

CHAP.		PAGE
III.	ARRANGEMENT	177
	Section I. Clearness	177
	“ II. Force	184
	“ III. Ease	198
	“ IV. Unity	208
	“ V. Kinds of Sentences	216
	“ VI. Paragraphs	230
	“ VII. Whole Compositions	239

PART II.

KINDS OF COMPOSITION.

	FOUR KINDS DISCRIMINATED	247
I.	DESCRIPTION	249
	Section I. Scientific Description	251
	“ II. Artistic Description	254
II.	NARRATION	281
	Section I. Movement	285
	“ II. Method in Movement	289
III.	EXPOSITION	300
IV.	ARGUMENT	327
	Section I. Proposition and Proof	328
	“ II. Evidence	334
	“ III. Deduction and Induction	341
	“ IV. Antecedent Probability, Example, Sign	354
	“ V. Arrangement	379
	“ VI. Persuasion	386
—————		
INDEX		401

THE PRINCIPLES OF RHETORIC.

PART I.—COMPOSITION IN GENERAL.

Book I.—GRAMMATICAL PURITY. *i*

CHAPTER I.

GOOD USE.

THE foundations of rhetoric rest upon grammar; for grammatical purity is a requisite of good writing.

Though it may be no merit to know the proper use of our native tongue, not to know it is a positive demerit,—a demerit the greater in those of us who have had the advantages of education.

Importance of correctness in the use of language.

To know is comparatively easy; but to have our knowledge always ready for use, to apply it in every sentence we frame, whether we have time to be careful or not, is far from easy. Not even eminent speakers or writers, not even those who readily detect in others errors in grammar, are themselves free from similar faults,—such faults at least as may be committed, through inadvertence, in the hurry of speech or of composition. “A distinguished British scholar of the last century said he had known but three of his countrymen who spoke their native language with uniform gram-

matical accuracy, and the observation of most persons widely acquainted with English and American society confirms the general truth implied in this declaration."¹

Grammatical purity is, then, the first requisite of discourse, whether spoken or written. Whatever is addressed to English-speaking people should be in the English tongue: it (1) should contain none but English words and phrases, (2) should employ these words and phrases in their English meanings, and (3) should combine them according to the English idiom.

What, now, determines whether a given expression is English?

Evidently, the answer to this question is not to be sought in inquiries concerning the origin, the history, or the tendencies of the language. However interesting in themselves, however successfully prosecuted, such investigations are of little practical value in a study which has to do, not with words as they have been or might have been or may be, but with words as they are; not with the English of yesterday or with that of to-morrow, still less with a theorist's ideal English, but with the English of to-day.

In the English of to-day, one word is not preferred to another because it is derived from this or from that source; the present meaning of a word is not fixed by its etymology, nor its inflection by the inflection of other words with which it may, for some purposes, be classed. *Athletics* (from the Greek), *farina* (from the Latin), *flour* (from the Latin through the French), *mutton* (from the French), *gas* (a term invented by a chemist²), are as

¹ George P. Marsh: Lectures on the English Language, lect. v.

² Van Helmont, a Fleming (born in 1577).

good words as *games*, *meal*, *sheep*, *fire*. Properly used, *manufacture* is as good a word as *handiwork*, *purple* as *red*, *prairie* as *meadow*, *magnificent* as *great*, *murmur* as *buzz*, *manual* as *handy*, *existence* as *being*, *convention* as *meeting*, *terminus* as *end*. Though a vast majority of nouns form the plural in *s*, the plural of *ox* is still *oxen*, and that of *mouse* is still *mice*; though we no longer say, "A bee *stang* John," we do say, "The bird *sang*;" though *its* has been in use only three centuries, it is as much a part of the language as *his* or *her*, and one can only smile at a recent writer's hostility to this "unlucky, new-fangled word."¹

"There is," says Landor, "a fastidiousness in the use of language that indicates an atrophy of mind. We must take words as the world presents them to us, without looking at the root. If we grubbed under this and laid it bare, we should leave no room for our thoughts to lie evenly, and every expression would be constrained and cramped. We should scarcely find a metaphor in the purest author that is not false or imperfect, nor could we imagine one ourselves that would not be stiff and frigid. Take now, for instance, a phrase in common use. *You are rather late*. Can anything seem plainer? Yet *rather*, as you know, meant originally *earlier*, being the comparative of *rathe*: the 'rathe primrose' of the poet recalls it. We cannot say, *You are sooner late*; but who is so troublesome and silly as to question the propriety of saying, *You are rather late*? We likewise say, *bad orthography* and *false orthography*: how can there be false or bad *right-spelling*?"²

¹ T. L. Kington Oliphant: The Sources of Standard English, chap. v.

² Walter Savage Landor: Conversations, Third Series; Johnson and Horne (Tooke).

The fastidiousness that objects to well-established words because their appearance "proclaims their vile and despicable origin,"¹ or to well-understood phrases because they "contain some word that is never used except as a part of the phrase,"¹ or to idiomatic expressions because, "when analyzed grammatically, they include a solecism,"¹—the fastidiousness, in short, that would sacrifice to the proprieties of language expressions that give life to our daily speech and vigor to the best writing, indicates "an atrophy of mind" akin to that of which Landor speaks.

Pell-mell, topsy-turvy, helter-skelter, hurly-burly, hocus-pocus, hodge-podge, harum-scarum, namby-pamby, willy-nilly, shilly-shally, higgledy-piggledy, dilly-dally, hurry-scurry, carry their meaning instantaneously to every mind. Examples of their effective use may be found in the very best authors:—

"Then what a *hurly-burly*! what a crowding! what a glare of a thousand flambeaux in the square!"²

"This shifting of persons could not be done without the *hocus-pocus* of abstraction."³

"And then draw close together and read the motto (that old *namby-pamby* motto, so stale and so new!) —"⁴

"And then there were apple pies, and peach pies, and pumpkin pies; besides slices of ham and smoked beef; and moreover delectable dishes of preserved plums, and peaches, and pears, and quinces; not to mention broiled shad and roasted chickens; together with bowls of milk and cream, all mingled *higgledy-piggledy*, pretty much as I have enumerated them, with the motherly tea-pot sending up its clouds of vapor from the midst—Heaven bless the mark!"⁵

¹ George Campbell: The Philosophy of Rhetoric, book ii. chap. ii.

² Burke: Letters on a Regicide Peace, letter iv.

³ Ibid., letter i.

⁴ Thackeray: The Virginians, chap. ix.

⁵ Irving: The Sketch Book; The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.

"On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,
Did the English fight the French,— woe to France!
And the thirty-first of May, *helter-skelter* through the blue,
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,
Came crowding ship on ship to St. Malo on the Rance,
With the English fleet in view."¹

"Go to Paris; rank on rank
Search the heroes flung *pell-mell*
On the Louvre, face and flank:
You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé Riel."¹

The italicized words in "by *dint* of," "as *lief*," "to and *fro*," "not a *whit*," "*kith* and kin," "*hue* and cry," "*spick* and *span* new," "*tit* for *tat*," are, by themselves, obsolete in the sense they bear in the phrases quoted; but the phrases are universally understood, and there is no more reason for challenging the words that compose them than there is for challenging a syllable in a word.

A similar remark may be made about idioms, — modes of expression peculiar to the language, or to the group of languages, in which they occur. Idiomatic expressions, though composed of words difficult to "parse," may be older than parsing and still in good repute. Such expressions give life to style.

On this ground, *had rather* and *had better*² are quite as good English as *would rather* and *might better*:—

"I *had rather* be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."³

"I *had rather* be a dog, and bay the moon,
Than such a Roman."⁴

¹ Robert Browning: Hervé Riel.

² For a discussion of these locutions, see an exhaustive article (by Fitz-Edward Hall) in "The American Journal of Philology," vol. ii. no. 7, pp. 281-322.

³ Psalm lxxxiv. 10.

⁴ Shakspeare: Julius Cæsar, act iv. scene iii.

"If you do not speak in that manner, you *had* much *better* not speak at all."¹

"A reader who wants an amusing account of the United States *had better* go to Mrs. Trollope, coarse and malignant as she is. A reader who wants information about American politics, manners, and literature *had better* go even to so poor a creature as Buckingham."²

Another familiar idiom is shown in the expression, "*Please* hand me that book," for "May it please you to," etc. The more formal expression still survives in "May it please your Honor."

The perfect and pluperfect tenses of the verb *be* are used idiomatically with *to* and a substantive or an infinitive of purpose. For example: "*Have you been to* the theatre?" "*He had been to* see Irving that night."

Other idiomatic expressions are, — *many a*, as in

"Full *many a* flower is born to blush unseen,"

never so good, would God, whether or no,³ either at the end of a negative sentence, as in "I can't go, *either*."

Still another idiom, which is objected to in England, it is said, but which is universal in the United States, consists in the use of *do*, and especially of *do not*, with *have*, in such expressions as "America *does not have* a monopoly of bad English," "He *did not have* much appetite."

Some idioms are relics of what was once ordinary usage. The origin of others has not yet been discovered, but the more the language is studied, the more light is shed upon the history of expressions which do not now carry their meaning on the face of them, as they once

¹ Lord Chesterfield: Letter to his son, July 9, O. S., 1750.

² Macaulay; in Trevelyan's "Life and Letters of Macaulay," vol. ii chap. ix.

³ See "The Saturday Review," Dec. 1, 1888, p. 641.

did. *Dance attendance, scrape acquaintance, curry favor*, however difficult to understand word by word, are easy to understand as phrases. As phrases, they are facts in language:—

"Welcome, my lord: I *dance attendance* here;
I think the duke will not be spoke withal."¹

"Politicians who, in 1807, sought to *curry favour* with George the Third by degrading Caroline of Brunswick, were not ashamed, in 1820, to *curry favour* with George the Fourth by persecuting her."²

In the use of language there is only one sound principle of judgment. If to be understood is, as it should be, a writer's first object, his language must be such as his readers understand, and understand as he understands it. If he is so fond of antiquity as to prefer a word that has not been in use since the twelfth or the seventeenth century to one only fifty or twenty years old but in good repute to-day, he is in danger of being shelved with his adopted contemporaries; if he is so greedy of novelty as to snatch at the words of a season, few of which survive the occasion that gives them birth, his work is likely to be as short-lived as they. If, being a scholar, he uses Latinisms or Gallinisms known only to scholars like himself; if, being a lawyer or a physician, he uses legal or medical jargon; or if, living in Yorkshire or in Arkansas, he writes in the dialect of Yorkshire or in that of Arkansas, — he will be understood by those who belong to his class or to his section of country, but he may be unintelligible, as well as distasteful, to the general public. By avoiding pedantry and vulgarity alike, a writer, while commending himself

¹ Shakspeare: Richard III., act iii. scene vii.

² Macaulay: History of England, vol. i. chap. v.

to the best class of readers, loses nothing in the estimation of any other class; for those who do not themselves speak or write pure English understand it when spoken or written by others.

The reasons, in short, which prevent an English author from publishing a treatise in Greek, Celtic, or French, or in a dialect peculiar to a place or to a class, prohibit him from employing an English expression that is not favored by the great body of cultivated men in English-speaking countries, an expression not sanctioned by GOOD USE, — that is, by *Present, National, and Reputable* use: present, as opposed to obsolete or ephemeral; national, as opposed to local, professional, or foreign; reputable, as opposed to vulgar or affected.

PRESENT USE is determined neither by authors who wrote so long ago that their diction has become antiquated, nor by those whose reputation as good writers is not firmly established. Not even the authority of Shakspeare, of Milton, or of Johnson, though supported by the uniform practice of his contemporaries, justifies an expression that has been long disused; nor does the adoption by many newspapers of a new word, or of an old word in a new sense, make it a part of the language. In both cases, time is the court of last resort; and the decisions of this court are made known through writers of national reputation.

The exact boundaries of present use cannot, however, be fixed with precision. Dr. Campbell, writing in the middle of the last century, held that a word which had not appeared in any book written since 1688, or which was to be found in the works of living authors only, should not be deemed in present use; but in these days of change words go and come more rapidly. Old names

disappear with old things, or acquire new meanings; new things call for new names, and the new names, if generally accepted, come into present use. Familiar instances are supplied by the history of chivalry, heraldry, astrology, on the one hand, and of gas, steam, mining, electricity, on the other.

Sometimes words long disused are recalled to life.

"Reason and understanding, as words denominative of distinct faculties; the adjectives *sensuous, transcendental, subjective and objective, supernatural*, as an appellation of the spiritual, or that immaterial essence which is not subject to the law of cause and effect, and is thus distinguished from that which is *natural*, are all words revived, not invented by the school of Coleridge."¹

Other words "revived, not invented," are *connotation*,² *spiritualism, tennis, plaisance* (which is the old word *pleasance*) in "Midway Plaisance;" but each of these is used in a sense different from that which it originally bore.

Words may be in present use in poetry which are obsolete, or almost obsolete, in prose.

Such words are: *ere, anon, nigh, save* (except), *betwixt, scarce* and *exceeding* (scarcely, exceedingly), *erst, fain, whilom, withal, hath, yore, quoth, kine, don, doff, nay, yea, ever* or *alway* (always), *mine*, as in "mine host."

Mrs. Browning may write *twain* and *corse*, where prose would write "two" and "corpse;" Tennyson may write *rampire* and *shoon*, where prose would write "rampart" and "shoes," just as he may call the sky "the steadfast blue."³

Words that are obsolete for one kind of prose may not be obsolete for another. In an historical novel, for example, archaic expressions may be introduced if they are characteristic of the time in which the scene is laid:

¹ Marsh: Lectures on the English Language, lect. viii.

² J. S. Mill: A System of Logic, book i. chap. ii. sect. v.

³ A Dream of Fair Women.

but they should not be so many as to render the work unintelligible or distasteful to ordinary readers. All that may properly be done is to suggest antiquity. In Thackeray's "Henry Esmond," for example, the use of 'tis for "it is" (frequent in "The Spectator," but rare in modern prose¹) helps to take the reader back to Queen Anne's time

In all cases, "the question is not, whether a diction is antiquated for current speech, but whether it is antiquated for that particular purpose for which it is employed. A diction that is antiquated for common speech and common prose, may very well not be antiquated for poetry or certain special kinds of prose. 'Peradventure there shall be ten found there,' is not antiquated for Biblical prose, though for conversation or for a newspaper it is antiquated. 'The trumpet spake not to the arméd throng,' is not antiquated for poetry, although we should not write in a letter, 'he *spake* to me,' or say, 'the British soldier is *arméd* with the Enfield rifle.'" ²

Some words may be regarded as applicants for admission to the language, but as not yet in present use. Such words are allowable in conversation, in books that reproduce conversation, and in writings that serve a temporary purpose.

"I certainly should not, in regular history," writes Macaulay, "use some of the phrases which you censure. But I do not consider a review of this sort as regular history, and I really think that, from the highest and most unquestionable authority, I could vindicate my practice. Take Addison, the model of pure and graceful writing. In his *Spectators* I find 'wench,' 'baggage,' 'queer old put,' 'prig,' 'fearing that they should smoke the Knight.' All these expressions I met this morning, in turning over two or three of his papers at breakfast. I would no more use the word 'bore' or 'awkward squad' in a composition meant to be uniformly serious and earnest, than Addison would in a State paper have called

¹ Used frequently, however, by Emerson.

² Matthew Arnold: *Essays in Criticism*; On Translating Homer, Last Words.

Louis an 'old put,' or have described Shrewsbury and Argyle as 'smoking' the design to bring in the Pretender. . . . The first rule of all writing — that rule to which every other is subordinate — is that the words used by the writer shall be such as most fully and precisely convey his meaning to the great body of his readers. All considerations about the purity and dignity of style ought to bend to this consideration. To write what is not understood in its full force for fear of using some word which was unknown to Swift or Dryden would be, I think, as absurd as to build an observatory like that at Oxford, from which it is impossible to observe, only for the purpose of exactly preserving the proportions of the Temple of the Winds at Athens. That a word which is appropriate to a particular idea, which everybody, high and low, uses to express that idea, and which expresses that idea with a completeness which is not equalled by any other single word, and scarcely by any circumlocution, should be banished from writing, seems to be a mere throwing-away of power. Such a word as 'talented' it is proper to avoid: first, because it is not wanted; secondly, because you never hear it from those who speak very good English.¹ But the word 'shirk' as applied to military duty is a word which everybody uses; which is the word, and the only word, for the thing; which in every regiment and in every ship belonging to our country is employed ten times a day; which the Duke of Wellington, or Admiral Stopford, would use in reprimanding an officer. To interdict it, therefore, in what is meant to be familiar, and almost jocose, narrative, seems to me rather rigid."²

NATIONAL USE is fixed by speakers and writers of national reputation. That reputation they could not possess if they were readily understood by the inhabitants of only one district or the National use. members of only one class. Using language intelligible in every district and to every class, they keep the common fund of expression in general circulation. Even

¹ Were Macaulay alive to-day, he would probably no longer object to 'talented,' for the word is now sanctioned by good use.

² Macaulay; in Trevelyan's "Life and Letters of Macaulay," vol. ii. chap. ix.