

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."<sup>1</sup>

"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."<sup>2</sup>

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."<sup>3</sup> "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

<sup>1</sup> Ben Jonson: Discoveries. Borrowed from Quintilian: Inst. Orator i. vi. i., xxxix-xlv.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Pope: Essay on Criticism, part ii.

<sup>3</sup> 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."<sup>1</sup>

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.

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

A resemblance  
in sound mis-  
leads.

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

<sup>1</sup> John Dryden: Dedication of "The Æneis."



*To accredit* means "to invest with credit or authority," or "to send with letters credential;" *to credit* means "to believe." "Now-a-days, few except very bad writers employ it [*accredit*] after the manner of Southey, Sir Walter Scott, &c., as a robust substitute for *credit* or *believe*."<sup>1</sup>

*Ceremonious* is properly applied to the forms of civility; *ceremonial*, to ceremonies.

*To construe* means "to interpret," "to show the meaning;" *to construct* means "to build:" we may *construe* a sentence as in translation, or *construct* it as in composition.

*Continual* is used of frequently repeated acts, as, "Continual dropping wears away a stone;" *continuous*, of uninterrupted action, as, "the continuous flowing of a river."

*To convince* is "to satisfy the understanding;" *to convict*, "to pronounce guilty." "The jury having been convinced of the prisoner's guilt, he was convicted."

A *decided* opinion is a strong opinion, which perhaps decides nothing; a *decisive* opinion settles the question at issue. A lawyer may have *decided* views on a case; the judgment of a court is *decisive*.

*Definite* means "clear," "well-defined;" *definitive*, "final." An executive officer's ideas of his duty should be *definite*, and his action *definitive*.

*Distinct* means "separate," "distinguishable," or "distinguished;" *distinctive*, "characteristic" or "distinguishing."

*Enormity* is used of deeds of unusual horror, *enormousness* of things of unusual size. We speak of the *enormity* of Cæsar Borgia's crimes, of the *enormousness* of the Rothschilds' wealth.

An *exceptional* case is a case excluded from the operation of a rule; *exceptionable* conduct is conduct open to criticism, — conduct to which exception may be taken.

*Haply*, now rarely used in prose, means "by chance;" *happily*, "by a happy chance."<sup>2</sup>

An article of food may be *healthful* or *wholesome*, but is not properly called *healthy*.

*Human* is that which belongs to man as man; *humane* means "compassionate."

<sup>1</sup> Fitzedward Hall: Modern English, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See George Eliot's "Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton," chap. ii.

*Likely* implies a probability of whatever character; *liable*, an unpleasant probability. One is *likely* to enjoy an evening, to go home to-morrow, to die; *liable* to be hurt, to attacks of melancholy.

*Negligence* is used of a habit or trait; *neglect*, of an act or a succession of acts.

We speak of the *observation* of a fact, of a star; of the *observance* of a festival, of a rule.

The act of a public officer when done in his capacity as officer is *official*; a person who forces his services upon one is *officious*.

A person may be *sensible* of cold, that is, may perceive cold, without being *sensitive* to cold, that is, troubled by cold.

The *signification* of an act is its meaning; the *significance*, its importance.

*Vocation* means "calling" or "profession;" *avocation*, "something aside from one's regular calling, a by-work."

*Womanly* refers to the stronger side of woman; *womanish*, to her weaker side. A similar distinction is made between *manly* and *mannish*, *childlike* and *childish*.

II. Another class of improprieties comprises words that are used in a sense resembling the correct one.

A resemblance in sense misleads.

We *allude* to an event not distinctly *mentioned* or directly *referred to*. Macaulay's *allusions* are said to imply unusual knowledge on the part of the reader.

*Apparently* is properly used of that which seems, but may not be, real; *evidently*, of that which both seems and is real.

*Condign* is properly used of punishment which is commensurate with the offence, but which is not necessarily *severe*.

*Conscience*, the moral sense, is improperly used for *consciousness*, the noun corresponding to *conscious*.

*To demean* (from the French *démener*) is improperly used in the sense of *to debase*, as if it came from "mean."

*To discover* is properly used in the sense of "to find or find out what previously existed;" *to invent*, in the sense of "to devise something new." The force of steam was *discovered*; the steam-boat was *invented*.



*To lease* is improperly used in the sense of "to hire by lease." It means "to let by lease:" the lessor leases to the lessee. This word is so frequently misused that one cannot always tell what is meant by an advertisement of "property to lease."

*Mutual* is properly used in the sense of "reciprocal;" it is improperly used by Dickens in "Our *Mutual* Friend,"—the friend we have *in common*.

*Flea* (in the legal sense) is properly used of the pleadings or the arraignment before a trial, not of the *argument* at a trial. A *plea* is always addressed to the court; an *argument* may be addressed either to the court or to the jury. A similar remark applies to the verbs *plead* and *argue*.

*Premature* is properly used in the sense of "too early ripe," as, "premature fruit," "a premature generalization," "intellect developed prematurely." It is improperly used to signify that which has not taken place and perhaps never will take place: thus, during the Crimean war, the newspapers spoke of the announcement of a certain victory by the Russians as *premature*, the fact being that the Russians had been beaten.

"*Quite*" says a recent writer, "is employed in every sense where greatness or quantity has to be expressed, and seems to me to be more injurious to the effect of literary composition than the misuse of any other single word. 'The enemy was quite in force,' 'Wounded quite severely,' 'Quite some excitement' (!), and so on *ad infinitum*. Somewhat akin to this is the word 'piece' to express distance: we say 'a piece of land,' or 'a piece of water;' but it is nothing less than a distortion of the word's<sup>1</sup> use to say that 'you should not shoot at a rattlesnake unless you were off a piece,' or 'We are travelling quite a piece,'—which latter I heard said by a judge to a member of Congress when we were crossing the Mississippi, and, owing to the floating ice, were compelled to run a little way up the river."<sup>2</sup>

Some of the expressions quoted above as "United States English" are peculiar to the United States, but others are at least equally common in England. Both Englishmen and Americans use *quite* in the sense of *not quite*. *Quite* should be used in the sense of "entirely," never for *rather* or *very*.

<sup>1</sup> Query as to this use of the possessive.

<sup>2</sup> Chambers's Journal, Dec. 20, 1873: United States English.

The word *team* is properly used by Shakspeare in "a team of horse," "the heavenly-harnessed team;"<sup>1</sup> by Gray in "drive their team afield;"<sup>2</sup> by Carlyle in "when a team of twenty-five millions begins rearing;"<sup>3</sup> and by "plain people" in "He's a whole team," "He's a full team." The word is improperly used when made to include a vehicle.

*Terse* (Latin *tersus*, "wiped"), as applied to style, is properly used in the sense of "clean, neat, free from impurities or superfluities." The word is improperly used for *forcible*.

*The whole* or *the entire* is improperly used for *all*; we may speak of "the whole army" or of "the entire army," but not of "the whole of General Grant's men."

III. Some other improprieties are severely commented upon by John Stuart Mill:—

Improprieties  
noted by  
Mill.

"So many persons without any thing deserving the name of education have become writers by profession, that written language may almost be said to be principally wielded by persons ignorant of the proper use of the instrument, and<sup>4</sup> who are spoiling it more and more for those who understand it. Vulgarisms, which creep in nobody knows how, are daily depriving the English language of valuable modes of expressing thought. To take a present instance: the verb *transpire* formerly conveyed very expressively its correct meaning; viz., to *become known* through unnoticed channels, to exhale, as it were, into publicity through invisible pores, like a vapor or gas disengaging<sup>5</sup> itself. But of late a practice has commenced<sup>5</sup> of employing this word, for the sake of finery, as a mere synonyme of *to happen*: 'the events which have *transpired* in the Crimea,' meaning the incidents of the war. This vile specimen of bad English is already seen in the despatches of noblemen and viceroys; and the time is apparently not far distant when nobody will understand the word if used in its proper sense. In other

<sup>1</sup> Two Gentlemen of Verona, act iii. scene i. Henry IV., part i. act iii scene i.

<sup>2</sup> Elegy written in a Country Churchyard.

<sup>3</sup> The French Revolution, part i. book iii. chap. v.

<sup>4</sup> Query as to this use of *and*.

<sup>5</sup> See page 21.



cases it is not the love of finery, but simple want of education, which makes writers employ words in senses unknown to genuine English. The use of *aggravating* for *provoking*, in my boyhood a vulgarism of the nursery, has crept into almost all newspapers and into many books; and when the word is used in its proper sense, — as when writers on criminal law speak of ‘aggravating and extenuating circumstances,’ — their meaning, it is probable, is already misunderstood. It is a great error to think that these corruptions of language do no harm. Those who are struggling with the difficulty (and who know by experience how great it already is) of expressing one’s self<sup>1</sup> clearly and with precision, find their resources continually narrowed by illiterate writers, who seize and twist from its purpose some form of speech which once served to convey briefly and compactly an unambiguous meaning. It would hardly be believed how often a writer is compelled to a circumlocution by the single vulgarism, introduced during the last few years, of using the word *alone* as an adverb, *only* not being fine enough for the rhetoric of ambitious ignorance. A man will say, ‘to which I am not alone bound by honor, but also by law,’ unaware that what he has unintentionally said is, that he is *not alone* bound, some other person being bound with him. Formerly, if any one said, ‘I am not alone responsible for this,’ he was understood to mean (what alone his words mean in correct English), that he is not the sole person responsible; but if he now used such an expression, the reader would be confused between that and two other meanings: that he is not *only responsible* but something more, or that he is responsible *not only for this* but for something besides. The time is coming when Tennyson’s *Enone* could not say, ‘I will not die alone,’ lest she should be supposed to mean that she would not only die but do something else.

“The blunder of writing *predicate* for *predict* has become so widely diffused that it bids fair to render one of the most useful terms in the scientific vocabulary of Logic unintelligible. The mathematical and logical term ‘to eliminate’ is undergoing a similar destruction. All who are acquainted either with the proper use of the word or with its etymology, know that to eliminate a thing is to thrust it out; but those who know nothing about it, except that it is a fine-looking phrase, use it in a sense precisely

<sup>1</sup> Is this the proper pronoun?

the reverse, — to denote, not turning anything out, but bringing it in. They talk of *eliminating* some truth, or other useful result, from a mass of details.”<sup>1</sup>

IV. Another class of improprieties comprises words used in a sense which they bear in a foreign English words with foreign meanings. tongue.

*Concession* is used in the sense of “legislative grant;” *evasion* in the sense of “escape;” *impracticable* in the sense of “impassable;” *pronounced*<sup>2</sup> (French *prononcé*) in the sense of “marked” or “striking;” *supreme* (Latin *supremus*) in the sense of “last;” *resume* in the sense of “sum up;” *That goes without saying*<sup>3</sup> in the sense of “That’s a matter of course.” We read that a person *assists*<sup>2</sup> (is present) at a reception or a wedding; that a window *gives upon* (looks upon or opens upon) the lawn. “Much of truth” is another Gallicism. In Pennsylvania *dumb* (German *dumm*) is sometimes used for “stupid,” *what for a* (German *was für ein*) for “what kind of.”

“The writers of telegrams,” says Mill, “and the foreign correspondents of newspapers, have gone on so long translating *demand* by ‘to demand,’ without a suspicion that it means only to ask, that (the context generally showing that nothing else is meant) English readers are gradually associating the English word *demand* with simple asking, thus leaving the language without a term to express a demand in its proper sense. In like manner, *transaction*, the French word for a compromise, is translated into the English word ‘transaction;’ while, curiously enough, the inverse change is taking place in France, where the word *compromis* has lately begun to be used for expressing the same idea. If this continues, the two countries will have exchanged phrases.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Mill: A System of Logic, book iv. chap. v. sect. iii. Not in some editions.

<sup>2</sup> For these words authority is increasing, but it may be doubted whether they are yet in good use.

<sup>3</sup> Trollope easily finds two equivalents for this borrowed expression. “‘Oh! of course, my dear fellow,’ said the Honourable John, laughing, ‘that’s a matter of course. We all understand that without saying it.’”



V. The subjoined citations illustrate some of the improprieties that have been pointed out:—

“The rains rendered the roads *impracticable*.”<sup>1</sup>

“The Porte . . . was not to be held as thereby acknowledging a right of interference which must in its very nature be *exceptionable*.”<sup>2</sup>

“He was gathering [on his death-bed] a few *supreme* memories.”<sup>3</sup>

“The *negligence* of this leaves us exposed to an uncommon levity in our conversation.”<sup>4</sup>

“Miss Potts seldom opened her lips in the presence of Mrs. Gervis, of whom she strongly disapproved, not more on account of her scandalous behaviour in eloping from her father’s house than of her present apparent *negligence* of a wife’s domestic duties.”<sup>5</sup>

“The peanut and pop-corn *concession* has been very profitable to the *cessionaire*.”<sup>6</sup>

“Those who hold the *concession* [of a horse railroad] ought to be looked upon only as servants of the people.”<sup>7</sup>

“The excitement of my *evasion* supported me for a while after leaving her.”<sup>8</sup>

“The son of a provincial banker, he had declined to join his brother George in carrying on the paternal *avocations*.”<sup>9</sup>

“Without, I trust, departing from my clerical character, nay, from my very *avocation* as Incumbent of a London Chapel, I have seen a good deal of the world.”<sup>10</sup>

“These *ceremonious* rites became familiar.”<sup>11</sup>

“The *enormity* of the distance between the earth and the sun.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert Southey.

<sup>2</sup> The Contemporary Review.

<sup>3</sup> American novel.

<sup>4</sup> The Spectator, No. 76.

<sup>5</sup> W. E. Norris: Matrimony, chap. xxv.

<sup>6</sup> American newspaper.

<sup>7</sup> The Montreal Gazette.

<sup>8</sup> Stanley J. Weyman: A Gentleman of France, chap. xxxi.

<sup>9</sup> W. E. Norris: Marcia, chap. ii.

<sup>10</sup> Thackeray: The Newcomes, chap. xix.

<sup>11</sup> William Robertson.

<sup>12</sup> The Edinburgh Review (1876).

“It never once entered Thomas Newcome’s head, nor Clive’s, nor Florac’s, nor his mother’s, that the Colonel *demeaned* himself at all by accepting that bounty.”<sup>1</sup>

“‘Yes, very proud,’ added Norman; ‘but we shall not *demean* ourselves any more, so you may take away your ugly stupid stalling; Edith is not to take it.’”<sup>2</sup>

“Jackson complied with the request of the ruffians who occupied the *team* with him.”<sup>3</sup>

“If the owners of heavy brick *teams* could be induced to put tires to their wagons, it would no doubt be a saving to the city.”<sup>3</sup>

“The loads of merchandise which now pass in *teams* through our narrow streets will, when this improvement is completed, make the transit by rail.”<sup>3</sup>

“She [Nausicaa] unharnessed the mules from the *team*.”<sup>4</sup>

“His domestic virtues are too well known to make it necessary to *allude* to them.”<sup>5</sup>

“A single quotation from the ‘Epistles’ of Horace, in his ‘Life’ of Lucullus, exhausts, if I do not mistake, *the entire* of his references.”<sup>7</sup>

“The gloomy staircase *on* which the grating *gave*.”<sup>8</sup>

“I was surprised to observe that, notwithstanding the rain and the coldness of the evening, the window which *gave upon* this balcony was open.”<sup>9</sup>

“The Cardinal declares that he ‘dies tranquil, in the *conscience* of never having failed in his duty toward the sacred person of the Pope.’”<sup>10</sup>

“And these sentiments being uttered in public, upon the promenade, to *mutual* friends, of course the Duchess had the benefit of Lady Kew’s remarks a few minutes after they were uttered.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thackeray: The Newcomes, chap. lxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> Miss Ferrier: Destiny, vol. i. chap. xxv. <sup>3</sup> American newspaper.

<sup>4</sup> Student’s translation from “The Odyssey.”

<sup>5</sup> Lord Dalling and Bulwer: Life of Sir Robert Peel, part vi, chap. iii

<sup>6</sup> Whose? The meaning is, “Plutarch’s.”

<sup>7</sup> Archbishop Trench: Plutarch, lect. i.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Dickens: Little Dorrit, book i. chap. i.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley J. Weyman: A Gentleman of France, chap. xv.

<sup>10</sup> The [London] Spectator.

<sup>11</sup> Thackeray: The Newcomes, chap. xxxiii.



"Mara's opinion in their *mutual* studies began to assume a value in his eyes that her opinion on other subjects had never done, and she saw and felt, with a secret gratification, that she was becoming more to him through their *mutual* pursuit."<sup>1</sup>

"Its judgments . . . not *alone* confirm Swift's own account of his studies, but apply otherwise."<sup>2</sup>

"Resolved, That the directors, if they deem it expedient, may *lease* or otherwise aid, as authorized by statutes, in the construction and operation of any branch of connecting railroads."<sup>3</sup>

"Art thou still so much surprised,' said the Emir, 'and hast thou walked in the world with such little *observance* as to wonder that men are not always what they seem?'"<sup>4</sup>

"Quite a host of miscellaneous facts relating to the inhabitants of the United States are brought together."<sup>5</sup>

"Then in the afternoon *the whole* of them got into a boat, and were rowed away to a long and flat and sandy island."<sup>6</sup>

"In the centre of this confused mass, *the whole* of the common prisoners were placed, but were no otherwise attended to by their nautical guard than as they furnished the subjects of fun and numberless quaint jokes."<sup>7</sup>

"*The whole* of the commissioners are unanimous in recommending the construction of a reservoir in the mill valley."<sup>8</sup>

"We are more *liable* to become acquainted with a man's faults than with his virtues."<sup>9</sup>

"Men differ in their *liability* to suggestion."<sup>9</sup>

"It is easy to *accede* something to Mr. Matthews."<sup>10</sup>

"It is not *alone* important but necessary to pronounce correctly."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> American novel.

<sup>2</sup> Forster: Life of Swift, book i. chap. ii.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution passed at a meeting of stockholders.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Walter Scott: The Talisman, chap. xxiii.

<sup>5</sup> The [London] Athenæum, Feb. 25, 1893, p. 250.

<sup>6</sup> William Black: Yolande, chap. xiv.

<sup>7</sup> James Fenimore Cooper: The Pilot, chap. xxx.

<sup>8</sup> The Nineteenth Century, May, 1894, p. 869.

<sup>9</sup> Student's theme.

<sup>10</sup> Augustine Birrell: Men, Women, and Books; Americanisms and Briticisms.

"'You're a scolding, unjust, abusive, *aggravating*, bad old creature!' cried Bella."<sup>1</sup>

"Mayor Hart *predicates* a majority for Greenhalge."<sup>2</sup>

VI. Each word in a phrase may be used in its proper sense, and yet the phrase taken as a whole may imply a contradiction in terms that constitutes an impropriety:—

"Andrew Johnson, *the last survivor of his honored predecessors*."<sup>3</sup>

"I do not reckon that we want a genius more than *the rest of our neighbours*."<sup>4</sup>

"We are at peace with *all the world*, and seek to maintain our cherished relations of amity *with the rest* of mankind."

This sentence appeared in President Taylor's Message to Congress (Dec. 4, 1849) as printed in the newspapers of the day. It was so much ridiculed that it was corrected in the permanent official record, which reads as follows: "We are at peace with all the other nations of the world, and seek to maintain our cherished relations of amity with them."

Some improprieties, though logically absurd, are rhetorically defensible:—

"He [Cerberus] was a big, rough, ugly-looking monster, with three separate heads, and *each of them fiercer than the two others*."<sup>5</sup>

"Adam, *the goodliest man of men since born*  
*His sons; the fairest of her daughters, Eve*."<sup>6</sup>

"On entering this court, I am greeted with a frightful uproar; a thousand instruments, *each one more outlandish than the other*, produce the most discordant and deafening sounds."<sup>7</sup>

"Holland House, however, was the seat of Charles's boyhood; and his earliest associations were connected with its lofty avenues,

<sup>1</sup> Dickens: Our Mutual Friend, book iii. chap. xv.

<sup>2</sup> American newspaper.

<sup>3</sup> From the Message of a President of the United States.

<sup>4</sup> Swift: A Proposal for Correcting the English Tongue.

<sup>5</sup> Hawthorne: Tanglewood Tales; The Pomegranate Seeds.

<sup>6</sup> John Milton: Paradise Lost, book iv. line 323.

<sup>7</sup> Henry M. Stanley: Through the Dark Continent, chap. ix.



its trim gardens, its broad stretches of deep grass, its fantastic gables, its endless vista of boudoirs, libraries, and drawing-rooms, *each more homelike and habitable than the last.*"<sup>1</sup>

"This made several women look at one another slyly, *each knowing more than the others*, and nodding while sounding the others' ignorance."<sup>2</sup>

Evidently, in these instances, the literal statement cannot be true; but the imagination makes it seem true, by making each one of the objects compared appear, at the moment it is looked at, superior to the others in the point in question.

## SECTION III.

## SOLECISMS.

As compared with highly inflected languages, English undergoes few grammatical changes of form. Its syntax is easily mastered, and for that very reason is often neglected. In conversation, indeed, slight inaccuracies may be pardoned for the sake of colloquial ease, and in oratory fire tells for more than correctness; but a writer is expected to take whatever time he needs to make his sentences grammatical. Hence, the grosser faults of common speech are avoided by good authors; but even they sometimes fall into constructions not English, — that is, they are guilty of SOLECISMS.

"Grammar," says De Quincey, "is so little of a perfect attainment amongst us, that, with two or three exceptions (one being Shakspeare,<sup>3</sup> whom some affect to con-

<sup>1</sup> G. O. Trevelyan: *The Early History of Charles James Fox*, chap. ii.

<sup>2</sup> R. D. Blackmore: *Cripps the Carrier*, chap. xii.

<sup>3</sup> *Per contra*, see Introduction to "A Shakespearian Grammar" by E. A. Abbott.

sider as belonging to a semi-barbarous age), we have never seen the writer, through a circuit of prodigious reading,<sup>1</sup> who has not sometimes violated the accidence or the syntax of English grammar."<sup>2</sup>

I. Nouns of foreign origin are sometimes used incorrectly. Errors in the use of foreign nouns.

*Cherub* and *seraph* may form their plural either according to the Hebrew idiom, as *cherubim*, *seraphim*, or according to the English, as *cherubs*, *seraphs*; but it is equally incorrect to speak of "a *cherubim*,"<sup>3</sup> and of "two little *cherubims*."<sup>4</sup>

A similar fault is committed by Addison: "The zeal of the *seraphim* [Abdiel] breaks forth in a becoming warmth of sentiments and expressions, as the character which is given us of *him* denotes that generous scorn and intrepidity which attend heroic virtue."<sup>5</sup>

The elder Disraeli says in one place, "The Roman Saturnalia were;" in another, "Such *was* the Roman *Saturnalia*."<sup>6</sup> "The *minuties*" and "the *minutia*" (as a plural) are sometimes seen. "In the *Daily News* of Saturday last, April 19th, we are informed that in the excavations at Luxor three new *necropoli* have been discovered."<sup>7</sup> A speaker in the House of Representatives, 1877, said that "The Electoral Commission had made the two Houses of Congress a mere *addenda* to a conspiracy." A college student wrote, "A natural *phenomena* is under the control of natural law;" another, "a *strata*;" another, "this *fungi*."<sup>8</sup>

II. The possessive case is sometimes used as if it were coextensive with the Latin genitive. The possessive case.

<sup>1</sup> Query as to the position of this phrase.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas De Quincey: *Essay on Style*.

<sup>3</sup> Shakspeare: *The Tempest*, act i. scene ii. Thus modern editions: the folio of 1623 has *cherubin*.

<sup>4</sup> George Eliot: *The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton*, chap. i.

<sup>5</sup> *The Spectator*, No. 327.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Henry H. Breen: *Modern English Literature; Its Blemishes and Defects*.

<sup>7</sup> *The [London] Athenæum*, April 26, 1884, p. 536.

<sup>8</sup> For additional examples, see "The Foundations of Rhetoric," pp. 47, 48.