

"The Minister having secured the attention of the tribunes observed that in presence of the gravity of the situation the mobilization of the National Guard was a measure of necessary precaution against the eventuality of a tentative disembarkation of the troops of the enemy on our coasts. Of two things the tentative must be assumed at once, whatever painful preoccupation it may excite, or the great cause of the solidarity of the peoples must be definitely abandoned."

Interrogated respecting the concessions of the Eastern line of the Gavalotte defence, the speaker called in doubt "the exactitude of the details put in evidence by the honorable deputy who improvised the motion before the legislature and invoked the textual reproduction of the project of law."

The measure, he said, "had been consecrated in the interests of the future, and came to establish the beginning of a new military hierarchy, destined to close in a brief delay all the so regrettable attributions of the system of to-day."

There are just one hundred and sixty words in this extract. If I understand at all what this speaker meant, I think I could put his meaning and make it absolutely intelligible in forty words. I do not know which it was, the French Minister from whom this is quoted, or the English Minister who recited it in our House of Commons, that is responsible for this avalanche of unintelligible jargon, but I do know that it is a most atrocious misuse of language. It is however very common, and I regret to notice that it is very much in vogue in the literature of the day: and I think I have heard something very much like it from young men of this college who have been ambitious to shine as public speakers.

The practice also of interlarding English with foreign words and phrases is not to be commended. Our language is full and copious, capable of expressing every phase of thought, and there is no excuse for importing the foreign coin when our own mint can furnish us with all the literary currency that is needed. I am not speaking against a quotation from its original, but against the jerky practice of slipping in foreign words to express ideas that can only be intelligible to readers when written in English.

Another practice is to write of past events in the present tense. When it is used very sparingly and by a master-hand it may add occasional variety and liveliness to a composition, though it is not in accordance with the idiom of the English tongue. Used thus sparingly and discreetly, I do not object to