

offenders in the expression of thought and still more against the canons of a refined taste.

Certain it is that, owing to various causes, some of which I shall presently mention, the well of pure, sound English is in great peril of permanent defilement: and any duly qualified person who has a chance of being listened to, can hardly do a better service to the young people of our country than by giving them practical hints which shall aid them to correct the habit of using language which is not English, and which is utterly at variance with the advice which the title of this lecture seeks to enforce, Call a spade a spade.

The need of such monitors is pretty obvious, when we read over in a Queen's Speech prepared under the scholarly eye of Mr. Gladstone such a sentence as this:

"The territories which have hitherto been under the sway of the King of Denmark, should continue so to remain."

I do not stop to criticise the grammar of this sentence, but I protest that the expression is unidiomatic. It is not the Queen's English, though Her Majesty was made to utter it. The question whether any word or phrase is or is not good English is strictly a question of fact, not altogether one of grammar. We have most of us received our first notions of grammar in connection with the dead languages. For Latin and Greek there are fixed standards of purity; at any rate conceivable standards, though scholars may dispute as to where the line should be drawn; but for a living language there is, and can be, no standard but the usage of educated men.

But although I admit the force of usage, which is continually legalizing expressions before unknown, or proscribing expressions once familiar to our forefathers, I am entitled to claim that these innovations should be governed by the usage of the educated classes, and not of the illiterate and vulgar. A conflict is always going on between the written and the spoken language of a country, because it is written by the cultivated few, it is spoken by the less cultivated many. Those who write labor on the whole to preserve the traditions and fences of the language, those who speak to break them down.

This is an age when newspapers and cheap literature, these media of imparting knowledge, are universal. Everybody who can read, reads them. The more sensational they are, the nearer they approach in their methods of expressing language to the common idiom in vogue, the more popular they are, and it is for this reason they are popular. The average country newspaper is a hideous travesty upon good English, so is most of