

in the course of editing the Greek text, I believe I have destroyed more than a thousand commas, which prevented the text being properly understood. One very provoking case is that where two adjectives come together, belonging to the same noun-substantive. Thus, in printing *a nice young man*, a comma is placed after *nice*, giving, you will observe, a very different sense from that intended: bringing before us the fact that a man is both nice and young, whereas the original sentence introduced to us a young man that was nice. While I am upon stops, a word is necessary concerning notes of admiration. The only case I know of where they are really necessary, is where the language is pure exclamation, as in—"How beautiful is night!" or, "O that I might find him!"

But I now come, from the by-rules and details of the use of the language, to speak of the tampering with and deteriorating the language itself. I believe it to have been in connection with an abuse of this kind that the term the "King's English" was first devised. Now in this case the charge is twofold; that of clipping, and that of beating out and thinning down the Queen's English. And it is wonderful how far these, especially the latter, have proceeded in our days. It may be well to remind you, that our English comes mainly from two sources; rather, perhaps, that its parent stock, the British, has been cut down, and grafted with the new scions which form the present tree:—the Saxon, through our Saxon invaders; and the Latin, through our Norman invaders. Of these two, the Saxon was, of course, the earlier, and it forms the staple of the language. Almost all its older and simpler ideas, both for things and acts, are expressed by Saxon words. But as time went on, new wants arose, new arts were introduced, new ideas needed words to express them; and these were taken from the stores of the classic languages, either direct, or more often through the French. You remember that Gurth and Wamba complain, in *Ivanhoe*, that the farm-animals, as long as they had the toil of tending them, were called by the Saxon and British names, *ox, sheep, calf, pig*; but when they were cooked and brought to table, their invaders and lords enjoyed them under the Norman and Latin names of *beef, mutton, veal, and pork*. This is characteristic enough; but it lets us, in a few words, into an important truth. Even so the language grew up; its nerve, and vigour, and honesty, and manliness, and toil, mainly brought down to us in native Saxon terms, while all its vehicles of abstract thought and science, and all its combinations of new requirements as the world went on, were clothed in a Latin garb. The language, as known and read by thousands of Englishmen and Englishwomen, is undergoing a sad and rapid process of deterioration. Its fine manly Saxon is getting diluted into long Latin words not carrying half the meaning. This is mainly owing to the vitiated and pretentious style which passes current in our newspapers. Their main offence, the head and front of their offending, is the insisting on calling common things by uncommon names; changing our ordinary short Saxon nouns and verbs for long words derived from the Latin. Our journals seem indeed determined to banish our common Saxon words altogether. You never read in them of a *man*, or a *woman*, or a *child*. A man is an "*individual*," or a "*person*," or a "*party*;" a woman is a "*female*," or if unmarried, a "*young person*," which expression in the newspapers is always of the feminine gender; a child is a "*juvenile*," and children *en masse* are expressed by that most odious term, "*the rising generation*." As to the former words, it is certainly curious enough that the same debasing of our language should choose, in order to avoid the good honest Saxon "*man*," two words, "*individual*" and "*party*," one of which expresses a man's *unity*, and the other belongs to man *associated*. And why should a woman be degraded from her position as a rational being, and be expressed by a word which might belong to any animal tribe, and which, in our version of the Bible, is never used except of animals, or of the abstract, the sex in general? Why not call a man a "*male*," if a woman is to be a "*female*?"

These writers never allow us to go anywhere, we always proceed. A man was going home, is set down "an individual was proceeding to his residence." We never eat, but always *partake*. We never hear of *place*; it is always a *locality*. Nothing is ever *placed*, but always *located*. "Most of the people of the place" would be a terrible vulgarity to these gentlemen; it must be "*the majority of the residents in the locality*." Then no one lives in *rooms*, but always in "*apartments*." "*Good lodgings*" would be far too meagre; so we have "*eligible apartments*." No man ever shows any feeling, but always "*evinces*" it. Again, we never begin anything in the newspapers now, but always "*commence*." I read lately in the Taunton paper, that a horse "*commenced kicking*." But even *commence* is not so bad as "*take the initiative*," which is the newspaper phrase for the other more active meaning of the verb to *begin*. Another word which is fast getting into our language is to *eventuate*. If they want to say that a man spent his money till he was ruined, they tell us that "*his unprecedented extravagance eventuated*" in the total dispersion of his property. "*Avocation*"

is another word patronized. Now, *avocation*, which of itself is an innocent word enough, means the being called away from something. We might say, "He could not do it, having avocations elsewhere." But in our newspapers, *avocation* means a man's calling in life. "*Persuasion*" is another word very commonly and very curiously used by them. We all know that *persuasion* means the fact of being *persuaded*, by argument or by example. But in the newspapers it means a *sect* or *way of belief*.

But to be more serious. Not only our rights of conscience, but even our sorrows are invaded by this terrible diluted English. A man does not *lose his mother* now in the papers: he "*sustains*" (this I saw in a country paper) *bereavement of his maternal relative*." Akin to *sustain* is the verb to *experience*, now so constantly found in our newspapers. No one *feels*, but "*experiences a sensation*." Now, in good English, *experience* is a substantive, not a verb at all. But even if it is to be held that the modern slipshod dialect has naturalized it, let us have it at least confined to its proper meaning, which is not simply to *feel*, but to have *personal knowledge of by trial*. Another such verb is to "*accord*," which is used for "*award*" or "*adjudge*." "*The prize was accorded*," we read, "*to so and so*." If a lecturer is applauded at the end of his task, we are told that "*a complete ovation was accorded him*." *Entail* is another poor injured verb. Nothing ever *leads* to anything as a consequence, or brings it about, but it always "*entails*" it. This smells strongly of the lawyer's clerk; as does another word which we sometimes find in our newspapers, "*in its entirety*," instead of *all*, or the *whole*.

"*Open up*," again, is a very favourite newspaper expression. What it means, more than *open* would mean, I never could discover. But whenever we are to understand that a communication is to be made between two places, it is invariably made use of: e.g., a new railway is to "*open up*" the communication between the garrisons of Chatham, Canterbury, and Dover. "*Desirability*" is a terrible word. I found it the other day, I think, in a leading article in the *Times*. "*Reliable*" is hardly legitimate. We do not *rely a man*, we *rely upon a man*; so that reliable does duty for *rely-upon-able*. "*Allude to*" is used in a new sense by the press, and not only by them, but also by the great Government offices for the procrastination of business. If I have to complain to the Post Office that a letter legibly directed to me at Canterbury has been missent to Caermarthen, I get a regular red-tape reply, beginning, "*The letter alluded to by you*." Now I did not "*allude to*" the letter at all; I mentioned it as plainly as I could. There are hundreds of other words belonging to this turbid stream of muddy English which is threatening to destroy the clearness and wholesomeness of our native tongue.

I must now conclude, with some advice. Be simple, be unaffected, be honest in your speaking and writing. Never use a long word where a short will do. Call a spade a *spade*, not a *well-known oblong instrument of manual husbandry*; let home be *home*, not a *residence*; a place a *place*, not a *locality*; and so of the rest. Where a short word will do, you always lose by using a long one. You lose in clearness; you lose in honest expression of your meaning; and, in the estimation of all men who are qualified to judge, you lose in reputation for ability. The only true way to shine, even in this false world, is to be modest and unassuming. Falseness may be a very thick crust, but, in the course of time, truth will find a place to break through. Elegance of language may not be in the power of all of us; but simplicity and straightforwardness are. Write much as you would speak; speak as you think. If with your inferiors, speak no coarser than usual; if with your superiors, no finer. Be what you say; and, within the rules of prudence, say what you are. Avoid all oddity of expression. No one ever was a gainer by singularity in words or in pronunciation. The truly wise man will so speak, that no one may observe how he speaks. A man may show great knowledge of chemistry by carrying about bladders of strange gases to breathe; but he will enjoy better health, and find more time for business, who lives on the common air. When I hear a person use a queer expression, or pronounce a name in reading differently from his neighbours, it always goes down, in my estimate of him, with a *minus sign* before it; stands on the side of deficit, not of credit.

Avoid, likewise, all *slang* words. There is no greater nuisance in society than a talker of slang. It is only fit (when innocent, which it seldom is) for raw school boys, and one-term freshmen, to astonish their sisters with. Talk as sensible men talk: use the easiest words in their commonest meaning. Let the sense conveyed, not the vehicle in which it is conveyed, be your object of attention. Once more, avoid in conversation all singularity of accuracy. One of the bores of society is the talker who is always setting you right; who, when you report from the paper that 10,000 men fell in some battle, tells you that it was 9970; who, when you describe your walk as two miles out and back, assures you it wanted half a furlong of it. Truth does not consist in