

- (b) We must not and have not time to become maniacs on this matter of vocabulary and style. Our business is to write clearly and accurately on matters in which we can claim competence. There are two tragic figures in literary matters; first, the man who has lived a full, rich, varied, adventurous, and rewarding life but is utterly incapable of setting pen to paper; the second, the man who has spent a life-time in perfecting his means of expression, only to find in his later years that he has absolutely nothing to express. And now for a joyful look at Appendix B.

Part 2

Several thousand words ago, I undertook to make, before the close of this lecture, a few modest proposals designed to strengthen or at least to comfort the ailing prose of the department. This is only fair, since even Old Oligarch, as he is affectionately known to classical scholars, (probably a contemporary of Pericles but this is not certain) a venomous critic of the Athenian Democracy and all its works, remarked in one of the surviving fragments: "It is much easier and more agreeable to point out the ills of a society than to suggest measures for their remedy". How right he was, but let's have a go as promised.

For a few of our ailing patients such as significant, involved, and presently, first-aid measures, if promptly applied, should be adequate; but for others, including overall, hopefully, consensus of opinion and irregardless, I fear that I can prescribe only painless euthanasia. Less flippantly, if you are not much interested in words, if you don't give a damn about the distinction between disinterested and uninterested, if you are not at your age familiar with either Fowler or Gowers (I speak now to those of you whose mother tongue is English) and were not much interested in the publication a year or so ago of Modern American Usage, you must find it tedious to draft telegrams, memoranda and letters; but this is what our job is about.¹ Diplomacy is the art of persuasion so long as it is furthered by words rather than by explosives, words deftly chosen from a very rich and very well-defined vocabulary. The work of this department requires historians, linguists, philosophers, regional specialists, economists and specialists in management and administration. Whatever their duties and responsibilities, they must be able to communicate skilfully; and their tools

- (1) My medical consultants believe that a further foot-note is required here to the effect that a barrister afflicted by a bad stammer, or a surgeon suffering even mildly from Parkinson's disease, will be severely handicapped.