

Literature, Historical Notes, etc.**CONVERSATIONAL ENGLISH.**

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Our generation is accredited with all the transgressions of the past, together with the germs of all future misdemeanours. Among present delinquencies is charged an undue tendency to organization. Hence one hardly likes to suggest the formation of another of those much-berated outgrowths of altruism—a society. Were this method of reform not so trite, a “Society for the prevention of Cruelty to the English Language.” might not be amiss; as it is, however, some less hackneyed remedy must be devised.

That reform is needed admits of no question. Those especially who have come in contact with the lower middle classes cannot fail to have been struck with their disregard of syntax and pronunciation, and their use of obsolete and unrecognised forms. As for “slang”—it is confined to no class, it is ubiquitous.

There is something peculiarly jarring about imperfect English. A rich brogue is consonant with poetic fervor and high enthusiasm. It touches religious feeling with a kindly and homely sense of reality; without destroying—even perhaps, on occasion enhancing—the beauty and sublimity of its pathos. Broad Scotch is well adapted to the latent and often grim humor of that nation, while it is also an expressive vehicle of dainty sweetness and earnest thought, as Burns has amply shown. If Moore had had a humorous vein in his composition, he might have done for Irish vernacular what Burns has done for the Scotch. But I doubt if anyone—unless perhaps Whitcomb Riley—could—apart from the pathos inseparable from all human longing and incompleteness—be genuinely pathetic in ungrammatical English.

Incorrect speaking is responsible for many a pleasure lost and many a positive ill endured.

It is a hindrance towards perfect friendship, for this must be a “mutual admiration society”; it cannot exist where one friend has cause to be ashamed of the other. When alone with your friend the feeling of shame may lie dormant, for his uncouth phrases fall on the lenient ears of affectionate appreciation. But the moment a stranger enters the room, you hear with the keen ear of the critic; and the social hour is one of torment lest the victim of deficient education should disgrace himself—and you.