

Silvia, is carried away faster and further than he could have deemed possible at the beginning; or where Valentine, stooping to an intended elopement with Silvia, is forced to pack his words with lies to his patron, her father, and afterwards to wince under chance stabs in the speech of the robbers who encounter him in exile; or where the Duke, praising Proteus for betraying his friend, is led successively to practise deceit upon Valentine and, in collusion with Proteus and Thurio, upon his daughter, being put to shame by both his accomplices in the end.

Poetic feeling in a dramatist, if subordinated to the exigencies of the stage, is not to be censured, least of all in Shakespeare, who esteemed his lyrics (*vide* 81st Sonnet) and gave no second thought to his plays. This feeling is conspicuous throughout the play under review, reaching a climax in the speech of Julia (Act II., scene 7), beginning: "The current that with gentle murmur glides." Tribute is also paid to the favourite art in the speech of the Duke (Act III., scene 2): "Ay, much is the force of heaven-bred poesy"; continued by Proteus in the lines:

For Orpheus' lute was strong with poets' sinews,
Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones,
Make tigers tame, and huge leviathans
Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands.

A word here as to a subtlety of mind natural to Shakespeare. If we examine carefully the simple sentence: "Except my mistress," put into the mouth of Proteus (Act II. scene 4), we find it either to be a veiled allusion to the rising tide of love for Silvia, or an effort to beat down the newly-forming desire for her. It matters not which the author meant it to be or whether he had a preference for one meaning over the other; enough, that in the hands of a capable impersonator the apparently indifferent expression could be made highly effective.

The more weight we attach to the evidences of an early creation of the "Two Gentlemen" the less can we imagine that the author should presume to depart from the conventional rule of five acts for every dramatic work, but an arrangement into four acts would have given the piece a better movement and finish. Whether in five or four acts, the second and third scenes, Act II., might with advantage appear as the last two scenes of Act I., and the last scene of Act II. would be improved by changing it to a soliloquy by Julia at Milan and putting it immediately before or after the soliloquy by Proteus at the beginning of Act IV. The last act of the play is sketchy and hurried, particularly in the final scene, and the violence offered by Proteus to Silvia seems forced and unnatural, though it has a secondary use in keeping up the guilt of Proteus and so helping to explain his horror and shame when awakened by Valentine's eloquent denunciation.

From the foregoing exposition, the following would seem to be a brief but fair statement of Shakespeare's method of realizing his own conception of the aim of the drama, so far as that method can be gathered from a single and somewhat immature example. The plot may be essentially attractive or the reverse, but it must be so reasonable as to appeal to common feeling and experience, and, if fundamentally repellant, the disagreeable features must be masked by a spirited and delicate handling of details. The scene should be laid far enough away, in point of time or place, to touch the historical or ethnical springs of our curiosity and to allow scope to the dramatist for a free, artistic treatment of his subject. The leading characters should be types rather than imitations or fancies, and vivified by qualities and habits that set them either above or below the average level of the "madding crowd." The action must be continuous and consistent, but carried on with liberal variation of scene, character and incident, so that the audience may be kept alert and the author spared from tedious explanation or reminiscence. Underplots are to be charily used and always in visible aid of the principal movement and end. The main cause of the action and event should be early and plainly indicated, and thenceforward the action should move briskly and steadily to a natural climax, from which height it should as briskly and steadily descend to the catastrophe. As soon as the smoke of the explosion has lifted, the dramatist must group his characters as skill and taste may order, and then, with a word or two suggestive of the future of the leading personages, ring down the curtain.

This is Shakespeare's act, lamed and maimed, perhaps, in the telling; but, even so, capable of yielding us some degree of instruction and entertainment when applied to his own works, or to such modern plays as may come respectively before us for perusal or observation.

CHARLES F. BENJAMIN.

ENCOURAGED, no doubt, by the success of the bridge across the Forth, engineers are now considering the equally great scheme of a bridge across the Bosphorus, thus connecting Europe and Asia, and their present and future railway systems. The Turkish newspaper, *Hakikat*, gives some particulars of this project *apropos* of an offer by a French syndicate to build a bridge of 800 metres in length and 70 metres high between Roumeli and Anatoli Hissar. The striking feature of the bridge would be that it would consist of one span, and thus, although of much shorter length than the Forth Bridge, it is described as a greater work, because its single span exceeds in length by one-half the longest span of the Forth Bridge. The Anatolian Railway, it is thought, will make the construction of such a bridge a necessary and feasible undertaking before many years.

THE SEASONS.

NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES.

I.

How fares the world? the winter slowly dies;
Breathes from the south a wraith of summer air,
That brings to mind a dream of warmer skies,
To tell the world it need not yet despair.
Life stirs through all the budded willows, breaks
Pale-hued and passionless where windflowers grow,
Faint heralds of the glory Flora shakes
From her full hands, when summer breezes blow.
High overhead the wild birds wing their flight
Towards the lingering snows,
And, like a silver sword blade in the light,
The winding river flows.

II.

Midsummer, and the scented morning, wet
With fragrant dew drops, where the zephyr's lull
A thousand roses, and the violet
Gleams in the eyeless socket of a skull
Of some slain bison of the countless horde
That shook the plain, all gone beyond recall;
The lily on the flower-sprinkled sward
Has seen them and blooms on above their fall.
So fall the mighty, and their bones are thrown
Broadcast to moulder, all their power vain;
Good deeds live on, and, ever freshly sown,
Spring forth to bloom again.

III.

Harvest full garnered, and a deep wood round
A sapphire lake set in a lonely land,
Where autumn in her lavish wealth hath bound
The gold and ruby of her wedding band.
Yet is her radiance mortal; for, alas!
The choicest fruits are sweetest when they fall.
Spring, summer, autumn change and fade and pass,
And universal winter withers all;
For all her beauty in the passing time
Is marked with winter's breath,
And, like a beauty dying in her prime,
She robes herself for death.

IV.

A wild, white land, that like a troubled sea
Runs into bitter ridges, where the snow,
High-heaped in pallid billows silently
Breaks into soundless surf when tempest blow;
Where the soft-footed wolf slides sidelong by,
Gaunt-ribbed and lank with care,
Watching the passer with suspicious eye
Before he seeks his lair;
A wide clear sky, wherein the jewelled stars,
In frosty radiance gleaming,
Pale into milder splendour where the bars
Of northern lights are streaming.

BASIL TEMPEST.

THE ASCERTAINMENT OF ENGLISH.

THE word that is habitually used by the true Westerner as an equivalent for "unnecessary" is *needless*; but as applied by him it has a peculiar significance of its own that cannot be exactly rendered by any other word in the English language.

Needless, rather than unnecessary, is the adjective that I think applicable to the article by Mr. Charles Mackay under the above caption in the January number of the *Nineteenth Century*. Not that there is not much truth in it, but because the truth, as distinguished from hyper-criticism and chimerical fancy, is of so very elementary a nature that it is familiar to boys and girls in our public schools; while the absence of all logical sequence is no less remarkable than in a would-be purist. Mr. Mackay's faulty and graceless English is curious.

Mr. Mackay's proposal for the "ascertainment" of English is presented to us as a modern adaptation and improvement on a scheme of Dean Swift's. He proposes that the standard of correct English should be definitely determined by a "high functionary," or Minister of Education—an official censor of language and grammar. After explaining that the purpose of his paper is "to treat of the purity and preservation of literary English, and to leave undiscussed, and with slight mention, the colloquial parlance of the multitude," he goes on to give examples of the solecisms and errors of speech that would call for the intervention of the official censor. But Mr. Mackay must either have a curiously illogical mind or else must include under the category of "literary English" the most miscellaneous collection of matter, since his article is largely devoted to enforcing the novel discovery that educated gentlemen should not write "toothsome" for "dainty," "lengthy" for "long" (e.g. a long ride) "vet" for "veterinary surgeon," "perks" for "perquisites," and other similar and equally well recognized atrocities. The expression "wholesale murder" may be objectionable, though, perhaps, not absolutely indefensible; but the purist who objects to the defilement of the English language by the introduction, in place of "many essentially native words," of "weaker words from the classic languages of Greece and Rome," and who, consequently, would expunge such words as *virtue*, *honour*, *religion*, *glory*, etc., in favour of their Anglo-equivalents, must have little regard for con-

sistency to suggest "indiscriminate massacre" as an improvement on "wholesale murder." Again in the matter of spelling it is difficult to see on what principle Mr. Mackay can urge that we should write "plow" for "plough," "du" for "do," "cawt" for "cough," and at the same time refuse to write "nee" for "knee," which he gives as an example of the length to which "the fanatics of phoneticism" would go. There is nothing to object to in the spelling of "plough," "cough," etc., except on phonetic principles, and the fanatics have this advantage over Mr. Mackay that they are ready to carry out their principles to their logical conclusion. "Logical consequences are the beacons of wise men, but the scarecrows of fools."

Surely it did not require a magazine article to teach us the lesson that in the words "plough," "through," "enough," etc., the same letters have different sounds; that in "literary English" we should not use an intransitive verb as a transitive, or *vices versa*; or, when meaning a sailor, write "a person of the naval persuasion." Are these mistakes so common in "literary English" that the authority of a "Minister of Education" is required to correct them, and to provide for the "ascertainment" of the language in respect to them, and similar errors?

So far as many of the matters touched on by Mr. Mackay are concerned, it must be remembered that the *usage of good authors* is, at the present time at least, the only standard of correct English; and when we find an expression stamped as currency by Thackeray and Leigh Hunt, we may perhaps be justified in preferring their usage to Mr. Mackay's authority, or even to the authority of his Minister of Education.

As examples of hyper-criticism, what Minister of Education would be foolish enough to alter the spelling and pronunciation of *gooseberry*, simply because it is derived from *gorseberry*—as well insist that *fox glove* be spelt *folks-glove* (if the pretty derivation from *folk*—or *fairy*—*glove* be correct). Fancy the outcry among all well-regulated children against the monster who would change Cinderella's slipper of *glass* into a *white-fur* shoe, and what on earth has this to do with the "ascertainment of ENGLISH?" With what fine scorn Mr. Mackay treats the expression "a ship swims," as if a ship were a duck or swan! but, surely, in many instances *swim* is quite the appropriate word to use in speaking of a ship, just as it is possible, under certain circumstances, to be in perfect good taste and yet speak of a swan *sailing*; unless indeed all simile, metaphor, and allusion are to be banished from the language. It is a wonder that Mr. Mackay doesn't quarrel with sailors for using the feminine personal pronoun when speaking of a ship—a neuter noun.

In quoting some expressions of the English of one of his "imperfectly educated young women," Mr. Mackay is very felicitous in presenting them as "specimen bricks of the literary edifice" (Anglice "a novel"). It is indeed just as if one were to exhibit half-a-dozen bricks from some large building, and ask us to judge from them of its architectural defects. Torn from their surroundings some of the expressions certainly seem rather crude—but even "an apricot sunset" is conceivable, while "velvet-coated stags" would clearly be appropriate in many a piece of description. The *gossamer-dressed* September morning, *gold misted* moon, *crisp* afternoon, etc., are all unusual, but it seems quite possible to use everyone of these expressions, if suitable to the context, without offending against any of the canons of literary English. In fact, may not the legal rule, *Noscitur a sociis*, be applied to expressions in "literary English" as a criterion of their propriety, and must not the style of the language be adapted to the exigencies of the subject matter?

Perhaps it is unfortunate that the "high functionary" whose duty it would be to suppress the gabble of the multitude was not in existence to revise Mr. Mackay's article before it appeared in print, for in that case we might have been spared the exhibition of a critic, complacently sneering at "the modernizing touch of the democratic school boards," and the "imperfect education among labouring classes," himself composing sentences that even the most imperfect education of the school boards would be ashamed to father.

It may well be doubted whether any boy or girl who had been "taught to handle the tools of knowledge," unless painfully stupid and unteachable, could be guilty of producing such a sentence as the following: "In our School Board era when the new generations are being taught to handle the tools of knowledge, to read, to write, and to cast accounts, and boys and girls think themselves educated because these tools of education are put within their reach, although the skill and the power to use them to advantage are not given them, or are possible to be acquired by them, in the fierce competition for bare existence, consequent on the excess of population and the overcrowded state of the labour market in our narrow islands, a revival of the project of Dean Swift might have a more favourable chance of acceptance by the State than it had in his day."

What can one think of the critic who, as an example of a gross error and solecism of speech, cites the expression a ship *swims* (instead of *floats*), and himself provides us with such flowers of rhetoric as "our noble speech promises to become the predominant, though not perhaps the only language, of the civilization of the coming centuries, and is already heard like the morning drum-beat of British power in every part of the globe . . . it floats upon the wings of a widely pervading literature, and of a still more pervading commerce to the uttermost ends of the earth?" And what expert in syntax can unravel the mystery of the