

ture, old and new, sacred and profane, that is attained by few technical writers. While, therefore, the attainment of Mr. Rickard's own felicity of expression is only possible to those, who in addition to the ability to think clearly and the possession of accurate technical knowledge, are deeply read and possess more than an ordinary education in English, there is a widespread necessity existing among engineering students to improve their use of English as an instrument to convey technical knowledge to others.

Mr. Rickard's slogan is "Remember the reader," which he correctly terms the fundamental rule of writing. "Somebody must put hard work into every technical article that is written for publication, if not the author, then the editor; if both the author and the editor shirk their duty, the reader will have a headache."

A quotation from Quintillian by Hill is used by Mr. Rickard, to emphasise the necessity for clearness, that is very apt. "It is not enough to use language that must be understood."

"Superlatives and other Diluents," is a chapter touching a common fault of writers. "Diluent" is a delicious sarcasm. The word "very" it is stated can be deleted nine times out of ten. The qualification of the unqualifiable word "unique" is properly condemned. "Considerable" is described as "a woolly word, usually out of place in a technical statement." Such loose and indefinite terms as "more or less," "some," "greater or less extent," "more or less completely" are shown to be a source of weakness. "The secret of a vigorous style is the rejection of the superfluous word" is Mr. Rickard's conclusion. At the same time he shows that clearness is desirable even if it requires seeming tautology.

A helpful chapter is that on hyphens and compound words, the trend of which is to be seen from the following examples :

"A 'single stamp-mill' is a lonesome mill.

"A 'single-stamp mill' is a mill consisting of batteries of one stamp each.

"A 'single-stamp-mill' is a mill containing only one stamp.

"A 'crude ore-bin' is an ore-bin of crude construction.

"A 'crude-ore bin' is a bin made to contain crude ore.

"A 'crude ore bin' is an example of crude writing."

In the chapter of "slovenliness" Mr. Rickard criticises, not too hotly, the befouling of the English language with vulgarisms and colloquialisms that are understood only locally or regionally. "Chucking muck in the gob" may be a phrase understood in Yorkshire coal-mines, but it is not preferable to "packing the waste," a term that does permit of ambiguity.

"Jargon" is dealt with entertainingly but in a root and branch fashion. It is described as dealing in periphrases rather than going straight to the point, it loves the abstract rather than the concrete, it dabbles in words of sound rather than meaning." Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch is quoted as writing; "In literature as in life he makes himself felt who not only calls a spade a spade, but has the pluck to double spades and re-double."

We think Mr. Rickard's truest statement is that slovenly writing is the result of slovenly thinking, "for slovenly habits of expression corrode the very substance of thought." A notable quotation is given from Whewell, who in the "Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences" writes: "Language is often called an instrument of thought, but it is also the nutriment of thought; or rather it is the atmosphere in which thought lives; a medium essential to the activity of speculative powers, although invisible and imperceptible in its operation, and an element modifying, by its qualities and changes, the growth and complexion of the faculties which it feeds."

Mr. Rickard's little book is commended to all who desire that their writing shall clearly express the thoughts they desire to communicate. While not all can hope to attain to the ideal of language expressed by Mr. Rickard in the concluding sentence of his book, is here quoted as a fine example both of style and idealism. "Language is a factor in the evolution of the race and an instrument that work for ethical progress—it is a gift to be cherished as the ladder by which man has climbed from his bestial origin and by which he may ascend to a loftier destiny, in which, ceasing to stammer in accents that are but the halting expression of swift thought, he shall unfold his mind in the fulness of speech, and, neither withholding what he wants to say nor saying what he wants to withhold, shall be linked to his fellows by a perfect communion of ideas."

F.W.G.

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