

have too much regard for pure English to run the risk of contamination."

When, about forty years ago, Albany Fonblanque of the *Examiner*, John Black, Charles Buller, and W. J. Fox of the *Morning Chronicle*, with other now forgotten masters of style, who were both scholars and politicians, were connected with the daily press of the metropolis, the paucity as well as the purity of their contributions excited general attention and admiration; but in our day the very multiplicity of leading articles deprives them of the notice which they might otherwise receive. Not that the chief lights of our daily literature do anything to deteriorate or vulgarize the language. That unhappy task remains to the third-rate writers, who allow their slight stock of good English to be diluted with the inferior vernacular verbiage that reacts upon us from the United States, where the English of the farm, the workshop, or the counter is considered, with true republican equality, to be quite good enough for the senate, the pulpit, or the press. The evils of this ultra-plebeian style of writing are beginning to be felt in the United States themselves. A recent writer in the *Atlantic Monthly*, speaking of the press in that country, condemns in very forcible terms "its insidious blood-poisoning at the well of English undefiled;" "its malign infatuation for coarseness and slang;" "its corrupt and mongrel vocabulary;" "its vampire persistency;" and "its salacious flavouring of scandal." These are hard words, but it cannot be said that they are wholly unmerited.

But language always deteriorates when the morals of a people become depraved, when the growth of political corruption hardens the heart and dulls the conscience of a nation; when men, and worse still when

women, lose the feeling and the habit of reverence, and when the cynical sneer or the senseless ridicule of the high and low vulgar are fashionable. When honest love is designated as "spoons" and spoonies, when disinterested friendship which does not value friendship for its own priceless self, but for what real or supposed advantage it may bring to the person who pretends to feel it, is declared to be folly—the language in which such sentiments are uttered is already in course of putrefaction. And when the lives of the great multitude of men and women, and even of children, are wholly engrossed with the care and struggles necessary to surmount the difficulties and soften the hardships of merely animal existence, and when consequently little time or taste is left them for intellectual enjoyment or mutual improvement, the deterioration of language receives an impetus which gradually hastens the undesirable consummation of rendering the pure speech of our fathers or grandfathers unintelligible to their degenerate descendants.

A noble language leads necessarily to a noble literature, and these in indissoluble union are the grandest inheritances and most justifiable pride of a nation. Rome and Greece as powers in the world have passed away, but their language and literature remain the everlasting monuments of their departed glory. Our noble English language must of necessity receive modifications and accretions as the ages roll onwards. But our present and future writers, without rejecting the new words that are certain sooner or later to enrich or extend the language, should make it their duty and their pride to transmit unimpaired to posterity the splendid heritage which has been entrusted to their guardianship. The task is more difficult now than it was a hundred years ago. At that date the