ESSAY WRITING

BAD AND GOOD.

C. J. ELLINGHAM, M.A.,
City of London School.

A. T. HEATON & CO., LTD., EXETER.

ESSAY WRITING

BAD AND GOOD.

BY

C. J. ELLINGHAM, M.A.,

City of London School.

Second Impression, 1936

A. WHEATON & COMPANY, LTD.,
The Paternoster Press,
EXETER.

Made and printed in England by A. Wheaton & Co., Ltd.
The Paternoster Press, Exeter.

PREFACE.

This book is intended for pupils from 13 to 16 years of age, so that it should meet the requirements of pupils in the top class of Senior Departments as well as those who are working for the School Certificate and similar examinations.

I have made no attempt to provide ready-made ideas to be used in essays, but try to help the writer to develop his own thoughts and express his own experiences efficiently. The question often asked when an essay is set, 'How much have we got to write?' shows that at present many pupils have missed a joy which might be theirs. No child, when told to draw a picture of a farmyard, asks 'How big is the picture to be?'

There are not many exercises, but I have tried to choose the most helpful.

I would like to ask that the book be read aloud in class, where there is time for it. Some of its statements can be profitably explained, illustrated, amplified, or safeguarded by the teacher.

CONTENTS.

	page
Part I. Style	5
Conciseness	6
Exercises	10
Vigour	11
Exercises	17
Beauty	18
Exercises	22
The Sentence	25
Exercises	30
The Paragraph	32
Exercise	34
Part II. The Essay	35
The Essay in the Making	35
Exercises	51
The Descriptive Essay	53
Exercise	56
Exercise	66
The Expository Essay	67
Exercise	72
The Argumentative Essay	72
Exercises	80
The Critical Essay	80
Exercises	93
The Imaginative Essay	93
Appendix	100

ESSAY WRITING

BAD AND GOOD.

PART I.

STYLE.

Before you can write a good essay you must have a good English style. This is hard to acquire; for bad style is catching, and we are surrounded by examples of it. A plain man with a pen for once in his hand sometimes writes like this:

> The few fur-seals I saw were very shy: and of fishes I saw next to none at all. I did not catch one; indeed, I seldom or never put a hook over during the whole voyage. Here in the strait I found great abundance of mussels of an excellent quality. I fared sumptuously on them. There was a sort of swan, smaller than a Muscovy duck; which might have been brought down with a gun, but in the loneliness of life about the dreary country I found myself in no mood to make one life less, except in self-defence.
>
> Slocum, *Sailing Alone Around the World.*

But a trained journalist who earns his living by writing often writes like this:

> During the recent drought reserves had to be drawn upon to a serious extent. Having regard to the experience gained, the Committee felt that every available step should be taken at the earliest possible moment to increase the resources of the board with a view to avoiding a recurrence of the circumstances of the last few months. *The Times.*

Much modern English prose is swollen without being strong. But the style at which you should aim has the virtues of conciseness, vigour, and, possibly, beauty.

CONCISENESS.

It is wasteful to say in twenty words what could be said in ten. 'The fewer the words the better' is not always true, but it is a good motto to start with. Read over what you have written, looking for unnecessary words.

I. There is a notorious group of danger-signals case, instance; way, manner; order, means, view; character, nature; extent; and, most glaring of all, fact.

Case, instance. In most cases, boys had not brought overcoats, while in some instances they had not even coats.

This is true in most instances, but not in the case of a man who lives out of town; for in his case it is impossible for him to get home by half-past six. You may say he could if he tried, but this is not the case. There are instances of men living ten miles from the factory.

Count the number of words that can be saved in these two passages.

Way, manner. You are talking in the most truculent way (or manner), and I will not listen until you speak in a more courteous manner (or way).

(Not even 'You are talking very truculently' is short enough.)

Order, means, view. He went towards the garden with a view to climbing into the house by means of a ladder, but found that he had to break through a hedge in order to reach it.

Character, nature. It is impossible to grow large turnips in my garden owing to the nature (or character) of the soil, which is of a sandy character (or nature).

Extent. To some extent; to a great extent; to a considerable extent; to an enormous extent; to a marvellous extent; this is due to a greater extent to the wind than to the snow.

Fact appears in many woolly phrases: owing to the fact that; due to the fact that; in spite of the fact that; it is a fact that; it is an undoubted, or notorious, fact that; he was unaware of the fact that; we must not forget the fact that; we must pay particular attention to the fact that; the fact that last summer was very dry.

Whenever you find that you have written one of these words, suspect that you are being wasteful.

II. Next come words like quite, truly, indeed, surely, simply, really, literally; and almost, somewhat perhaps, fairly, usually, practically, and the incorrigible rather. They cannot be condemned out of hand, but their use may imply that the reader will disagree with you, and that you must either defy or conciliate him. To write that roses are truly or indeed or really beautiful, should mean that the statement has been challenged; and to write that Dickens is perhaps more interesting than Scott, means either that you do not know your own mind or that you fear contradiction. Literally, in 'he was literally mad with rage,' is used in conversation to enable the voice to climb up the scale towards an impressive pitch for 'mad' but it serves no other purpose.

When you find yourself using one of these words, make certain that you mean to strengthen or qualify your statement. If not, cross it out.

III. These faults are general among beginners. There are others which you will learn to recognise if you look for them. You may be among those who cannot make a statement without prefacing it with 'I think that,' or 'it is my opinion that,' or 'in my opinion'; or worse, 'in my humble opinion,' or 'personally I think that,' or even 'personally it is my opinion that' or among those who confuse fussiness with accuracy, and write 'a man or woman on entering a railway carriage takes his or her seat and opens his or her paper' or among those who write 'he is weak as regards, or with regard to, arithmetic,' and 'this is an improvement from the point of view of effectiveness,' and 'there is much doubt as to whether,' and 'according as to whether,' and the illiterate 'equally as well.'

Try to find your own besetting sins. In revising a paper lately I found on the same page two sentences, the one beginning 'It cannot be denied that' and the other 'Nobody can deny that.' A statement so obvious that it cannot be denied may be necessary, but there is no need to call attention to its obviousness. I also found:

Patience and a dictionary are the only things that are needed.
Having finished one verse, he turned his attention to the next.
I enjoyed reading such a book as . .
It was a product of that type of pessimism which

and many more. What should have been written?

IV. If you give a word two adjectives, make sure that you are not repeating yourself. 'In the quiet and peaceful surroundings of the country'; 'a plain and

straightforward story'; 'we felt wretched and miserable'; 'the book is dull and uninteresting' 'he is a poor feeble creature.'

V. Remove the prepositions and adverbs that cling like parasites to some verbs. Some people, on a walk, start out from Crediton and end up at Exeter. They divide up their money, and finish up the pudding, and start up their engines, and listen in to the wireless, and open up vistas, and check up on their position, and face up to a situation.

You can remove these blemishes by keeping your eyes open. Other faults are harder to cure.

VI. Words are always wasted when the writer thinks out the sentence as he writes.

We all spend some of our money upon amusement, although, of course, if we are very poor we cannot afford to do so.

The 'of course' shows where the writer began to think. Had he thought first, he would have written 'Unless we are very poor, we spend,' or 'All but the very poor spend,' and saved ten or eleven words.

The general public, or at least those who are not motorists, look upon him mostly as

He wrote 'The general public' before he began to think. He found it too sweeping, and qualified it twice.

The following is a good example of thinking while you write:

By now, also, in every village in England electricity has been installed or is on the way, which is, of course, an ideal improvement which will increase the interests of the villagers;

for they will now be able to install wireless sets, read by a powerful light, and in winter sit before a blazing log fire, which is a luxury not experienced by us, and read peacefully.

VII. Waste is also caused by an inadequate vocabulary. If you do not know the words 'sinecure' or 'antidote,' you have to write 'My uncle holds a post in which he is paid very well for doing very little'; or 'When the doctor came he gave him something to counteract the effect of the poison.' And since, when writing an essay, you cannot hunt through a dictionary for these words, you must mark them in the books you read, and collect them in your memory, if you have one, or in a notebook. But there are many common adjectives and adverbs which save whole sentences. The boy translated the French fluently, or glibly; or listlessly, or dejectedly. The first boy's translation was fast and correct; the second's was as fast and correct, but with six letters you suggest that he had learned the crib by heart. The second pair both produced a feeble translation; but while the first was past caring what happened, the second had had enough trouble in the past, and saw more coming. Words which can express whole phrases are worth collecting.

EXERCISES.

1. Rewrite the fragment from *The Times* quoted on page 5, and the sentence about electricity on page 9.
2. Rewrite:

   While throwing stones just to pass the time, without trying to hit anything in particular, the boy struck the Colonel, who always lost his temper very easily, in the eye. Realising from the roar of rage that, without noticing what he was doing, he had wounded a warrior with so great a

reputation, he apologised for his action, for which no defence could be made, but found that the old man refused to be soothed

in the following form :

While *adverb* throwing stones the boy struck the *adjective* Colonel in the eye. Realising from the roar of rage that he had *adverb* wounded so *adjective* a warrior, he apologised for his *adjective* action, but found that the old man was *adjective.*

3. The first boy translated fluently, the second glibly, the third listlessly, the fourth dejectedly. Find adverbs for ten more boys.

4. Write not more than fifty words, not one of which shall be unnecessary, on each of the following :
   A town or country scene ;
   any outdoor game ;
   capital punishment.

5. Take some platitude, such as ' In every class some pupils will be abler than others,' and expand it into at least thirty words, without adding anything to the meaning. Then try to see how long you can make it before it becomes too ridiculous.

VIGOUR.

I thought that we should have a nice holiday at Folkestone, but we had a ghastly time. The weather was awful, and there were some foul people at the boarding-house. There was a rotten band, and it mostly played that ghastly classical stuff which I find terribly boring. Instead of nice smooth sand, there was that rotten shingle stuff, almost as bad as you get at that beastly hole, Dover, where we had such a putrid time last year.

Unless he is posing, the writer's dislike of Folkestone is vigorous enough, but he has not the art to express it. Only two of his adjectives are vigorous, and they

are not 'ghastly' and 'putrid,' but 'smooth' and 'classical.' They are the only two which will influence my choice of a holiday resort. If I must have smooth sand, I shall not go to Folkestone. If I must have classical music, I may go there, provided that he means what I mean by classical. But I shall not be influenced by 'ghastly' times and 'awful' weather and 'foul' people. The phrases do not tell me enough. He is like a drill-sergeant who, disdaining to tell his squad to form fours in lucid English, emits a roar which can only be interpreted by the initiated. Were the 'foul' people uncongenial, or did they sop up their gravy with their bread, or were they unclean in their habits, or were they monsters of moral turpitude?

Vigorous English is not merely to be used when you are excited or angry. Any English which does its work well, and shows exactly what the writer means, is vigorous. Feeble writing leaves the reader to do all the work. I have known a boy begin an essay on books with 'It is nice to read a good book, especially if it is also interesting.' This is feeble; but it will not be vigorous to write 'It is thrilling to read one of the great masterpieces of English literature, especially if it is of enthralling interest.' This too only tells us that the writer is very interested by certain books which he finds very interesting.

Somewhere among the thousands of English words is the one which will express your exact meaning; and when you find it your writing will be vigorous. You play a shabby trick on a friend. He is hurt or vexed or angry or exasperated or enraged or infuriated; or

grieved or aggrieved or indignant; or disillusioned or estranged or embittered. But any one friend is only one of these things. And the next time you see him you notice that his manner is peevish or sulky or distant or polite or cool or cold or frigid or icy or suspicious or cynical. And you are touched or penitent or contrite or remorseful or apologetic or tactful or conciliatory or indifferent or off-hand or callous or thick-skinned or unrepentant or brazen or blustering or defiant; and he becomes understanding or forgiving or forbearing or patronising or implacable or whatever it may be. The accurate word gives an accurate picture. If you merely write as perhaps you would speak: 'He wasn't half fed up, but I calmed him down,' or 'but he did not get much change out of me,' the picture is blurred.

English will be vigorous, then, if words are chosen which do the work required of them. But since it is easy to mistake noise for effectiveness, a few dangers must be pointed out.

I. Do not try to bluff the reader. It is your work to describe, and if your words are inadequate, no verbal device will make the reader do your work for you. If you are describing a sunset, and feel that 'the sunset was beautiful' is not enough, it is bluff to write 'the sunset was amazingly beautiful.' You have not avoided the duty of describing the sunset. You have only made your task harder, for now you must show that it was amazing as well as beautiful. Words like amazing, wonderful, astounding, unique, extraordinary, miraculous, and their adverbs often do not describe, but only try to avoid description.

II. Do not bully the reader by asking him questions and giving him orders and dictating his emotions to him.

Surely everybody loves the sight of a little child.

How glorious it is to have a long holiday by the sea!

What better way is there of spending one's leisure than in the perusal of a good book? (If 'perusal' does not annoy him, the question-mark will.)

Take the Thames Embankment, for instance.

Go into any classroom, and what do you find?

The rhetorical question may help a speaker by evoking a sympathetic grunt or cheer, but it is out of place in an essay. The direct imperative is discourteous, and the ecstatic exclamation is sloppy. All these devices mean that you are trying to make the reader do your work for you.

III. On the other hand, know when to stop. The reader will not do your work for you, but he does not want his work done for him. The point of an epigram is conveyed by what is left out as much as by what is put in. 'There is never a good champagne year unless there is a heavy apple crop in Normandy.' It spoils it to assume that the reader cannot understand, and add the words 'because much champagne is made of apples.' A boy wrote of the saxophone 'invented by Saxe, presumably a half-wit, for no man in his right mind would have invented such a woe-begone instrument.' We will allow him to call Saxe a half-wit, and his invention a woe-begone instrument; but he need not have taken such pains to point out the obvious. 'A woe-begone instrument, invented by Saxe, presumably a half-wit,' pays the reader the compliment of

assuming that he can follow the thought. (Is 'presumably' wanted?) Apart from epigrams, it is a mistake to labour a point. A boy, in attacking a school tuck-shop, wrote 'Buy for three halfpence a half-bad, bruised, soft, tasteless, so-called apple.' We gather his contempt for the apple long before his fifth epithet. A judicious selection of two adjectives would have been more effective.

IV. Do not get into the habit of labelling every noun with an adjective.

The weary wayfarers in tattered clothes and broken boots shambled hopelessly along the endless road to the distant town, where a wretched bed and Spartan fare awaited them in the grim workhouse.

Not one of these adjectives is bad by itself, but together they sound laborious.

Which would you sacrifice?

V. Beware of the hackneyed phrase which had vigour once, but has died of overwork. 'First and foremost,' 'last but not least,' 'fast and furious' (especially with the ridiculous 'wax'), 'plain and unvarnished,' 'sally forth,' 'despairing effort,' 'gentle reader,' 'faint but pursuing,' 'eagle eye,' 'tender mercies,' 'irony of fate,' 'leave severely alone,' 'sleep the sleep of the just,' and many more have had their day.

You may have your own hackneyed phrases, apart from those in common use. For instance, I find that when I use the word 'struggle' the adjective 'desperate' has a habit of attaching itself to it.

VI. Do not be racy and breezy and slangy In essays describing school life, or country life, or life in a busy street, there is a temptation to introduce conversational phrases and experiments in illiteracy to enliven the narrative. 'Soccer is not a patch on Rugger.' 'I felt I would not say no to a cup of tea.' 'And he said, "'Ere, 'arf a mo', guv'nor, you 'aven't paid for the blinkin' keb."' The last is an exhibition of snobbery. The others are harmless in speech, where you choose your audience. The objection to slang is not that it is not 'good English,' but that its appeal is not wide enough. To call a face a clock or a dial limits the appeal to those who take pleasure in detecting the slight similarity between the face of a man and the face of a clock. Outside this narrow circle the remark will fall flat. Only W. W. Jacobs or P. G. Wodehouse can please everybody.

And if you decide to use slang, never apologise for it with quotation marks. You cannot have it both ways.

VII. Do not overstate. Even in abuse the most telling word is the word which might be true. No boy minds being called a lop-eared baboon; but he will mind being called a sneak or a funk or a mother's darling. It is possible for him to be any one of these three, but the first is beyond him. A boy who in attacking a daily paper called it a 'dustbin full of bilge and muck' overshot the mark in the same way.

The dewdrops on the grass sparkled with a thousand times the lustre of diamonds on the neck of some dusky beauty.

It is unlikely.

VIII. Long words of Latin and Greek derivation have a dangerous attractiveness. Some, like sophisticated or elementary or inquisitiveness, cannot be replaced, for they describe thoughts or emotions or qualities or actions too complex to be conveyed more tersely. Some, like omnipotent or resplendent or tribulation, mean no more than the simpler almighty or shining or suffering, but have a beauty and rhythm which makes them welcome. Some, like arduous or extremely or invariably, may mean more than the simpler word, hard or very or always, but are often used when they do not. Some, like edifice or irate or eventuality, have a doubtful right to existence. But, useful or not, they all look important; and if you are misled by their glamour you may find yourself 'participating in the diversions of childhood,' or 'practically invariably perusing your correspondence before the initial meal of the day,' or 'encountering an intoxicated agriculturist upon a quadruped of unusual dimensions.' The rule which applies to words applies also to syllables. If 'practically invariably' means no more than 'almost always,' do not waste ink.

EXERCISES.

1. Are the following words worth their keep?
   intoxicated, extremely, invariably, eventuate, absolutely, similarity, parsimonious, dimension, obviate, transpire, magnitude, totality, evince?
2. Choose two adjectives for each of the following:
   a duck;
   a gasometer;
   a Pekinese dog;
   a Catherine wheel;

an express train at full speed;
a muddy estuary with the tide out;
the noise of a circular saw;
the noise of a fire-engine bell;
the railway lines at a big junction;
the task of a man engaged in knitting;
the work of a miner;
the life of a lion-tamer.

3. I go for a walk in late autumn and see the following in front of me:

tall long steep range of hills; old road (my road) up them, new motor road round them; fields up to base of hills and a little beyond; mostly pasture; a few cottages and clumps of trees; above the fields, grass up to the top; no hedges; bracken in patches; sheep; chalk-pits here and there; top is level; one ruined tower on top, origin uncertain; clouds low; it has been raining for a month; it is still raining.

Write a description of what I see.

4. Write a short description of a building which you admire, of one which you do not admire, and of one which you detest.

5. Write a short description of a brilliant feat at football (or hockey, or netball, or what not) supposed to be written:

(a) by one who admires the game;
(b) by a superior person who thinks it silly;
(c) by an anxious mother who thinks it dangerous.

BEAUTY.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain.
(*Authorised Version.*)

We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement. (*Authorised Version.*)

Shall I drink the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? (*Authorised Version.*)

Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. (*Authorised Version.*)

And to guide our feet into the way of peace. (*Coverdale.*)

So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side. (*Bunyan.*)

And quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests. (*Browne.*)

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. (*Milton.*)

When all is done, human life is at the greatest and best but like a forward child, that must be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over. (*Sir William Temple.*)

The angel of death is abroad in the land. We can almost hear the beating of his wings. (*Bright.*)

She lies in fifteen fathoms, at the edge of the rocks, upon the sand; and her crew lie all around her, asleep until the judgment day. (*Kingsley.*)

And leaning upon a flame he smiled and died. (*Thornton Wilder.*)

There is something more than conciseness and vigour about these passages; some power of arousing emotion which we call beauty. They all touch heights which we shall never reach; but when we have found that writing is a joyful act of creation, we too try to polish an occasional phrase until it is more than merely efficient. To aim at fine writing is a worthy ambition, but there are pitfalls.

I. Be sincere. Wait until you are yourself deeply moved before you try to attain the phrase which will stir emotion in others. There is a difference between sentiment and gush. Do not think—'Evening'? Ha!

This is a subject by which the examiner expects me to be deeply stirred; so here goes

The rays of the dying sun fell athwart the prattling rivulet, and the feathered songsters warbled their tuneful lays in leafy bowers, what time the weary hind plodded homeward to his well-earned repose.

Even if you do not give the show away through sheer ignorance, and write of 'the robin's musical trill,' or 'the foxglove peeping shyly from its tangle of leaves,' the reader will know after eleven words that you do not really care. No lover of a stream would patronize it by calling it a prattling rivulet. Emotional phrases only come at the call of emotion.

II. Some words are more beautiful than others, as mercy than mug, or harmony than haggle. But vale is not more beautiful than valley, nor grove than wood, nor rill than river, nor lay than song, nor grot than cave, nor hind than labourer. There are a number of such words, never used in ordinary speech, but in great demand among the minor poets of past ages, partly because they are monosyllables and more amenable to metrical treatment, and partly because there are many rhymes to them.

When, doff'd his casque, he felt free air,
Around 'gan Marmion wildly stare.

Scott was writing against time, and may be forgiven. But the beginner may think that since this is certainly not 'prose,' the unusual words, doff, casque, and 'gan, have a 'poetic' and therefore an emotional value; and with a generous desire to do his best for his reader he

will doff his hat, and don his coat, and wage war, and delve in gardens, and lave in rills, and bask in groves, and achieve other strange antics.

III. Avoid what is known as Wardour Street English, from a street in London where the furniture of bygone days, or imitations of it, may be bought albeit or howbeit for although, what time for when, ere for before, anent for about, and so on. And however emotional you may feel, never use the archaic second person, thou and ye. Carlyle won a reputation by doing it, but you will get entangled in the conjugation of the verb didst, canst, sangst, dugst it is not worth it.

IV. Use inversion very sparingly. 'Gone were the days of childhood,' 'hushed was the wind, and still were the waves,' are a sentimental assault upon the reader.

V. The secret of beautiful writing appears to be rhythm. Imagine a sentence as bad as can be:

> The inadequacy (or efficiency, to taste) of the Somersetshire Constabulary in comparison with their Metropolitan confrères has been conclusively demonstrated in the recent epidemic of burglarious activity in the vicinity of Bridgwater.

Its ugliness is not only in its pompous polysyllables, but in its rhythm, which is that of an engine with a heavy load puffing up a steep slope. A noble phrase will be found to have a good proportion of stressed syllables, usually at least one in three The danger of the polysyllable is that four-fifths of it may be mere gabble, there being no time to bring out the vowel sounds in which beauty lies. No pronunciation can make laboratory or epistolary or anticipatorily, if it

exists, sound dignified. Drink the blood of men imbibe the sanguinary fluid of individuals. All the beauty is murdered, and largely because the rhythm has changed.

But though you need plenty of stressed syllables, you must be careful to avoid the fixed beat of verse rhythm. Some writers lapse unconsciously into metre whenever they become emotional:

> A gnarled and half-starved oak, as stubborn as my own resolve, and smitten by some storm of old, hung from the crag above me. Rising from my horse's back, although I had no stirrups, I caught a limb and tore it like a wheat-awn from the socket. *Lorna Doone.*

And Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water.

Even when written, words cannot be separated from their sounds. And when you are doubtful which of two phrases to prefer, read them aloud, or ask somebody to read them to you. Phrases which look well enough on paper will sometimes be found to have an unpleasing jog-trot when read aloud.

EXERCISES.

1. Beauty cannot be produced to order, and exercises may be a waste of time; but try to make the following sound more attractive:

   The sun set, and darkness immediately followed.

   Encompassed by foemen he fought till he fell.

   The moon made a bright path of light right across the lake.

   The mysterious cry of a night bird came from the dilapidated tower.

He had several faithful friends, a bliss denied to many.
There were large numbers of bluebells in the woods.
This is the sepulchre of a murdered monarch.
I hunted for my friend among the corpses.
Sorrow is a commoner human experience than joy.
There was no more danger, for the men had been brought safely to shore.

2. Of the following passages on similar subjects, which do you think the noblest? Put them in order of merit, and give reasons for your order.

(a) Two brothers fight to the death.

At the last Balan, the younger brother, withdrew him a little and laid him down. Then said Balin le Savage, What knight art thou? for or now I found never no knight that matched me. My name is, said he, Balan, brother to the good knight Balin. Alas! said Balin, that ever I should see this day. And therewith he fell backward in a swoon. Then Balan went on all four feet and hands, and put off the helm of his brother, and might not know him by the visage, it was so full hewen and bled: but when he awoke he said, O Balan my brother, thou hast slain me and I thee, wherefore all the wide world shall speak of us both. Malory, *Mort d'Arthur.*
(Malory wrote in the fifteenth century, so this is not Wardour Street).

(b) A flood.

The next instant the boat was no longer seen upon the water and the huge mass was hurrying on in hideous triumph. But soon the keel of the boat reappeared, a black speck on the golden water. The boat reappeared—but brother and sister had gone down in an embrace never to be parted: living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together.

George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss.*

(c) After a flood.

Lup stood up in the stern to hail, and found his voice a dead thing in his throat. All night long it had been calling, but it was dumb now. In his pocket his icy fingers crushed the forgotten violets meant for his mother. Lancaster, at an oar, looked up at his terrible face, and shivered. Somebody called, and they rowed closer. Across the sill of an upper room the wind had blown the silvery strand of a woman's hair. They hailed once more, and drew towards it; but when they saw the watermark, they were silent.

So, on Mothering Sunday, Lup Whinnerah came home again.

Constance Holme, *The Lonely Plough.*

(d) Death of a child.

She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell was dead. Her little bird—a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed—was stirring nimbly in its cage; and the strong heart of its young mistress was mute and motionless for ever. Where were the traces of her early cares, her sufferings, and fatigues? All gone. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born; imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose.

Dickens, *Old Curiosity Shop.*

(e) Death of a very old man.

And settling back in his chair he closed his eyes. Some thistledown came on what little air there was, and pitched on his moustache more white than itself. He did not know; but his breathing stirred it, caught there. A ray of sunlight struck through and lodged on his boot. A humble-bee alighted and strolled on the crown of his Panama hat. And the delicious surge of slumber reached the brain beneath that hat, and the head swayed forward and rested on his breast. Summer—summer! So went the hum. The stable clock struck the quarter past. The dog Balthasar stretched and looked up at his master. The

thistledown no longer moved. The dog placed his chin over the sunlit foot. It did not stir. The dog withdrew his chin quickly, rose, and leaped on old Jolyon's lap, looked in his face, whined; then, leaping down, sat on his haunches, gazing up. And suddenly he uttered a long, long, howl. But the thistledown was still as death, and the face of his old master.

Galsworthy, *Indian Summer of a Forsyte.*

THE SENTENCE.

The number of the prisoners was one hundred and forty-six. When they were ordered to enter the cell, they imagined that the soldiers were joking; and being in high spirits on account of the promise of the Nabob to spare their lives, they laughed and jested at the absurdity of the notion. They soon discovered their mistake. They expostulated; they entreated; but in vain. The guards threatened to cut down all who hesitated. The captives were driven into the cell at the point of the sword, and the door was instantly shut and locked upon them.

Macaulay, *Clive.*

Here are six sentences in ninety-seven words. Macaulay is designedly making them shorter than usual; for he is telling a very moving story, and each abrupt sentence is another nail in the coffin of the prisoners in the Black Hole of Calcutta. But the passage shows how effective the short sentence can be. The beginner is more likely to make his sentences too long than too short. I have known an essay to consist of one sentence. Since this was caused by faulty punctuation, it may be advisable to state the rules of punctuation, as far as they can be stated. A good deal of variety is allowed.

I. It would be unnecessary to say that a sentence must contain a verb, did not some modern novelists write like this :

The field was full of sheep. White sheep on a green ground. Staid, matronly ewes, and skittish youngsters frisking round them And so on.

II. A complete statement is marked by a full stop, however short it may be.

(A) The dog barked. I threw a stone at him.

(A) The porter laughed. I had missed the train.

III. But two or more complete statements can be put into one sentence when you want to show a contrast, or when the actions they describe are closely connected as parts of one process.

(B) The dog was barking ; the cat was sleeping.

(B) The porter laughed ; the station-master sobbed.

(B) The guard waved his flag, the engine whistled, the wheels began to turn.

The stop used is the semi-colon, the comma, or even the old-fashioned colon. A semi-colon or colon marks a longer pause than a comma, and is used when you do not want the transition of thought to the second part of the sentence to be too rapid.

(B) The wind blew, the rain fell. (There is no need to pause long in thought.)

(B) One party offers us temporary security and future danger ; the other offers us . (The semi-colon invites the reader to pause and review the statement.)

Thus to write 'The dog barked, I threw a stone at him,' suggests that we were partners in a circus

trick. 'The porter laughed; I had missed the train,' suggests that my heart was too full for laughter. The rule still holds when the subject is the same.

(A) I went for a walk. I like going for walks. I have walked all over England.

(B) I drink nothing but water, I wear nothing but wool, I eat nothing but vegetables.
(Connection. I am some sort of crank.)

(B) I eat with a fork, I row with an oar, I walk with a stick.
(Contrast.)

In the sentences marked (A) a full-stop must be used. In those marked (B) a full stop is not wrong, though not so neat as another stop. When in doubt, use a full-stop.

IV. A subordinate clause, relative, temporal, conditional, and so on, should never form a sentence by itself. Some writers try to achieve smartness by breaking this rule.

Jones arrived at the office five minutes late. When he was promptly sacked. Which, as Euclid would say, is absurd.

V. If full-stops are rigidly controlled, the others are more manageable. Some people urge that the old-fashioned colon should be kept strictly to the work of introducing a catalogue, where it is used without a dash.

The Government have passed the following measures: (not :—) the Sedition Bill, the Intestacy Bill, the

But a colon will also be found useful to mark the middle of a long compound sentence.

The beginner may be too lavish with his exclamation marks. This stop should be used with genuine

interjections, such as Oh! Alas! Bravo! but not with ellipses like Right, Splendid, Exactly. Some say that it may be used to mark a meaning which would be obvious in the spoken, but is not obvious in the written word that 'he ate it with a spoon' is a statement of fact, and 'he ate it with a spoon!' calls attention to his ignorance of polite usage. But the beginner is probably too prone already to stress his ironies and innuendoes. He will sometimes even call attention to them by marks in brackets as guides to the obtuse reader. 'We had a beautiful (?) time at Worthing.' 'He came out top of the class (!).' Do not kick the reader to keep him awake.

If, with due care for full-stops, your sentences are still long, it may be that they are badly formed. There are two kinds of sentence in which length is allowed. The first contains a number of parallel clauses.

I went to the tool-box and took out my tools one by one the hammer of honest Birmingham steel; the chisel, somewhat blunted by long use, but still serviceable; the

This sentence may grow enormous if you have enough tools, and still be intelligible, though perhaps monotonous. Newman wrote one of five hundred and thirteen words, its purport being 'If there be a religion which . . . which . . which it is not unlike primitive Christianity.' Hazlitt wrote one of eight hundred and forty words: 'Coleridge read . and passed on to . . and discovered . and . .' the sentence being designed to comment ironically, by its length, on Coleridge's multitudinous and desultory reading.

The second kind contains a main clause, with a number of subordinate clauses which prove or explain or safeguard its truth.

Though man alone of living creatures appears ungrateful to his Creator, though he ever despises the actual and strives after the unattained, though he may cross the Sahara in a motor-car, and view the ocean bed in a diving bell, and mount into the stratosphere in a balloon, and find himself still unsatisfied at the end of his journey; yet it would be a mistake for the moralist to attempt to eradicate this discontent, the direct cause of the progress which has rescued us from the pitiful helplessness of primitive man, a naked cowering creature with but a pointed stick or jagged stone to defend himself from the assault of the mastodon and the dinosaurus.

I do not commend this sentence. It is rhetoric, and not very good rhetoric, rather than writing. But at least it is clear, for all its hundred odd words. It is clear because everything in it has some connection with the main clause. In the middle is the moralist debating whether he shall try to eradicate human discontent. Everything that comes before that point would influence him in one way, and everything that comes after it in another. Contrast the rambling sentence.

She decided to make a cake in case her uncle came to tea, since he had said that he was coming to town that afternoon to buy a savage dog, as there had been a number of burglaries in his suburb and he was afraid he might be the next victim, since he had in his house a great deal of old silver which he had inherited from his grandfather, who

Probably nobody would carry the sentence much farther, though there is no logical reason why it should ever stop. The last sentence was an arch with a

keystone. This is a daisy-chain, and no daisy is more important than another. She made a cake because she expected her uncle. She expected her uncle because he was coming to town. He was coming to town because he wanted a dog. He wanted a dog because he feared burglars. He feared burglars because he possessed silver. He possessed silver because Her reason for making a cake ends at 'tea,' and the sentence should end there.

If you find that you are writing long sentences, make sure that they are not of this type. A number of rambling sentences can sometimes be rearranged into one sturdy sentence, with a great saving of space.

Now that our colony of Ruritania has revolted (1), everybody agrees that it is worth getting back again (2), and the only question is, how is it to be done (3)? Men of the military profession urge the use of force (4), and so do those who are always wanting to fight somebody (5); but I think that we shall be more likely to secure our end by tact than force (6), since when you are dealing with a proud people (7), it is of no use to bully them if you want to make contented subjects of them (8). [*92 words*].

While those whose profession (4) or temperament (5) is military urge the use of force (4) to recover our admittedly valuable (2) colony of Ruritania (1), I think that tact is more likely than force (6) to reconcile (8) a proud (7) people to subjection (8).

And the whole sentence covers (3). [*37 words*].

('I think that' is not superfluous here; for the writer is contrasting his opinion with that of the militarists).

EXERCISES.

1. Punctuate:

The circus had come its large tent had been pitched overnight in a field outside the village its wagons and caravans were drawn up in line by the far hedge the per-

formance would not begin for another hour but already numbers of little boys were lying at full length on the grass trying to peep under the tent-flap they were determined to miss nothing all night in their dreams horses had galloped gymnasts had swooped clowns had postured they all had the sixpence which would pass them through the magic door but they could not wait so long something might be going on even now in the tent.

2. Arrange the following ideas, altering the wording as much as you like, in one sentence for each group.

(a) 1. Dancing is an innocent pastime.
2. The young like it.
3. Everybody else condemns it.

(b) 1. Dancing is a useless pastime.
2. Fools enjoy it.
3. Good-natured people are willing to let it alone.
4. Everybody else condemns it.

(c) 1. Dancing is a popular pastime.
2. Mr. Jones was very old.
3. He could not dance.
4. He played chess instead.
5. It is a more intelligent way of spending the time.

(d) 1. Dancing is a popular pastime.
2. Mr. Jones was very old.
3. He could not dance.
4. He played chess instead.
5. It is not such good fun.
6. But you cannot blame him.

(e) 1. Rugby Football is a dangerous pastime.
2. Players suffer severe injuries.
3. Some have even been killed.
4. But the young like it.
5. It has such thrilling moments.
6. So they will always play it.
7. This is a pity.

(f) 1. Rugby football is a dangerous pastime.
2. Players suffer severe injuries.
3. Some have even been killed.
4. So some boys will not play it.
5. They prefer a walk in the country.
6. This is healthy.
7. But there is no thrill in it.
8. So they make a great mistake.

3. Carry on yourselves with this exercise up to twelve.,

4. Write a correctly formed sentence of about one hundred words, and of the second type, on any subject.

THE PARAGRAPH.

1. A country walk takes me either into the fields or into the woods. Some walks take me through both. In the fields I have the pleasure of walking on crisp grass, of passing the time of day with horses and other companionable beasts, of looking with a knowing eye at the crops; and in autumn there is the thrill of treasure-trove when I meet a well-laden bramble bush or a lurking mushroom. The attraction of the woods is more subtle. I cannot see so far, and all sorts of things might be happening just beyond my vision. I hear the tap tap tap of a woodpecker's bill, but cannot quite locate him. And I may come across a butterfly orchis, if they have not all been looted by last Monday's trippers. Trippers should not be allowed in woods. They should be driven along the high road in well disciplined herds. But they cannot ruin everything, and I can never make up my mind whether I prefer fields or woods. Streams are lovely too, with water crowfoot and moorhens and flickering trout and a kingfisher once in a lifetime; but there are no streams of any size where I live.

2. Trippers ought not to be allowed in woods. They cannot be trusted. They break down saplings to light ineffectual fires. They carve their commonplace initials on tree trunks. They vie one with another in collecting bunches of wilting hyacinths to bestrew their homeward road. They leave tin

ware, and paper bags, and orange peel behind them. Their pleasure is bought at too great a cost to others. If they must visit the country, they should be marched along the high road in gangs with armed warders on the flanks.

The second passage is a paragraph, a group of sentences with a common interest. They are all concerned with the keeping of trippers out of woods. BECAUSE they do harm, THEREFORE their presence is unfair to others, AND SO we will use this method of keeping them away. If your sole interest lay in settling the question, 'Shall I keep trippers out of woods or not?' each sentence would help you to form a decision.

The other passage has no central thought Its first sentence suggests that the writer will contrast the fields with the woods. In the second, another idea intrudes. Then the contrast is restated and developed; but the development is arrested while the writer amuses himself with trippers. He then returns to his contrast; leaves it again to describe the river walk; and ends by explaining why he chose a contrast of two and not of three walks.

A paragraph, then, has a central idea to which everything else is subordinate. As in a good sentence there is no clause which is not connected in thought with the main clause, so in a good paragraph there is no sentence which is not connected in thought with the key phrase containing the main idea. This key phrase does not always come first, but it is better for the beginner to put it there. It will keep his thoughts from straying, and he will more easily see whether his paragraphs follow one another in logical order. But

c

the question of the logical order of paragraphs must be discussed later.

EXERCISE.

Write short paragraphs, beginning with the following:

1. I hate (love) cats.
2. I would not choose for a holiday (Fill in to taste).
3. The criminal is seldom improved by imprisonment.
4. This worship of noise is also seen in modern music.
5. It is unfair to accuse the police of incompetence because they cannot prevent smash-and-grab raids.

PART II.

THE ESSAY.

You can now put what you have to say into adequate English, if you can think of anything to say. It is not my duty, even if I could do it, to furnish you with ideas on all the subjects on which you may be required to write an essay. I can only point out a few obvious ways of setting your mind to work, and show you how to make the most of the ideas which occur to you. But first we will write an essay against heavy odds, and see how much we can achieve.

We will take for our subject 'The Traffic Problem,' which has been set in the School Certificate Examination. It looks easy, because there cannot be a catch in the title, and we all know something about the subject. But after a second look we are less hopeful. It is a subject on which we cannot be enthusiastic, unless we belong to the small group of reactionaries who would gladly abolish the motor-car, when we shall have great fun attacking it; or unless we are experts who have found a solution to the problem and want to publish it. But if we are ordinary people our ideas will be commonplace. We know that there is much congestion, that accidents are frequent, and that various remedies and palliatives are proposed, some more promising than others. And we conclude helplessly that the problem will some day solve itself.

We cannot suddenly become brilliant and original thinkers, so we must do our best with the powers which

we have First we note down our ideas as they occur to us :

1. Many people are killed.
2. There is need of supervision.
3. Can a speed limit be enforced ?
4. Can we spare the police ?
5. What a dismal subject !
6. Somebody will do something when half of us have been killed.
7. Congestion.
8. Noise.
9. Drivers should be more careful.
10. Trams are dangerous.
11. Careless pedestrians.
12. Some drivers are unfit.
13. Roads should be wider.
14. Keep pedestrians on pavement.
15. Special crossing places.
16. Too many horses.
17. Traffic lights. Do they work ?
18. One-way streets.
19. Stopping places of public vehicles.
20. Dangerous road junctions.
21. Poisoning of the air.
22. More subways.
23. Roads for traffic types.
24. More islands.
25. Tramlines dangerous.
26. More car parks.
27. Bicycles in main streets.
28. Motor-coaches very dangerous.
29. Trackless trolley-buses better than trams.
30. Streets should be straighter.
31. Number of cars increasing daily.
32. Dangerous to board a tram in the middle of the road.
33. Licences too easily granted.

I have purposely made the thoughts very inconsecutive, for at this stage it does not matter in what order they occur.

The next step is to group these ideas, and this needs care. If we hasten to select the subdivisions :

(i.) cars,
(ii.) other traffic,
(iii.) pedestrians,
(iv.) roads and pavements,
(v.) noise and smell,

we shall find that our divisions intersect. We shall say in (i.) that cars knock down pedestrians, and in (iii.) that pedestrians are knocked down by cars, and in (iv.) that cars knock down pedestrians when the cars mount the pavement or the pedestrians stray into the road. We shall say in (i.) that cars crowd the roads and in (iv.) that the roads are crowded with cars in (ii.) that trams are a nuisance in the roads and in (iv.) that there should not be tramlines in roads. Again, if we take as subdivisions :

(i.) things,
(ii.) men,

we shall find the same difficulty. We shall have to explain in (i.) that there are a great number of cars in narrow and crooked roads, and in (ii.) that men are endangered not only by their own carelessness, but also by the congestion in narrow roads. Is the difficulty which a motorist finds in passing a stationary tram to be included in (i.) or (ii.) or both ? And are noise and smell things in the sense in which cars and trams are things ?

A more possible solution is :

(i.) the problem,
(ii.) its cure,

with a further subdivision of (i.) into :

(a) the congestion,
(b) its consequences.

With these three we get a logical development :

(i.) (a) there is congestion,
(b) it has evil consequences,
(ii.) so we must cure it.

Let us arrange our thirty-three ideas under these three headings, putting the same under two or even three if we are uncertain where it belongs.

First Paragraph : Congestion.

7. Congestion.
10. Trams.
13. Narrow roads.
16. Too many horses.
26. Stationary vehicles.
27. Bicycles
30. Crooked streets.
31. Number of cars increasing.

Second Paragraph : Evil Consequences.

1. Many people get killed.
8. Noise.
10. Trams dangerous.
11. Careless pedestrians killed.
12. Danger from unfit drivers.
19. Danger at stopping places of public vehicles.
20. Road junctions dangerous.
21. Poisoning of the air.

25. Tramlines dangerous.
28. Motor-coaches dangerous.
32. Danger of boarding trams in middle of road.

Third Paragraph Suggested Remedies.

3. Speed limit.
4. Enough policemen ?
6. It will be solved when accidents get intolerable.
9. Make drivers more careful.
11. Make pedestrians more careful.
14. Keep pedestrians on pavement.
15. Special crossing places.
17. Traffic lights.
18. One-way streets.
22. Subways.
23. Roads for traffic types.
24. Islands.
26. More car parks.
29. Trolley-buses.
33. Tests for licences.

This leaves :

2. More supervision,
5. What a dismal subject,

and these can be used for introduction or conclusion, or left out altogether. We need not work in all our ideas, and it is better to sacrifice something which we could have said than to spoil a logical arrangement.

The three paragraphs are of similar length, and do not encroach upon each other too much. We see the risk of monotony and repetition. Each paragraph might be made into a dreary catalogue ; and we must avoid writing ' motorists are inconsiderate and pedestrians careless ' in the second paragraph, and ' motorists must be more considerate and pedestrians more careful ' in

the third. Indeed, if we do not take care, the word 'must' will break out all over the essay like a rash.

The next step is to write the paragraphs. We may need an introduction, but it will save time to leave this to be decided later. The treatment of the subject may suggest a way of approach to it.

First Paragraph.

We must arrange the ideas in the best order, and find the key phrase. The paragraph will be about congestion, so the first sentence must make this clear. 'There is much congestion in our roads' would do; but it might be more arresting. Let us try 'We are overrun by the motor-car.' This is more vivid, and avoids using the word 'roads' which belongs to the next sentence.

The logical order for the ideas is narrow roads, still further narrowed by stationary vehicles; many cars; other traffic obstructing the cars.

We will now write the paragraph. It is chiefly here that our craftsmanship can display itself. If we were to write:

> We are overrun by the motor-car (7). The roads are often narrow (13) and crooked (30), and there are often numbers of cars standing about at the edges (26), which make them still narrower. There are also more and more cars every day (31). There are also horses (16), who cannot go very fast, and motors are slowed up behind them. Cyclists (27) also get in the way of the cars, and increase the confusion. And trams (10), which stop in the middle of the road, make things still worse;

we have covered all the ground, but the result is as dull as the subject. We must search for the vivid

word, which will touch the reader's imagination and stir his interest in spite of himself, and the concise word, which will save a whole phrase. These words are printed in italics.

'We are overrun by the motor-car (7). Many of our roads are narrow (13) and *tortuous* (30), and their boundaries are still further *straitened* by lines of vehicles at rest at either kerb (26). And along these *meagre* channels flows a daily-increasing stream (31) of cars, lorries, tradesmen's vans, and motor-buses. They *struggle* along, now *crawling* behind the *plodding* horses of a brewer's dray (16), now accelerating *hopefully*, to be suddenly checked by a tram at *anchor* in the middle of the road (10), now swerving to avoid a *foolhardy* cyclist (27).'

We should now pass on to the next paragraph, leaving the revision of this till later. But for convenience we will revise it now. 'Tortuous' is on the whole better than 'crooked' or 'twisting' or 'winding.' A crooked road may have only one turn in it; and while a car can twist or turn at speed, it cannot be tortuous quickly. We wanted to write 'silted' channels to keep the metaphor, but remembered that we should require 'silted up,' which sounds clumsy. We think we were justified in describing the congestion pictorially, with 'cars, lorries, tradesmen's vans, and motor-buses,' instead of saying 'terrible' or 'amazing' congestion. By a reverse process, since the horse is a nuisance from his slowness and not his numbers, we have selected the heaviest and slowest horse-drawn vehicle we could think of. We do not like the two

participles 'crawling' and 'plodding.' We might say 'slowed up,' but we suspect that 'up': we want 'checked' later on we might say 'crawling behind the ponderous,' except that we like 'plodding'; or 'plodding behind the ponderous,' but a car cannot plod without feet. We cross out 'hopefully' for a cheap appeal of the 'faint but pursuing' type. We have had enough of nautical metaphors, and alter 'anchor' to 'rest,' and 'at rest' to 'inert' and back again to 'at rest.' We feel that 'foolhardy' is not fair to the cyclist. He has a right to be there, and not all cyclists ride recklessly. A journalist would say 'ubiquitous'; for cyclists are 'ubiquitous,' as widows are 'tragic' and discoveries 'dramatic.' But they are not really. We leave 'foolhardy' in the hope that our brain may work subconsciously. If not, it must go. We wr te 'cramped' as an alternative to 'meagre,' and leave the decision till later.

Second Paragraph.

The key phrase is 'The results are disastrous.' The best arrangement is in a series passing from the least to the most harmful effects noise, poison, danger to the driver, danger to the pedestrian (who is innocent more often than not).

We will not spend time showing how we might write a bad paragraph, but will try at once to write a good one. We still look for the vivid and the concise word.

'The results are disastrous. Not only are the ears of the town dweller *assaulted* by the unceasing *din* (8); not only are his lungs *choked* by a flood of *carbon monoxide*

from *countless* exhausts (21); but he goes on his daily round with his life in his hand (1). If he is a driver, he may *skid* on a tramline (25) or be crushed by an *aggressive* motor-coach (28), or encounter a beginner or a *cripple* (12) who has somehow secured a licence from a *lax* government. If he is a pedestrian, unless he is very *wary* (11) he may be killed whenever he steps into the road, to cross a side street (20) or to board a tram (32).'

We have not used all our ideas. It is also dangerous for a pedestrian to pass carelessly behind a bus drawn up at a kerb (32); but to include it would make the last sentence clumsy, and we have already mentioned stationary vehicles at kerbs. Neither have we mentioned the danger from trams (10) with their great braking power, but it is a small point.

Revision.

The paragraph exaggerates. It suggests that most of us are killed, and that the survivors are deafened and choked. Some exaggeration is pardonable, for the death-roll makes us feel savage. But we will alter 'din' to 'clatter,' and 'choked' to 'polluted' unless we can think of a better word. 'Aggressive,' like 'hopefully' in the last paragraph, is an instance of what is called the pathetic fallacy, and is dangerous; but we will risk it. 'Cripple' is not an exaggeration. Men have driven with one leg, or one arm, or one eye.

Third Paragraph.

Here the difficulty is to select the key phrase. Some of the remedies proposed are practicable; others too

expensive; others so fussy that nobody would endure them; others are merely pious hopes that people will stop being careless. We might begin 'What is the remedy?' but we will not ask the reader questions. We might say 'Various remedies have been proposed. The first class consists of those which are possible but expensive, such as . The second class consists of those which . But this leads to dullness and repetition. Upon the whole we decide that, since our chief feeling is one of despair, our key phrase must be 'The remedy is hard to find.'

'The remedy is hard to find. We can only dream of an *Utopia* in which drivers never lose their heads (9), and pedestrians never leave the pavement (11, 14), in which all streets are straight and no corners are *blind*. We cannot afford to *forbid* the use of horses, to *substitute* trolley-buses for trams (29), to build a subway at every *corner* (22) and an island every few yards (24). We will not *tolerate* an *incomprehensible network* of one-way streets (18) and graded roads (23), thickly *jewelled* with traffic lights (17). We cannot use all our police (4) to enforce an *unpopular* speed limit (3). As far as means allow, car parks can be made (25), street crossings can be *supervised* (15), and the entering and leaving of public vehicles can be *safeguarded*. The rest must be left to time, and to the growth of that caution and *courtesy* which the *discipline* of *calamity* will *instil* (6).'

'Tests for licences' has been left out, but it has already been suggested by 'lax' in the second paragraph. Some unauthorised ideas have got in. 'Utopia'

is one of them. But they do not seem to be in the way, and their presence shows that our imagination is working. We have detailed the remedies without repeating 'there is also the proposal that,' and we have hinted rather than tabulated our opinion of them.

Revision.

'Incomprehensible network' must be altered to 'maze.' 'Jewelled' is not quite convincing. The cumbersome 'entering and leaving of public vehicles' suggests a County Council bye-law, but we can think of nothing shorter. 'Access to' and 'use of' mean something different. If we leave the phrase out, the proportion of what we can do to what we cannot do seems pitifully small. It had better stand.

Conclusion.

We may add a short paragraph to take leave of the subject gracefully.

'This may sound a confession of failure; but the motor-car is still new, and humanity has seldom adopted a discovery without a lengthy period of misuse.'

We now return to the problem of the introduction.

Introduction.

I have seen it laid down in books that an essay must have an introduction. I do not agree. It must have a beginning, certainly. The natural starting-point should not come in the middle, or wherever the writer has just thought of it. But the chief use of an introduction in the accepted sense is to conciliate the reader. It is

invaluable in a speech; for the audience may be inattentive, or even hostile, or may not be alert enough to catch the speaker's chief point if he starts with it. And in the leisurely essay, as written by Lamb, it is no bad thing to give the reader a glimpse of your whimsical personality before you turn to your subject. But in a short essay, as written by Bacon, it is better to get to the point. A beginner's attempted introduction is often no more than a roundabout way of saying 'I am now going to write about Trade Unions, or about Boarding Schools.' This would have been obvious if he had got on with it.

The subject of Trade Unions, about which I propose to write, is one of the very greatest importance at the present day is feeble compared with

Trade Unions began in 1834, when

or

Trade Unions foster discontent,

or

Trade Unions have won for the working man what little security he possesses.

Some of the dreariest sentences, enough to prejudice any reader, are written while the writer shuffles his feet before stepping out.

This is a subject on which a great many people hold different opinions.

(You have to look back at the heading to see what the subject is not that it matters, as the remark is true of almost anything.)

There are many profitable and enjoyable ways of passing one's leisure time, and among the most delightful is carpentry.

A point on which many people disagree is *as to* whether Capital Punishment is a good thing or not.

(Somehow the word 'many' usually gets in.)

On consulting the dictionary we find that a game is defined as exercise or play for amusement.

The ways of avoiding this dullness which the text-books suggest have not much to recommend them.

I. The Anecdote.

But very few of us know any anecdotes, except frivolous ones which are out of place, or hackneyed ones about Nelson or George Washington which nobody wants to hear again. A dutiful young writer trying to achieve an anecdote is a pitiful sight.

While sitting in a tram the other day, I overheard one working man saying to another, 'Have you paid your Trade Union subscription yet, Bill?' This at once brings up the question of Trade Unions.

The other day I met a friend whom I had not seen for years. We went for a long walk in the park, and after we had told each other how we had been getting on, we began to talk about the future of railways.

II. The Quotation.

The same difficulty arises. The quotation which we can remember will be too familiar. An essay on Leisure will be prefaced by

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,'

and one on Patriotism by

> Breathes there a man with soul so dead
> Who never to himself hath said
> 'This is my own, my native land'?

And neither will be greeted with any delight by the reader.

III. The Arresting Opening.

This is an exhibition of cleverness which starts with an irrelevant remark, and works from it to the subject.

THE DRINK PROBLEM.

Antananarivo is the capital of Madagascar. We learn this at school, and that Mount Elburz is the highest peak in the Caucasus, and that Bodmin stands on the River Camel. We learn a great deal of the geography of the earth; but of the wonderful geography of the human frame, with its mountain chain of vertebræ and its rivers of blood, and of the hostile powers which ever seek to invade this fair domain, we are taught nothing.

Foremost among these enemies is Alcohol.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

Some people like guinea-pigs. They frisk attractively round their cages. But nothing in a cage pleases me. Imprisonment is too cruel for any living creature. If I were found guilty of murder, rather than languish for twenty years behind prison bars I would be hanged outright.

This is too easy to be worth doing. The presumption of course is that the reader, wondering what on earth guinea-pigs have to do with capital punishment, will be provoked into interest. But he is much more likely to be interested by a crisp and sensible phrase which shows that the writer intends to discuss the subject without waste of time.

An introduction to an essay may be needed for two purposes

I. You may find on reading your essay that your tone is so dogmatic or your conclusion so inconclusive, that it is only fair to warn the reader of what he will find.

All my life I have suffered from the tyranny of the examination system

That is, you feel strongly on the subject, and there will be little moderation about your views.

Man has solved many of the problems of life. He can fly higher, and move faster, and make a noise louder than any other living creature. But he has failed to solve the problem of unemployment.

So you can hardly be expected to do so.

II. You may decide to limit yourself to one aspect of a subject, through shortness of time or imperfect knowledge.

In discussing the steam engine I will confine myself to the road and the rail.

I have no acquaintance with any summer game but cricket.

In our essay on the traffic problem, an introduction might convey to the examiner that he can expect nothing profound or original from us, without angering him by suggesting that it is a silly subject, or appealing to his clemency. As this precise intonation is hard to guarantee, we had better let it alone.

This, then, is the essay, when we copy it out after a final revising glance :

THE TRAFFIC PROBLEM.

We are overrun by the motor-car. Many of our roads are narrow and tortuous, and their boundaries are still further

straitened by lines of vehicles at rest at either kerb. And along these meagre channels flows a daily increasing stream of cars, lorries, tradesmen's vans, and motor-buses. They struggle along, now hampered by the plodding horses of a brewer's dray, now accelerating, to be suddenly checked by a tram at a standstill in the middle of the road, now swerving to avoid a cyclist.

The results are disastrous. Not only are the ears of the town dweller assaulted by the unceasing clatter; not only are his lungs irritated by a flood of carbon monoxide from numberless exhausts, but he goes on his daily round with his life in his hand. If he is a driver, he may skid on a tramline, or be crushed by an aggressive motor-coach, or encounter a beginner or a cripple who has somehow secured a licence from a lax government. If he is a pedestrian, unless he is very wary he may be killed whenever he steps into the road, to cross a side street or to board a tram.

The remedy is hard to find. We can only dream of an Utopia in which drivers never lose their heads and pedestrians never lose their lives, in which all streets are straight and no corners are blind. We cannot afford to forbid the use of horses, to substitute trolley-buses for trams, to build a subway at every corner and an island every few yards. We will not tolerate a maze of one-way streets and graded roads, thickly jewelled with traffic lights. We cannot use all our police to enforce an unpopular speed limit. As far as means allow, car parks can be made, street crossings can be supervised, and the entering and leaving of public vehicles can be safeguarded. The rest must be left to time, and to the growth of that caution and courtesy which the discipline of calamity will instil.

This may not sound hopeful; but the motor-car is still new, and humanity has seldom adopted a discovery without a prolonged period of misuse.

We have decided that 'council of despair' has been used often enough: and we have made other slight alterations.

It is not four hundred words long, but we have used all that we know, and anything more would be padding. It sounds a little pompous, like an editorial in a serious daily paper. Nobody could call it thrilling. But it is intelligible.

Notice that the three key phrases read coherently in succession, and form a summary of the essay. 'We are overrun by the motor-car. The results are disastrous; and the remedy is hard to find.'

It is not suggested that you will have time for this elaborate analysing and polishing when you are confronted with an essay in a public examination. But after practice, some of it will become automatic. Your early essays should be short and careful rather than long and slovenly. Remember the four important things:

1. Paragraph selection.
2. The key sentence.
3. The arrangement inside the paragraph.
4. The vivid and concise word.

EXERCISES.

1. Write key phrases and make paragraphs out of as many of the following ideas as you can:

(a)
1. Daylight saving saves the expense of artificial light.
2. It saves work by artificial light.
3. It gives more time to spend in the open air.
4. It gives more sunlight, which is said to be healthful.
5. It allows games to be played after work.
6. It lets us see more sunrises.
7. It makes summer seem longer.

(b)
1. Railways carry people to and from work.
2. They carry goods.

3. Including very heavy articles.
4. And goods in great bulk.
5. They make travelling independent of weather.
6. They are very quick for long journeys.
7. They are the safest for travelling.
8. They keep clear of other traffic.
9. They employ large numbers of men.
10. They use fine looking engines.

2. Rewrite the following more vigorously

(a) There is no doubt that boys have to do too much homework. Sometimes they have to prepare three or four subjects, and this often takes them three hours or even more. They spend an hour over mathematics, and when they have become thoroughly sleepy they have to wake up again to start some entirely different subject like geography. They sometimes have to work at three languages in one evening, and it is no wonder that these languages sometimes get mixed up, and French words appear in the Latin prose. They have to carry several pounds' weight of books to and from school, and often make quite unavoidable mistakes and take the wrong book home, and then there is trouble. It cannot be healthy to have to work like this.

(b) Boys often cannot see any sense in homework. They dislike having to carry heavy books to and fro, and forget to take them home when they think it will be safe. They do not realise that education has two sides. We learn things, and we learn to use and apply what we have learned. This part of our training is best done at home, where there is nobody to help and the pupil has to stand on his own feet. If it were done at school it would be a great waste of time, for the masters would be standing about doing nothing while the pupils were working. Homework need not take very long if the worker is willing. A great deal of time is often spent staring at open books and wishing that the job had not to be done.

THE DESCRIPTIVE ESSAY.

MOUNTAINS.
SEA FISHING.
A COUNTRY WALK.

The chief aim of a descriptive essay is to be interesting. It is the clearest example of what every essay is more or less, a secret shared with a reader.

I. So before you start you must be sure of your secret. How do mountains interest you? If you were given a mountain, what would you do with it? I would look at it and stroll about on it. An Alpinist would try to climb it by all the ways which seemed impossible. A geologist would walk over it with a hammer, deducing its age and exploring its structure. A prospector would search it for mineral wealth, and a botanist for flowers. A tactician would look for gun-emplacements, and try to find a method of forcing it against armed opposition. Unless we are very versatile, we have only one of these interests, probably the first. We know that there are other interests, and having read a little we know a little about them. We have vague ideas of the difference between aqueous and igneous rocks, and of the craft of the mountaineer, and we have heard of edelweiss. But we do not know enough to be interesting.

Sometimes I have seen in text-books such a scheme as this for an essay on mountains.

MOUNTAINS.

Introduction. Many varieties of mountain.
1. Formation of mountains.
2. Beauty of mountains.

3. Mountain climbing.
4. Mountains as frontiers. Their strategic and tactical value. Conclusion. Mountains in story and poem.

No doubt if mountains had also a nautical or a mathematical or an edible value, it would have been included. And all this is to be written by a boy or girl of fourteen or so, in about an hour and a half. Nothing but a miracle can produce more than an efficient arrangement of correct platitudes, dull to write and duller to read.

Select the aspect which appeals to you most, and stick to it. Even if you possess three or four mountains, if for instance you are a Staff Captain and a member of the Alpine Club, with a turn for geology and an eye for beauty, you cannot do justice to all your interests in one essay. Climbing and beauty might go together, but not in separate paragraphs.

> Our frosted breath was silver against the blue sky.
> We came to a cliff of rose-coloured limestone.

You can show that the mountain is beautiful while you are showing how to climb it.

The same is true of sea fishing. There is fishing from piers and rocks, and fishing the shallows in dinghies, and fishing the deep sea in trawlers, and fishing the ocean bed in research vessels. And on a trawler there is the man who loves the wind and sea and the gleam of the scales; and the man who knows the technique of the trade, and the man whose interest is in the disposal of his fish. We cannot hope to share many of these varied interests; so let us have none of this sort of thing.

SEA FISHING.

Introduction. Value of fish as food.
1. Hardships of fisherman's life.
2. Some methods of catching fish.
3. The fish market.
Conclusion. Some queer catches in the depths of the sea.

I will assume that you are ordinary people who like walking up and down mountains, and trying to catch fish at the seaside. The expert does not need advice. He need only tell us how he climbs the Matterhorn, or how he catches herrings in his trawl, and he cannot help being interesting.

The country walk does not offer the same temptation to cover too much ground. You can only describe; unless indeed you pretend to be a doctor and prate about the healthiness of the pastime.

II. Granted that you are neither a climber, nor a geologist, nor a prospector, nor a botanist, nor a tactician, but like or dislike mountains for their own sake, the next step is to decide how many mountains you know well enough to be entitled to talk about them. Perhaps you live under the shadow of one, and walk up it several times a year. Perhaps you have spent a holiday in Westmorland. Perhaps you have lived in Huntingdonshire every hour of your life, but have read *The Epic of Everest*, or *Scrambles in the Alps*, or *Kim*, books which give you mountains, if only at second-hand. Perhaps you have neither seen a mountain, nor read much about one, but have formed a picture, erroneous no doubt but still vivid, of what a mountain is like. Then your real mountain or book mountain or dream

mountain is the mountain of which you will write. If you have neither experience nor reading nor imagination to help you, you will have to fall back on the text-book synopsis, and cudgel your flagging brain to produce scraps of miscellaneous information which everybody but an imbecile knows already, trusting to correct arrangement and spelling and punctuation to carry you through. But do not let it come to that if you can help it.

In the same way the sea fishing you will describe will be either that which you have witnessed and enjoyed yourself; or that which you have heard friends and relatives discuss; or that which you have read of in *Captains Courageous* or *The Cruise of the 'Cachalot'*; or, as a last resource, that which you picture to yourself when you hear that the herring fleet has put to sea. A vivid description of what you imagine life on a trawler to be like, however incorrect it may be, cannot fail to interest, but if you limit yourself to the two or three paltry facts which you know to be correct, you are but telling the reader what he knows already. This kind of essay is not a test of knowledge.

And of course the country walk which you will describe is the walk which you have yourself enjoyed.

EXERCISE.

What have you any right to talk about in an essay on the following? Give reasons for your choice.

Rivers.	Foreign Travel.
Outdoor Games.	Old Age.
The Stately Homes of England.	Music.
Country Villages.	The Sea Serpent.

III. Having decided what to write about, plunge straight in. An introduction may be needed if you fear that your flights of imagination will be so far removed from reality that it is only fair to warn the reader.

I have never seen any mountains, but I have always imagined them to be something like this.

But otherwise there is no need to wind yourself up before starting. If you want an 'arresting opening,' there is no doubt which of these three should be so described.

(i.) Of all the ways of spending a day's leisure, undoubtedly one of the most healthy and pleasing is a long walk in the country.

(ii.) Some people live in hilly districts, and can take lovely walks up and over the hills ; others can enjoy woods and streams and level pastures. Any kind of walk in the country is delightful.

(iii.) I set out from Moretonhampstead early one August morning.

IV. But now you may feel that you have handicapped yourself too heavily by limiting your material, and will not be able to write more than half a page. For you have become used to reticence in speaking. We all use convenient symbols, and are seldom called upon to explain or justify them. We say 'I had a beautiful walk,' or 'we had a lovely time,' or 'I read an interesting book.' We are not allowed to monopolise the conversation in explaining at length why the walk was beautiful. Our audience does not want to hear that. If you say to a friend, 'We had a glorious motor ride on Saturday,' the chances are that he will reply,

'Ah, yes, so did we'; and after a brief comparison of routes you have dismissed the subject, and are discussing the performances of your cars.

A descriptive essay is a challenge to us to become articulate. At last we have found a sympathetic listener. The man who set the essay presumably wants to hear about our country walk, or why we like mountains. Our chance has come, for he cannot interrupt. Can we break down the barrier of reticence for once in a way, and give an account of ourselves? Contrast

We had a lovely ride the other day, through some beautiful country, and the car behaved perfectly,

with

She turned her broad black bows to the westering light, and lifted us high upon hills that we might see and rejoice with her. She whooped into veiled hollows of elm and Sussex oak; she devoured infinite perspectives of park palings; she surged through forgotten hamlets, whose single streets gave back, reduplicated, the clatter of her exhaust, and, tireless, she repeated the motions. Over naked uplands she droned like a homing bee, her shadow lengthening in the sun that she chased to his lair. She nosed up unparochial byways and accommodation roads of the least accommodation, and put old scarred turf or new-raised molehills under her most marvellous springs with never a jar. And since the King's highway is used for every purpose save traffic in mid-career she stepped aside for, or flung amazing loops about, the brainless driver, the driverless horse, the drunken carter, the engaged couple, the female student of the bicycle and her staggering instructor, the pig, the perambulator, and the infant school (where it disembogued yelping on cross-roads), with the grace of Nelly Farren (upon whom be the Peace) and the lithe abandon of all the Vokes family.

Kipling, *Steam Tactics.*

It is a little hysterical, and some of the matter is out of date, but there is no mistaking the gusto of it. It makes you want to go out and buy a car. It is your task to make the reader want to go out and walk up a mountain, or catch a mackerel.

There are three things to remember:

(i.) The reader is interested and sympathetic, and wants to hear what you like and why you like it.

(ii.) Every human being, while he is sincere, cannot help being interesting to every other human being.

(iii.) Say what you feel, and not what you think the reader will think you ought to feel. An essay is a test of English, not of conventionality. If you think roses ugly, or cuckoos a nuisance, or walking through puddles enjoyable, you will not lose marks for it. Forget all about marks, anyhow.

If you can break down the barrier of inarticulateness, the difficulty will soon be not to find what to put in, but to decide what to leave out.

The method to be used takes us back to the vivid word. You are acting as interpreter between the sights you see, the emotions you feel, and the reader. Suppose you do prefer dandelions to roses, you must give a reason for it.

The dandelion makes a generous offering to all but the colour-blind; the fastidious rose reserves its charm for the sophisticated.

(I do not think much of that sentence, but then I do not prefer dandelions to roses, and it is the best I can do.)

The cuckoo is a nuisance.

He complacently utters his two notes, content with no audience but himself.

Walking through puddles is good fun.

I like to kick the yielding water about, and feel that I am spoiling shoe-leather for which someone else will pay.

A few hints will show you how to train yourself to be communicative. The method is, to ask yourself questions, and to go on until you reach the concrete. 'That sunset is beautiful.' Why? 'Because the colours are lovely.' What colours? And you can get no farther than the answer.

A. The mountain from a distance.

Why does the sky-line please you? Would you prefer a straight line? Or a perfect parabola? Why not? Is the edge a series of peaks, or a slope up to a main peak, or an undulation with no particular prominences? Given a giant with an enormous spade, could he improve or spoil the outline? Is the top ever hidden by clouds? Does that spoil it? Are there trees on top? If not, would you plant any if you could? What is its colour, or mixture of colours? Would you paint it bright red or gleaming white if you could? Is the colour the same all day long, or at the same time on different days? What happens to the colours when it rains?

B. Walking up it.

What happens to the colours as you get nearer? Do you choose to walk up it the easiest or the hardest way? Would you like a funicular railway? Or a rol ed

and gravelled path up it? Do you try to break your record to the top, or take your time? Do you look back at intervals, or wait till you get to the top? Can you see the top a long way off as you climb? Does the mountain change on the way up? Where is it most interesting? Are there springs or waterfalls? Is the grass greener in patches? Are there trees? Of what kind? Do they seem to be thriving? Which way do the boughs bend? Are there many flowers? Would you sooner see them planted in orderly rows or clumps? Are there snakes or lizards? Are there houses or farms or cottages? Would you like to live in one of them?

C. On the top.

Is it a ridge or a level plateau? Are there hollows in it? Are there outcrops of stone? What do they look like? How many sounds can you hear? Would you welcome more? Would you care for a row of houses on top? Or a large restaurant? Or a look-out tower? Do you like heather? Do you walk through it? Would you walk through a patch of bluebells? Are there whortleberries? Are they worth picking? What living creatures do you find? Would you welcome the arrival of a party of tourists, or an experimental motor-cyclist? Is there a wind? How strong? What does it smell of? What does it do to the grass? How far can you see? What do you look for? How much can you recognise?

And of course if you hate mountains, and are only dragged up them under protest, you can ask the same questions, though the answers to them will be different.

The essay contains the answers to these questions. The reader is not to be bored with the workings of your mind, but is allowed to see the results. Let us try the last division.

I pant up the last few yards, and come upon the top. It is a narrow plateau nearly four miles long, swelling very gently upward to the great fortress of jutting stone which forms the peak, the Devil's Chair of local mythology. It is covered with a carpet of many colours, the glossy green of whortleberries, some blood-red splashes of cranberries, the leaves even more vivid than the fruit, a few patches of grass, faded to yellow by the dry summer, with blanched stems uplifted which the straggling sheep have not cropped. And the ground for the pattern is the indescribable brown and red and blue of acre upon acre of heather. It is a changing carpet ; for a stiff breeze is blowing, and the bending grasses flicker in the sun, and the shadows of the clouds march across like relentless armies. There is no sound but the whimper of the wind through the leaves and twigs, and the cry of a distant curlew. Here and there lies a grey boulder, weather-worn into fantastic shapes, and stained with orange lichen.

I follow a rough cart-track which writhes across the top. Soon my path dips into a hollow, and as the right and left horizons leap to within fifty yards of me I walk for a short space in a world all to myself, perched high and aloof under the clouds. I flush a few grouse, or they may be blackcock, for I am no sportsman, but there is no other living thing in sight. After a time the track turns right and drops abruptly down hill ; but I go straight ahead, stepping from stone to stone in a channel hollowed by the water which rushes down it after every thunderstorm, until I am abreast of my goal. I plunge towards it through heather knee deep, the tough stems springing back unbruised behind me. Then for a minute I fancy myself a Balmat or a Whymper, while I clamber up twenty-five feet of rock, and I am in the Devil's Chair.

I make myself comfortable in the niche where he sat plotting harm to the County of Shropshire, and at last look fairly at the

view which I have pretended to ignore hitherto. North-westward I see the homely slope of Long Mountain, and the switchback curve of the Breiddens behind it, and the Berwyns far away; but a black rain cloud beyond them has cheated me once more of a sight of the elusive Snowdon. My eyes wheel southwards, past Cader Idris by the sea, and a hump which I hope is Plinlimmon, round to the Malvern Hills, the miniature Alps of central England, and Bredon where the lovers lay and watched the coloured counties, and north again over the heather-clad wilderness of the Long Mynd, to where the Wrekin with its forest fleece broods over the slag heaps of Wellington.

All the questions but two have been answered, some of them by implication. If the reader cannot tell that I would not welcome the experimental motor-cyclist, I have failed badly. But though the questions have been answered, the essay does not read like a catechism. All that it wants now is polish, but the schoolboy writer has little enough time for that, if he is given an essay once a week.

A few minor points are worth mentioning.

(i.) Balmat first climbed Mont Blanc, and Whymper first climbed the Matterhorn. I have used their names instead of writing 'I fancied myself a mountaineer.' They were exceptional mountaineers. Balmat not merely got to the top of a mountain thought unclimbable, but carried his employer on his back for the last hundred feet or so. Whymper's brilliant feats can be read of in *Scrambles in the Alps*. The words are a friendly gesture to the reader. If he has heard of the two men, he is mildly flattered. If not, no harm is done. He cannot fail to understand that they were

climbers. But the trick looks a little ostentatious, and should be used sparingly. Do not write

> In this machine age it is more likely that the boys in a class will grow into Brunels or Marconis than into Sheridans or Shelleys or Raphaels. And anyhow most of them want to be Hobbses.

(ii.) There are two quotations in the last paragraph. The reader who is familiar with Housman's *Shropshire Lad* will take pleasure in recognising them. Those who do not know the book will not know that they have missed them. This is the most tactful way to use a quotation. It looks either arrogant or incongruous in quotation marks.

(iii.) Almost everything is concrete. They are almost all things which may be touched and seen, or qualities apprehended by sight and touch. This is natural in an essay on mountains. But it should be remembered that the nearer we can get to the concrete, the more intelligible we shall always be. Instead of writing

> When England's greatness shall have declined; or
> When the centre of commercial activity shall have been transposed from the northern to the southern hemisphere;

Macaulay, the master of the concrete, wrote

> When some traveller from New Zealand shall take his stand upon a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's.

Although some of them have been mentioned before, it may be well to give a list of the dangers which lie in wait for this kind of essay.

(i.) Insincerity, striving after effect, and getting farther and farther away from your true feelings. This may take two forms

(a) Silliness.

The rabbits scurried off into the bracken at my approach (quite safe).

The impudent rabbits skipped off into the bracken, with a derisive flick of their bob tails (on the edge).

The impudent little bunnies testified their scorn of the clumsy human who had invaded their solitude by derisive wagglings of their tufted hindquarters as they scurried away (well over the cliff).

(b) Sheer humbug.

Beautiful as are the blooms that adorn our gardens in summer, they are surpassed in loveliness by the little wild flowers that grow unregarded in the woodlands and meadows. (The illustration is given by Mr. George Sampson in *English for the English*).

From this commanding height I looked down upon the hamlet of Puddlehinton as Cortes stared at the Pacific, ' silent upon a peak in Darien.'

At the sight of these bluebells a cry of ecstasy rose from the bottom of my heart.

(ii.) Talkativeness.

You are allowed to tell the reader what you like, but it is only courteous not to waste his time with trivialities. From the mass of things which you could say, select what you enjoyed most.

(iii.) Over-exactness.

Some of the best descriptions of William Cobbett, the great lover of the English countryside, are marred

by this. His mental honesty led him to write something like this:

> The road lay between hedges from four feet to four feet six inches high, and was full of holes which averaged nine inches in depth, and were sometimes as deep as eighteen inches.

So do not try to mention all the shrubs in a hedge and all the colours in a sky. Make a judicious selection of two or three, and never hint that you had noticed others with the odious abbreviation 'etc.' 'The street was full of children playing marbles, hopscotch, etc.' Marbles *or* hopscotch hints that other games were being played as well.

(iv.) The pathetic fallacy.

This means the tendency to credit inanimate objects with human emotions. There is no harm save in the excess of it. Nobody would object to 'frowning cliff' or 'angry wave.' 'The wind gave a howl of disappointed fury at its victim's escape' is near the danger-point, and 'each laughing daisy in the field shared my lighthearted holiday mood' seems to me to be definitely past it. But it is a matter of taste.

EXERCISE.

Write paragraphs beginning:

The boat pushed off from the jetty into the morning mist.
I now began the dreariest part of my journey.
Our path lay through thick woods.
The regiment marched past.
There was a great crowd in the vegetable tent.
The kitchen was spotless.

THE EXPOSITORY ESSAY.

THE PEASANTS' REVOLT.

I need only take one illustration. The questions set in history or geography papers are of this type. The expository essay is what the descriptive essay was not, a test of knowledge. Its first duty is to give the facts.

There are two kinds of bad expository essays. The first gives many facts all huddled together. The second, which is much commoner, gives hardly any facts. The teacher, taking a surreptitious peep at the papers of his more backward pupils before they are enclosed in the envelope for the public examiner, is disappointed to find something like this :

THE PEASANTS' REVOLT.

The Peasants' Revolt occurred in 1381. The peasants were dissatisfied with their condition, being especially angry at the enclosures which the nobles were making without compensation to the tenants. So they marched up to London to lay their grievances before the King. He said that he would help them, and though their leader was killed in a scuffle, they marched away fairly satisfied. But after this the revolt was put down, and nothing was done. The enclosures went on, and the peasants still got no compensation.

And there is not a word more : or rather, there is not a word more if the writer is honest. A dishonest writer tries to create an appearance of knowledge by saying it all over again in different words ; and by writing a rambling introduction about the importance of the peasants' revolt to the student of history, and a smug conclusion about the pride we ought to feel at having progressed so far since those days. But he has not improved his answer.

There are, of course, not enough facts. Words like 'peasants,' 'enclosures,' 'tenants,' and 'grievances' are left isolated and unexplained. This parsimony of fact is not the result of ignorance, for an ignorant writer would not have got the little that he has written so right. It is rather a disinclination to take risks. He knows that there was an objection to enclosures, but he is unwilling to define enclosures, for fear he may make some mistake. He knows that the peasants had other grievances, but he is not certain that he can specify them all; so he bluffs with the word 'especially.' He is treating the reader either as an enemy who will be eager to note his slightest slip, or as a very obliging person who will supplement his outline with details.

The risk of getting the facts wrong must be taken, or the essay will never come to life. And the facts may be elicited by a method like that used in the descriptive essay. Challenge every statement with a question, and see what happens.

The peasants had a grievance. What? The enclosures. What were enclosed? The estates of the Lord of the Manor. Why? For sheep farming. Why? Because it paid. Why? Because of the wool trade with Flanders. Why now and not before? Europe was settling down to Prosperity again. Why? I do not know.

What had been done with the land before it was enclosed? Some of it was let to tenants. What happened to the tenants? Turned out. Any compensation? No. What would happen to them? They would become day-labourers. Was there a demand for them? Yes, but less since the enclosures. Why? Because sheep need fewer men than agriculture.

Were all the peasants tenants? No. What were the others? Villeins. What is a villein? One who lives on the

common land, protected by the Lord of the Manor, and pays for the protection by service on that part of the lord's estate which was not let to tenant farmers. Had they their grievances? They wanted to commute their service to money payments. Why? It would give them more freedom to manage their own affairs. Had this commutation ever been done? Yes, when labour was plentiful, and the lords needed money. Why did the lords refuse now? Because labourers were scarce. Why? The Black Death. Was that another reason why they tried sheep farming? Yes. How did they justify their refusal to commute? They produced the manor rolls, in which the villeins' ancestors had promised service for ever. Were the villeins satisfied? No. Why not? For three reasons. They could not read, and distrusted lawyers. The rolls belonged to a past age. They disliked the word service. Why? They thought that one man was as good as another. Why? Because of the communism preached by John Ball and others. Why did he preach communism? Because feudalism was breaking down. Why? More suited to war than peace. Why? More chance of showing the qualities of leadership in war. But why communism? It looks at first the Christian and logical answer.

It would be tedious to prolong the process. Continued through the essay, it would recall still more facts. The constitution of Parliament made it most unlikely that the Knights of the Shire would listen sympathetically to the grievances of peasants. The badness of the roads, the wildness of the country, and the tyranny of the vagrancy laws made it impossible for the peasants to use many emissaries to plan a concerted action. The character of the king made him a feeble champion of the oppressed. The methods of fighting and the advantage of armour made it impossible for the appeal to force to succeed. Fresh facts emerge every instant, and some of them the writer can

employ very vividly. He probably knows a good deal about the state of the roads, or the method of fighting in armour, or the lack of education among the labourers ; but it might not have occurred to him that such things had any connection with the peasants' revolt.

Most of the answers to his questions are known to him. Sometimes he has to find his own answer, and of course it will occasionally be wrong. But even when he is mistaken he is using his intelligence, and his answer will be interesting.

Having got his facts, those of which he is sure, and those which he is prepared to risk, the writer has to arrange them and to state them in their best form. If he takes care to make his key phrases combine into a consecutive statement, he will not have much difficulty with the arrangement. For instance,

At the end of the fourteenth century the peasants had several grievances against the Lords of the Manors
There was no easy means of obtaining redress
So they decided to ask the King for support
Richard was willing but weak
His promises were not fulfilled
The rising was suppressed

are more consecutive key phrases than

In 1381 there was a serious rising of peasants . . .
The most memorable episode was the scene on Blackheath . . .
The peasants told the King their grievances . . .
The King promised to help, but the nobles prevented him . .
They did not want the grievances redressed
The rising was suppressed.

To state his facts in their best form, the writer must try to get the concise word. Indeed there may now be

so much that he wishes to include, that economy of statement is imperative if he is to finish his answer in the time allowed.

The lords enclosed their estates because they wanted to keep sheep, and an enclosure prevented the sheep from straying. Sheep farming was much more profitable than agriculture, as there was a great demand for English wool on the Continent, where prosperity had returned once more. [*45 words*].

The lords found an enclosed estate more convenient for the sheep farming which commerce with a now prosperous Europe had made more profitable than agriculture. [*25 words*].

But this does not mention wool. It might have been mutton that was exported. And 'a now prosperous' is clumsy.

Europe had recovered its prosperity, and its demand for wool made sheep farming profitable, and enclosures advisable. [*17 words*].

This is too compressed. It was not the demand, but the desire to satisfy the demand, which made enclosures advisable. And probably the rest of the paragraph will have to be rewritten if Europe is allowed to be the subject of this sentence.

The lords were enclosing their estates for sheep farming, finding it profitable to satisfy the demand for wool caused by the recovery of prosperity in Europe. [*26 words*].

The last clause is clumsy, as we find if we read it aloud.

The lords were enclosing their estates for sheep farming, finding it profitable to satisfy Europe's new demand for wool. [*19 words*].

This suggests that Europe had already demanded wool at least once.

The lords were enclosing their estates for sheep farming, finding it profitable to satisfy the demand for wool which had arisen since Europe had regained prosperity. [*26 words*].

Probably you will never be quite satisfied. It is not as slow as it seems, for the process is largely mental, and need not take much time. And it is worth while.

The method, then, is :

1. Elicit all the facts which have a bearing on the question.
2. Make your paragraphs consecutive.
3. Look for the concise word.

EXERCISE.

Improve the following :—

> It would have been very difficult to get the villeins to act in concert. Messengers would have had to be sent round to all the villages. The roads and tracks, where they existed, were very difficult to travel over, full of ruts, and often knee deep in mire. When a stranger was seen in a village, unless he could give an account of himself, he might be arrested as a vagrant or a decamping serf. And the villagers, living a narrow life in their own little district, would be suspicious of a stranger, and unwilling to exert themselves for a body of people of whose existence they had never heard, or to take orders or even suggestions from a leader whom they did not know.

THE ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY.

Boarding versus Day Schools.
Capital Punishment.
The Value of Flying.
The Uses of Advertisement.

If in the descriptive essay you show the reader what you enjoy, and in the expository what you know, in this type you show him what you think and why you think it. Its virtue is the power of grasping the point.

I. You will not receive extra marks if the reader agrees with you. The title may be 'The uses of advertisement,' or 'Is advertisement useful?' or 'What, if any, are the uses of advertisement?' but each is merely a demand that you should state and justify your own opinion. If you think that flying is unnecessary, or advertisement mischievous, you have the right to say so. An essay which tries to prove that flying has no value is an essay on the value of flying. Never repeat stock platitudes with which you disagree, under the impression that you are being asked for them.

II. You need not hedge, or apologise for your inexperience, or qualify your remarks by insisting that they are only your opinion. If they were not your opinion, they would not be there.

III. Give reasons for your opinions. It is in this kind of essay that writers try to save work and thought by bluffing the reader with the rhetorical question. The following was given me in an essay on vivisection:

> Why should you torture and kill poor dumb animals? Have they not a right to live as well as you? How would you like to be tortured and killed yourself?

Obviously this is not argument. Granted that the answer to the second question is Yes, there is nothing to argue about. But the vivisectionist answers it with No, and a hinted accusation of brutality will not make

him change his mind. The writer's object was to shame the reader into admitting something which he did not intend to prove. If he cannot do better than this, his belief in the iniquity of vivisection is a mere prejudice. An essay, if carefully written, may help you to destroy your prejudices or to turn them into reasoned beliefs.

IV. This is the kind of essay in which most time is wasted with unnecessary introductions. The writer takes a page or so to say that some prefer boarding schools and some prefer day schools; that the pupils of the schools of either type will prefer that type; that some have not the money to pay the boarding school fees, and so prefer day schools: and reaches the illuminating conclusion that after all it is very much a matter of taste, and there is a great deal to be said on both sides. We can dispense with all this. He prefers boarding to day schools himself, or believes in capital punishment, or refuses to be hectored into what is called 'air-mindedness,' or thinks advertisement a valuable contribution to commercial prosperity; and it is his duty to tell us why.

It is sometimes difficult to arrange the arguments in the best order. Let us write down those which can be used for and against capital punishment:

Punishment ought to be retributive, remedial, and deterrent. Some people urge that it should only be remedial, on the ground that crime is a disease. But if this is true, why do most criminals only commit crimes when they hope to avoid detection? Others urge that punishment should not be retributive, since often not the man, but a vicious environment, is responsible for the crime. But civilised life is organised

on the assumption that men are responsible for their actions. It is very difficult to make exceptions. And men have rescued themselves from the most unfavourable environments. Capital punishment, confined as it is to murder, is certainly retributive. It takes a life for a life. Some urge that nobody has the right to take a life; but is this true of the State? The State preserves life by safeguarding the conditions which make life possible; and presumably has the right to decide who shall have the benefit of those conditions. Outlawry would be equivalent to death in modern complex society, where nobody could keep himself alive alone. And if the State can outlaw, it can kill. It is urged that if an innocent man is hanged, no compensation is possible. But the risk must be taken. And adequate compensation for any miscarriage of justice is impossible. The previous condition cannot be entirely restored. Capital punishment is not remedial, unless we believe in a future life; and the legislator cannot treat this belief as general. It is claimed that imprisonment, as possibly remedial, is a more desirable punishment. But a short term of imprisonment would not be a strong enough deterrent; and experience shows that long imprisonment makes more gaolbirds than reformed citizens. Capital punishment is deterrent. It threatens us with what we all dread the most. It is urged that when death was the penalty for almost any offence, crime was much more frequent than now. But this cannot be accepted as a valid argument unless we are sure that crimes in those days would not have been more numerous still if the penalty had not been death. Men say that they would fear life imprisonment worse than death. But it is found that the condemned murderer almost always takes every possible step to secure a reprieve. It is urged that the death penalty causes much unhealthy journalistic activity. But so does cricket.

Here are most of the arguments that might suggest themselves to the mind of one who is in favour of capital punishment. To arrange them logically we must put first things first. A doctor could not explain a cure for

measles unless he had first explained what measles is. And if measles were a result of a defect in the blood system, he would first have to explain what the blood system is. So we cannot discuss capital punishment until we have discussed the purpose of punishment. And we cannot explain the purpose of punishment without going back to that which is punished, and explaining the nature of crime. And, strictly speaking, we ought not to discuss crime until we have discussed the nature of the society whose laws are broken by the criminal. And it might be urged that we must not discuss society until we have discussed the instincts of mankind from which society has arisen. But we have not several years to write our essay in. It will be enough to go back to the point where first we can meet our opponents on common ground. Unless they are anarchists, they are likely to agree that law is good and should be maintained. So we will start by establishing our contention that crime is a voluntary and avoidable breaking of the law. Some readers will not agree, but we have been fair to them by stating their objections and meeting them with answers. We can do no more.

When we have defined crime, we must justify our contention that the State has the right to enforce the laws, and then decide whether punishment is an adequate method of enforcement, before we can try to prove that capital punishment is justifiable. So the logical arrangement of the essay will be as follows

1. Establish the responsibility of the individual.
2. Establish the right of the state to enforce laws.
3. Discuss punishment as a method of enforcement.

4. Define the crimes to which, and the criminals to whom, the death penalty should apply.
5. Discuss the effectiveness of the death penalty
   (a) as retributive ;
   (b) as remedial ;
   (c) as deterrent.
6. Conclude that, in spite of its shortcomings as a remedy, capital punishment must be retained.

The following suggestions may help you to get the best order for your ideas.

I. Make clear, as early as you can, what you really mean by the primary idea about which you are going to argue. This primary idea may be missed, as it is not always in the title of the essay. In the essay on Capital Punishment it was crime. If the reader rejects our theory that crime is a deliberate and voluntary breaking of the law, it is only fair to let him know at the outset that this is the theory on which we are working. In an essay on Boarding Schools versus Day Schools, the primary idea would be education. Is it the teaching of facts, or the training of character, or the fitting for life, or the fitting for leisure, or the building up of a healthy body, or any or all of these ? In an essay on Road versus Rail, it would be transport. Are we satisfied if necessary journeys can be made and goods delivered with safety and despatch, or do we think that the more opportunities there are to move men and things about, the better ? In an essay on Advertisement, it would be commerce. Is its object the production and exchange of essentials of the best possible quality, or the maximum of output and employment ? In an essay on Vivisection, it would be the

value of man. It irritates the reader to think that you do not know the standpoint from which he views the question, only to find on page five that you have heard of it after all.

II. If there are arguments for and against, state first those which do not convince you, and then those which do. If you state your own belief first, it is difficult to avoid this sort of thing:

1. Games should be compulsory, for the following reasons.
2. Some people object, for the following reasons.
3. But on the whole I think that they should be compulsory, for the reasons which I have given, and for a few new ones which occur to me now.

III. If you wish to establish a series of opinions about something, each of which is challenged, it is better to take each point separately, than to give all the objections and then all the answers. This saves repetition, and clumsy phrases like 'as regards the objection that stamp-collecting is a useless hobby'; 'in reply to the objection that Rugby football is dangerous, I would urge that . . .' So an essay on the value of stamp-collecting might take the following form:

The purpose of a hobby (for hobby is the primary idea).

In spite of the price of a Blue Mauritius, stamp-collecting can be inexpensive.

Though most stamps look alike to a layman it can be interesting.

Though some people merely amass stamps it can be intelligent.

IV. Avoid what is known as a 'straw man'; that is, an entirely untenable argument which nobody ever urged, and which you merely stick up for the pleasure of knocking it down again. I have known whole pages wasted in proving that it is impossible to expect a boy to work for every minute of his waking life; or in demonstrating that it is advisable to eat; or in showing how boring it would be if we had nothing whatever to do. There is no merit in merely covering a sheet of paper. Some things must be taken for granted.

Remember that if an ounce of practice is worth a pound of theory, an ounce of illustration is worth a pound of generalisation. Had Macaulay written our essay on capital punishment, he would not have written

in the days when the death penalty was inflicted for the most trivial offences,

but

when gibbets creaked at every crossroads, and a child of twelve was hanged for stealing an apple.

So when you have written a sentence full of abstract ideas, such as 'the designs on some postage stamps are of considerable artistic merit,' or 'boarding schools cramp the initiative of the individual,' give an illustration or two at once to drive the point home.

The important things to remember, then, are:

1. The primary idea on which the whole of your argument depends.
2. The arrangement of the arguments from the less to the more convincing.
3. The illustration.

EXERCISES.

1. Illustrate the following generalities:

   The monotony of prison life has a bad effect upon the prisoner.
   Cricket causes much unhealthy journalistic activity.
   Advertisements often appeal to the baser emotions.
   It is possible to travel very quickly by aeroplane.
   In a boarding school it is very difficult to be alone.
   It is a mistake for the State to interfere too much with the liberty of the individual.

2. What is the primary idea whose meaning you must decide before you can write an essay on

   Professionalism in sport.
   Should games be compulsory?
   The educative value of the cinema.
   Would you rather have written Gray's 'Elegy' or captured Quebec?
   The need for an universal language.

   Write short paragraphs defining these primary ideas.

THE CRITICAL ESSAY.

A Good Book.
School Stories.
Your Favourite Poem.

In a descriptive essay you tell the reader what you like or dislike; in a critical essay you tell him why you like or dislike. The subjects are usually restricted to books and poems. A young writer is not supposed to know much about music or art or architecture.

The virtue of this kind of essay is power of analysis. I have met much of this sort of thing:

A good story is one which is interesting, one which tells a rattling good yarn, and is written in an interesting style; not

like some stories, which are very dull and boring, and told in the most uninteresting manner.

That extract is as nearly word for word as I can remember. Obviously it tells nothing except that a good book is an interesting book. Had the writer gone on to explain what books he found interesting, and why he found them interesting, this exordium would not have been entirely a waste of time, for it would have got him started. But he did not. He went on to repeat his statement with all the circumlocutions which ingenuity could suggest, and collapsed after a page and a half.

You do not need an elaborate critical vocabulary to do better than this; but only the determination to think straight, to ask yourself questions, and to test the answers by the books you know. But three necessary cautions must be repeated first.

I. Be scrupulously honest. A good book for you is the book which you enjoy, not the book which you imagine the reader will expect you to enjoy. If you try to cheat, you will soon be found out. You cannot vamp up enthusiasm for the 'sublime masterpieces of English literature' if you read and enjoy nothing but Edgar Wallace or Angela Brazil. If it is a crime to enjoy Edgar Wallace, which I deny, do not be a furtive criminal. If he really wrote rubbish, you may find it out from an analysis of your reasons for liking him.

II. It is worth while to say it again. Do not waste time giving a long list of the different books which different people enjoy. This is the resource of the

dullard who despairs of filling a few pages by thinking for himself.

III. Never lose sight of the actual books which you have read. If I had to write an essay on School Stories, I would start by writing on a piece of paper :

Farrar's *Eric*,
Reed's *Cock House at Felsgarth*,
Kipling's *Stalky & Co.*,
Lunn's *The Harrovians*,
Coke's *Bending of a Twig*,
Vachell's *The Hill*,
Turley's *Godfrey Marten*,
Philpotts' *Human Boy*,
Hughes' *Tom Brown*,
Heywood's *Decent Fellows*,
Maclaren's *Young Barbarians*,
Wodehouse's *Mike*,

which are all different. I think some of them good and some of them bad. But I would try not to lose sight of any of them. If I came to a conclusion which seemed to prove that *Eric* was good and that *Godfrey Marten* was bad, or that *The Hill* was a greater book than *Mike*, I would hastily revise it.

Illustrate what you try to prove from your books. The last essay given me on detective stories contained, in fifteen hundred words, only one reference to an author, and none to a book.

How then do you decide what a good school story is ?

Take a bad one to begin with. There is a type of school story, usually sold for threepence, in which the French master is a German spy, and the Science master an American gangster fleeing from justice ; and the

bully is hand in glove with dope smugglers, and the nervous new boy is the unrecognised heir to a fortune, and is rescued from kidnappers by the head prefect in a racing aeroplane; and the head master is mistaken for the hero by some skylarking louts in the Lower Fifth, who drop a pot of tar over his head; and so on.

If you feel that this is bad because it is improbable, you have a start for your analysis. Take the working hypothesis that a good school story must be true to life. Divide the book into plot, characters, and language, for instance, and you will find that you have plenty to say.

I. *The Plot.*

Can you imagine a school story with a plot which was strictly true to life, which, in a million words or so, started at daybreak, and washed and dressed and fed the boys, and plodded through everything that was said and done in every lesson, and adjourned to the playing field, and described every pass and kick and scrum in a game of football, and detailed all the conversations at tea, and went on indefatigably till bedtime?

Obviously, then, the writer must select. And from the activities of school life he will usually select episodes introducing the four important things which make up school life: work, play, companions, and authority. And since the actions selected are to be representative, they must be slightly larger and more coloured than those which are found in the average school life. The success which you personally achieve at cricket, for instance, would probably not be representative. Many boys would surpass it in fact, and

every boy would surpass it in desire. So, however much it thrilled you, it would not thrill the reader ; and since the thrill is one of the most important parts of it, it would fail. So the hero is allowed to make a brilliant century. And if a master is to be ragged, it must not be by the threadbare expedients of the average boy, but by something more glamorous. It would never do for the reader to think that he could do better than that himself. As soon as he thinks that, the book begins to fail.

So we must amend our hypothesis, and allow the writer to colour his facts a little. And besides this artistic exaggeration, there is the exaggeration of the cynic or the reformer who wants to make sure that you do not miss his contention that games are a fetish, or that the school curriculum is unimaginative ; and the exaggeration of the caricaturist which comes from sheer exuberance. And the bad writer will exploit this licence out of all bounds, and make his hero hit fourteen sixes running, or steal the head master's trousers on Speech Day. If you use the canon of truth to life intelligently, you will find that you can give a reason for liking or disliking the plot of a book which will compel attention. You may be mistaken ; but you are not expected to be right, but to be honest.

II. *The Characters.*

Since the reactions of every boy to these four cardinal things would take too long to illustrate, the author will make his story revolve round the activities of very few boys at the most, and often of only one. It may be any type of boy ; and the reaction may be

constant throughout the book, or may be modified by the environment, or may even modify the environment. The old-fashioned, unsophisticated, wholesome type of story, of which Talbot Baines Reed wrote many honourable examples, shows good boys, and bad boys, and rudimentary boys ; and their characters are usually fixed. The good boys like work, like games, like other boys, and respect authority. When they are not dropping goals, and winning scholarships, they are helping lame dogs over stiles, and taking tea with 'the Doctor.' The bad boys crib in examinations, funk at football, bully, and break bounds. The rudimentary boys are lazy and mischievous, but attractive ; and they will all grow up into good boys. The heroes of *Stalky & Co.* apparently scorn work, games, all other boys than themselves, and all authority except that of the Head and the Chaplain, whom for some reason they respect. Mike is gently tolerant of work, very fond of games, very good-natured, and on the whole decently subordinate. The hero of *The Harrovians* hates games, is a determined worker, is content with unpopularity, and loyal to the right and defiant of the wrong authority ; and he conquers his environment. The hero of *The Bending of a Twig* grows from a timid little egotist into an intelligent and understanding prefect, and is moulded by his environment. The hero of *Decent Fellows* deteriorates from a decent fellow with plenty of ideals and enthusiasms to a pretentious failure, and is beaten by his environment.

And the characters, like the plot, are slightly more coloured than life. You must try to distinguish between

the exaggerations of artistry, of caricature, of propaganda, and of mere clumsiness. To my mind the good boy Redwood in *Tom, Dick, and Harry* is credible; the good boy Arthur in *Tom Brown* is just possible; and the good boy Russell in *Eric* is wholly inconceivable; or the incredible Stalky is a little irritating; while the equally incredible Psmith in *Mike* can be swallowed whole.

III. *The Language.*

The language, too, must be slightly coloured, especially the dialogue; for our ordinary conversations, literally taken down, would not be vivid enough to stand as representative. And for the same reasons as before, one author may exaggerate more than another, and may sometimes go too far. What is your opinion of the following extracts?

Mr. Gordon's face grew blacker and blacker. The deep undisguised pain which the discovery caused him was swallowed up in unbounded indignation. 'False-hearted, dishonourable boys,' he exclaimed, 'henceforth my treatment of you shall be very different. The whole form, except Russell and Owen, shall have an extra lesson every half-holiday; not one of the rest of you will I trust again. I took you for gentlemen. I was mistaken. Go.' And so saying, he motioned them to their seats with imperious disdain. *Eric.*

Well, listen to your Uncle Stalky—who is a Great Man. Moreover and subsequently, Foxy's goin' to let us drill the corps in turn—*privatim et seriatim*—so that we'll all know how to handle a half company anyhow. *Ergo*, an' *propter hoc*, when we go to the Shop we shall be dismissed drill early; thus, my beloved 'earers, combinin' education with wholesome amusement. *Stalky & Co.*

It's not footer I loathe. Footer's a good enough game if it's decently run. But why should I be expected to like a game in which I never get a chance; in which I get run off my legs from beginnin' to end; in which I'm barged over by some hefty brute twice my size, when I do get near the ball; in which I'm cursed at whenever I touch the ball, and cursed at whenever I miss the ball; in which I get whopped for slacking when I've simply sweated—why the hell should I like it?

The Harrovians.

You should now be able to get beyond 'interesting' and 'boring' in discussing a school story. As you see, there are two main questions to ask:

1. What is the author trying to tell us? The reactions of what sort of boy to what?

2. Does he succeed in telling it, or is his method spoilt by over-cleverness, or stupidity, or an undue love of propaganda?

Your liking or dislike for the book will depend upon whether you are interested in what he is trying to tell, and satisfied with his method of telling it.

II. *The Poem.*

Analysis will again take you straight from generalisation to concreteness. Ask the questions: what does the poet tell us, and how does he tell it?

I. *The Subject.*

The difference between poetry and prose is usually said to be that poetry has an inspiration, or passion, or imagination, or enthusiasm, which prose has not. The four abstract words all mean the same thing; that

while prose gives the facts, poetry gives the facts coloured by emotion. The poet tries to make us feel that something which is happening or has happened, some scene or some action or some state of mind, is beautiful or noble or joyful; or ugly or ignoble or sad.

The Etruscan army was delayed by Horatius, who, with two comrades, held the bridge-head while the bridge was being destroyed, and then swam back to the Roman army,

is a statement of fact. But Macaulay's Lay of Horatius colours the fact with emotion. He tries to make us feel, and succeeds in making us feel, that Horatius' conduct was noble. So the true subject of the lay is not an episode in a war between Rome and Tuscany, but the glory of fighting in your country's defence.

> And how can man die better
> Than facing fearful odds,
> For the ashes of his fathers
> And the temples of his gods?

So Chesterton tries to make us feel that Lepanto was a glorious victory; Southey in *After Blenheim* that war is a muddle-headed business; Wordsworth in *Alice Fell* that an orphan's lot is an unenviable one.

Some facts, but not many, are unsuitable for poetical treatment. The discovery that if $17x = 51$, then $x = 3$ cannot be made into a poem, because it is impossible to feel any emotion about it. But almost anything except scientific fact is capable of being shown to be beautiful or ugly, or noble, or base. Some poets set themselves what seems the easy task of showing that a spring day is beautiful, or mother-love noble, or death sad. But it is not an easy task to invest the obvious

with fresh glamour, and they may fail badly. Wordsworth, for instance, fails very badly in *Alice Fell*. Other poets shun the obvious, and lead us down strange and exciting byways of emotion. Browning makes our flesh creep with a picture of petty jealousy in the *Spanish Cloister*, or with the topsy-turvy logic of a madman in *Porphyria's Lover*.

The poet does not tell us that this or that is glorious or ignoble, but makes us feel it. This needs a far more subtle skill, and there are very many varieties of method.

II. *The Method.*

(a) The Metre.

It should be obvious now that metre does not make poetry.

> The sun was bright, the sky was blue,
> The trees were tall and green;
> On every branch a singing bird
> Was heard, and sometimes seen,

scans and rhymes perfectly, but it is not poetry unless I have made you feel that this particular scene was worth looking at. I probably have not. Metre is not even essential to poetry. A large part of the Authorised Version of the Bible is poetry. There is much so-called poetic prose, too, in which the writer is conveying emotions as well as facts. And some modern poets have dispensed with metre, because they feel that the exigencies of metre sometimes distort the message, and that its lilt sometimes introduces emotions which they do not want there. But most poets have been glad to avail themselves of the emotional effect of the fixed beat of metre.

The metre must suit the subject. There is a great variety to choose from, some fast, some slow, some dignified, some breathless; and a great variety of rhyme pattern, from the simplicity of the ballad metre to the complication of the Spenserian stanza or the Italian sonnet. You would not write an *Ode to Death* in the metre of *Hey Diddle Diddle*, or a comic poem in Miltonic blank verse.

(b) The Words.

There are many ways of making words appealing. Wordsworth usually relies on simplicity;

> But she is in her grave, and oh
> The difference to me.
>
> *Lucy.*

Tennyson on dignified decoration and music;

> No nightingale delighteth to prolong
> Her low preamble all alone,
> More than my soul to hear her echo'd song
> Throb through the ribbed stone.
>
> *Palace of Art.*

Swinburne on fire and speed and alliteration;

> Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,
> And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of unspeakable things,
> White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled,
> Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.
>
> *Hymn to Prosperine.*

Browning on the unusual and the grotesque;

> As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
> In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
> Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
> One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
> Stood stupefied, however he came there,
> Thrust out past service from the devil's stud.
>
> *Childe Roland.*

Some modern poets on shock tactics;

> A wail.
> Lights. Blur.
> Gone.
> On, on. Lead. Lead. Hail.
> Spatter. Whirr! Whirr!
> 'Towards that patch of brown;
> Direction left.' Bullets a stream.
> Devouring thought crying in a dream.
> Men crumpled going down
> Go on. Go.
>
> Robert Nichols, *The Assault.*

Shakespeare on every device known to man.

This is not all that makes up a poem. In the greatest poems there is a power of emotional appeal which defies analysis. We cannot discover the secret of the white heat at which they were written. We can only say that the poet feels intensely, and makes us share some of his feelings.

Here, then, are some of the questions which you must ask yourself before you can criticise a poem:

What is the poet trying to tell you?

If you have been told it before, does he give you a fresh glimpse of its truth, or do you feel that you have wasted your time?

If it is new to you, was it worth telling? Do you feel like saying 'how silly' when you are meant to say 'how strange'? Do you believe it? Do you think the poet believes it? If not, why does he say it? Purely convention, or hypocrisy, or the desire to impress?

Does the metre suit the poem? Or would you have preferred something brisker or slower, or simpler or more elaborate? Does the poet handle the metre smoothly, or are you conscious of a jolting rhythm? Do you get tired of the metre? Can you say why? If there is rhyme, has the necessity for rhyme produced any unnatural phrases?

What are the chief characteristics of the language? Are there any tricks which would be easy to imitate? Are there any phrases which strike you as very good, or very bad? Can you say why?

If the author is not given, are you prepared to guess at him? If he is given, does it seem a characteristic piece of work?

What is the temperature of the poem? Is it lukewarm, or red-hot, or white-hot? (I am not suggesting that you should incorporate these phrases into your vocabulary as a critic, but that if the poem has made a profound effect upon you, this effect may be impossible to analyse. But you will not be fair to the poet if you do not acknowledge it).

There are two cautions:

(i.) Do not be ashamed of admiring. No doubt some people are tone-deaf, and some poems are not very intelligible to the young. But criticisms of poetry by boys, at any rate, seldom err on the generous side. 'Not bad' or 'fairly interesting' is all the tribute they are willing to pay to a masterpiece.

(ii.) On the other hand, do not assume that the poem must be good if it is there to be criticised. I

once hunted out some dreadful doggerel by Eliza Cook, and over half the class were most dutiful in admiring it, for widely divergent and incompatible reasons.

EXERCISES.

1. John Brown, a railway porter, kills George Jones, a station-master, with an invisible death-ray, and robs him of a five pound note. His guilt is discovered when he tries to change the note.
   For how many reasons would you judge this to be a good or a bad plot for a detective story?

2. What types of detective are used in detective fiction?

3. Do you know any school stories in which other influences besides those of work, play, companions, and authority are brought to bear upon the characters?

4. Why do you like or dislike adventure stories? Do you prefer
   the pirate—desert island type;
   the cowboy—distressed damsel type;
   the secret service—super-submarine type;
   the Tarzan type?
   Can you give reasons for your preference?

5. What other types have you met?

6. If you were to write a very long and serious story poem, what metre would you choose? Why?

7. What is the poet trying to tell in any four poems with which you are familiar?

THE IMAGINATIVE ESSAY.

Imagination cannot be taught. I can only give a few warnings and hints. The method will depend upon the kind of subject.

I. *The Imaginary Conversation.*

Give an account of a conversation between Shakespeare and Nelson.

This sort of thing used to be a favourite subject with examiners, but they are realising its unfairness, and it is dying out. It is far beyond the powers of any young writer. But if you are unlucky enough to meet a specimen, you must find a subject for which the two worthies have a common enthusiasm. The following will not do at all:

Nelson. Good morning, Shakespeare. I have just been fighting the battle of the Nile. The French fleet lay

Shakespeare. How perfectly wonderful. I have just been writing a play called 'Hamlet.' A certain Claudius, King of Denmark

Nelson. Dear me, how delightful. And now shall we go to lunch?

Shakespeare and Nelson might meet on their common love for England. They would both have hard words to say of the French, and both would appreciate the loyalty of the plain man who stood by Henry at Agincourt and by Nelson at the Nile. Shakespeare would know a little about fighting and sea-power, but Nelson nothing about drama.

Julius Cæsar might talk to Gibbon about methods of writing history and about the downfall of Rome. Socrates and Pitt could discuss democracy. When the two have nothing in common that you can discover, one must give way to the other. Alexander could tell

Keats what the wastes of Asia looked like, and what his battles really felt like. He would not want to be repaid by a recitation of the *Ode to a Grecian Urn.*

II. *Imagination Pure and Simple.*

LIFE ON MARS.

IF I WERE A MILLIONAIRE.

IF I WERE INVISIBLE.

This is much easier, and little advice is needed.

(i.) Get down to details. Do not write 'If I were a millionaire, I would buy an expensive car. I would have all sorts of delightful things to eat.' What sort of car? What things to eat?

(ii.) Do not plagiarise. Jules Verne and H. G. Wells have already covered most of the ground; but it will be more interesting to use your imagination than to purloin theirs.

(iii.) Try to frame some big central scheme into which all the details will fit. There are two ways, for instance, of describing life on Mars. One is to ramble from point to point, bringing in startling details.

> The inhabitants of Mars average twenty-seven feet in height. They are of phenomenal strength. They keep elephants as pets, and lead them about on ropes a foot thick. They have only one meal a month. They have eyes in the back of the head

The other way is to lay down some condition unknown on earth, and frame their lives to obey it. You might imagine that they have achieved perfect

happiness, and describe the Utopia which they have built. Or you might assume that some climatic condition had made them all blind, or that intense cold made the surface of their world uninhabitable, or that their earth was liquid instead of solid, and try to adapt them to this environment. An essay on 'If I were Invisible' was set to a form. The more thoughtless boys did little beyond describing the practical jokes which they would play. The more thoughtful realised that their whole lives would be changed, and tried to frame a life which would be tolerable, asking such questions as 'how would I live, at what would I work, what good could I do, how would I spend my leisure?'

III. *Proverbial Moralisings.*

PROCRASTINATION.

Crabbed Age and Youth cannot live together.

I have classed these under Imaginative Essays because I presume that that is what the examiner wants. He should not want a sermon. He cannot need a lesson in ethics from his juniors.

Procrastination is a vice which may enter into any department of life. Work which is put off is either neglected, or performed in a hurried and perfunctory manner. Many a promising scheme has been wrecked by the procrastination of the directing officials. It is our duty during youth to form habits of regular industry which will serve us well in the battle of life. 'Never put off till to-morrow what can be done to-day' is a motto which we should do well to take to heart.

It is inconceivable that anyone would want to read that. This kind of essay is not set to see whether you

have been well brought up, but to see whether you have imagination enough to breathe life into a platitude. Your task is that of the poet. We are not moved by being told that procrastination is a vice, or that the old and the young have great difficulty in understanding each other; for we have heard it very often before. It is your task to make us feel its truth once more. There are various ways of doing this.

(i.) It is tempting to take it straight into the concrete by writing a story about a boy who procrastinated, or a grandmother and granddaughter between whom there was constant friction. But the technique of a story is hard to acquire. The incidents which you select as representative must keep to the narrow path between the trivial and namby-pamby on one hand, and the garish and sensational on the other. The boy who neglected to feed his tame rabbit until the poor beast was discovered dead in its cage, or the man who would not buy a wireless licence until he was pounced upon by the B.B.C., will but provoke amusement. The dreadful tale of the man who put off repairing the brakes of his car, until he had caused the death of his wife and all his children, is only suitable for a penny newspaper.

(ii.) You might quote historical instances of men who have procrastinated, or of times in which youth has revolted from age. Monmouth's rising might have been successful had he struck sooner. Mark Antony perhaps lost his chance of world dominion by loitering in Egypt. You may find that quite a number of people might have won battles, if that is worth doing, by

striking sooner. And, if we are to believe the newspapers, modern youth is in a state of passionate revolt from the conventions of its parents, who twenty years ago fought the battle of emancipation against their parents, and so on up the ages. The danger of the first is that you will be giving judgments and opinions at second-hand; and since your reading is not extensive and your touch will probably not be light, you will parade once more before the reader's wearied eyes those poor puppets who are not allowed to rest in their graves, but are doomed to serve as warnings and examples to point a threadbare moral, Alfred and the cakes, Canute on the sea shore, Napoleon on St. Helena, Wolsey on his death-bed. And the danger of the second is that you may be doing what you can to perpetuate some of the nonsense which is served out daily to people who have been taught to read, but have not been taught to think.

(iii.) It is far safer to fall back upon your own experience, and describe how the habit of procrastination hampers you, or how you fail to get on with your grandmother. But do not start pointing morals, or exhorting the reader to go and do likewise.

Of course you are not bound to agree with what are apparently the views of the examiner. It may be your experience that crabbed age and youth get on very well together, and you have every right to say so. It may be your opinion that some of the opportunist solutions which the twentieth century applies to every problem might have been improved by a little procrastination; or you may feel, with the cynic, that

if you put off the answering of letters long enough they answer themselves. Sincerity is the test. Write what you believe to be true.

Some people are clever enough to break this rule, and to write brilliant paradoxical *tours de force* to prove that matricide is a virtue, and chronic drunkenness the height of bliss. But it is unlikely that you are one of them.

APPENDIX.

Four Popular Superstitions.

I. *That we must not use the First Personal Pronoun.*

It is true that 'I' is sometimes used unnecessarily, as in the tiresome 'I think that.' But if I am describing what happens to me alone, 'I' is properly used.

On half holidays in summer I go for a walk, whenever I can escape cricket.

If I am describing an experience which I share with most other people, 'we' is better than 'I.'

As we grow up, we leave the toys of childhood behind us.

To use 'you,'

As you grow up, you leave the toys of childhood behind you

is to take a liberty with the reader. I have no right to make statements about him unless he has asked for my advice or criticism. To use 'one,'

As one grows up, one leaves the toys of childhood behind one

is an affectation which is difficult to keep up. 'One' usually lapses into 'he' or 'we' or 'you' or 'they' before the sentence is finished. Unskilled writers, anxious to avoid 'I' and 'we,' sometimes use the cumbersome 'a person.'

Suppose a person goes for a walk and loses his or her way.

This breaks the rule of 'the shorter the better.'

II. *That we must not use a Preposition to end a sentence with.*

It is true that 'with' in this sentence is illogical. It cannot be a preposition, for by its name a preposition is that which is 'put in front of' something else. And it cannot be an adverb, for it does not modify the verb 'end.' But it is a convenient idiom which is neither ugly nor unintelligible. As H. W. Fowler remarks in his invaluable *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*,

> The power of saying 'People worth talking to' instead of 'People with whom it is worth while to talk' is not one to be lightly surrendered.

III. *That we must not begin a sentence with 'But' or 'And.'*

It is true that nobody should write

> The dog was eating. And the cat was watching him;

or

> The dog was eating. But the cat was asleep;

since the two ideas are connected or contrasted, and should be included in one sentence. But we begin a sentence with 'but' when after stating one side of the case we turn to the other. And we begin a sentence with 'and' when we are reinforcing a statement with another which will not readily combine or contrast with it.

IV. *That we must never split an Infinitive.*

Some people seem to imagine that 'to be utterly lost,' or even 'I have utterly lost,' or 'I am utterly

lost,' is a split infinitive. This is of course an illusion. The split infinitive usually sounds ugly, especially if several words are inserted between the 'to' and the verb, as in

We must try to as far as possible grasp the situation.

But it is difficult to find an English author who does not sometimes split an infinitive; and sometimes there seems little harm in it. 'The men are declared to strongly favour a strike' seems at least as good as 'to favour strongly a strike' or 'to favour a strike strongly'; while 'the men are declared strongly to favour a strike' is ambiguous.