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PRECISION OF DICTION.

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THE platitude that every movement is followed by a reaction has another instance in the present fashion of ignoring "False Syntax" and "Slips of Tongue and Pen" and kindred exercises. Five years ago in Ontario, a great part of the time assigned to the study of composition in our High Schools was spent in correcting errors in English; not usually the pupil's English but that of some other, often fictitious, author. To-day many masters do nothing of this except the correction that comes in the regular criticism of the pupil's composition. It is probable that a great deal of time was wasted by following the old method; looking over "The Verbalist" "Hodgson's Errors" and other works of that class one sees that only very judicious use of them could have been profitable in High School work. In the authorized text-book on practical English, the exercises on purity seem to be compiled with a great disregard of the needs of our pupils, while in some of the other hand-books of "bad English," the examples are interest-

ing on account of their absurdity, but of absolutely no use whatever in High School work. Besides the unfitness of the selections given for investigation, there is often observable in this class of books a petty and carping spirit of fault-finding and purism, which disgusts teachers and pupils and even strikes at freedom of expression, and that large and figurative use of language which is one of the great beauties of English, and above all of the literary style. Fancy a man's objecting to the expression "My dearest Maria" on the ground that it suggests bigamy; probably Ayres inserted this as a joke. Think of asking for "iced-cream" because it is illogical to say ice-cream, as if logic were the ultimate authority in determining conventional expression. We must not say "above paragraph" because forsooth "above" is not an adjective; of all absurdities this surely is the chief, that in a language where there is scarcely a word that is not capable of functional interchange, poor "above" must be pounced upon for slipping out of its orthodox part of