

Read the sentence given below:

I have a black and white cow.

This sentence means that I have a cow which is partly white and partly black. But If I say '*I have a black and a white cow*', I have two cows – one black and the other white.

Hence when two or more adjectives qualify the same noun, the article is used only before the first adjective; but when the reference is to different nouns, expressed or understood, the article is used before each adjective.

Compare:

The secretary and treasurer has gone on leave.

The secretary and the treasurer have gone on leave.

Here the first sentence clearly indicates that the nouns secretary and treasurer refer to the same person. The repetition of the article in the second sentence indicates that the nouns refer to two different persons.

Now examine the following sentences:

Winston Churchill was a great orator and statesman. (Here the reference is to one person – Churchill.)

There were on the jury among others a great orator and a great statesman. (Here the reference is to two different persons.)

Note that we may either say-

The first and the second chapter OR The first and second chapters