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(continued from previous page)

the foreigner has to do is to learn 850 words by heart. But Mr. Churchill disposes of a vocabulary that may stretch to 250,000 words. We will be modest, however, and estimate it at 100,000. Now, before he left Downing Street, did the Prime Minister take the precaution of memorising the 99,150 words which he must not use? Even if he did, will they not sometimes flock unbidden to his practised tongue? He wishes to say, for example, "We will fight them on the edges of the land." That is impeccable Basic English. But habit is strong. Before he got to the end of the sentence might not the forbidden word "beaches" slip in?

Let us take at random a sentence from the Premier's address at Harvard:

Twice in my lifetime the long arm of destiny has reached across the oceans and absorbed the entire life and manhood of the United States in a deadly struggle.

Mr. Churchill has a prodigious memory. He remembers, of course, that "twice" does not occur, nor "life," nor "reach," nor "ocean," while "fate" is not included as a possible substitute for "destiny"—and so we might go on. Here is the sentence as this consummate artist might have written it to justify his reception of his doctor's degree:

Two times in my existence the long arm of history has stretched across the seas and kept all the living things and all the males of the United States in a fearful fight.

The sentence is perfectly "basic," but would it earn the orator his customary meed of applause?

The reader may object to his test: Mr. Churchill is no fit subject for simplification. Then let us become as little children. It shall be a nursery rhyme. "Three blind mice . . ." Worse than ever. "Blind" is not allowed, nor "mouse." The little grey animals without eyes can run after the farmer's wife, but all she had to cut off their tails with was a meat knife. We confess that we have never seen such a thing in our "existence." But let us try again with something as simple, if more classical. "Tiger, tiger. . ." But neither is that animal one of the chosen. The big Indian cat will burn bright enough. We wonder what hand and what eye could make its fearful regularity.

How soon will Basic English be appointed to be read in churches? How long will its rival survive in elementary schools? We can see Lord Beaverbrook racing all the peers of Fleet Street for the honour of producing the first Basic daily newspaper. The last phase may lie a little way ahead: the best to hope for is that it will not be in our lifetime. What publisher will hesitate, when in one language he can count on a sale of ten million copies, and in the other of ten thousand? The classics, we trust, will be translated: it is doubtful if they will survive in any other form. Scholars, a few centuries hence, will collect the fragments of Mr. Churchill in the original tongue much as they try to assemble the lost books of Livy. Assuredly, the mighty fertilising and health-giving river

"will flow on, and all the children of men will drink from it." But will it not taste a trifle insipid?

An Answer to Criticism

To show, however, that the *New Statesman* did not speak with the approval of all its readers, we end with the protest of an indignant correspondent:

Sir,—The comment on Basic English in to-day's number of the *New Statesman* must be easily the most childish piece of writing the "N.S." has printed for many a moon.

The writer of the article seems to suggest that Mr. Churchill speaks off the cuff on public occasions, but the general belief is that the Premier's speeches are very carefully prepared. Certainly the more imposing passages are carefully laid out. When addressing an English-speaking audience, Mr. Churchill uses the full sweep of the language from Billingsgate upwards, but conceit for his composition would not stop him putting his meaning into Basic English if he had to speak to the world's peoples on weighty matters. His Harvard speech is the first clear sign that Mr. Churchill is aware of the real problems confronting the world's legislators. True, it is a surprise to find the tradition-steeped Winston Churchill starting an inquiry into an important problem in advanced internationalism, but it is also a great shock to find the *New Statesman* dithering and drivelling blimpishly at a shadow the approaching future is casting ahead. It is the *New Statesman's* business to anticipate and control the future, not to shudder at novelty. It is silly to suggest that because, out of a sense of world citizenship and courtesy to those who are new to our tongue, we discipline ourselves on occasion to 850 chosen words and turns of speech using them, that therefore the British stock using the language as a bludgeon, or a steam hammer, or a fine precision tool, or a musical instrument will die out. Advocacy of Basic is a sign of freshness of outlook, not of decadence.

Probably the public utterances of no English-speaking statesman of to-day would benefit so much from a brief training in Basic English as Mr. Churchill's. I find his extravagant and over-elaborate verbiage unbearable to listen to, and always wait for the newspaper reports of his broadcasts, when I can swiftly grasp his meaning and shake it free of Gibbonish. I, myself, have found a brief study of Basic of real help in the use of language, both in the writing of verse and of accurate statement.

An international language is an obvious need for world integration. Basic English may or may not be the best solution. I think it is. But whether or no, the matter is undoubtedly well worth going into, and Mr. Churchill is to be congratulated upon overcoming his first sarcastic objections and recognising that the case for Basic English is powerful and important. And surely when the coin drops in the mind of the Old Man, that is no time for the *New Statesman* to get out of order?

F. R. GRIFFIN.

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

AS HE SAID IT:

FOUR-SCORE and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place of those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work they have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that the dead shall not have died in vain, that that nation shall, under God, have a new birth of freedom, and that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

AS HE WOULD HAVE

SAID IT IN BASIC ENGLISH:

EIGHTY-SEVEN years back, our fathers gave birth on this land to a new nation, designed to be free and given to the theory that all men are to their Maker equal. Now we are in the middle of a great war among ourselves, testing if that nation, or any nation so designed and given to such a purpose, may long go on. We are come together on a great fighting field of that war. We are come together to put by a part of that field as a last resting place for those who here gave their blood that that nation might go on. It is very right that we do this.

But in a deeper sense, it is not for us the living to give this field in their name to history. The true men, living and dead, who saw fighting here have so given it far past our power to do anything more or less. The earth will take little note and keep not long in memory what we say here, but it will ever keep in memory what they did here. It is for us the living, though, to give ourselves up here to the uncompleted work which they have so far so highly undertaken. It is for us to be here given over to the great work still before us—that from these respected dead we may take greater belief in that cause for which they gave the last full measure of belief—that we here make it our high purpose that these dead will not have given their all for nothing—that this nation, under God, will have a new free birth, and that government of all, by all, and for all will not come to end on earth.