

THE
FOUNDATIONS OF RHETORIC

ADAMS SHERMAN HILL

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THE
FOUNDATIONS OF RHETORIC

BY

ADAMS SHERMAN HILL

BOYLSTON PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND ORATORY
IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY



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PREFACE

For practical purposes there is no better definition of a good style than Swift's,—PROPER WORDS IN PROPER PLACES.

Differ as good writers may in other respects, they are all distinguished by the judicious choice and the skilful placing of words. They all aim (1) to use no word that is not established as a part of the language in the sense in which they use it, and no word that does not say what they wish it to say so clearly as to be understood at once, and either so strongly as to command attention or so agreeably as to win attention; (2) to put every word in the place fixed for it by the idiom of the language, and by the principles which govern communication between man and man,—the place which gives the word its exact value in itself and in its relations with other words; and (3) to use no more words than are necessary to effect the purpose in hand. If it be true that these simple principles underlie all good writing, they may properly be called THE FOUNDATIONS OF RHETORIC.

To help young writers to master these principles is the object of the following pages. They are especially intended for those who have had some practice in writing, but who have not yet learned to express themselves well.

The Introduction sets forth as simply, clearly, and compactly as possible the leading facts of English grammar, including definitions of technical terms.

The body of the book is in three Parts. Part I., which treats of WORDS, is divided into two books: in Book I., proper and improper expressions, arranged for convenience in classes that correspond to the several parts of speech, are set side by side; in Book II., questions of choice between words equally proper are considered. Part II., which treats of SENTENCES, is divided into two books: in Book I., good and bad sentences, arranged for convenience in chapters that correspond to the five important qualities of style, are set side by side; in Book II., questions of choice between sentences equally proper are considered. Part III. treats of PARAGRAPHS.

Believing that every one should be encouraged to do work for himself, I begin the discussion of every question with an example,—a practice which enables the student to discover for himself the rule under which the example falls. For young scholars this is the true order; for it is the order in which the mind naturally works. In experience, facts come before principles or rules: induction precedes deduction.

Believing that attention should be drawn primarily to good English, I have, in every case in which proper and improper forms appear side by side, placed the proper form where it will first catch the eye.

Within the prescribed limits, it is of course impracticable to enumerate all possible departures from propriety in the choice of words or in their arrangement. All that is attempted is to note those which unpractised

writers are most likely to make. Some of the sentences quoted as warnings are taken from current newspapers, novels, and other publications that are likely to fall in the way of young readers and to affect their modes of expression; but most of them come from manuscripts produced under the stress of the examination-room or in the agonies of "composition." I have not deemed it advisable to increase the enormous amount of bad English already in the world by inventing new varieties, or by manufacturing new specimens of old varieties.

For valuable assistance in the preparation of these pages, I am indebted to Miss E. A. Withey, who brought to the task unusual patience, intelligence, and devotion.

To several of my colleagues, by whose suggestions and criticisms I have profited, and to the authors of various books on the English language which I have consulted, my thanks are also due.

A. S. H.

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