

# GRAMMAR OF THE

ing a definitive substitute, pointing to the following sentence—that which follows being provided.\*

It is not uncommon for authors to carry the practice of abridging discourse so far as to obscure the common regular construction. An instance frequently occurs in the omission both of the nominative and the participle in the case independent. For example: "*Conscious of his own weight and importance, his conduct in parliament would be directed by nothing but the constitutional duty of a peer.*" *Junius, Let. 19.* Here is no noun expressed to which *conscious* can be referred. We are therefore to supply the necessary words, to complete the construction—"He being conscious"—forming the clause independent.

**RULE III.**—A sentence, a number of words, or a clause of a sentence may be the nominative to a verb, in which case the verb is always in the third person of the singular number; as, "*All that is in a man's power in this case, is, only to observe what the ideas are which take their turn in the understanding.*" *Locke 2. 14.* Here the whole clause in italics is the nominative to *is*.

"*To attack vices in the abstract, without touching persons, may be safe fighting indeed, but it is fighting with shadows.*" *Pope, Let. 48.*  
"I deny that *men's coming to the use of reason*, is the time of their discovery."

"*That anything can exist without existing in space*, is to my mind incomprehensible." *Darwin, Zoon, sect. 14.* Here the definitive substitute may be transferred to a place next before the verb—"Any thing can exist, without existing in space," that [whole proposition] is incomprehensible.

**RULE IV.**—The infinitive mode may be the nominative to a personal verb; as, "*To see is desirable.*" "*To die is the inevitable lot of men.*" Sometimes an attribute is joined with the infinitive; as, "*to be blind is calamitous.*" In this case the attribute has no name expressed to which it refers. The proposition is abstract, and applicable to any human being, but not applicable to any.

**RULE V.**—In some cases the imperative verb is used without a definite nominative; as, "*I will not take any thing that is thine—save only that which the young men have eaten.*" *Gen. xiv. 23. 24.*  
"*Israel burned none, save Hazer only.*" *Josh. xi. 13.*  
"*I would that all were such as I am, except these bonds.*" *Acts xxvi. 29.*

"Our ideas are movements of the nerves of sense, as of the optic nerve in recollecting visible ideas, *suppose of a triangular piece of ivory.*" *Darwin, Zoon, sect. 39.*

This use of certain verbs in the imperative is very frequent, and there is a peculiar felicity in being thus able to use a verb in its true sense and with its proper object, without specifying a nominative; for the verb is thus left applicable to the first, second or third person. I may save or except, or you may except, or we may suppose. If we examine these sentences, we shall be convinced of the propriety of the idiom; for the ideas require no application to any person whatever.

**RULE VI.**—When the same thing is affirmed or predicated of two or more objects, in the singular number, the nominatives are joined by the copulative *and*, with a verb agreeing with them in the plural number; as, "*John and Thomas and Peter reside at Oxford.*" In this sentence, *residence at Oxford* is a predicate common to three persons; and instead of three affirmations—John resides at Oxford, Thomas resides at Oxford, Peter resides at Oxford, the three names are joined by *and*, and one verb in the plural applied to the whole number.

"*Reason and truth constitute intellectual gold, which defies destruction.*" *Johnson.* "*Why are whiteness and coldness in snow?*" *Locke.*  
"*Your lot and mine, in this respect, have been very different.*" *Cuep. Let. 38.1*

**NOTE 1.**—The rule for the use of a plural verb with two or more names in the singular number, connected by *and*, is laid down by critics with too much positiveness and universality. On original principles, all the names, except the first, are in the objective case; for it is probable that *and* contains in it the verb *add*. "*John and Thomas and Peter reside at York.*" on primitive principles must be thus resolved—"John, add Thomas, add Peter reside at York." But without resorting to first principles, which are now lost or obscured, the use of the singular verb may be justified by considering the verb to be understood after each name, and that which is expressed, agreeing only with the last; as, "*Nor were the young fellows so wholly lost to a sense of right, as pride and conceit has since made them affect to be.*" *Rambler, No. 97.* That is, as pride has and as conceit has. "Their safety and welfare is most concerned." *Spectator, No. 121.* In our best authors the singular verb is frequent in such sentences.

What will the hypercritic say to this sentence, "*Either sex and every age was engaged in the pursuits of industry.*" *Gibbon, Rom. Emp. ch. 10.*

\* Provided that, says Johnson, is an adverbial expression, and we sometimes use *provided* numerous for the conjunctions, as its correspondent word is in French. What strange work has been made with Grammar!

† Is this last example an evidence that *mine* is in the possessive case!

‡ This was also an very common practice with the best Greek and Roman writers. *Mens enim, et ratio, et consilium, in senibus est.* *Cicero de Senec. ca. 19.* "*Sed etiam ipius terre vis ac natura delectat.*" *Idem. 15.*

Is not the distributive effect of *either* and *every*, such as to demand a singular verb? So in the following: "*The judicial and every other power is accountable to the legislative.*" *Paley, Pab. 6. 8.*

**NOTE 2.**—When names and substitutes belonging to different persons, are thus joined, the plural substitute must be of the first person in preference to the second and third, and of the second in preference to the third. *I, you and he* are represented by *are*; *you and he*, by *you*. Pope in one of his letters makes *you or I* to be represented by *we* or *you*. "*Either you or I are not in love with the other.*" The sentence is an awkward one, and not to be imitated.

**RULE VII.**—When an affirmative or predicate refers to one subject only among a number, which are separately named in the singular number, the subjects are joined by the alternative *or*, *nor*, with a verb, substitute and name in the singular number; as, "*Either John or Peter was at the Exchange yesterday*; but neither John nor Peter is there to day."

"*Errors—A circle or square are the same in idea.*" *Locke, 2. 8.*

"*But whiteness or redness are not in the porphyry.*" *Idem.*

"*Neither of them [Tillotson and Temple.] are remarkable for precision.*" *Blair.*

Substitutes for sentences, whether they represent a single clause, or the parts of a compound sentence, are always in the singular number; as, "*It is true indeed that many have neglected opportunities of raising themselves to honor and to wealth, and rejected the kindest offers of fortune.*" *Rambler, No. 58.* Here *it* and *that* refer to the clauses which follow—"It is true, that many have rejected the kindest offers," &c.

**RULE VIII.**—Collective or aggregate names, comprehending two or more individuals under a term in the singular number, have a verb or substitute to agree with them in the singular or plural; as, the council is or are unanimous; the company was or were collected; this people, or these people.

No precise rule can be given to direct, in every case, which number is to be used. Much regard is to be had to usage, and to the unity or plurality of idea. In general, modern practice inclines to the use of the plural verb and substitute; as may be seen in the daily use of clergy, nobility, court, council, commonalty, audience, enemy and the like.

"*The clergy began to withdraw themselves from the temporal courts.*" *Blackstone's Comm. Introduction.*

"*Let us take a view of the principal incidents, attending the nobility, exclusive of their capacity as hereditary counselors of the crown.*" *Blackstone's Comm. 1. 12.*

"*The commonalty are divided into several degrees.*" *Idem.*

"*The enemy were driven from their works.*" *Idem.*

*Portuguese Asia, Michie, 163.*  
"*The chorus prepare resistance at his first approach—the chorus sings of the battle—the chorus entertains the stage.*" *Johnson's Life of Milton.*

"*The nobility are the pillars to support the throne.*" *Idem.*

*Blackstone's Comm. 1. 2.*  
"*Partly and army, in customary language, are joined with a verb in the singular number. Constitution cannot be plural. Church may be singular or plural. Mankind is almost always plural.*"

The most common and palpable mistakes in the application of this rule, occur in the use of *sort* and *kind*, with a plural attribute—these *sort*, those *kind*. This fault infects the works of our best writers; but these words are strictly singular, and ought so to be used.

When a collective name is preceded by a definitive which clearly limits the sense of the word to an aggregate with an idea of unity, it requires a verb and substitute to agree with it in the singular number; as, a company of troops was detached; a troop of cavalry was raised; this people is become a great nation; that assembly was numerous; "a government established by that people." *Blackstone's Comm. 1. 2.*

Yet our language seems to be averse to the use of it, as the substitute for names, even thus limited by a *this* or *that*. "*How long will this people provoke me, and how long will it be ere they will believe me for all the signs that I have shewed among them?*" *Vim. xiv. 11.* "*Liberty should reach every individual of a people; as they all share one common nature.*" *Spectator, No. 287.* In these passages, it in the place of *they*, would not be relished by an English ear; nor is it ever used in similar cases.

**RULE IX.**—When the nominative consists of several words, and the last of the names is in the plural number, the verb is commonly in the plural also; as, "*A part of the exports consist of raw silk.*" "*The number of oysters increase.*" *Golds. Anim. Nat. vol. 4. ch. 3.* "*Of which seeming equality we have no other measure, but such as the train of our ideas have lodged in our memories.*" *Locke, 2. 14. 21.* "*The greater part of philosophers have acknowledged the excellence of this government.*" *Anarch. vol. 5. 272.*

**RULE X.**—Pronouns or substitutes must agree with the names they represent, in number, gender and person; as,

\* The Romans used a greater latitude in joining plurals with collective names, than we can. "*Magna pars in villis repleti cibo vinoque.*" *Liv. 2. 26.* Here is an attribute plural of the masculine gender, agreeing with a noun in the singular, of the feminine gender.