

INTRODUCTION.

regulated. And it is to be extremely regretted that these principles should, in any instances, be neglected, or forced to yield to arbitrary reasons of derivation, or to a pedantic affectation of foreign pronunciation. When we know that the great mass of a nation naturally fall into a particular manner of pronouncing a word, without any rule or instruction, we may rely upon this tendency as a pretty certain indication that their accentuation is according to the analogies of the language, by which their habits of speaking have been formed; and this tendency cannot be opposed without doing violence to those analogies and to national habits.

Thus formerly, the word *horizon* was universally accented on the first syllable, and this accentuation was according to the settled analogy of the language. But the early poets had a fancy for conforming the English to the Greek pronunciation, and accented the second syllable; the orthoepists followed them; and now we have this forced, unnatural pronunciation of the learned in collision with the regular, analogous popular pronunciation. By this affectation of the Greek accent, the flowing smoothness of the word is entirely lost.

In like manner, an imitation of the French pronunciation of *confesseur*, and *successor*, led the early poets to accent the English words on the first syllable, in violation of analogy and euphony; and some orthoepists affect to follow them; but public usage frowns on this affectation, and rejects their authority.

There are many words in the English language, indeed a large part of the whole number, which cannot be reduced under any general rule of accentuation, as the exceptions to any rule formed will be nearly as numerous as the words which the rule embraces. And in most instances, we shall find, in the structure of the words, satisfactory reasons for the difference of pronunciation.

DISSYLLABLES.

No general rule can be given for the accentuation of words of two syllables. It is however, worth observing that when the same word is both a noun or an adjective and a verb, it happens, in many instances, that the noun or adjective has the accent on the first syllable, and the verb on the last. Instances of which we have in *absent*, to *absent*; *concert*, to *concert*; *export*, to *export*. The reason is, the preterit and participles of the verbs require to have the same syllable accented as the verb, but if the first syllable of the preterit and participles were to be accented, it would be difficult to pronounce the words, as may be perceived by attempting to pronounce *abs'ent*, *con'certed*, *con'ducted*, with the accent on the first syllable.

In a few instances, the word has a different accent when a noun, from that which it has when an adjective; as *Aug'ust*, *august*; *gallant*, *gal'lant*.

TRISSYLLABLES.

Words of three syllables, derived from dissyllables, usually retain the accent of their primitives. Thus

Poet, *poëtess*; *pleas'ant*, *pleas'an'tly*; *grac'ious*, *grac'iously*; *relate*, *re'lôted*; *polite*, *poli'test*.

In like manner, words of four syllables, formed from dissyllables, generally retain the accent of the primitives; as in *collect'ible* from *collect*, *service'able* from *service*.

In all cases, the preterit and participles of verbs retain the accent of the verbs.

Words ending in *tion*, *sion*, *tian*, *cious*, *tious*, *cial*, *cian*, *tial*, *tiate*, *tient*, *cient*, have the accent on the syllable preceding that termination; as *motion*, *christian*, *precious*, *erudition*, *patient*, &c.

Words of more than two syllables, ending in *ly*, have, for the most part, the accent on the antepenult; as *grat'ify*, *prop'riety*, *prosper'ity*, *insens'ibility*.

Trissyllables ending in *ment*, for the most part have the accent on the first syllable, as *compliment*, *detriment*; but to this rule there are many exceptions, and particularly nouns formed from verbs, as *amendment*, *commandment*.

Words with the following terminations have the accent on the last syllable except two, or antepenult.

- fluus, as *super'fluous*, *mellifluous*.
- ferous, as *baucifer'ous*, *argentif'erous*.
- fluent, as *ericion'fluent*.
- cracy, as *democ'racy*, *theoc'racy*.
- gonal, as *diag'onal*, *sex'agonal*.
- gony, as *cosmog'ony*, *theog'ony*.
- muchy, as *logom'uchy*, *them'uchy*.
- loquy, as *ob'loquy*, *ventril'oquy*.
- mathy, as *polym'athy*.
- meter, as *barom'eter*, *hygrom'eter*.
- nomy, as *eccl'onomy*, *astron'omy*.
- pathy, as *ap'athy*, *antip'athy*.
- phony, as *eu'phony*, *sym'phony*.
- parous, as *enip'arous*, *vivip'arous*.
- scopy, as *deuteros'copy*, *aeroc'copy*.
- strophe, as *apost'rophe*, *catas'trophe*.
- vorous, as *igniv'orous*.

—vorous, as *carniv'orous*, *graminiv'orous*.

—tomy, as *ana'tomy*, *lithot'omy*.

—raphy, as *geog'raphy*, *orthog'raphy*.

Compound words, as *book-case*, *ink-stand*, *pen-knife*, *note-book*, usually have a slight accent, that is, one syllable is distinguished by some stress of voice; but as the other syllable is significant by itself, it is uttered with more distinctness than the syllables of other words which are wholly unaccented. And in some words, there are two accents, one on each component part of the word, which are barely distinguishable. Thus in *legislative*, *legislator*, *legislation*, the accent on the first syllable can hardly be distinguished from that on the third; and if a speaker were to lay the primary accent on the third syllable, his pronunciation would hardly be noticed as a singularity. Indeed there are some compound words, in which there is so little distinction of accent, that it is deemed unnecessary to mark either syllable or part of the word as accented.

As to a great part of English words, their accent must be learned from dictionaries, elementary books, or practice. There is no method of classification, by which they can be brought under a few simple general rules, to be easily retained by the memory; and attempts to effect this object must only burden the memory, and perplex the learner.

The differences in the accentuation of words, either in books or in usage, are not very numerous. In this respect, the language is tolerably well settled, except in a few words. Among these are *acceptable*, *commendable*, *confessor*, *successor*, *receptacle*, *receptory*, *deceptory*, *refragable*, *despisy*, which the orthoepists incline to accent on the first syllable. But with regard to most of these words, their accentuation is contrary to common usage, and with regard to all of them, it ought to be rejected. The ease of pronunciation requires the accent to be on the second syllable, and no effort to remove it can ever succeed.

The words *accessory*, *desultory*, *exemplary* and *peremptory* would all have the accent on the second syllable, were it not very difficult, with this accent, to articulate the three last syllables of the derivatives, *accessorily*, *desultorily*, *exemplarily*, *peremptorily*. It is for this reason, that the primary accent is laid on the first syllable, and then a secondary accent on the third enables the speaker to articulate distinctly and with tolerable ease the last syllables. If the primary accent is laid on the second syllable, there can be no second accent. Yet the natural accent of the last syllables being on the second syllable of the three first, and the derivatives little used, we find good speakers often lay the accent on the second syllable; nor is it easy to change the practice.

This circumstance of regarding the pronunciation of derivative words, in settling the accent, has been either wholly overlooked, or not sufficiently observed in practice. Hence the orthoepists accent the second syllable of the verbs *alternate*, *demonstrate*, *contemplate*, *compensate*, *extirpate*, *confiscate*, *expurgate*. Notwithstanding all authorities however, such is the tendency to confusion and melody in utterance, that many respectable speakers lay the accent of these and similar words on the first syllable. The reason of this is obvious, although perhaps it never occurs to the speakers themselves. It is, that when the accent is laid on the second syllable, the two last syllables of the participles, *alternating*, *demonstrating*, *compensated*, &c. are either pronounced with difficulty, being wholly unaccented, or they are disgustingly feeble. How very difficult it is to utter distinctly the words *alternating*, *demonstrating*, &c. with the accent on the second syllable; the organs being compelled to change their position and form three, four, five, or six articulations in an instant, to utter the two last syllables!

But place the primary accent on the first syllable, and a secondary one on the third, and the voice resting on these, the speaker is enabled to bound with ease from syllable to syllable and utter the whole word distinctly without effort, *alt'ernating*, *demon'strating*.

In *extirpate*, *compensate* and *confiscate*, the accent on the second syllable leaves the last syllables of the participle most miserably weak. What a feeble line is this of Pope:

Each seeming ill compensated of course.

This evil is remedied by placing the primary accent on the first syllable, and a secondary one on the third; *compensated*; *compensating*; *extirpating*; *extirpated*; *confiscating*; *confiscated*; the full sound of a giving due strength to the last syllables.

It is further to be observed that there are some words which, in poetry and prose, must be differently accented, as the accent has been transferred by usage from one syllable to another within the two last centuries. Nares enumerates more than a hundred words, whose accent has been thus changed since the age of Shakespeare. Of this class of words are *aspect*, *process*, *sojourn*, *conceit*, *content*, *refine*, *converse*, the noun *horizon*, which Milton accents on the second syllable, and *acceptable*, which he accents on the first, as he does *attribute* and *contribute*. But the accent of all these words has been changed; the seven first have the accent indubitably on the first syllable; the two last, on the second syllable; and although some difference of opinion may exist, as to the accentuation of *horizon* and *acceptable*, yet the common popular practice of accenting *horizon* on the first and *acceptable* on the second, is according to regular analogies and cannot will be altered. No one is to be; the poetic accent in both, is harsh and unnatural. This difference of accent causes a slight inconvenience; but it is the arbiter in language; and when well settled and general, there is no appeal from its decisions, the inconvenience admits of no remedy.