

of the matter thought. If a writer is said to be fond of epithets, it is because he has a habit of always thinking a quality very prominently along with an object; if his style is said to be figurative, it is because he thinks by means of comparisons; if his syntax abounds in inversions, it is because he thinks the cart before he thinks the horse.

"And now, by extension, all the forms of slipshod in expression are, in reality, forms of slipshod in thought. If the syntax halts, it is because the thread of the thought has snapped or become entangled. If the phraseology of a writer is diffuse; if his language does not lie close round his real meaning, but widens out in flat expanses, with here and there a tremor as the meaning rises to take breath; if in every sentence we recognise shreds and tags of common social verbiage—in such a case it is because the mind of the writer is not doing its duty, is not consecutively active, maintains no continued hold of its object, hardly knows its own drift. In like manner, mixed or incoherent metaphor arises from incoherent conception, inability to see vividly what is professedly looked at. All forms of slipshod, in short, are to be referred to deficiency of precision in the conduct of thought. Of every writer it ought to be required at least that he pass every jot or tittle of what he sets down *through* his mind, to receive the guarantee of having been really there, and that he arrange and connect his thoughts in a workmanlike manner."

It is a pleasure to listen to one whose words flow easily and in perfect harmony with the thought to be expressed, whose vocabulary is such that he never needs to use a second-best word if a first-best is to be found in the language. This power is partly a natural gift, but also the result of culture. There is, however, little probability of the attainment of this degree of culture, if the mind has not in the first instance been trained to think clearly enough to obey unconsciously and of necessity the broad syntactical rules of concord and government. It is not necessary that the individual should have *heard* of these rules; but, if he should happen to come across them, they must be to him nothing new, but merely the formal expression of what he has always tacitly believed to be the only possible mode of true utterance.

It would be interesting, and perhaps profitable, to trace the growth of a few common mistakes from the first bacterial germ to the wide-spread epidemic; something might then be done to prevent the dissemination of any possible mistakes yet non-existent. The unwritten history of mistakes will, however,