

2. ANALYSIS OF DESCRIPTIONS.

EXERCISE LIII.

The following paragraphs should be analyzed according to the model on page 124:—

I had expected to see a sleek, well-conditioned pastor, such as is often found in a snug living in the vicinity of a rich patron's table, but I was disappointed. The parson was a little, meagre, black-looking man, with a grizzled wig that was too wide and stood off from each ear; so that his head seemed to have shrunk away within it, like a dried filbert in its shell. He wore a rusty coat, with great skirts and pockets that would have held the church Bible and prayer-book; and his small legs seemed still smaller from being planted in large shoes, decorated with enormous buckles. — *Christmas Day.*

The point of view is stated in the last sentence of the preceding paragraph. The characteristic trait will be found in the first sentence.

As I was once visiting this haunt of the learned, my attention was attracted to a person just entering the room. He was advanced in life, tall, and of a form that might once have been commanding, but it was a little bowed by time—perhaps by care. He had a noble Roman style of countenance; a head

that would have pleased a painter; and though some slight furrows on his brow showed that wasting thought had been busy there, yet his eye still beamed with the fire of a poetic soul. There was something in his whole appearance that indicated a being of a different order from the bustling race round him. — *Roscoe*.

The point of view is expressed in the first sentence. "Attracted" will suggest the characteristic trait, stated in the last sentence.

The orchestra was in a small gallery, and presented a most whimsical grouping of heads piled one above the other, among which I particularly noticed that of the village tailor, a pale fellow with a retreating forehead and chin, who played on the clarinet, and seemed to have blown his face to a point; and there was another, a short pousy man, stooping and laboring at a bass-viol, so as to show nothing but the top of a round bald head, like the egg of an ostrich. There were two or three pretty faces among the female singers, to which the keen air of a frosty morning had given a bright rosy tint; but the gentleman choristers had evidently been chosen, like old Cremona fiddles, more for tone than looks; and as several had to sing from the same book, there were clusterings of odd physiognomies, not unlike those groups of cherubs we sometimes see on country tombstones. — *Christmas Day*.

"A most whimsical grouping of heads," gives the characteristic trait. In the enumeration of heads notice how this trait shows itself.

I had now come in sight of the house. It is a large building of brick, with stone quoins, and is in the Gothic style of Queen Elizabeth's day, having been built in the first year of her reign. The exterior remains very nearly in its original state, and may be considered a fair specimen of the residence of a wealthy country gentleman of those days. A great gateway opens from the park into a kind of courtyard in front of the house, ornamented with a grass-plot, shrubs, and flower-beds. The gateway is in imitation of the ancient barbican, being a kind of

outpost and flanked by towers, though evidently for mere ornament instead of defence. The front of the house is completely in the old style, with stone-shafted casements, a great bow-window of heavy stone-work, and a portal with armorial bearings over it carved in stone. At each corner of the building is an octagon tower surmounted by a gilt ball and weathercock. — *Stratford-on-Avon.*

There are few places more favorable to the study of character than an English country church. I was once passing a few weeks at the seat of a friend who resided in the vicinity of one, the appearance of which particularly struck my fancy. It was one of those rich morsels of quaint antiquity which gives such a peculiar charm to English landscape. It stood in the midst of a country filled with ancient families, and contained within its cold and silent aisles the congregated dust of many noble generations. The interior walls were incrustated with monuments of every age and style. The light streamed through windows dimmed with armorial bearings, richly emblazoned in stained glass. In various parts of the church were tombs of knights, and high-born dames, of gorgeous workmanship, with their effigies in colored marble. On every side the eye was struck with some instance of aspiring mortality; some haughty memorial which human pride had erected over its kindred dust in this temple of the most humble of all religions. — *The Country Church.*

What does "rich morsel of quaint antiquity" express?

While the mutual greetings were going on between young Bracebridge and his relatives, I had time to scan the apartment. I have called it a hall, for so it had certainly been in old times, and the squire had evidently endeavored to restore it to something of its primitive state. Over the heavy projecting fireplace was suspended a picture of a warrior in armor, standing by a white horse, and on the opposite wall hung a helmet, buckler, and lance. At one end an enormous pair of antlers were inserted in the wall, the branches serving as hooks on

which to suspend hats, whips, and spurs, and in the corners of the apartment were fowling-pieces, fishing-rods, and other sporting implements. The furniture was of the cumbrous workmanship of former days, though some articles of modern convenience had been added, and the oaken floor had been carpeted; so that the whole presented an odd mixture of parlor and hall. — *Christmas Eve.*

See the second sentence for the characteristic trait. This description should be compared with one of the same place, given in the second paragraph of *The Christmas Dinner*. In the latter description the characteristic trait is that of a Christmas banqueting scene.

I entered from the inner court of Westminster School, through a long, low, vaulted passage that had an almost subterranean look, being dimly lighted in one part by circular perforations in the massive walls. Through this dark avenue I had a distant view of the cloisters, with the figure of an old verger in his black gown moving along their shadowy vaults, and seeming like a spectre from one of the neighboring tombs. The approach to the abbey through these gloomy monastic remains prepares the mind for its solemn contemplation. The cloisters still retain something of the quiet and seclusion of former days. The gray walls are discolored by damps and crumbling with age; a coat of hoary moss has gathered over the inscriptions of the mural monuments and obscured the death's heads and other funeral emblems. The sharp touches of the chisel are gone from the rich tracery of the arches; the roses which adorned the keystones have lost their leafy beauty; everything bears marks of the gradual dilapidations of time, which yet has something touching and pleasing in its very decay. — *Westminster Abbey.*

His family mansion is an old castellated manor-house, gray with age, and of a most venerable though weather-beaten appearance. It has been built upon no regular plan, but is a vast accumulation of parts erected in various tastes and ages. The centre bears evident traces of Saxon architecture, and is

as solid as ponderous stone and old English oak can make it. Like all the relics of that style, it is full of obscure passages, intricate mazes, and dusty chambers; and though these have been partially lighted up in modern days, yet there are many places where you must still grope in the dark. Additions have been made to the original edifice from time to time, and great alterations have taken place; towers and battlements have been erected during wars and tumults, wings built in time of peace, and out-houses, lodges, and offices run up according to the whim or convenience of different generations, until it has become one of the most spacious, rambling tenements imaginable. An entire wing is taken up with the family chapel, a reverend pile that must have been exceedingly sumptuous, and indeed in spite of having been altered and simplified at various periods, has still a look of solemn religious pomp. Its walls within are storied with the monuments of John's ancestors; and it is snugly fitted up with soft cushions and well-lined chairs, where such of his family as are inclined to church services may doze comfortably in the discharge of their duties. — *John Bull*.

The point of view is not expressly stated. The characteristic trait or traits can be gathered from the first and second sentences.

On our way homeward his heart seemed overflowed with generous and happy feelings. As we passed over a rising ground which commanded something of a prospect, the sounds of rustic merriment now and then reached our ears. The squire paused for a few moments, and looked around with an air of inexpressible benignity. The beauty of the day was of itself sufficient to inspire philanthropy. Notwithstanding the frostiness of the morning, the sun in his cloudless journey had acquired sufficient power to melt away the thin covering of snow from every southern declivity, and to bring out the living green which adorns an English landscape even in mid-winter. Large tracts of smiling verdure contrasted with the dazzling whiteness of the shaded slopes and hollows. Every sheltered bank on which the broad rays rested yielded its silver rill of cold and limpid water glittering through the dripping

grass, and sent up slight exhalations to contribute to the thin haze that hung just above the surface of the earth. There was something truly cheering in this triumph of warmth and verdure over the frosty thralldom of winter; it was, as the squire observed, an emblem of Christmas hospitality breaking through the chills of ceremony and selfishness and thawing every heart into a flow. He pointed with pleasure to the indications of good cheer reeking from the chimneys of the comfortable farm-houses and low thatched cottages. "I love," said he, "to see this day well kept by rich and poor; it is a great thing to have one day in the year, at least, when you are sure of being welcome wherever you go, and of having, as it were, the world thrown all open to you; and I am almost disposed to join with Poor Robin in his malediction on every churlish enemy to this honest festival:—

"Those who at Christmas do repine,
And would fain hence dispatch him,
May they with old Duke Humphry dine,
Or else may Squire Ketch catch 'em."

— *Christmas Day.*

See the second sentence for the point of view, and the fourth sentence for the characteristic trait. Notice how the statement of the trait is developed later on in the paragraph.

Among these the most formidable was a burly, roaring, roistering blade of the name of Abraham—or, according to the Dutch abbreviation, Brom—Van Brunt, the hero of the country round, which rang with his feats of strength and hardihood. He was broad-shouldered and double-jointed, with short, curly black hair and a bluff but not unpleasant countenance, having a mingled air of fun and arrogance. From his Herculean frame and great powers of limb he had received the nickname of "Brom Bones," by which he was universally known. He was famed for great knowledge and skill in horsemanship, being as dexterous on horseback as a Tartar. He was foremost at all races and cock-fights, and, with the ascendancy which bodily strength acquires in rustic life, was the

umpire in all disputes, setting his hat on one side and giving his decisions with an air and tone admitting of no gainsay or appeal. He was always ready for either a fight or a frolic, but had more mischief than ill-will in his composition; and with all his overbearing roughness there was a strong dash of wag-gish good humor at bottom. He had three or four boon companions who regarded him as their model, and at the head of whom he scoured the country, attending every scene of feud or merriment for miles around. In cold weather he was distinguished by a fur cap surmounted with a flaunting fox's tail, and when the folks at a country gathering descried this well-known crest at a distance whisking about among a squad of hard riders, they always stood by for a squall. Sometimes his crew would be heard dashing along past the farmhouses at midnight with whoop and halloo, like a troop of Don Cossacks; and the old dames, startled out of their sleep, would listen for a moment till the hurry-scurry had clattered by, and then exclaim, "Ay, there goes Brom Bones and his gang!" The neighbors looked upon him with a mixture of awe, admiration, and goodwill, and when any madcap prank or rustic brawl occurred in the vicinity, always shook their heads and warranted Brom Bones was at the bottom of it. — *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.*

Examine the first sentence for the characteristic traits of this description.

EXERCISE LIV.

In the following pairs of paragraphs we have descriptions of the same object from different points of view. These descriptions should be analyzed, and special attention should be paid to the way in which the point of view varies the details.

We had now come in full view of the old family mansion, partly thrown in deep shadow, and partly lit up by the cold moonshine. It was an irregular building of some magnitude, and seemed to be of the architecture of different periods. One

wing was evidently very ancient, with heavy stone-shafted bow-windows jutting out and overrun with ivy, from among the foliage of which the small diamond-shaped panes of glass glittered with the moonbeams. The rest of the house was in the French taste of Charles the Second's time, having been repaired and altered, as my friend told me, by one of his ancestors who returned with that monarch at the Restoration. The grounds about the house were laid out in the old formal manner of artificial flower-beds, clipped shrubberies, raised terraces, and heavy stone balustrades, ornamented with urns, a leaden statue or two, and a jet of water. — *Christmas Eve.*

Everything conspired to produce kind and happy feelings in this stroughold of old-fashioned hospitality. The window of my chamber looked out upon what in summer would have been a beautiful landscape. There was a sloping lawn, a fine stream winding at the foot of it, and a tract of park beyond with noble clumps of trees and herds of deer. At a distance was a neat hamlet with the smoke from the cottage chimneys hanging over it, and a church with its dark spire in strong relief against the clear, cold sky. The house was surrounded with ever-greens, according to the English custom, which would have given almost an appearance of summer, but the morning was extremely frosty; the light vapor of the preceding evening had been precipitated by the cold, and covered all the trees and every blade of grass with its fine crystallizations. The rays of a bright morning sun had a dazzling effect among the glittering foliage. A robin perched upon the top of a mountain ash that hung its clusters of red berries just before my window, was basking himself in the sunshine and piping a few querulous notes, and a peacock was displaying all the glories of his train and strutting with the pride and gravity of a Spanish grandee on the terrace walk below. — *Christmas Day.*

Both the local and temporal points of view are different.

Thus feeding his mind with many sweet thoughts and "sugared suppositions," he journeyed along the sides of a

range of hills which look out upon some of the goodliest scenes of the mighty Hudson. The sun gradually wheeled his broad disk down into the west. The wide bosom of the Tappan Zee lay motionless and glassy, excepting that here and there a gentle undulation waved and prolonged the blue shadow of the distant mountain. A few amber clouds floated in the sky without a breath of air to move them. The horizon was of a fine golden tint, changing gradual into a pure apple green, and from that into the deep blue of the mid-heaven. A slanting ray lingered on the woody crests of the precipices that overhung some parts of the river, giving greater depth to the dark gray and purple of their rocky sides. A sloop was loitering in the distance, dropping slowly down with the tide, her sail hanging uselessly against the mast; and as the reflection of the sky gleamed along the still water, it seemed as if the vessel was suspended in the air. — *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.*

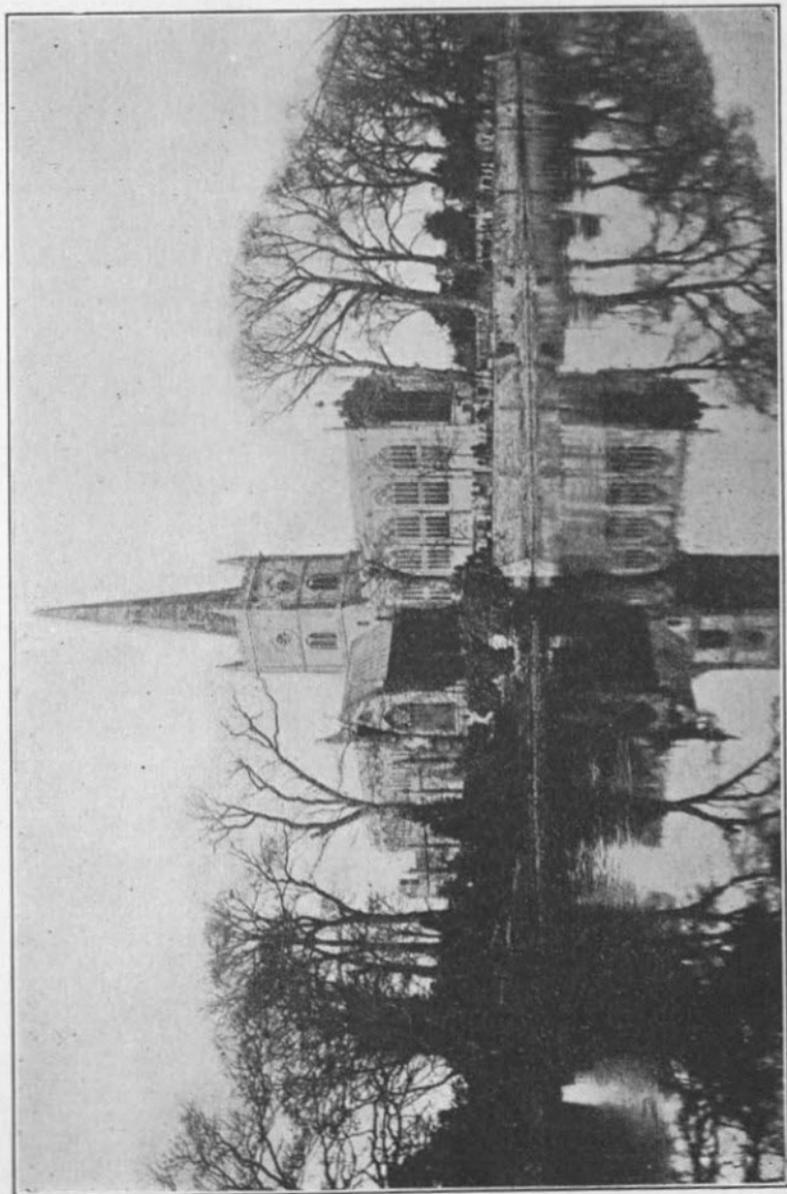
It was the very witching time of night that Ichabod, heavy-hearted and crestfallen, pursued his travel homewards along the sides of the lofty hills which rise above Tarry Town, and which he had traversed so cheerily in the afternoon. The hour was as dismal as himself. Far below him the Tappan Zee spread its dusky and indistinct waste of waters, with here and there the tall mast of a sloop riding quietly at anchor under the land. In the dead hush of midnight he could even hear the barking of the watch-dog from the opposite shore of the Hudson; but it was so vague and faint as only to give an idea of his distance from this faithful companion of man. Now and then, too, the long-drawn crowing of a cock accidentally awakened would sound far, far off, from some farmhouse away among the hills — but it was like a dreaming sound in his ear. No signs of life occurred near him, but occasionally the melancholy chirp of a cricket, or perhaps the guttural twang of a bull-frog from a neighboring marsh, as if sleeping uncomfortably and turning suddenly in his bed. — *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.*

The colors in the first description deserve attention. Its characteristic trait is not expressly stated except in very general terms,

but may be gathered from the details. In the second description, the characteristic trait is expressed in the beginning. The local point of view seems to be the same in the two descriptions; the temporal point of view is different.

From the birthplace of Shakespeare a few paces brought me to his grave. He lies buried in the chancel of the parish church, a large and venerable pile, mouldering with age, but richly ornamented. It stands on the banks of the Avon, on an embowered point, and separated by adjoining gardens from the suburbs of the town. Its situation is quiet and retired; the river runs murmuring at the foot of the churchyard, and the elms which grow upon its banks droop their branches into its clear bosom. An avenue of limes, the boughs of which are curiously interlaced so as to form in summer an arched way of foliage, leads up from the gate of the yard to the church porch. The graves are overgrown with grass; the gray tombstones, some of them nearly sunk into the earth, are half covered with moss, which has likewise tinted the reverend old building. Small birds have built their nests among the cornices and fissures of the walls, and keep up a continual flutter and chirping, and rooks are sailing and cawing about its lofty gray spire. — *Stratford-on-Avon.*

We approached the church through the avenue of limes, and entered by a Gothic porch, highly ornamented, with carved doors of massive oak. The interior is spacious, and the architecture and embellishments superior to those of most country churches. There are several ancient monuments of nobility and gentry, over some of which hang funeral escutcheons and banners dropping piecemeal from the walls. The tomb of Shakespeare is in the chancel. The place is solemn and sepulchral. Tall elms wave before the pointed windows, and the Avon, which runs at a short distance from the walls, keeps up a low perpetual murmur. A flat stone marks the spot where the bard is buried. There are four lines inscribed on it, said to have been written by himself, and which have in them something extremely awful. If they are indeed his own, they show



HOLY TRINITY PARISH CHURCH, STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

that solicitude about the quiet of the grave which seems natural to fine sensibilities and thoughtful minds:—

Good friend, for Jesus' sake, forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be he that spares these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones.

— *Stratford-on-Avon.*

The local point of view is different in the two descriptions. In the former the church where Shakespeare is buried is viewed from the outside; in the latter from the inside. It would be an interesting study to compare the various descriptions of churches found in the *Sketch Book*. See *The Country Church*, *The Widow and Her Son*, *Westminster Abbey*, *Christmas Day*, *The Pride of the Village*, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

EXERCISE LV.

In the following paragraphs, after analyzing the description, the student will point out how the characteristic trait is reflected in each detail. See analysis on page 125.

As Ichabod jogged slowly on his way, his eye, ever open to every symptom of culinary abundance, ranged with delight over the treasures of jolly autumn. On all sides he beheld vast store of apples; some hanging in oppressive opulence on the trees, some gathered into baskets and barrels for the market, others heaped up in rich piles for the cider press. Farther on he beheld great fields of Indian corn, with its golden ears peeping from their leafy coverts and holding out the promise of cakes and hasty pudding; and the yellow pumpkins lying beneath them, turning up their fair round bellies to the sun and giving ample prospects of the most luxurious of pies; and anon he passed the fragrant buckwheat fields, breathing the odor of the beehive, and as he beheld them soft anticipations stole over his mind of dainty slapjacks, well buttered and gar-

nished with honey or treacle by the delicate little dimpled hand of Katrina Van Tassel. — *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.*

The paragraph is developed by enumerating the treasures of autumn. The characteristic traits are "abundance" and "culinary."

Nothing can be more imposing than the magnificence of English park scenery. Vast lawns that extend like sheets of vivid green, with here and there clumps of gigantic trees heaping up rich piles of foliage; the solemn pomp of groves and woodland glades with the deer trooping in silent herds across them, the hare bounding away to the covert, or the pheasant suddenly bursting upon the wing; the brook, taught to wind in natural meanderings or expand into a glassy lake; the sequestered pool, reflecting the quivering trees, with the yellow leaf sleeping on its bosom, and the trout roaming fearlessly about its limpid waters; while some rustic temple or sylvan statue, grown green and dank with age, gives an air of classic sanctity to the seclusion. — *Rural Life in England.*

How is the paragraph developed? How do the details show forth the ideas of "magnificence" and "imposing"?