

V. ESSAY.

CONNECTED PARAGRAPHS.

PRECEPTS.

ESSENTIAL POINTS.

Proposition.— After choosing a subject for an essay, the writer should at the outset limit this subject to some definite issue. If this definite issue is set forth in a sentence, it is called the proposition or theme. The limitation of the subject is not always expressed in a single sentence. Sometimes it is explained throughout a whole paragraph; sometimes it is not explicitly stated at all, but it should be present to the writer if he hopes for unity in his composition. What the topic is, therefore, to the paragraph, the proposition is to the essay.

The *Country Church* is the subject of one of Irving's sketches. This subject might be limited to various definite issues. Irving's proposition, setting forth the definite issue in the case, is found in the very first sentence. "There are few places more favorable to the study of character than the English country church." For similar examples, see *The Wife*, *English Writers on America*, *Rural Life in England*, *Rural Funerals*, *The Angler*.

In the sketch, *The Art of Bookmaking*, the whole first paragraph is devoted to explaining the definite view of

the subject taken by the author. Compare also the first paragraphs of *The Broken Heart* and *Traits of Indian Character*.

In the sketch, *Roscoe*, there is no explicit statement of the proposition. It might be expressed thus: Roscoe is worthy of our admiration.

Gathering of Material. — The next point in an essay is the gathering of material. Ample matter will be suggested by the different modes of development.

Ordering of Material. — After the gathering of material comes its ordering or disposal. The writer should have a plan in mind, whether it is to be expressly stated or not. In general, the thought should grow in importance. In particular cases the order will vary much. What has been said of the order of thoughts in a paragraph, can be extended to a whole composition, for a paragraph is a composition in miniature.

Continuity in an Essay. — Continuity in an essay is preserved in the same way as in a paragraph. In the latter, sentences are bound together; in the former, the paragraphs are united. The first sentence of the paragraph generally shows the connection. Connectives are omitted, as in the case of sentences, for similar reasons.

In the first article of the *Sketch Book*, — *The Author's Account of Himself*, — by taking the first sentence of each paragraph, it will be seen how the paragraphs are connected. So well, too, are the paragraphs constructed that with the addition of part of the second sentence in the third paragraph and of a sentence in the middle of the last paragraph, a summary of the whole article can be written out. The order is that of time; the proposition is stated

in the opening sentence, and the connectives are printed in italics.

¶ I was always fond of visiting new scenes and observing strange characters and manners. ¶ *This rambling propensity* strengthened with my years. ¶ *Further* reading and thinking, though they brought *this vague inclination* into more reasonable bounds, only served to make it more decided. I visited various parts of my own country; and had I been merely a lover of fine scenery, I should have felt little desire to seek elsewhere its gratification. ¶ *But* Europe held forth all the charms of storied and poetical association. ¶ I had, *besides all this*, an earnest desire to see the great men of the earth. ¶ It has been either my good or evil lot to have my *roving passion* gratified. — As it is the fashion for *modern tourists* to travel pencil in hand, and bring home their portfolios filled with sketches, I am disposed to get up a few for the entertainment of my friends.

Make a like summary of the sketch, *Rural Life in England*. In the second paragraph take the first clause of the first sentence and the first part of the second sentence down to the words, “a small portion of the year.” In the tenth paragraph, the sentence beginning, “In the country, too,” should be added to the first sentence of the paragraph. In the eleventh paragraph, add to its first sentence the sentence beginning with, “The man of refinement, therefore.” In the following paragraph take only the first clause. The two paragraphs at the end will have to be summarized. See page 74.

The writing of such summaries will sometimes be found useful to the student before the actual composition of an essay, and may with profit be put into practice in the exercises that follow.