



NOTES



Journalese

Common errors, made more common by their frequency in newspapers, are the use of *state* for *say*, *allege* for *say*, *administer* for *give*, *aggravate* for *annoy*, *mutual* for *common*, *factor* for *cause*, *ilke* for *sort*, *illy* for *ill*, *inaugurate* for *begin*, *liable* for *likely*, and for *to*. And is indeed one of the pitfalls of the language. There is hardly a day we do not come upon such wrong uses of it as in the sentence: "Try and come with us." Still worse is the clumsy conjunction of *and* with the relative, as in the sentence: "He owned a violin made by Stradivarius, and which was formerly the property of his grandfather." Another evil of journalese is the habit of using ready-made phrases. Men who have to write much and at short notice are prone to acquire this habit, and that is one of the reasons why journalese is often a language that it is a weariness to read. Ready-made phrases are not alive; they are not quickened by thought; they are the stock-in-trade of men who are unable to think, or who have not been trained to think. Thus, persons who read editorials every day (if there be such persons in existence) recognise that each and every editorial is only a combination of a very limited number of words and current phrases. These are flung on the paper without order, and without beauty, and often at the end of a leading article the reader asks himself what is it all about.

Nuts to Crack

If any boy or girl thinks that the correct writing of English is an easy matter we would advise the quiet study of the following sentences, all of which are faulty:

The Spectator: "The Great Powers, after producing this absolutely certain result, are ending with what they ought to have begun—coercion."

Beaconsfield: "There were other means of communication between Claribel and her new prophet. Books were mutually lent to each other."

The Spectator: "Whatever we possessed in 1867 the British Empire possesses now and is part of the Dominion of Canada."

The Times: "I am sensible that by conniving at it it will take too deep root ever to be eradicated."

Morley: "These journeymen are far too declamatory, and too much addicted to substitute vague and puerile dissertations for solid instructions."

Conan Doyle: "I think that if the matter were handed over to the parish councils . . . we would within a twelvemonth have exactly such a network of rifle clubs as is needed."

Gladstone: "I cannot let the moment pass at which I would have been enjoying a visit to you after your severe illness without one word of sympathy."

Carlyle: "Add to all this that he died in his thirty-seventh year: and then ask, If it be strange that his poems are imperfect?"

The Times: "Mr. Lionel Philips main-

tained that it was impossible to introduce white unskilled labor on a large scale as a payable proposition, without lowering the position of the white man."

The Times: "We are giving these explanations gently as friends, also patiently as becomes neighbors."

Scott: "It is to you whom I address a history which may perhaps fall into very different hands."

Thackeray: "With whom on those golden evenings I should like to have taken a stroll in the bayfield."

If the average reader is unable to discover where the fault lies in each of the foregoing sentences, he may at any rate console himself that errors in English prose are not confined to ordinary people. It may console others to remember that that maniac, the *Spectator*, which certain old fogies rank beside the Bible, is the worst offender of all.

Matthew Arnold's Poetry

We once heard a friend remark that his objection to Matthew Arnold's poetry was that the man knew too much about the technique of versification. That implied that he was more concerned with how he said a thing than with what he said; in other words indicated that the critic found Arnold wanting in vitality, in spontaneity, in careless rapture, in fire, in fierceness, in full-bloodedness. He strove indeed after the perfect form, but he had also the *content*—the *Inhalt*, as our German cousins would call it; he perhaps had too much *Inhalt* and was too thoughtful, and this may be the reason why he was never very popular with people who like sugar and sentiment and jingle. There was not only a critic but also a philosopher behind his pen; and the result was a high seriousness, a sweetness that was never without light, and an atmosphere of wholesomeness with a music as of lapping waters. Mr. Birrell tells us of another kind of critic. "I read the other day in the *Spectator* newspaper," he writes, "an assertion that Mr. Arnold's poetry had never consoled anybody. A falser statement was never made innocently. It may never have consoled the writer in the *Spectator*, but because the stomach of a dram-drinker rejects cold water is no kind of reason for a sober man abandoning his morning tumbler of the pure element. Mr. Arnold's poetry is full of consolation. It would be strange if it had not been. It is

No stretched metre of an antique song,

but quick and to the point." His poetry, then, was consoling and serious, but its most distinctive note was perhaps its sincerity. He went in search of the heart of things, and in doing so he left the beaten track and with it the *profanum vulgus* who were too bleary-eyed to follow him. This may be seen in his love of Nature, of which Mr. Birrell writes: "Mr. Arnold's love of Nature, and poetic treatment of Nature, was to many a

vexed soul a great joy and an intense relief. Mr. Arnold was a genuine Wordsworthian—being able to read everything Wordsworth ever wrote except 'Vandracour and Julia.' The influence of Wordsworth on him was immense, but he was enabled by the order of his mind to reject with the heartiest goodwill the cloudy pantheism which robs so much of Wordsworth's best verse of the heightened charm of reality, for, after all, poetry, like religion, must be true, or it is nothing. This strong aversion to the unreal also prevented Mr. Arnold, despite his love of the classical forms, from nonsensical neopaganism. His was a manlier attitude. He had no desire to keep tugging at the dry breasts of an outward creed, nor any disposition to go down on his knees, or hunkers as the Scotch more humorously call them, before plaster casts of Venus or even Proteus rising from the sea. There was something refreshing about this. In the long run even gloomy truth is better than a cheerful falsehood. The perpetual strain of living down to a lie, the depressing atmosphere of a circumscribed intelligence, tell upon the system, and the cheerful falsehood soon begins to look puffy and dissipated." Mr. Birrell's own opinion is thus succinctly expressed: "But though severe and restricted, and without either grandeur or fancy, Arnold's poetry is most companionable. It never teases you—there he has the better of Shelley—or surfeits you—there he prevails over Keats. As a poet, we would never dare or wish to class him with either Shelley or Keats, but as a companion to slip in your pocket before starting to spend the day amid

The cheerful silence of the fells, you may search far before you find anything better than the volumes of Mr. Arnold's poems."

Unhealthy Books

Side by side with the taste for unclean books grows in our day a delight in books that are unhealthy without being really obscene. There is a kind of feminine, sentimental, emotional novel which is as disastrous to the mind as a diet of sweet cakes is to the bodily health. These books substitute emotion for argument, and cloying sweetness for noble thoughts. They have a laxative effect on the moral fibre of their readers, and they poison the soul and enervate its strength slowly and surely. There are many such books in circulation to-day and their popularity is a sad sign of the degenerate spirit of the age. The great feminine reading public creates for such writings a demand that authors are pandering to with much financial profit to themselves and much evil results to the race. People who read nothing but this sort of literature lose sight of every high ideal of manhood or womanhood, and the constant pabulum of worthless diet for the mind disposes the soul for actual depravity by weakening its powers of resistance. The readers live in a perpetual miasma and the fresh mountain breezes of true inspiration never reach them. There is no energy, no activity, no serious attention required for the perusal of such books, and the passive reading of them is the forerunner of decay. Our modern education—the product of innumerable fads and rash experiments, by persons without any proper notion of what

W. E. Evans

TAILOR and COSTUME MAKER

IF YOU APPRECIATE BEING WELL
DRESSED LET US OUTFIT YOU.

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