

the language is still the Latin. Nevertheless it is the *Spanish* language, though founded on the Latin; and so, hereafter, must the *American* language, modified as it doubtless will be by national peculiarities and infringements, be distinguished by that name from its prototype, the English. The *French* language, by general custom and consent of nations, has become almost a universal dialect; it is commonly used as the medium of official communication, between functionaries of other countries, wholly unconnected with France; it is the general organ of intercourse with travellers, in all the various European territories; and no one, in the present day, can pretend to have received a liberal education, who possesses no acquaintance with the French language. It is though thus universally used,—although technical terms and modes of expression are frequently borrowed from the French, and incorporated into other tongues, yet no one could ever dream of altering the pronunciation or meaning of French words, or of disturbing the established mode of expression in that language; nor would the nation to whom that language pertains admit of such innovations, or allow any such foreign barbarisms to be ingrafted upon the genuine national language of France. So, then, should we be equally jealous of American corruptions of our English tongue, and ever watchful against their introduction into colloquial usage among us; remembering, that in our intercourse with the mother country and its native inhabitants, our spoken and written compositions will be judged by them according to the established rules of the *English* language; and that our indulgence in American innovations and peculiarities will be considered, as evidences of vulgarity and ignorance.

Having thus premised the *principles* naturally incidental to this subject,—principles which should be carefully remembered and faithfully acted upon, by all who would cultivate correctness and purity of speech,—I now proceed to adduce a few examples, among the numerous corruptions already prevalent, as specimens of the innovations against which we are called upon to guard. These common errors may be divided into several classes: some are mere American barbarisms; others are ignorant perversions of the genuine meaning of words, *not* peculiar to our republican neighbours only; and others are *ungrammatical* modes of expression, which a little explanation of Lindley Murray or Pinnoek will enable every one to rectify. I would only

further remark, for the consideration of the *critical* portion of my hearers, that this lecture being merely a *popular* exposition of a few common errors, I deem it best to conduct it, not so much by referring the examples to *grammatical rules*, which would be presuming a previous knowledge, inconsistent with the design and objects of this dissertation; as by unfolding in a simple manner, the *rationale* of the criticisms advanced, and thus endeavouring to convince the reason, while exposing the erroneous practice. *Syntactical* knowledge must be the result of the private study of enquirers.

One of the most prominent verbal abuses borrowed from our neighbours, is the gross perversion of the verb “to *fix*.” The best English Lexicographers define the meaning of this verb as “to *fasten*, to *settle*, to *determine*,” and it is never legitimately made use of, but to express such a mode of disposing of or securely settling anything, that it shall not be liable to casual removal or alteration. When, therefore, we hear such absurd expressions, as to “fix the tea-things,” “fix the chairs,” and many other such improper uses of that verb, we may at once set them down as gross vulgarities. The term “*fix*” is also often very improperly used in reference to personal *actions*, having no reference to positive fixation. Persons speaking together in business, will say, “I will *fix* it for you,” or, “Will you go and *fix* that matter?” or, “Never mind, I’ll *fix* him;” when they merely intend, that they will *arrange* or *settle* such and such an affair, or will set such and such a person right on some particular point. Now, although the verb “to *fix*,” means “to settle or determine,” yet its principal definition is “to *FASTEN*,” and whenever it is properly used, it is invariably to denote a *firm* and *permanent* establishment or securing of anything, and not a mere temporary settlement or arrangement. It is also especially to be remembered, that this verb rightly applies only to *things* and *inanimate objects*, and not to actions or to persons, unless some restraining and overpowering *force* is included in the expression; and therefore, to speak of *fixing* a person or animal, or of fixing a matter or affair which merely requires settlement or arrangement, is perfectly ridiculous. But the grossest abuse of this word “*fix*,” is the transmuting it from a *verb* to a *substantive*. We often hear persons say, “I’m in a pretty *fix*,” or, “He will find himself in a nice *fix*,” and so on; thus creating a substantive which *does not exist in the English language*; while, at the same time, the meaning would be correctly