

in the south of England there used to be, and perhaps still is, an enormous sign in the form of an arrow pointing toward the harbour. I have been told that quite a number of French citizens returning to their own country preferred to go by the rather longer Newhaven-Dieppe passage just for the pleasure of observing this sign. On it were inscribed in letters about four feet high the words "AUX BATEAUX", which indeed means to the boats, but of course in a somewhat special sense. This is the final command which the captain of a ship, rapidly foundering, would give to the passengers and the crew; it properly means "to the life boats", and could well be translated as "abandon ship", or perhaps, "every man for himself". Les pièges sont bien traités.

If I may reminisce very briefly, when I first went to France more than thirty years ago I had what would be described as a good knowledge of French, that is to say, I read a great deal and I knew the grammar thoroughly including all the imperfect subjunctives, even tricky ones like *s'asseoir* (*Il aurait fallu que je m'assisse*). I was, however, entirely unable to read a menu and for the first few days, because of vanity, I lived very largely on omelets, because it was the only word I could recognize. I ventured boldly on one occasion to ask for a dessert, and chose "gaufrettes", to the astonishment of the waiter, who none the less brought me a saucer of those thin wafers that accompany ice cream. I was much puzzled, too, by the streets marked "sens interdit" which, (and this perhaps indicates a dangerous Freudian symptom) I took to mean that on these streets marked "sens interdit" the gayer young ladies of Paris were not allowed to ply their ancient trade.

My general thesis this morning is that young people come to us from the universities (not all but many of them), capable of writing a clear, simple and direct prose, and that the department very rapidly corrupts them. As a corollary to this outrageous thesis, the young people d'expression française who come to us, follow the lead of their English speaking brothers, and translate into French even the most atrocious examples of our departmental faults. So sweeping a thesis as this would no doubt be difficult to prove, and it would, in any case, be subject to many footnotes which cannot be added here. As appendix "A" to the printed version of my observations this morning you have a memorandum which I prepared some time ago for the Under-Secretary on our telegraphic communications. This has been recently edited and greatly shortened for this occasion. You will find also an Appendix "B", listing some forty or fifty examples of infelicitous expressions widely used in the Department, all of them objectionable, and all of them suitable for inclusion in an Index Verborum Prohibitorum. I have come to the conclusion that, unless we are alert in the department, we shall reduce the vast riches of the English language to a basic jargon of about 300 words: if this process continues, we shall ultimately exchange our views by a series of inarticulate grunts, as has already happened in Liverpool, Glasgow and in the Quartier La Villette of Paris. I should perhaps point out that all the eccentricities illustrated in both annexes are all our own departmental work; these I have been noting for some little time. All of them, also, are dealt with harshly in