

When two qualifying words are wanted, the latter may be an adjective, though applied to a verb; as, "He beat time *tolerably exact*."

"The air will be found diminished in weight *exactly equal* to what the iron has gained." *Goldsmith, An. Nat. ch. 12.*

"Horses are sold *extremely dear*." *Lewisier, ch. 3.*

"And *greatly independent* lived." *Goldsmith.*

"This was applying a just principle *very ill*." *Thomson, Spring.*

It will be remarked that we have no adverbial form of the adjective in the comparative and superlative degrees, except that of *more* and *most*, *less* and *least*, prefixed. But we use the adjectives with the regular terminations, in these degrees, to qualify verbs. Examples:

"To hands that *lazier* shall the weapon wield." *Hoole's Tasso, 7.*

"—Then the pleasing force

Of nature and her kind parental care,

Worthier I'd sing." *Akenside, Pleas. of Imag. 1. 323.*

"So while we taste the fragrance of the rose,

Glow not her blush the fairer?" *Im. 2. 77.*

"When we know our strength, we shall the *better* know what to under-

take with hopes of success." *Locke, 1. 6.*

"And he that can *most* inform or *best* understand him, will certainly be

welcomed." *Rambler, No. 99.*

"How much *nearer* he approaches to his end."

"I have dwelt the *longer* on the discussion of this point."

Junius, Let. 17.

"The next contains a spirited command and should be pronounced much

higher." *Murray's Grammar.*

"Leviathan, which God of all his works

Created *hugest* that swim th' ocean's stream," *Milton, 1. 201.*

"But *in* my first and last shall *brightest* shine," *Id. 3. 134.*

"Such opinions as seemed to approach *nearest* [to] the truth."

Enfield, Hist. Phil. 2. 59.

"Her smiles, amid the blushes, *lovelier* show;

Amid her smiles, her blushes *lovelier* glow." *Hoole's Tasso, b. 15.*

Authors, misbegotten by Latin rules, and conceiving that every word

which is used to qualify a verb, must be an *adverb*, have pronounced many

of the passages here recited and similar ones to be incorrect; and in such as

are too well established to bear censure, they call the adjective an *ad-*

verb. Were it not for this influence in early education, which impresses a

notion that all languages must be formed with the like idioms, we should

never have received an idea that the same word may not modify a noun, an

adjective and a verb.

So far are the words here used from being adverbs, that they cannot be

changed into adverbs, without impairing the beauty, weakening the force, or

destroying the meaning of the passages. Let the sentences be put to the

test—*Margie de la fleur* smoothly—the cakes eat shortly and crisply—the apples

glow hot softly or hardly—glows not her blush the *more* fairly. Every

English ear rejects this alteration at once; the sentences become nonsense.

Nor can the adjective be separated from the verb—"Amid her smiles, her

blushes, glow *lovelier*, glow"—this is not the sense; nor will it answer to

say, "Her lovelier blushes glow"—this is not the idea. The sense is, that

the attribute expressed by *lovelier*, is not only a quality of *blushes*, but a

quality derived, in a manner, from the action of the verb, *glow*.

Thus, clay burns *white*—objects may be seen *double*—may rise *high*—

fall *low*—grow *strait*, or *thick*, or *thin*, or *fat*, or *lean*—one may speak *loud*—

the sun shines *clear*—the finer a substance is pulverized—to grow *wiser*, to

plunge *deeper*, spread *wider*—and similar expressions without number,

constitute a well established idiom, as common as it is elegant.

RULE XIX.—Some adjectives are used to modify the sense of others and

of participles; as, *a very clear day*; *red hot iron*; *a more or most excellent*

character; *more pressing necessity*; *most grating sound*. "Without com-

ing my nearer." *Locke*. "A *closer* grained wood." *Lewisier, Tasso.*

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene." *Gray.*

"Some deem'd him *wondrous* wise." *Beattie's Minstrel.*

In these expressions the last attribute belongs more immediately to the

noun expressing its quality; and the first attribute qualifies the second.

Not unfrequently two attributes are used to modify a third, or the principal

one; as, "The manner in which external force acts upon the body is

very little subject to the will." *Rambler, No. 78.*

RULE XX.—Adjectives are used to qualify the sense of adverbs; as, a

word was *very* bravely defended; the soldiers were *most* amply rewarded; a

donation *more* beneficially disposed; a house *less* elegantly furnished; a

man the *least* peaceably disposed.

We have a few other words which are often used to modify adjectives as

well as verbs; as, *a little*; *a great deal*; *a trifle*. "Many letters from per-

sons of the best sense—do not a *little* encourage me." *Spectator, 124.* "It

is a *great deal* better;" *a trifle* stronger; the last of which expressions is

colloquial.

RULE XXI.—The adjectives *each*, *every*, *either* and *neither*, have verbs

and substitutes agreeing with them in the singular number; as,

"*Each* one was a head of the house of his fathers." *Josh. xxii. 14.*

"*Every* one that findeth me, shall slay me." *Gen. iv. 11.*

"And take *every* man his censor." *Num. xvi. 17.*

"Nabal and Achish took *either* of them his censor." *1. Sam. x. 1.*

"*Neither* of the ways of separation, real or mental, is compatible to pure

pace." *Locke, 2. 13.*

Errors. "Let each esteem others better than themselves." *It ought to*

be himself.

"There are bodies, *each* of which are so small." *Locke, 2. 8.* It ought

to be *is*.

NOTE.—A plural verb, which affirms something of a number of particu-

lars, is often followed by a distributive which assigns the affirmation to the

particular objects or individuals. Thus, "If *metals* have, *each* a peculiar

earth." Hence we may consider *each* as the nominative to *has* understood

—If *metals* have, if *each metal* has a peculiar earth." There is no other

way of resolving the phrase. This manner of expression is common, though

quite useless; as the last clause, "if *each metal* has," is sufficient. It has

not the merit of an abbreviation. This phrase, "Let us love one another,"

is of a similar construction, but it is not easy to find a substitute of equal

bravity.

RULE XXII.—Nouns of measure or dimension stand without a governing

verb, followed by an adjective; as, "a wall seven feet high and two

feet thick" "a carpet six yards wide;" "a line sixty fathoms long;" "a

kingdom five hundred miles square;" "water ten feet deep."

"An army forty thousand strong," is a similar phrase.

NOTE.—Double comparatives and superlatives, *most straightest*, *most high-*

est, being improper and useless, are not to be used. The few which were

formerly used are obsolete. *Worse*, a mistake in spelling *wyras*, is obsolete;

but *less*, a mistake for *lessa*, is still used, as well as its abbreviation,

less.

The superlative form of certain attributes, which in the positive degree,

contain the utmost degree of the quality, as *extremest*, *chiefest*, is improper

and obsolete. But authors indulge in a most unwarrantable license of an-

nexing comparison to attributes whose negative sense precludes increase or

diminution; as in these sentences, "These are more formidable and *more*

impassable than the mountains." *Goldsmith, An. Nat. ch. 2.* "This dif-

ficulty was rendered still *more insurmountable* by the licentious spirit of

our young men." *Murphy, Thel. Oral, 35.* "The contradictions of im-

picities are still *more incomprehensible*." *Mosellon, Sermon to the Clergy.*

Similar to these are numerous expressions found in good authors—more

impossible, more indispensible, less universal, more uncontrollable; and

others, in which the sign of comparison is not only improper, but rather en-

feeble the epithet; for the word itself expressing the full extent of the

idea, ought to bear some emphasis, which, if a qualifying word is prefixed,

will naturally be transferred to that word."

In a few instances, this usage seems to be too well established to be al-

tered, and particularly in the use of *more* and *most*, *less* and *least* perfect.

In several, it would indicate more precision of thought to apply a term of

diminution to the affirmative attribute *less possible*, *less surmountable*, *less*

controllable, rather than a term of *increase* to a negative attribute.

NOTE 2.—In English, two nouns are frequently united to form a new

noun; as earth-wood, drill-plow, ink-stand, book-case. In some cases,

these compounds are by custom effectually blended into one term; in other

cases, they are separated into their component parts by a hyphen. In other

cases, words are united, and the first term forms a sort of occasional ad-

jective to the second; as *family-use*, or *family-consortion*.

NOTE 3.—From a disposition to abridge the number of words in discourse,

we find many expressions which are not reducible to any precise rule,

formed at first by accident or ellipsis. Such are, *at first*, *at last*, *at best*, *at*

worst, *at most*, *at least*, *at farthest*, *at the utmost*. In these expressions

there may have been an ellipsis of some noun; but they are well establish-

ed, brief and significant, and may be numbered among the *pinions* of *Mer-*

cury.

NOTE 4.—We have certain adjectives which follow a verb and a noun to

which they belong, but never precede the noun. Such are, *adry*, *afraid*, *af-*

raid, *alone*, *alive*, *anore*, *akin*, *alive*, *asleep*, *awake*, *athirst*, *aloft*, *aghost*, *a-*

ghast, *askew*, *ashamed*, *pursuant*, *plenty*, *worth*; to which may be added,

amiss, *aground*, *ashore*, *aside*, and a few others which may be used as at-

tributes or modifiers. We say, one is *adry*, *ashamed*, *alive* or *awake*; but

never an *adry* person, an *ashamed* child, &c. We say, "A proclamation

was issued *pursuant* to advice of council." But we can in no case place

pursuant before a noun.

* This effect may proceed also from another consideration. If the ad-

jective alone is used, its sense precludes the idea of increase or diminution—it

expresses all that can be expressed. But admit comparison, and it ceases

to express the utmost extent of the quality.