

## OBJECTIONABLE ENGLISH.

(From Chambers' Edinburgh Journal.)

*Aggravate*, in the sense of irritate. "He aggravated me so much that at last I struck him." The least reflection on the etymology of the word is sufficient to show how erroneously it is here used. A gentleman might say: "His conduct towards me was very insolent; the offence was aggravated by my having never shown him anything but kindness." It is probably from its use in such a legitimate connection of ideas, that it has at length come, in loose common speech, to represent the words insult and irritate.

*Some*. "It took the counsel some two hours to cross-examine the witness." The proper word to be used is "about." It is remarkable that Raleigh, Bacon, Addison, and Prior, use the word "some" in this objectionable way.

*Progress*, as a verb. "We are progressing favourably." This is a barbarism, recently introduced from America. While such words as proceed and advance exist, it seems a pity to adopt a new one out of its old and accustomed sense. Here, too, however, there is not wanting a certain classic sanction, for the word is used as a verb by Milton.

*Antiquarian*, as a noun. Antiquarian being the adjective, it is surely best that we use antiquary as the noun, seeing that it is at our service. The language, by being varied, is enriched.

*Talented*. "Talents," in the sense of mental abilities, is itself a scarcely legitimate term, being only adopted figuratively from the word in the scriptural parable. When used as above, it becomes unbearable. Our language, as it happens, exhibits a poverty of words for mental ability; yet "gifted" would be preferable to "talented."

"You would wish me to invite you; but I am not going to." "Mark caught the words he was not intended to." These sentences give examples of an elision which has become very common in the familiar language of the middle classes, and is even creeping into print. Let it be condemned and avoided.

*As well*, in the sense of also. "He was very angry, and I was hot as well." This is another growing grammatical evil much to be deprecated.

*Directly*, in the sense of when or as soon as. "Directly the pot is boiling, take it off the fire." The word is here manifestly used in a wrong relation.

"The question lays in a nutshell." This sentence occurred a few years ago in a daily journal of very high repute. It

is an example of a mistake very general in conversation among the middle classes of the English people (it is unknown in Scotland)—the active verb *lay* substituted for the neuter verb *lie*—and which most frequently occurs in the preterite, as "I laid down in bed," for *lay* down," &c.; or "I had scarcely laid down in bed," for "I had scarcely *lain* down," &c.

*Left*, for departed. "Thomas left this morning at six." In using the word "left," the mention of the place departed from is strictly necessary.

*In this connection*. "In this connection, we may also advert to the shallow learning of the present age." Meaning, in connection with this fact, or proposition, or group of ideas. This is a piece of corrupt phraseology which seems to have taken its rise in the American pulpit, but is now spreading in England.

*Those sort of things*. "The proper expression to use would be that sort of things, or things of that kind."

*John, whom she said was looking another way*. "This is an example of a direct breach of grammar not unfrequently seen in books. The relative pronoun ought obviously to be in the nominative (who,) to govern the verb "was looking;" the words "she said" being parenthetical.

*Party*, for person. "I asked Thomas if he had long known that party," referring to a gentleman formerly seen in Thomas's company. This vulgarism seems to have taken its rise in the counting-house and exchange, where, being first used legitimately with regard to individuals in a bargain, it has at length come to be employed as a general term for an individual or person. It ought to be sternly repressed.

To these specimens of improper English may be added a specimen of improper Scotch. The word "canny" is constantly used in English as a Scotch word, appropriate to a low prudence or roguish sagacity, which southern people are pleased to attribute to their northern kinsfolk. Now, if Englishmen feel themselves entitled to use terms of obloquy regarding the morals of their neighbors, let them do it in correct language. The word "canny," in reality, means gentle, innocent, propitious, and has no connection whatever with either cunning or prudence.

THE best composition and temperance is, to have openness in fame and opinion; secrecy in habit; dissimulation in seasonable use; and a power to feign, if there be no remedy.

## VOICES.

The voice was the crowning gift of God to man. By means of it we can most readily convey our thoughts to our fellow-creatures, and through this medium the most of us can exercise the greatest influence. The different tones of the voice have great power over the emotions of the soul,—if they are gentle and kind, a kindred feeling will be awakened within our own breasts; if harsh and austere, like emotions will be aroused. How carefully then should we guard this delicate instrument, so that its keys, when touched, shall ever send forth sweet, harmonious music.

But there are voices, myriads of voices, breathing everywhere. 'Tis not alone to man that God has granted this great gift. Ah, no: Who has not heard another voice—even the voice of Nature, either amid the loud roaring of the cataract, the howling of the storm, or in the musical plash of the mimic waterfall. There may be much in her sublime tones to stir the quick perceptions of the soul, but her gentle whisperings have so much of beauty and sweetness they cannot fail awakening deep emotion. Glad songs have the little babbling brooks sung to us in our childhood, and now we can never watch their silvery waters, murmuring so peacefully along, without having our thoughts wafted back to happy by-gone days.

But the human voice and the voice of Nature are not the only ones we may hear; for there are voices, sweet spirit voices, that thrill through the soul, and echo there long after the tones that awakened them have died away. When the heart is sad and weary, soothing whispers are heard telling of a Land of Rest where the cares and sorrows of earth have no entrance. They speak of unfading flowers,—of trees that always are green,—of bright, beautiful waters, ever flowing peacefully,—of angel bands with wings and golden harps,—of music more melodious than e'er was struck from earthly lyres,—of a starry crown to be exchanged for the burdensome cross, and we long to say to the fettered soul, "Plume thy pinions for thine everlasting flight,—leave far behind the sin and sorrow of earth, and find an eternal rest amidst the glories of the Bet Land." At such moments, when we feel an impatient restiveness of soul, and find it well nigh impossible to exclaim, "Thy will be done," one spirit voice, superior to all others, will speak to the heart, and if we but listen it will teach us the difficult lessons of heroic endurance and patient waiting, till we be called to inherit our eternal reward.