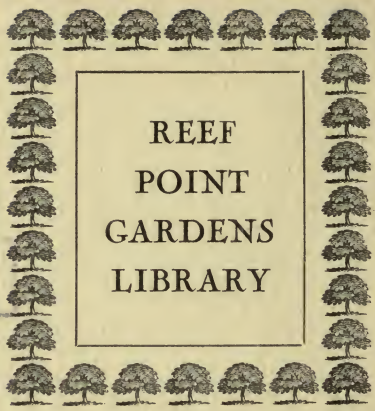

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# PUNCTUATION

## ITS PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

BY

T. F. HUSBAND M.A.

AND

M. F. A. HUSBAND B.A.

. . Faithful in that which is least . .—S. Luke xvi. 10

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# PUNCTUATION

## ITS PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

*Authorities:*

Isaac Taylor, *The Alphabet* (London, 1883);
Edward Clodd, *The Story of the Alphabet* (London, 1900);
E. S. Roberts, *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy*, Part I (Cambridge, 1887);
E. L. Hicks and G. F. Hill, *Greek Historical Inscriptions* (Oxford, 1901).

§ 1. It is difficult for us who live under modern conditions to realize the feelings and aims of the man who first tried to express himself in a form more permanent and far-reaching than speech, but of one thing we may feel tolerably certain. His effort presupposes a degree of self-consciousness and a power of constructing conditions other than those immediately present which markedly separate him from his predecessors.

At the same time, however, his powers of abstraction were but weakly alive: he was still unable adequately to put himself in the position of his reader, and, as a result, the

correct understanding of the rude pictures in which he recorded his experiences involved some antecedent knowledge of the circumstances described. The form of his expression was simple and direct, yet it was not altogether clear and complete. We, on the other hand, are in possession of a highly complex instrument of expression, an instrument that has been developed and refined to meet the needs as well of the reader as of the writer.

During the long process of growth which has brought our written language to its present wide range of power, certain conventional signs have slowly come into general use in order to indicate the grouping and sequence of ideas, and at the same time to simplify and safeguard the correct interpretation of a writer's meaning. We may best judge how far we are dependent on these artificial devices by reading the following piece of nineteenth-century prose, which is printed in what may be called primitive simplicity:—

HOWPAINFULTOSEEORTOKNOWT
HATVASTREVELATIONSOFGRANDE
URANDBEAUTYAREWASTINGTHEM
SELVESFOREVERFORESTSTEEMIN
GWITHGORGEOUSLIFEFLORALWIL
DERNESSESHIDDENINACCESSIBLY
WHILSTATTHESAMETIMEINCONTR
APOSITIONTOTHATEVILBEHOLDAC
ORRESPONDINGEVILVIZTHATWITH
EQUALPRODIGALITYTHEGREATCA

PACITIESOFENJOYMENTARERUNNI
NGALSOTOWASTEANDAREEVERYW
HEREBURNINGOUTUNEXERCISED
WASTEINSHORTINTHEWORLDOFT
HINGSENJOYABLEBALANCEDBYAN
EQUALWASTEINTHEORGANSANDT
HEMACHINERIESOFENJOYMENT[1].

The defect of which we are most vividly aware in reading such a passage as this is the want of word-separation. Without laboriously forming each word out of its constituent letters, we are unable to grasp the author's meaning; and the slow interpretation involved in this almost literal spelling of every word baffles and irritates us when contrasted with our usual method of reading. In ordinary reading we take in the words at a glance, and are rarely conscious of them as units: concentrating our attention on meaning rather than on form, we tend more and more to merge their individuality in the phrase or sentence of which they form part. Nevertheless, though at the present day it is necessary to avoid by word-separation the diversion of interest from the subject-matter to its formal elements, the general practice of word-separation is only comparatively recent. As we shall have occasion to notice in our next chapter, the Christian era was some centuries old before the practice was commonly adopted by scribes and copyists. The difference of usage in this respect in the

[1] For the modern form see Appendix A p. 129.

case of inscriptions is noteworthy, and in order to illustrate it we shall describe shortly a few outstanding instances.

§ 2. The inscription on the famous Baal Lebanon bowl [1] is probably the oldest extant in the Phœnician alphabet. It is ascribed to the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the tenth century B.C., during the reign of Hiram, King of the Sidonians. It runs from right to left round the edge of the bowl, the letters following each other in close succession. There is no separation of words, nor pointing of any kind. On the other hand, the celebrated Moabite Stone [2], ascribed to the ninth century B.C., shows a clear separation of words by single dots, and of sentences by vertical strokes. The record is written in horizontal lines running from right to left.

In considering the question of word-separation with reference to Greek records it is important to bear in mind that the Greeks had no current term exactly co-extensive with our *word*. When defining *noun* and *verb* Aristotle does not bring them under a simple class-name, but describes them as 'a portion of discourse, of which no part has a meaning by itself'. The tendency of the Greek mind to make sense and significance the basis of division is further evidenced by the fact that, even when word-separation is

[1] Now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

[2] Now in the Louvre, Paris. A cast of it may be seen in the Phœnician department of the British Museum.

made, the articles, particles, and other meaningless words, remain attached to the words in connection with which their value in the sentence is determined.

Amongst the oldest Greek inscriptions one of the most notable is the famous twelve-columned record [1] found in the wall of a mill on the site of Gortyn. It is written alternately from right to left and left to right, and the columns succeed each other from right to left. It dates from the end of the seventh or the beginning of the sixth century B.C., and contains provisions of private law relative to fines, divorce, laws of succession, and other matters. There is no word-separation of any kind; but on one of the columns a curious sign, like two triangles placed horizontally with their apices together, is used to separate two clauses of the law. In one or two isolated cases belonging approximately to the same period an upright line is used as a mark of word-separation, while on the famous marble from Sigeion [2], dating from the first half of the sixth century B.C., dots occur as the mark of division. There are two inscriptions on the marble: the first is in the Ionic dialect and character; the second, which is a repetition and at the same time an enlargement of the first, in the Attic. Both are written in alternating directions; in the Ionic version some of the clauses are separated by two dots placed as in our colon,

[1] Now in the Louvre, Paris.
[2] Now in the British Museum.

while in the Attic (slightly later than the Ionic) two dots separate the significant words, and three the clauses.

One of the earliest instances of the division of subject-matter into sections occurs on the bronze tablet from Ozolian Locris, which sets forth the conditions for founding the colony at Naupactus. The first nine letters of the alphabet are used to indicate the various sections, the letters being horizontal and pointing sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left; they are enclosed by two upright groups of three dots. The words, with the exception of articles, etc., are also separated by three dots. The decree dates from the beginning of the fifth century B.C.

With regard to the word-separation of Latin inscriptions it is hardly necessary to say more than that only one dot is used instead of the two or three that are characteristic of the Greek method. An interesting instance of the use of a single dot in Greek, probably due to Latin influence, occurs in a deed of conveyance of land, engraved on a bronze tessera[1] found near Croton. The document dates from the sixth century B.C., and is a model of neatness and simplicity; after an invocation of God and Fortune it proceeds as follows:—

SAOTIS·GIVES·TOSIKAINIA·THEH
OUSE·ANDTHEOTHERTHINGS·ALL·

[1] Now in the Museum, Naples.

It only remains to be noticed that the Latin inscriptions which deal with the ordinary facts and designations of life are generally expressed in conventionally abbreviated forms. The dot of word-separation then becomes identical with the dot of abbreviation[1].

[1] In our own day a dot in the middle position between two words is sometimes used in decorative printing, where it imparts an element of quaintness.

## CHAPTER II

### SOME GREEK AND LATIN MANUSCRIPTS

*Authorities:*

E. Maunde Thompson, *Handbook of Greek and Latin Palæography* (London, 1893);

F. G. Kenyon, *The Palæography of Greek Papyri* (Oxford, 1899);

————, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London, 1901);

Wilhelm Arndt, *Schrifttafeln zur Erlernung der Lateinischen Palæographie* (Berlin, 1897, 1898, 1903).

§ 1. THE oldest existing manuscripts do not take us back to such remote centuries as do the inscriptions. This is chiefly due to the fact that the stone and metals on which inscriptions were engraved are well fitted by their durability and bulk to withstand the chances of time and fortune, while papyrus is a fragile substance and becomes very brittle with age. Of Greek papyri the oldest recovered belong to the third century B.C., but, although large numbers of documents such as wills and official and industrial records have been found in the mounds and mummy cases of Egypt, only comparatively few literary writings of greater age than the Christian era have come down to us. By the fourth century A.D. vellum was established as the

usual writing material, and in consequence of its greater durability manuscripts dating from that time onwards have been preserved in larger numbers.

We have no example of a Greek manuscript written in pure capitals, but it is easy to trace the connection between the forms used in the oldest papyri and those of lapidary inscriptions. At the same time there is the analogy of Latin manuscripts: a few of these, notably some of the papyri recovered at Herculaneum, are written wholly in capitals. The difference of material and instrument in manuscripts as compared with inscriptions necessarily led to modifications in the form of the letters, and from the second century A.D. a new system of lettering can be traced. We call it *uncial* writing, but the term is not applicable in its strictest sense. Jerome (c. 390) used it in the preface to his translation of *Job* when inveighing against the extravagant style of many of the books of his day, which were written, he says, 'uncialibus, ut vulgo aiunt, litteris'. This popular exaggeration was excusable, for there are manuscripts of that time written in letters measuring five-eighths of an inch, with capitals nearly double that size. Up to the eighth century the uncial was the ordinary book-hand, but the influence of the more cursive non-literary hand that had been in use side by side with it became more and more apparent. At the same time, too, the increasing demand for

books made it desirable that they should be written in a style that would occupy less space and involve less labour. The new book-hand that was developed under these conditions is called the *minuscule* from the smaller size of its letters. In varying degrees of perfection it continued in use as the literary hand until the introduction of printing.

§ 2. As we had occasion to notice in the preceding chapter, word-separation is in the case of manuscripts a comparatively recent practice. This may largely be accounted for by the fact that, while inscriptions existed mainly in and for the public eye, the reading of manuscripts was common only amongst leisured and learned scholars. The inconvenience which most of us experience in reading a continuously written text is chiefly due to our own different habit and custom, and we can only suppose that early readers felt little or none of our difficulty. This view is rendered more likely by the fact that, before the practice of separation was established, instances of it, though irregular, were more frequent in the documents of ordinary life than in literary works. Of isolated examples the most notable is the Vatican *Virgil*, written in the fourth century; it is written in capitals, and has its words separated by a dot. Another similar instance—though in this case the separation was probably made for teaching purposes—may be seen in the British Museum: on a wooden board are inscribed thirteen

lines from the *Iliad*, the words being marked off and the syllables indicated by accents. Apart from such detached cases there was little word-separation before the ninth century, and even after the new fashion was introduced small words were written continuously with those to which they were related. In Latin manuscripts a system of separation was fully perfected by the eleventh century, but in Greek a tendency to inaccurate separation continued longer.

The need for a division of the text into paragraphs made itself felt very early. In the oldest manuscripts a blank space indicates a break, but the dividing stroke was known in Aristotle's time (384–322 B.C.). In the fragments of the *Antiope* of Euripides and of Plato's *Phædo*, found by Professor Flinders Petrie in the Gurob mummy cases, and written about the third century B.C., the stroke is used to mark off the speeches of the various characters. It occurs similarly in the Bankes *Homer* of the second century A.D., the best preserved papyrus of the *Iliad* yet found; in addition, the narrative portions are indicated by an abridged form of the word *poet* written in the margin. Instead of a horizontal stroke a wedge sometimes marked the end of a paragraph, but in course of time it became customary to draw the first letter of the new paragraph into the margin. Later, this initial letter was enlarged and ornamented. When a paragraph ended near the beginning of a

line the consequent loss of space was lessened by leaving only a small blank and beginning the next paragraph in the same line; the initial letter was then placed in the first full line. About the ninth century it became customary to mark the end of a paragraph and chapter by two or more dots, with or without a dash. The practice of enlarging and ornamenting the initial letter of a paragraph was prevalent until the introduction of printing, and a survival of it may still be frequently seen at the beginning of a chapter.

From very early times—there is evidence of the practice as established in the third century B.C.—it was customary to keep a record of the number of lines of standard length in a manuscript, the unit taken being an average Homeric line of fifteen or sixteen syllables. This measurement was doubtless made in the first instance to determine the copyist's payment, but out of it probably arose the division of a text into sense-lines, which is first found in works intended for public reading. In the preface to his translation of *Isaiah* Jerome refers to the *cola*[1] and *commata*[1] into which the speeches of Demosthenes and Cicero were divided, and says that for convenience in reading he had arranged his work 'in the new style of writing'. The system

[1] A *colon* has been defined as a clause of from eight to seventeen syllables, and a *comma* as one of less than eight.

had already been used in the *Psalms* and poetical books of the Bible, and it was gradually extended to the other books.

A regular system of pointing, the invention of which is ascribed to Aristophanes of Byzantium (third century B.C.), was developed in the Schools of Alexandria. According to it the value of the dot varied with its position: placed high, the dot indicated a full stop; on the line, a shorter pause equal to our semicolon; and in the middle position, an ordinary pause equal to our comma. But even while lettering was large and it was possible accurately to distinguish these positions, their values were not consistently adhered to, and the introduction of smaller writing made the distinction no longer possible. The comma, the inverted semicolon, and the mark of interrogation[1], appeared about the ninth century. Quotations were either written wholly in the margin, or indicated by marks, the commonest being the arrowhead. Words other than integral parts of the text, or certain combinations of letters such as the reference letters in the Bodleian *Euclid* (888 A.D.), were distinguished from the text by a superimposed line.

§ 3. In order to give greater definiteness to these somewhat detached remarks we shall describe briefly a few typical manuscripts.

[1] It is said that the modern form [?] is derived from the first and last letters of the Latin *quæstio* written so: ⳾. The shape of the *Q* has become obscured and the *o* filled up.

Some of the Biblical Codices[1] are selected as being representative of uncial writing on vellum at its best.

The *Codex Vaticanus*, generally considered the oldest and most valuable manuscript of the Greek Bible, is assigned to the fourth century. It is written on pages measuring 10½ inches by 10, and each page contains three narrow columns. An early corrector has inserted in the margin a division of the *Acts* into chapters according to the system of Euthalius, who in his edition of the *Acts* and *Epistles* arranged the text in short clauses according to breaks in the sense and provided prologues and chapter-summaries. No accents, breathings, or stops, have been inserted by the first hand. There are no enlarged initial letters to mark paragraphs or even the beginnings of the several books, and there is no word-separation.

The *Codex Sinaiticus*[2] also belongs to the fourth century. Its pages measure 15 inches by 13½, and each contains four columns. There are no accents or enlarged letters, and punctuation by the first hand is rare. The text is divided into short paragraphs, for each of which a fresh line is taken and the initial letter drawn slightly into the margin. Each of the *Gospels* is divided into sections according

[1] This term was used to indicate that the leaves were bound together to form a book instead of being rolled on a cylinder as was the custom with papyri.

[2] Now in the Imperial Library, St. Petersburg.

to the system compiled by Eusebius, the section-numbers being marked in the margin. There is no word-separation.

The *Codex Alexandrinus*[1], belonging to the fifth century, is written with only two columns on a page. The text is divided into sections as in the *Codex Sinaiticus*, and the initial letters of paragraphs are enlarged. There is evidence in this Codex that the scribes had begun to forget the use of the horizontal stroke of paragraph-division, which was being superseded by the enlarged initial. The horizontal stroke here appears in anomalous positions, chiefly over the initial letter of the several books. The middle and high dots are used pretty generally, but there is still no word-separation.

The *Codex Bezæ*[2] dates from the sixth century, and contains a Latin text as well as a Greek one. The two are written side by side on opposite pages, the Greek occupying the place of honour on the left. The text is written, not in continuous paragraphs, but in short clauses divided according to the sense. In this way corresponding words are kept more nearly parallel. Initial letters are drawn into the margin, but there is no word-separation.

Written wholly in Latin and executed with

[1] Now in the British Museum. Tradition says it was written by a noble lady of Egypt, described in an Arabic note of the thirteenth or fourteenth century as 'Thecla, the Martyr'.

[2] Now in the University of Cambridge.

great care, the huge volume known as the *Codex Amiatinus*[1] is generally regarded as the best authority for the Vulgate text. It measures 1 ft. $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches by 1 ft. $1\frac{1}{2}$, and was written in the monastery of either Wearmouth or Jarrow and presented to Pope Gregory in 716. The text is divided into clauses and sub-clauses (technically called *cola* and *commata*), and these are arranged in paragraphs. Sections are indicated in the margin.

[1] Now in the Laurentian Library, Florence.

# CHAPTER III

## SOME ENGLISH MANUSCRIPTS[1]

*Authorities:*

John Earle, *Anglo-Saxon Literature* (London, 1884);
Richard Garnett, *English Literature an Illustrated Record*, vol. I (London, 1903);
Du Cange, *Glossarium Mediæ et Infimæ Latinitatis* (Paris, 1840);
W. W. Skeat, *Twelve Facsimiles of Old English Manuscripts* (Oxford, 1892);
Henry Sweet, *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care* (London, 1871 and 1872);
Julius Zupitza, *Beowulf. Autotypes of the Unique Cotton MS.* (London, 1882);
John Earle, *The Deeds of Beowulf* (Oxford, 1892);
Charles Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel with Supplementary Extracts from the Others* (Oxford, 1892 and 1899);
Richard Morris, *Specimens of Early English*, Part I (Oxford, 1887).

§ 1. OLD English literature owed much to Latin influence. With the exception of certain archaic annals which seem to have been transferred from an older source to the Saxon Chronicles when the importance of such records began to be recognized, there are few remains of Old English writing prior to

[1] The extracts quoted in this Chapter have been chosen mainly with the object of showing certain principles at work in the determination of punctuation.

the introduction of Christianity into England. These ancient annals cover the period 450 to 600 A.D., and up to the time of their embodiment in the Chronicles were probably preserved either in ballads or in runes. As long as the runic was the only alphabet, the facilities for writing were limited, but with the establishment of religious foundations and schools, after Pope Gregory's mission of 597 A.D., came the knowledge of the Roman alphabet and writing. Then, through an acquaintance with Latin literature, the Saxons learnt the value and possibilities of their own.

During the early part of the seventh century the Christianizing of England developed from Canterbury and the Kentish schools as a centre, but later Northumbria became the seat of learning. Several causes combined to produce this. In the time of the pre-Christian occupation of Britain by the Romans York had been the capital, and a great military concentration had been made in the north, in order to keep the Picts and Scots in check: it may be that traces of the Roman civilization lingered longer there than elsewhere and made men's minds readier to receive the new influences. The chief cause of Northumbria's pre-eminence, however, was the special enthusiasm of the Irish missionaries from Iona who in 634 A.D. founded the see of Lindisfarne. They brought with them the Irish style of writing, founded on the Roman Half-uncial, and from it the Saxon hand was developed.

Caedmon's *Hymn*, the oldest Christian poem in Old English, was composed in the abbey of Whitby towards the close of the seventh century. A facsimile reproduction [1] of a short extract taken from the eighth century MS. shows it to have been written without clear word-separation and with little punctuation. That the subject of punctuation was, however, receiving attention from scholars is evidenced by the following verse [2] from a poem of Alcuin (735–804 A.D.), the famous Northumbrian scholar who was intimately connected with the revival of learning at the court of Charlemagne :—

> Per cola distinguant proprios et commata versus,
> Et punctos ponant ordine quosque suo.
> Ne vel falsa legat, taceat vel forte repente,
> Ante pios fratres Lector in Ecclesia.

The words *cola* and *commata* are here used in their rhetorical sense and refer to members of the period [3], while *punctos* includes the various marks then in use to indicate pauses. The need for such marks *arose simply and naturally out of the conditions of life then prevalent.* Learning and education were centred in the monastic schools, and were in their main aspects closely connected with the religious life: it was meet that in the transcription of sacred works steps should be taken to insure

[1] *English Literature an Illustrated Record*, p. 19.

[2] Quoted on p. 5 of Preface, *Glossarium Mediæ et Infimæ Latinitatis.* Reference is given to Poem 126, but we have not had an opportunity of verifying the quotation.

[3] See p. 12.

a correct rendering when they were read aloud in an assembly of the faithful.

§ 2. Except in the domain of poetry, culture expressed itself in those times in the Latin language; up to the days of Alfred the Great no one had sought to bring it home to the people in their own tongue. When Alfred came to the throne in 871 A.D., he found even the clergy in a state of ignorance: the ravages of the Danes had brought devastation and disorganization to the monasteries and schools, and the light of learning seemed to have gone out in the land. In the hope of re-kindling it Alfred made many translations from Latin into the vernacular. Of these the most interesting to us is his version—a paraphrase rather than a translation—of Pope Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*, a copy of which, written in his lifetime and executed with minute care, still survives. This is the copy destined by him for the Bishop of Worcester and now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. In order to observe its punctuation we quote the opening passage of the prefatory epistle [1]:—

✠ THIS BOOK IS TO GO TO
· WORCESTER:·

ALFRed king commandeth to greet
waerferth bishop with his words in

[1] The punctuation is copied from Plate I of *Twelve Facsimiles of Old English Manuscripts*. Word-separation is distinct in the original, but *and* and *on* are sometimes joined to the succeeding word. We have used Prof. Earle's translation from *Anglo-Saxon Literature*, p. 189.

loving and friendly wise⁝ and i would have you informed that it has often come into my remembrance. what wise men there formerly were among the angle race. both of the sacred orders and the secular⁝ and how happy times those were throughout the angle race. and how the kings who had the government of the folk in those days. obeyed god and his messengers⁝ and they on the one hand maintained their peace. and their customs. and their authority within their borders⁝ while at the same time they spread their territory outwards. and how it then went well with them. both in war. and in wisdom⁝ and likewise the sacred orders. how earnest they were as well about teaching as about learning⁝ and about all the services. that they owed to god⁝ and how people from abroad. came to this land for wisdom and instruction⁝ and how we now should have to get them abroad. if we were going to have them; So clean was it fallen away in the angle race. that there were very few on this side humber who would know how to render their services in english⁝ or so much as translate an epistle out of latin into english.

The points in the above are used throughout the book with these values:—the dot is

equivalent to our comma, the inverted semicolon [1] to our semicolon, and the semicolon to our full stop. It will be seen that one long sentence forms the greater part of our quotation; for a more detailed examination of it we analyze the content of the various sections marked off by the inverted semicolon as follows:—

1. Greeting.

2a. Introduction to comparison of past with present.

2b. Statement of one element of past: wisdom.

3a. Statement of another element of past: happiness.

3b. Statement of another element of past: goodness of kings.

4. Analysis of their government.

5a. Analysis of their government.

5b. Statement of result of their government.

6. Review of past resumed, and another element stated: earnestness of sacred orders.

7. Statement of main object of this earnestness.

8. Review resumed and another element stated: pre-eminence of English learning.

9. Contrast of present.

[1] In modern editions of old MSS. the sign is generally so printed, but this is not in all cases an exact reproduction. Most commonly the dot is surmounted by a curve whose convexity lies towards the writer's right-hand. This was the more easily written form, while in modern times it is easier to invert the semicolon.

Of these sections, 2b, 3a and b, 6, 8, 9, form the main thread of the passage, and each therefore demands the same point. 2a introduces all of these, and receives a formal completeness from the close connection of 2b, while 3b may be regarded as causally explanatory of 3a and therefore not to be emphatically separated from it. With regard to the remaining sections we note first that a change of construction, such as occurs between 1 and 2, was common in early languages, and did not in itself demand a full stop, as is the case in modern times: there is no break in the sequence of thought such as would demand the stronger point. Sections 4 and 5 form a balanced statement, and in such a connection it was customary to separate the two members by an inverted semicolon; another example of this is seen in the concluding part of our quotation. The relation between 5a and 5b is similar to that between 3b and 3a. Section 7, though strictly a part of 6, was probably given a more prominent position on account of its supreme importance.

The use of the dot (ranking with our comma) is free, and in some respects suggestive of later practice in the so-called heavy system of punctuation. In reading the passage in such a way as to realize the effect of the dots, we get the impression that the author thought carefully, and that as his mind worked he indicated by a dot every slight

break in his thought. This break sometimes takes the form of a minor development by analysis, e. g., *the angle race. both of the sacred orders and the secular:* and *it then went well with them. both in war. and in wisdom.* Sometimes the break arises for no other reason than that he wished to dwell on an element of his thought and so signify its greater importance, e. g., *and likewise the sacred orders. how earnest they were* . . . In the other cases, if we omit those virtually covered by what was said in the preceding paragraph, we find that the use of the dot is most simply explained with the help of grammatical terms: it indicates a pause (1) between a long subject and the predicate with which it is connected, (2) between a series of objects, and (3) between a main and a dependent clause. *The pause lessens the risk that either confusion or incomplete comprehension will arise out of the complexity of terms.*

As a general result of the foregoing analysis we may note that the composition and punctuation of King Alfred's epistle are the work of a disciplined mind,—*a mind that had been trained by the exact exercise of Latin studies to a clear and logical evolution and expression of thought.*

§ 3. Of a very different standard from the above is the punctuation of the manuscript which we shall next consider. This is the unique copy of the Old English epic *Beowulf.* The poem is one of the oldest of considerable

length in any Teutonic tongue and belongs most probably to the eighth century, while this copy[1], the earliest that survives, was written late in the tenth or early in the eleventh. The poem consists of 3183 lines divided into 43 parts. By the first scribe (the manuscript is in two hands) each part is closed by a dot, while by the second a double dot, placed as in our colon and followed by a dash, is generally used. The internal punctuation is slight, and yet in spite of this it is not consistent with itself. Throughout the poem —except in line 2489 where the double dot seems accidental—a dot is the only point used. Sometimes it is placed on the line and sometimes in the middle position, but the principle that originally underlay this difference[2] is not observed. Occasionally, as in line 641 where it marks off a noun in apposition, it acts like our comma, but in the main it shows the close of a thought. Its use is, however, somewhat arbitrary; between two dots there frequently occur successive breaks of continuity as distinct as that indicated by the dot, while at the same time a dot often separates ideas whose interdependence is very close. It may be that the scribes were copying from an old manuscript and tried to make an exact copy. The want of system in the punctuation is, however, more probably one of the minor effects of the check given to Old English learning by the Norman Conquest.

[1] Now in the British Museum. [2] See p. 13.

Doubtless too in the matter of punctuation much was determined by the personal idiosyncracy of the writer. We must further bear in mind that when the style is not involved a reader is to some extent independent of pointing; just how much so in this particular case we can judge from the following extracts[1]:—

1. beowulf (i. e. Beaw) was renowned his fame sprang wide heir of scyld in the scedelands. So ought a young chief to work with his wealth with gracious largesses. while in his fathers nurture that in his riper age willing comrades may in return stand by him at the coming of war. and that men may do his bidding eminence must in every nation be attained by deeds (worthy) of praise.

   MS. lines 17–26.

2. [*Thrytho, wife of Offa*] had held high love to the commander of men who was of all mankind my story tells the most excellent between the seas the wide world over for as much as Offa was the spearkeen man for graces and warfeats widely celebrated with wisdom he ruled his ancestral home whence eomaer was born for peoples aid kinsman of heming grandson of garmund and a skilful campaigner:—

   MS. lines 1954–63,
   End of Part XXVII.

[1] We have used Prof. Earle's translation, replacing his modern punctuation by that of the original MS. and using only the capitals that appear there. The parentheses do not appear in the original. The division into lines in the MS. coincides only occasionally with sense-divisions.

Though there is no great difficulty in following the above, *we cannot fail to feel the want of harmony between the composition and the pointing.*

§ 4. One of the chief sources of information concerning the literary history of the twelfth century is to be found in the Laud MS. of the Saxon Chronicle, now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. It is the fullest of the Chronicles; it embodies most of the contents of the others[1], and at the same time carries on the history seventy-five years later. It was written by the monks of Peterborough after the greater part of the abbey had been destroyed by fire in 1116 A.D., and closes with the death of Stephen in 1154 A.D.

The following passage[2] shows the dot alone[3] in use:—

[1] There are in all seven MSS. and they together contain four Chronicles. The earliest were written in the last years of the ninth century, and the latest in the twelfth. In the preface to *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel with Supplementary Extracts from the Others*, Mr. Plummer says: 'The only stops which occur in the MSS. are as a rule the point either on or above the line (.) (˙), the inverted semicolon (⁏), . . . . In a few instances, so few that they might I think be counted on the fingers of one hand, the colon and semicolon do occur in the MSS. . . .'

[2] Translated and punctuated from Plate III of *Twelve Facsimiles of Old English Manuscripts.*

[3] That other points were in use at this period may be seen from the twelfth-century MS. (Latin) in which is told the story of Alfred and the cakes. A mark ℣ follows each of the contemptuous questions in which the swineherd's wife abused the king. The passage is reproduced on p. 47 of *English Literature an Illustrated Record.*

they heard that the king had given the abbacy to the French abbot called Turolde. and that he was a very stern man. and was then come in to stanford with all his french men. there was then present one of the church guard called iware. he took by night all that he could. that is christs books and mass-garments and copes and robes and such small things. whatever he could. and went early before day to the abbot turolde and said to him that he sought peace. and informed him how the outlaws would come to the town. he did that wholly by the monks counsel. then early in the morning all the outlaws came in sailing ships and tried to get in to the monastery. and the monks resisted that they should not come in. then they set on fire. and burnt up all the monks houses and all the town except one house.

The dot has here a variable value. In spite of this fact, and in spite of the absence of capitals where a new sentence might begin, there is no difficulty in following the passage and no possibility of misunderstanding it. *The narrative is simple and direct: there is no need of elaborate punctuation.*

As an instance of *a fuller punctuation, arising in part out of the nature of the thought and in part out of its form of expression*, the following extract from a collection of old Kentish Sermons[1] written in

[1] Translated and punctuated from Plate V of *Twelve Facsimiles of Old English Manuscripts*.

the first half of the thirteenth century may be given :—

> Offer to him not only to-day. but all the days of the year spiritually. Gold. and Incense. and Myrrh. as i have said. Gold ſ for belief in God. Incense ſ for holy orison. Myrrh. for good works. These are the offerings. that our lord asks for every day from the christian man. and wherefore the christian man if he doeth them ſ deserveth the bliss of heaven.

§ 5. Our last illustration of the period prior to the introduction of printing is taken from the Douce MS. of John Wycliffe's translation of the Bible[1], a manuscript written before 1400 A.D. Parallel with it we print the corresponding passage (2 Chron. vii. 1–4) from the Authorized Version :—

And whanne salamon hadde fulfilde heeldynge out preyers ſ fijr came down fro heuen and deuoured þe brent sacrifices and þe slayn offrynges/ and þe mageste of þe lord fulfilde þe hous. and þe prestis myȝten not goon in to þe temple of þe lord. for þi þat þe mageste of þe lord: hadde fulfilde the temple of þe lord/ bot and

1. Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house.

2. And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house.

[1] Copied from Plate VIII of *Twelve Facsimiles of Old English Manuscripts.*

alle þe sonis of ysrael sawen fijr goyng doun, and þe glorie of þe lord vpon þe hous: and fallynge doun bowed in to þe erþ vpon þe pament paued wiþ stoon: honourden and preyseden þe lord for he is good: for in to þe world þe mercy of hym/ þe king forsoþe and al þe puple offreden slayn offryngis beforn þe lord/

3. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

4. Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD.

The oblique stroke following *offrynges* is probably used with the value of our comma[1], as was then the general practice. In the three remaining cases in which it occurs it has a stronger value; the sense of the passage demands a decided pause, as in the Authorized Version at the end of verses 2 and 3; while the end of the passage coincides with the end of a chapter in Wycliffe's version, and here too we should expect a full stop. If we regard the oblique stroke after *offrynges* also as equivalent to a full stop, then the two succeeding statements, marked off by dots, supply an example of effectively short sentences. The

[1] The sign that follows *doun* is in appearance not unlike our comma. It consists of a small square to which is attached a curve.

use of the inverted semicolon calls for no special remark; its occurrence after *preyers*, as compared with the comma of the more modern version, is a question chiefly of degree[1]. The colon as here used ranks in strength between the full stop and the inverted semicolon, but the colon that follows *þe mageste of þe lord* is a device for gaining emphasis by dwelling on the conception, just as in the Authorized Version the word LORD is made more impressive by being specially typed.

A comparison of the two versions as above shows that *the principles according to which Wycliffe's translation was punctuated are, apart from the value of the various points, essentially modern.*

§ 6. The punctuation of poetry was as a rule metrical rather than logical. Every complete verse in *Ormulum*[2], for example, is marked by a dot, and every half-verse by an inverted semicolon. In *The Vision of Piers Plowman*[3], on the other hand, a dot marks the half-verse, while in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*[4] the medial pause is generally marked by a slanting stroke.

[1] We have seen books belonging to the middle of the nineteenth century with a semicolon in a like connection.

[2] MS. Junius, written about 1200 A.D., Plate IV of *Twelve Facsimiles of Old English Manuscripts.*

[3] MS. Laud, written about 1400 A.D., Plate IX of *Twelve Facsimiles of Old English Manuscripts.*

[4] MS. Fairfax, written before 1450 A.D., Plate X of *Twelve Facsimiles of Old English Manuscripts.*

# CHAPTER IV

## SOME BOOKS ON PUNCTUATION

*Books consulted:*


William Blades, *The Biography and Typography of William Caxton*, Second Edition (London, 1882);

Aldus Manutius, junior, *Orthographiæ Ratio* (Venetiis, 1566);

Alfred Edward Thiselton, *Some Textual Notes on a Midsommer Nights Dreame* (London, 1903);

*The Poems of Shakespeare.* Edited by George Wyndham (London, 1898);

Ben Jonson, *Works*, vol. VII (London, 1756);

Alexander Hume, *Of the Orthographie and Congruitie of the Britan Tongue.* Edited by Henry B. Wheatley (London, 1865);

*The Poetical Works of John Milton.* Edited by David Masson (London, 1874);

Robert Monteith, *The True and Genuine Art of Pointing* (Edinburgh, 1704);

A. Fisher, *A New Grammar, with Exercises of bad English* (London, 1753);

Joseph Robertson, *An Essay on Punctuation*, Second Edition (London, 1786);

David Steel, *Elements of Punctuation: containing Remarks on an "Essay on Punctuation"; and Critical Observations on Some Passages in Milton* (London, 1786);

Charles Coote, *Elements of the Grammar of the English Language* (London, 1788);

Lindley Murray, *An English Grammar: comprehending the Principles and Rules of the Language*, A New Edition (York, 1808);

Justin Brenan, *Composition and Punctuation Familiarly*

*explained for those who have neglected the Study of Grammar* (London, 1829);
J. H. Chauvier, *A Treatise on Punctuation.* Translated from the French by J. B. Huntingdon (London, 1849);
(Anonymous), *Mind your Stops: Punctuation made plain* (London, 1856);
A Practical Printer, *A Manual of Punctuation* (Manchester and London, 1859);
Henry Beadwell, *Spelling and Punctuation* (London, 1880);
Paul Allardyce, *"Stops" or How to Punctuate*, Twelfth Edition (London, 1902);
T. Bridges, *Punctuation Simplified* (London, 1904);
John Bygott and A. J. Lawford Jones, *Points in Punctuation* (London, [presumably] 1905);
A. Elster, *Methodischer Leitfaden der Deutschen Interpunktionslehre* (Magdeburg, 1901);
John Earle, *English Prose, Its Elements, History, and Usage* (London, 1890).

§ 1. In Chapters II and III we considered the punctuation of manuscripts written before the invention of printing, and we found, as a general result, that no uniform system existed in practice. In spite of the precision of the rules laid down by the grammarians in the third century B.C., our era was some centuries old before the points could be said to be in general use, and even then great diversity of practice existed. This was doubtless due to the fact that *highly inflected languages like Greek and Latin are to a great extent independent of the help that may be given by the division of a text into minute sections.* The words themselves by their form show their mutual agreement and reference, and as long as the outstanding breaks of continuity are indicated little danger of misinterpretation

arises. In consequence of this the Greek and Latin scribes concerned themselves mainly with the *sense-divisions* of the rhetorical period, the *cola* and *commata* corresponding with our clauses and sub-clauses.

The extracts selected from English manuscripts show the want of uniformity in a striking degree. The earliest manuscript of those we considered[1] shows at once the greatest fulness and the most complete consistency of punctuation; the latest[2], while agreeing fundamentally with our Authorized Version in regard to the position of points, shows a good deal of inconsistency in the assignment of values; and in the manuscripts of the intervening period few points are in general use, and these few are applied to indicate breaks of continuity that vary widely in degree.

We think that special circumstances account for these incongruities, and that the slightness of punctuation in some of our extracts is due to the fact that a real need for it was then only in course of development. With regard to Alfred's *Pastoral Care* it is important to bear in mind that at the time of translation Latin was the language of scholars, that in fact Alfred's translations were the earliest

[1] The opening passage of King Alfred's epistle prefatory to his translation of Pope Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*. See p. 20.

[2] The Douce MS. of Wycliffe's translation of the Bible. See p. 29.

attempts to express classic culture in terms of the vernacular. Classical forms and standards controlled his expression, and, at the same time, conscious of the depths of ignorance into which even the monks had sunk, he felt the need for clear and unambiguous construction. This, we think, explains his minute and careful punctuation, and here we find the origin of constructional punctuation. Our extract from the Saxon Chronicle[1] was written under widely different educational circumstances, for since the days of Alfred a vernacular prose had been created, with a genius and character of its own. The style of the narrative is simple and direct, and needs little punctuation. The internal inconsistency in the value of the points affords further evidence that the matter was then altogether of secondary importance. *But with the gradual loss of inflections from the vernacular and the growth at the same time of a richer and more complex style, there came what we might call a native need for more exact punctuation.*

§ 2. The renewed study of Greek and Latin authors, which was one of the aspects of the Renaissance, brought English literature again under a strong classical influence, and modified the natural internal development of English prose. It was not until the middle of the sixteenth century that scholars began to advocate with warmth the writing of their works in the vernacular, and amongst the early Elizabethan

[1] See p. 28.

prose writers were many in the same position as Roger Ascham, who, while thinking fit to write 'English matters in the English tongue for Englishmen', admitted that he would have found it easier to write in Latin or in Greek. The thoughts of scholars were firmly set in the classical mould, and they imposed alien constructions and syntax on their own mother-tongue, whose characteristic form of expression was inherently different. This artificiality of construction necessitated the employment of means by which to make the constructions clear to a reader not exercised in the classics, and the heavy constructional punctuation of some of the later Elizabethans was the outcome of this need[1]. Throughout the succeeding centuries Latin forms of construction and syntax have continued to exercise a strong, though diminishing, influence on our prose[2], and, as a result, the system of constructional punctuation became firmly established and has continued in a varying degree to control

[1] The elaborate punctuation of the 1625 edition of Bacon's *Essays* shows the constructional theory pushed to the extreme of consistency. It is reproduced in the Temple Classics Edition (London, 1901).

[2] The classical style culminated in the seventeenth century with Milton and Clarendon, and in the end of the same century began to give way before the restitution of native forms of expression. The establishment of newspaper-writing with its greater freedom and simplicity played an important part in the change that has been going on ever since. A detailed discussion of the Latinisms of Milton's syntax will be found on pp. lxxiii–ciii of Vol. I of *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, edited by David Masson.

English punctuation down to our own times. Side by side with it we see constant traces of rhetorical punctuation, whose origin, we noticed, dates back to mediæval times when most classes of society were illiterate and depended for literary instruction on the ear rather than the eye.

Before we proceed to a detailed survey of some of the books about punctuation that have been written since the introduction of printing, it may be well to say a little concerning the work of the early printers. Our own pioneer Caxton (c. 1422–1491) used only three points: the comma[1], the colon, and the full stop. He does not seem to have used them according to a regular system, however, and some of his books, notably of poetry and of Latin, have no points at all. Of Robert Stephens (1503–1559) we are told that in his desire to make his editions faultless he exposed the proofs in public places and rewarded every one who discovered a typographical error. We are also told that in each of his editions of the Greek Testament the pointing varied. In 1566 the treatise *Interpungendi Ratio* was published by Aldus Manutius, junior, one of the famous family of Venetian printers. In view alike of its own interest and of the controlling influence which classical forms then exercised in the making of English prose, we print in an Appendix[2] a transla-

[1] An oblique stroke, as in some of the later manuscripts.
[2] See Appendix B, p. 130.

tion of this treatise. We need only observe here that general directions alone are given, and that a wide scope is left for the application of individual judgment concerning details.

§ 3. We now propose to give a short account of the views expressed by some of the writers on punctuation, from the seventeenth century onwards. In order to retain chronological continuity it seems advisable to deal with each book separately rather than to collect the different theories that have been propounded regarding the function of each point. Inasmuch as illustrations from this period are comparatively easy of access we refrain from quoting examples, and we confine ourselves in our summaries to a statement of theories as then expressed, avoiding as far as possible a modern interpretation of the then current practice. For this reason we are obliged merely to express our general indebtedness to Mr. Thiselton's analysis and systematization of Shakespeare's punctuation[1]; likewise to Mr. George Wyndham's remarks on the subject[2].

**Summary c. 1617.**—Ben Jonson's researches in grammar, published posthumously, are assigned to this date. Chap. IX of *The English Grammar* is entitled *Of the Distinction of Sentences.* These are his views :—

Our breath is so short that, as well for the speaker's ease as for the plainer deliverance

[1] *Some Textual Notes on A Midsommer Nights Dreame.*
[2] *The Poems of Shakespeare*, pp. 265–8.

of things spoken, means have been invented whereby men might pause a pretty while and yet the speech be never the worse understood.

Sentences are perfect or imperfect. The perfect are distinguished by (1) a pause, and (2) a period; the imperfect by (1) a comma, and (2) a semicolon.

A comma is a mean breathing, and is used when the word serveth indifferently both to what goes before and to what follows after. A semicolon is a distinction wherein with somewhat a longer breath the sentence following is included. The perfect sentence hath a more full stay, and doth rest the spirit. A pause (:) marks a sentence which though perfect in itself is yet joined to another. A period marks a sentence in all respects perfect.

If a sentence be with an interrogation, we use this note (?). If it be pronounced with an admiration, then thus (!)[1].

'These distinctions, as they best agree with nature, so come they nearest to the ancient stays of sentences among the Romans and the Grecians.'

c. 1617.—*Of the Orthographie and Congruitie of the Britan Tongue.*

Lib. 2, Cap. 13, *Of Distinctiones.* The perfect distinctions are (1) the round punct,

[1] It is said that this mark was originally *Io*, the Latin exclamation of joy, written so: Ꝭ. The form of *I* became obscured and the *o* filled up.

which concludes an assertion, and (2) the tailed punct, which concludes an interrogation.

The imperfect distinctions are (1) the two punctes, one under the other, that divide the parts of a period and are read with half the pause of a perfect punct, and (2) the comma, which divides the least parts of the period, and is pronounced in reading with a 'short sob'[1].

The parenthesis marks off a sentence interlaced on some occurrence which does not cohere by syntax with the rest of the period[2].

**1704.**—*The True and Genuine Art of Pointing.*

Pointing is the disposal of speech into certain members for more articulate and distinct reading and circumstantiating of writs and papers. It rests wholly and solely on concordance, or government of words, and necessitates a knowledge of grammar. The wrong placing of points perverts the sense from the true scope of all speech, which is sound reason.

The use of the comma is based on four rules, all determined by grammatical considerations. The semicolon ('comma majus')

[1] By this we must evidently understand 'a short breath'. In Dr. Jamieson's *Scottish Dictionary* (Edinburgh, 1841) we find *Sob, s. a gale of wind, a landstorm.* Hume was a Scots schoolmaster.

[2] It is noteworthy that no mention is made of the semicolon, though it occurs frequently in the original manuscript. This stop, it is said, was first used by Richard Grafton in *The Byble,* printed in 1537.

is used when a sentence is half complete or when it contains an antithesis, a long induction, an enumeration of particulars, or a gradation of clauses. The colon marks a longer pause than that shown by a semicolon.

To make the points regularly each construction or two ought to be followed by a comma; five of these at the most need a semicolon; as many more need a colon; as many more, or perhaps fewer, a point. 'Some think' there should never be a point nor a colon between two phrases or sentences if the words of the one be governed by those of the other.

The Point of Interrogation and the Point of Admiration have an obvious application. It is foolish, however, to begin an ordinary letter with 'Sir!', since the writer is neither confused nor amazed.

Parentheses include words such that if they be taken from the sentence the sense remains entire. A free use of these marks is 'pedantick'. 'Nowadays' many people prefer to use two commas, especially when the words included are few[1].

[1] In a Latin example given to illustrate parenthesis we notice an instance of the semicolon being used to indicate an abbreviation of the letters *ue.* This is one of the commonest abbreviations in early manuscripts and probably took its form from a hasty combination of the two letters. Joseph Robertson writing about the middle of the eighteenth century ridicules the custom of writing *Esquire* in the form *Esq;*, and explains that it is only on account of scarcity of type that printers sometimes use the semicolon in abbreviations instead of the dot.

**1753.**—*A New Grammar, with Exercises of bad English.*

*Of Stops and Marks*[1].

The points are marks of pauses whose length is determined so: for the comma count 1; for the semicolon 2; for the colon 3; and for the full stop, the mark of interrogation, and the mark of admiration, 4. The comma is used after distinct numbers, distinct figures, names of persons spoken to, interjections, and every the least distinct clause of a sentence which is part of a more perfect one.

The colon is used before the conjunction in similitude.

**1776.**—Dr. Johnson's definitions of the various points are quoted below in Part II, where we deal with each in detail, but the present seems an appropriate place for inserting the following from Boswell's *Life*[2]:—

> He talked of Lord Lyttelton's extreme anxiety as an authour; observing that 'he was thirty years in preparing his *History* and that he employed a man to point it for him; as if (laughing) another man could point his sense better than himself'.

[1] Here and in the remaining summaries we refrain from quoting definitions and remarks that agree with those of previous works. We notice only what is characteristic or what is of some special interest.

[2] Edited by George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford, 1887), Vol. III, p. 32.

**1785** [1].—*An Essay on Punctuation.*

The subject is still generally considered of secondary importance; witness Mr. Pope's couplet in the Prologue to the Satires:—

> Commas and points they set exactly right,
> And 'twere a sin to rob them of their mite.

Correct pointing adds perspicuity and beauty to literature, and indicates the right place and proper length of the pauses to be made in reading. It is governed by rational and determinate principles, 'for nature, which never separates the agreeable from the truly useful, has annexed a pleasure to respiration, which the hearer feels, as well as the speaker'.

Forty rules are given for the placing of the comma [2]. After the rules have been explained the author says 'In almost all the foregoing rules and examples great regard must be paid to the length of those clauses, which form a compounded sentence, and are supposed to require the insertion of a comma. When the clauses are short, and closely connected, the point may be omitted. On the contrary, a simple sentence, when it is a long one, may admit of a pause'. Four rules are given for the semicolon and four for the colon; all of these are based on the distinction between an imperfect and a perfect grammatical construction. Attention is drawn to the fact that

[1] We have seen only the second edition, 1786.

[2] They were criticized in the following year. The most noticeable points will be found under that date.

'every verse in the Psalms, the Te Deum, and other parts of the Liturgy, is divided by a colon'[1].

The parenthesis sometimes shows vivacity of thought, but its frequent use gives the impression of 'wheels within wheels' and arises from a lack of the art of introducing a thought in its proper place. It is 'utterly inconsistent with accuracy and elegance of style'.

The dash is 'often used by hasty and incoherent writers, in a very capricious and arbitrary manner, instead of the regular point'.

A moderate use of the note of exclamation is recommended in these words:—

'The sacred writings, and particularly the Psalms, abound with expressions of the warmest piety, and the most elevated descriptions of the divine nature. On these sublime subjects, fanatics and enthusiasts would have used many rapturous exclamations. But our translators, in conformity to the sober majesty of the original, have seldom introduced the note of admiration. And in this particular they deserve applause; because the rational and manly genius of true religion does not consist in exclamations, flights, and ecstasies;

[1] Mr. Wyndham finds an analogous use of the colon in Shakespeare's Poems as punctuated in the 1609 Quarto Edition. He says 'Shakespeare's quatrains and the Psalms were "printed as they are to be sung or said." Like Shelley, he preferred rhythmical effect to syntactical standing'.

but in calmness and composure, in energy of thought, and the plain unaffected language of sincerity and truth'.

**1786.**—*Elements of Punctuation: containing Remarks on an "Essay on Punctuation"; and Critical Observations on some Passages in Milton.*

The author of the *Essay on Punctuation* is complimented in these terms: 'that gentleman made a progress in elucidating the doctrine of points, undoubtedly greater than had been attempted, by producing his essay in the form of systematical rules'. The essential and general rules for the placing of the comma are then reduced from forty to seventeen.

These are the chief matters in which improvement is suggested. (1) The two different uses of the word *or* are distinguished: when the first of the two nouns or adjectives between which it stands can be preceded by *either* no comma is necessary; otherwise commas must be inserted. (2) When several adjectives qualify the same noun each, including the last, must be followed by a comma unless the last has a closer connection with the noun than the others; nevertheless, when there are only two adjectives, the full pointing would be 'too rigid', and it is better in this case to dispense with the points and consider the first adjective as acting adverbially to the second. (3) A rule stating that some words such as *especially*, *much less*, etc., are 'very

properly' preceded by a comma, while some others 'of no importance' such as *perhaps*, *surely*, etc., need not be so separated is described as indeterminate and of little general use: such rules rest on a false principle and 'mislead the uninformed in grammar' since the points depend not on words, but on sentences. (4) Objection is also made to the rule 'When *a Preposition* is followed by a *Relative Pronoun*, a comma is very properly placed before the preposition': that this rule cannot always be applied is seen from the sentence 'Remember this plain distinction, a mistake in which has ruined thousands, that *your conscience is not a law*', the ground of the objection being that '*a mistake in which* must be taken collectively and not partially'.

Nothing is more difficult than to distinguish 'the degree of connection that requires a colon, and that which demands a semicolon'. Completeness of grammatical construction is the test. Criticism of passages from recent authors is also based on grammatical and structural principles. Distinctness and precision are two essential qualities in punctuation: 'never to confuse, but always to elucidate, are maxims invariably to be pursued'. 'Punctuation should not only direct the reader in pause, but should point to the sense of an author'.

**1788.**—*Elements of the Grammar of the English Language*, pp. 260–7.

The comma separates those parts of a sen-

tence that are only one degree removed from the close connection that needs no pause. 'Simple sentences' introduced by a conjunction are marked off by a comma. When a relative clause introduces an additional remark, or when it refers to persons or things in an indeterminate or absolute way, a pause is needed; not so when it has a close connection with the antecedent.

The mark of interrogation and the mark of exclamation are defined with reference to *tone*.

**1808.**—*An English Grammar: comprehending the Principles and Rules of the Language*, vol. i, p. 369, *et seq.*

The chief use of the points is to assist the reader in determining the grammatical constructions and in making the different pauses which the sense and accurate pronunciation require. Since, however, the different degrees of connection between the several parts of a sentence and the pauses necessary to express them are of great variety, while we have only four points by which to indicate them, it follows that each point does not always indicate the same degree of pause. The Rules of Punctuation can, therefore, serve only as a general direction, to be supplemented, when deficient, by the writer's judgment. Attention must be paid to the sense and to the clear, easy, communication of it. Twenty Rules are given for the use of the comma.

In addition to the points that mark pauses

in discourse, there are characters which denote a modulation of the voice according as the sense is interrogative, exclamatory, or parenthetical.

**1829.**—*Composition and Punctuation Familiarly explained for those who have neglected the Study of Grammar.*

While 'uncontrolled and dangerous liberty' is to be deprecated, a minute attention to grammatical rules is held to be unnecessary. These rules have proved insufficient, for after a thousand years practice is still so divergent that no two grammarians punctuate alike. High pointing may or may not be adopted, but a mixture of it with the ordinary mode is undesirable.

Latterly the parenthesis, which is the mark of 'insipid prolixity', has fallen into well-merited contempt. The colon has been 'literally *dashed* to pieces', while the rejection of the 'eternal semicolons of our ancestors' is one of the greatest improvements in punctuation. These two marks, the colon and the semicolon, were 'primeval sources of unprofitable contention'. Any 'coloned or semicoloned sentence' can be made to read as forcibly with only the comma and the dash. When a sentence cannot be read in one breath a comma may be inserted wherever a momentary rest seems desirable, though the direct connection be broken. Care must be taken that the dash is not used to serve every foolish conceit, as by Sterne and Richardson.

**1849.**—*A Treatise on Punctuation.*

Punctuation is analogous to an author's style. It has two parts: 'the fixed and the authentic' includes customary rules, while the 'variable and shifty' shows custom and rules at variance.

Punctuation according to grammatical construction is determined without regard to the idea awakened in the mind. Grammarians made the mistake of establishing the principles of punctuation on value in reading, since the points are accidental and insufficient for this purpose. The unity of one thought ought not to be broken by a point, and no separation may be marked between words except when they cease to express a 'connection of ideas necessarily continued'. The 'accent proper to the mind' is determined by the author.

It would be well to mark off an incidental sentence by the comma reversed, and reserve the comma proper for principal sentences.

The comma separates members of a period in which a common idea prevails; the semicolon those that have a common thought; while the colon shows synonymy of thought.

**1856.**—*Mind your Stops: Punctuation made plain.*

The comma, semicolon, and colon, mark pauses; the remaining six points have distinct uses, and convey positive information, at the same time adding strength and indicating the emphasis and meaning.

Printers and grammarians are at variance ; three-quarters of the commas used might be omitted, and this alike to the benefit of the passage and the relief of the reader. The elocutionary interpretation of the points is often wrong, for the points are not like so many crotchets, quavers, semiquavers, etc. Pointing must sustain the unity of the various parts of the sentence.

The semicolon has gone out of fashion.

**1859.**—*A Manual of Punctuation.*

The practice of loose pointing, technically 'low' but really haphazard, is common.

The object of punctuation is to make the construction and meaning apparent, and the rules are deduced, not from mental laws, but from usages established by the practice of authors and printers. The practice of correct modern printers differs little from that shown in the good old English classics [1].

§ 4. These summaries are necessarily fragmentary and imperfect, but they suffice to bring out the characteristics of the theories of punctuation that have been operative during the last three hundred years. Throughout, there are two openly avowed principles underlying the rules that are given for practical guidance,—the same two principles as we

[1] The rest of the books cited at the commencement of this Chapter are of such recent date that it seems unnecessary to give a summary of them. They have been of value in the preparation of Part II.

found at work in earlier times. Frequent reference is made to the pauses necessary for breathings and to the technicalities of grammatical structure as determining the position and character of the points. It is noteworthy, however, that with the fuller expression of these principles in sets of rules ready for application differences of opinion arose, and that *in the discussion of debated questions appeal was always made to the sense of the sentence as the highest determining factor.* To us this may seem the only natural and reasonable course to follow, but it marks an important change of method: form as form is no longer considered of chief importance—it is subservient to the real living thought that it expresses. We first see this change in a deprecation of the extravagant use of what we may call the more emotional points; then we find clearness of thought and expression advocated as more desirable than the vivacity of frequent breaks and interruption; and later we notice the gradual introduction of such phrases as 'close connection of the sense', 'idea awakened', and 'unity of thought'.

There can be little doubt as to the relative value, at the present time, of these different principles. It has already been frequently shown by writers on the subject that our punctuation-marks do not indicate the most suitable places for pauses in reading aloud; the voice of an intelligent reader ignores some

of the textual pointing and introduces breaks at places other than those where there are points. The pointing of matter 'to be sung or said' is, in fact, a subject apart. With regard to constructional pointing it may be urged that in reality it rests ultimately on sense and meaning, since grammar is the analysis of the forms in which rational expression is made. We think, however, that all the complexities and divergences and confusions of grammatical pointing arose just because it was not in constant and direct touch with meaning. Grammatical classifications and rules tended towards absolutism. This, we take it, is one reason for the revolt from strict constructional punctuation that is noticeable in the latter part of the nineteenth century[1]. But the chief reason is to be found in the fact that *a return to more native forms of expression has made heavy constructional punctuation unnecessary*[2].

[1] Doubtless the higher conceptions of grammar that have at the same time become current have also reacted on the theories of punctuation.

[2] At p. 75 of his *English Prose* Prof. Earle states the fundamental differences between Latin construction and English in these words:—

> The Latin sentence is an outgrowth of flectional conditions, and rejoices in that multiplicity of inward ramifications for which Flexion ministers the spring; whereas the English sentence is for the most part simpler and shorter or else more concatenated; it works less by internal differentiation and more by external subdivision, less by collectedness and concentration, more by expansion and serial development. Our early writers exhibit a mixture of these two types, the one being the fruit of their scholastic

In Part II we shall try to show the resulting tendencies at work.

---

discipline, the other the gift of boon Nature. In the struggle for literary survival the native structure has grown and prevailed; while the Latin sentence, which in Hooker and Clarendon and Milton had the pre-eminence, has gradually waned in popularity and is now mostly reserved for special and occasional use.

# PART II[1]

## CHAPTER V

### THE FULL STOP

§ 1. THE chief use of the full stop is to mark the end of a sentence that is neither exclamatory nor interrogative. As commonly defined the sentence is a complete thought expressed in words, and to the right expression of this thought in such a way as to *make sense* certain grammatical elements are held to be essential. In the actual practice of reading and writing, however, we find few sentences that contain a really complete thought, while many show a repetition of the necessary formal elements in a great variety of combinations. A thought cannot be wholly separated from its context, nor, on the other hand, has a definite technical limit been set to the content of one sentence. In order, then, to realize the conditions that determine the position of the full stop, it is necessary to consider the sentence in its relation, alike to the paragraph, and to the various clauses that are held together by the full stop.

[1] In all the extracts quoted the punctuation of the original is exactly reproduced.

Concerning the principles which determine the division of subject-matter into paragraphs it is beyond our province in this volume to speak; our present purposes are sufficiently served if we assume that in the treatment of a subject, be it narrative, descriptive, or expository, the paragraph properly contains a logical division of the whole. It concentrates attention on a particular element or aspect of the subject-matter, and elaborates it by grouping together ideas and facts that explain and support it. Taken as a whole, therefore, the paragraph gives a certain completeness of conception; running through all the sentences that go to make it up there is a common thread of discourse, round which are grouped relative considerations essential to the matter in hand. The various degrees of importance to be attached to these secondary elements are indicated by the prominence given to them, for, in order to convey his exact meaning to a reader, the writer must emphasize the weighty ideas and so arrange the subordinate ones that their degrees of relative importance may be clear. It is chiefly on this fact that the principles governing the division of the paragraph into sentences ultimately rest; when for special reasons the due balance is disturbed there is danger of a loss of that ready and exact intelligibility which is one of the most valuable qualities of good style.

§ 2. Before proceeding to consider in greater detail the relations existing between

the sentence and the paragraph we must notice that these are sometimes coterminous. Many writers, for example, introduce the subject of a chapter, or sum its results, in a sentence-paragraph, thereby focussing attention on the main position. Again, the nature of the subject-matter may demand that it be expressed in such a way as to show the close unity that holds the elements together when, on account of rapidity of incident, sustained flow of thought, or some such characteristic, a strong break would be incongruous. This may be felt in the following :—

> How it [the many-footed Host] reached the Salle de Manége, like an ever-waxing river; got admittance after debate; read its Address; and defiled, dancing and *ça-ira*-ing, led by tall sonorous Santerre and tall sonorous Saint-Huruge: how it flowed, not now a waxing river but a shut Caspian lake, round all Precincts of the Tuileries; the front Patriot squeezed by the rearward against barred iron Grates, like to have the life squeezed out of him, and looking too into the dread throat of cannon, for National Battalions stand ranked within: how tricolor Municipals ran assiduous, and Royalists with Tickets of Entry; and both Majesties sat in the interior surrounded by men in black: all this the human mind shall fancy for itself, or read in old Newspapers, and Syndic Roederer's *Chronicle of Fifty Days*.
>
> THOMAS CARLYLE[1].

[1] *The French Revolution*, Temple Classics Edition (London, 1897), vol. II, p. 316, l. 26.

Such devices exist, however, only for exceptional cases, and in general the sentence and the paragraph must perform separate functions. A tendency to identify the two is occasionally noticeable at the present time; it arises perhaps from a desire to increase the effect of each sentence, but it must be borne in mind that *when a sentence is essentially incomplete it gains only formally in weight by being raised to the dignity of a paragraph.*

§ 3. Short sentences have many advantages over long ones. They are simple, clear, and easily understood; at the same time too they offer few opportunities for wordy and irrelevant digression. For example :—

> Prudence is the virtue of the senses. It is the science of appearances. It is the outmost action of the inward life. It is God taking thought for oxen. It moves matter after the laws of matter. It is content to seek health of body by complying with physical conditions, and health of mind by the laws of the intellect.
>
> R. W. EMERSON[1].

Here the sentences are on an equality. Each supplies in a condensed, emphatic, form a characterization of prudence. The similarity of structure gives simplicity and harmony to the whole.

Contrast the effect of short sentences in the following :—

[1] *The Complete Works*, Bohn's Standard Library (London, 1874), vol. I, p. 93, l. 11.

> Also, that hankering after an overt or practical effect seems to me an apostasy. In good earnest, I am willing to spare this most unnecessary deal of doing. Life wears to me a visionary face. Hardest, roughest action is visionary also. It is but a choice between soft and turbulent dreams. People disparage knowing and the intellectual life, and urge doing. I am very content with knowing, if only I could know. That is an august entertainment, and would suffice me a great while. To know a little, would be worth the expense of this world. I hear always the law of Adrastia, "that every soul which had acquired any truth, should be safe from harm until another period."
>
> R. W. EMERSON[1].

In this instance short sentences tend rather to confusion than to clearness, for the staccato style is not in harmony with the underlying argument. A series of ideas is presented to the reader; they do not hold the same rank in relation to the theme, yet there is no indication of their comparative importance. Had some of the sentences been thrown together, and leading ideas thus been connected more closely with subsidiary, the argument would have been more easily followed. This, too, without any necessary loss of vigour or terseness, for *it is possible to retain these characteristic qualities and yet preserve the right relation of single ideas to the whole.* For example:—

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 190, l. 17.

> The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation [1].

In order to bring out more clearly the principles on which the division into sentences rests, we shall analyze in detail the following paragraph. For purposes of reference the sentences are lettered :—

> (a) The amount of resistance a good disposition or a moral instinct can overcome is the only true measure of its value. (b) Temptations, whether in the form of distinct, definite inducements, or in the diffused character of unfavourable surroundings or seductive environment, constitute the resistance to be surmounted. (c) They are the steep gradients up which moral energy has to force its way to the heights of Pisgah or to some lower elevations. (d) They are the infected, unwholesome climate in which

[1] *Exodus* xv, 9–13, Authorized Version. The division into verses, being irrelevant to the point under discussion, is omitted.

goodness has to live and, if possible, thrive. (e) They are the poor, starved, exhausted, often poisoned soil in which the good seed must grow. (f) Moral resistance to the good every man's own nature offers, and every man's own circumstances present. (g) Nothing need be done to render life a more severe moral gymnasium than it is and must be at the best. (h) But there are many influences in our present day civilization which make life a moral gymnasium at its worst. (i) What ought to be comparatively easy and simple virtues are become feats of strength by reason of the rank after rank of resistance placed in their way. (j) In high social life simplicity and sincerity are well-nigh impossible. (k) The difficulty of flower gardening in East-End slums is as nothing to the difficulty of cultivating simplicity and sincerity of character in West-End palaces. (l) In the hurry and whirr and noisy, dusty onrush of our industrial chaos strict honesty and truth are as much out of date as bows and arrows in modern wars. (m) The fierceness of competition tramples out with its tiger feet ethical boundary lines. (n) It is war; and like war it justifies to itself every means by which it may secure an advantage. (o) At any rate, this same fierceness of competition places in front of any one's disposition to truth and honesty an enormous power of resistance [1].

[1] Taken from a London daily newspaper, 30th Jan., 1904.

The foregoing may be shortly and simply expressed as follows :—

(a) A good disposition or a moral instinct is measured by the amount of resistance it can overcome.
(b) The resistance to be overcome consists of temptations, (1) definite, (2) diffused.
(c) (d) (e) Temptations are like the resistance that in other and better known circumstances militates against success.
(f) Man's own nature and circumstances present in themselves resistance to be overcome.
(g) These make life even at the best a sufficiently severe school of morality.
(h) Our present-day civilization adds influences that greatly increase the severity.
(i) What would in the absence of these additional difficulties be easy virtues are now feats of strength.
(j) Simplicity and sincerity are almost impossible in high social life.
(k) The cultivation of these virtues is much more difficult in the West-End than flower culture in the East-End.
(l) Honesty and truth are as much out of date in our present industrial conditions as bows and arrows in modern warfare.
(m) Ethical distinctions are destroyed by the fierceness of competition.
(n) As in war, the means are justified by the end.
(o) Competition opposes an enormous power of resistance to any one's disposition to truth and honesty.

This analysis shows that in the original paragraph the full stop does not in all cases indicate an equality of break, and that it is many times used when there is no real separation of ideas.

To begin with, the general theme is stated in (a), which thus forms an introduction to the whole. We therefore need not consider it further. The matter contained in the remaining sentences may be classified so :—

I. (b) Definition of resistance to be overcome.

(c) (d) (e) Illustrations to make (b) clear

II. (f) One source of resistance to be overcome.

(g) Relation to morality of amount coming from this source.

(h) An additional source of resistance.

(i) Relation to morality of this amount.

(j) Example of (i).

(k) Comparison of (j) with similar but at the same time simpler circumstances.

III. (l) (m) (n) Results of some special conditions of (h) and comparison with war as affording similar conditions.

IV. (o) Connection of (l) (m) (n) with (i).

To suggest that these fourteen sentences would have been more suitably arranged as four may seem the extreme unreasonableness of mere formality. Short sentences give, at any rate, the *appearance* of easy intelligibility, and careful internal pointing may seem stilted. But a glance at the above grouping will show that *the short sentence merely as such is not always helpful;* when the place of the minor points is usurped by the full stop a valuable element of clearness is ignored. The paragraph as a whole would have been more readily grasped had the main ideas been kept in better line with each other. As it stands, each statement is given the same weight, while the isolation of each causes a looseness of connection against which there is no compensating gain.

At the same time too, when considered from the point of view of style, the present-day fondness for short sentences is seen to be somewhat excessive. Simplicity and uniformity become bald and monotonous; and in the short, spasmodic, steps by which progress is made all dignity and impressiveness are lost. *The charm and power of the paragraph lie in such a skilful adjustment of the sentences as will bring them into harmony with the varied movement of the development of the thought.* Their place within the paragraph is determined by what we may call the morphology of its meaning.

§ 4. *Secondary Uses of the Full Stop.*

The full stop is used to separate two sentences the second of which is grammatically incomplete, when the second (a) stands in apposition to the first, or (b) makes an elliptical reference to its whole content. In such cases the context is readily supplied. The following are typical examples :—

1. Miss Brontë was far too downright a person ever to adopt the surely not dishonest practice of the disappointed, but wily author, who is careful, before sending off the child of his brains on a fresh voyage of adventure, to obliterate all tokens of the disastrous trip from which it has but just returned. Not she, indeed !

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL[1].

2. Danger or pain of any kind I knew not : my strength was never exercised, my patience never tried, and my courage never fortified. Not that I was ever afraid of anything,—either ghosts, thunder, or beasts ; . . . . .

RUSKIN[2].

A striking series of technically incomplete sentences, whose reference is to the whole preceding paragraph, occurs in Mr. John Morley's *Oliver Cromwell*[3]. After relating the main points of the declaration that Cromwell issued in Jan. 1650 in reply to the

[1] *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (London, 1887), p. 94, l. 16.
[2] *Præterita* (Orpington, Kent, 1886), vol. I, p. 63, l. 9.
[3] (London, 1900) pp. 307, 308.

manifesto of the Catholic prelates, he proceeds :—

> As if Cromwell had not stood by the side of Pym in his denunciations of Strafford in all their excess and all their ignorance of Irish conditions, precisely for systematic violation of English law and the spirit of it throughout his long government of Ireland. As if Clare's famous sentence. . .

And so on throughout the paragraph.

The full stop is also used to mark abbreviations, for example :—B.C., D.D., R.S.V.P., MS., Rev., Dei Grat., Fid. Def., and so on[1]. In this connection contractions are no longer distinguished from abbreviations, and formations like *Mr.* and *Dr.* are well-established in practice. When numbers are written in Roman characters they are still sometimes followed by a full stop as, for example, Edward VII., Chap. I., but the stop should properly be omitted. In earlier times the expression of numbers by figures was considered an abbreviation, and the figures were followed by a point. An instance may be seen at p. 107 of Bacon's *Essays* in the edition previously referred to[2].

A full stop is also often used at the end of titles of books, headings of chapters, etc., but

[1] Plurals are indicated by duplication :—MSS., LL.D., pp., Britt. The full stop of abbreviation is merged at the end of a sentence, but an instinct of style avoids as far as possible the coincidence.

[2] See p. 36.

in this matter the practice of different publishing-houses varies. The rule of the Clarendon Press, for example, is 'All points to be omitted from the end of lines in titles, half-titles, headlines, &c. . . . . unless a special direction is given to the contrary'[1]. Our own view is that the punctuation of a title-page is determined not only by the meaning of the matter conveyed but by considerations of decorative and effective disposal, and that accordingly spacing and difference of type serve in part—but in part only—the purposes of punctuation.

[1] *Rules for Compositors and Readers at the University Press, Oxford.* By Horace Hart, Fifteenth Edition (London, 1904), p. 28.

# CHAPTER VI

## THE MARK OF INTERROGATION AND THE MARK OF EXCLAMATION [1]

*Definitions:*

*The Mark of Interrogation:*

(1) A note that marks a question; thus ? as, Does Job serve God for nought?—DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON [2].

(2) The symbol used in writing or printing to indicate a question, in most European languages placed at the end of the sentence and having the form ? or ?

. . . . . .

A point of interrogation is also sometimes placed before a word, or phrase, to query its correctness, existence, etc.[3]

*The Mark of Exclamation:*

(1) A note by which a pathetical sentence is marked thus !—DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON [4].

(2) The mark (!) affixed to words, phrases, or sentences, intended to be uttered with an intonation of exclamation or surprise.[5]

§ 1. THESE marks, like the full stop, are used at the end of a sentence; in the simplest cases of their application they illustrate, more

[1] The earlier names, *note of interrogation* and *note of admiration*, indicate the closeness of association with *tone*.

[2] *A Dictionary of the English Language*, vol. I, Sixth Edition (London, 1785).

[3] *A New English Dictionary*, vol. V (Oxford, 1901).

[4] *Op. cit.*, vol. I.

[5] *N. E. D.* This definition appears under *Note of Admiration*, vol. I (Oxford, 1888).

clearly than the full stop does, the fundamental principle that controls the placing of all the points. In Chapter V we have seen that a necessary connection exists between the thought expressed by a sentence and the placing of the full stop. There we saw that the paragraph, while itself only part of a larger whole, is the expression of continuous and unified thought; that there is running through it a central nerve of thought which dominates the secondary systems; and that these secondary systems, or groups of ideas, are set forth sentence by sentence, according to the character of each and its relation to the whole, some of them taking short sentences as their fittest form, others long. We saw, in short, that the placing of the full stop is not a matter of arbitrary judgment, but that it depends on the quality of the thought expressed. In the case of questions and exclamations the dependence of punctuation on thought is more easily recognized, since *questions and exclamations* show primarily a certain degree of discontinuity of thought, and *retain, even when isolated from their context, their own peculiar quality of thought or feeling.* This outstanding characteristic of the logical content of the sentence demands the appropriate point, and our recognition of the fact is so ready as to be almost instinctive. In simple cases we have no doubt about placing our mark of interrogation or of exclamation.

§ 2. The logical outcome of such a theory

of the determination of points may seem to be that the same sign should follow all questions whether direct or indirect. A question *is* a question whatever be the particular grammatical form in which it is framed, and an identical indication of it would seem to be only consistent. The obvious answer to this is that the character of the sentence *as a whole* determines the point, and that, when a question is asked indirectly, it generally ceases to be the dominating element of the thought expressed. There are, however, many cases regarding which usage has varied. As early as 1786 exception was taken by a writer on punctuation [1] to the use of the question-mark, as then customary; we print in his amended form the two following passages :—

1. Say, first, (for heav'n hides nothing from thy view,
Nor the deep tract of hell,) say, first, what cause
Mov'd our grand parents, in that happy state
Favour'd of heaven so highly, to fall off
From their Creator, and transgress his will
For one restraint, lords of the world besides.
Who first seduc'd them to that foul revolt?

MILTON [2].

2. Say what strange motive, goddess, could compel
A well-bred lord t' assault a gentle belle:
Oh! say what stranger cause, yet unexplor'd,
Could make a gentle belle reject a lord.

[1] David Steel, *Elements of Punctuation.*
[2] *Paradise Lost*, book i, lines 27–33.

In tasks so bold can little men engage?
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage?
POPE[1].

Mr. Steel rejects question-marks after *besides*, *belle*, and *lord*, and inserts one after *engage*. His view is that in his cases of rejection the question is indirect, since it is a grammatically subordinate part of the invocation addressed to a higher power: in the remaining cases he considers the question direct. In reply, it may be urged that *what* and *who* can introduce both direct and indirect questions, and that it is possible to regard the clauses introduced by them in the above passages as co-ordinate with the clause containing the invocation, and therefore as independent parts of the discourse; but there is a more effective way of testing the meaning of the passages than by grammatical analysis. In speech, *tone helps us to get closer to sense than does grammar alone*, and we shall find that when these passages are read aloud the interrogative tone is the keynote of their exact rendering.

Some further light may be thrown on the essential difference between direct and indirect questions by a consideration of the views of a correspondent who discussed the matter in *Notes and Queries*[2], in 1868. He refers to the same passage from Milton as Mr. Steel had criticized, as an instance of the incorrect use

[1] *The Rape of the Lock*, canto i, lines 7–12.
[2] Fourth Series, vol. II, p. 527.

of the question-mark; and in support of his contention that the excessive use of this point was one of the great imperfections of the punctuation of his own time he quotes the following passages[1] from Shakespeare, as then printed:—

Say, is your tardy master now at hand?

. . . . . .

Say, didst thou speak with him?

*The Comedy of Errors*, II, i, 44, 46.

Say on, my lord of Westmoreland, in peace,
What doth concern your coming?

*King Henry IV*, Part II, IV, i, 29.

Say, Voltimond, what from our brother, Norway?

*Hamlet*, II, ii, 59.

Speak, shall I call her in?

*King Henry VI*, Part I, I, ii, 58.

Speak then, Prince Dolphin, can you love the lady? *King John*, II, i, 524.

Speak, nephew, were you by when it began?

*Romeo and Juliet*, I, i, 112.

Speak briefly, can you like of Paris' love?

*Ibid.*, I, iii, 96.

Then tell me, whither were I best to send him?

*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I, iii, 24.

Now tell me, how do all from whence you came?

*Ibid.*, II, iv, 122.

Now, Warwick, tell me, even upon thy conscience,
Is Edward your true king? for I were loth, etc.

*King Henry VI*, Part III, III, iii, 113.

[1] The correspondent does not state from what edition his quotations are taken. While leaving the punctuation unchanged we have adapted his references to The Temple Shakespeare Edition.

The correspondent referred to is of opinion that each of the above quotations is the statement of a request. The suppression which he suggests of the comma after *say*, *speak*, etc., increases the apparent formal dependence of the second part of the sentence, but a sufficient justification is not given for the inversion—the prose indication of a direct question—by a reference to our practice of inversion in such phrases as *said I*, *said he*, etc. Moreover, it is possible without putting any strain on the construction to regard the second part of the sentence as being in apposition to a suppressed object of *say*, etc. This further relieves us from the necessity of trying to view as a request what is manifestly an urgent interrogative. The words *say*, *speak*, etc., are little more than an emphatic introduction made for the purpose of arresting attention and insuring immediate reply. They distinctly *increase the vividness of the question*[1].

[1] In most of the recent editions of Shakespeare the question-mark is used in sentences of this kind; sometimes the break between the two parts of the speech is strengthened by the use of a semicolon or colon instead of a comma. Editors of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* have long been misled by the *form* of the last two lines in Sonnet CXV. In replacing the customary mark of interrogation by a full stop, Mr. Wyndham has in his edition (London, 1898) restored the sense. Another noteworthy instance of the close interdependence of sense and punctuation can be seen in the first stanza of Section LXXXI of *In Memoriam*. When printed, as it generally is, with a full stop at the end of line 4 the meaning of the section is lost. A point of interrogation makes it clear. For further remarks on the subject see pp. 162, 163, of *A Commentary on Tennyson's In Memoriam*, by A. C. Bradley (London, 1901).

§ 3. That we punctuate in accordance with the nature of the thought expressed, rather than with its form, is further evidenced by those cases in which we convert a question into an affirmative. Here an index to the true meaning is given by *tone* in speech, and by the question-mark in writing. Similarly, a question, though expressed in the direct form, is not followed by the appropriate mark when *qua* interrogative it is only a subsidiary element of the main thought, as in the following lines:—

> Ask, is Love divine,
> Voices all are, ay.
> Question for the sign,
> There's a common sigh.
>
> GEORGE MEREDITH[1].

Absurd combinations sometimes result when a divergence of form from meaning is ignored, as in the following passage taken from a review of Mr. Morley's *Life of Gladstone*:—

> What are we to say of a statesman who calmly and seriously entered in his journal the note:
>
> > Wrote a memorandum on Egyptian finance to clear my head?

We do not think that the reviewer intended to convey the impression that there was some doubt in Gladstone's mind on the question of fact. If the interrogative character of the reviewer's remark is insisted upon, a slight

[1] *Poems* (London, 1898), vol. I, p. 70.

adaptation of words would justify the placing of the question mark after *note*. In reality, however, the sentence means no more than this: *words fail us in which to express our opinion of a statesman. . . .*

A question-mark is sometimes placed in the middle of a sentence. In such a position it concentrates attention on certain elements of the thought, those which follow being added as an after-thought, or as a modifying circumtance. Of a similar nature is the question-mark enclosed in brackets that is inserted immediately after a word when a doubt is cast on the fitness of expression.

§ 4. Rhetorical questions are akin to exclamations: the mark that follows them generally depends on the character of the effect the writer has in view.

The mark of exclamation, being the sign of a vivid experience which in the intensest form of reality limits the power of utterance to a single cry, indicates the depth of the emotion expressed. Its frequent use lessens its power, however, and there is a danger of depending on it in cases where, with a little trouble, words sufficiently strong for the occasion could be found. As in other cases: emphasize everything and you emphasize nothing.

# CHAPTER VII

## THE COMMA

*Definitions:*

(1) The point which notes the distinction of clauses, and order of construction, in the sentence; marked thus [,].
DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON[1].

(2) A punctuation-mark [now,] used to separate the smallest members of a sentence. Also used to separate figures and symbols in arithmetic, chemical formulæ, etc.

. . . . . .

The function of the comma is to make clear the grammatical structure, and hence the sense, of the passage; one of the means by which this is effected in actual speech is a short pause; hence the comma is often inaccurately said to be merely the mark of such a pause; . . . .[2]

§ 1. IN dealing with the internal punctuation of the sentence it is obviously most convenient to consider first of all the comma, and this for several reasons. It is the mark that indicates the least degree of interruption to the flow of thought, and its use is therefore in many cases simple and easily understood. At the same time, its relation to the other points makes this order of discussion desirable. The function of the semicolon and of the colon is at times determined solely by

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. I.
[2] *N. E. D.*, vol. II (Oxford, 1893).

reference to that of the comma: when, for instance, a complex net-work of subordinate ideas grows out of the main thought, the relative importance of the threads is preserved, as we shall see later, by introducing the stronger marks in positions where in simpler conditions the comma would suffice. On the other hand, the comma is sometimes closely akin to the full stop; the treatment of such cases follows naturally that of the full stop, and at the same time forms a suitable transition to the greater complexities of internal punctuation.

In the early stages of development discourse takes in the main the form of a succession of detached judgments corresponding with an actual succession of experiences. This we can observe at the present time in the talk of children, illiterate persons, and backward races. We can further observe that, with the widening of experience and the growth of a knowledge of the relations that exist between realities, the developing mind gradually avails itself of the ready-made machinery by which the links in the chain of thought are interlaced. This machinery consists in part of the system of particles and other connective words by which we express these relations, and in part of a condensed form of expression that makes the results of past experience and knowledge readily available. In speech the possibility of pause and the variations of tone give the power of indicating, when necessary,

that while judgments are woven together into an organic whole they are yet distinct and in varying degrees complete in themselves. In the written language this apartness is signified by the conventional marks[1]. The freedom with which these marks are used varies from time to time, but it is limited on the one hand by the distraction and drag of frequent interruption, and on the other by the difficulty, confusion, and misapprehension, that may occur when a complex thought is expressed without break.

Following the line of development shown in actual life, we shall deal first with the comma as separating judgments that are essentially independent of each other and yet form part of the same sentence. Next we shall consider the conditions under which clauses[2] connected by a relation of dependence are separated by a comma; and lastly, the conditions under which single words and phrases are so separated.

§ 2. The following six examples serve as typical cases of the first group of sentences:—

1. Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet.

R. W. EMERSON[3].

[1] We do not mean to imply that they coincide throughout with pauses in speech, but only that in the two cases the same purpose exists—the elucidation of meaning. The difference of circumstance demands a somewhat different method.

[2] We use this word in the grammatical sense. It includes all distinct parts of a sentence that contain a subject and a predicate of their own.

[3] *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 26, l. 4.

2. Originally women were taken by force, or regularly sold by their father to the husband.

JOHN STUART MILL [1].

3. Sound book-keeping will not, by itself, make a prosperous merchant, nor supply the place of industry and honesty.

LESLIE STEPHEN [2].

4. They could not refuse admiration to his audacity, but they were unable to feel confident in his success.

LESLIE STEPHEN [3].

5. In the following year he served on a committee appointed by the Social Science Association to investigate the question of strikes, and in the September of that year took part in a discussion of the report presented by this committee at the Glasgow meeting.

LESLIE STEPHEN [4].

6. The genuine anguish of a rejected lover often expresses itself in curses both loud and deep, but the mood of blinding wrath which the rejection of a lovesuit may rouse in a passionate nature does not seem from the internal evidence to be reflected genuinely in Shakespeare's sonnets of vituperation.

SIDNEY LEE [5].

[1] *The Subjection of Women.* Third Edition (London, 1870), p. 53, l. 20.
[2] *Life of Henry Fawcett.* Third Edition (London, 1886), p. 145, l. 15.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 183, l. 10.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 184, l. 17.
[5] *A Life of William Shakespeare.* Fourth Edition (London, 1899), p. 120, l. 11.

In describing as essentially independent the two main judgments[1] into which each of the above sentences divides itself, we do not mean to say that they exist in the sentence out of all relation to each other. They are manifestly brought together in order to make explicit a relation that does exist; this relation is of co-existence, opposition, exclusion, alternation, or some such kind. By essential independence we mean rather that *the two judgments stand equally as integral parts of a larger whole;* each represents a judgment in its entirety, and neither is derivately dependent on the other. The exigencies of the whole passages of which the extracts form part have, as it were, driven together the narrower judgments which in other circumstances might have stood alone. We may thus regard the comma that separates the two judgments as a modified full stop.

Our examples vary considerably in length and complexity, but in each the fundamental balance of thought is preserved. We see from examples 1, 2, 3, and 5, that when the two such parts of a sentence have a member in common this does not of itself make the con-

[1] We use the term *judgment* as meaning *the sentence* (or, as in our examples, *the independent clause*) *as understood*, whether it be assertive, interrogative, imperative, or hortatory. Without entering into a discussion of the ultimate logical import of questions, commands, and exhortations, we think it well to say that we consider our use of the term *judgment* justified by the fact that a question is in reality an assertion of ignorance, while a command or an exhortation asserts superiority of one kind or another.

nection between the two so close as to cause the suppression of the comma. It has been customary, in cases where the predicate is common, to mark by a comma its omission from the second clause ; except for purposes of emphasis or contrast this is superfluous, as the mind readily supplies the omitted member when it is one of the elements necessary to every judgment. When, however, the common member is one that might or might not be taken with both clauses, it is necessary to indicate by punctuation the correct interpretation. In such a case the two clauses are generally drawn into an unbroken connection, while the common member is marked off by one or two commas, according to its position in the sentence, in order to stand in the same degree of association with both clauses.

The separate judgments contained in one sentence may be so closely and intimately associated in thought that the interruption caused by a comma unduly breaks the unity[1]. It must be borne in mind, however, that unless there is a fast interweaving of the judgments we lose in clearness by dropping the intervening comma. Further, shortness is not in itself a reason for omitting it. However short judgments may be, their individualization is sometimes a necessary means of gaining effect.

[1] The omission of the comma may sometimes even imply that one statement is merely an elaboration of another, as in the following: *I was very unimportant and had no one to love me.*

When describing Satan's course through chaos Milton says of the Fiend that he

> pursues his way,
> And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies[1].

§ 3. Midway between sentences of the type just discussed and those between whose clauses a relation of dependence exists, there is a class which in appearance belongs to the latter though in reality of the same type as the first. This divergence of form from meaning is due to the fact that our relative pronouns do not always express the same kind of relation. Most commonly, perhaps, they introduce a subordinate clause which is at the same time dependent on a main judgment, in the sense that apart from this connection the subordinate clause would not be intelligible. Sometimes, however, they serve merely to connect independent judgments, as in the following :—

> Besides—I ha' not since put up my sword—
> Against the Capitol I met a lion,
> Who glazed upon me and went surly by
> Without annoying me: and there were drawn
> Upon a heap a hundred ghastly women
> Transformed with their fear, who swore they saw
> Men all in fire walk up and down the streets.
>
> SHAKESPEARE[2].

[1] *The Poetical Works of John Milton.* Edited by David Masson (London, 1874). Vol. I, p. 186, l. 949.

[2] *Julius. Cæsar*, I, iii, 19. The Temple Shakespeare (London, 1901).

With the exception of the subordinate elements at the end, this passage relates a series of separate incidents. *Who* in line 3 is obviously equal to *and he*, and in line 6 to *and they*. As a result, the statements introduced by this word take rank with the others and are marked off by a comma.

Of a somewhat less obvious independence is the clause introduced by the relative pronoun in the following examples :—

1. In both their excellences and their defects Shakespeare's sonnets betray near kinship to his early dramatic work, in which passages of the highest poetic temper at times alternate with unimpressive displays of verbal jugglery.

   SIDNEY LEE[1].

2. All the deeper life of the soul is absorbed in this love, which from its exclusively personal character is unable to coalesce with other interests and prevents their growth.

   A. C. BRADLEY[2].

In the first example the work to which the sonnets betray kinship is described sufficiently for recognition and identification by the words *early dramatic*. If the sentence ended at *work* it would still be intelligible, though it would convey less information than in its present form : the second part is in no sense a constituent element of the first. Again, in the

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 87, l. 9 from bottom.

[2] *A Commentary on Tennyson's In Memoriam* (London, 1901), p. 40, l. 1.

second example the word *this* throws us back to an analysis in the preceding sentence that we may realize the kind of love that absorbs the deeper life of the soul. The sentence might close at *love* without any injury to the sense : *which* merely forms a bridge to connect additional facts. In both examples this apartness of the two members of the sentence is signified by the intervening comma.

A certain degree of exactness of perception is needed to discover *this real equality of rank that sometimes underlies apparent verbal dependence.* Whether an unwillingness to make the mental effort be the cause or not, it is the fact that this discrimination is not by any means common. Such sentences as the following show the possibilities of misconception that arise from the failure to punctuate in accordance with this distinction :—

> It is requested that all members of Council, who are also members of the Lands Committee, will assemble in the Council Room.

As the sentence stands it requests all members of Council to assemble in the Council Room, and at the same time states that all members of Council are also members of the Lands Committee. This may or may not be the case. If it is, there would in ordinary circumstances be no reason for saying so, since the members of Council would be able to identify themselves without this additional fact. When the comma following *Council* is

omitted, only those members of Council who are also members of the Lands Committee are requested to assemble. In this case there is a probable inference that there are some members of Council who are not members of the Lands Committee.

Enough has now been said to make it clear that *a clause, though introduced by a relative pronoun, may nevertheless be of independent rank in the sentence.* From the logical point of view the individual character of the introductory or connective word does not matter: the real value of the new thought is determined by the kind of relation it bears to the preceding one. This relation cannot be determined by a mere word-inspection [1].

§ 4. We pass now to a consideration of clauses introduced by a relative pronoun which, unlike those last discussed, are not separated from the word of reference by a comma. They are generally called dependent, but in a certain sense it is rather the so-called principal clauses that are dependent, since one element in the thought expressed by them derives its definiteness and completion from the subordinate clause. That is to say, *the word to which reference is made suggests a*

[1] The variation of meaning with the use or omission of a comma may be further seen from a consideration of the following: (1) *Squire Woodhouse is a true friend who never spares himself,* and (2) *When it was seen that William was breaking all the old and free Saxon institutions and the mild and equitable laws, which he had most solemnly sworn to preserve . . .*

*full and clear conception only when the relative clause is taken with it;* this being so, the break caused by a comma would obviously be incongruous. The intimacy of such a connection is plainly seen in sentences like the following:—

1. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath [1].

2. No storms are ever harder to allay than those that spring up in abstract discussions.
JOHN MORLEY [2].

3. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here.
SHAKESPEARE [3].

In these illustrations there occur certain groups of words which, while belonging to different grammatical clauses, cannot be separated in thought without introducing a vague indeterminateness that is hostile to the ready grasping of the sense. *Every one that hath; him that hath not; that which he hath; those that spring up in abstract discussions; you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts:* each of these groups suggests an exact, well-defined conception, and the introduction of a comma before *that* or *which* would only serve to raise a feeling of unrest and expectation until the limiting conditions were announced.

[1] S. Matthew xxv, 29, Authorized Version.
[2] *Oliver Cromwell* (London, 1900), p. 236, l. 17.
[3] *Macbeth*, I, v, 41. The Temple Shakespeare (London, 1901).

It is perhaps superfluous to say that the presence of a preposition at the beginning of the relative clause does not change the relation to the word of reference, and therefore does not necessitate a comma. Similarly no comma is necessary when the real relation between two clauses is of this restrictive type, whatever be the special form of expression. This will be seen from the following :—

1. A personal note may have escaped him involuntarily in the sonnets in which he gives voice to a sense of melancholy and self-remorse, . . . .

SIDNEY LEE[1].

2. There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he's an arrant knave.

SHAKESPEARE[2].

The words *in which he gives voice to a sense of melancholy and self-remorse* supply the description that identifies the sonnets in question, and thus form an inseparable part of the conception. The nature of the connection between the two lines from Shakespeare becomes clear when the words *But he's* are changed into *Who is not*[3].

Before closing this section we must point

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 159, l. 15.

[2] *Hamlet*, I, v, 123. The Temple Shakespeare (London, 1900).

[3] We think it more akin to modern usage to substitute these words rather than, as most grammarians do, *unless* for *but*. In both cases the clause is restrictive, but in the second the example would be more appropriately placed in § 3 of Chapter VIII. See p. 95.

out that cases occur in which the punctuation seems to be at variance with the principle we have discussed. A closer inspection of such cases will generally show that the relative clause is already separated from the word of reference; when this verbal separation would cause doubt regarding the word to which the qualifying clause belongs, a comma detaches it from the word it immediately follows. For example:—

> I am his first-born son, that was the last
> That ware the imperial diadem of Rome;
> SHAKESPEARE[1].

The apparent inconsistency of punctuation in the above is due to the fact that the words *that was the last* refer to *his* and not to *son* as we should suppose were there no comma after *son*. The reference of the second line is quite unambiguous, and there is therefore no comma after *last*. When in spite of the reference being clear a comma is introduced for reasons arising out of the general structure of the sentence the result is generally an awkward sentence. *For this, reconstruction is the best remedy*, as in the following:—

> 1. Finally, they [certain ideas] dealt one of the blows, that seem so naturally to mark the course of all modern revolutions, to History as a moral power.
> JOHN MORLEY[2].

[1] *The Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*, I, i, 5. The Temple Shakespeare (London, 1900).
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 168, l. 9.

2. Prohibitory duties, designed to discourage the importation of foreign silk, were imposed by the legislature; monopolies were granted to successful throwsters, and every precaution was taken, which the follies of protection could suggest, to perpetuate the supremacy which Great Britain was gradually acquiring in the silk trade.

SPENCER WALPOLE[1].

[1] *A History of England from the Conclusion of the Great War in 1815*, Second Edition (London, 1879), vol. I, p. 67, l. 15 from bottom.

# CHAPTER VIII

## THE COMMA (*continued*)

§ 1. In Chapter VII we discussed the first of the three groups of cases under which we are considering the internal punctuation of sentences, and in spite of the demands of a strictly methodical division we also included in that chapter one case of the second group. Sections 2 and 3 of that chapter deal with sentences in which several independent[1] judgments are brought together, while section 4 begins the discussion of sentences which in addition to an independent judgment contain a dependent[2] clause. Our reasons for following this plan of division must be obvious. The similarity of form that exists between the sentences dealt with in sections 3 and 4 makes juxtaposition desirable in order the more forcibly to show the real underlying difference. In addition to this the difference is far-reaching, and it will be found to lie at the root of much that remains to be said; the case already considered presents it in a vivid form.

[1] This word is used throughout with the qualification stated on p. 79.

[2] See p. 84.

We distinguished the two classes of relative clauses by examining whether they expressed independent facts or merely contributed an element necessary for the more exact conception of one of the members of the sentence. A similar test may be applied to all the clauses, phrases, and single significant words, into which a sentence can be divided. *Each is either a judgment*[1] *or a modification of a judgment, and ranks in the sentence either as an integral part or as an accessory.* It is important to note that judgments are not in all cases explicit; but to be implied rather than affirmed is a difference only of degree, not of kind. As a subject of thought, the suggested, or implied, judgment differs from the explicit in being farther from the focus of attention; by a re-adjustment of focus with a consequent broadening out of form, what was suggested becomes explicit. In an explicit judgment two elements are necessary, a subject and a predicate; these may best be described by saying that the bit of reality expressed by the subject is analyzed or developed in the predicate, and the unity of the two constitutes the judgment. A suggested judgment, on the other hand, is expressed in a variety of abridged forms developed in the natural course of economy in speech and thought. According to the sense in which they are used these abridged forms suggest either expansion and independent value, or

[1] For note on the content of this term see p. 79.

absorption as an essential part of some other element of the whole judgment.

From these remarks it is clear that the lines drawn in grammatical analysis between independent and dependent clauses, and between clauses, phrases, and words, do not always coincide with a difference of real meaning. Though grammar in its worthiest sense is psychological, it deals mainly with the work done by each member in the *construction* of the sentence. In order then to keep close to the real meaning of a sentence we use grammatical terms with a formal reference, and *determine our punctuation by a direct reference to the thought expressed.*

§ 2. In addition to adjective-clauses, of which the relative clause is the type, there are two varieties of dependent clauses to be considered : the substantive and the adverbial. The following may be taken as typical examples of the substantive-clause :—

1. It is at the bidding of the dead that he seeks a friendship for the years to come.

A. C. Bradley [1].

2. It is likely enough that beneath all the conventional adulation bestowed by Shakespeare on Southampton there lay a genuine affection, . . . .

Sidney Lee [2].

3. The worst misfortune of a civil war, said Cromwell's contemporary, De Retz, is that

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 44, l. 14. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 151, l. 9.

one becomes answerable even for the mischief that one has not done.

JOHN MORLEY [1].

4. The majority of the parliament, true to English traditions and instinct, insisted that all church government was of human institution and depended on the will of the magistrate.

JOHN MORLEY [2].

Examples 1 and 2 are of the same type, 2 being slightly more complex than 1. It is into this form that sentences whose subject consists of a substantive-clause are usually thrown. The grammatical subject *it* is anticipatory, and delays the statement of the real subject until after the predicate. The real, or logical, subject is in the one case *that he seeks a friendship for the years to come* [3], and in the other, *that beneath . . . affection.* In thought the subject and predicate are inseparable, since together they form the unit of judgment. A comma after *dead* in 1 and *enough* in 2 would therefore represent a merely formal break; in the absence of special and unusual complexity such a pause interrupts the formation of a judgment by introducing an expectant mood, with its consequent disturbance of attention.

In example 3 the grammatically independent clause is *said Cromwell's contemporary,*

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 227, l. 9.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 159, l. 4.
[3] Otherwise *his search of a friendship. . . .*

*De Retz*, and all the rest of the sentence forms the grammatical object of the verb *said*. In reality, and apart from any special emphasis of authorship[1], these words do not express the chief judgment of the sentence; they merely give its authority, and the *said* means no more than *according to*[2]. *From a logical point of view it is the grammatically dependent part of the sentence that is important.* It is there that the value of the sentence as an expression of knowledge lies. The substantive-clause *that one . . . the mischief* with its sub-dependent clause *that . . . done* is an integral part of the predicate which analyzes *the worst misfortune of a civil war*. A comma after *is* could not be justified even on formal grounds, for grammatical analysis recognizes that the word *is*, except in the sense of *exists*, cannot be a complete predicate. Moreover, a break after *is* would give undue importance to a word which merely symbolizes that the subject and predicate co-exist. This is very evident when such a sentence is read aloud with a pause after *is*.

In example 4[3] we find two substantive-clauses serving as grammatical object of the verb *insisted*, and here again the connection

[1] The context indicates no such emphasis.

[2] On the punctuation of clauses, phrases, and single words, introduced incidentally, see p. 103.

[3] The adjectival phrase that is marked off by commas is equivalent to an independent relative clause of the type treated in § 3 of Chapter VII. Expanded it might take the form *which in holding such an opinion was true. . . .*

in thought is obviously too close for any formal break.

As a general result it is to be noted, then, that the substantive-clause is either the logical subject of a sentence or an integral part of the predicate. In itself it is incomplete, for when taken in its entirety it makes no sense, explicit or implied, the word *that* which generally introduces it indicating an intimate connection with another part of the sentence[1]. Except in the case of an unusually involved style it is only when enumerations or systematic explanations are thrown into the form of substantive-clauses that considerations of distinctness necessitate a formal separation. At the same time such substantive-clauses tend to have a different logical value from those we have already considered, as will be seen from the following :—

> He was accused of boldly avowing such noxious principles as these : that every single man is judge of what is just and right as to the good and ill of a kingdom ; that the interest of the kingdom is the interest of the honest men in it, and those only are honest men who go with him ; that it is lawful to pass through any forms of government for the accomplishment of his ends ; that it is lawful to play the knave with a knave.
>
> JOHN MORLEY[2].

[1] It may be urged that when the *that* is omitted the substantive-clause does make sense. So it may, but not the sense in which it is used in any particular sentence.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 244, l. 8.

The series of clauses following the colon[1] in the above is finally dependent on the word *avowing*, through apposition with the words *such noxious principles as these*. It is just this fact of second-hand dependence that differentiates the sentence from example 4, p. 92. The part of the sentence that precedes the colon conveys a definite intelligible notion though there is at the same time an indication that further information on the subject is forthcoming. This consists of a statement of various doctrines taken as instances of the noxious principles; each statement is manifestly separate and distinct, and in no way dependent on other elements for intelligibility. At the same time it cannot be denied that the fact of accusation is the main statement of the sentence[2]; the detailed enunciation of the noxious principles rises only for the time being into prominence because of their own individual importance.

§ 3. As the name suggests, an adverbial clause generally qualifies a judgment. With regard to its punctuation a distinction is sometimes drawn according as it precedes or follows the judgment it qualifies. In this view a comma marks off an adverbial clause that precedes the judgment to which it refers, but no comma is used between the two when it follows. This view is supported by the conten-

[1] The use of the colon and semicolon in sentences like our example is dealt with in § 1 of Chapter IX.

[2] The context shows this clearly.

tion that in the first case, since the clause is in itself incomplete, and leaves the mind in expectation of something more, the comma in no way endangers the correct interpretation of the sentence; and that when, on the other hand, the main judgment comes first no indication of the modification to follow is given, and a break would raise the supposition that the sentence is complete. This theory may be exact and sufficient when a writer has to bear in mind that his book will be read aloud, but at the present time it is certainly not consistently followed by good writers. An examination of some instances will show that the meaning and relation of the clause determines the punctuation and that a variation of real import accounts for apparent anomalies:—

1. History is only intelligible if we place ourselves at the point of view of the actor who makes it.

JOHN MORLEY[1].

2. Shakespeare clearly favoured the adult actors in their rivalry with the boys, but he wrote more like a disinterested spectator than an active partisan when he made specific reference to the strife between the poet Ben Jonson and the players.

SIDNEY LEE[2].

3. So long as the mourner's sorrow and desire

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 238, l. 15.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 217, l. 1.

are fixed on that which dies they withdraw his interest from all other things.

A. C. BRADLEY [1].

4. Even where he does not carry us with him, there is nobody of the time whose opinion is much better worth knowing.

JOHN MORLEY [2].

5. If all the words be taken literally, there is disclosed an act of self-sacrifice that it is difficult to parallel or explain.

SIDNEY LEE [3].

6. Up to the time when he finished the poem he does not appear to have made any study of philosophers; and though a few of his later poems bear marks of some reading of this kind, and even employ terms too technical for poetry, in general the language remains that of imagination, and the form of argumentation or strict statement is never adopted.

A. C. BRADLEY [4].

Examples 1, 2, and 3 give instances of adverbial clauses that are not separated by a comma from the clause they modify. A very little consideration will show that *the qualification is too important an element in the judgment to admit of any separation.* It supplies the characteristic tone of the whole.

The adverbial clauses in examples 4 and 5

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 43, l. 3 from bottom.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 96, l. 12.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 154, l. 12 from bottom.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 50, l. 15.

seem to us to be of a different kind. We consider that each is more than a modification of the main judgment; *in reality it suggests a quite definite subsidiary judgment.* In example 4 the mind promptly supplies *and there are such cases;* and in 5 we supply *I myself am not disposed to take them so.* A study of the context fully justifies these inferences; and, to our thinking, the break caused by the comma marks the more independent character of the adverbial clause that a full grasp of its meaning gives. That such adverbial clauses are found oftener before the main judgment than after it is due in part to the greater prominence thus secured, but chiefly to the fact that in this position the comma is more aptly suggestive of an unexpressed judgment. Were such an adverbial clause to be placed after the main judgment a comma between the two might *after the reading of the adverbial clause* suggest that it had a special signification, but at the same time a stop of some kind would naturally follow the formal ending of the judgment and thus lessen the suggestive effect of the preceding comma. The device would then fail for mechanical reasons[1].

In view of what has already been said the apparent inconsistency between the two parts of example 6 is easily resolved. The tem-

[1] The change of meaning consequent on a wrong insertion of a comma is seen in the following: *Man must be excessively fond of riches, when they are earned with such circumstances of abject submission.*

poral clause in the first part is an essential element of the main clause, and cannot be separated from it without changing the thought. In the second part, on the other hand, the main clause is intelligible without the two clauses introduced by *though*[1]. These in reality state additional facts whose relation to the others is indicated by the connective word *though*. This relation might be expressed fully in these words: *we should have expected these facts to have an important bearing on the question under discussion, but they have not*[2].

§ 4. We pass now to a consideration of the principles that determine the use of the comma in marking off phrases and single significant words. Here as before we find two classes according as the element contributed is essential to the main judgment or only accessory. Phrases and single words may serve the same function in a judgment as the various clauses which we have already discussed somewhat fully, and there is therefore no need to enter in detail into this aspect of the matter. We shall confine our remarks to a few remaining points of importance.

§ 5. We shall best illustrate the need for

[1] That the words *a few of his later poems* are introduced in the adverbial clause is a matter of style and does not affect the general argument.

[2] The concessive character of *though* is in this example weakened to such a degree that the clauses introduced by it might almost rank as co-ordinate.

clearness of connection by giving a few examples of its neglect:—

1. It appears that Mrs. Henderson was in the act of crossing the street at the part mentioned, when the motor came along, and in passing the near lamp of the vehicle struck her on the side, causing her to fall[1].
2. This is the "Health in Nature" system for the cure of diseases developed by Dr. A. T. Sanden[2].
3. An old servant of a relation of my own with an ungovernable temper. . . .
   DEAN RAMSAY[3].
4. Bands of Protestants, under the name of Peep-o'-day Boys, had scoured the country and seized the arms which the Roman Catholics possessed in defiance of the law.
   SPENCER WALPOLE[4].
5. Fortunately only two psalms were sung at each service; for to add to vocal dreariness each successive line of the psalm was read or drawled out before it was sung to the dislocation of all music.
   HENRY GREY GRAHAM[5].

The absence of a comma after the word *passing* in example 1 causes the reader to con-

[1] Daily Newspaper, 25th May, 1903.
[2] Weekly Newspaper, 24th April, 1903.
[3] *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character*, Thirtenth Edition (Edin. 1865), p. 71, l. 10.
[4] *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 236, l. 12.
[5] *The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1901), p. 291, l. 13.

nect *the near lamp of the vehicle* with this word until the word *struck* is reached. There is of course no difficulty in correcting the misinterpretation, but this is a needless interruption that could have been simply obviated.

As it stands example 2 throws a reflection on the skill of the medical gentleman which he would probably resent. A comma after the word *diseases* would disconnect it from the succeeding phrase, which would then be thrown back for reference to *cure*. This would relieve the sentence of the undesirable suggestion. In order to bring out the exact meaning, however, the adjectival phrase ought to come immediately after *system*.

The insertion of a comma after *own* in example 3 is the least that is necessary, but it may be contended that the construction is radically at fault and requires alteration such, for instance, as the substitution of *had* for *with*.

In example 4 the absence of punctuation combined with vagueness of style raises a doubt whether it was the Protestants or Roman Catholics or both who acted in defiance of the law. A comma after *arms* would be logically defensible, and would restrict censure to the Roman Catholics. If the Protestants also are involved reconstruction of the sentence is the only means of making this clear.

In example 5 reconstruction is again the only remedy. A comma after the second *sung*

would still leave the connection indefinite. We take it that the phrase *to add to vocal dreariness* refers to the reading or drawling before singing, while *to the dislocation o all music* is characteristic of the whole vocal procedure—the reading or drawling combined with the singing. If this interpretation is correct, the defect of construction is radical.

As a general result, we may say that there is a somewhat narrow limit to the power of punctuation to free a sentence from the ambiguity that arises out of vagueness of connection. A comma at times serves to disconnect a phrase from words to which proximity suggests a reference, but the demands of lucidity are effectively served only when at the same time the real reference becomes unquestionable. Thus in legal documents, where clearness of reference is the first essential, punctuation-marks are systematically omitted precisely because this omission necessitates a constructional expression the meaning of which cannot be mistaken.

§ 6. When each of a series of phrases or words serves the same function in a sentence each is separated from the other by a comma. This is due to the fact that each member of the series stands ultimately for a separate judgment[1]. With regard to the last member of the series practice varies. A logical consistency demands that it too be followed by a

[1] The repetition of the same word or phrase is analogous.

comma in order to secure for every member of the series an equality of relation to the rest of the sentence. There are, however, three cases in which the omission of this comma can be justified: when the last of the series is joined to the others by a connective word implying that a similarity of function is discharged by each member of the series a comma after the last would needlessly interrupt the flow of the sentence; again, when the last of the series is the climax or when it sums up all the others it manifestly includes all, and in itself connects all the others with the rest of the sentence; and finally, when a series of adjectives is used to qualify a noun and the last of the series has a closer connection with the noun, tending to form with it a compound, the comma is obviously incongruous. *The really important consideration for the writer when dealing with a series of similar phrases or words is to determine whether the singleness and separateness are to be emphasized or the unity of the group.* If the former then each member has the same relation to the rest of the sentence and demands the same punctuation; in the second case all are incorporated with the sentence through the last member.

§ 7. When clauses, phrases, or single significant words, are introduced incidentally they manifestly do not form an integral part of the sentence. Used with the force of a separate statement they interrupt the sequence of the thought, and are therefore marked off by

commas. Even single words such as *however*, *moreover*, *again*, *hence*, etc., though partly of a connective nature, have the power of a distinct judgment; but many words and phrases that were originally of this type are now used more freely, and tend rather to give a special colouring (tentativeness, suggestiveness, or such-like) to the thought which they seem to interrupt. In such circumstances commas need not be used.

# CHAPTER IX

## THE SEMICOLON AND THE COLON

*Definitions:*

*Semicolon:* Half a colon; a point made thus [;] to note a greater pause than that of a comma.

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON[1].

*Colon:*

(1) A point [:] used to mark a pause greater than that of a comma, and less than that of a period. Its use is not very exactly fixed; nor is it very necessary, being confounded by most with the semicolon. It was used before punctuation was refined, to mark almost any sense less than a period. To apply it properly, we should place it, perhaps, only where the sense is continued without dependence of grammar or construction; . . .

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON[2].

(2) A punctuation-mark consisting of two dots placed one above the other [:] usually indicating a discontinuity of grammatical construction greater than that marked by the semicolon, but less than that marked by the period.

Its best defined use is to separate clauses which are grammatically independent and discontinuous, but between which there is an apposition or similar relation of sense. Thus it may introduce an antithetic statement, an illustration, extract, etc. . . . It is also employed to divide prose into metrical periods for chanting[3].

§ 1. IN dealing with these marks we shall first consider the cases in which their use is determined, not so much by the kind of

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. II.
[2] *Op. cit.*, vol. I.
[3] *N. E. D.*, vol. II (Oxford, 1893).

relation that exists between the parts of the divided sentence, as by the necessity of indicating that the breaks in the continuity of the sentence are of various degrees. The two following examples are instances of this kind :—

1. A large number of the items are rather in the nature of full notes on special points—on a recently-discovered Cross-Slab at St. Andrews, on An English Letter of Gospatric, and so on. But among the longer pieces are articles of much interest, as an excellent opening article by Professor Walter Raleigh on "The Lives of Authors", a paper which will attract bibliographers on a book about Scotland, of which only one copy exists in England, written for Magdalene de Valois, daughter of Francis I. and Queen of Scotland, and a paper on Treasure Trove, *à propos* of the prehistoric gold ornaments recently discovered in Ireland.

   *The Times*[1].

2. One hinted in vain that wisdom is justified of her children, that the poet must be trusted to judge of the capacity of his own theme, and that it is his conception and treatment of it that ultimately justify or discredit his choice. Now that the entire work is before the world, this is plain, and it is admitted. When the second volume, containing *Giuseppe Caponsacchi*, appeared, men no longer found it sordid or ugly; the

[1] Literary Supplement, p. 299: List of New Books and Reprints *sub* '*Scottish Historical Review*' (London, 16th Oct., 1903).

> third, with *Pompilia*, convinced them that the subject was not, after all, so incurably unlovely; and the fourth, with *The Pope*, and the passage from the Friar's sermon, may well persuade those who needed persuasion, that moral fruitfulness depends on the master, his eye and hand, his vision and grasp, more than on this and that in the transaction which has taken possession of his imagination.
>
> JOHN MORLEY[1].

The two sentences in our first example are similar, both in the nature of their content and in the general form of their structure: in the first the comma, helped out as it is by a dash that makes the detailed items stand clearly in the same connection with the introductory remark, is sufficient; in the second the comma serves so many different functions that a second reading is necessary before the exact relations are grasped. In this case the complexity of information about the 'longer pieces', notably about the second specified, necessitates a stronger point than the comma between the main divisions of the sentence; this again involves the marking off of the introductory remark by a stronger point than that between the detailed statements. It is desirable, then, that a semicolon should follow the description of each 'longer piece' mentioned, while a colon with the consequent dropping of the word *as* should follow the

[1] *Studies in Literature* (London, 1891), p. 255, l. 10.

word *interest.* The sentence then becomes clear and unmistakable in form. The punctuation of a sentence like this is generally explained by reference to the principle of enumeration, but we should like to point out that *it is not enumeration in itself that necessitates the use of the colon and semicolon.* Apart from a special formality of style or a desire for emphasis by marked reference, these points are brought into use only *when, along with an enumeration, there is introduced such a multiplicity of detail as would otherwise obscure the main line of thought.*

Our second example shows, perhaps even more clearly, how the elaboration of a central thought determines the points to be used. The extract forms the concluding part of the opening paragraph in Mr. Morley's study on Browning's *The Ring and the Book*, and contains the grounds on which he held as unreasonable the outcry that had greeted the publication of the first volume of this poem. It is to the closing sentence that we would chiefly direct attention. Mr. Morley's argument has already been stated in general terms, and now, in a final refutation of any lingering opponents, he deals specifically with each succeeding volume. Within this culmination of his argument there is a regular progression of conviction up to the point where the general and special arguments are unanswerably knit together. This elaboration and development of proof leads to the introduction of many

associated ideas, and it is the resulting internal complexity that determines the strength of the mark used in separating into sections the thread of the argument.

That it is of practical as well as theoretical importance to bear in mind the relativity of value between the points may be seen from the following[1]:—

> Mr. McKenna, in asking the Prime Minister his Question, [whether, in view of the large and exceptional import of unstemmed tobacco in the month of March in anticipation of the Budget proposals, he will grant a Select Committee to inquire who were the importers; and whether the import has been induced by information that it was intended to make such proposals] said he desired to state that, either by the alteration of the Clerk at the Table or by a printer's error, in the fourth line what stood now as a semicolon should have been a comma. . .
> MR. SPEAKER: It is a printer's error.

The effect of this change of point is important. The semicolon after *importers* brings the succeeding clause into the scope of Mr. McKenna's question to the Prime Minister, while the original comma left it in connection with *who were the importers* and so brought it into the scope of the suggested inquiry by a Select Committee.

The semicolon is frequently used instead of

[1] Hansard (4th Series), vol. 134, col. 545 (5th May 904)

the comma when, in spite of a formal simplicity, the ideas presented are comprehensive and far-reaching. In such a case the more emphatic break concentrates attention on each idea in turn, and increases the ease with which the content of each may be apprehended. This is illustrated in the following example :—

> He is for a lodger franchise; abolition of church-rates; removal of religious restrictions (as he has shown at Cambridge); economy; the volunteer movement; the equalisation of poor-rates, and the reform of local government in London.
>
> LESLIE STEPHEN[1].

§ 2. With regard to the use of the semicolon and colon respectively as indicative of a specific relation between the parts of a divided sentence it is difficult to draw a definite line. The cases to be discriminated show a gradual progression in the quality of relation, and at no point is it possible to say, here a semicolon is always used and a colon never. We shall therefore consider limiting cases.

When a sentence contains two (or more) formally independent clauses there is generally an indication, by means of a conjunction or otherwise, of the relation existing between them. If, however, this indication is not given, or if in passing from the one clause to the other there is a transition of thought somewhat abrupt or not altogether direct,

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 191, l. 1.

then a semicolon is generally used. Here, *the semicolon indicates not so much a specific relation as the fact that a gap exists which must be filled by the reader before the relation is quite obvious.* This is seen in the following:—

1. It is not amusing to inquire into the principles involved in a sound currency; but the possession of a sound currency system is of vast importance to the welfare of a nation.

LESLIE STEPHEN [1].

2. The sculptor, the painter, and the musician, have each their special means of producing this final and superlative impression; each is bound by the strictly limited capacity in one direction and another of the medium in which he works.

JOHN MORLEY [2].

It is manifest that this break in the direct sequence of thought may occur in widely varying degrees, but it is hardly possible to say when the transition becomes so wide as to necessitate a colon. Much depends on the individual judgment of the writer and on the degree of prominence which he wishes to attach to the succeeding clause. The ultimate value of the colon in this respect is best seen in cases where in introducing a quotation, illustration, or explanation, it acts somewhat like an index-finger [3]; for the rest, it is most

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 144, l. 10.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 265, l. 8 from bottom.
[3] In such cases a dash sometimes follows the colon.

forcibly used between (a) the two terms of an apposition, (b) the general and the special statement of a truth, and (c) the members of a fundamental antithesis. The following are examples :—

1. New ribbons, however, make little difference on the whole: those who liked *The Girl from Kay's* before will like her none the worse for the change.

   *The Times*[1].

2. On the other hand, nobody had ever heard of a Dodson who had ruined himself: it was not the way of that family.

   GEORGE ELIOT[2].

3. Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!

   ROBERT BROWNING[3].

4. That low man seeks a little thing to do,
   Sees it and does it:
   This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
   Dies ere he knows it.

   ROBERT BROWNING[4].

[1] (London, 10th Sept., 1903), page 4, col. 5.
[2] *The Mill on the Floss* (A New Edition, *undated*), p. 250, l. 8 from bottom.
[3] *The Poetical Works*, in Two Volumes (London, 1897) vol. I, p. 249, Section II, l. 9.
[4] *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 425, col. 2, l. 17.

# CHAPTER X

## THE DASH[1], THE MARKS OF PARENTHESIS, AND THE INVERTED COMMAS

### I. THE DASH

*Definitions:*

1. A mark in writing; a line —, to note a pause, or omission.

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON[2].

2. A horizontal stroke of varying length (—, ——, ———) used in writing or printing to mark a pause or break in a sentence, a parenthetic clause, an omission of words or letters or of the intermediate terms of a series, to separate distinct portions of matter, or for other purposes[3].

§ 1. THE most characteristic use of the dash is to indicate that the expression of a thought is suddenly interrupted and is left unfinished or imperfectly developed. This interruption may arise in a variety of ways, as will be seen from the following:—

1. Therefore, paying piteous duty, what seemed
You have wé consigned

[1] The dash is regarded with growing disfavour by printers because its thinness makes it liable to fracture in stereotype plates.

[2] *Op. cit.*, vol. I.

[3] *N. E. D.*, vol. III (Oxford, 1897).

Peacefully to—what I think were, of all earth-beds, to your mind
Most the choice for quiet, yonder: . . .
ROBERT BROWNING[1].

2. I whipt him for robbing an orchard once when he was but a child—
'The farmer dared me to do it,' he said; he was always so wild—
And idle—and couldn't be idle—my Willy—he never could rest.
TENNYSON[2].

3. "O it is difficult—life is very difficult! It seems right to me sometimes that we should follow our strongest feeling;—but then, such feelings continually come across the ties that all our former life has made for us—the ties that have made others dependent on us—and would cut them in two. . . ."
GEORGE ELIOT[3].

In each of these examples *the interruption springs naturally out of the circumstances:* the first shows a distinct avoidance of an explicit statement which in bald simplicity would be unbearable to the deep and tender feelings the occasion has raised; in the second the transitions of thought are so rapid as to make each statement almost atomic and void of cohesion; while in the third a severe emotional struggle crowds the speaker's mind with relevant, but detached, judgments, and at the

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 545, col. 1, l. 5.
[2] *Works* (London, 1895), p. 502, col. 2, l. 3.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 417, l. 1.

same time hinders her from seeing them in balanced relation to each other. In contrast with such cases we sometimes find the dash to be, not so much the indication of a real interruption, as *a conscious device on the author's part to introduce an unexpected turn in the thought.* The contrast may be caused by the introduction of some elements in a thought that are not necessarily apparent, or by the presentation of an idea to some extent incongruous with the preceding and forming a climax or anti-climax to the whole. The following are typical examples :—

1. And he [Napoleon] was not content with exacting money or pictures—he needed men.
F. W. H. Myers[1].

2. If, then, it has been well for the Popes even to be forcibly deprived of the temporal power, what might they not have gained by its voluntary reform ;—nay, even by its dignified and timely surrender !
F. W. H. Myers[2].

3. A woman's arm touched the soul of a great sculptor two thousand years ago, so that he wrought an image of it for the Parthenon which moves us still as it clasps lovingly the time-worn marble of a headless trunk. Maggie's wa such an arm as that—and it had the warm tints of life.
George Eliot[3].

[1] *Essays—Modern* (London, 1883), p. 3, l. 2 from bottom.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 24, l. 4 from bottom.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 409, l. 16 from bottom.

4. Sansculottism is now among mere friends; and can 'circulate freely'; indignant at Body-guards;—complaining also considerably of hunger.

THOMAS CARLYLE[1].

5. She was not the least pretty; and depended precariously on keeping able for her work on small pittance; but did that work well always; and looked nice,—near the foot-lights.

RUSKIN[2].

Akin to this more rhetorical use of the dash is its occurrence between the members of a balanced structure, as in the following:—

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:

ROBERT BROWNING[3].

§ 2. Like the colon the dash sometimes serves to introduce a definition, explanation, or illustration; there is some difference, however, in the value of these points in this connection. We have seen (page 111) that the colon acts with a certain amount of emphasis, and directs special attention to what follows;

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 316, l. 3 from bottom.
[2] *Præterita* (Orpington, Kent, 1888), vol. III, p. 48, l. 2 from bottom.
[3] *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 249, Section II, l. 1.

in such a case the definition *qua* definition is important in the sentence. When marked off by a dash[1] it is not so prominent nor yet so exhaustive; it may merely give greater definiteness to general terms, or again it may analyze the leading features of an idea just so far as is necessary to guard against misconception in the particular case under discussion. The dash is also used to mark the converse of these relations, as, for example, in the summing up of a succession of particulars by a general term. The following are typical examples:—

1. Protestant visitors being then rare in Auvergne, and still more, reverent and gentle ones, she gave her pretty curiosity free sway; and enquired earnestly of us, what sort of creatures we were,—how far we believed in God, or tried to be good, or hoped to go to heaven?

RUSKIN[2].

2. We cannot assert that the evolution of new grammatical material—for instance, of new auxiliary verbs—is altogether impossible, but the modern conservative instinct would render the acceptance of such novelties very difficult.

HENRY BRADLEY[3].

[1] A second dash is needed to indicate the resumption of the main thread of discourse when the definition occurs in the middle of the sentence.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 10, l. 11.

[3] *The Making of English* (London, 1904), p. 79, l. 9 from bottom.

3. The principle of nationalities was one which he [Mazzini] deduced directly from his conception of the moral universe. The nation, he said, is within humanity what the family is within the nation—a divinely constituted group with a special mission of its own, to be pursued independently, though in association with the groups around it. To break up a nationality—a group set apart by race and tongue—was to deny to it the only right which an individual or a society can possess, the right of developing itself freely along its appointed path.

F. W. H. Myers[1].

4. Apostrophes to metaphysical abstractions, vivid picturings of the beauties of nature, adulation of a patron, idealisation of a *protégé's* regard for a nobleman in the figurative language of amorous passion, amiable compliments on a woman's hair or touch on the virginals, and vehement denunciation of the falseness and frailty of womankind—all appear as frequently in contemporary collections of sonnets as in Shakespeare's.

Sidney Lee[2].

In the first and second of these examples the additional detail introduced by the dash certainly gives greater clearness and *verve* to the statements made; in the third the complexity of the conception under discussion, combined with the diversity of views held regarding it, makes the limitation of terms an

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 16, l. 1.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 159, l. 2.

imperative necessity. The function of the dash in the third sentence of this example approaches that of the curved bracket; the essential difference is that the facts introduced by a dash in such cases generally enter more intimately into the unity of the sentence.

## II. THE MARKS OF PARENTHESIS

*Parenthesis:*

(1) A sentence so included in another sentence, as that it may be taken out, without injuring the sense of that which incloses it: being commonly marked thus, ( ).
DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON [1].

(2) An explanatory or qualifying word, clause, or sentence inserted into a passage with which it has not necessarily any grammatical connexion, and from which it is usually marked off by round or square brackets, dashes, or commas [2].

In order to show more clearly the difference between the double dash and the curved brackets the following sentence may be considered:—

> Now structural punctuation—as I conceive it—so far as it approximates an ideal perfection, will distinguish structural additions—as component parts of a complex sentence—to the simplest form of sentence, which it will regard as a kind of nucleus (if that term may be applied to what is often somewhat disparate by reason of interposi-

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. II.
[2] *N. E. D.*, vol. VII (Oxford, 1904).

> tions), while it not only will indicate the relations of these additions to such nucleus, and their relations to each other, but also similarly deal with the component parts of such additions.
>
> ALFRED EDWARD THISELTON[1].

It will be seen that the words *as I conceive it* and *as component parts of a complex sentence* are qualitative and explanatory, and are more or less necessary to the exact valuation and comprehension of the related conceptions. The parenthetical clause, on the other hand, may be regarded as an indirect justification of the term *nucleus*; this by indicating the qualities in which the analogy fails. Without the parenthesis a careful reader would infer from the words *a kind of nucleus* that the analogy is only partial, and at the same time the additional fact stated—that the simplest form of sentence is often disparate by reason of interpositions—cannot be regarded as an essential part of the sentence; this is rather a bit of knowledge introduced incidentally because of a general interest and importance.

The special characteristic of a parenthesis appears clearly in the following :—

> Nearly all the words that English owes to the Greek language, indirectly as well as directly, were originally scientific or technical, though many of those of older date (adopted through mediæval Latin and French), such as *fancy*,

[1] *Some Textual Notes on a Midsommer Nights Dreame* (London, 1903), p. 80, l. 10.

> *idea*, *ecstasy*, *pathos*, *sympathy*, have long taken their place in the popular vocabulary.
> HENRY BRADLEY [1].

Here the parenthesis supplies information necessary to make our perception of the relation between the English language and the Greek truer and fuller, but it is not directly contributory to the clearness or correctness of the sentence.

The parenthesis further serves as a means by which an author may state his own opinion or make a running commentary concerning a matter treated in the rest of the discourse. This assumption of a double standpoint creates a position similar to that of an author who in the midst of a quotation supplies matter of his own : in this case, however, square brackets are used to show that two distinct authorities are represented. The following are typical examples :—

1. Nay, if there's room for poets in this world
   A little overgrown (I think there is),
   Their sole work is to represent the age,
   Their age, not Charlemagne's, —— . . .
   ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING [2].

2. Concede she wrote (which were preposterous)
   This and the other epistle,—what of it?
   ROBERT BROWNING [3].

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 100, l. 4 from bottom.
[2] *Aurora Leigh* (London, 1890), p. 177, l. 6 from bottom.
[3] *Op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 202, l. 473.

3. As late as 1633 Thomas Heywood wrote of 'some actors who think it against their peculiar profit to have them [*i. e.* plays] come into print'.

SIDNEY LEE[1].

4. . . . and of two editions of 'Sir John Oldcastle' published in 1600, one printed for T[homas] P[avier] was impudently described on the title-page as by Shakespeare.

SIDNEY LEE[2].

5. Greene himself sent to the dramatist 'a note of inconveniences [to the corporation that] would happen by the enclosure'.

SIDNEY LEE[3].

## III. THE INVERTED COMMAS

*Definition* (under *Comma*):

A mark, the same as that used in punctuation, but placed above the line as a quotation-mark: that at the beginning of the quotation or line is inverted, that at the end erect (thus "`. . . .'"); and both are commonly doubled (thus "`. . . .'"). Now called *inverted commas*[4].

There are few considerations calling for remark concerning the use of the inverted commas. They indicate an exact reproduction of matter from another source, and may enclose a long passage, a sentence, a phrase, or merely a single word. In this last case

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 48, l. 3 from bottom (note).
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 170, l. 8 from bottom.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 270, l. 7 from bottom.
[4] *N. E. D.*, vol. II (Oxford, 1893).

they are generally used to show that the word in question has a special signification; there is frequently involved a further implication—most commonly perhaps, an ironical one—that it is not correctly applied.

When a quotation occurs within a quotation single inverted commas are used in one case and double in the other. The more logical course would seem to be that single marks should represent the first quotation and double the one contained in it[1]. Consistency would then require that single marks only should be used in ordinary quotation[1].

It is no longer usual to put within inverted commas titles of books, names of newspapers, periodicals, etc. These are now generally printed in italics.

[1] The Clarendon Press follows this method.

# CHAPTER XI

## CONCLUSION

WE make no claim, in the foregoing Chapters, to have discovered a steady line of development which, in spite of temporary aberrations, might be said to run down from early days to our own times; we consider, on the other hand, that certain needs have always existed in the expression of thought by written language, and that these permanent needs have been met in varying ways and with different degrees of exactness according to the special circumstances, social and intellectual, of the time of writing.

In the history of punctuation, so far as we have been able to present it, the introduction of printing makes, for some reasons, a noteworthy division. As long as every copy of a work had to be written by hand, errors and variations of the text were not by any means uncommon, much depending on the natural and acquired habits of care that belonged to the copyist. The greater part of his attention was absorbed in producing a text as correct as was possible, and punctuation was often regarded as comparatively unnecessary

and unimportant. But when the printing press lightened the labour of publication and reproduction, a re-distribution of attention took place. At the same time, too, the wider dissemination of knowledge increased the interest in punctuation as a subject of discussion, and there followed many attempts to reduce practice to uniformity in accordance with a systematic theory. We must not suppose, however, that uniformity has been at any time established; the standard has shifted from time to time, and within any selected period we can always find enthusiastic exponents of opposing theories. At the present day we are still conscious of wide divergence in usage and of some degree of vagueness in current theory.

In spite, however, of the inconsistency of practice and the conflict of theory, the fundamental principle of punctuation has always been the same. Punctuation exists primarily as an aid to intelligibility, while the precise form and meaning of the signs used have been determined by varying elements. This we saw notably in the analogous case of word-separation: special circumstances made such separation desirable in inscriptions; these circumstances did not exist in the case of manuscripts where, at the same time, other circumstances were present which made the separation unnecessary. The apparent discrepancy can thus be reasonably explained. So, too, with regard to the different standards

of punctuation that we noticed in the manuscripts. When we analyze the conditions under which they were written we can, to a large extent, account for the variations: prominent amongst the determining causes are the characteristics of style, simplicity and directness requiring little punctuation while complexity and formalism necessitate more frequent and more elaborate aids to clearness. We find further that similar determining causes, even when acting at widely separated times, produce like results. A comparison of the punctuation of King Alfred with that of Wycliffe gives a noteworthy instance of this. In both cases classical forms and constructions dominated expression, and the necessity of making these intelligible to the unlearned was met by the application of similar principles of punctuation.

In the more conscious development of theory that was made possible by the introduction of printing, a long-continued impression was made by the special characteristics of English literary life in the early Elizabethan period. Here, again, we find a strong classical influence at work. An efficient theory had then to explain and justify the punctuation of a prose-style constructed, not according to the genius of the vigorous English that was by that time developed, but artificially and according to classical forms. To this characteristic of the early Elizabethan style we attribute a tendency, soon noticeable, to regard

punctuation primarily as a means of making the construction of a sentence clear; very close to this standpoint, in fact a logical result of it, is the establishment of rules of punctuation resting on grammatical considerations. That this theory continued to be maintained throughout the eighteenth century, when the classical influence had begun to yield before the restoration of more native forms, may largely be explained by the devotion of that century to formal exactness; towards its close, however, there are distinct signs discernible that heavy grammatical punctuation was no longer held to be necessary, and that other than formal considerations were regarded as important. This may in part have been caused by the disrepute in which grammar was frequently held, as being a mere formal science divorced altogether from reality and meaning; but in a certain sense a constructional theory of punctuation is inherently difficult of consistent application. The difference between good pointing and bad is, in such a theory, mainly a question of degree, rightness being determined by adherence to the precise degree of minuteness with which we decide to break up a sentence; at the same time, too, a degree of minuteness defensible from the point of view of construction may serve only as a hindrance alike to writer and reader. Constantly there is felt the need of a check that will save our standard alike from the excess of a minute constructional

theory and the defect of a violent reaction from it. This check can never be supplied by merely formal considerations. It can be found only by direct reference to the nature and forms of thought. By this means the written expression will be brought into harmony with the living reality whose form it is, and no separation of elements will be made other than that which exists in thought. Here there is a definite standard, varying, it may be, from sentence to sentence when tested by constructional formulæ, but justifiable always by reference to sense and meaning.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

Modern version of sentence printed on pp. 2–3 in capitals and without punctuation: —

How painful to see or to know that vast revelations of grandeur and beauty are wasting themselves for ever—forests teeming with gorgeous life, floral wildernesses hidden inaccessibly; whilst, at the same time, in contraposition to that evil, behold a corresponding evil —viz. that with equal prodigality the great capacities of enjoyment are running also to waste, and are everywhere burning out unexercised—waste, in short, in the world of things *enjoyable*, balanced by an equal waste in the organs and the machineries of enjoyment!

Thomas de Quincey.

*Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (London, 1902), p. 50, l. 4.

## Appendix B

Translation of *Interpungendi Ratio*, referred to on p. 37 :—

[The treatise begins at p. 791 of *Orthographiæ Ratio*, by Aldus Manutius, son of Paul : (Venice, 1566). The main part of the text is printed in italic, only the opening word of each paragraph and the examples being in roman type. Every sentence does not begin with a capital letter. We have not reproduced these minor variations, but we have kept as close to the original punctuation as translation allowed.]

Since you are of opinion, Franciscus Morandus, that the subject of punctuation is related to orthography, we shall be strengthened by your support, in our treatment of this section too : that learned men are well known to disagree on this matter of punctuation is in itself a proof, that the knowledge of it, in theory and practice, is of some importance. I myself have learnt by experience, that, if ideas that are difficult to understand are properly separated, they become clearer ; and that, on the other hand, through defective punctuation, many passages are confused, and distorted to such a degree, that sometimes they can with difficulty be understood, or even cannot be understood at all. On this account then, it seems worth while, to give some

instructions concerning the matter. Nevertheless I must confess that, if any one brings forward worthier considerations, our own opinions will be adjusted to them. And now let us proceed, as it were by steps, from the lowest of the points to the highest.

In the first place it must be noted, that the least degree of separation is indicated by the semicircular mark, made so ❜ a mark that some call the virgule, others the comma, and others again the half-point[1]: this mark does not indeed close a complete sentence, nor yet the parts of a sentence, but it separates names, or words, that differ only slightly from each other, as, when we say, *An upright, and learned man:* or, *By dint of earnestness, exertion, and effort:* and in other like cases. It is also used with verbs, that do not express the same idea, in this way, *To exhort, to entreat, to advise.* But certain good qualities through a want of moderation in their use, degenerate into bad. In like fashion I have noticed, that if this mark is appended to all words, that vary in meaning, not only is the sentence not freed from difficulty, it is even clogged, as if one were to employ as many marks of separation, as there are words, because the meaning of all words seems to be different. And this sometimes happens.

This same mark, if it is used along with a single point, as this is ❜ ; serves another purpose. For it then separates words that are

[1] We shall use in translation the modern name, *comma*.

opposed in meaning to each other, in this way: *Public, and private affairs; sacred, and profane; one's own, and some one else's.* It is quite clear, that, in this example, a comma alone is not enough, and that the mark, which is made with a double point so : interrupts the sentence too much. The mark in question is also sometimes found in passages, in which the words are not opposed in meaning, but the sense depends on the words in such a way, that, if you use the comma it is too little; if the double points, too much. I was thinking to give an example: but, I felt the point had come out plainly enough, in the immediately preceding sentence. A great many instances of this kind occur in the books of the ancients. Why then should I grudge the trouble? especially as amongst all the marks, I consider this one, at present under consideration, to be the most difficult of all, these then will be our examples: *Our good sense teaches us, that, if our lot be ill, we must not grieve too much; if good, we must rejoice with moderation.* For, if you put a comma after this, *too much*, the sentence is carried on as by a headlong current: since however, it consists of two members, it ought after the first part to stop altogether for a little. But if you want rather to put the double point in this place, the sentence will not stand so much of a break: its latter part depends on its former: since the word, *teaches*, dominates each part of the sentence in the same degree.

The next instance is similar: *Of your own will, you mark what riches accomplish; not so what excellence avails.* Let us next take a longer extract, in order to show, what difference lies between the double point, and the point superimposed on the comma. Cicero wrote to Torquatus in these words: *Although the present disturbance of the common weal is such that every man grieves greatly over his own private lot and there is no one, who would not prefer to be anywhere in the world, rather than here, where he is: nevertheless I am convinced, that at this time, to be in Rome, is for a good man, the cruellest fate.*

The doubling of the point is next to be considered: the effect of this doubling is, that the mark thus formed takes rank between the point used in conjunction with the comma, and the point standing alone. For if the double point be compared with the point and comma, it will be found to effect a stronger break in the sentence; if with the point standing alone, it is on the contrary seen to be used with altogether less strength, when the sentence has two, or more, parts, which individually are dominated by their own verbs and are independent, and complete so that, just as a whole body consists of limbs complete in themselves, the sentence in its entirety is made up of integral parts. Here is an example, taken from the same letter of Cicero: *Although, wherever a man is, he has the same knowledge, and the same bitter feeling concern-*

*ing the instability of affairs public and private: yet those have their grief increased whose eyes are forced to behold what other men hear, whose eyes leave no respite from the thought of their woes.* But sometimes the sentence continues to such a length, that a break has to be made by the double point not simply once, but a second time, and even oftener; this is generally the case when the sentence consists of integral parts, for the distinction of which neither a comma, nor yet the point in conjunction with the comma is enough.

There remains the single point, with which the sentence is closed, and completed. It is not difficult to understand for one cannot fail to notice, with what word a sentence ends although, when it is short, and another short one follows, I myself use the double point more freely, than the single, As for instance: *Make ready a lodging for me: for I shall arrive to-morrow:* and so again: *I give you no orders concerning my affairs: you yourself will decide, what is to be done.* It seems to be in harmony with the account given, that, if after the single point a sentence follows, that is akin to the preceding, the first word begins with a small letter; if the second sentence be quite unlike the preceding then a capital is used. If in addition to the sentence being unlike, an altogether different subject is introduced: then what follows, must be separated, not merely by a single point, and a capital letter, but also by a short space: this seems to be the prin-

ciple that controls the introduction of a different subject.

The word itself explains, in what position the mark of interrogation occurs. However, in the expression of grief, and of wonder, if one were to use a single point, instead of the mark of interrogation, he would in my opinion do right, as in this example: *How great a calamity threatens the state.* and in this *How great services has philosophy performed to mankind.* Sometimes, although it is clear a question is asked, we nevertheless do not use the mark, as, when the sentence continues to such a length, that the prominence of the question, which was felt in the beginning of the sentence, disappears, after gradually growing less as the sentence proceeds. This may be tested by the example: *Do you consider that those are good men, who cultivate friendships for their own advantage, and regard as of no account what is kind and honourable; who have no pleasure in concerning themselves about things, of such a kind that were I not to esteem them above all else, I should consider myself unworthy of the goodness you show me, a boon in which I habitually find the chief part of my happiness.*

Concerning the parenthesis I shall say a few words: this one thing I cannot refrain from remarking, that people act foolishly, who enclose in a parenthesis, *As I think, As the matter shows, As has been handed down to us from our ancestors, Which I myself could easily*

*understand*, and such phrases; if they are separated by the comma, or even by the point with a comma, it is enough. Those words ought to be enclosed in a parenthesis, which are not a part of the sentence, and do not depend on any word either preceding, or following: words whose absence causes no loss to the sentence.

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*The figures denote pages*

THE END

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