ought to be tinctured by the thoughts and feelings: now rapid, now slow; now solemn, now familiar, etc. One of the clearest signs of a depraved taste is the absence of such harmony between the scene presented and the style in which it is narrated. This want of taste is very noticeable in Froude's narration of the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. On the other hand, no one can help feeling how much the narration of the same sad event is set off to advantage by Robertson, Miss Agnes Strickland, and Dr. Lingard.

To accustom students to narrate in an orderly manner the following exercises may be of use:

376. **1st Exercise,** by *analysis:* After reading the history of Joseph and his brothers, mention briefly in the order of their occurrence the facts connected, 1. With the sale of Joseph to the Egyptian merchants; 2. With his elevation to power; 3. With the recognition of him by his brothers. This kind of analysis can be applied to any narration

377. **2d Exercise,** by *observation:*

Mention briefly the various stages, 1. In the growth of corn, from the seed to the ripe ear; 2. In the growth of a peach-tree, from the planting of a peach-stone to the decay of the tree; 3. In the rising and development of a summer storm; 4. In the transition from autumn to winter, and from winter to spring.

378. **3d Exercise.**—Point out *defects* in the following order of facts. Landing of Columbus: (*a*) signs of land appeared at last; (*b*) there had been a mutiny on board the vessel; (*c*) great joy of the sailors; (*d*) Indians stood wondering on the shore; (*e*) it was Easter day; (*f*) Columbus planted the standard of Spain; (*g*) he landed with several companions; (*h*) the Indians took them for visitors from heaven.

379. **4th Exercise,** *criticism:*

Read a narration and point out in it how the rules are observed or are violated. Consider chiefly these points: 1. Is there unity? 2. Is anything superfluous? 3. Is everything in its proper place? 4. Is it easy to follow the narrative? 5. Does everything appear natural? 6. Are the reasons of every act apparent? 7. Are the essential scenes clearly described? 8. Is any important item omitted?

Note 1.—It must be remembered that unity is not secured by the fact that the narration is limited to the events of a day, a year, etc.; there must be a leading event developed throughout.

Note 2.—Complex narration will occur in tracing one effect to various causes—*e.g.*, the American Revolution—or the various effects of one common cause.

380. **5th Exercise.**—*Narrate* the change that has come over the world through the inventions of printing, of steam-power, or of the telegraph.

Unity in these complex narrations is secured by keeping the one cause or the one effect continually before the reader's mind.

CHAPTER IV.

DESCRIPTION.

381. We mean by a **description** the delineation of some object or scene. Narration deals with successive facts; description with objects that exist at the same time. We rarely find any literary production of great length which is entirely descriptive; but descriptions are often introduced into narratives with happy effect. Sometimes they serve the purpose of making the narration impressive, by moving the passions of the reader. At other times they are intended to make the events more intelligible. Thus we have seen that some narratives of battles are hard to follow because the writer has neglected to give us a clear description of the battle-field. Descriptions frequently serve as ornaments, affording an agreeable variety to the narration, and presenting scenes of striking interest to the imagination.

We shall divide this chapter so as to treat, first, of the description of things; secondly, of the description of persons or characters.

Article I. Description of Things.

382. *Rule* 1.—In all cases the description should be **of a piece with the rest** of the composition, and not look like a purple patch sewed on a common garment.

383. *Rule* 2.—Descriptive passages must have a natural **connection** with the main subject, or be properly introduced.

384. To acquire skill in description it is necessary to form a **habit of close observation,** to study natural objects and the various characters of men. The exercises laid down in a preceding chapter on Object-Lessons are a useful preparation for descriptive compositions.

385. We have already remarked, when treating of narrations, that **brief descriptions** are constantly blended with them to great advantage, making them vivid and impressive. But **long descriptions** are not of very frequent occurrence, because they labor under serious difficulties; the study of these difficulties and of the ways to overcome them will suggest the chief precepts for the management of descriptions.

386. **I. The first difficulty** is that it is impossible to express in words all that the eye would take in if the scene were actually witnessed.

This difficulty is obviated by making a judicious **choice of the salient features** of the scene. For, in reality, when we behold a landscape, for example, the mind does not pay attention to all the particulars presented to the eye; it notices distinctly a few striking points, and sees the rest vaguely or not at all. Hence we learn that the great art of description, as of painting and drawing, consists chiefly in the skilful selection of those very items which the eye would rest on if the whole scene were present. We may apply to description what Macaulay remarks of history:

> "No history and no picture can present us with the whole truth; but those are the best pictures and the best histories which exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole. . . . An outline scrawled with a pen which seizes the marked features of a countenance will give a much stronger idea of it than a bad painting in oils. Yet the worst painting in oils that ever hung in Somerset House resembles the original in many more particulars."—*Essays, History.*

Though Macaulay's practical use of this principle is not always defensible, the principle itself is universally acknowledged

387. Another point of comparison between history and painting is likewise applicable to description:

"History has its foreground and its background, and it is principally in the management of its perspective that one artist differs from another. Some events must be represented on a large scale, others diminished; the great majority will be lost in the dimness of the horizon, and a general idea of their joint effect will be given by a few slight touches."—*Id.*

So in description a few objects will be **fully dwelt upon,** others **briefly pointed out,** and the rest will be suggested by some general terms.

388. We quote as an **example** of this process a passage of Washington Irving's *Sketch-Book* in which he describes his first landing in England:

"It was a fine sunny morning when the thrilling cry of 'Land!' was given from the masthead. None but those who have experienced it can form an idea of the delicious throng of sensations which rush into an American's bosom when he first comes in sight of Europe. There is a volume of associations with the very name. It is the land of promise, teeming with everything of which his childhood has heard or on which his studious years have pondered.

"From that time until the moment of arrival it was all feverish excitement. The ships-of-war that prowled like guardian giants along the coast, the headlands of Ireland stretching out into the Channel, the Welsh mountains towering into the clouds—all were objects of intense interest. As we sailed up the Mersey I reconnoitred the shores with a telescope. My eye dwelt with delight on neat cottages with their trim shrubberies and green grass-plots. I saw the mouldering ruin of an abbey overrun with ivy, and the taper spire of a village church rising from the brow of a neighboring hill. All were characteristic of England.

"The tide and wind were so favorable that the ship was enabled

to come at once to the pier. It was thronged with people, some idle lookers-on, others eager expectants of friends or relatives. I could distinguish the merchant to whom the ship was consigned; I knew him by his calculating brow and restless air. His hands were thrust into his pockets; he was whistling thoughtfully, and walking to and fro, a small space having been accorded him by the crowd in deference to his temporary importance. There were repeated cheerings and salutations interchanged between the shore and the ship as friends happened to recognize each other.

"All was now hurry and bustle—the meetings of acquaintances, the greetings of friends, the consultations of men of business I alone was solitary and idle. I had no friend to meet, no cheering to receive. I stepped upon the land of my forefathers, but felt that I was a stranger in the land"

389. The same happy selection of circumstances may be noticed in his description of a poor man's funeral in the sketch entitled "The Widow and her Son," and in the following pen-picture by Longfellow:

"The first snow came. How beautiful it was, falling so silently all day long, all night long, on the mountains, on the meadows, on the roofs of the living, on the graves of the dead! All white save the river, that marked its course by a winding black line across the landscape; and the leafless trees, that against the leaden sky now revealed more fully the wonderful beauty and intricacies of their branches. What silence, too, came with the snow, and what seclusion! Every sound was muffled, every noise changed to something soft and musical. No more tramping hoofs, no more rattling wheels! Only the chiming sleigh-bells, beating as swift and merrily as the hearts of children."

390. **II. The second difficulty** arises from the fact that a description, unlike a painting, can present only one feature at a time. To realize the whole scene the reader must exert himself and group the various features in his imagination. Now, ordinary readers are not apt to take so much trouble, unless they feel an unusual interest in the

scene presented; they soon fail to follow the guidance of the writer, the scene becomes confused, and all effort to follow the description is abandoned.

391. **One means of removing** this inconvenience is never to attempt a long description, except when sufficient attention has been aroused, either by the importance of the matter itself or by some special sympathy or curiosity awakened in the reader. The main points, then, to be studied in this connection are:

1. To see by what process we can arouse the reader's attention; and especially,

2. To study how we can lessen the strain on his imagination.

392. 1. **To arouse attention** we may show the importance of conceiving the scene distinctly; we may also enlist the feelings of the reader in our subject. Nothing is more conducive to attention than a deep interest felt in the objects described. Whatever will inspire sympathy, love, affection, or any of the gentler emotions or stronger passions, will quicken the imagination to realize the scene described. We may instance the lengthy description of Westminster Abbey in Irving's *Sketch-Book*. The reflections introduced at every step sustain the attention amid scenes which it is difficult to delineate in a striking manner. Instead of such reflections as Irving introduces in that description, we may keep the reader's sympathies enlisted in a subject by viewing it in connection with one of the persons or characters in whom special interest is felt. Thus Irving describes the scene at the landing of Columbus as seen by that hero; and Abbott, the various phases of the battle of Waterloo as observed by Napoleon. Thus, too, Homer describes the chief Grecian heroes through the lips of Helen, who points them out to Priam from the top of the Trojan walls.

393. 2. **To lessen the exertion** required of the reader's imagination several means may be suggested:

(*a*) Place the reader in a **favorable position** to observe the whole scene.

394. (*b*) **Begin with a striking feature,** or with a view of the general outline, and proceed next to fill up the scene in an orderly manner. Both these rules are well exemplified in this extract from Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* (vol. ii. b. iii. c. 6):

"Nothing could be more grand than the view which met the eye from the area on the truncated summit of the pyramid. Toward the west stretched that bold barrier of porphyritic rock which nature has reared around the Valley of Mexico, with the huge Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl standing like two colossal sentinels to guard the entrance to the enchanted region. Far away to the east was seen the conical head of Orizaba soaring high into the clouds, and nearer the barren though beautifully-shaped Sierra de Malinche throwing its broad shadows over the plains of Tlascala. Three of these are volcanoes higher than the highest mountain peak in Europe, and shrouded in snows which never melt under the fierce sun of the tropics. At the foot of the spectator lay the sacred city of Cholula, with its bright towers and pinnacles sparkling in the sun, reposing amidst gardens and verdant groves, which then thickly studded the cultivated environs of the capital. Such was the magnificent prospect which met the gaze of the conquerors, and may still, with slight change, meet that of the modern traveller, as from the platform of the great pyramid his eye wanders over the fairest portion of the beautiful plateau of Puebla."

395. (*c*) Use all the **ornaments of style** that may please the imagination; as Irving does in this description of a farm-yard:

"A great elm-tree spread its broad branches over it, at the foot of which bubbled up a spring of the softest and sweetest water, in a little well formed of a barrel, and then stole sparkling away through the grass to a neighboring brook that babbled along among the alders and dwarf willows. Hard by the farm house was

a vast barn that might have served for a church, every window and crevice of which seemed bursting forth with the treasures of the farm; the flail was busily resounding within it from morning to night; swallows and martins skimmed twittering about the eaves; and rows of pigeons, some with one eye turned up, as if watching the weather, some with their heads under their wings or buried in their bosoms, and others swelling and cooing and bowing about their dames, were enjoying the sunshine on the roof. Sleek, unwieldy porkers were grunting in the repose and abundance of their pens, whence sallied forth, now and then, troops of sucking pigs, as if to snuff the air. A stately squadron of snowy geese were riding in an adjoining pond, convoying whole fleets of ducks; regiments of turkeys were gobbling through the farm-yard, and guinea-fowls fretting about it, like ill-tempered house-wives, with their peevish, discontented cry. Before the barn-door strutted the gallant cock, that pattern of a husband, a warrior, and a fine gentleman, clapping his burnished wings and crowing in the pride and gladness of his heart—sometimes tearing up the earth with his feet, and then generously calling his ever-hungry family of wives and children to enjoy the rich morsel which he had discovered."

396. (*d*) Let the **rule of unity,** necessary in all compositions, be strictly observed in every description—that is, let only one object be described, or let a variety of objects be united by one leading idea into a moral whole, the embodiment of one sentiment. Thus Bancroft, in his *History of the United States* (vol. ii. p. 266, old edition), describes the site where New York was afterwards built, and gives unity to all the leading parts by means of the one dominant idea of wildness; next (p. 268) he presents the site as it is now, as an embodiment of civilization.

397. (*e*) It is a great help, where it can be done, to introduce into a long description **a connected narrative** that will unite the various parts of the scene, as when a person is made to visit successively various portions of a landscape.

398. (*f*) Sometimes we may introduce brief narratives

of **incidents** or of historical reminiscences; at other times reflections of an agreeable or elevated kind. These precepts are exemplified in numerous passages of Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*, in particular in his description of the Valley of Mexico (vol. ii. p. 68).

399. The **style** in description should be concise: every word should add light to the picture, and no useless feature should be presented to the imagination. Still, description need not be bare of ornament; on the contrary, it may be richly adorned, as we have explained (No. 395). We add one instance in point from the pen of Fenimore Cooper, "Venice at Night":

"The moon was at the height. Its rays fell in a flood on the swelling domes and massive roofs of Venice, while the margin of the town was brilliantly defined by the glittering bay. The natural and gorgeous setting was more than worthy of that picture of human magnificence; for at that moment, rich as was the Queen of the Adriatic in her works of art, the grandeur of her public monuments, the number and splendor of her palaces, and most else that the ingenuity and ambition of man could attempt, she was but secondary in the glories of the hour.

"Above was the firmament gemmed with worlds and sublime in immensity. Beneath lay the broad expanse of the Adriatic, endless to the eye, tranquil as the vault it reflected, and luminous with its borrowed light. Here and there a low island, reclaimed from the sea by the patient toil of a thousand years, dotted the lagunes, burdened by the group of some conventual dwellings, or picturesque with the modest roofs of a hamlet of the fishermen. Neither oar, nor song, nor laugh, nor flap of sail, nor jest of mariner disturbed the stillness. All in the near view was clothed in midnight loveliness, and all in the distance bespoke the solemnity of nature at peace. The city and the lagunes, the gulf and the dreamy Alps, the interminable plain of Lombardy and the blue void of heaven, lay alike in a common and grand repose."

400. **1st Exercise.**—Analyze various model passages of the best authors, noticing:

1. What object or aim the author wishes to attain ;
2. What features he has selected for distinct treatment, what others for a brief sketch ;
3. How he starts out ;
4. What order he follows in the development ;
5. What sentiments he has introduced ;
6. What special artifices he has used to excite interest, or to enable the reader to follow him with ease.
7. How naturally the description is introduced, and how naturally it is laid aside to return to the narration.

401. **2d Exercise.**—Compare the descriptions of the same or of analogous subjects as drawn by various great writers, noticing how the style will differ with the general aspect of their works. For instance, compare the Pestilence in Athens, by Thucydides (book ii.), with the London Pestilence of A.D. 1665 as described by Lingard (vol. vii. pp. 278–282), by De Foe (Chambers' *Cyclopædia of Literature*, vol. i. p. 621), by Armstrong (*id.* ii. p. 69).

402. **The study of description** is one of the best means of improving the style of narrations, and, in fact, of all literary compositions. It is to his remarkable descriptive power that Prescott, for instance, owes that special charm which makes him so popular among all classes of readers, so that children, who find unadorned history too dry for their taste, will pore over his pictured page as they would over a touching story. As one more specimen of the descriptive style of this author we will refer to the crossing of the Sierra (vol. ii. pp. 461–465).

403. **3d Exercise.**—Mention briefly the items you would select to describe a city, a village, river, picnic-ground, country—putting all the items in good order.

404. **4th Exercise.**—Point out the faults against order in this sketch, a description of a room :

1. The room is nearly square.
2. It is dark and unattractive, having but two small windows on the east side.
3. It is twenty-four feet long and twenty-two feet wide.
4. It is in the southeast corner of the building.
5. It is a low room, the ceiling being only nine feet from the floor.
6. It has a recess on the west side.
7. The walls are plastered.

405. **5th Exercise.**—Describe a pleasant scene in spring, a busy scene in a city, a pompous funeral, a scene of devotion in a church, a scene of distress, one of lively enjoyment, one of solemn grandeur.

Article II. Descriptions of Characters.

406. We mean by **descriptions of characters** the pointing-out of those peculiarities by which certain persons are distinguished from the generality of men. Such compositions are far less in use than descriptions of things ; but they are occasionally very appropriate in historical or fictitious works, and as beautiful, when skilfully drawn, as they are difficult to compose.

407. "The drawing of characters," says Blair, "is one of the most splendid and, at the same time, **one of the most difficult ornaments of historical composition.** For characters are generally considered as professed exhibitions of fine writing; and an historian who seeks to shine in them is frequently in danger of carrying refinement to excess from a desire of appearing very profound and penetrating. He brings together so many contrasts and subtile oppositions of qualities that we are rather dazzled with sparkling expressions than entertained with any clear conception of a human charac-

ter. A writer who would characterize in an instructive and masterly manner should be simple in his style and should avoid all quaintness and affectation; at the same time not contenting himself with giving us general outlines only, but descending into those peculiarities which mark a character in its most strong and distinctive features." —*Blair*, Lect. xxxvi.

408. There are **two kinds** of these descriptions: one depicts *general* and one *individual* characters. The latter describes a real or imaginary person by a multiplicity of traits; the former presents one trait only, common to a whole class of men. The former usually occurs in the course of histories, biographies, or novels; of the latter kind Theophrastus among the ancients has left us some good specimens. Marshall, in his *Comedy of Convocation*, gives us some general characters as elegant as they are unpretending. See also "The Bashful Man" (*Models of English Lit.*, p. 59).

409. One of the most admired descriptions of **individual character** is that of the great Carthaginian general Hannibal, which occurs in the twenty-first book of Livy's history of Rome; another, that of Catiline in Sallust's history of that depraved Roman (n. 5). The following by Walter Scott is distinct and truthful:

"**Robespierre** possessed this advantage over Danton, that he did not seem to seek for wealth, either for hoarding or expending, but lived in strict and economical retirement, to justify the name of the 'Incorruptible' with which he was honored by his partisans. He appears to have possessed little talent, saving a deep fund of hypocrisy, considerable powers of sophistry, and a cold, exaggerated strain of oratory as foreign to a good taste as the measures he recommended were to ordinary humanity. It seemed wonderful that even the seething and boiling of the revolutionary caldron should have sent up from the bottom, and long supported on the surface, a thing so miserably void of claims to public distinction; but Robespierre had to impose upon the minds of the vulgar, and he knew how to beguile them by accommodating his flattery to their passions and scale of understanding, and by acts of cunning and hypocrisy, which weigh more with the multitude than the words of eloquence or the arguments of wisdom. The people listened as to their Cicero when he twanged out his apostrophes of 'Pauvre Peuple, Peuple vertueux!' and hastened to execute whatever came recommended by such honeyed phrases, though devised by the worst of men for the worst and most inhuman of purposes," etc.

410. The **general character is exemplified** in this selection from Marshall's *Comedy of Convocation:*

"**The Good and Easy Clergyman** was a more agreeable type, and one which he had frequent opportunities of studying. One of this school was incumbent of a large and fashionable chapel not half a mile from his own parish church. His voice and manner were so tender that he seemed to be always on the point of making everybody an offer of marriage. His life appeared to glide away in a mild and amiable conflict between the claims of piety and good breeding. Sometimes his eye would kindle, and you would have said he was going to launch a rebuke against some popular sin; but good taste came promptly to the rescue, and the sinner's sensibility was greatly spared. His sermons were generally a tender panegyric of the natural virtues. He considered them in every aspect, and drew such ravishing pictures of the 'devoted mother,' or 'the Christian at home,' or 'the good parent's reward,' that people said his sermons were as good as a novel; and so they were. He was quite sure he never once alluded to hell during his whole career," etc.

411. **Rules for the Description of Characters.**

1st Rule.—They should present the individual, or the class of persons described, by **striking traits** which will enable the reader to form a lively and distinct conception of the subject.

2d Rule.—These traits of character must be **consistent with one another,** and the whole picture must be true to nature, so that the highest probability be attained.

3d Rule.—Above all, the characters of real persons must be presented with strict **regard to truth.** For truth is the

chief quality of all historical compositions; and no good can come to mankind from falsehood and misrepresentation. And still it is certain that many descriptions of character, occurring in works of great reputation, are very untruthful, often very unjust to the persons described.

412. There are **two chief causes** of this defect. The first is the difficulty of finding out the truth. It is hard enough for us to understand fully those with whom we daily converse, and to picture them to others in their true light without exaggerating or lessening their merit; it is far more difficult to do so with persons who lived in distant ages and in foreign lands. The second source of difficulty lies in the fact that a character drawn with strict regard for the truth is apt to be too tame for the taste of ordinary readers. Most persons, especially the uneducated, want what is striking and sensational in literature. It is easy enough to pander to such taste and to draw flashy portraits in the brightest colors, or, like Carlyle, "to give sketches alternately in chalk or charcoal, that exhibit his saints and his demons, now in ghastliest white and then in the most appalling blackness" (President Porter, *Books and Reading*, p. 162). But to qualify discreetly our praise and blame, to trace those delicate lineaments of the mind and heart which make up a man's individual character, is a task which few can successfully accomplish.

413. How far a straining after effect has injured the truthfulness of historical writings is well explained by President Porter:

> "The fact deserves notice in this connection that, of late, professed historians have indulged somewhat freely in romancing, and so in a sense turned their histories into quasi-historical novels; especially when they attempt to give elaborate and eloquent portraitures of their leading personages, in which the most lavish use is made of effective epithets and pointed antitheses," etc.—*Id.*

414. As much light may be thrown upon one character by comparing or contrasting it with another, we sometimes meet with **Parallel Characters,** as such descriptions are called. In these, two characters are explained at the same time, every trait in the one being compared with an analogous trait in the other.

415. The following is a specimen of this kind, as elegant in style as it is judicious in thought.

"Homer and Virgil compared":

> "Homer was the greater genius, Virgil the better artist. In one we most admire the man, in the other the work. Homer hurries and transports us with a commanding impetuosity, Virgil leads us with attractive majesty. Homer scatters with a generous profusion, Virgil bestows with a careful magnificence. Homer, like the Nile, pours out his riches with a boundless overflow; Virgil, like a river in its banks, with a gentle and constant stream. When we behold their battles, methinks the two poets resemble the heroes they celebrate: Homer, boundless and irresistible as Achilles, bears all before him, and shines more and more as the tumult increases; Virgil, calmly daring like Æneas, appears undisturbed in the midst of the action, disposes all about him, and conquers with tranquillity. And when we look upon their machines, Homer seems like his own Jupiter in his terrors shaking Olympus, scattering the lightnings and firing the heavens; Virgil, like the same power in his benevolence, counselling with the gods, laying plans for empires, and regularly ordering his whole creation."—*Pope.*

See a similar passage with which Blair concludes Lecture xliii. The ancients have left us admirable models of parallel characters; for instance, the comparison between Cæsar and Cato in Sallust's history of Catiline's Conspiracy (liv.)

416. To facilitate the writing of exercises in this species of composition attention is called to the following **items:**

1. A general appreciation of the person's worth.
2. His race, family, age, fortune, station, resources.

3. Bodily aspect, general bearing, complexion, looks, voice, gesture, manners.
4. Qualities of mind and heart, virtues, vices, inclinations.
5. Intercourse with superiors, equals, inferiors, relations, friends, enemies, strangers.
6. Influences acting on him, and exerted by him on others. Etc.

For an analysis of Parallel Characters see "Socrates and Seneca," in *Zanders' Outlines of Composition* (p. 167).

417. **Exercises:**

1 Write a general character of a fop, a troublesome friend, a politician, a spendthrift, a miser. (Compare Saxe's "My Familiar.")

2. Write an individual character of Washington, Napoleon I., St. Francis Xavier, Mary Queen of Scots.

3. Write a contrast between a rich man and a poor man from the cradle to the grave.

CHAPTER V.

ESSAYS.

418. **Essays** are attempts to state one's own reflections upon a given subject. They are of different lengths and kinds, ranging from learned treatises to the first attempts of a school-boy at putting his own thoughts on paper. **As school exercises,** to be beneficial they require careful management. Nothing is easier than for a teacher to tell a pupil to write an essay "On the beautiful" or "On the sublime," etc.; but nothing is more difficult for a pupil than, unassisted, to carry out such an order. Or, if he finds no difficulty in the task, it is perhaps owing to the fact that sense and nonsense are equally welcome to his youthful mind, provided he can cover a few pages of foolscap with well-sounding sentences.

419. **The main difficulty** in this matter is that the boy is thus called upon to express his thoughts on a subject on which he has no clear thoughts to express, and he has not been instructed how to gather thoughts for himself. The first step, therefore, in treating of essay-writing is to teach pupils how to collect appropriate thoughts by a thorough study of the subject assigned.

420. We have said **appropriate thoughts,** for we wish to warn both teachers and learners against an error which has gained ground in our day, and which directs pupils to write down any thought that comes to their minds, no matter how little it be to the point. "At first," says a modern rhetorician, "aim only at copiousness, correcting no faults

except those of grammar and punctuation, and encouraging the pupil to write freely whatever thoughts come up about the subject, and in whatever order they happen to come up." This will teach fluency, no doubt, but not excellence of composition. Let all remember that good sense is ever the foundation of literary success; that, as Quintilian remarks, nothing but what is excellent should be proposed for the imitation of the young, and children should learn nothing which they are afterwards to unlearn (b. i. c. i. 4, 5). A boy who can write ten lines of good sense on a given subject is really further advanced in composition than one who can dash off a hundred lines of mixed sense and nonsense. The first task, then, is to collect appropriate thoughts.

Article I. Collecting Appropriate Thoughts.

421. **To study a subject** is to consider carefully all that belongs to that subject, its nature and its name, its causes and its effects, its circumstances and its antecedents, its resemblance to other subjects or its contrast with them; recalling also to mind, or reading, what others have done or said concerning the matter in question, etc., etc.

These are called by rhetoricians the **topics of thoughts;** they are fully explained in the study of oratory (see *Art of Oratorical Composition*, b. ii. "On the Invention of Thought"). We shall confine ourselves here to a brief explanation of them.

§ 1. *The Nature and Name of the Subject.*

422. When we begin to study a subject **four considerations** are apt at once to present themselves: 1. What is really meant by the subject—*its definition;* 2. What class of things it belongs to—its *genus or kind;* 3. Of what portions it is made up—the *enumeration* of its parts; 4. The *name* by which it is called.

423. 1. A **definition** is a brief explanation stating what is meant by the subject, and how it is distinguished from all others. This is often the most important of all the topics. It makes the writer conceive a clear idea of his subject, and enables him to write a sensible explanation of the same. Thus the essay "On Honor," in the *Guardian*, is mostly taken up with the discussion of the true idea or definition of 'Honor'; that "On Modesty," in the *Spectator*, discusses the definitions of 'Modesty,' of 'Assurance,' and of 'Impudence'; while Addison begins his essay "On Cheerfulness," in the same paper, by a brief explanation of what 'Cheerfulness' is, showing how it differs from 'Mirth,' with which unreflecting minds often confound it.

"I have always preferred cheerfulness to mirth. The latter I consider as an act, the former as a habit of the mind. Mirth is short and transient, cheerfulness fixed and permanent. Those are often raised into the greatest transports of mirth who are subject to the greatest depressions of melancholy. On the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind such exquisite gladness, prevents us from falling into any depths of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of lightning, that breaks through a gloom of clouds and glitters for a moment; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of daylight in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity."

These last lines show how figures may be used to set off a definition to advantage.

424. 2. **Genus or Kind.**—It is often useful to examine to what kind or class of things the subject belongs. Thus Cardinal Wiseman, in his essay "On the Miracles of the New Testament," shows how these may be viewed either as exhibitions of Christ's power, proving that he was God; or as works of mercy, wrought to relieve the sufferings of men; or as teachings of certain truths, as when He healed

the paralytic to prove that a man may receive from God the power to forgive sin.

425. 3. **Enumeration of Parts.**—This topic opens a wide field for the development of thought. In our chapter on "Object-Lessons" we have suggested a useful exercise, which consists in pointing out the parts of an object presented to the senses (b. i. c. i. a. 2). A similar process may often be applied to moral subjects. Thus Henry Giles begins his essay "On the Worth of Liberty" with this paragraph:

"What is the worth of liberty? Within the limits of this inquiry all that I propose to say on the present occasion will be confined. Of course I refer mainly to civil liberty, although I do not exclude all reference to liberty in its more spiritual relations. I do not attempt to define liberty either civil or moral. What civil liberty is we all practically comprehend; and if we do not, defining it would not enable us. I will simply mention the following as a few of the attributes that belong to it: supremacy of the law; equality of all before the law; the representation of all in the enactment or changes of the law. To these we may add the provisions which wisdom and experience suggest by which such conditions can be most thoroughly attained and most inviolately preserved."

In the last lines he enumerates the attributes or moral parts which make up liberty. He would have done well to begin with a good definition of liberty; for it is not true that "we all practically comprehend what civil liberty" or any other kind of liberty is. Many think it is the absence of all restraint, whereas it is only the absence of all undue restraint.

426. 4. **Name.**—Sometimes the very name of the subject will suggest some appropriate thoughts. For instance, if the subject were "The United States, a Land of True Liberty," the name 'United States' may remind us that the wisdom of our forefathers knew how to combine in the

Union all the advantages of a strong government, respected by all the world, with most of the advantages of independent legislation for the different States of the Union, so that every part of the land may enjoy as large a share of independence as is compatible with the common good.

§ 2. *Causes and Effects.*

427. 1. **Causes.**—The author of the essay "On Cheerfulness," in the *Spectator*, raises the question, what causes produce this happy disposition in the mind, and devotes to these causes a considerable portion of his paper. The consideration of the causes throws much light on every kind of subjects. The essay "On Gratitude," in the *Tatler*, examines in particular the reasons why we should be grateful to the Creator:

"If gratitude is due from man to man, how much more from man to his Maker? The Supreme Being does not only confer on us those bounties which proceed more immediately from His hand, but even those benefits which are conveyed to us by others. Every blessing we enjoy, by what means soever it may be derived upon us, is the gift of Him who is the great Author of good and Father of mercies."

The essay of Addison "On Laughter," in the *Spectator* (No. 52), is almost entirely drawn from the topic of causes.

428. 2. **Effects.**—Effects suggest still more abundant thoughts, and such as are more easy of development. Often a whole essay is nothing more than a description of effects. Such is an essay in the *Spectator* "On the Advantages of a Good Education," and one in the *Rambler* "On the Disadvantages of a Bad Education."

Exercise.—Write an essay on bad company, on intemperance, on war, on music, on steam, on electricity, drawing all the thoughts from this one topic of effects.

§ 3. *Circumstances and Antecedents.*

429. 1. **Circumstances.**—Every subject may be viewed as connected with various circumstances, under which it exists or may be supposed to exist. For instance, if I am to write an essay on "Our National Banner," I may speak of it as displayed in war and in peace, on land and on sea, at home and abroad, and in various events of our national history. If I write on "Water," I may view it in the rain, in the ocean, in the destructive torrent, in the quiet stream, in the bubbling brook, in the refreshing spring, in the clouds of heaven, in the form of falling snow or of the floating iceberg, etc.

"How common, and yet how beautiful and how pure, is a drop of water! See it as it issues from the rock to supply the spring and the stream below. See how its meanderings through the plains and its torrents over the cliffs add to the richness and the beauty of the landscape. Look into a factory standing by a waterfall, in which every drop is faithful to perform its part, and hear the groaning and rustling of the wheels, the clattering of shuttles, and the buzz of spindles, which, under the direction of their fair attendants, are supplying myriads of purchasers with fabrics from the cotton-plant, the sheep, and the silkworm."

430. **Exercise.**—Describe a good-natured man, a peevish man; the display of heroism, of cowardice; the power of music, of eloquence viewed in various circumstances or situations.

431. 2. **Antecedents.**—It may often be useful in an essay to describe what a man or a thing was at a former time, in order to conjecture thence what may be expected from the same on future occasions. Thus in an essay "On the Early Propagation of Christianity," I may invite the reader to go back in spirit and consider that those wonderful men, the Apostles, who established so sublime a religion in so many lands, had been ignorant and timid fishermen, and

that they could never have accomplished their great mission without the assistance of a higher power, that of God Himself.

From this same topic an essay on Hume, in the *Dublin Review* for May, 1842, shows that this writer was utterly unqualified by his antecedents to become the historian of England, and therefore that truth cannot be expected from such a source.

§ 4. *Resemblance and Contrast.*

432. One of the readiest means to understand a subject clearly and to explain it to others is to compare it with other matters and trace out certain points of resemblance or opposition.

1. **Resemblance.**—We may take as an example the labors of an educator, and compare them with those of the gardener, who raises young plants. The consideration of what the latter does to foster, to protect from harm, to quicken, to prune, etc., the objects of his assiduous care, may suggest many analogous duties incumbent on the educator of human hearts and minds. Again, the enriching of the soul for heaven may be compared to advantage with the indefatigable industry of merchants, who gather wealth for earth, etc.

Our American essayist, E. P. Whipple, in his essay "On Words," illustrates the various styles of English writers by playfully comparing them to various kinds of soldiers.

"Words are more effective when arranged in that order called style. The great secret of a good style, we are told, is to have proper words in proper places. To marshal one's verbal battalions in such order that they may bear at once upon all quarters of a subject is certainly a great art. This is done in different ways. . . . The tread of Johnson's style is heavy and sonorous, resembling that of an elephant or a mail-clad warrior. He is fond of levelling an object

by a polysyllabic battering-ram. Burke's words are continually practising the broad-sword exercise and sweeping down adversaries at every stroke. Arbuthnot 'plays his weapon like a tongue of flame.' Addison draws up his light infantry in orderly array, and marches through sentence after sentence without having his ranks disordered or his line broken," etc.

Addison, in the 153d number of the *Tatler*, compared different characters in conversation to different instruments of music.

433. 2. **Contrast.**—Many subjects may be appropriately illustrated by contrasting them with their opposites, as when modesty is inculcated by making boastfulness odious, when the useful citizen is praised by contrasting him with a man who is a burden to the state. Thus Addison, in the *Guardian* (No. 111), makes the indolence of the British youth of his day odious by contrasting it with the love of knowledge displayed by Julius Cæsar, by Alexander the Great, and by King Solomon.

§ 5. *Authorities and Examples.*

434. Lastly, it may be very useful to consider what others have said and done in connection with the subject on which we are to write. For this purpose we must study authorities and examples.

1. **Authorities** are the sayings of men whose word inspires confidence. Now, though an essay-writer is supposed to give his own views on the subject before him, he is not expected to form those views without considering what thoughtful and well-informed men have said on the same matter. He will exhibit a pleasing modesty by leaning on the judgment of others; and the authorities quoted, besides showing him to be possessed of learning, will often inspire much more confidence than his own speculations could command. An appropriate quotation of some excellent authority is like a gem in a composition, adding considerably to its brilliancy and its real value. Notice the happy effect of this topic in the following passage of Washington Irving:

"How vain, how fleeting, how uncertain are all those gaudy bubbles after which we are panting and toiling in this world of fair delusion! The wealth which the miser has amassed with so many weary days, so many sleepless nights, a spendthrift heir may squander away in joyless prodigality. The noblest monuments which pride has ever reared to perpetuate a name the hand of time will shortly tumble into ruins, and even the brightest laurels gained by feats of arms may wither and be for ever blighted by the chilling neglect of mankind. 'How many illustrious heroes,' says the good Boethius, 'who were once the pride and glory of the age, has the silence of historians buried in oblivion!' And this it was that induced the Spartans, when they went to battle, to sacrifice to the Muses, supplicating that their achievements should be worthily recorded. 'Had not Homer tuned his lofty lyre,' observes the elegant Cicero, 'the valor of Achilles had remained unsung.'"

435. 2. **Examples** are remarkable actions of great men proposed for imitation, or referred to as confirming our opinion. Addison, in the *Tatler* (No. 133), begins his essay "On Silence" thus: "Silence is something more magnificent and sublime than the most noble and expressive eloquence, and is, on many occasions, an indication of a great mind." He then refers to several facts of illustrious personages to confirm his proposition, in particular to the silence of the Son of God under calumny and defamation.

Article II. Various Kinds of Essays.

436. The topics just explained will furnish appropriate thoughts for every kind of essays. But the use of these topics, and the treatment and development of them, will differ considerably for the various kinds.

§ 1. *School Essays.*

437. Essays have been written as **school exercises** from time immemorial. The ancient rhetorician Aphthonius explains them with some detail, and in a manner well suited to develop in the student habits of orderly and sensible composition. He proposes to the pupils what he calls a *chria* (*Χρεία*)—that is, a pregnant or suggestive sentence, borrowed from some author and developed by certain rules. There are three species of this chria:

438. (*a*) The **verbal chria** proposes a wise maxim, as would be the advice Shakspeare puts on the lips of Wolsey:

"Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition."

439. (*b*) The **historical chria** proposes a fact which implies, though it does not express, an important lesson; as:

"Pythagoras required of his disciples that, to learn how to speak, they should be silent for five years."

440. (*c*) The **mixed chria** proposes a fact containing the statement of a maxim; as:

"The mother of the Gracchi exhibited no gold nor pearls; but pointing to her young boys she said, 'These are my jewels.'"

441. To develop any of these species of chria Aphthonius proposes **eight heads** or considerations:

1. A *Commendation* of the sentence proposed, or of its author, by way of introduction. Let it be brief and modest.
2. A *Paraphrase*, expressing the meaning of the sentence in other words, with some further development or explanation.
3. The *Cause* or reason why the maxim is true, or why the fact is such as stated.

4. *Resemblance*, illustrating by comparison with similar things.
5. *Contrast*, illustrating by comparison with contrary things.
6. *Examples.*
7. *Testimonies* or authorities.
8. *Conclusion* addressed to the mind or the heart of the reader. Care should be taken that the transition from one point to another appear natural.

442. One **advantage** derived from so regular an exercise is that the young learn to think and write in an orderly manner, which result is, or should be, one of the great aims of all literary education; for it is one of the chief elements of literary excellence. Still, it is not necessary that the same amount of regularity be observed in all essays, whether written as school exercises or not.

443. There is, besides the regular chria, the free or **loose chria,** as some rhetoricians call it, which allows much more variety of arrangement. Sometimes one or two topics will supply a sufficient amount of appropriate thought, and there is a special advantage in fully developing a few points. In fact, it may be laid down as a rule that one consideration well developed will produce a more effective composition than a great number of separate reflections, each briefly expressed. If we analyze the essays of great writers we shall find that they usually confine their treatment of a subject to few topics.

444. **Example 1.**—Let us consider how Blair does this in his third lecture on Rhetoric. In it he treats of four subjects, giving us, as it were, four different essays, on "Criticism," on "Genius," on the "Pleasures of Taste," and on "Sublimity in Objects."

On *Criticism*, he examines its definition and its nature.

On *Genius*, its nature and a comparison between Genius and Taste.

On the *Pleasures of Taste*, he considers the sources of those pleasures and the authority of Addison.

On *Sublimity in Objects*, the nature and the sources of sublimity.

445. **Example 2.**—His fourteenth lecture is "On Figurative Language." After some introductory remarks he treats:

1. Of the *cause* or origin and of the *nature* of figures.
2. Of the *circumstances* of time, showing that language is most figurative in early ages.
3. Of the *effects* or advantages of figures.
4. He *enumerates* and explains various kinds of figures.

(On Blair's treatment of the topics, see *Art of Oratorical Composition*, 127.)

446. Let the student, then, apply to the study of his subject such topics as he thinks may give him suitable thoughts. He will do well to examine all the topics, and then **select for treatment** those thoughts which appear most appropriate and most within his power of treatment. Let him note in the margin the topic he is developing and the various thoughts suggested by it. For instance, if, with Blair, he considers the nature and the sources of sublimity, let him write in the margin 'Nature,' and then explain what he has to say on that topic; further on he will write 'Sources,' and then mark, in the order in which he treats them, the different sources, 'Obscurity,' 'Disorder,' 'Moral Sublimity,' and, lastly, the general source, the 'Foundation of the Sublime.'

447. With pupils not sufficiently advanced the teacher may usefully point out the sources which are most likely to furnish appropriate thoughts, and even make out a sketch to be developed by them, adding special hints for the development of every part.

If he assigns an **essay upon a sensible object**, he will do well to remind the pupils of what has been explained in the chapter on "Object-Lessons," and lay down as a plan the division suggested in Exercise I. of Lesson VI.

It will be proper to begin with such sensible objects as are well known to the students, or on which they can gather information from books put at their disposal.

448. Next will come insensible or **abstract subjects**, such as virtues and vices—for instance, diligence or sloth, courage or cowardice, generosity or selfishness. For the treatment of these the following **plan** may be suggested:

1. Definition or description of the virtue or vice;
2. Causes in which it originates;
3. Circumstances in which it is apt to be exhibited;
4. Effects which it produces;
5. Comparisons and contrasts;
6. Authorities and examples.

For the thorough treatment of Order or Arrangement we must refer the student to our *Art of Oratorical Composition* (book iii.)

§ 2. *Magazine Articles.*

449. Modern literature abounds in essays. They fill the pages of our Quarterly Reviews, Monthly Magazines, Weekly and Daily Papers in endless variety and profusion. Many **essays in periodicals** are written with great ability, being the productions of cultivated minds, who strive to condense and to set forth with clearness, for the benefit of the general reader, what has cost them years, perhaps, of study and meditation. But the vast majority of periodical articles are compositions of a very different kind. Even when written by authors of considerable reputation they

are dashed off in haste with a view to excite the interest and to please the craving for novelty of the thoughtless public.

450. As a natural consequence most periodical essays are both **unreliable in matter and defective in form**: far from being good models for the imitation of the young, they falsify taste by preferring apparent to real excellences.

"A magazine," says Macaulay, "is certainly a delightful invention for a very idle or a very busy man. He is not compelled to complete his plan or adhere to his subject. He may ramble as far as he is inclined, and stop as soon as he is tired. No one takes the trouble to recollect his contradictory opinions or his unredeemed pledges. He may be as superficial, as inconsistent, and as careless as he chooses" (*Essays*, "Athenian Orators").

451. **Macaulay's Essays** are striking proofs of these assertions. They contain, indeed, an abundance of original thoughts, suggestive and bold speculations, of real facts and plausible theories; but in many of them truth is blended with fiction, facts are distorted and exaggerated, as if the author were sometimes trying to see to what extent an able pen can trifle with the convictions of ages and still remain within the sphere of plausible argumentation.

452. One of the worst features of periodical essays is that **order**, so essential to real beauty of composition, is much neglected in them, and the minds both of readers and writers lose all power of regular development of thought. Even Orestes A. Brownson, probably the greatest of American essayists, acknowledged in his *Republic* that constant essay-writing had disqualified him for the composition of a regular treatise.

In order that essay-writing may be truly beneficial, systematic arrangement and development must ever be made a prominent point in it, as in all other species of composition. With these cautions great benefit may be derived

from the study of our leading essayists, whose productions constitute a rich and important portion of English literature.

453. But while order is necessary in essays, we can lay down **no definite plan** upon which such composition should be written. Maturer minds, at least, must be allowed considerable liberty. Let them study the matter thoroughly and then draw up such a plan in each case as will display their matter to the best advantage. For the study of such power of combination and division we must refer them to the *Art of Oratorical Composition* (book iii.) An essay is in many respects similar to an oration, and we can conceive no better precepts for it than those which ancient and modern rhetoricians have laid down for oratorical composition. Periodical essays may be critical, philosophical, historical, or political.

§ 3. *Critical Essays.*

454. Two things require special explanation in connection with **critical essays**: 1. The general laws of criticism; and 2. The special points to which the critic should attend in composing his essay.

455. **I. General Laws of Criticism.**

The critic is not to be guided by his individual preferences, his likes and dislikes; but he is to judge of literature by the **universally received laws of composition.** These precepts are not the arbitrary dictates of any man or any body of men, but the systematized expression of the judgments pronounced by the most judicious minds in the civilized world, and confirmed by the approbation of many generations Every new work on Rhetoric or Belles-Lettres is but another attempt to restate those laws or precepts with new illustrations and with particular applica-

tion to special circumstances. In our language Alexander Pope has written a beautiful poetical essay, showing, both by his own example and by his judicious precepts, how the laws of composition are to be applied by the critic. His little work deserves careful study ; but we must here confine ourselves to those directions which are most necessary for the composition of critical essays.

456. **The chief laws of criticism are these:**

1. Let the critic consider with care what is the **real value of the work** he undertakes to criticise. For this purpose it will be useful to compare it with other works written on the same subject, and see in what respects it is superior. Publications which are not, in some important particulars, superior to all other works already existing in the same language are not deserving of recommendation.

457. 2. In judging of the value of a recent work let the critic not be misled by the manner in which it has been received by the press or the general public. The **first welcome given to a book** is not always the result of genuine admiration. "Puffers," says Macaulay, "are a class of people who have more than once talked the people into the most absurd errors, but who surely never played a more curious or more difficult trick than when they passed Mr. Robert Montgomery off upon the world as a great poet." But one of his poems had already gone through eleven editions before Macaulay, by his critique in the *Edinburgh Review* (April, 1830), stemmed the tide of general admiration.

458. 3. Nor should the critic allow himself to be captivated by the **fashions of the day**, or by the mannerism of a prevalent school of art. Acknowledging what is really good in such fashions, which are often reactions against other species of depraved taste, he should judge of perfection by the old universal standard and the undoubted maxims of genuine taste.

459. 4. Still, he should not be so **pedantic** as to refuse to see real beauties because marred by some flagrant violations of admitted rules. Shakspeare and others have uncommon beauties mixed with great defects. To reject both were not reasonable ; to praise both is not judicious. It is the part of the critic carefully to draw the line between what is good and what is bad.

460. 5. In writing the critique of a commendable composition, more trouble should generally be taken to bring to view its **excellences** than its **shortcomings.** Students in their essays should occupy themselves almost exclusively in showing forth what is really worthy of approbation. To do so will practise their skill and improve their appreciation of the beautiful.

461. 6. Let praise or blame be given with **due moderation.**

> "Avoid extremes ; and shun the fault of such
> Who still are pleased too little or too much.
> At every trifle scorn to take offence,
> That always shows great pride or little sense :
> Those heads or stomachs are not sure the best
> Which nauseate all and nothing can digest.
> Yet let not each gay turn thy rapture move :
> For fools admire, but men of sense approve ;
> As things seem large which we through mists descry,
> Dulness is ever apt to magnify."
>
> —*Pope's Essay on Criticism.*

462. 7. When defects are to be pointed out let it be done with **politeness** and delicacy of speech, so as not to wound susceptibilities more than is necessary. Still, there are occasions when more emphasis is required to counteract the evil which violations of good taste would otherwise produce. Whatever would do injury to religion or moral-

ity should be openly condemned ; and it will generally be found that what is hurtful to these is at the same time a departure from true artistic beauty.

463. 8. Lastly, we must guard the critic against an odious but not uncommon mistake—that of **condemning what he does not thoroughly understand.**

> " But you who seek to give and merit fame,
> And justly bear a critic's noble name,
> Be sure yourself and your own reach to know,
> How far your genius, taste, and learning go ;
> Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet,
> And mark that point where sense and dulness meet."
>
> —*Id.*

464. **II. The composition of a critical essay.**

It is useful to begin by analyzing the work which is to be criticised, and writing a clear **synopsis** of the same. (See the precepts for Analysis and Synopsis in the *Art of Oratorical Composition*, book iii. c. iv.) This synopsis need not form a part of the critical essay ; but it will aid the writer to understand thoroughly the subject of his criticism. In preparing it he will notice in particular the following points :

1. What the author criticised pretends to prove or to explain, or what appears to be the purpose of his work.
2. What are the difficulties which he has had to overcome.
3. How he enters upon his subject ; what proposition he lays down, if any ; what process he chiefly adopts —whether narrating, discussing, theorizing, etc.
4. What line of thought he follows from the beginning to the end of his composition.
5. What original thoughts occur in the course of the work.

6. To what species of composition the work belongs.
7. What appears to be its chief merit in thoughts, style, etc.
8. How far it accomplishes the purpose for which it was written.

465. The writer should carefully **examine the rules** which rhetoricians have laid down for the species of composition to which the work criticised belongs, and see how they are followed by the author.

After these preparations he will proceed to write the **plan** of his own criticism ; in doing which he may profit by the following suggestions :

1. It is often appropriate to begin with a general appreciation of the work criticised ; this appreciation should be expressed with accuracy, in a spirit of moderation, and usually of kindness.

2. After this, and sometimes before it, the principles should be explained upon which the criticism is based. If these principles are not generally recognized they should be supported by proofs drawn from reason or from authority.

3. In proceeding to details a lucid order should be followed. It is usually proper to treat first of those items for which the work criticised deserves praise ; then to proceed, with expressions of regret, to those items which call for censure.

466. The **style** most appropriate for critical essays is that which is called the *neat* (*supra*, book iii. c. iv. art. 2). As proper models of style we may propose Prescott's, Bancroft's, and Spalding's Miscellanies, Cardinals Wiseman's and Newman's Essays, and Lingard's Tracts.

467. The **tone** of the criticism should usually be kind and respectful, observant of the oratorical precautions and all the laws of literary politeness, even when dealing with

authors who ignore such precepts. (On Politeness and Oratorical Precautions see *Art of Oratorical Composition*, book iv. c. iv. art. 2.)

468. As an **example** we insert a synopsis of Archbishop Spalding's criticism on Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico:*

1. General appreciation of the work, remarks on the style.
2. Brief criticism on the introduction—*i.e.*, the Aztec Civilization.
3. General principles of historical writing—stated, proved, and applied:
   (*a*) Research: diligent and thorough.
   (*b*) Accuracy: general, not universal.
   (*c*) Impartiality: much wanting, proved by quotations.
4. A synopsis of the history, with quotations.
5. Special moral questions debated.
   (*a*) Was the Conquest justifiable? Yes, as shown not *à priori*, but from the facts and from the principles of natural and international law.—The Pope's interference.
   (*b*) Was it stained with wanton cruelty? No. Discussion of details.

§ 4. *Scientific, Historical, and Political Essays.*

469. All the remaining species of essays belong to one of three kinds: **Scientific or Philosophical, Historical,** and **Political** Essays. The first deal with abstract principles, the second with past facts, and the third with future measures. This distinction bears a close resemblance to the division of oratory into Demonstrative, Judicial or Forensic, and Deliberative discourses. (See *Art of Oratorical Composition*, book vi. No. 334.) In fact, essays have almost

everything in common with orations: the invention, the arrangement, the development of thought.

470. Therefore the **precepts** for essay-writing are nearly identical with those treated fully in the *Art of Oratorical Composition*. The chief difference is that essays are read, not spoken. This will affect the **style** and the use of pathos. But even the difference of style is confined to very few points. The essay is not composed in the direct style, which is suitable to speeches (*Ib.* No. 308), nor does it require the same copiousness of treatment (No. 313). Still, this last difference does not affect essays intended for the general reader, especially in an age when readers do so little thinking for themselves.

The earnest pupil who wishes to perfect himself in essay-writing should study thoroughly the work referred to. We shall here add such points as belong more directly to the composition of various essays.

471. **I. Scientific or Philosophical Essays.**

Science traces the connection between particular conclusions and general principles. It may treat of religion, of philosophy proper, or of the physical sciences. A Scientific Essay usually takes the form of a **Thesis**—*i.e.*, it lays down a proposition which it undertakes to prove, as 'Man is a free agent'; 'The soul of man is immortal'; 'The theory of spontaneous generation is untenable.'

472. The **plan of a Thesis** usually comprises:

1. An *introduction* to awaken interest. (See *Art of Or. Comp.*, b. iv. c. i.)
2. A *statement* and an *explanation* of the proposition which we undertake to prove.

This should be clear, pointed, and concisely expressed. Any vagueness on this point would be a great defect. (*Ib.* c. ii.)

3. The *proof* or argumentation, containing two parts:

(*a*) Lay down carefully and establish firmly the first principles from which you intend to draw your conclusion. Do not hurry your readers on to your deductions till they have fully agreed to your principles. Finish this part by reminding them of the truths so far established.

(*b*) Show by logical and lucid reasoning that your Thesis or proposition follows from those truths. Propose your reasoning in various forms, if necessary; make it striking to every class of your readers. (*Ib.* c. iv. art. i. § 2.)

4. A *refutation* of objections. (*Ib.* § 3.)

5. A *conclusion*, drawing inferences or making practical applications.

473. Scientific essays are at present extensively printed and read in magazines and other periodicals. When intended for the general public they should be written in a popular **style**, elegant and racy, substituting for abstract thoughts all kinds of clear and apt illustrations. How to adapt such a composition to different classes of readers is explained in connection with Academic Lectures in the *Art of Oratorical Composition* (b. vi. c. iii. art. 3). A noble model for such essays is found in the lectures of Cardinal Manning "On the Four Great Evils of the Day."

474. **II.** An **Historical Essay** treats of an historical event or an historical character. It may assume various forms; the following are the principal:

475. 1. A connected **Narrative** of an historical event; such an essay is nothing else than a narration, and the precepts for it have already been given (book iv. c. iii.)

476. 2. A **Biographical Sketch** of an historical personage; this will be treated under Biography (c. vii.)

477. 3. A **Thesis** to be proved by historical facts; this will follow a plan similar to the scientific thesis just explained. Archbishop M. J. Spalding, in the eleventh article of his *Miscellanea* ("On the Spanish Inquisition"), lays down and proves these three theses:

(*a*) The Spanish Inquisition was mainly a political institution, and the result of extraordinary political circumstances;

(*b*) Its cruelties have been greatly exaggerated;

(*c*) The Catholic Church is not responsible for the institution itself, much less for its abuses, real or alleged (p. 222).

His whole "Chapter on Mobs" (p. 619) is an historical thesis proving that "mobs cannot put down truth and virtue."

478. 4. A **Dissertation**, presenting different views entertained by different historians on some event or character. This kind of essay is not bound down to any definite plan; still, it should observe the rules of all good compositions respecting unity of subject, an orderly process, and clear development.

Of this species is the essay of J. C. Calhoun which he entitles "A Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States" (*Works*, vol. i.)

Other examples are found in various chapters of Balmes' *European Civilization; or, Protestantism and Catholicity compared in their Effects on the Civilization of Europe*, a work of extraordinary ability. Chapter ii. contains a brief dissertation "On the Causes of Protestantism."

479. 5. A **disquisition** or systematic inquiry into a special historical question. The essay must confine itself to that one question, and explain lucidly:

(*a*) What is the exact point at issue;

(*b*) What views are entertained by different parties regarding it:

(*c*) What reasons are urged by them in support of their several views;

(*d*) What the author considers to be the true solution, and how far it appears to be certain;

(*e*) What reasons support his conclusion.

See J. C. Calhoun's "Disquisition on Government" (*Works*, vol. i.)

Another example is found in Archbishop M. J. Spalding's criticism of Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* (analyzed in No. 468); he discusses in particular:

(*a*) Was Cortez justifiable in attempting the subjugation of Mexico?

(*b*) Were the conquerors wantonly cruel?

480. **III. Political Essays,** like political speeches, are of a practical nature, regarding measures advocated or opposed. They occur most commonly as editorials in newspapers. **Editorials** are such leading articles as formally express the editor's opinions on the current topics of the day; they must be distinguished from mere news reports, communications, clippings, etc.

481. News articles simply record the facts of the day, while editorials discuss the leading events, commending or condemning, explaining or defending, convincing and exhorting, assigning causes and suggesting remedies, also pointing out tendencies and probable consequences—in a word, giving the philosophy of present history. Hence the style is very different: news must be stated clearly, accurately, briefly; editorials must be written eloquently.

482. The **importance of Editorials** at present is uncommonly great. They are the teachers of the age, exerting the widest and most telling influence for good or evil, truth or falsehood, sound or corrupt morality. They replace songs in O'Connell's saying: "Give me the making of a nation's songs, and I care not who makes its laws."

483. **Their aim** should be to inculcate and defend sound principles of private morality and public virtue, expose present events in their true light, trace their true causes, tendencies, and probable consequences; expose public vice and falsehood, unmask false pretenders and public quacks, uphold the noble traditions and aspirations of the country. Editors should be the advocates of right and truth at the bar of public opinion.

484. The **style of editorials** is of a high order, combining popularity with judicial dignity, vigor with moderation, simplicity with the various charms of eloquence.

Editorials, and all essays written for practical purposes, bear a very close resemblance to speeches addressed to popular assemblies. No better precepts can be laid down for the thorough study of them than the rules given for Deliberative Oratory; these should be as carefully studied by editors as by popular orators. (See *Art of Oratorical Composition*, book vi. c. i.)

CHAPTER VI.

DIALOGUES.

485. A **Dialogue** is a conversation between two or more persons. Among the ancients this species of composition was carried to great perfection. Their dialogues were of two kinds, the *descriptive* and the *didactic* or philosophical.

486. The **descriptive** kind was used by Lucian for the portrayal of characters. We have elsewhere spoken of the description of characters. **Lucian,** instead of describing them in his own words, introduces his personages as speaking. He makes the pagan gods and the souls of the dead converse among themselves in such a way as to exhibit marked traits of character, and he does this in a lively, interesting manner. His object is to show forth the absurdities of pagan superstitions.

487. **Didactic** or philosophical dialogues were written with great elegance by Plato, and, after his example, by Cicero. These authors introduced learned men discussing some important subject, in an easy and natural manner, with great refinement of thought and language. Their purpose was the same as that of philosophical essays; but the conversational form added special charm to the composition. The personages introduced were such as would command attention; they were placed in situations interesting to the reader, and made to converse in language consistent with their respective characters.

488. As an **example** we may take the dialogue of Plato styled *Phædon*. A discourse on the immortality of the

soul is put on the lips of the philosopher Socrates, and addressed by him to his disciples, under circumstances which make it remarkably impressive. It was the day at the close of which the philosopher was to drink hemlock in punishment of his teachings. His disciples had gathered round him in his prison to show their esteem and affection for their master. Every one must feel that such circumstances add far more weight to the philosopher's words than an abstract essay could possess.

489. **Plato** in his dialogues never speaks in his own person; but **Cicero** proceeds differently. He dedicates his compositions to some friend, and explains to him who his characters are, why he has chosen them, and under what circumstances they are supposed to discourse. His conversations "On Old Age," "On Friendship," and "On the Orator" are special favorites with classical scholars.

490. **English literature** has not produced any acknowledged masterpieces in this species of composition. But we have many scenes in dramas and in novels exhibiting characters as strikingly as do the dialogues of Lucian—*e.g.*, the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius in Shakspeare's "Julius Cæsar"; the examination of Sam Weller by Sergeant Buzfuz in Dickens' *Pickwick Papers;* the character of the Martyr's Boy in Cardinal Wiseman's *Fabiola* (c. ii.).

491. Of the **philosophical dialogue** we have a good specimen in *Brownson's Review* for 1854, styled "Uncle Jack and his Nephew," and another in the *Month* for November, 1869, styled "The Dialogues of Sydney." A late work by St. George Mivart, entitled *Nature and Thought,* is an imitation of Cicero's dialogues. In modern times didactic treatises usually assume the form of essays; when conversation is introduced at all it is wont to be combined with so much incident as to be classed among Novels. Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* is of this nature.

492. Dialogues are subject to the following **rules**:

1. They must create interest by presenting lifelike characters, placed in interesting situations, and conversing in a natural and unaffected manner.

2. If didactic they must treat of some theme, and develop it with sufficient regularity, so as to give a clear insight into the views of the author on that subject.

3. They must be replete with wisdom, or at least with good sense.

4. They must be couched in refined language, with tasteful and modest ornament.

493. **Exercise I.** Write a descriptive dialogue exhibiting the character of a miser, a spendthrift, a fop, a flatterer, a young hero. (For a model see *Fabiola*, c. ii.)

494. **Exercise II.** Write a didactic conversation on the advantages of a thorough education, of music, of good company; on the Crusades, the Inquisition, on Galileo. (For a model see a dialogue between Fabiola and her slave Syra in the sixteenth chapter of *Fabiola*.)

CHAPTER VII.

NOVELS.

495. A **Novel** is a fictitious narrative in prose, embracing a complete series of events, and exhibiting some phase of human life.

Such phases of human life are, for instance:

(*a*) *Peculiar conditions of society*, as in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, his *Leather-stocking Tales*, etc.

(*b*) The *manners of certain periods* of history, as in historical novels generally. Such are Cardinal Wiseman's *Fabiola*, Cardinal Newman's *Callista*, B. O'Reilly's *Victims of the Mamertine*, McKeon's *Dion and the Sibyls*, Bailey's *Pearl of Antioch*, Conscience's *Lion of Flanders*, Lady Fullerton's *Constance Sherwood* and *Too Strange not to be True*.

(*c*) The *workings of the passions*, as in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, etc.

(*d*) The *tendencies of institutions* and popular movements, as in Bresciani's *Jew of Verona* and *Lionello*, and in Brownson's *Spirit-Rapper*.

(*e*) *Peculiar views of the world*, as in Dickens' *Christmas Carols*.

496. Some novels may be called **philosophical**, being intended to set forth special views and systems of doctrine. To this class belong religious novels. In all such it is important that not only the doctrines inculcated be sound, but also that the composition possess literary beauty and

proper interest, and that the moral tone of the characters be favorable to virtue. We can mention no more excellent model than the *Fabiola* referred to above. Gen. Lew Wallace's *Ben-Hur* deserves praise.

497. Others are called **Society Novels**: these are usually written to ridicule the extravagances of prevalent tastes and practices, thus answering the same purpose as comedy. Such is Bulwer's *My Novel*. Many of these give little attention to plot, being chiefly taken up with the exhibition of character. All such compositions may be useful in their way; but unfortunately not many can be recommended for the perusal of those who care to keep their hearts undefiled by the contamination of vice.

498. **Sensational Novels** are still more objectionable. These stir up the passions by frequent vivid sketches of exaggerated and unreal scenes. They create a morbid craving for exciting stories, and impair that calm of mind which is an essential element of a prudent and considerate character.

499. Well-written novels possess certain **advantages** over other species of literature:

1. They reach those who will not read more serious books;
2. They may fill up profitably an occasional hour of needed relaxation, even with earnest men;
3. They may widen the reader's knowledge of the world;
4. If well chosen they may improve his heart;
5. They may enlarge his stock of words and phrases.

500. The **objections** universally urged against promiscuous novel-reading are numerous; the principal are:

1. They cause great waste of time;
2. They produce desultory habits of mind, which disqualify a person for earnest attention to duty;

3. They give false views of life;
4. They make the reader familiar with vice and vicious characters, thus lowering his standard of virtue by showing that many others are worse than himself;
5. They often make vices look like virtues, or at least like excusable foibles;
6. They develop in the reader that spirit of the world which is diametrically opposed to the spirit of Christ.

(See further objections to novel-reading in Jenkins' *British and American Literature*, pp. 322, etc.)

501. There are **two schools** of novelists, the *realistic* and the *ideal*. The **ideal** is the older school; it has more of the spirit of poetry. It presents men not as they usually are, but as they may exceptionally be, and as we love to imagine them—more noble, more disinterested, more heroic. Such novels are called Romances; most French novels belong to this class. Their effect on the reader is often elevating, analogous to that produced by epic and tragic poetry; but they are apt to become unreal and extravagant, as were the tales of knight-errantry in the Middle Ages. They are also liable to another objection, for they often exalt passions that should rather be checked, in particular the passion of love, which up to the time of Walter Scott made up the plot of nearly all novels.

502. The **realistic** school is more prosaic; it is also more favorable to common sense. It is well exemplified in the novels of Charles Dickens. It describes men and things just as they are, and makes persons act in a probable, natural manner. This process also has its inconveniences. Brownson is severe on Dickens for making his readers so familiar with vulgar and vicious characters.

503. Most of the precepts that should direct this species

of composition have been treated in this work under the heads of Narration (book iv. c. iii.) and Description (c. iv.) We shall here add a few **special rules.**

Rule 1.—Let the novel be **interesting** to the class of readers for whom it is intended; some novels written for very laudable purposes are undeniably dull.

Rule 2.—It should **aim at a higher purpose** than mere amusement—namely, to deck valuable knowledge and true wisdom in the pleasing garb of fiction, so as to captivate the imagination, and thus more readily gain mind and heart to what is worthy of man.

Rule 3.—It should give a right direction and a **healthy tone** to the passions. No amount of interest can atone for the slightest injury to mind and heart.

Rule 4.—It should, in order to be a true work of art, either portray **characters** in a very natural and pleasing manner, or excite great interest by a well-developed **plot,** combining variety of incident with unity of the general plan.

504. **Novelists.**—De Foe was the father of the English novel as distinguished from the more romantic tales of knight-errantry; Fielding and Richardson soon followed him; but those novelists are now almost forgotten by the general public. Every year brings new authors into general notice. But none, perhaps, have gained so continued and general favor as Walter Scott.

Novelists are by this time so numerous that it were vain to attempt a criticism upon their respective merits. Gerald Griffin, the Banim Brothers, Marion Crawford, Miss Rosa Mulholland, Christian Reid, Kathleen O'Meara—also known as Grace Ramsay—and especially Bolanden, may be mentioned, in addition to those referred to with praise in the above precepts, as novelists that have written in a moral spirit; while George Eliot, Victor Hugo, Charles

Reade, Wilkie Collins, George Sand, Balzac, and many others are immoral and often blasphemous. Bulwer's early novels are objectionable, but his later ones are better.

505. **Exercise.**—Analyze a novel according to the following plan:

1. What is known of the author?
2. To what school or class of novels does the work belong?
3. Is a definite purpose, philosophical, political, moral, or religious, discernible in the novel?
4. What is the plot? Analyze it briefly.
5. In what lies the principal excellence of the work?
6. What are its leading characters and how naturally are they presented throughout?
7. Is the style beautiful and properly varied to suit the different characters?
8. What of the descriptions? the narration? the dialogues?

CHAPTER VIII.

HISTORY.

506. History is **one of the noblest studies** to which man can devote himself. Cicero styles it:

"The witness of ages, the light of truth, the life of our memory, the teacher of our lives, a messenger from the distant past" (*De Or.*, ii. 9).

Frederick Schlegel remarks:

"History constitutes the apparently easy and first elements of all instruction; and yet the more cultivated the mind of a man becomes, the more multiplied opportunities will he find of applying it and turning it to use, the more will he discern its richness and divine its deeper sense. Indeed, no thinker is so profound as to be able to anticipate with accuracy the course of history, no scholar so learned as to think he has exhausted it, and no sovereign so powerful that he may with impunity disregard its silent teachings" (*Lectures on Modern History, I.*)

507. The **kind of instruction** that history affords is most precious, for it enables us to gather with comparatively little trouble that knowledge which others have acquired by long, and often bitter, experience; it enables one man to profit by the lives of millions. As he travels in mind through various lands and successive ages, he observes the customs of diverse nations, their manners of worship, of government, of warfare, of commerce, and of agriculture; their cultivation or their neglect of the liberal and the useful arts; and he becomes acquainted with the characters of men and the workings of the human pas-

sions. Thus his mind is enlarged, his views are extended, and he gathers wisdom for his own conduct, learning what course of life leads to success, and what other course leads to destruction.

Article I. Nature and General Laws of History.

508. **History is defined** as the narrative of past events for the instruction of mankind. Instruction, then, is its end or purpose. Should this instruction embrace all the information that can be drawn from the study of past ages? Macaulay would require this (Essay on Mitford's *Greece*); but in doing so he departs from the approved way and he aims at what is visionary and unattainable. He acknowledges that such an historian as he desires has never existed; and Prescott remarks: "Such a monster never did and never can exist" (Essay on Irving's *Conquest of Granada*).

The historian who strives to compass more than he can will necessarily neglect some part of his task; and the danger is that he will neglect what is less attractive but more truly important.

509. There are two classes of details which **the historian will properly omit** and leave to other writers:

1. Whatever affords **mere gratification of curiosity** rather than valuable information. Such matters, as Macaulay acknowledges, are usually left to the historical novelist:

"Mr. Sismondi publishes a grave and stately history, very valuable and a little tedious. He then sends forth as a companion to it a novel, in which he attempts to give a lively representation of characters and manners. . . . We manage these things better in England. Sir Walter Scott gives us a novel; Mr. Hallam a critical and argumentative history. Both are occupied with the same matter" (*Essays*, "Hallam").

Macaulay has striven to unite both elements, but with little success. His *History of England* has all the charms of a novel; but "it is not a student's book, and could no more be quoted as an authority than Shakspeare" (*Dublin Review*, June, 1856, "Hallam"). "Everybody reads, everybody admires, but nobody believes in Macaulay" (*Blackwood's Magazine*, August, 1856).

510. 2. What is of no importance for the general student, but **interesting to specialists only,** should not overload the pages of a general history. There are special histories of painting, music, commerce, etc.; but history proper deals with such matters in so far only as they are intimately connected with great events and lessons of wisdom, which are the specialty of history as such. For history is not a collection of universal knowledge, but a special department of study.

511. What knowledge, then, or **what special instruction is the historian to impart?** We answer, the knowledge of the great events and important changes which have affected mankind, in as far as the knowledge of these increases the wisdom of succeeding generations. This is what the greatest historians have endeavored to record, and for the proper recording of which they have been considered as great historians. Tacitus troubled himself very little about "rummaging the old-fashioned wardrobe" of Tiberius—a task which Macaulay would impose upon the historian—but he unmasked the hypocrisy of that prince and showed the world how he destroyed the liberty of Rome.

512. Among the great events and important changes that the historian is to record, **the principal are** those which affect religion and systems of government, military achievements, the progress or decay of liberty, of general enlightenment, or of the arts and sciences, and whatever is prominent in the civilization of a people.

513. There is one line of thought in which modern historians are expected to improve on the ancients. We attach more importance now to **the welfare of the people** than to the splendor of public exploits, and justly so, because we understand better than the ancients did that the true end of government is the happiness of the governed. The modern historian must therefore take more pains to point out what measures led to the happiness and what to the sufferings of the common people. This task is more important than the descriptions of battles and sieges, which make up so extensive a portion of ancient histories. On this point Macaulay is correct:

> "The circumstances which have most influenced the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity—these are for the most part noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. . . . The upper-current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the under-current flows. We read of defeats and victories, but we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories and prosperous amidst defeats. . . . We have read books called histories of England, under the reign of George II., in which the rise of Methodism is not even mentioned" (*Essays*, "History").

514. Since the purpose of history is instruction, **the great law for history** is that it shall impart sound knowledge, giving us true facts, faithfully presented and correctly interpreted. Truth is to the mind what food is to the body—an essential requisite for its proper development and healthy condition. For the absence of truth from histories nothing can atone—no style, however beautiful; no name, however popular.

515. Still, **all errors are not equally important.** If an historian is somewhat mistaken about the number of men who perished in a given battle, about the armor of certain

troops or the name of their commander, such errors do not seriously interfere with the lessons of wisdom which the reader is expected to learn. But those errors are most pernicious which affect practical conclusions; above all, when those conclusions regard the highest interests of mankind. Thus Hume, who so misrepresents many facts as to instil infidelity; Gibbon, who labors to undermine Christianity; Macaulay, who incessantly carps at Catholicity; and Bancroft, who, while patronizing all religions, inculcates indifferentism to all positive teaching—far from instructing, lead men astray on subjects which it is their highest interest to understand aright.

516. It is not here supposed that all these historians have set themselves deliberately to work to misrepresent what they knew to be the truth. **The critic** deals with the literary productions themselves, and with the motives of the writers in so far only as they throw light upon the value of the works. As for the **student of history,** he ought to inquire before reading whether the author is a reliable guide, whether he is sound on the first principles of reason and revelation. If he is not sound on these he will be sure to mislead. "Can the blind lead the blind? do they not both fall into the ditch?" (Luke vi. 39).

Article II. Sources of Historical Knowledge.

517. *Rule* 1.—In gathering materials for a history the writer should, as far as possible, **consult the original documents,** and not be satisfied with taking statements at second-hand. Lingard's conduct in this respect is worthy of imitation:

"To render these volumes more deserving of public approbation," he writes in his preface to the *History of England,* "I did not hesitate, at the commencement of my labors, to impose on myself a severe obligation from which I am not conscious of having on any occasion materially swerved: to take nothing upon trust; to confine my researches, in the first instance, to original documents and the more ancient writers, and only to consult the modern historians when I had satisfied my own judgment and composed my own narrative. My object was to preserve myself from copying the mistakes of others, to keep my mind unbiassed by their opinions and prejudices, and to present to the reader from authentic sources a full and correct relation of events."

518. It is owing in great part to the **neglect of this rule** that misconceptions and misstatements are handed down from one historian to another. For instance, how often do we not hear of the cruel dungeon in which Galileo is supposed to have been incarcerated, when in reality he was simply forbidden to leave for some time the halls and gardens of a magnificent palace? (See the collection of original documents regarding Galileo in the *Dublin Review,* vol. xvii., New Series. On the transmission of false statements from one historian to another, see an interesting chapter in Cardinal Newman's *Present Position of Catholics in England,* pp. 226, etc.)

519. The original **documents to be consulted** are not only books, deeds, journals, chronicles, memoirs, official records, private letters, etc., but even such relics of the past as buildings, tombs, coins, paintings, tools, and so forth. Lately much light has been thrown on some portions of history by the study of such relics. Still, we must distinguish between the real facts which these studies have discovered and the mere theories which historians and scientists are ever inventing to fill up the void left by the facts.

520. **The Holy Scriptures** are, of course, the most venerable and the most reliable source of historic knowledge: besides being inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are, even from a human point of view, the most ancient and the most

authentic documents. (See Southwall's *Recent Origin of Man*, Preface.) Vain men are ever building up theories, and exploring every remnant of former ages, with the view to find contradictions between God's word and the records of time. But the highest authorities in antiquarian researches, such as the two brothers Rawlinson, Lenormant, Chevallier, and others, have sufficiently shown that there is no real conflict between science and revelation.

521. *Rule* 2.—Distinguish carefully between **reliable and unreliable documents.** Not every document, however ancient, is truthful; nor is it enough that a writer is a contemporary of an event to be a reliable witness of it. The historian must know how to sift his evidence with acute discrimination, as a judge must do with conflicting testimony. Within this century there has been considerable earnestness displayed by leading historians in discovering the truth on many points which had been misunderstood for ages. Niebuhr has made important discoveries bearing on the history of ancient Rome. Voigt and Roscoe, though not Catholics, have restored the honor of Gregory VII. and of Leo X.; Hallam and Ranke have labored zealously in the cause of truth, though both are prejudiced witnesses; Maitland has, to a considerable extent, changed the views of the learned in favor of the middle ages; and the Catholic historian Digby has set forth the true grandeur of those Ages of Faith. (On Hallam see *Dublin Review*, vols. xix., xx., New Series. See also Maitland's *Reformation*, Essay I. "On Puritan Veracity.")

522. As examples of unreliable documents from which writers have often drawn gross falsehoods, we may mention the two historians of the Spanish Inquisition, **Limborch** and **Llorente,** who have supplied Prescott with most of his misrepresentations on that subject. Both are utterly unreliable writers, as is proved to evidence in Archbishop M. J. Spalding's *Miscellanea* (pp. 216, etc.; see also Balmes' *European Civilization*, appendix). Prescott admits the extravagant exaggerations of Llorente; but unfortunately he has thought it proper to consign this important admission to a foot-note which he puts near the end of his work (*History of Ferdinand and Isabella*, vol. iii. p. 492), while he takes special trouble to exalt the authority of Llorente in the chapter on the Inquisition (vol. i. p. 265), to which he purposely appends a sketch of Llorente's life.

523. Late historians owe much of their reliability to the fact that they have gained more free access to authentic documents than was granted to their predecessors. For instance, Agnes Strickland in her *Lives of the Queens of England and Scotland*, and Lingard in his *History of England*, have been allowed to consult the English State papers; and now the Vatican archives have been thrown open to all comers.

Article III. Qualities required in an Historian.

524. The *first quality* which an historian will need in collecting his materials is **industry**—hard, long, and persevering labor. Lucian, in his *Treatise on the Manner of Writing History*, correctly remarks:

> "This is not a task for fluent writers or careless compilers; but more than any other species of literature it requires much thought, if the historian wishes to produce what Thucydides calls a treasure that will endure for ever" (ch. v.)

525. Of industry **the ancients** have given us bright examples. Herodotus travelled over the greater part of the then known world. Thucydides began to collect his documents at the beginning of the war of which he intended to become the historian. Polybius travelled much

to visit those places with which remarkable events were connected. From him we have this celebrated maxim: "Truth is to history what eyes are to animals. As animals are of no use without sight, so history without truth is only amusing and unprofitable narration."

526. Most eminent **historians of modern times** have displayed no less industry. Prescott's laborious research is unquestionable.

"He has thoroughly examined," says Archbishop M. J. Spalding, "and seems to have carefully sifted all the original documents relating to the Conquest [of Mexico]. . . . He obtained no less than 8,000 pages of unpublished documents. He was also greatly aided in this task by men of distinguished talent in Mexico" (*Miscellanea*, p. 252).

527. David Hume, on the contrary, is notoriously deficient in research. He wrote before the critical school of history began; he consulted no original documents; he did not weigh his second-hand authorities; he simply wished to write a pleasant narrative in a faultless style. Hence the *North American Review* says of nim: "That any instructor in our day should place Hume's work in the hands of a youth, leaving him to suppose that it contained the truth, is to us a matter of no little surprise." (See a thorough criticism of Hume in the *Dublin Review* for May, 1842.)

528. The *second quality* needed by an historian is **impartiality.** This does not consist in being indifferent to justice and injustice, good and evil, as the infidel critic Taine pretends to be.

"What matters it," he writes, "if Peter or Paul is a rascal? That is the business of his contemporaries; they suffered from his vices, and ought to think only of despising or contemning him. Now we are beyond his reach, and hatred has disappeared with the danger. At this distance, and in the historic perspective, I see in him but a mental machine, provided with certain springs, animated by a primary impulse, affected by various circumstances," etc. (*English Literature*, vol. ii. p. 407).

This is an absurd indifference, which can only be justified on Taine's own theory: "Vice and virtue are products, like vitriol and sugar" (vol. i. Introduction). Still, such indifference is not seldom exhibited by writers of unsound principles.

529. The impartiality required of the historian is the absence of such **prejudice** as would prevent him from discovering or from acknowledging the truth. For instance, a person raised in a mercantile community and destitute of a liberal education is apt to appreciate no enterprise which does not add to the wealth of the nation. He may readily be blinded by prejudice to such a point that he will judge a grand enterprise like the Crusades by no other rule than that of cold utilitarianism.

How far prejudice has affected historians in regard to religious questions is ably explained by Cardinal Newman in his *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (L. i., etc.)

530. The *third quality* needed by the historian is **discrimination,** which will enable him to determine:

(*a*) What documents are reliable;

(*b*) What is the real meaning of obscure passages in reliable documents; and

(*c*) Which is the true or the most probable among conflicting testimonies.

The ancients did not generally manifest this critical spirit. Still, even Herodotus takes care to distinguish between what he witnessed and what he heard, between what he considered as probable and what as fabulous. In the present century history is become much more critical than ever before; but it is far from perfection as yet. For instance, Fra Paolo, alias Pietro Sarpi, continues to be

quoted as an authority about the Council of Trent, though it is clearly proved that he wrote under the dictation of passion and bitter hatred.

Judicious discrimination supposes in the historian a keen insight into the characters and the passions of men, so as to discern the selfish motives which may impair the value of his authorities.

Article IV. History generally Reliable.

531. Mankind has exhibited in all ages a high appreciation of fidelity in historical records; and historians have, as a rule, striven earnestly to discover and transmit the truth. It may, therefore, be safely asserted that **history is generally reliable.** Several **reasons** contribute to make it so:

1. Man is naturally desirous of discovering the truth on important matters;

2. It is a principle of Ethics that men do not deceive wantonly when important interests are at stake; and, therefore, even questions of life and death are unhesitatingly decided by the testimony of proper witnesses;

3. When historians have gone to great trouble to discover the truth with regard to events, they are not apt to trifle with knowledge so laboriously acquired;

4. If one is tempted by special considerations to misrepresent some weighty events, others will unite their testimony to contradict him, and thus no gross errors are apt to be universally received.

532. What, then, must we think of the well-known saying of Sir Robert Walpole to his son Horace, "Quote me not history; for that I know to be false"? This means that not every assertion found in a history is to be at once received as decisive. Thus understood, the caution is a wise one. We should **read history with a critical spirit,** with careful discrimination between reliable and unreliable authors. When history is thus read it will be found that the vast majority of past events are agreed on by historians, and therefore it would be folly to refuse credence to them. It will appear, besides, that falsifications concurred in by many historians are confined to special classes of events. If copious streams of error have been poured out upon the earth, those streams can be shown to flow from certain sources and along determined channels which it is quite possible to distinguish from the general currents of reliable information.

533. Against our thesis, "history is generally reliable," **it may be objected** that so great an authority as Count de Maistre has said: "The history of the last three centuries is a general conspiracy against the truth." And our Supreme Pontiff, Leo XIII., in a late encyclical letter on historical studies, writes: "Now, if ever, it may justly be said that the art of writing history would seem to be a conspiracy against the truth." But it must be noticed that both these authorities speak of special departments of history, of such as bear upon the Catholic Church.

534. That the **history of the Church** should have been greatly misrepresented by her opponents need not surprise us. Christ had foretold that His Church should be persecuted. "If you had been of the world, the world would love its own," etc. (John xv. 18–22). The persecution of the sword has ceased, but other methods of attack are continuing in all ages.

"It was natural," says the Pontiff, "that those who were attacking the Papacy by every means in their power should not spare history, the witness of such great facts. They have tampered with her integrity, and that with such persistent art as to turn into weapons of offence the very arms that were most suited to the purpose of warding off aggression. The Centuriators of Magdeburgh made themselves conspicuous by their adoption of this system," etc.

He proceeds to show that their example was followed by the opponents of the Church generally. Unfortunately most English writers have ranked themselves with her enemies. How this hostility has led to various systems of falsification we shall have occasion to explain in the next article.

Article V. Special Sources of Error.

535. **The law of truthfulness** in historical writings is thus expressed by Cicero :

"Who does not know that the first law of history is that it shall dare say nothing false, next that it shall not fear to tell the whole truth, again that the narration suggest no suspicion of favor or enmity?" (*De Or.*, ii. 15).

This wise rule may be **violated in four ways**, which constitute so many sources of error—namely, by *false assertions*, by the *suppression of facts*, by *partiality*, by prejudice or *hostility*. There is a fifth source of error, less familiar to the ancients—*i.e.*, the misrepresentation of facts by *false theories*.

§ 1. *False Statements.*

536. No truly great historian would deliberately stain his pages with **false statements**. When these occur they are usually the result of misinformation, of prejudice, or of such party spirit as blinds the mind to the light of truth. As examples of false statements, the **results of misinformation**, we may refer to the works of Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus, and to the portions of Rollin which are drawn from those unreliable authorities. Lenormant and Chevalier speak with great respect of those authors ; but they judiciously add :

"To reproduce as a whole the facts which they relate, and to give them as an account of the chain of principal events in Egyptian or Abyssinian history, . . . would convey an absolutely untrue idea" (*History of the East*, Introduction).

Happily, Rawlinson's notes in his edition of Herodotus correct most of the errors in the original. Lenormant and Chevalier's *History of the East* now replaces the corresponding parts of Rollin.

537. Of false statements **resulting from a violent partisan spirit** James M. line points out many examples occurring in Froude's *History of England*. (See a series of articles on Froude in the *Catholic World* for 1870.)

538. **Misquoting and mistranslating documents** is a method of falsification that comes under the head of false statements. In this connection it has been said "Mr. Froude does not seem to have fully grasped the meaning of inverted commas." (For examples of this defect see *Catholic World* for October, 1870, p. 73 ; and *Month* for 1879, p. 142.)

539. It is usual for great historians to give in **marginal notes** references to their authorities for every important statement. Prescott blames the earlier editions of Bancroft's *History of the United States* for discarding notes and abridging references, and he points out the evil results of this practice (*Miscellanies*, p. 327). The last edition of Bancroft has omitted references, and is now merely a popular book, no longer a work of great authority. (See articles on Bancroft in the *Catholic World* for 1883–84.)

540. How **documents may be distorted** from their real meaning by designing men is exemplified by the efforts of Gibbon to cast a doubt on the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures. Three Evangelists narrate that there was darkness over all the earth at the death of our Blessed Saviour. Gibbon, to invalidate their testimony, says among other things : "A distinct chapter of Pliny is designed for

eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration" (chap. xv.) Now, Pliny pretends to give only an example, and the distinct chapter referred to is only this brief paragraph, which we quote entire :

"There happen wonderful and protracted eclipses" [notice the plural number], "as was the one which occurred when Cæsar had been slain, and while the war of Antony was carried on, at which time the sun was pale for a whole year continuously" (Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, ii. 30).

§ 2. *Suppression of Facts.*

541. Witnesses before our courts of justice are made to swear that they will tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." The reason is that the **suppression of facts** may be, and often is, equivalent to a false statement. This suppression is another of the disingenuous methods by which Gibbon attacks the Christian religion. Prescott writes :

"He [Gibbon] has often slurred over in the text such particulars as might reflect most credit on the character of the religion, or shuffled them into a note at the bottom of the page, while all that admits of a doubtful complexion in its early propagation is ostentatiously blazoned and set in contrast to the most amiable features of paganism," etc. (Essay on *Conquest of Granada*).

It is a remarkable illustration of the power of prejudice that Prescott, who has written this correct criticism of Gibbon, should have incurred a similar reproach in his writings. He has described the conversion of Mexico to Christianity in a manner analogous to Gibbon's method of accounting for the early rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire. (See Spalding's *Miscellanea*, p. 293.)

542. Are there not some **details which an historian may properly suppress?** There certainly are; for as history aims at useful instruction, whatever can in no way contribute to this purpose is to be omitted ; for instance, the scandalous details of the voluptuous lives of Tiberius and Heliogabalus. But only details are to be suppressed, not important facts ; thus the life of David would be incomplete without the story of his fall into sin. Such events are important for the instruction of mankind, and as such they are related both by profane and sacred writers. It is not usually expedient, in writing the life of Luther, to quote freely from the shocking vulgarities of his *Table Talk ;* but it is a falsification of history to garble some of the extracts without warning the reader, as is done in Bohn's edition.

543. In encyclopædias, and similar works of reference, falsification by suppression of facts is often carried very far. Thus in the latest edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, a work of high pretensions, the article on "Missions to the Heathens" suppresses and ignores almost all the facts regarding Catholic missions. (See a detailed criticism of the article in the *Dublin Review* for July, 1884.)

§ 3. *Partiality.*

544. It is not required, nor is it even desirable, that the historian shall feel no **special affection** for the nation whose history he writes. In fact, unless he can sincerely sympathize with the actors of his story he will scarcely do justice to their motives :

"Who would think," asks Prescott, "of looking to a Frenchman for a history of England? to an Englishman for the best history of France? Ill fares it with the nation that cannot find writers of genius to tell its own story. What foreign hand could have painted like Herodotus and Thucydides the achievements of the Greeks? Who like Livy and Tacitus have portrayed the shifting character of the Roman in his rise, meridian, and fall? Had the Greeks trusted their story to these same Romans, what would have been their fate with posterity? Let the Carthaginians tell" (*Miscellanies*, "Bancroft").

Washington Irving did not sympathize with the Spaniards in their struggle for independence from Moorish domination: the result is that his *Conquest of Granada* fails to bring out the true spirit of that heroic enterprise; the work looks like the parody of a history.

545. But, on the other hand, **excessive sympathy** with a cause often leads to serious misrepresentations, and gross injustice towards its opponents. Livy is severely blamed for such partiality to Rome. Still, it must be remembered that Livy is not our only authority on the subject which he has treated. Several Greek historians support his statements concerning the virtues and the glory of the early Romans. The criticism passed on Livy by Macaulay in his "Essay on History" is exaggerated, as are many other statements in that unreliable essay (*supra* No. 51).

§ 4. *Prejudice or Hostility.*

546. We have seen that prejudice may readily prevent an author from discovering the truth; but it often goes further, and under the form of **hostility** it leads the historian to make unjust attacks upon his opponents. This hostility sometimes manifests itself by direct charges, as when Prescott writes: "In that day the principle that the end justifies the means was fully recognized" (*History of Ferdinand and Isabella*, vol. i. p. 245).

547. False charges are often disguised under the form of **innuendoes.**

"Gibbon," says Prescott, "by a style of innuendo that conveys more than meets the ear, has contrived, with Iago-like duplicity, to breathe a taint of suspicion on the purity which he dares not openly assail" ("Essay on Irving").

This unmanly system of warfare is not uncommon. After Irving has given us such a character of Ferdinand as the most reliable authorities prove him to have deserved, he continues thus: "It has been added, however, that he had more bigotry than religion, that his ambition was craving rather than magnanimous," etc. Irving does not say that such charges rested on good authority; he merely breathes suspicion on a character which he appears unwilling to assail openly (*History of Columbus*, book ii. c. ii.) Another species of innuendo consists in suggesting unworthy motives where the actions related are honorable, as Irving does in attributing to Ferdinand unworthy motives for encouraging Columbus; and he introduces these motives with a mere ***perhaps*** **(c. iii.)**

§ 5. *False Theories.*

548. **False theories** are a source of falsification which requires special attention, both because they are extensively used by late writers, and because they escape detection on the part of many readers. Macaulay gives a lucid explanation of them:

"The best historians of later times have been seduced from truth, not by their imagination, but by their reason. They far excel their predecessors in the art of deducing general principles from facts. But unhappily they have fallen into the error of distorting facts to suit general principles. They arrive at a theory from looking at some of the phenomena, and the remaining phenomena they strain or curtail to suit the theory. For this purpose it is not necessary that they should assert what is absolutely false. . . . In every human character and transaction there is a mixture of good and evil: a little exaggeration, a little suppression, a judicious use of epithets, a watchful and searching scepticism with respect to the evidence on one side, a convenient credulity with respect to every report or tradition on the other, may easily make a saint of Laud or a tyrant of Henry the Fourth. This species of misrepresentation abounds in the most valuable works of modern historians" (*Essays*, "History").

549. Macaulay **applies this criticism** to Hume and to

Gibbon, and especially to Mitford's *History of Greece.* Orestes A. Brownson, in his *Quarterly Review* for 1852 (p. 423), applies it to several others :

"Herder, Kant, Hegel, Guizot, Cousin, Michelet, and even Carlyle and Macaulay," he says, "are instances in point, as all who are familiar with their writings need not be informed. None of them give us genuine history ; they merely give us their speculations on what is not history, and what, according to those speculations, ought to be history. It is the common error of the modern school of so-called philosophical historians, and to which school Mr. Bancroft belongs, though he is not by any means the worst of the school, to suppose that history may be reduced to the terms of a speculative science, and be written, as it were, *a priori*. 'Give me the geographical position of a people,' says the brilliant and eloquent Cousin, 'and I will give you its history.'"

550. Brownson gives the following **examples of false theories:**

"Herder finds in all history only his ideas of human progress ; Kant finds nothing but his categories ; Hegel finds the significance and end of all history, the operations of divine Providence, of all mankind, and of all nature, to have been the establishment of the Prussian monarchy ; Mr. Bancroft finds that the original purpose of creation, of God and the universe, is fulfilled in the establishment of American democracy."

The same article of Brownson's, in analyzing the entire theory of Bancroft, shows conclusively that the philosophical speculations of that historian are not merely visionary, but fraught with false principles of government and morality tending to the ruin of society. The article deserves most careful study (Brownson's *Quarterly Review* for 1852, "Bancroft").

551. **Carlyle's theory is:**

(*a*) That the world is ever tending to go wrong. From time to time appear great minds that labor to set it right. These are his "Heroes," who are not to be judged, but whose conduct is law for us. Such are Oliver Cromwell, Mahomet, Napoleon I., Frederick the Great, as well as St. Paul, Shakspeare, Dante, Burns, Luther, and Calvin ; not Voltaire, who only pulled down. "It is from the heart of the world that he [the Hero] comes ; he is a portion of the primal reality of things" (Carlyle).

(*b*) The world is all wrong now: "God's laws are become a Great Happiness Principle, a Parliamentary expediency." "The Universe—a swine's trough," all scrambling for felicity.

(*c*) Religion is very necessary. It is moral rectitude as understood by Cromwell and the Puritans. They read their duty in themselves ; the Bible only aided them. At need they did violence to it. Carlyle is so much their brother that he excuses or admires their excesses. He sets them before us as models, and judges both past and present by them alone. "Carlyle's style has introduced into this country a thoroughly false method of writing history" (Justin MacCarthy).

552. Macaulay, in his *History of England*, disclaims all theory ; but, unconsciously perhaps, he inculcates the "Great Happiness Principle," which Carlyle condemns. By this standard everything is judged. Puritanism is good, the Establishment bad, Catholicity worst of all. This last did some good in the Dark Ages, when "the priests, with all their faults, were by far the wisest portion of society" ; it is now become "an unjust and noxious tyranny" (*Hist. of England*, chap. i.)

Hence he is more severe on blunders than on crimes. While "under Cromwell hell was the dread of being found guilty before the just Judge, now it is the dread of making a bad speculation or of transgressing etiquette" (Carlyle). Macaulay is the impersonation of the spirit of the world. (See also *Dublin Review* for April, 1886, "Studies of History.")

Article VI. The Plan of a History.

553. To erect a building that shall unite beauty with usefulness we need, besides sound material, a suitable **plan** drawn by a skilful architect. In the same manner the historian must conceive an artistic plan for the composition of his work. Now, everything artistic supposes unity of design. The events that make up a history must be bound together by some connecting principle, which enables the mind to see them in their bearing on one another, and to view them as the portions of one entire group.

554. This unity is easily attained **in particular histories**—that is, in those which narrate one event, such as the Conspiracy of Catiline, the French Revolution of 1789, etc.

But the difficulty is much greater in general or **universal histories**, which deal with various nations, each of which presents an independent series of events. In such works both utility and artistic beauty require that some leading idea shall combine those separate parts into a harmonious whole. The ancients, with their well-known perfection of taste, are here again our models.

555. Thus Herodotus, while embracing in his work all the nations known in his day, arranges the parts so as to develop this one idea: "that the whole empire of Persia, after subjugating and incorporating with itself all the nations of the East, was in its turn conquered by united Greece." His history resembles an heroic poem, in which one great enterprise or action is related. We find ourselves at once in the midst of the events, and we are gradually informed of all that preceded by long episodes appropriately introduced. Both in the main narration, which is the history of the Persian war, and in the various episodes or partial

histories of different lands, one philosophic thought is ever held before us—that of a Nemesis or avenging deity, which causes the exalted to be humbled.

556. **Polybius,** whom Blair pronounces the most successful of all ancient historians in respect to unity, wrote what he calls a *Universal History*—not, indeed, comprising all times, but all nations within a given period; he maintains unity by professing to show "how and by what sort of policy almost all the countries of the inhabited earth, in less than fifty-three years, passed into the power of Rome."

557. **Livy** exhibits "the power of Rome arising from humble beginnings and extending through gradual conquests to universal empire." Thus Livy begins at the centre and spreads to the circumference of Roman power, while Polybius begins at the circumference and unites all its parts with the centre.

558. **Thucydides,** on the contrary, in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, has entirely neglected this source of light and beauty. Though his subject possessed the closest unity, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus observes, his account of it has none, but it is cut up into various campaigns, into winters and summers; he leaves one enterprise or expedition unfinished, to carry us away to disconnected events in other parts of Greece. (See Dionys. Halic. Letter to Cneius Pompey.)

559. Among modern historians **Archibald Alison** is very successful in maintaining unity. He had a difficult task to perform, as he had undertaken to write the *History of Europe from the Commencement of the French Revolution in* 1789 *to the Restoration of the Bourbons in* 1815, which he afterwards continued to the accession of Louis Napoleon in 1852. His bond of unity is expressed in the following lines of his preface:

"Its earliest years [*i.e.* of the French Revolution] suggest at

every page reflections on the evils of political fanaticism, and the terrible consequences of democratic fervor; the latter on the debasing effects of absolute despotism and the sanguinary march of military ambition."

Alison's is truly a learned work, but it bears a partisan character. To his mind the English constitution is the ideal of perfection politically, and the Church of England religiously; everything else is measured by its approach to these two standards.

560. **The different parts** also of a large history must have their own principles of unity. For instance, one period of a nation's history may be marked by the steady growth of popular freedom, another by the constant increase of absolutism in the ruling power.

561. It is evident that the **selection of a false principle** or leading idea will cause misconceptions of many events, as if in the history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the author should pretend to see the growth of liberty, whereas those centuries rather promoted the principles of absolutism. When the philosophic ideas which connect or underlie a history are made so prominent that the facts are not fully considered, but only in so far as they bear on the theory or the thesis, the work is then called a philosophical history, or the philosophy of history, of which species we are yet to treat.

Article VII. Development of the Facts.

562. **The facts should be so developed** as to secure two results—the *artistic beauty* of the narrative, and *proper instruction* for the reader.

§ 1. *The Artistic Beauty of the Narrative.*

563. The **artistic beauty of the narrative** is attained by the observance of the precepts laid down for narration (*supra*, book iv. c. iii.)

As an example of the application of these precepts to a history, we shall here add **a criticism of Sallust's "Conspiracy of Catiline,"** confining our remarks to the artistic beauty of the narrative.

564. It is evident that not all the circumstances of that intricate plot, all that was said and done in Rome and elsewhere in connection with it, can be or need be narrated by the historian. He must "exhibit such parts of the truth as most nearly produce the effect of the whole." Let us suppose that we see Sallust at work. How does he go about it? He has formed to himself a clear conception of the events. He knows that the conspiracy did not arise suddenly and of itself, nor was it entirely the work of one designing man; but it was the natural outcome of **a combination of causes,** which had been some time developing before they produced so vast an effect.

565. He will, then, begin by showing us those causes at work. This, however, he does not attempt to do by a philosophical discussion, but by an exhibition of the facts. For the sake of unity he seizes upon **one prominent figure,** around which all the separate facts are made to cluster, as the parts in a group of statuary are gathered around one central figure. This prominent figure is Catiline. After his introduction, therefore, the historian at once makes us acquainted with that personage, who is to remain prominently before us during the whole narrative, like the hero of an epic poem.

566. This sketch, or **Character of Catiline,** is certainly a striking picture, perhaps overdrawn so far as truth is concerned, but artistically adapted to arouse interest from the opening of the story.

567. With this commanding figure before us, we are next

made to review the **history of Rome,** from its simple beginnings to its full development, from the patriarchal virtues of its early founders to the luxury and depravity of those latter days. All this account is expressed in terms pregnant with meaning, but very rapidly, especially the description of former virtues, which forms the background to the picture. Soon we see Rome abandoned to the designing ambition of wicked men, the laws violated with impunity, and wealth and lust replacing all higher aspirations.

568. As a natural consequence we see **the Roman youth corrupt,** leading a life of extravagance and dissipation. Here we have the materials which are to be kindled into a vast conflagration. Now Catiline, whose commanding figure has struck us from the beginning, steps forward to apply the match. His methods of corrupting still further the Roman nobility, the intended tools of his ambition, and of next gaining them and binding them to himself, are most vividly described. With this comes a brief sketch of Catiline's former career, which makes the whole narrative more probable.

569. With No. XVII. begins the narration of **the Conspiracy** itself. So far great skill was required to keep unity in view while tracing the various remote and proximate cause of the events; but unity has been well maintained. all is clear and interesting. Now the narrative becomes more exciting; it reads like a novel or a tragedy. We see the most desperate of the young Roman nobles assembled at night around Catiline. We have his speech almost in his own words—and an artful speech it is, showing the justice and necessity of conspiring. For Sallust understood human nature well: he knew that the most vicious men will hide their wickedness from their own eyes under the cloak of justice, or at least of a sad necessity. Then the plan of action intended by Catiline is more fully developed; there are stirring scenes, as that of the conspirators pledging themselves to each other in cups of human blood.

570. But now a new personage, Furius, is introduced, whose foolish vanity must lead to the discovery of the criminal plot. All this is as naturally developed as in a well-conceived novel. Rome takes the alarm. **Cicero is made consul.** Here, however, it appears that private rancor in Sallust against the noble "Father of his country" prevented the historian from adding another great source of beauty and interest to his narrative. For as every element of evil had skilfully been gathered around Catiline, so now Cicero might and should have been made the central figure of the opposing group. Artistic beauty suggested it; truth required it; and the story would have gained from it in thrilling interest.

571. It will be a useful study to **compare** with Sallust's account of Catiline's Conspiracy the narrative of the Gunpowder Plot in Lingard's *History of England* (vol. vi. c. 1), or, better still, Father Gerard's *Narrative of the Gunpowder Plot*, which is more reliable.

§ 2. *Proper Instruction for the Reader.*

572. That a history may impart **proper instruction** to the reader, two rules must be observed:

Rule 1.—The facts must be narrated without false coloring, so that they may appear to the reader such as they really are.

Rule 2.—The historian should not be constantly interrupting his narrative to preach a sermon or point a moral; such practice would be inartistic, blending the historical with the didactic style of composition—as great a fault against good taste as the blending of two styles in architecture.

573. But **should the historian never show himself,** never

aid his readers directly to take the right view of the facts, by saying honestly what he himself thinks of them? This is the point on which critics and historians differ considerably, so that they may be divided into three distinct schools.

574. One school may be called the **Fatalistic School** of history. It wishes the historian not only to utter no judgment on the facts presented, approving some and condemning others, but not even to form such a judgment in his own mind. Writers of this school in reality admit no radical or essential difference between right and wrong; or at most they consider this distinction as a matter of opinion only, which therefore the historian may leave to the taste of the reader. Of this school Thiers and Mignet are the leaders among the French. Bancroft is one of their imitators in this country. As scepticism is spreading, there is a tendency in many late historians to adopt the same course.

575. The second may be called the **Descriptive School.** It allows the historian to form his own judgment, but directs him never to utter it in so many words, but to describe or represent the facts in such a manner as to inculcate his own conclusions on the reader. This is, at present, a very popular school, adopted by some very good men and by many writers of unsound principles.

576. The third may be called the **Judicial School,** in which the historian, like a judge, after fully examining the evidence on both sides, boldly pronounces his judgment, approving and condemning as important occasions may require. This school is that of the ancients; it is best exemplified in Tacitus, the prince of historians, who brands with ignominy the human monsters that bore the sceptre of the Roman Empire during so many calamitous years. To the same school belong, among the moderns, Bossuet in his

Discourse on Universal History, Alzog and Darras in their *Histories of the Church*, Ranke in his *History of the Popes*, and a multitude of others of the best historians.

577. The Fatalistic school is utterly unsound in principle and pernicious in practice. Of the two other schools **the Judicial** is, we think, **preferable** for several reasons:

1. It appears to be more honest on the part of the historian to state clearly his views on important events.

2. It is more useful; for the historian, who is supposed to be a man of maturity and wisdom, is better qualified to form such a judgment than ordinary readers, and thus can guide them aright.

3. It is the practice sanctioned by the approbation of ages.

578. 4. The only plausible objection brought against it—viz., that the historian may misjudge the facts—vanishes if we consider that the Descriptive school may mislead its readers as well, and that in a more pernicious manner. For in the Descriptive school the historian inculcates his private judgments by the coloring which he gives to the facts; he does not lead the reader to judge for himself, but he forces his own conclusions on him.

579. 5. The Judicial school adds to the narrative the warmth of genuine passion, which, as the readers of Tacitus well know, contributes more to interest than any degree of ornament. In fact, without such honest warmth that defect is felt for which Prescott blames Gibbon when he says ("Essay on Irving"):

"It is a consequence of this scepticism in Gibbon, as with Voltaire, that his writings are nowhere warmed with a generous moral sentiment. The most sublime of all spectacles, that of the martyr who suffers for conscience' sake, . . . is contemplated by the historian with the smile, or rather sneer, of philosophic indifference. This is not only bad taste, as he is addressing a Christian audience,

but he thus voluntarily relinquishes one of the most powerful engines for the movement of human passion, which is never so easily excited as by deeds of suffering, self devoted heroism."

Certainly, the Judicial manner of writing history may be abused; but every good thing may be abused, and the Descriptive manner is still more liable to this objection.

Article VIII. The Style of History.

580. As history is one of the noblest and most dignified species of composition, all critics mention dignity as the chief quality of **historical style.** But **dignity** does not mean pomposity; and such writers as Gibbon, Robertson, and Bancroft become less interesting by their excess of stateliness. Prescott says:

"The historian of the *Decline and Fall* too rarely forgets his own importance in that of his subject. The consequence which he attaches to his personal labors is shown in a bloated dignity of expression and an ostentation of ornament that contrast whimsically enough with the trifling topics and commonplace thoughts on which, in the course of his long work, they are occasionally employed. He nowhere moves along with the easy freedom of nature, but seems to leap, as it were, from triad to triad by a succession of strained, convulsive efforts" (*Miscell.*, "Irving").

In what, then, consists the dignity of style which history requires?

581. **Dignity consists,** (*a*) in a **proper gravity,** which Blair explains thus:

"Gravity must always be maintained in the narration. There must be no meanness nor vulgarity in the style; no quaint nor colloquial phrases; no affectation of pertness or wit. The smart or the sneering manner of telling a story is inconsistent with the historical character. I do not say that the historian is never to let himself down. He may sometimes do it with propriety, in order to diversify the strain of his narration, which, if it be perfectly uniform, is apt to become tiresome. But he should be careful never to descend too far; and on occasions when a light or ludicrous anecdote is proper to be recorded, it is generally better to throw it into a note than to hazard becoming too familiar by introducing it into the body of the work" (Lecture xxxvi.)

582. It consists, (*b*) in the use of such **ornaments of style** as will set off the thoughts to the best advantage, without, however, diverting the attention of the reader from the thoughts to the figures, from the march of the events to the harmonious flow of the sentences. History admits of a rich style, as rich as any other species of prose composition; but no writing admits of bombast—*i.e.*, of more sound than sense, such as we find in the following lines of Bancroft (*Hist. of U. S.*, vol. i. p. 209):

"It is one of the surprising results of moral power that language, composed of fleeting sounds, retains and transmits the remembrance of past occurrences long after every monument has passed away. Of the labors of the Indians on the soil of Virginia there remains nothing so respectable as would be a common ditch for the draining of lands; the memorials of their former existence are found only in the names of their rivers and their mountains. Unchanging nature retains the appellations which were given by those whose villages have disappeared and whose tribes have become extinct."

The middle sentence would have been all-sufficient.

583. **Exactness** is a second quality of style in history. It consists in expressing just what the historian means, and not merely something like it. For instance, one of the sources of vagueness in the first sentence of the passage just quoted is the use of the word *moral* in a meaning which the word does not properly bear; for 'moral' regards law, or the distinction of right and wrong, which is not in question here.

584. Exactness should affect even the smallest words and the apparently insignificant portions of a sentence; an ill-chosen or ill-placed adjective or adverb is often enough to