"With these views I find the various processes of annexion[1] only a natural manifestation to be encouraged always, and to be welcomed under proper conditions of population and public opinion. I say 'annexion' rather than 'annexation.' Where a word is so much used, better save a syllable, especially as the shorter is the better."

For two or three days after the publication of this letter, some of the local journals followed Mr. Sumner's lead; but in a week his suggestion was forgotten.

These marked failures should warn the student of language, whether he fills a professor's chair or sits at a pupil's desk, not to try to stem the current of usage when it strongly sets one way.[2]

1 The question was whether to annex Charlestown to Boston.

2 For numerous instances of such attempts, see Mr. Fitzedward Hall's "Modern English."

CHAPTER II.

VIOLATIONS OF GOOD USE.

OFFENCES against good use are: (1) BARBARISMS, words or phrases not English; (2) IMPROPRIETIES, words or phrases used in a sense not English; (3) SOLECISMS, constructions not English.

SECTION I.

BARBARISMS.

BARBARISMS are: (1) words which, though formerly in good use, are now obsolete; (2) words, whether of native growth or of foreign extraction, which have not established themselves in the language; (3) new formations from words in good use.

Readers of books written three centuries ago may regret that some of the words in those books have disappeared from the vocabulary of the present generation; but the fact that they have disappeared goes to show that they are no longer useful. Valuable as they may have been in their day, they are now barbarisms.

Obsolete words.

Yet Swift maintained that "it is better a language should not be wholly perfect than that it should be perpetually changing;" that, therefore, "some method should be thought on for ascertaining and fixing our language forever, after such alterations in it as shall be thought requi-

site;" and that, to this end, "no word which a society shall give a sanction to, be afterward antiquated and exploded, because then the old books will yet be always valuable according to their intrinsic worth, and not thrown aside on account of unintelligible words and phrases, which appear harsh and uncouth only because they are out of fashion."[1]

Strange that so shrewd a man as Swift should not have drawn the natural inference from his last expression, — should not have perceived that words, like things, are as a rule of little value when out of fashion, and that a word inevitably goes out of fashion with that which it names! When, for instance, the introduction of firearms into the field of sport put an end to hawking, it also rendered obsolete many words in the vocabulary of hawking.

The analogy suggested by Swift's expression is, indeed, complete. Old-fashioned words give stateliness to poetry, as brocades and knee-breeches give dignity to a ceremony; but on ordinary occasions the former are as much out of place as the latter. Those who use obsolete or obsolescent words because they do not know the present fashion in language, show their ignorance; those who know the fashion but refuse to follow it are guilty of affectation.

Examples of such ignorance are: *party*[2] (person), *collegiate*[3] (collegian), *afeard* (afraid), *unbeknown* (unknown), *axe* (ask), *to suspicion* (suspect), *for to*, as, "I started *for to* go." Examples of such affectation are: *agone*,[3] *in the like sort*,[4] *to suffrage*, *meseemeth*,[5] *otherwhere*,[6] *commonweal*[7] (commonwealth), *adit*, as in "their *adits* and exits;"[1] *mote*, as in "So *mote* it be." *Gotten* may come under either head.

[1] Jonathan Swift: A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue. (1712.)

[2] See Notes and Queries: Sixth Series, vol. ii. p. 274.

[3] Student's theme. [4] E. A. Freeman.

[5] William Morris: The Story of the Glittering Plain.

[6] Archbishop Trench: Lectures on Plutarch.

[7] A. C. Swinburne: Essays and Studies.

In times of intellectual ferment like ours, novelties in language are constantly coming to the surface. These novelties, of which some are and some are not destined to become English, popular writers are too eager and scholars too slow to accept. The scholar may retard the necessary growth of the language; but the popular writer runs the risk of disfiguring his pages with expressions that will be either disagreeable or unintelligible to the next generation. It is the exigencies of expression that determine what words shall come into a language as well as what words shall go out of it. Thus the invention of gunpowder, at the same time that it rendered the vocabulary of hawking useless, introduced a vocabulary of its own.

New words.

So, too, we have borrowed new things from nations which excel in one or another particular, and with the new things their names.

Words of foreign origin.

Shrub (a drink), *sofa*, come to us from the Arabic; *cargo*, *embargo*, *stampede*, *ranch*, *cigar*, *sherry*, *siesta*, *matador*, from the Spanish; *imbroglio*, *macaroni*, *vermicelli*, *piano*, and many musical terms, from the Italian; *moccasin*, *squaw*, *wampum*, *wigwam*, *tomahawk*, from the North American Indian; *yacht*, *buoy*, *sloop*, and other nautical terms, from the Dutch; *toddy*, from the Hindoostanee; *cockatoo*, *gong*, *gutta-percha*, from the Malay; *taboo*, from the Polynesian; *acrobat*, *ambrosia*, *euphony*, *panic*, *theism*, from the Greek; *caste*, from the Portuguese; *attar* (of roses), *shawl*, *sherbet*, from the Persian; *hammock*, from the West Indian. The French language has contributed to the English many of the terms of warfare, as *abatis*; of diplomacy, as *envoy*; of fashionable intercourse, as *etiquette*; of cookery, as *omelette*; of the fine arts, as *amateur*; and it has borrowed from the English some nautical terms, as *brick*

[1] Sir Arthur Helps: Social Pressure.

(brig); some political terms, as *budget*;[1] some words relating to home life, as *confortable*;[2] some relating to manly sports, as *jockey*.

Convenient as the practice of borrowing from one's neighbors may be, it should never be carried beyond the limits prescribed by good use, — limits fixed by necessity or by general convenience. Even within these limits, the introduction of a foreign word is attended with serious drawbacks. Time — sometimes more, sometimes less — is required for such a word to become familiar, and it may never quite throw off its foreign air. A native word, moreover, is usually one of a numerous family; but a foreign word often comes alone, and rarely brings with it all the words of the same origin.

Even if *exposition* should finally supplant *exhibition*, we should still be unable to say *to expose*, *exposants*, *expositor*, instead of *to exhibit* and the cognate words. If a new derivative were required, an Englishman would naturally form it from *to exhibit*, as a Frenchman would form it from *exposer*.

Borrowed finery.

Though these inconveniences constitute no sufficient objection to the use of a foreign expression which has been naturalized or of one which supplies an obvious need, they should in all other cases be decisive. Unfortunately, the temptation to strut in borrowed finery is often too strong to be resisted.

"It is difficult to believe either in the moral rectitude or in the mental strength of a man or a woman addicted to the quoting of odd scraps of odd French. When we take up the latest work of a young lady novelist, and find scattered through her pages *sobriquet* and *double entendre* and *à l'outrance* and *artiste* and other choice specimens of the French which is spoken by those who do not speak French, we need read no further to know that the mantle

[1] Originally from the French *bougette* (leather bag).

[2] "Comfortable" came to us from the French *confort*, and has now gone back to the French with the English meaning.

of George Eliot and Jane Austen has not fallen on the fair authoress's shoulders. Even Mrs. Oliphant, a novelist who is old enough to know better, and who has delighted us all with charming tales of truly English life, is wont to sprinkle French freely through her many volumes, not only in her novels, but even in her unnecessary Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, whom she rashly credited with *gaieté du coeur* (*sic*)."[1]

On this subject Punch gives some sound "advice to an actor": —

"Do not call your part a *rôle*; it is not English. . . . And do not call the wings the *coulisses*. Do not style yourself an *artist*, or an *artiste*, as the case may be, and do not speak of applause, however loud and genuine, as a perfect *furore*. Do not describe a performance given at three o'clock in the afternoon as a *matinée*, and do not call a burlesque a *travestie* or *extravaganza*. When a concert or mixed entertainment is given between more solid pieces at a benefit, there is no occasion to describe it as a *mélange*, or *intermezzo*."[2]

Borrowed verbal finery is perhaps less common than it was a generation ago; but it still appears in writings that find many readers.

"We need only glance into one of the periodical representatives of fashionable literature, or into a novel of the day, to see how serious this assault upon the purity of the English language has become. The chances are more than equal that we shall fall in with a writer who considers it a point of honor to choose all his most emphatic words from a French vocabulary, and who would think it a lamentable falling off in his style, did he write half-a-dozen sentences without employing at least half that number of foreign words. His heroes are always marked by an air *distingué*; his vile men are sure to be *blasés*; his lady friends never merely dance or dress well, they dance or dress *à merveille*; and he himself when lolling on the sofa under the spirit of laziness does not simply enjoy his rest, he luxuriates in the *dolce far niente*, and wonders

[1] The Saturday Review, Jan. 26, 1884, p. 113.

[2] Punch, Dec. 23, 1882.

when he will[1] manage to begin his *magnum opus.* And so he carries us through his story, running off into hackneyed French, Italian, or Latin expressions whenever he has anything to say which he thinks should be graphically or emphatically said. It really seems as if he thought the English language too meagre, or too common-place a dress, in which to clothe his thoughts. The tongue which gave a noble utterance to the thoughts of Shakspere and Milton is altogether insufficient to express the more cosmopolitan ideas of Smith, or Tomkins, or Jenkins!

"We have before us an article from the pen of a very clever writer; and, as it appears in a magazine which specially professes to represent the 'best society,' it may be taken as a good specimen of the style. It describes a dancing party, and we discover for the first time how much learning is necessary to describe a 'hop' properly. The reader is informed that all the people at the dance belong to the *beau monde*, as may be seen at a *coup d'œil*; the *demi-monde* is scrupulously excluded, and in fact every thing about it bespeaks the *haut ton* of the whole affair. A lady who has been happy in her hair-dresser is said to be *coiffée à ravir.* Then there is the bold man to describe. Having acquired the *savoir faire*, he is never afraid of making a *faux pas*, but no matter what kind of conversation is started plunges at once *in medias res.* Following him is the fair *débutante*, who is already on the look-out for *un bon parti*, but whose *nez retroussé* is a decided obstacle to her success. She is of course accompanied by mamma *en grande toilette*, who, *entre nous*, looks rather *ridée* even in the gaslight. Then, lest the writer should seem frivolous, he suddenly abandons the description of the dances, *vis-à-vis* and *dos-à-dos*, to tell us that Homer becomes tiresome when he sings of Βοῶπις πότνια Ἥρη twice in a page. The supper calls forth a corresponding amount of learning, and the writer concludes his article after having aired his Greek, his Latin, his French, and, in a subordinate way, his English."[2]

On behalf of some of these expressions, — viz., *blasé*, *dolce far niente*, *demi-monde*, *savoir faire*, *faux pas*, *débutante*, *vis-à-vis*, *dos-à-dos*, — something may be said, for it is hard to find English equivalents; but it can never be wise to crowd a page with foreign expressions, even though some of them may be allowable. A book intended for English-speaking people should be in English.

[1] Is this the proper auxiliary?

[2] The Leeds Mercury; quoted by Dean Alford in "The Queen's English"

Foreign fashions in spelling.

Of late years there has sprung up a practice of following the foreign fashion in the spelling of proper names of foreign extraction which have long had English forms. Since the old word is familiar, the new word is not needed, and it is not pleasing to English ears.

There might be less objection to a change in the direction proposed, if it were rigidly carried out with all proper names of foreign origin, if it were founded upon any intelligible principle, or if the practice of its advocates were uniform.

A would-be reformer writes *Thucydidês*, *Miltiadês*, *Herodotos*, in one book;[1] *Thucydides*, *Miltiades*, *Herodotus*, in another.[2] We find *Mykênê*, *Arkadia*, *Korkyra*, *Sophoklês*, *Xerxês*, *Pyrrhos*, *Nizza*, *Marseille*, *Elsass*, in the same book[3] with *Thebes*, *Corinth*, *Cyprus*, *Æschylus*, *Alexander*, *Crœsus*, *Venice*, *Lyons*, *Lorraine.* In one of two histories published in the same year, Mr. Freeman writes of King *Ælfred*;[4] in the other, of King *Alfred.*[5] The same author writes *Buonaparte*; but, like Macaulay, he calls the French Louis *Lewis*, and, like Irving, writes *Mahomet* and *Mahometan*, not "Mohammed" and "Mohammedan." The Arabic prophet's name[6] still is, as it has been for centuries, a favorite battle-ground for Christians. "Every man who has travelled in the East brings home a new name for the prophet, and trims his turban to his own taste."[7] A remarkable style of turban appears in the title of a book published in England in 1876, — "A Digest of *Moohummudan* Law."

[1] Freeman: General Sketch of History (edition of 1876).

[2] Ibid.: History of Europe (Primer).

[3] Ibid.: General Sketch of History.

[4] Ibid.: History of the Norman Conquest.

[5] Ibid.: History of Europe (Primer).

[6] See Campbell's Rhetoric, book ii. chap. iii. sect. i. Failure attended the attempt, in Dr. Campbell's time, to substitute *Confutcee* for "Confucius," and *Zerdusht* for "Zoroaster."

[7] Landor: Conversations, Third Series; Johnson and Horne (Tooke).

The practice of calling Greek deities by Greek names, rather than by the Latin names of other deities. seems to be gaining ground. The reasons for this change are succinctly stated by Matthew Arnold: —

"The Latin names of the Greek deities raise in most cases the idea of quite distinct personages from the personages whose idea is raised by the Greek names. Hera and Juno are actually, to every scholar's imagination, two different people. So in all these cases the Latin names must, at any inconvenience, be abandoned when we are dealing with the Greek world. But I think it can be in the sensitive imagination of Mr. Grote only, that 'Thucydides' raises the idea of a different man from Θουκυδίδης." [1]

Occasionally, however, a powerful voice is heard on the other side of the question.

"I make no apology for employing in my version the names Jupiter, Juno, Venus, and others of Latin origin, for Zeus, Hera, Aphrodite, and other Greek names of the deities of whom Homer speaks. The names which I have adopted have been naturalized in our language for centuries, and some of them — as Mercury, Vulcan, and Dian — have even been provided with English terminations. I was translating from Greek into English, and I therefore translated the names of the gods, as well as the other parts of the poem." [2]

Words of low origin.

Barbarisms which come under the general head of slang or cant — the spawn of a political contest, for instance — usually die a natural death. For example: —

Up Salt River, Loco-foco, Copperhead, Barn-burner, Hunker, Soft-shell, Hard-shell, Adullamite, Dough-face, Short-hairs, Puseyite, Carpet-bagger, Unionist, Secessionist, Free-soiler, Garrisonian, contraband (fugitive slave).

Mugwump, Socialist, Populist, Laborite, Silverite, Coxeyite, are so new that their fate is not yet decided.

[1] M. Arnold: Essays in Criticism; On Translating Homer, Last Words.
[2] William Cullen Bryant: Preface to "The Iliad."

If a word supplies a permanent need in the language it may, whatever its origin, come into good use. For example: —

Whig, Tory, Methodist, Quaker, Shaker, Yankee, Transcendentalist, Realist, Idealist, Radical, banter, bigot, blue-stocking, bombast, buncombe, cabal, cant, fun, fustian, hoax, humbug, slang, snob, tramp (vagrant), *clever, flimsy, quixotic, to boycott, to shunt, to quiz.*

New formations.

Great latitude is allowed in the formation of new words from words in present use, since it is by such changes that a language grows.

The noun *mob* may have been justly objected to while the question of its adoption was open; but when once it was established, *to mob, mobbish, mob-rule*, and *mob-law* naturally followed. After *gas* came into general use, — the word with the thing, — it was necessary, as well as natural, to form derivatives like *gaseous* and *gasometer*. Other instances are: *to coal, to steam, to experience, to progress, to supplement, gifted, talented*. Of these the last five met, if indeed they do not still meet, great opposition.

"One verb, that has come to us within the last four years from the American mint, is 'to interview.' Nothing can better express the spirit of our age, ever craving to hear something new. The verb calls up before us a queer pair: on the one side stands the great man, not at all sorry at the bottom of his heart that the rest of mankind are to learn what a fine fellow he is; on the other side fussily hovers the pressman, a Boswell who sticks at nothing in the way of questioning, but who outdoes his Scotch model in being wholly unshackled by any weak feeling of veneration." [1]

Vulgarisms.

Whatever the need of *to interview*, there is nothing to be said in favor of many vulgar substitutes for expressions in good use. For example: —

A steal, the try,[2] *educationalist*,[2] *speculatist, preventative, ruination, confliction*[3] (conflict), *cablegram*,[2] *electrocution*,[2] *reportorial*,[2] *managerial*,[2] *informational, in course*[3] (of course), *tasty*[2] (tasteful),

[1] Oliphant: Standard English, chap. vi.
[2] American newspaper.
[3] Student's theme.

to systemize,[1] and the italicized words in the following expressions: "the *skatorial* phenomenon;"[1] "an international *oaric* contest;"[1] "Speaker Randall's *retiracy*;"[1] "his letter of *declinature*;"[1] "reputable *musicianly* virtues;"[1] "a *lyricated* farce;"[1] "*intheatricable* dramas;"[2] "*unwipeupable* blood;"[3] "Lord Salisbury's *wander* through Europe;"[4] "since the *issuance* of the President's order;"[1] "Clothes *laundered* at short notice;"[5] "The case was *refereed*;"[1] "He *deeded* me the land;" "The town of Reading *defaults* payment;"[1] "President Cleveland will not *consulate*;"[1] "The woman suffragists are still *suffraging*;"[1] "Brown *suicided* yesterday;"[1] "It was a case of *suicidism*;"[1] "The police *raided* the club-house;"[1] "The house was *burglarized*;"[1] "He was fatigued by the difficult *climb*;"[6] "Longe was *extradited*."[1]

Abbreviated forms.

Good use adopts some abbreviated forms, but brands as barbarisms many others.

Among the abbreviated forms which have established themselves as words in the language are: *cab* from "cabriolet," *chum* from "chamber-fellow" or (perhaps) "chamber-mate," *consols* from "consolidated annuities," *hack* from "hackney-coach," *mob* from *mobile vulgus*, *Miss* from "Mistress," *penult* from "penultima," *proxy* and *proctor* from "procuracy" and "procurator," *van* from "vanguard."

Some of the abbreviations condemned by "The Tatler"[7] at the beginning of the last century are still in bad use, as *hyp* for "hypochondria," *incog* for "incognito," *phiz* for "physiognomy," *poz* for "positive." Others — as *plenipo* for "plenipotentiary," *rep* for "reputation" — have disappeared; but their places have been more than filled by such words as *ad* for "advertisement," *bike* or *byke* for "bicycle," *cap* for "captain," *co-ed* for "female student at a co-educational college," *compo*[8] for "composition," *curios* for

[1] American newspaper.
[2] Longman's Magazine, November, 1882, p. 54.
[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne: Dr. Grimshawe's Secret, chap. xxii. The reader should perhaps be reminded that Hawthorne did not revise this romance.
[4] The [London] Spectator.
[5] Advertisement.
[6] Student's theme.
[7] No. 230 (Swift). See also "The Spectator," No. 135 (Addison).
[8] C. L. Eastlake: Hints on Household Taste.

"curiosities," *cute* for "acute," *exam* for "examination," *gent*[1] for "gentleman," *gym* for "gymnasium," *hum* for "humbug," *mins* for "minutes," *pants* ("the trade name," it is said) for "pantaloons" ("trousers" is far preferable), *par* for "paragraph," *pard* for "partner," *ped* for "pedestrian," *perks* for "perquisites," *phone* for "telephone," *photo* for "photograph," *prelim* for "preliminary examination," *prex* for "president," *prof* for "professor," *quad* for "quadrangle," *spec* for "speculation," *typo* for "typographer," *varsity* for "university."

Some abbreviations that are frequent in verse are not allowable in prose. For example: —

E'er, ne'er, o'er, e'en, i', o', 'mid, 'neath, 'twixt.

The safe rule.

It may be said, and said with truth, that the rules thus far suggested, however firmly founded in reason, are least useful where there is room for doubt whether an old word has become obsolete, or whether a new word has established itself, — the very cases in which guidance is most needed. In such cases, prudence — at least for writers who have their spurs to win — is the better part of valor. Such writers can follow no better counsel than that given by Ben Jonson and Pope: —

"Custom is the most certain mistress of language, as the public stamp makes the current money. But we must not be too frequent with the mint, every day coining, nor fetch words from the extreme and utmost ages; since the chief virtue of a style is perspicuity, and nothing so vicious in it as to need an interpreter.

[1] "The curt form of *gent*, as a less ceremonious substitute for the full expression of 'gentleman,' had once made considerable way, but its career was blighted in a court of justice. It is about twenty years ago that two young men, being brought before a London magistrate, described themselves as 'gents.' The magistrate said he considered that a designation little better than 'blackguard.' The abbreviate form has never been able to recover that shock." — John Earle: The Philology of the English Tongue, ¶ 370.

Words borrowed of antiquity do lend a kind of majesty to style, and are not without their delight sometimes. For they have the authority of years, and out of their intermission do win themselves a kind of grace-like newness. But the eldest of the present, and newness of the past language, is the best. For what was the ancient language, which some men so dote upon, but the ancient custom? yet when I name custom, I understand not the vulgar custom; for that were a precept no less dangerous to language than life, if we should speak or live after the manners of the vulgar: but that I call custom of speech, which is the consent of the learned; as custom of life, which is the consent of the good."[1]

> "In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold;
> Alike fantastic, if too new, or old;
> Be not the first by whom the new are tried,
> Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."[2]

Even writers of established reputation who unite tact and discretion with genius act in the spirit of these precepts. Cicero was wont to introduce an uncommon expression with "so to speak;" Macaulay's new words can be counted on the fingers; Matthew Arnold apologizes for writing *Renascence* for "Renaissance." "I have ventured," he says, "to give to the foreign word *Renaissance* — destined to become of more common use amongst us, as the movement which it denotes comes, as it will come, increasingly to interest us — an English form."[3] "I trade," says Dryden, "both with the living and the dead, for the enrichment of our native language. We have enough in England to supply our necessity; but, if we will have things of magnificence and splendour, we must

[1] Ben Jonson: Discoveries. Borrowed from Quintilian: Inst. Orator i. vi. i., xxxix–xlv.

[2] Alexander Pope: Essay on Criticism, part ii.

[3] M. Arnold: Culture and Anarchy, sect. iv. Since this was written, several writers have adopted Mr. Arnold's suggestion, and *Renascence* bids fair to find a place in the language.

Query as to the position of "an English form."

get them by commerce. Poetry requires ornament; and that is not to be had from our old Teuton monosyllables: therefore, if I find any elegant word in a classic author, I propose it to be naturalized, by using it myself; and, *if the public approves of it, the bill passes.* But every man cannot distinguish between pedantry and poetry: every man, therefore, is not fit to innovate."[1]

How, then, is a language to grow? How is literature to avail itself of the words, new or old, which it needs for complete expression? The answer suggests itself. In the art of writing, as in every other art, it is the masters who give the law and determine the practice. The poets, the great prose writers, may safely be left to decide what words shall be recalled from the past, imported from other countries, or adopted from the common speech of common people. It is they who determine GOOD USE.

SECTION II.

IMPROPRIETIES.

To use an English word in a sense not English is to be guilty of an IMPROPRIETY of language. Faults of this kind are numerous. To attempt a complete classification of those into which even a well-informed writer may be betrayed would transcend the limits of this work; but some current errors may be noted.

A resemblance in sound misleads.

I. Many words are so much alike in appearance or in sound as to be easily mistaken for one another.

To accede means "to come to;" *to cede* means "to yield."

[1] John Dryden: Dedication of "The Æneis."