

§189. The comparative of an adjective or adverb often signifies that a quality exists in too high a degree—that is, in a higher degree than usual, as :

*Senectus est naturā loquacior.*

Old age is naturally rather talkative.

*Liberius vivebat.*

He lived rather freely or too freely.

NOTE.—If a quality is described as existing in too high a degree for something, it is expressed by *quam pro* (thus in proportion to), as: *proelium atrocius quam pro numero pugnantium*, a battle too fierce in proportion to the number of combatants. If the something is expressed by a verb, *quam qui* or *quam ut* is used, as: *major est quam cui nocere possis* or *quam ut ei nocere possis*, he is too great a man for you to be able to hurt him.

§190. When two qualities existing in the same person or thing are compared with each other, either both adjectives are put in the comparative, or the comparative of the first only is indicated by *magis*, as :

*Corpora magna magis quam firma.*

Bodies rather large than strong.

*Oratio verior quam gratior.*

A speech more true than pleasing.

NOTE.—After a comparative poets sometimes use *atque* or *ac* instead of *quam*. About the omission of *quam* after a comparative, see § 176.

§191. The superlative in Latin not only indicates the highest degree absolutely, but also relatively, which we express in English by “very” with the positive, whence *vir fortissimus* may mean the bravest man, or a very brave man; *optime valeo*, I am very well. The context always shows in which of the two senses a superlative is to be understood.

NOTE 1.—The force of a superlative is sometimes increased by the addition of *quam*, with or without the addition of the verb *possum*, as: *quam maximas copias armat*, or *quam maximas potest*, he arms as large a force as he can. Sometimes the same is effected by the addition of *unus*, *unus omnium*, *longe*, or *multo*, as: *unus praestantissimus vir*, *unus omnium vir praestantissimus*, *longe praestantissimus*, or *multo praestantissimus*, by far the most distinguished man. The superlative *maximus* sometimes takes *quantus* in the same sense, as *labor quantus maximus*, the greatest possible labour.

NOTE 2.—When in English a superlative in the plural has the word *all* before it, it may be expressed either in the same way, or more idiomatically by *quisque*, as: *optimus quisque*, all the best men; *sapientissimus quisque*, all the wisest men; *altissima quaeque flumina*, all the deepest rivers.