, which contains striking instances of the misapplication of *Negatives* and of the *Ellipsis*. In our language *two negatives*, applied to the *same verb*, or to the *same words* of any sort, amount to an *affirmative*: as, “Do *not* give him *none* of your money.” That is to say, “*give him some* of your money;” though the contrary is meant. It should be, “do *not* give him *any* of your money.” Errors, as to this mat-

ter, occur most frequently, when the sentence is formed in such a manner as to lead the writer out of sight and out of sound of the first negative before he comes to the point where he thinks a second is required: as, "*Neither* Richard nor Peter, as I have been informed, and, indeed, as it has been proved to me, *never* gave James authority to write to me." You see, it ought to be *ever*. But, in this case, as in most others, there requires nothing more than a little *thought*. You see clearly, that two negatives, applied to the same verb, destroy the negative effect of each other. "I will *not never* write." This is the contrary of "I *will never* write."

The Ellipsis, of which I spoke in Letter XIX, paragraph 227, ought to be used with *great care*. Read that paragraph again; and then attend to the following sentence of MR. TULL, which I select in order to show you, that very fine thoughts may be greatly marred by too free an use of the Ellipsis.

"It is strange, that *no* Author should *never* have written fully of the fabrick of ploughs! Men of *greatest* learning have spent their time in contriving instruments to measure the immense distance of the stars, and in finding out the dimensions and *even weight* of the planets. They think it more eligible to study the art of ploughing the sea with ships, than of tilling the land with ploughs. They bestow the utmost of their skill, learnedly to pervert the natural use of all the elements *for destruction* of their own species by the bloody art of war; and some waste their whole lives in studying how to arm death with new engines of horror, *and inventing* an infinite variety of slaughter; but think it beneath men of learning (who only are capable of doing it) to employ their learned labours in the invention of new, or *even improving* the old, instruments *for increasing of bread*.

You see the *never*, ought to be *ever*. You see, that the *the* is left out before the word *greatest*, and again before *weight*, and, in this last-mentioned instance, the leaving of it out makes the words mean the "*even weight*;" that is to say, not the *odd weight*; instead of "*even the weight*," as the author meant. The conjunction *that* is left out before "*of tilling*;" before destruction the article *the* is again omitted; *in* is left out before *inventing* and also before *improving*; and, at the close, *the* is left out before *increasing*. To see so fine a sentence marred in this way is, I hope, quite enough to guard you against the frequent commission of similar errors.

LETTER XXII.

ERRORS AND NONSENSE IN A KING'S SPEECH,

MY DEAR JAMES,

IN my first Letter I observed to you, that, to the functions of Statesmen and Legislators was due the highest respect which could be shown by man to any thing human; but I, at the same time, observed, that, as the degree and quality of our respect rose in proportion to the influence which the different branches of knowledge naturally had in the affairs and on the conditions of men; so, in cases of imperfection in knowledge, or of negligence in the application of it, or of its perversion to bad purposes, all the feelings opposite to that of respect, rose in the same proportion; and, to one of these cases I have now to direct your attention.

The Speeches of the King are read by him to the Parliament. They are composed by his Ministers, or Select Councillors. They are documents of great

importance, treating of none but weighty matters: they are always styled *Most Gracious*, and are heard and answered with the most profound respect.

The persons, who settle upon what shall be the topics of these Speeches, and who draw the Speeches up, are a Lord High Chancellor, a First Lord of the Treasury, a Lord President of the Council, three Secretaries of State, a First Lord of the Admiralty, a Master General of the Ordnance, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, and, perhaps, one or two besides. These persons are called, when spoken of in a body, *the Ministry*. They are all Members of the king's constitutional Council, called the *Privy Council*, without whose assent the King can issue no Proclamation nor any Order affecting the people. This Council, Judge Blackstone, taking the words of Coke, calls "a noble, honourable and reverend assembly." So that, in the Ministry, who are selected from the persons who compose this assembly, the nation has a right to expect something very near to perfection in point of judgment and of practical talent.

How destitute of judgment and of practical talent these persons have been, in the capacity of Statesmen and of Legislators, the present miserable and perilous state of England amply demonstrates; and, I am now about to show you, that they are equally destitute in the capacity of writers. There is some poet, who says:

"Of all the arts, in which the learn'd excel,
"The first in rank is that of *writing well*."

And, though a man may possess great knowledge, as a Statesman and as a Legislator, without being able to perform what this poet would call *writing well*; yet, surely, we have a right to expect in a Minister the capacity of being able to write *grammatically*; the capacity of putting his own meaning clearly down upon paper. But, in the composing

of a King's Speech, it is not *one* man, but *nine* men, whose judgment and practical talent are employed. A King's Speech is, too, a very *short* piece of writing. The topics are all distinct. Very little is said upon each. There is no reasoning. It is all plain matter of fact, or of simple observation. The thing is done with all the advantages of abundant time for examination and re-examination. Each of the Ministers has a copy of the Speech to read, to examine, and to observe upon; and, when no one has any thing left to suggest in the way of alteration or improvement, the Speech is agreed to, and put into the mouth of the King.

Surely, therefore, if, in any human effort, perfection can be expected, we have a right to expect it in a King's Speech. You shall now see, then, what pretty stuff is put together, and delivered to the Parliament, under the name of King's Speeches.

The Speech, which I am about to examine, is, indeed, a Speech of the Regent; but, I might take any other of these Speeches. I choose this particular Speech, because the subjects of it are familiar in America as well as in England. It was spoken on the 8th of November, 1814. I shall take a sentence at a time, in order to avoid confusion.

“ My Lords and Gentlemen, It is with *deep regret* that I am again obliged to announce the continuance of His Majesty's lamented indisposition.”

Even in this short sentence there is something *equivocal*; for, it *may* be, that the Prince's regret arises from *his being obliged* to announce, and not from the thing announced. If he had said: “ With deep regret I announce,” or, “ I announce with deep regret,” there would have been nothing equivocal. And, in a composition like this, all ought to be as clear as the pebbled brook.

“ It would have given me great satisfaction to

“ *have been enabled to communicate to you the*
“ *termination of the war between this country and*
“ *the United States of America.*”

The double compound times of the verbs, in the first part of the sentence, make the words mean, that it would, *before the Prince came to the House*, have given him great satisfaction *to be enabled to communicate* ; whereas, he meant, “ it would, *now*, “ have given me great satisfaction *to be enabled to* “ *communicate.*” In the latter part of the sentence we have a little nonsense. What does *termination* mean ? It means, in this case, *end*, or *conclusion* ; and, thus, the Prince wished to *communicate an end* to the wise men, by whom he was surrounded ! To communicate is *to impart* to another any thing that we have in our possession or within our power. And so, the Prince wished to *impart the end* to the Noble Lords and Honourable Gentlemen. He might wish to impart, or communicate, the *news*, or the *intelligence*, of the *end* ; but, he could not *communicate the end itself*. What should we say, if some one were to tell us, that an Officer had arrived, and *brought* home the termination of a battle and *carried* it to Carleton House and *communicated* it to the Prince ? We should laugh at our informant’s ignorance of grammar, though we should understand what he meant. And, shall we, then, be so partial and so unjust as to reverence in King’s Councillors that which we should laugh at in one of our neighbours ? To act thus would be, my dear Son, a base abandonment of our *reason*, which is, to use the words of Dr. Watts, the common gift of God to man.

“ *Although this war originated in the most un-*
“ *provoked aggression on the part of the Govern-*
“ *ment of the United States, and was calculated*
“ *to promote the designs of the common enemy of*
“ *Europe against the rights and independence of all*
“ *other nations, I never have ceased to entertain a*

“ sincere desire to bring it to a conclusion *on just and honourable terms.*”

The *the most* would lead us to suppose, that there had been *more than one* aggression, and that the war originated in the most unprovoked of *them*; whereas the Prince's meaning was, that the aggression was *an* unprovoked one, unprovoked in the superlative degree; and that, therefore, it was *a most* unprovoked aggression. The words *all other nations*, may mean all nations *except England*; or, all nations *out of Europe*; or, all nations *other than the United States*; or, all nations *except the enemy's own nation*. Guess you which of these is the meaning: I confess that I am wholly unable to determine the question. But, what does the close of the sentence mean, when taken into view with the *although* at the beginning? Does the Prince mean, that he would be justified in wanting to make peace *on unjust and dishonourable terms, because the enemy had been the aggressor*? He might, indeed, wish to make it on terms dishonourable, and even disgraceful, to the enemy; but, could he possibly wish to make it on *unjust* terms? Does he mean, that an aggression, however wicked and unprovoked, would give him *a right to do injustice*? Yet, if he do not mean this, what does he mean? Perhaps (for there is no certainty) he may mean, that he wishes to bring the war to a conclusion as soon as he can get *just and honourable terms from the enemy*; but, then, what is he to do with the *Although*? Let us try this. “I am ready,” say you, “to make peace, *if you will give me just terms, although you are the aggressor.*” ‘To be sure you are, *whether I be the aggressor or not!* All that you can possibly have the face to ask of me is *justice*; and, therefore, why do you connect your wish for peace with this *although*? Either you mean, that my aggression gives you *a right to demand of me more than justice*, or you talk *nonsense*. Nor

must we overlook the word "*Government*," which is introduced here. In the sentence before, the Prince wished to communicate the end of the war between "*this country and the United States*;" but, in this sentence we are at war with "*the Government of the United States*." This was a poor trick of sophistry, and as such we will let it pass with only observing, that such low trickery is not very becoming in men selected from "*a noble, honourable and reverend assembly*."

"I am still engaged in negotiations for this purpose."

That is the purpose of bringing the war to a conclusion. A very good purpose; but, why *still*? He had not told his nobles and his boroughmen that he *had been* engaged in negotiations. Even this short, simple sentence could not be made without fault.

"The success of them must, however, depend on my *disposition* being met *with* corresponding *sentiments* on the part of the enemy."

Now, suppose, I were to say, "my wagon was met *with* Mr. Tredwell's coach." Should you not think, that somebody had met the wagon and coach both going together the same way? To be sure you would. But, if I were to say, my wagon was met *by* Mr. Tredwell's coach, you would think, that they had approached each other from different spots. And, therefore, the Prince should have said, "met *by*." This sentence, however, short as it happily is, is too long to be content with one error. *Disposition*, in this sense of the word, means, *state*, or *bent*, or *temper*, of *mind*; and the word *sentiments* means, *thoughts*, or *opinions*. So, here we have a *temper of mind* met by *thoughts*. Thoughts may correspond, or agree with, a temper of mind; but, how are they to *meet* it? If the Prince had said, "my disposition being met *by* a corresponding disposition on the part of the

“ enemy,” he would have uttered plain and dignified language.

“ The operations of his Majesty’s forces by *sea*
“ *and land in the Chesapeake*, in the course of the
“ present year, have been attended with the most
“ brilliant and successful results.”

Were there only the *bad placing* of the different members of this sentence, the fault would be sufficient. But, we do not know, whether the Prince means *operations by sea and land*, or *forces by sea and land*.

“ The flotilla of *the enemy* in the Patuxent has
“ been destroyed. The signal defeat of *their* land
“ forces enabled a detachment of his Majesty’s
“ army to take possession of the City of Washington ;
“ and the spirit of enterprize, which has charac-
“ terized all the movements in that quarter, has
“ produced on the inhabitants a *deep* and *sensible*
“ impression of the calamities of a war in which
“ they have been so wantonly involved.”

Enemy is not a noun of multitude, like *gang*, or *House of Commons*, or *den of thieves* ; and, therefore, when used in the singular, must have singular pronouns and verbs to agree with it. *Their*, in the second of these sentences, should have been *his*. A *sensible* impression is an impression *felt* ; a *deep* impression is one *more felt*. Therefore, it was “ a *sensible* and *deep* impression.” But, indeed, *sensible* had no business there ; for, an impression that is *deep* *must be* *sensible*. What would you think of a man who should say : “ I have not only
“ been *stabbed*, but my *skin has been cut* ? ” Why you would think, to be sure, that he must be a man selected from the noble, honourable, and reverend assembly at Whitehall.

“ The expedition directed from Halifax to the
“ Northern coast of the United States, has termi-
“ nated in a manner *not less satisfactory*.”

Than *what?* The Prince has told us, before this, of nothing that has terminated satisfactorily. He has talked of a brilliant result, and of an impression made on the inhabitants; but of *no termination* has he talked; nor has he said a word about *satisfaction*. We must always take care how we use, in one sentence, words which refer to any thing said in former sentences.

“The successful *course* of this operation *has been* followed by the *immediate* submission of the extensive and important district east of the Ponobscot river to his Majesty’s arms.”

This sentence is a disgrace even to a Ministry selected by the grovelling borough-tyrants. What do they mean by *a course* being followed by a *submission*? And then, “*has been* followed by the *immediate* submission.” One would think, that some French emigrant priest was employed to write this speech. He, indeed, would say, “*a élé suivie par la soumission immédiate.*” But, when we make use of any word, like *immediate*, which carries us back to the time and scene of action, we must use the *past time* of the verb, and say, “*was* followed by the *immediate* submission.” That is to say, *was then* followed by the *then* immediate; and not, *has now* been followed by the *then* immediate submission. The close of this sentence exhibits a fine instance of want of skill in the placing of the parts of a sentence. Could these noble and reverend persons find no place but the end for “*to his Majesty’s arms?*” There was, but they could not see it, a place made on purpose, after the word *submission*.

It is unnecessary, my dear James, for me to proceed further with an exposure of the bad grammar and the nonsense of this speech. There is not, in the whole speech, one single sentence that is free from error. Nor, will you be at all sur-

prized at this, if ever you should hear these persons uttering their *own* speeches in those places, which, when you were a naughty little boy, you used to call "the *Thieves' Houses*." If you should ever hear them there, stammering and repeating and putting forth their nonsense, your wonder will be, not that they wrote a King's Speech so badly, but that they contrived to put upon paper sentences sufficiently grammatical to enable us to guess at the meaning.

LETTER XXIII.

ON PUTTING SENTENCES TOGETHER, AND ON
FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

MY DEAR JAMES,

I HAVE now done with the subject of Grammar, which, as you know, teaches us to use *words* in a proper manner. But, though you now, I hope, understand how to avoid error in the forming of sentences, I think it right not to conclude my instructions without saying a few words upon the subject of *adding sentence to sentence*, and on the subject of *figurative language*.

Language is made use of for one of three purposes; namely, to *inform*, to *convince*, or to *persuade*. The first, requiring merely the talent of telling what we know, is a matter of little difficulty. The second demands *reasoning*. The third, besides reasoning, demands all the aid that we can obtain from the use of figures of speech, or, as

they are sometimes called, *figures of rhetoric*, which last word means, the power of persuasion.

Whatever may be the purpose, for which we use language, it seldom can happen that we do not stand in need of more than one sentence ; and, therefore, others must be added. There is no precise *rule* ; there can be no precise rule, with regard to the manner of doing this. When we have said one thing, we must add another ; and so on, until we have said all that we have to say. But, we ought to take care, and great care, that, if any words in a sentence relate, in any way, to words that have *gone before*, we make these words correspond grammatically with those foregoing words ; an instance of the want of which care you have seen in paragraph 173.

The *order* of the matter will be, in almost all cases, that of your thoughts. Sit down *to write what you have thought*, and not *to think what you shall write*. Use the first words that occur to you, and never attempt to *alter a thought* ; for, that which has come of itself into your mind is likely to pass into that of another more readily and with more effect than any thing which you can, by reflection, invent.

Never stop to *make choice of words*. Put down your thought in words just as they come. Follow the order which your thought will point out ; and it will push you on to get it upon the paper as quickly and as clearly as possible.

Thoughts come much faster than we can put them upon paper. They produce one another ; and, this order of their coming is, in almost every case, the best possible order that they can have on paper : yet, if you have several in your mind, rising above each other in point of force, the most forcible will naturally come the last upon paper.

Mr. Lindley Murray gives *rules* about *long sen-*

tences and *short sentences* and about a *due mixture* of long and short ; and, he also gives rules about the *letters* that sentences should *begin* with and the *syllables* that they should *end* with. Such rules might be very well if we were to *sing* our writing ; but, when the use of writing is to *inform*, to *convince*, or to *persuade*, what can it have to do with such rules ?

There are certain *connecting words*, which it is of importance to use properly : such as *therefore*, which means *for that cause*, *for that reason*. We must take care, when we use such words, that there is *occasion for using them*. We must take care, that, when we use *but*, or *for*, or any other connecting word, the sense of our sentences requires such word to be used ; for, if such words be improperly used, they throw all into confusion. You have seen the shameful effect of an *although* in the King's Speech, which I noticed in my last Letter. The adverbs *when*, *then*, *while*, *now*, *there*, and some others, are connecting words, and not used in their strictly literal sense. For example : " Well, *then*, I will not do it." *Then*, in its literal sense, means *at that time*, or *in that time* : as, " I was in America *then*." But, " Well, *then*," means, " Well, *if that be so*," or " *let that be so*," or " *in that case*." You have only to accustom yourself a little to reflect on the *meaning* of these words ; for that will soon teach you never to employ them improperly.

A writing, or written discourse, is generally broken into *paragraphs*. When a new paragraph should begin, the nature of your thoughts must tell you. The propriety of it will be pointed out to you by the difference between the thoughts which are coming and those which have gone before. It is impossible to frame rules for regulating such divisions. When a man divides his work into Parts,

Books, Chapters, and Sections, he makes the division according to that which the matter has taken in his mind ; and, when he comes to write, he has no other guide for the distribution of his matter into sentences and paragraphs.

Never write about any matter that you do not well understand. If you clearly understand all about your matter, you will never want thoughts, and thoughts instantly become words.

One of the greatest of all faults in writing and in speaking is this ; the using of many words to say little. In order to guard yourself against this fault, inquire what is the *substance*, or *amount*, of what you have said. Take a long speech of some talking Lord, and put down upon paper what the *amount* of it is. You will mostly find, that the amount is very small ; but, at any rate, when you get it, you will then be able to examine it, and to tell what it is worth. A very few examinations of this sort will so frighten you, that you will be for ever after upon your guard against *talking a great deal and saying little*.

Figurative language is very fine when properly employed ; but, figures of rhetorick are edge tools and two-edge tools too. Take care how you touch them ! They are called *figures*, because they represent other things than the words in their literal meaning stand for. For instance : “ The tyrants oppress and starve the people. The people would live amidst abundance, if those *cormorants* did not devour the fruit of their labour.” I shall only observe to you upon this subject, that, if you use figures of rhetorick, you ought to take care that they do not make nonsense of what you say, nor excite the ridicule of those to whom you write. Mr. Murray, in an address to his students, tells them, that he is about to offer them some advice with regard to “ their future walks in the *paths* of literature.”

Now, though a man may take a walk along a path, a walk means also the ground laid out in a certain shape, and such a walk is wider than a path. He, in another part of this address, tells them, that they are in "the morning of life, and that that is "the season for exertion." The morning, my dear James, is not a season. The year, indeed, has seasons, but the day has none. If he had said the spring of life, then he might have added the season of exertion. I told you they were edge-tools. Beware of them.

I am now, my dear son, arrived at the last paragraph of my treatise, and I hope, that when you arrive at it, you will understand grammar sufficiently to enable you to write without committing frequent and glaring errors. I shall now leave you, for about four months, to read and write English: to practise what you have now been taught. At the end of those four months, I shall have prepared a Grammar to teach you the *French Language*, which language I hope to hear you speak, and to see you write, well, at the end of one year from this time. With English and French on your tongue and in your pen, you have a resource, not only greatly valuable in itself, but a resource that you can be deprived of by none of those changes and chances which deprive men of pecuniary possessions, and which, in some cases, make the proud man of yesterday a crawling scoundrel to-day. Health, without which life is not worth having, you will hardly fail to secure by early-rising, exercise, sobriety, and abstemiousness as to food. Happiness, or misery, is in the mind. It is the mind that lives; and the length of life ought to be measured by the number and importance of our ideas; and not by the number of our days. Never, therefore, esteem men merely on account of their riches or their station. Respect goodness,

find it where you will. Honour talent wherever you behold it unassociated with vice; but, honour it most when accompanied with exertion, and especially when exerted in the cause of truth and justice; but, above all, when it steps forward to protect defenceless innocence against the attacks of powerful guilt.

THE END.