

form of addressing the public, through the newspaper, has never found favor with the best writers; custom sanctions it, that is all. It is neither elegant nor convenient, and as a form, if it were adopted by writers generally, it would be intolerable to their readers. It has bad effects on style and on taste, and is destructive of all the traditions of our English idiom. It tempts even modest men to put on the disguise of egotism: and on the other hand it spoils all the graces and charms of those passages where the writer's own peculiar thoughts, actions or expressions can be brought forward. Many a confident assertion or dogmatic impertinence now uttered under the mark of plurality would have been modified had the editor been distinctly reminded of his individual responsibility by a more natural form of speech. Personally I have experienced considerable embarrassment from the practice of concealing myself under this cover: but custom having sanctioned it, I do not feel courageous enough to be odd and peculiar, or to be characterized as a pedant wishing to make himself conspicuous in the profession.

In considering the perils to which a language is exposed the constant influence of corruption from foreign sources must not be overlooked. It would be safe to say that our English language has suffered in its purity more from the Americanisms that have been imported into it during the past 100 years than from any other cause. The slang expressions, extravagant similes, and coarse humor, which permeate our periodical literature, and particularly through the columns of our newspapers, as well as the ordinary speech of the day, come very largely from that source. Our language circulates much as our blood does. It brings back with it to the heart all sorts of impurities from the extremities to which it has penetrated and unfortunately nature has not provided any lungs for the oxygenation of speech. Writing and speaking were both more generally pure in the days of the essayists, of Goldsmith and of Burke, than they are to-day. The deterioration of our mother-tongue commenced with the colonial age. It is hard to fight against these colonialisms, and it is lamentable to notice how avariciously these un-English words and phrases are seized upon and made to pass current by many good, scholarly writers, who think it necessary to write *down* to the average intelligence, rather than to raise that intelligence by having a careful regard to the idiom of our comprehensive mother-tongue as it was spoken and written by the masters of the art 100 years ago.

With regard to magniloquence and misuse of words, I have