

I. SENTENCE.



PRECEPTS.

I. THE PERIOD AND THE LOOSE SENTENCE.

The Period. — A period is a sentence in which the meaning is suspended to the close; as, —

On one of those sober and rather melancholy days in the latter part of autumn, when the shadows of morning and evening almost mingle together and throw a gloom over the decline of the year, I passed several hours in rambling about Westminster Abbey. — *Westminster Abbey.*

The essential element of the period is given in the definition. To have a period in its perfection the sentence should be harmonious and somewhat ample.

The Loose Sentence. — A loose sentence is one in which there is no complete suspension of meaning. Unlike the period, if stopped before the end, it makes sense; as, —

He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud or the sail of a lagging bark here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands. — *Rip Van Winkle.*

More attention is given to the periods in the exercises, because being usually longer, they are better suited to exemplify the development of thought and give more scope for study and imitation. They are also more difficult to write, and, when mastered, insure

to the student a command of the other kinds of sentences. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that periods should occur frequently in every kind of English composition. They must be used with discretion and be relieved by loose sentences or by sentences partly periodic in structure.

The period has its most frequent application in passages of force and feeling. It will be found oftener where persuasion or proof is called for. The end of a paragraph or of an essay is a favorite place for periods in the *Sketch Book*. On the other hand, they occur more rarely in simple description or narrative. To show the relative frequency of the period and the loose sentence in different kinds of writing, a comparison should be made between the two sketches, *Rip Van Winkle* and *English Writers on America*. In the imitations, the student should carefully note the place from which the model period is taken and the reason for its use.

2. SUSPENSION OF SENSE.

Means of Effecting Suspense. — Suspense in a period is brought about in three ways.

1. By **inversion**, which consists in placing the modifying clause or phrase or predicate before the part of the sentence modified. Inversion results from the transposition:—

a. Of a *clause*, when the subordinate clause is placed before the principal clause; as, —

When the ship is decked out in all her canvas, every sail swelled, and careering gayly over the curling waves, how lofty, how gallant, she appears — how she seems to lord it over the deep! — *The Voyage*.

b. Of a *phrase*, when the phrase is placed before the word it modifies. In most periods the phrase will be found at the beginning; as, —

Accustomed, as we are in our country, to know European writers only by their works, we cannot conceive of them, as of other men, engrossed by trivial or sordid pursuits. — *Roscoe*.

2. Of a *predicate*, when the predicate is placed before the subject. Examples of such inversion are not common in the *Sketch Book*. In the following example we have the transposition of a phrase, as well as of the predicate.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple, good-natured fellow of the name of Rip Van Winkle. — *Rip Van Winkle*.

2. By **accumulation of subjects**; as, —

The manners of her people — their intellectual activity — their freedom of opinion — their habits of thinking on those subjects which concern the dearest interests and most sacred charities of private life, are all congenial to the American character. — *English Writers on America*.

3. By the **use of correlative words**, which go in pairs and are of such a nature that when one of the pair is found in a sentence, the meaning is kept in suspense until the other is stated; as, —

So vividly and naturally are these scenes of humor depicted, and with *such* force and consistency are the characters sustained, *that* they become mingled up in the mind with the facts and personages of real life. — *The Boar's Head Tavern*.

Examples of such correlatives are: *both — and, either — or, not — but, not only — but also, some — others, former — latter, partly — partly, etc.*

3. DEVELOPMENT OF PERIODS.

Definition. — By development or amplification is meant a fuller statement of a proposition with the view of making the thought clearer, more pleasing, or more forcible.

Mere abundance of words does not constitute amplification. With the fulness of statement there should be a real advance of thought in definiteness and completeness and a more and more effective appeal to the imagination, the mind, or the will of the reader.

Modes of Development. — Periods are developed from simple propositions: —

1. By **paraphrase.** Development by paraphrase consists in stating more in detail what is summarily expressed by the proposition. In the following sentence the latter part is a paraphrase of the former: —

There is certainly something more affecting in these prompt and spontaneous offerings of nature than in the most costly monuments of art; || the hand strews the flower while the heart is warm, and the tear falls on the grave as affection is binding the osier round the sod; but pathos expires under the slow labor of the chisel, and is chilled among the cold conceits of sculptured marble. — *Rural Funerals.*

2. By **enumeration.** Development by enumeration consists in applying to the individuals of a class or to the parts of a whole what the proposition predicates of the class or of the whole. Both kinds of enumeration are exemplified in the following passage, in which the second sentence is a development of the first. The individual charms and the parts of the whole country are both enumerated, and of each part is predicated its appropriate charm.

On no country have the charms of nature been more prodigally lavished. Her mighty lakes, like oceans of liquid silver; her mountains, with their bright aerial tints; her valleys, teeming with wild fertility; her tremendous cataracts, thundering in their solitudes; her boundless plains, waving with spontaneous verdure; her broad, deep rivers, rolling in solemn silence to the ocean; her trackless forests, where vegetation puts forth all

its magnificence; her skies, kindling with the magic of summer clouds and glorious sunshine;—no, never need an American look beyond his own country for the sublime and beautiful of natural scenery.— *The Author's Account of Himself.*

3. By **causes or effects.** This development adduces the reasons for a proposition or the results which arise from the truth of it. In the following example the period is a development of the preceding sentence and adduces the causes by which the home feeling is aroused.

It is gratifying to see that home feeling completely aroused which holds so powerful a place in every English bosom. The preparations making on every side for the social board that is again to unite friends and kindred; the presents of good cheer passing and re-passing, — those tokens of regard and quickeners of kind feelings; the evergreens distributed about houses and churches, emblems of peace and gladness: all these have the most pleasing effect in producing fond associations and kindling benevolent sympathies. — *Christmas.*

Development by means of effects is exemplified by the following sentence, in which it is proved that commerce is a glorious human invention by adducing the results it has achieved.

What a glorious monument of human invention, which has in a manner triumphed over wind and wave, has brought the ends of the world into communion, has established an interchange of blessings, pouring into the sterile regions of the north all the luxuries of the south, has diffused the light of knowledge and the charities of cultivated life, and has thus bound together those scattered portions of the human race between which nature seemed to have thrown an insurmountable barrier.

— *The Voyage.*

4. By **circumstances.** This development consists in stating the truths connected with a person, a thing, a

time, or a place, that help to prove or explain the proposition. In the following example the proposition "The situation of the Pilgrims was to the last degree gloomy and disheartening," is explained and proved in the next sentence by recounting the circumstances of persons (*number, sickness, etc.*); of place (*wilderness, savage tribes, etc.*); of time (*winter, etc.*).

When the Pilgrims, as the Plymouth settlers are called by their descendants, first took refuge on the shores of the New World from the religious persecutions of the Old, their situation was to the last degree gloomy and disheartening. Few in number, and that number rapidly perishing away through sickness and hardships, surrounded by a howling wilderness and savage tribes, exposed to the rigors of an almost arctic winter and the vicissitudes of an ever-shifting climate, their minds were filled with doleful forebodings, and nothing preserved them from sinking into dependency but the strong excitement of religious enthusiasm. — *Philip of Pokanoket.*

5. By **comparison**. This development consists in illustrating or proving the proposition by a similitude or analogy. In the two following sentences the second is a development of the first by means of a comparison.

Indeed, he has extended his relations of pride and policy so completely over the whole country that no event can take place without infringing some of his finely-spun rights and dignities. Couched in his little domain, with these filaments stretching forth in every direction, he is like some choleric, bottle-bellied old spider who has woven his web over a whole chamber, so that a fly cannot buzz nor a breeze blow without startling his repose and causing him to sally forth wrathfully from his den. — *John Bull.*

A comparison at the end of a paragraph, as in the example, is of frequent occurrence in the *Sketch Book*.

There will, perhaps, be some difference of opinion as to the pre-

cise method of development used in certain passages. Under some conditions causes and effects may be considered circumstances. Again, all three may belong to a class, and so fall under development by enumeration. In any case this difference of opinion need not worry the student. His purpose is to learn to write, and provided he understands how the thought is developed, it will matter little what name he gives the development.