

editor had some such delightful experience as he tells in his *Essays on Education, English Studies, and Shakespeare*. For simplicity and common sense, and ways of saying things as an ordinary common-place person would say them, that little book was a worthy predecessor of *Our English*. The publisher was Ginn of Boston, in 1884.

Neither Mr. Hudson nor Mr. Hill has rules for producing perfection in teachers or in taught; and neither thinks, on the other hand, that nothing can be done.

The author of *Our English* does nothing more than ask us to confess how bad things are, while he offers suggestions as to how each one must, in his writing, bind license down to liberty, and pedantry down to order.

To begin with,—it is obvious that, as Emerson says, your child may be caught some births too late to make a scholar of him: we may have equal rights, but we are not equal. But "even she whose talk is the life of the school at recess, writes as if she were on her good behavior at a funeral. Even he who takes the lead among his fellows, in everything that requires quickness of wit, becomes insufferably dreary the instant he puts pen to paper." Taking the ordinary intelligence which might write fairly, the fact that teaching should lead it to dull mediocrity is the worst thing of all. Better have crowds of mistakes. But can these, too, be avoided, by teaching from the first the chief rules as to sentences and punctuation, not wearying with niceties; and by teaching spelling of all common words? Above all, our author says, do not waste time on grammar. Might not one reflect in this connection, that English speaking people in Europe do not speak and write worse than such in America, though they may be said to learn no grammar? As to punctuation, we should add, pierce unmercifully with full stops all ordinary young writers.

Together with this elementary teaching in correctness—no child's play—the child, and then the boy or girl, must be given something interesting to write about, something that interests him or her. Let the writers sometimes or often choose their own subjects, we say.

If the writer abuses the freedom, the teacher no doubt can help by showing that liberty meant to the writer license. But can he do very much? Even if the writer is not caught too late, one has to ask: Is he bumptious and never in the state of one looking to be taught? Is he humorous in the bad sense, funny, in fact, and therefore vulgar? How has he spoken? How do his associates speak? Not everything rests with the teacher, even when the teacher is perfect.

But if license and "humor" are dangers in the path, so are pedantry, and what Professor Hill says he "must be pardoned for calling 'schoolmasters' English" the dialect of men and women whose business keeps them in close relations with young minds, and who, being to a great extent cut off from intercourse with the world outside of the school room, are apt to attribute undue importance to petty matters, to insist upon rules, in cases where the best usage leaves freedom of choice, to prefer bookish and pompous ways of putting things to easy and natural ones."

He goes on to quote a poet, who, inspired by our author's words, wrote as follows:—

IMMODESTY.

I am a modest little maid,
Who thinks it more polite
To bid a man "good evening,"
Than bid a man "good night."
And when the human members
Are spoken of by him,
I always call what doctors call
"A leg" "a lower limb."

I am a modest little maid,
Who never goes to bed;
But to my chamber I "retire"
Most properly instead.
And when the chaste Aurora
Unseals my sleepy eyes,
The act which some call "getting up"
I designate "to rise."

I never speak of feeling "sick,"
But always say I'm "ill,"
And being in my dressing gown,
I style my "deshabille."
In fact I always hesitate
To call a spade a spade,
Because, you see, I try to be
A modest little maid.

Coleridge had a master: "*Lute, harp and lyre, muse, etc.* were all an abomination to him.... 'Harp? harp? lyre? Pen and ink, boy, you mean! Muse, boy, muse? Your nurse's daughter, you mean! Pierian spring? Oh ay! the cloister pump, I suppose.' But the truly great have all one mind, as the same Coleridge says; and so all sensible people, humorous in the good sense, agree about this. Another of them says: "Think as wise men do; speak as common people do." And even: "Be profound with simple terms, not with obscure terms."

What the author says about the younger pupils, he says about the older. That his own pupils may sometimes write in a heat, having no time for fine language, he gives essays to be written in twenty minutes, which plan Professor Hill finds to work well.