THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPEECH

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BY

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CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH OF SPEECH

HERODOTUS tells us that the Phrygians and Egyptians both claimed to be the oldest nation on the earth till Psammeticus, King of Egypt, decided to settle the question once for all, and with that end performed the following experiment. He took two new-born infants and gave them in charge of a shepherd, who had orders to place them both in a lonely hut among the hills, to allow them the maternal attentions of a nanny-goat, and on no account to let them hear the sound of human speech. These instructions the shepherd carried out for two years, when one day on opening the door of the hut, both children rushed towards him with outstretched arms exclaiming "*Bekos.*" At first the shepherd took no notice of this demonstration, but when they repeated it at every

subsequent entrance, he reported the matter to the king. The king ordered the children to be brought into his presence, and having assured himself that what the shepherd had reported was correct, he set enquiries on foot to discover if *bekos* was a word employed in any existing language, and found that it was a Phrygian word for *bread*. This result was supposed to have established the claim of the Phrygians to be the oldest nation on earth.

It must be regretted that the King of Egypt did not carry his investigation further and in a more scientific spirit, for in that case he might have solved for all time a far more interesting question than the relative antiquity of the Phrygians and Egyptians—the question of the origin of language. In no other way could a final answer be given to this tantalising problem than by isolating two or more human beings in the manner described by Herodotus, and by observing what means of communication they evolved by the single light of nature, and whether these had any points in common with the existing languages of to-day. The question, therefore, is not likely to receive any conclusive answer in our time, for among those nations which are imbued with sufficient scientific curiosity to desire a solution, such experiments with human

beings are forbidden alike by sentiment and morality.

At the present time the theorists on this subject are divided into two schools, who we may call the evolutionists and the agnostics. The former hold that language evolved from natural cries and ejaculations and from imitations of natural sounds. Thus the noun *ache* is merely the ejaculation "*ach!*" the cry of pain; the pronoun *me* is the ejaculation "*ahem!*" by which the intending speaker calls attention to his own presence (in Sanskrit "aham" = I). The evolutionists admit that the chain of association in the case of many words consists wholly of missing links, and content themselves with exhibiting those few which still exist in a perfect state.

The word whose interjectional pedigree has been most satisfactorily established is "ugly." Chance has preserved to us several fragments of old Scotch poetry which seem designed to confirm the evolutionist theory.

> The rattling drum, the trumpet's shout,
> Delight young swankies that are stout,
> What his kind frighted mother *ugs* (i.e. views with horror)
> Is music to the sodger's lugs.

In a passage of Hardynge, it is related how the Abbess of Coldinghame, having cut off her

own nose and lips for the purpose of striking the Danish ravishers with horror,

> Conseilled al her systers to do the same,
> To make their foes *houge* so with the sight.
> And so they did afore the enemies came,
> Eche on their nose and overlip full right
> Cut off anon, which was an *hougly* sight.

In his translation of *Virgil*, Gawain Douglas writes:

> The *ugsomeness* and silence of the nyght
> In every place my sprete made sore aghast.

Another important source of word formation is the imitation of natural sounds which by association are used to indicate the objects which produce them. Thus by saying *boo* we can indicate the animal which makes such a sound; compare the Greek "bous," an ox, pronounced "boose." By saying "crack" we can reproduce the audible symptoms of breaking earthenware. This path, however, does not at first sight seem to take us very far; for it gives us no handle by which to lay hold of such objects as are naturally mute. It is easy enough to make a noise like a cow or a breaking plate; but what if we are required, for example, "to make a noise like a nut," or to make a sound signifying silence? And, in general, how are we to indicate the ideas of sight and touch?—which

are, in fact, far more numerous than those of sound. "For this one of the senses," says Aristotle of sight, "is more than all the others a source of knowledge and discovers many varieties in things." The reply to this is that the kind of sound which an object produces is largely determined by its shape; hence the sound can be used to signify the shape and so can be applied to other objects in which the same shape is found, but which are not themselves vocal. Thus by the sound "peep, peep," we imitate the cry of small birds; whence the Latin word "pipio," "a small bird." A similar shrill sound, however, is produced by blowing into a hollow reed; hence pipe, formerly the imitation of a sound, comes to mean anything of cylindrical shape.

Air, rising through water, assumes a spherical shape, and emits a certain sound, which is imitated in the Latin "bulla"=bubble. Hence anything of a spherical or hemispherical shape, e.g. a ball, or a bullet, or a belly, or a billow, and from the reduplicated form "bubble" "a bubby," i.e. a woman's breast, as in D'Urfey's "The ladies here may without scandal show face or white bubbies to each ogling beau."

Indeed, it is remarkable how easily words are transferred from ideas of one sense to those of another. Thus, "a shine" means either a loud

noise or a bright light, " éclat " in French means either " a crash " or " a flash," Latin " flavor " =yellowness now means " taste."

It is certainly not possible to imitate silence by sound; but closing the lips is significant of silence, and there is one sound which we can make with our lips closed, namely, the sound of *m*, whence Greek " muo," to shut the mouth or eyes, seen in " myopia," " mystery," " mute," or in the phrase " mum's the word."

The sound " yah " cannot be produced without a forcible contraction of the muscles of mouth and jaw, and is well fitted to be the expression of some strong feeling or of some notion in stress. In Hebrew it signifies " God," and in speaking it with its Hebrew meaning we can see the God-intoxicated Oriental dancing and calling on the object of his enthusiasm: " Praise Him in His name ' Jah,' and rejoice before Him."

In German " yah " (*ja*) means " yes," a fact not unrelated to the character of this nation, whose most salient weakness has ever been a too dogmatic assertiveness and a too passionate belief in the rightness of its own opinions. In Russian " yah " signifies " I." " Nobody, except myself, will ever confess it, I suppose, but I for one feel perfectly convinced that I am better and cleverer than anybody else in the world,

and I am sure you think the same of yourself." In these words the greatest of modern altruists confessed that naïve egoism which is the birthright of every Russian.

The natural cries of the human infant in particular furnish the roots of many common words. "Goo-goo," says the happy babe, and the same sound is uttered by deaf-mutes. "How are you on the deaf-and-dumb, Bilgewater?" says the "King" to the "Duke," in Mark Twain's immortal romance. The Duke said leave him alone for that; he had played a deaf-and-dumb person on the histrionic boards. Later on we hear of him "goo-gooing with all his might for joy, like a baby that can't talk." Hence, perhaps, the word "good," and possibly "God." "Goo-goo" is the first articulate sound which the infant utters; this is followed in turn by "ma-ma," "ta-ta," and "pa-pa," which furnish the substance of words found in all European languages. "Dear pappa," says Nausikaa to her father—and the word is spelt with the same letters which we use in English to-day—"will you please harness for me the wagon, that I may take the dirty clothes down to the river to wash them?" In the nursery still new words are constantly springing into being, which live for a while like saplings round a full-grown tree, but are doomed

to perish at length in the shadow of those whose roots are already deep and wide.

To this view many eminent philologists are strongly, almost fiercely, opposed. "Man is only man by speech," wrote William von Humboldt, "and in order to discover speech he must be already man"; and again, "Philosophers who imagine that the first man left to himself would gradually emerge from a state of mutism and have invented words for each new conception that arose in his mind, forget that man could not by his own power have acquired the faculty of speech, which is a distinctive character of man unattained and unattainable by the brute creation." "The onomatopœic theory," wrote Max Müller, "goes very smoothly so long as it deals with cackling hens and quacking ducks, but round that poultry-yard there is a dead wall, and we soon find that it is behind that wall that language really begins." Interjections, he maintains, are generically distinct from words proper, and cannot, therefore, become the germ of words; to this day they remain grammatically isolated from all other parts of speech, penned in their own enclosures, like remnants of a barbarous people in a land inhabited by a civilized race, with whom they can claim no kinship and are admitted to no intercourse. This view is confirmed by Horne Tooke,

who writes: "The dominion of speech is founded on the downfall of interjections." The business of philology, according to this school, is to investigate not the absolute origins of speech, but the relations of European languages to one another and to their common kinsman, Sanskrit. When a word has been referred back to one of the four or five hundred roots of which Sanskrit is composed, it has been explained as far as science can hope to explain it. A friend of the writer's was present at the last lecture delivered by Max Müller before his death; in his closing words the lecturer observed that "notwithstanding the immense progress made in the study of comparative philology during the last century, the actual origin of speech was still shrouded in impenetrable darkness." Like Herbert Spencer, Max Müller concluded his career by a declaration of complete agnosticism respecting his explanation of those phenomena to the study and classification of which he had devoted the labour of a lifetime. Such are the triumphs of modern philosophy; the beginning of wisdom, according to the ancients, was the discovery of one's own ignorance; but according to the moderns this is also its end.

The dilemma proposed by Humboldt, that "man must be a linguist in order to invent language," need not delay us long, for it is no more

than a revival of the old paradox by which the Greek sophists sought to demonstrate the impossibility of all genesis whatever. "Nothing," they said, "can come into being, for in order to come it must already exist." To this Aristotle replied by his famous distinction between "potential" and "actual" being. "Nothing," he admitted, "can come to be which does not already exist potentially; but when we say a thing is born, we mean that it passes from potential into actual being, and in doing so becomes manifest to our senses." Now, it is just this process which philology is concerned to investigate in the case of language. It is not required to explain the existence in man of the potency of speech, but the development of this potency into fact; it has to show not why man developed language, but why he developed those forms of language which we know, and no others. Humboldt's remark has weight only when considered as a reply to the theory popular in his day, that language was established by a formal contract, drawn up by all the members of the species assembled in conclave, in which it was agreed that certain signs should be used to represent certain ideas. This view, which was held by Locke, Adam Smith, and other philosophers of the eighteenth century, was analogous to Rousseau's

view of the origin of civic institutions; it is patently absurd, because it presupposes the existence of the thing which it is invented to explain, and is as extinct as the opinions of the eighteenth century on most other subjects. Considered as a criticism of this theory, Humboldt's remark has force, but it has none whatever when it is opposed to the theory of gradual development. Furthermore, this contention of Humboldt is flatly contradicted by facts. Language is language only in relation to collinguals; if, then, we find ourselves isolated in the company of foreigners, we are thrown temporarily into a state of complete mutism. Do we then cease to be human beings, incapable of any kind of reciprocity? By no means; we begin forthwith to extemporise a means of communication with our fellows—the language of gesture. This language is often developed to a great pitch of complexity among deaf-mutes, and is employed even by those who have acquired the language of conventional signs known as the deaf-and-dumb alphabet. (The capacity of dumb children to evolve a language of their own does not require to be encouraged, but has rather to be repressed; such repression is necessary because the gesture language, though easier to learn, is less efficient in the end than the language of conventional

signs, and the use of the former enables the child to escape the necessity of practising the latter. In the same way the tendency of children to use the natural method of reckoning on their fingers has to be discouraged, because it enables them to avoid practising the conventional notation. The gesture language has a further disadvantage that it involves much grimacing and ungainly gesticulation, such as renders the child disagreeably conspicuous in public places.)

The capacity, then, of man to evolve a language of symbolic gesture by the light of nature is not a theory but a fact, and we may suppose that in the earlier stages of human development this means of communication was far more cultivated than at the present day, when it is only required on rare emergencies. This supposition is confirmed by the fact that among primitive peoples we find a far more complex system of gesture-signs in use than among civilized races. By placing his hand against his mouth and extending two fingers in imitation of the forked tongue of a snake, the American Indian indicates that a man is a liar; by crossing his fore-fingers he expresses his readiness for trade.

There is evidence, moreover, of the survival of such a language in Europe till historic times. In no other way can we explain the mimetic

dancing of the Greeks, a form of art now extinct, except by supposing the existence of a language of gesture of far greater range than any in use to-day. It is only natural that this—the earliest form of language—should evolve one of the earliest forms of art, and that this art should die out when the language in which it was composed fell into disuse.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the origin of this language presents a problem in all points analogous to the problem of the origin of speech. Some gestures explain themselves immediately ; of some the origin is not apparent at first sight, but reveals itself after a little reflection ; of others again no certain explanation has been, or is even likely to be, found. Such gestures as bowing or shaking hands require no explanation ; the gesture of shaking the head in sign of refusal does not explain itself at first, but after a little reflection we recognise it as identical with the gesture of an infant who has been fed to satiety ; the efforts of the child to remove its mouth from the range of the loaded spoon produce that horizontal oscillation of the head which is now employed to indicate any kind of refusal. Of shrugging the shoulders in sign of deprecation, of biting the thumb in sign of contumely, the origin is as obscure as that of any spoken word.

Gesture includes any muscular motion by means of which we endeavour to impart our thoughts to others; it therefore comprises gestures of the mouth as well as gestures of the hands and feet. Now let us return for a moment to the aforesaid infant, obsessed by the attentions of an overanxious mother; foiled in his efforts to withdraw his mouth from the proffered morsel, he finds the object of his aversion already between his lips; he has no other resource but to close his teeth, and in his excitement he will probably utter sounds from his throat; the sound he will produce will be that which we represent by the dental *n*. Such we may conjecture to be that natural fact which has associated this sound with the idea of negation not only in the Aryan speech but in many languages of independent origin.

The language of speech then, according to this view, is a species of the older and more universal language of gesture. It has superseded the latter, because it has been found in practice to be more adaptable and capable of greater diversity of form; "The voice," says Aristotle, "is the most imitative of all our parts." It has the additional advantages of requiring far less muscular exertion and of being perceptible by the ear. As Zeus, the son of Kronos, dethroned his parent and left him to reign in the realm of Tartarean darkness,

so language, the child of gesture, has dethroned its parent and left it to reign among ignorant savages and in the silence of the dumb; and as Zeus, when his own throne was in danger, was compelled to seek aid from the fallen Titan, so, when speech fails us, as when we are stranded in a remote French village or suffering from an acute cold, or when our ears and those of our neighbours are obsessed by some overpowering din, we are forced to revert to the older language of imitative gesture, a language which in range and expressiveness is by no means so restricted as some would have us suppose.

Let us follow the growth of another speech germ, of which it may be said that as a seed it is "the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

There is in Greek a word *sizein*, meaning "to sizzle"; it is used by Homer to express the noise made by the Cyclop's eye when the red-hot stake was thrust into it. It is also used for the sound made by boiling water. The most confirmed agnostic would not deny that the origin of this word is patent and indisputable. There is another word *zein*, meaning "to boil," which may be regarded as a simpler and unfrequentative form of the first word; from it we get the word "zeal" = boiling,

and " eczema " ; it may be compared to a word in English of similar meaning, " to seethe." Now the most noticeable symptom of boiling is the disturbance of the surface of the water by the rising of bubbles, and as this symptom also belongs to the process of fermentation, we find the same root employed to express this idea also ; in this meaning the word appears in the English " zymology," the science of fermentation.

Again, the most noticeable characteristic of fermentation is the appearance of spontaneous motion and activity in something formerly inert and lifeless. Hence we find the same word applied to all manifestations of the quickening spirit—in short, to the notion of " life " in general, in which form it appears in the word " zoology."

Now it has been observed by travellers that negroes who have no word for " to be " in their own language often employ the word " to live " in its place. " Your hat no *lib* where you put him, sah," said a negro servant for " Your hat *is* not where you put him." We must not suppose that this deficiency is peculiar to negro tongues ; for it is a law of thought (and, therefore, of language) that the narrower concept precedes the wider one. To be defective, then, in such a wide concept as that of " being " simply marks a language in a certain stage of development. At such a stage the Aryan tongue must at some time have

been, and when the need of such a concept first came to be felt, what was more natural than that the word for "to live" should be employed for this purpose, just as we know the negro to employ it? Such, then, it may be conjectured, is the origin of the *s* in the English "is," the Latin "esse," the German "sein," and many other cognate forms. Every one of these links of thought may be confirmed by analogies from other sources. The connection between boiling and motion is found in the use of the Latin "fervere," "to boil." "Litora fervere prospiceres," says Virgil—"you might see the shores moving with men." The connection between motion and life is found in the English word "quick." The connection between "life" and "being" is found in the Latin "fui," the past tense of "to be," derived from the Greek root "fu," meaning "to grow." Finally, the connection between "fermentation" and "life" is found in the word "ghost," the German "geist," meaning "soul or life," which is derived from a root "gasa," meaning "to ferment," and is simply another form of the word "yeast."

In short, there is a clear logical, as well as a clear philological connection between each term of the series. The wave of thought started by the sound of the boiling kettle has expanded in ever widening circles, till now it comprises the

totality of existence. We have found a ladder by which to escape from the poultry-yard in which Max Müller would have us permanently confined. And after all it is not surprising that man should have the power to construct such an implement; for what is the Kosmos itself but a construction of man's thought? Is it not more surprising that out of the confused and fragmentary elements of sense-perception he should build up this immense and ordered universe, than that out of the elements of one of these senses he should evolve a system of signs by means of which he can imperfectly represent a part of it?

It will be objected to this example of word development that any other sound besides "hissing" would have served the final purpose just as well, for every sound indicates motion of some sort, and so might be used to indicate first life and then actuality in general. This we admit. There could exist no means of determining *a priori* what object the growing idea would first lay hold of in its ascent from the particular to the universal; all we can be sure of is that it would lay hold of whatever was nearest to hand, and what this might be at each stage would largely be determined by accident. Our only reason for believing the *s* in "is" to have been originally an imitation of the hissing of water, is that we can show the idea in each of the separate

stages of its ascent. There is doubtless an infinity of ways in which a word meaning existence might have been evolved; the business of philology is to discover in what way such a word was evolved in the languages actually known to us.

The objections of the agnostics to this theory have weight only when they are directed against a false conception of the theory. The contention of Max Müller that interjections are generically different from words and cannot become the germ of words is perfectly sound. If in a moment of disgust I ejaculate "Ugh!" I am not using a word but an interjection pure and simple. If, however, in all calmness and under the influence of reflection I endeavour to reproduce this sound in order to call up in my neighbour's mind the idea which formerly preceded it, then I am employing a word proper. An interjection is merely a natural fact; it is no more language than the banging of a door or the crackling of fire, but like any other sound it becomes a word when its relation to fact is inverted, that is to say, when it becomes a cause of the idea of disgust instead of being a result of this idea. The fact, however, that in the case of the interjection we reproduce the sound on the same organ by which it was first produced, inclines the mind to confuse the natural fact with the artificial imitation of it. In the same way when a child averts his head

from the breast or ejaculates " Na ! na ! " through its closed teeth, it is not employing a gesture or a word proper. It is only when we reproduce these actions by an act of deliberate symbolism to indicate our aversion to some other proposition that we are using real language.

We will conclude by considering some other words which still show clear vestiges of having been once what Aristotle calls them, imitations of things.

" Busy," i.e. buzzy, like a hive of bees. Compare the phrase " to make things hum."

" Luck," German " gluck," English " to click for," an imitation of the sound of the tossed coin struck on the table.

" To love," German " lieben " ; Latin " labium " =lip, " libido "=lust ; Greek " lipto "=I desire ; English " lap," originally to touch with the lips ; compare Greek " philein "=to kiss, to love.

Greek " kakos "=bad, nasty ; compare Latin " cacare "=to defæcate, and English nursery-word " to do cacas."

Greek " o-on "=an egg, an imitation by the lips of the shape of an egg.

Greek " ma-o "=to desire strongly, an imitation of the voice of a lamb bleating for its mother.

Latin " elementum "=a letter of the alphabet, seems to be the sound of the letters *lmn*, used to signify the whole series, just as our grandparents

spoke of learning their Latin Grammar as learning "hic, hæc, hoc."

Greek "gluku"=sweet (found in "glycerine"), originally the noise of some one licking his palate, and because honey and sweet things are sticky, "gluten"=glue. By this connection of thought we may find an explanation of Greek "mellein" =to delay, from "mel"=honey. Compare Latin "hæsito"=I stick or delay. Similarly Russian "medleet"=to delay, may be connected with Russian "med"=honey.

Latin "fu"=to be (found in "future"), may be originally an imitative word meaning "to blow," the train of thought being: Latin "fu"= to be; Greek "fuomai"=to grow; Greek "fuo" =to beget; Greek "futeuo"=to plant; Latin "futuo"=to have coitus; Greek "fusao"=to blow.

For the last link of thought compare English "to blow"=to breed—"When each fly has blown, there will be millions" (Mayhew); also "by-blow"=bastard—"I thought he was a gentleman's son though he was a by-blow" (*Tom Jones*), also Latin "flo"=I blow, "flos" =flower. The ancients attributed the genetic orgasm to air. Compare Aristotle, *De Generatione*, cap. 20: "That pleasure happens in coition is not only from the seed being cast out, but from the compressed air (pneuma) by which the seed is expelled."

In "line," "linen," and "linseed" we have a sound which from time immemorial has signified "flax." That flax was used for the strings of musical instruments may be inferred from Homer's "linon upo kalon aeiden"="the flax sang beautifully in answer," said of the boy playing to the vintagers on a cithara. That "lin" is a natural and effective way of imitating a musical note we can see from Tennyson's "The mellow linlan-lone of evening bells."

The root "mah" seen in Latin "magnus," Sanscrit "maha," compare "maharajah"=great king, means large. It may be noticed that many words signifying "surprising" have come to mean simply "large," e.g. "prodigious," "portentous." We may conjecture, therefore, that "mah" was originally the sound of opening the mouth wide in expression of astonishment.

The evolutionist theory, whether right or wrong, has at least one great merit; it does offer a complete explanation of something, whereas the agnostic theory, which can conceive of nothing more fundamental than a Sanskrit root, explains nothing. There is an Indian legend which asserts that the earth rests upon the back of an elephant, and the elephant stands upon the back of a tortoise; concerning the "locus standi" of the tortoise it tells us nothing. In the same way

these philosophers take us from English to Latin, from Latin to Sanskrit, from Sanskrit to the five hundred roots of which Sanskrit is said to be composed; these five hundred roots are left, like the fabulous tortoise, poised in empty space.

Hence a modern textbook of comparative philology, instead of being one of the most interesting, is one of the dullest kind of treatises that one can open; it is merely an immense pile of uninstructive, unassimilable facts. After reading such a treatise the night which formerly involved the mind respecting the origin of speech is filled with a thick fog. Explanation is the reference of the unknown to the known. What sort of satisfaction does the enquirer receive when he is referred from English to Greek, of which he knows little, and from Greek to Sanskrit, of which he knows nothing? In reply to his request for the explanation of a certain fact, he is offered ten more facts, all as unaccountable as the fact with which he started. A Sanskrit form may provide the essential link in some chain of association which connects an extant word with its root in the soil of human nature, and in that case it is a valuable discovery; otherwise the knowledge of Sanskrit throws no more light on the dark places of philology than existed before Sanskrit was discovered.

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH OF SPEECH

There is an insect which people avoid,
Whence is derived the verb "to flee."

THIS etymology, though advanced by a Fellow of Christchurch, Oxford, is not strictly accurate. It is true that the noun and the verb are connected, but not in the way Lewis Carroll invites us to believe. From the same Anglo-Saxon root, found in *fleogan*, "to escape," are derived both the verbs "to fly" and "to flee," also the nouns "fly" and "flea."

We have selected this word to exemplify a process which we will call the cleaving or divarication of sounds, a process which has played a most important part in the evolution of language. When the Genius of Humanity set himself the task of finding names "for all cattle, and for the fowl of the air, and for every beast of the field," he was faced by a difficulty—shortage of material. A few names existed ready to hand, fashioned by

Nature herself, but what were they among so many? It is true that one name can serve for many things, yet there is a limit to the principle of communism in nomenclature; words are surprisingly elastic, yet they have a breaking-point: if a name is required to mean too much, it will end by meaning nothing.

That the difficulty was solved in due time we know, and also that no name was ever arbitrarily attached to its nominate; yet by what miracle have the few score of names provided by nature been multiplied so as to suffice for every animate and inanimate object which man can think of?

The multiplication of names was effected by slow degrees through the alternate segregation and congregation of the parts of the same nation. When some tribe of nomad humanity became so numerous that "the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell together," it became necessary for the community to break itself into two, and for these to lead forth their flocks in different directions under different leaders. There would now be two tribes speaking the same tongue, yet holding no communication; hence would arise differences of speech, for the children of each tribe, mishearing the sounds uttered by their parents, or failing of that complete co-ordination of the nerves of ear and tongue by

which adults can exactly reproduce the sounds which they hear, would alter them sometimes in the same, sometimes in different directions; and when in course of time these two tribes, abandoning their nomad life and with it the need of separation, became united once more into one, they would find many words were sounded among them in two different ways. Now, if it chanced that any of these names was already performing the functions of two, these two functions were now accommodated with two functionaries; the separate forms acquired separate uses, and the divarication of sound was used to signify a divarication of meaning. Thus, for example, the Anglo-Saxon race at some period of their history were released from the necessity of calling all fugitive insects "fleas," as children still do, since for the winged kind they had one name and for the unwinged another.

This example illustrates the process of divarication in its simplest form; sometimes, however, the various shapes of a word are far more numerous. Thus, of the word "grave" we have the collateral forms "groove" and "grove" (properly a cutting through trees), also the Greek "graph" and the Latin "scribe." But undoubtedly the most highly divaricated word in the language is the Anglo-Saxon *sceran*, "to cut"; this word

appears in its simple form in scar, score, shear, shire, share, sheer, shore, and with a dental suffix in short, shirt, skirt, and sherd.

The only cause which we have suggested for the change of word-forms is the imperfect reproduction by the hearer of sounds heard; to this cause we may assign all those modifications which we observe commonly among children and unlearned persons, i.e. abbreviation, as "mam" for "madam"; transposition, as "wops" for "wasp"; intrusion of consonants, e.g. "acrost" for "across," "gound" for "gown," "Victoriar, our Queen" for "Victoria, our Queen." In this way "antecessor" became "ancestor," "numero" became "number," "malagma" became "amalgam," "paralysis" became "palsy."

There is, however, another and opposite kind of change in the form of words which is made consciously by the speaker, namely, lengthening. In order to understand this we must consider briefly how significant sounds are formed. When we speak, a note of a certain pitch is produced by the vocal chords; in passing out through the mouth it suffers two modifications; the mouth is a sound-box of variable size, possessing a musical pitch of its own, which varies accordingly, and when this pitch coincides with the pitch of some one or other of the harmonics of the original

note, it reinforces this harmonic and produces one of those differences of quality which we know as the different vowel sounds. The mouth is also a box which can be opened or shut, and the noise of this opening and shutting is what we call a consonant. It will appear that the sound of this double action of shutting and opening is represented in writing sometimes by one letter, as the *t* in "cater," sometimes by two different letters, as the *nt* in "canter," sometimes by a repetition of the same letter, as the *tt* in "scatter."

Vowel sounds are of two species, long and short, i.e. those which, like the *a* in "father," can be prolonged, and those which, like the *e* in "let," cannot. The reason of this seems to be that in forming the short vowels the throat is in such a position as to emit a large quantity of air, so that the lungs are immediately emptied of wind; hence it is necessary to close or partly close the mouth in order to lessen the expense of wind, if speech is to continue; in other words, such vowels must always be followed instantly by a consonant; from this cause is derived the rule that short vowels are followed by double consonants, e.g. "letter," and long vowels by single consonants, e.g. "later." After a short vowel, as in "letter," the shutting of the mouth is done

with some force and quickness, and is clearly audible and distinguishable from the noise of the subsequent opening. After a long vowel, however, as in "later," the closing of the mouth is done softly and only the noise of the opening mouth is clearly heard; the two sounds of shutting and opening after the short vowel are represented by the double consonant. Hence the double consonant has come to indicate the shortness of the vowel preceding it.

We have seen that after a short vowel the consonant follows instantly, and is made audible by means of this vowel proceding, e.g. "nod"; but that after a long vowel the consonant is not so made audible, therefore it needs a vowel to follow it, e.g. "no-de." Hence it has come about that the *e* following a consonant indicates that the preceding vowel is long.

These facts are important, because the practice of indicating the short and long vowels in English in this way has been called irrational. Having seen what is the essential difference between short and long sounds, let us consider in what ways a short sound can be lengthened without losing its distinctive character.

This can be effected—

(1) By iteration, e.g. "cross," "criss-cross."

(2) By mutation, that is, by changing the

short vowel into a long one, e.g. "God," "Gawd," or "Gahd," or into a diphthong, e.g. "till," "toil."

(3) By nasalisation, e.g. "stick," "sting." This means that the air is diverted through the narrower passage of the nose and so can be prolonged at will.

(4) By dilation, e.g. "through," "thorough." In this case adjacent consonants are separated.

(5) By augmentation, e.g. "spouse," "espouse." This is the result of making the closing of the mouth more forcible and therefore audible.

The words which most commonly undergo lengthening are those which the Germans call "time-words" and which we call "verbs"—those which signify some process in time. The purpose of this lengthening is to indicate a process continued or repeated; what is called the "present tense" by grammarians is really the form of the word signifying continuous action. Examples of such lengthening are—Iteration: Greek "do" = give, "didomi" = I am giving; mutation: Greek "khar" = rejoice, "khairo" = I am rejoicing; nasalisation: Latin "vic" = conquer, "vinco" = I am conquering; dilation: Russian "chtu" = read, "cheetayu" = I am reading; augmentation: Greek "sta" = stand, "histamai" = I am standing.

The change of sounds into sounds which they resemble is not hard to understand; what is not so easy to understand is the apparent change of sounds into others totally dissimilar. For example, the French word "national" was once pronounced as it is written; why has it come to be pronounced "nassional"? There appears to be no resemblance between the sounds of *s* and of *t*.

This apparent difficulty is caused by regarding the letters rather than the sounds; the mind always tends to identify things signified by the same sign, so that we naturally think that the *t* in "tea" is the same sound as the *t* in "toe." But it can be shown that this is not the case. When we are preparing to utter the sound "toe" our mouth is already in position to form the sound *o*, and when we are preparing to utter the sound "tea" our mouth is already in position to give the sound *ee*; therefore the sound of *t* in "tea" is in reality a different sound from the sound of *t* in "toe," although they are signified in writing by one sign; as the sound of *t* in "tea" is similar to the sound of *sh*, it has a constant tendency to change into that sound; but the sound of *t* in "toe" has no such resemblance and no such tendency to change into that sound. The truth is that every

consonant is a different sound according to the vowel that follows it, and has different affinities. If, then, we look from the sign to the thing signified, we shall find no more difficulty in understanding the change of the *t* in "nation" to *sh*, as in the English pronunciation "nashon," and to *s* in the French pronunciation "nassion," than in any other change of consonants.

In view of these facts we must beware of speaking carelessly of any change in the pronunciation of words as decay or degradation. A very striking example of this fault is to be found in Mr. Bridge's book on the pronunciation of English. In this work he makes frequent references to the degradation and deterioration of English, yet in no part does he give an adequate definition of the meaning of these terms. If he means that all change in the pronunciation of words is decay, then the decay of language and the growth of language are identical processes, which is absurd. If, however, he means that some changes are for the better and some for the worse, then he should make clear his standard of excellence. Thus, of the two current modifications of the word "mistress," namely, "Mrs." and "Miss," he may hold one to be the result of decay and the other of growth, but which does he believe to be which? Here he leaves us in complete uncertainty.

Or possibly he may hold that any change involving contraction or loss of sounds is decay and deterioration; yet this view would lead him to unwelcome results, for if loss of sounds be deterioration, then acquisition of sounds must be amelioration, and we must believe that the English "trousers" is a better word than its ancestor, the French "trousses," since it has acquired an additional sound; or that the English "cellar" is better than the Latin "cella" for the same reason. Yet this belief we know Mr. Bridges does not hold, since he protests against the pronunciation of Victoria as "Victoriar."

It is Mr. Bridges' avowed intention to arrest the changes which are taking place in the contemporary pronunciation of English by the introduction of a new phonetic alphabet. We have nothing to say against the alphabet, which has many excellent and attractive features, but against the end which he hopes to achieve by its introduction. The whole of Mr. Bridges' argument is based upon an assumption which he makes no attempt in any part of his book to demonstrate, namely, that all changes in the current pronunciation of English are from the better to the worse. That there are reasons for doubting the validity of this assumption we have attempted briefly to indicate.

It would, indeed, be possible to argue that language has now grown far enough, having found names for all things in heaven and earth and under the earth, and that all further growth must prove useless and unfruitful, and had better be checked. Just as the gardener clips off the tops of his bean-stalks when they have reached the extremities of his bean-poles, so we might propose to clip off the excrescent shoots of language now that its branches have extended in all directions to the confines of reality. But have they? Is not this an audacious and unwarrantable assumption? How dare we assert of the future what has never been true of the past?—that no new thought will be born to seek utterance, that the brain of the creator has grown tired, and that the springs of evolution have run dry. Is reality indeed a dead bean-pole, or is it not rather a living tree, whose form can only be followed by a language itself living and growing?

CHAPTER III

SPEECH AND THOUGHT

THERE is a poem by Matthew Arnold in which the writer compares the souls of men to islands scattered in the main; at their invisible bases they are united into one vast continent, and in rare moments they become conscious of that deep-seated unity; but for the most part they are only sensible of the distance which divides them one from another, by reason of the divine ordinance

> Which bade between their shores to be
> The unplumbed salt estranging sea.

The poem is entitled "Isolation."

It is this title to which we desire to call attention. The word "isolation" is another form of "insulation"; "insula" is derived from "in" and "salum," the sea, and "salum" means originally "the salt." From this it may be seen that Matthew Arnold's poem is simply an expansion of the image involved in the

word "isolation," and that the whole poem is already latent in the word which the poet has chosen for his title.

We have taken this example to illustrate an aspect of the science of philology which is too often overlooked. Philology reveals to us not only the source of words, but also the source of notions themselves; it searches out, in the first place, the particular relations of sounds, but in doing so it often lays bare the universal relations of ideas, for language has not grown up at random; in all the sinuosities and divarications of its growth it has followed a pre-established framework, the framework of reality; hence, when we are tracing the origins of words we are also tracing the anatomy of thought, along which language has developed.

Thus the doctrine which is the foundation of Hegel's philosophy, that contrary notions are implicit in each other, cannot better be proved than by pointing to the tendency in language to signify contrary ideas by the same word, e.g. "to let" signifies "to prevent" and "to allow"; "fast" is an intensive both of fixity and of movement; "personne" means in French "some one" and "no one"; "black" and "bleach" are derived by philologists from the same root; "with" in "withstand" means "against" (com-

pare German "widerstehen"; it also means "along side of"); "nay" means in English "no," in Greek "yes"; "pravo" in Russian means "straight," in Latin it means "crooked." Hence the philologist who derived "lucus 'a non lucendo'" is not so laughable as he is sometimes made to appear.

Again, the famous contention on which Bergson's philosophy rests, that the vulgar notion of time is merely a copy of the notion of space, cannot be more simply proved than by showing how all our words of time had formerly a spatial meaning. Thus formerly "by and by" meant "near," French "maintenant"=now meant "in the holding hand," Latin "annus"=year meant "a ring" (compare "anus"), Greek "kairos"=the right time meant "the right or deadly spot for striking your enemy." It is this aspect of philology which renders its study of interest not only to its own specialists but to all who have any leaning towards speculative thought. This fact needs to be forcibly stated, because we have been told recently by persons of no small learning and authority that the ordinary speaker or writer has no call to trouble about the origins of the words which he uses, and that he had best leave such matters to the expert philologist.

Mr. Kipling, in his story entitled *Naboth*,

tells how he granted permission to a starving beggar, to whom he had already given alms, to establish a sweetmeat-pitch against a thick shrubbery which formed the boundary of his garden. "Remember," says Mr. Kipling, "there was only Naboth, his basket, the sunshine, and the gray dust when the sap of my Empire first began." The sweetmeat seller prospered in his business, and day by day encroached on the garden of his benefactor, until at last he had built a hut and penned off a large portion of ground surrounded by a strong mud wall. This, as Mr. Kipling says, is an allegory of empire.

The same sequence of events enacted on a larger scale resulted in one of the severest political storms which ever shook the Roman Republic, when the two brothers Gracchus attempted in turn to recover for public use the public land which by process of gradual encroachment had been absorbed by a number of wealthy proprietors, "possessores" as they were called. Indeed, Kipling's tale is but a fable of what has happened and is happening daily in every community, and is a sarcastic comment on the origin of many forms of legal possession. The word "possession" itself, however, tells the same tale in yet shorter form, for possession is but "porro-session," i.e. sitting down further on.

In various names for "woman" we may learn what were her chief functions in earlier times. In "daughter"=milker we see her in the nomadic stage; in Latin "mulier"=miller, corn-grinder, we see her in a later but still primitive order of society; in English "wife"=weaver and also "spinster" we see her exercising what was her chief function from then up to the beginning of the modern era. In "sister"=sewster we see her in a capacity which she fulfills to the present day. In the names Slav and Serb we see in what capacity the more civilized nations of Europe first became acquainted with that great race which is perhaps destined to become the foremost in Europe.

Sometimes it is the immutable connections of things which we discern with pleasure in tracing the origin of words; for example, in the connection between "aqua" (water) and "æquus" (even) we recognize the inalienable property of water, the tendency to seek its own level; again, the word "blight," originally "be-light," reveals an early recognition of the fact, only recently established on a scientific basis, that electrical conditions stimulate the activity of the micro-organisms of decay.

Sometimes it is the changes which have taken place in the connections of things which we discover with surprise; for just as zoology can throw

light upon geology by showing the former unity of lands now separate, so philology can throw light upon history by showing the former identity of notions now distinct. For example, the Latin word for "marriage" is "matrimonium," which means properly motherhood; to marry a woman was in Roman phrase to lead her into motherhood —"ducere in matrimonium." That the Romans should have used the same word for motherhood and for marriage indicates that they were ignorant of two of the evils which affect modern society—motherhood without marriage and marriage without motherhood.

We have said that philology in tracing the roots of words traces also the roots of ideas; hence it is a great aid to clearness of thought; for an idea which is attached to its root cannot stir: severed from its root it wanders abroad, and the word which signifies it wavers in meaning; this wavering irritates the mind as a flickering light irritates the eye, and the attempt to fix again the meaning of such words is a favourite exercise of philosophers and men of letters. Often, however, the shortest, if not the only way of achieving this end is to follow the guide-post of philology and to attach them again to the root from which they sprang.

For example, much time has been spent in

debating the meaning of the word "classic." What is a classic? Why are not modern authors classics? Why does the idea of "classic" involve some notion of difficulty and dullness? are questions which rise in the mind when we hear this word used. The simplest answer to all these questions is that a "classical" author is one whose works are proper to be studied in class; from this notion all the other attributes of "classic" will be seen to spring. For those works only are proper to be studied in class which the difficulties of an ancient or a foreign tongue render inaccessible without special study, and those only are worthy of such study whose excellence is such as to compensate the student for the time and labour so spent.

What is a "novel"? How does it differ from the epic and other kinds of fictitious narrative which preceded it? The word itself supplies the answer; stories are either ancient or novel; in the days of primitive simplicity, mankind derived a never-failing delight from hearing the ancient tales retold; the art of the story-teller consisted not in creating new fictions, but in revivifying the old ones. There is a story of an English tourist in the Highlands questioning a lad whom he met on the road. "What do they give you for breakfast, my lad?—Porridge.—And what

for dinner?—Porridge.—And the same for supper? —Yes.—Don't you get tired of porridge every day?—And why should I tire o' my food?" We sometimes wonder if the ancient Greeks did not weary of the everlasting round of the epic cycle; probably, however, if one could have questioned them on this head, they would hardly have understood the point of the enquiry. But at some period in the growth of civilisation a change takes place; with luxury comes its attendant spirit, "ennui"; the old tales no longer amuse.

Homer, formerly the guest of kings, has become a vagrant ballad-seller, patronised only by the lowest of society. At the tables of the great and wealthy sit the tellers of new stories; though perhaps there are no new stories to be found, yet with new names and new scenes an appearance of unfamiliarity can be given to the ancient themes, sufficient to revive the jaded palate of the listener; but the appetites which proceed not from natural necessity but from the *soif de plaisir* are not easily satisfied: as all quarters of the world were ransacked to discover some new morsel to lay on the tables of the Roman epicure, so the skies are swept and gutters scavenged to provide some new thrill for the modern gourmands of fiction, and when the resources of earth

are exhausted, the remaining planets are summoned to contribute variety of scene, and when past and present are depleted, the future is laid under contribution, as far as the searchlights of science can render it dimly visible. Such is the genesis and motive cause of the novel.

"Language," say the philologists of the new school who are bent on reforming our spelling, "can, like anything else, a horse or a watch, be considered from two points of view: as an object of theoretical study or as a tool of practical utility; you do not think about the anatomy of your horse whenever you get on his back to make a journey, or of the mechanism of your watch whenever you look at the time; in like manner you do not need to think about the origins of words whenever you are using them as a means of communication." To this we reply: If you ride your horse without thinking of his anatomy, you will probably end by breaking his back; if you wind your watch without reflecting on its mechanism, you will be likely to end by breaking its mainspring; so if you use words without thought of their origin, you may in course of time and with the help of many more of the same creed succeed in adding one or two more to the stock of damaged and useless words with which our language is already encumbered.

CHAPTER IV

METAPHOR, OR THE TRANSFERENCE OF NAMES

I

"A NAME of anything," says Aristotle, "is either its own name or one transferred to it from something else." Thus, if I call a young goat "a kid," I am calling it by its own name, but if I call a young human "a kid," I am calling him by the name of something else. Now, if we accept the belief that speech has evolved from the imitation of natural sounds, all names must be regarded as transferred, except those few which have a counterpart in nature, and even these must be regarded as transferred in a sense; that is to say, they are transferred from the sound to the cause of the sound; thus when we speak of a "cuckoo," we mean not the sound which the bird makes, but the bird which makes the sound.

"Names," says the same philosopher, "are transferred in four ways."

Firstly, the name of the species is transferred to the genus; thus the Latin name "felis," a cat, has been transferred to the whole genus of which the cat is a species. "Chattel" meant formerly "cattle," a species of movable property; it has since been transferred to movable property in general.

Secondly, the name of the genus is transferred to the species: thus "fowl" in old English was applied to the whole feathered race; it has since been transferred to one species, "Gallus gallinaceus." "Poet" in old Greek meant a "maker" in general, but in classical Greek it meant one species of maker, namely, a maker of songs and dramas.

Thirdly, the name of one species is transferred to another species. It is evident that if a name is transferred from one species to another it must be transferred to a species of some other genus, for the species of the same genus are mutually exclusive; thus, if "horse" were also used to signify "cow," it would signify neither one nor the other with any clearness. "Horse," however, can be transferred to the species of another genus, e.g. to a species of domestic furniture, without loss of clearness.

A few instances may be found in which a name has been transferred from one species to another

of the same genus; thus, the Latin "nepos," meaning "a father's child," has been transferred in the form "nephew" to a brother's child, i.e. from one species of blood-relationship to another. Such cases are, however, very rare.

Fourthly, names are transferred according to analogy. By this Aristotle means that when A is to B as C is to D, the name of A can be used to indicate C. Thus, as the helmsman is to the ship, so the ruler is to the State, so that the Latin "gubernator," a helmsman, is used in the form "governor" to indicate the ruler of a State. Or as salt is in food, so are wit and humour in literature, so that the name "salt" can be used to indicate these qualities in literature. By this species of "metaphora," or transference, Aristotle means precisely what we mean by "metaphor."

These four relationships are far from being the only connections of thought which are employed in the transference of names from idea to idea. Not less important than those mentioned by Aristotle are the relations of cause and effect, part and whole, substance and quality.

Effect to Cause.

The affections of the mind are not known to us directly, but only by their outward effects;

hence the name of the effect has to be used to indicate its cause. Thus, "spott" (spittle) in German signifies contempt; "logos" (speech) in Greek means thought or reason.

Cause to Effect.

Sometimes mental affections are indicated by the name, not of their effect, but of their cause. Thus, *happiness*, *felicity*, *eudaimonia* all mean firstly "good fortune," and secondly the mental state which is the result of good fortune.

Sometimes a thing is named both after its cause and its effect. Thus we call a certain common distemper "a cold," from its supposed cause; the French call it a "rhume" (i.e. a streaming), from its undoubted effect. We call death from want of air "suffocation," i.e. "sub-faucation," or throttling, one of its causes; we also call it "asphyxia," i.e. non-pulsation of the heart, one of its symptoms or results.

Part to Whole.

"Greek" was formerly the name of a small tribe of Hellenes inhabiting Epirus, with whom the Romans first came in contact; it was afterwards transferred by them to the whole Hellenic race.

"Tea" is the name of a beverage; it is also applied to a meal consisting of bread, butter, jam, and other light comestibles, of which it commonly forms a part.

Whole to Part.

"Elephas" in Greek means firstly an elephant. It is also applied to that part of the elephant which is chiefly valued by man, namely, ivory. "Mamma," the universal Aryan word for "mother," is also given to that part of the mother which is her distinguishing feature.

Substance to Quality.

"Kind" means originally "family," "kindred"; it has been transferred to that disposition of mind which is (or was once) characteristic of the members of one family towards each other, —willingness to help and protect.

"Heliotrope" means firstly a certain flower, and secondly the peculiar colour of this flower.

Quality to Substance.

This is the commonest of all transferences. "Brief" means short; it also means a short summary of a legal case.

"Mundus" in Latin means clean and orderly; it was also applied to the universe of things,

which appeared to the ancients as distinguished by orderliness. Some things have received names at different times from different qualities; thus the sea is called by us "the deep," by the Romans "the level" ("æquor"), by the Greeks "the salt" ("hals").

The above is far from being an exhaustive list of those bridges of thought which are crossed and recrossed by names in their manifold mutations; to achieve such a list would be a long, if not an impossible task, for language develops along the framework of the real, and though the larger limbs of this frame are finite and numerable, its lesser ramifications are scarcely so. Let it suffice, then, to say that whenever two ideas are connected in such a way that the one cannot be thought of without the other, the name of the first can, when necessity arises, be transferred to the second.

In its earliest stages the growth of language is upwards; that is to say, from the species to the genus, from the effect to the cause, from the part to the whole. This cannot be otherwise, since we know the species before we know the genus, the effect before we know the cause, the part before we know the whole. In the later stages, however, the reverse processes are equally

frequent; downward growth succeeds to upward growth, but without a certain measure of upward growth there could be no downward growth.

Since the Norman conquest and the subsequent infusion of foreign elements into the language, the growth of the native elements of the language has been constantly downwards. Thus "wag," the German "bewegen," meant formerly to move in general; it is now applied to a few humble species of motion, such as that of a dog's tail. "Wean," the German "gewöhnen," meant formerly to accustom; it is now only applied to accustoming a child to do without the breast. "Deer" the German "thier," the Greek "theer," meant formerly a wild beast of any species; it is now applied to one species only. "Wrangle" meant formerly to debate or dispute; it was applied to the philosophical and scientific debates held in the universities, hence "senior wrangler"; it is now applied only to debating angrily and about trivial matters.

"Lust" meant formerly desire in general; it is now applied only to the carnal aspect of sexual desire.

"Loom" meant formerly a tool or implement, as in heirloom. It is now applied only to an instrument of weaving.

II

When we speak of the transference of names, we are employing an image from spatial motion, but there is an important difference to be noticed in the things compared. When I transfer an object in space, the object quits its first position in process of assuming the second; but when I transfer a name from one thing to another, the name does not cease thereby to belong to the thing from which it was transferred. It is indeed possible to transfer signs from one meaning to another, just as objects are transferred in space; thus I can use x to signify 6 in one calculation and 7 in another, and at the moment when it begins to signify 7 it ceases to signify 6. But this is not the way in which words are transferred in living speech. A word acquires a second meaning not by losing its first, but by keeping it; it does not lose its first meaning except in process of acquiring a third.

The motion of words in the development of speech may be most fitly compared to that of a man climbing along a horizontal ladder. At any moment of his career he is suspended by one hand to the bar above him, and with the other he is either releasing his hold of the bar behind him or reaching out to the bar in front. Let us take

an example. "To spoil" means firstly "to skin an animal," secondly "to strip a dead body," thirdly "to deprive in general," fourthly "to mar utterly," fifthly "to pamper," and in slang phrase, by a more violent transference, "to desire strongly," as in the sentence "He is spoiling for a fight." (In order to understand this last metaphor we must call up the picture of hay "spoiling" for want of cutting, or a sauce "spoiling" for want of stirring.) Now, it will be seen that, though the word does not signify all these meanings at once, yet if we take it at any moment of its varied career it signifies not one meaning, but at least two or three. In short, we may say of any word of living speech that it is a sign not of one idea, but a series of related ideas.

On this fact the whole difficulty and the whole art of using language depends, for the purpose of language in art is not simply to convey ideas, but to excite a feeling of attraction or repulsion towards them. Now, as every idea has many affinities, both good and bad, every idea can be named in many ways, and our emotion towards it will be determined, as far as language can determine it, by the character of the relation which we choose in naming it. For example, I might say of a man that he was a "veteran radical" or that he was an "inveterate radical." In both

cases I should convey the same idea, namely, that he was a radical of long standing, but I should be expressing a very different emotion towards this fact. This is because the words "veteran" and "inveterate," though they spring from the same source, have travelled by very different routes in their subsequent history. "Veteranus" in Latin signified a soldier of long standing, "inveteratum" a disease of long standing; and each word brings with it a savour of its past history, exciting prejudice or predilection towards any object to which it may be applied.

Moreover, since words are signs not of one but of many things, it will be possible to combine words in speech in such a way that the ideas primarily conveyed are perfectly congruous, but those incidentally conveyed are incongruous and incompatible. The most obvious case of this is what is called "mixed metaphor." In the cases commonly classed under this name, the prior signification of the names employed is so clearly present in consciousness that it is easy to discover and isolate the discordant elements in them; but in most cases we are only made aware of the latent discord by a vague feeling of dissatisfaction with a particular phrase or turn of speech, and our only guide in avoiding these subconscious dissonances are those irrational attractions and repulsions

which combine to form what is called the literary instinct.

A very similar phenomenon is found in music: just as a living word calls up not one idea but a series of related ideas, so a living note calls up not one but a series of related sounds; the presence of these secondary sounds cannot be discovered by introspection; we are only made aware of them by a vague sense of dissonance which results when they form discordant combinations one with another, marring the effect of chords which are in other respects harmonious. In like manner there are overtones of speech, the presence of which we are unaware of and could not discover by deliberate analysis of the content of consciousness, yet which make themselves felt so soon as we attempt to combine words in such a way as to give pleasure to ourselves and others. Hence the joy of "le mot juste," which strikes some harmonious chord in the lower depths of consciousness; hence that mild annoyance which is provoked by the work of reckless and slipshod writers who are content to thump out their meaning, neglecting the finesse of harmony and orchestration.

The matter will be made clearer by examining a type of language in which the overtones of speech are not only negligible, but proper to be neglected: we mean the language of science. For

in science a word means one thing and one thing only. When a writer on medicine states that "the heart is situated immediately above the stomach," he does not mean by the word "heart" "the tender emotions," as when we speak of "a man without heart," nor does he mean "that part of anything which is farthest from the circumference," as when we speak of "the heart of London," but he means simply a certain organ on the left side of the thorax.

But when Swinburne writes "I hid my heart in a nest of roses," he means all that the word "heart" is capable of meaning. In short, the language of science is exclusive, that of art is inclusive. The words preferred of science are those which connote least, those preferred of art are those which connote most.

This is one of the reasons why science has always shown such a marked predilection for the use of Latin and Greek words in its nomenclature; for the words of a dead language can be used as the words of no living language can be used, simply as signs of one thing without prior or posterior signification, and therefore without capacity to excite attraction or repulsion, emotions foreign to the spirit of scientific research. These same words, so useful to science, are utterly repugnant to art. What poet, for example, could

incorporate such words as "hyperæsthesia," "polygamy," "chloride of sodium" into the texture of his verse? Even Browning's omnivorous Muse could hardly digest them; yet there is nothing unpoetical in the ideas which they convey; take, for example, the last-named element: we have only to call it "salt" and it becomes full of poetic possibilities.

From these considerations we can see in what consists the difficulty of translating a work of literary art. Benedetto Croce, the Italian philosopher, in his remarkable treatise on æsthetics, boldly asserts that translation is impossible, for, as he holds, the act of intuition and the act of expression are but two aspects of a single fact; hence the intuition cannot possibly be separated from the form of words in which it is expressed. This view seems to be corroborated by the fact so often observed, that the most beautiful and telling phrases of one language seem to be despoiled of all their virtue or charm when rendered into another; nevertheless, this view is unacceptable because it assigns to the mere sound or physical vibration a virtue which it cannot possibly possess. We may admit that the charm of a phrase or a line of verse is inseparable from the individual words in which it is embodied, but we must consider the individuality of the words to consist

not in the particular form of their sound, but in the particular series of ideas along which they are moving. Translation, then, of a work of art is possible only when there are to be found words which are at the same point of transition along the same series of ideas in the one language as in the other. Hence, we may say that translation is sometimes possible between languages closely allied to one another, but rarely, if ever, possible between languages which have developed on wholly independent lines.

Hence we may infer that an artificial language, such as Esperanto, can never acquire any literary value, although it may possibly provide a useful vehicle of scientific or philosophic thought; for, as we have shown, the literary instinct consists in a fine sensitiveness to the ulterior signification of words, and the literary art consists in choosing words with due regard to every overtone of meaning; but the words of a language artificially created can have no more ulterior signification than the signs of algebra: a language which has no past can have no future; it is doomed to exist, like inanimate matter, in an eternal present.

There is another important inference to be drawn from the foregoing data. When a name is transferred from one idea to another, it is always by virtue of some element common to

both that the transference is made ; e.g. when the name "pedigree" ("pied de grue") is transferred from the foot of a bird to a genealogical diagram, it is by virtue of a shape common to both that the name is transferred from one to the other. When, however, a name has been twice transferred, there may be nothing common to the extreme terms between which the transference occurs; e.g. if a name is transferred from A to B and from B to C, there may be nothing common to the notions A and C ; or, again, if a name is transferred from A to B and from A to C, there may be nothing common to the notions B and C. For example, the word "gentleman" means originally a man of noble birth, i.e. born of illustrious progenitors. Now, to be so born involves commonly the inheritance of two things: firstly, of a temperament zealous of honour and fearful of dishonour, and secondly, of the wealth by which the community is accustomed to recompense those who have served it by illustrious deeds. The word "gentleman" has been transferred from its first meaning "nobleman" to each of these characteristics of nobility, so that it means on the one hand a man of whatever rank who is zealous of honour, and on the other a man of whatever character who possesses hereditary wealth. Ideas such as those conveyed by the

word "gentleman" are what Aristotle calls homonymous, that is to say, different in kind yet bearing the same name; and it is these homonymous [1] ideas which are the most frequent cause of philosophic error and of vain metaphysical enquiry. For one of the favourite pursuits of philosophy is to seek the definition of common names, e.g. to ask, What is the beautiful? What is art? What is humour? What is a gentleman? Now, if it should happen that any of the names whose definition is sought is applied homonymously, the search is a hopeless one, for it is to seek the common element in ideas which have nothing in common, except a common ancestry.

Such are the theoretical results of our study of name-transference; we will now turn to the practical conclusions to be drawn from the same data. If it be true, as we have striven to show, that the individuality of a word consists in the

[1] It should be noted that this is not precisely what is meant by "homonymous" in modern English. By "homonyms" are meant such words as "bear, an animal," and "bear, to carry," which by a pure accident of speech are identical in sound. This, which we may call "phonetic homonymy," is the concern not of the philosopher but of the punster, since no one is deluded by this accident of speech to confuse dissimilar notions. It is the logical homonymy which philosophy is concerned with, since this alone constitutes a pitfall of thought.

sum of its past and present significations, in so far as these are present to the consciousness of the hearer, and if the art of the literary craftsman consists in using each word in such a way that it does not obscure but rather illuminates the individuality of its neighbours, it must follow that the same words will not have the same individuality for the educated and for the uneducated (since the former alone will be conscious of the full signification of the imported elements of English), and the same language will be the same in sound but not in fact for the two classes which use it; hence those verbal felicities which thrill the one will leave the other unmoved, and what in literature appears excellent to the former will appear worthless to the latter, and conversely. Now, this is exactly what we may observe to be the case: the appreciation of English literature both past and present is a monopoly of the few, and though we English regard ourselves as one nation, we lack the strongest bond of national unity—a common language and a common art.

But not only are the uneducated excluded from the enjoyment of their own nation's literature, they are equally debarred from participation in its science and philosophy; in order to understand how this is so, we must consider again the way in which words first become significant of

ideas and how the language of science and philosophy is developed.

The only way in which a sound can be made significant of an idea is to bring the sound and the idea simultaneously into the mind of the hearer; and the only way in which an idea can be brought into the mind is by indication, by representation, or by signification. Thus, if I wish to make the word "hat" significant to a Frenchman ignorant of its meaning, I must either show him a hat or a picture of a hat, and then utter the sound "hat," or else without showing him anything say "Hat means *chapeau*." In this case I am dealing with one who has already mastered one language, and so I can employ signification; if, however, I am dealing with a child who has not yet mastered one language, signification is useless, since by hypothesis the sign "hat" signifies nothing as yet; there is no use telling it that "hat means hat." It is clear, then, that the meaning of words in the first place can only be taught by indication or representation. Now, the only ideas which can be indicated or represented are ideas of sense; how then is it possible that words can be made to signify ideas *not* of sense, and therefore incapable of indication or representation?

This can be done by analogy, or, as mathema-

ticians call it, proportion. Let us suppose that I wished to convey to some one the notion of the number 20, but had no name for this number, and no means of indicating it to his senses; yet if I could convey the notion of the relation of 1 to 10, and also the notion of 2, I could convey the notion of 20. So if I can convey the notion of a workman and his work and of the universe, all of which can be seen and touched, I can convey the notion of a Creator who cannot be seen or touched or in any way perceived. If I can convey the notion of a letter and of a word and of the world, all of which can be seen and shown, I can convey the notion of an "element" which cannot be seen or shown.

It appears, then, that every name must convey some definite, sensible image, or else it conveys nothing, and no man knows the meaning of any word unless he knows what sensible image it conveys or formerly conveyed. Thus no man knows the meaning of a "crude" work of art, unless he knows that *crude* formerly meant *raw*, or of a "coruscating" style unless he knows that *coruscating* formerly meant *sparkling*; or of "evolution" unless he knows that *evolution* formerly meant *unrolling*. It is utterly impossible to apprehend the ideas which these words convey without the mediation of some sensible

image; once a word becomes disconnected with the sensible image with which it was formerly connected it becomes useless, a mere encumbrance to the language, a piece of dropsical verbiage, a pitfall for the careless thinker, a cloak of sham learning, pseudo-science, and all manner of imposture.

Ideas, then, are related to each other as the rungs of a ladder, of which the higher can only be reached by those who have ascended the lower. Now, as we have shown elsewhere, it is a peculiarity of the English tongue that when we desire to convey a sensuous idea we commonly use a native English word, but when we wish to convey an extra-sensuous idea we use the corresponding word in Latin or Greek; thus, when we wish to speak of *looking* with the eyes we call it *looking*, but when we speak of *looking* with the mind we call it *speculation*; when we wish to indicate that food is *tasteless* we call it *tasteless*, but when we wish to indicate the analogous quality in literature we call it *insipidity*. In other words, the ladder of ideas conveyed by the English language is broken short, half-way up, and the higher altitudes of thought are only reached by another ladder, the Latin tongue. In order, therefore, that an English-speaking person may ascend this ladder, he must start again at the bottom

and climb its lower rungs—that is to say, he must master the elements of the Latin tongue; otherwise the upper reaches of thought will remain for ever inaccessible to him.

CHAPTER V

GRAMMAR, OR THE THEORY OF SPEECH

Truly, over the door of the grammar-school there hangs a curtain, yet is that curtain the shroud of falsehood, not the veil of mysteries.—ST. AUGUSTINE.

I

THE "science" of English Grammar begins with a series of definitions. Let us examine them in order. "A noun is the name of anything." Now, *noun* and *name* are two forms of the same word. This definition, then, transgresses the first rule of definition; it repeats the word which it seeks to define. We are left, then, to suppose that this is not a logical definition of a term, but a gloss upon an alien word. In that case the words "of anything" are not wanted. *Name* is a relative term and implies the co-existence of something named; but in translating the word *noun* it is not necessary to expound its logical bearings. If I look up the word *filius* in the dictionary, I do not expect to be told that *filius* means the

" son of a father " ; it is quite enough to say that *filius* means " son." As a definition of a term, then, the above statement is inadequate, as a gloss upon a word it is redundant.

" Nouns are divided into common nouns, proper nouns, abstract nouns, and collective nouns." This is as though we should say, " Animals are divided into sea animals, land animals, American animals, and tame animals," or " Scotland is divided into Highlands, Lowlands, West Scotland, and Argyll." The subdivisions of a genus should be mutually exclusive ; these divisions overlap in all directions. Three principles of classification are here confused, one grammatical, one logical, and one metaphysical. First, there is the distinction between common and proper, which is a distinction of names ; then the distinction between abstract and concrete, which is a distinction not of names but of ideas ; thirdly, the distinction between individual and dividual, i.e. collective, which is a distinction not of names, nor of ideas, but of things.

" Nouns are of three genders, masculine, feminine, and neuter. Names of males are masculine nouns, names of females are feminine nouns, names of sexless things are neuter nouns."

This is as though we should say, " Nouns are of three political sects, Liberal, Conservative,

and Non-party. Names of Liberals are Liberal nouns, names of Conservatives are Conservative nouns, names of non-political things are Non-party nouns."

The facts of gender are these. Greek names were divided into three *genē*, or kinds, according to certain peculiarities of form. As the majority of the names of males were of one form, this received the name "the male kind," *arsen genos*. As the majority of the names of females were of another form, this received the name "the female kind," *thelu genos*. The third kind was called in early times "the between kind," *metaxu genos*, and later the "neither kind," *oudeteron genos*, which in Latin became *neutrum genus*. As there exist no such distinctions of form in English names, the statement that English nouns are of three genders is utterly pointless.

"A verb is a word by means of which we make an assertion." Now, definition is *per genus et proprium*; that is to say, we define a thing by stating its "kind" and some property which belongs to it and no other member of that kind. Thus a man can be defined as "an animal which laughs." We know that this definition is true because the definition and the term defined are convertible. Every man is an animal which can laugh, and every animal which can laugh is

a man. If then the above is a true definition of a verb we can say, "Every word by which we make an assertion is a verb, and every verb is a word by which we make an assertion." Each of these statements is glaringly untrue. Consider the following sentences:

"Come into the garden, Maud."
"If I were king."
"What is your name?"

Each of these sentences contains a verb, yet none of them makes an assertion. Consider again the following:

"Great Liberal Victory at Preston."
"Wet Paint!"
"Yes."
"The more the merrier."
"In vino veritas."

Each of these sentences makes an assertion, yet none of them contains a verb.

Moreover, the distinction between a verb and other parts of speech is only found in languages belonging to the same structural type as our own. If then every word by which we make an assertion is a verb, and verbs are unknown to the majority of the human race, the majority of the race are incapable of making assertions.

Furthermore, assertions can be made without speech at all. If I glance at my neighbour, indi-

cate a third person and tap my forehead, I assert that the third person is soft-witted, just as well as if I employed spoken language. In this connection it is worthy of note that the word *assertion* originally refers to an assertion made in the language of gesture. *Asserere manum* means to lay hands on a piece of property (especially a slave) in token of laying claim to it. It is true, of course, that we do use verbs in making assertions very frequently, but we also use most of the other "parts of speech." If we begin by saying that a verb is a word by which we make an assertion, we can continue, "a noun is a word by which we ask a question; an adjective is a word by which we give a command." All these statements are equally true and equally inane.

"*Verb* is derived from the Latin word *verbum*, 'a word,' and is so called because it is the most important word in the sentence." Now, the Roman grammarians may have been stupid, but they were not so stupid as this remark would lead us to suppose. No word in a statement is by nature more important than any other, although any word may be the most important in any particular sentence. If I say "Socrates is mortal," all three words are essential parts of the statement, and none is, by its own right, more important than any other. If, however, there is any prefer-

ence to be given, we must say that nouns and adjectives are more important than verbs, for the verb is the part of speech which can be most often omitted without loss of clearness.

The facts of the matter are these. The Greeks called a verb *rhema*, which means "something said." This term is not inapt, because most forms of the Greek verb contain both "subject and predicate" and are complete statements; *grapho* means not "Write," but "I write." The Romans, having no form corresponding to the Greek word *rhema*, translated it very inadequately by the word *verbum*. The term is doubly unsatisfactory in English Grammar. First, because the Latin *verbum* does not translate the Greek *rhema*, and secondly, because the Greek *rhema* does not correspond to the English *verb*.

"An adjective is a word which is used to limit the meaning of a noun." This statement appears at first sight to contradict the most evident facts, for to limit means to restrict, and the effect of placing an adjective against a noun is not to restrict, but to expand the meaning conveyed. The matter becomes clear, however, when we discern in the wording of this definition some dim and muddled recollection of the logical statement that an adjective increases the *content* of a name, but limits its *extent*. The word *meaning*,

however, comprises both *content* and *extent*. If asked the meaning of the word *metal*, I might reply "a hard shiny substance," or else, "gold, iron, silver, etc." The definition, therefore, as above worded is ambiguous and pointless. If, however, we restrict the word *meaning* to denote the extent of a name, the definition becomes untrue. It may be granted that the *effect* of placing an adjective before a name is often to restrict the applicability of the name, but that is not the *purpose* for which it is used. The purpose for which we use the adjective is to extend the content of the name. When I say that "Solomon was a wise king," my object in using the word *wise* is not to limit the potential applicability of the word *king*, but to increase its actual content.

How has it come about that the English nation has no better intellectual food to offer to its children than this parody of science, this amazing concatenation of explanations which obscure, of definitions which confound, of statements which either state nothing or state what is patently untrue? The question may best be answered by dividing it into two, and enquiring severally, Why are English children taught this science? and How has this science come into existence?

The adoption of English Grammar as a subject of instruction in our national schools is an out-

come of the same fallacy which has sterilised our national education from the root upwards. In the early part of the nineteenth century, when the philosophers' dream of universal education was at length embodied in a series of legislative Acts, it became necessary to decide more precisely than the philosophers had done what were the chief constituents of this wonder-working charm, which conferred such advantages on those who possessed it and such disabilities on those who lacked it. Now, from the Middle Ages down to that time, education had been identified with the study of Latin; for no other purpose were founded all our public schools and universities.

Many circumstances, however, conspired to defeat the claims of Latin as a subject of national instruction. The Victorian was an age not of scholarship, but of science. It was in this direction that new worlds of thought and new fields of action were being opened up. The wave of classic culture that burst over Europe in the fifteenth century had spent its force, and a new wave was gathering strength in its wake. The Petrarchs of this period were to be found, not in the library, but in the laboratory; and as the respect for scientific knowledge rose, the respect for scholarship fell. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, and others had written vehemently protesting against the regard

still paid to the study of Greek and Latin, maintaining that the elements of physical science were of more universal interest than those of any other, and were better fitted than the dead languages of Greece and Rome to form the basis of a national education.

Moreover, the decay of Latin teaching (the causes of which we shall examine in a later chapter) was already far advanced. The aim of our public schools was no longer to impart an easy and copious Latinity, such as our forefathers took pride in, nor yet the gift of readily translating the best classical authors; but to develop a curious exotic and sterile species of accomplishment, a faultless Ciceronian prose style. For the accomplishment of this end, not less than ten years were required, of which the first five must needs be devoted to preliminary labouring of the soil, by means of syntactical exercises Naturally, therefore, it was felt that such a discipline was pre-eminently unsuited to children destined to quit study for ever at the age of fourteen years. So it came about that the ship of national education was launched, but its chief cargo was left behind. The play of "Hamlet" was enacted, but to save time the character of the Prince of Denmark was omitted. It was felt, however, that some such discipline as that afforded

by the study of Latin Grammar was an essential ingredient of education. This need was supplied by taking the current textbooks on Latin Grammar and, after abstracting the Latin, reprinting them under the title " English Grammar."

The same decision was reached by another process of reasoning. It is a peculiarity of this country that the wealthier classes throughout the country speak a tongue distinct in idiom and intonation from that of the poorer classes. In the most distant and secluded village of the kingdom, you will find a small knot of more or less well-to-do persons, including the parson, the squire, and the doctor, who speak a dialect distinct from that of the people among whom they dwell, but identical with the dialect of a similar small knot of persons in every village of the kingdom. This uniformity of speech among the wealthy in all parts of the country is an outcome of our university system. To the centres of Oxford and Cambridge the sons of the gentry and the professional classes congregate year by year and live together for a short time in close intimacy. During this period every trace of native accent and local idiom is rubbed away by constant social intercourse and a perfect uniformity of speech is established. From Oxford and Cambridge these men are scattered once more into every part of the king-

dom, and wherever they are found their speech is accepted as the standard of correct English. Through the Public Schools, where they are employed as teachers, their influence is most widely felt; in fact, the dialect in question is acquired by all whose parents are wealthy enough to give them a public-school training.

Now, where teachers trained in our universities or by university men were called upon to instruct the children of the working classes, they observed that the speech of these children differed in many respects from their own, and with an egoism such as we can easily understand and pardon, they took for granted that their own forms of speech were right and those of the poor wrong; and, knowing that the errors which they themselves had made in writing Latin or French were corrected by learning Latin and French Grammar, they inferred that errors in speaking English were to be corrected by learning English Grammar.

That this inference is based upon wholly false premises we shall endeavour to show elsewhere. There is nothing grammatically wrong in the dialects of the poor, or grammatically right in the dialect of the rich. "The grammatical correctness or incorrectness of an expression," says Professor Sayce, "depends upon its intelligibility, that is to say, upon the ordinary use and

custom of a particular language. Whatever is so unfamiliar as not to be generally understood is also ungrammatical. In other words, it is contrary to the habit of the language as determined by common use and consent. . . . Thus, in the dialect of West Somerset, *thee* is the nominative of the second personal pronoun; while in cultivated English the plural accusative *you* has come to represent a nominative singular. Both are grammatically correct within the sphere of their respective dialects but no further. *You* would be as ungrammatical in West Somerset as *thee* in classical English, and both would have been equally ungrammatical in Early English. Grammatical propriety is nothing more than the established usage of a particular body of speakers at a particular time in their history."

"'Im and me's next," cries the London schoolboy, claiming his turn at the wicket.

"What should you have said instead of that?" exclaims the schoolmaster, standing near.

"He and I are next," replies the boy promptly.

"Why did you not say it then?"

"Because they'd all laugh at me, if I talked like that, sir."

Now, it is evident that "within the sphere of their respective dialects" both of the expressions

in question were grammatically correct; that is to say, both were intelligible and agreeable to the habit of the language as determined by common usage and consent. The only grammatical impropriety was committed by the master who expected the boy to use a form of speech in addressing his companions so unfamiliar as to render him ludicrous in their eyes.

The history of Grammar, if it came to be written, would make pleasant reading for the cynic. It would be a story of the march of mind from light to darkness, of the decline of philosophy from vigorous manhood to doddering senility. The first treatise on the subject is to be found in the writings of Aristotle. This philosopher distinguishes eight parts of speech, which he defines in order, with characteristic exactness and penetration. Considered as an analysis of the parts of Greek speech, his exposition could not be bettered. It is worthy of note that the phrase "parts of speech" and the terms "conjunction," "article," "noun," "verb," "case," which he defines, are all in use to-day, but none of them in the sense which he assigned to them. As the names "Punch" and "Judy" still survive in the show so-called, bearing witness to the great drama from which it originated, so these grammatical terms still survive in the schoolroom, bearing

witness to the great intellect who first investigated the facts of speech.

The next extant treatise on this subject is by Dionysius the Thracian. Dionysius is the worthy founder of the long line of grammarians who have made it their chief business to misunderstand, mistranslate, and misapply the distinctions laid down by their predecessors. They are remarkable only for the skill with which they combine two seemingly contrary vices: slavish imitation with wanton perversion of their models. Dionysius begins by enumerating eight "parts of speech," which are the same as those in use to-day, except that he includes the article and the participle and does not recognise the adjective or the interjection. He copies Aristotle's phrase "parts of speech," but he means not "parts of speech," but "kinds of words." These he subdivides into numerous "schemes," or classes. Thus he distinguishes twenty-four classes of names and twenty-six classes of adverbs. Nevertheless, his exposition is terse and lucid; many of his definitions are excellent; however far he may fall short of his model in philosophical insight, he shines in comparison with his successors, and his book is one of the best treatises on grammar in existence.

The Romans borrowed their grammar from the Greeks, and the English borrowed theirs from

the Romans. What the Greek grammarians had preserved intact of the original, the Roman grammarians effaced. What the Romans left discernible of the likeness of truth, the English grammarians obliterated. *Corruptio optimi pessima.* If English Grammar is a subject repulsive alike to learn and to teach, this is because it is a noble science in the last stage of decay.

Its decline is partly due to the incompetence of those who from time to time have undertaken to adapt the theoretical science of language to the practical needs of language-teaching, and partly to the difficulties inherent in the subject itself. The difficulty of many sciences is to distinguish things from the names by which we signify them. The difficulty of grammar is to distinguish names from the things which they signify. All writers on grammar, except Aristotle, have stumbled over this obstacle. They mix up differences in names with differences in things. For example, when we speak of "common" and "proper names" we make a correct distinction between two species of names. If we say that "Jones" is a "proper" name, or "gold" is a "common" name, we mean what we say; we do not mean that Jones is a proper person, or gold a common thing. On the other hand, when we say that "virtue" is an "abstract

name," we mean that it is the name of an abstract quality ; we do not mean that the name is abstract.

If we are to call the names of abstract things " abstract names," we may call the names of tall things " tall names," and so on *ad infinitum*. This is how Dionysius arrives at his twenty-four classes of nouns and his twenty-six classes of adverbs ; but there is no reason why he should have stopped there. If he distinguishes adverbs of time from adverbs of place, he is entitled to distinguish adverbs of quickness from adverbs of slowness, and adverbs of moderate quickness from adverbs of great quickness, and so on till he has a separate class for every adverb in the language. How far men may stray in this direction may be shown by the case of certain grammarians, mentioned by Quintilian, who distinguished a *vocabulum*, a name of that which can be touched and seen, such as " house," " bed," from an *appellation*, which cannot be so perceived, such as " God," " wind," " virtue."

There is, of course, good reason for making such distinctions when they serve a practical purpose. Thus, in Latin, names of abstract qualities are usually feminine. In order to formulate this fact as a grammatical rule, it is permissible to distinguish a class of " abstract names." In the same way, if we were concerned to teach Chinese,

and it happened that the names of all tall things in the Chinese language were distinguished by a certain termination, it would be excusable to invent a class of " tall names " in order to formulate a rule concerning them. What is not excusable is to jumble all these distinctions of practical language-teaching together, label them " English Grammar," and expect English children, who are not learning Latin, Chinese, or any other foreign language, to understand what they mean.

II

Grammar, the theory of speech, is a department of philosophy. Grammar as usually understood is a part of Linguistic, the practice of teaching languages. The relation of theory to practice may best be seen by taking a parallel case. There is a science, epistemology, the classification of knowledge, and there is an art, the classification of books. The distinctions of knowledge drawn by epistemology will be recognised and utilised in the classification of books. Many other distinctions, however, such as the size, age, and authorship of books, will be recognised and utilised by the practical librarian, distinctions of which epistemology knows nothing. In the same way grammar will draw certain distinctions of speech,

which linguistic will utilise. Linguistic will, however, make as many more distinctions as experience may prove serviceable. With these grammar will have no concern. Grammar is the business of the philosopher ; linguistic of the schoolmaster. We do not go to the library assistant for our theory of knowledge. Why, then, should we go to the schoolmaster for our theory of grammar ?

On the one hand, then, grammar must be distinguished from those sciences which lie beneath it ; on the other, it must be distinguished from those which stand above it. Speech is a similitude of thought, and thought is a similitude of reality ; hence the ultimate solution of all grammatical difficulties can only be reached by referring them to logic and metaphysic. The questions which schoolboys are whipped for being in doubt about are the same which have baffled the greatest sages since the dawn of philosophy.

The close relationship of the problems of grammar to those of metaphysic is well seen in the above-mentioned definition of an adjective as " a word which limits the meaning of a noun." It is said that a sceptic once entered a church and, addressing himself to the preacher, asked :

" Do you say that God is good ? "

" Yes."

" Do you say that God is infinite ? "

"Yes."

"Do you admit that an adjective limits the meaning of a noun?"

"Yes."

"How, then, can God be infinite, if He is limited by the adjective 'good?'"

The flaw in this sophism, if such it be, is by no means easy to expose. It lurks, doubtless, in the word *limit*, which is one of the most elusive and perplexing in the language; for without changing its meaning, it seems to involve two notions which differ almost to contrariety.

Omnis determinatio est negatio, wrote Spinoza —"All limitation is negation." This view is reflected in a dozen words and phrases in common use to-day. We speak of "finite intelligence," meaning weak and imperfect intelligence. By our "limitations" we mean our "deficiencies." We speak of a "limited monarchy," meaning a monarchy which has lost all but its name. In the same way all our strongest superlatives are negatives of limitation. *Boundless*, *infinite*, *immense*; by such words we indicate the greatest magnitudes and the most perfect excellences of which we can conceive.

The Ancients, however, assigned an almost opposite value to this word. To them the "unlimited" was equivalent to the negative, the

non-existent. *Horismos*, "a limiting," was the word chosen by Aristotle to designate that form of words which states the essence of a thing. *Teleios*, "having an end," was the Greek word for perfect. Aristotle, indeed, denies that there can exist an "unlimited" in any direction. To be unlimited, he says, is to be nothing at all; it is not even to be unlimited; for the attribute unlimited is in itself a limit, since it excludes the limited; the unlimited, then, is under a unique disability: it cannot even be itself.

The change which has taken place in the philosophical value of this term can best be explained by tracing the metaphor to its source. The word *limit*, the Greek *horos*, means originally a territorial boundary. Now, the people who first used this word philosophically were a small nation, inhabiting by isolated communities part of the coast of a continent of which the interior was largely unreclaimed desert. To men so situate the earth would appear as divided into the enclosed and the unenclosed, the boundless desert and the bounded field; the one shapeless, barren, inhospitable, the other orderly, fruitful, kindly. Hence, to the Greek, the boundary was the token of man's power and mastery over nature; the extent of each man's boundaries was the extent of his riches; so the *bounded* became a symbol

of the full, the shapely, the positive; whilst the *unbounded* symbolised the void, the shapeless, the negative.

But for us who live in a land where every square foot of soil has long since been occupied by man, the fence or boundary is more often a token of our impotence than of our power; it marks not the breadth of our domain, but its narrowness. Hence, for us, the boundary has become a symbol of restriction, and so of negation. It is rather in those few regions where the barren rock and steep mountain have defied the efforts of man to enclose and cultivate that our pulses quicken with a sense of power and possession; it is there, in the waste, the void, the immense, that we find the most apt similes to express our feeling of the greatness of God and whatever else appears to us of surpassing magnitude or excellence.

Again, the distinction between singular and collective nouns involves the question of the *one* and the *many*. The schoolboy who is set to translate the sentence: "A large number of soldiers was led into the camp," and is in doubt whether to make the verb plural or singular, is face to face with one of the most venerable problems of philosophy. By *one* we mean an indivisible quantity; but all quantities known

to us are divisible *ad infinitum*. There is, then, no true *one*, and if there is no *one* there is no *many*, for every *many* is a *many* of *ones*.

The only way of escaping from this dilemma is to turn our attention from the world of sense to the world of spirit, whence alone comes the notion of unity and individuality, for the soul alone is composed of parts which are divisible in thought, but indivisible in fact. The notion so derived is applied by transference to those divisible aggregations of matter in which the indivisible spirit is present, and again by transference to other aggregations which resemble these in having one motion, or by co-existence in adjacent space. Thus we speak of a limb as *one*, inasmuch as it has one motion, or we speak of it as *two*, if it is jointed and capable of two motions. In the case of what are called "collective unities," the two notions of unity and plurality seem to balance each other precisely. Thus an army may be thought of now as *one*, inasmuch as it is capable of one motion, and now as *many*, since it is capable of many motions; such is the ultimate source of the schoolboy's grammatical perplexity.

III

The man who first built a fence round a certain portion of the earth's surface and laboured solely within that fence, neglecting all that lay beyond, was the first husbandman; and the man who first circumscribed a certain field in the orb of experience and laboured this field alone, forgoing all others, however closely neighbouring on his own, was the first scientist. The state of a man's husbandry may be known by the state of his fences and the state of a science may be judged by the same criterion. Where the boundaries between one science and its neighbour have never been firmly established, or have crumbled into ruin, you will find neither the fruit of laboured knowledge nor the beauty of spontaneous nature, but merely the deformity of neglect and decay. In other words, every science deals with some one fact or class of facts, and the truth and accuracy of its results will always be proportionate to its success in excluding all other facts from the field of observation. The fact which grammar deals with is signification—the transference of ideas from man to man by means of spoken signs. It is the business of grammar to distinguish the various means by which signification is effected among the various societies of mankind, to dis-

tribute these into classes, and to secure them there by means of appropriate denominations; it is not the business of grammar to classify ideas, which is the province of logic, but only the means by which differences of ideas are conveyed.

An idea can be conveyed in three ways—indication, representation, or signification. If I wish to convey to your mind the idea of a hat, I can do so by showing you a hat, or a picture of a hat, or by saying the word "hat." The picture conveys the idea of a hat by its similarity to a hat. The word conveys the idea solely by the force of past association, and is simply a sound-wave of a certain shape, or, if written, is an irregular broken line of ink. Neither aspect of the word bears any formal resemblance to a hat. "To signify," then, is to convey an idea by means of another which bears no resemblance to it, but is connected with it simply by past association.

Grammar does not deal with all forms of signification, but only with signification by spoken signs. For example, it does not deal with the signification of sounds by notes, or of numbers by figures. Neither does it deal, at least primarily, with the signification of speech by means of written letters (*grammata*), as its name suggests. In all these forms of signification, however, the same principles will be found in operation. We will, then,

begin by examining the fact of signification in general.

Let us take a simple numerical proposition expressed in the current European notation:

$$3 \times 7 = 21.$$

It will be found that three means of signification are here employed. Firstly, we have the signs 3, 7, 2, 1, each of which signifies a certain number. These we will call self-significants. Secondly, we have the signs $\times$, $=$. These signs mean nothing by themselves, and no idea can be conveyed by combining them together. They become significant only when used in combination with self-significant signs, as in the above proposition; so we may call them cosignificants. Thirdly, we have signification by position: 21 signifies not two and one, but two tens and one; this is signified not by the signs themselves, but by the order in which they are put. We will call this "significant order."

In language the same three methods of signification are employed. Firstly, we have self-significants, e.g. man; secondly, we have cosignificants, e.g. the *s* in man's; thirdly, we have significant order: e.g. of the phrases, "this black shoe," "this shoe-black," "black this shoe," each bears a different meaning.

The invention of significant order in speech and notation may be compared to the invention in mechanics of the type of engine in which the function of the flywheel was performed by the engine itself in rotation, a discovery which made possible the conquest of the air by reducing the weight of the engine to a minimum. In like manner modern speech has found a way to make the words themselves signify what the ancients signified by means of complex and cumbersome appendages, and by lightening the mechanism of thought has enabled it to travel with less effort and to greater distance.

In the current system of signifying sounds by letters, many letters will be found to signify no sound; for example, we represent the sound of "taut" by "taut," but the sound of "caut" by "cau*ght*." It is clear that the characters *gh* in "caught" signify no sound. Such we will call "dead signs."

The same thing is found in language. Thus we say "I love," "They love," but "He loves." The *s* in "loves" does not here signify anything. "He loves" signifies no more than if we should say "He love."

It is usual to compare the form "loves" with the Latin "amat"; this is wrong, because the *t* in "amat" is a living sign and signifies "that man."

The *s* in " loves " is a dead sign, signifying nothing. In the French word *portent* we have a sign which is doubly dead. The characters *nt* signify no sound, and if they signified a sound, this sound would carry no meaning.

In a ready-made system of signification the same idea will always be conveyed by the same sign. In many actual systems, however, we find the same idea conveyed by different signs in different places. Thus the sound which is signified by *c* in " cool " is signified by *k* in " kudos " and by *q* in " queen."

The same thing is found in language. Thus we say " I am," " Thou art," " He is." We mean the same as if we said " I is," " Thou is," " He is." These we will call " lazy signs," because two or more signs are found to be doing the work of one. Again, we say " He loves me," but we do not say " Me loves he," but " I love him." The change of signs, however, indicates no change in the thing signified.

It is often said that " he " and " I " are the nominative and " him " and " me " the accusative case of the pronouns. If this statement means anything, it can only mean that " I " and " he " differ from " him " and " me " as the Latin " ego " and " ille " differ from " me " and " illum." This is quite untrue.

If I say in English "Me loves he," I mean that "me" is the lover and "he" the loved. That is what the words in this order signify in English, though this is not the customary manner of signifying it. On the other hand, "*Me amat ille*" signifies that *me* is the beloved and *ille* the lover. Hence it is untrue to say that *me* in English is the "accusative case" of *I*, since this can only mean that it bears the same signification as the accusative case bears in Latin, which is untrue.

The idea which a sound conveys always among people who speak the same language we call its *signification* or *meaning*. The idea which a sound carries sometimes over and above its meaning when used in combination with others we will call its *ad*signification or *by*-meaning. Thus the by-meaning of the compound phrase "cake pan" is quite different from that of "pan cake," although the elements compounded are the same.

In short, the by-meaning of any group of words is that which the hearer supplies himself and is not given by the words taken separately.

The nature of adsignification or by-meaning can best be seen by observing an important difference existing between speech and thought, between the sign and the significate, namely, that language is discrete, thought is continuous. For example,

when we say "John's head," the meanings of "John" and of "head" are two notions which can be thought separately, and are conveyed to the mind at two separate moments of time. In the thought, however, conveyed by the phrase "John's head," John and his head are continuous, for the head would not be a head without John, and John would not be John without his head.

Now the discrete can approximate nearer and nearer to the continuous by receiving fragments of smaller and smaller dimensions into the spaces which separate its component parts. So the engineer who desires to construct a road with a continuous surface commences by laying down a number of large stones; over these he spreads a layer of smaller ones, and these again he overlays with gravel or sand. Yet perfect continuity is not achieved, for even the smallest particles have a determinate form of their own, and therefore cannot enter into perfect proximity one with another. It is only by treating the whole with some liquid matter, such as tar or molten bitumen (and by liquid we mean that which possesses no fixed shape of its own, but is susceptible of the form of whatsoever environs it), that perfect continuity is achieved.

In like manner the discrete elements into which all language is divisible strive in actual speech to

approach the continuity of actual thought. To the large stones we may compare the self-significant signs of speech; between these fall the signs of lesser signification which we have called co-significants, and that derive their signification less from themselves than from their environment.[1] Even so perfect continuity would not be achieved but for the final admixture of pure thought, which, like a perfect fluid, is susceptible of every form and receives its character wholly from its environment. This we have called the by-meaning of speech. By this alone the separate notions which language conveys are welded into a concrete whole.[2]

[1] If the reader will consider the following phrases—

The city *of* Rome,
The rivers *of* England,
The cat *o'* nine tails,
He came *of* his own free will,

he will see that the meaning borne by " of " in each phrase is different, that it signifies some species of relation between the ideas which precede and follow it, but that the nature of this relation is shown not by the cosignificant, but by the self-significant.

[2] The matter has been well treated by Henri Bergson. " Every language," he writes, " whether elaborated or crude, leaves many more things to be understood than it is able to express. Essentially discontinuous, it proceeds by juxtaposing words; speech can only indicate by a few guide-posts placed here and there the chief stages in the movement of thought. This is why I can indeed understand your speech, if I start from a thought analogous to your own and follow its windings by the aid of verbal

That there is something more in real speech than a mere synthesis or juxtaposition of ideas may be shown in a very simple way. If the content of a phrase were no more than the content of its constituent elements, we should understand any utterance so soon as we knew the meaning of all the words uttered. But every one who has studied a foreign language knows that it is possible to understand every word of a passage without having the least understanding of the whole. To understand is, as the Romans expressed it, "to read between," *intelligere*, i.e. "*inter legere*," to apprehend not only the signification but also the adsignification, or, as we might name it, the intersignification of the signs uttered.

images, which are so many signposts showing me the way from time to time. But I shall never be able to understand it if I start from the verbal images themselves, because between two consecutive verbal images there is a gulf which no amount of concrete representatives can ever fill. For images can never be anything but things and thought is a movement." In order to understand the apparent miracle of speech, the representation of a continuous movement by a broken and interrupted one, we must always remember that when we speak to our neighbour we are not calling up images into a receptacle hitherto void, or imparting motion to an object hitherto stationary, but simply giving a fresh direction to a thought which is in constant motion of its own. It is by its own motion that the mind of the listener passes from one to another of the ideas conveyed to it by speech; hence the gulf between these ideas does not need to be bridged by the language of the speaker.

We have seen that when we combine two ideas by speech we often bring into the mind a third idea, or some modification of one of the ideas conveyed. Now it often happens that we find a sign used not to signify its own meaning, but this third idea or this modification. Thus, the *e* in French "jugea" signifies not the sound of *e* but that the *g* is soft. "To" in "to come" signifies not any of the meanings of "to," but that the action is thought of as a thing. "Will" in "I will come" signifies not "will"= desire, but simply that the action is in the future. We will call this trans-signification.

The by-meaning of any combination of significants is either the natural or a conventional by-meaning. Thus if the signs V and I when put together mean "five" added to "one," we say they carry a natural by-meaning, since this can be inferred from the placing together of the signs. If, however, when put together as in the Roman sign IV, they signify "one" taken from "five," we say they carry a conventional "by-meaning," since this cannot be inferred from a knowledge of the signs themselves.

The natural by-meaning of any combination of words is the first and most natural way in which the ideas brought together coalesce in the mind. Thus, if we bring together the ideas signi-

fied by "shoe" and "black," they naturally coalesce into the notion of a "black shoe." If, however, they bring up the additional notion of "a person who makes shoes black," this is not by nature but by convention.

Now we know—

(1) That natural adsignification must have existed before conventional adsignification, since that which is by nature necessarily precedes that which is by convention.

(2) That dead signs were once living, since in order that there may be a dead body there must have been a living one. Thus the *nt* in French *portent* once signified a sound, and this sound once signified an idea.

(3) That cosignificants were once self-significants, since we know no other way in which cosignificants can have come into existence except by the decay of self-significants. Thus *if* was once "gyf," i.e. *give*.

The earliest form of language, then, must have consisted of self-significant signs, which in conjunction bore a natural adsignification. Language in its earliest stage may be conceived to have been something like the following. God make heaven-earth—earth all dark—God say-come light—light come—God see light—say good light—God put light there—dark there.

It will be seen that language in this stage has no grammar in the common sense of the term. A foreigner desiring to know the meaning of the above needs only to know the meaning of each word and he will know the meaning of the whole. Whatever by-meaning these words convey is their natural and not a conventional by-meaning, and will therefore be apprehended as well by a foreigner as by a native.

In the earliest stage of language many kinds of by-meaning will be conveyed by gesture and tone, which in the later stages will be conveyed by cosignificants or by significant order. Thus in a primitive speech the difference between "Cæsar dead," a question, and "Cæsar dead," an affirmation, will be shown by the tone of the voice. In Latin the interrogation would be conveyed by a cosignificant—

Num Cæsar mortuus est,

and in English by significant order—

Is Cæsar dead ?

Now, as gesture and tone cannot be represented in writing, we may conclude that no language can develop a written literature of great expressiveness until it has developed the capacity to

convey by-meaning without inflection of voice and gesture, by cosignificants or by significant order.

Since the only purpose of language is to signify, the only fault in language is the failure to signify, i.e. the failure to convey the thought which is in our minds. Thus, if we translate "This shoeblack" into French by "ce soulier noir," we should fail to signify what we desired; or, if we wished to ascertain from an ancient Roman whether Cæsar was dead, and addressed him with the words "Est Cæsar mortuus?" we should equally have failed to convey our meaning. This is the first kind of grammatical error.

There are, however, two other things commonly classed under the name "grammatical error" or "bad grammar." The first is the result of what we have called lazy signification. When there exist two signs for the same idea it is customary to use one in one connection and one in another. Thus we say, "I am," but "He is." If we go contrary to custom in the matter, the result is laughable, because unusual, even though it is perfectly significant. This is the second kind of grammatical error. The third is when we use a form of signification which is both significant and customary in one society of men, but is not

so in another. This is called by members of the other society " bad grammar."

It is clear, then, that, both logically and historically, the first and most important elements of a language are its self-significants, or its vocabulary; and that the secondary and less important elements are its cosignificants, its dead signs and lazy signs. The former are the essence of a language, and the latter, as they are sometimes called, its " accidence." The study of any language, then, should begin with the study of its essence, since when we are in possession of this we have the means of understanding and being understood in that language, even though in doing so we render ourselves ridiculous. On the other hand, a knowledge of the accidence of a language does not enable us either to understand or to be understood in that language. In practice, however, the natural order is commonly reversed. We spend years inculcating the " grammar " of French or German, but teach as much only of the vocabulary as is necessary to exemplify the grammar. If, however, we began by inculcating the vocabulary, the grammar would be acquired spontaneously, by force of habit and with little special study.

The practical results of these reflections may be summed up as follows: The purpose of speech

is to signify. Hence there is only one fault of speech, failure to signify; there is only one virtue of speech, success in signifying; there is only one reform of speech, increase of significance. From these premisses we can derive a criterion by which to decide the difficult question of the Reform of English Spelling.

CHAPTER VI

THE REFORM OF SPELLING

I

THE two chief dates in the history of English spelling are the year 1755, the date of the publication of Johnson's *Dictionary* and the consequent standardisation of our spelling upon a historical or retrospective basis, and the year 1912, which witnessed the first organised attempt to demolish Johnson's time-honoured edifice and to set up a purely modern and utilitarian system in its place.

The scheme of "rational" spelling promulgated by the Simplified Spelling Society has been opposed by a great variety of arguments. Some critics attack it on æsthetic, some on philological grounds. One writer maintains that our present spelling is not difficult; another that its difficulties provide a useful educational discipline. Some object that the new spelling is too simple, others that it is not simple enough. Such arguments

may be sound or unsound, but none of them gives the real reason of our hostility to the new system —a reason so simple and homely that no one cares to express it in plain English. In our heart of hearts, we dislike the prospect of reforming our spelling for the same reason that we dislike getting out of a warm bed on a cold winter morning—because it means exchanging a condition of perfect comfort for one of extreme discomfort. On such occasions the mind is always ready with a host of excellent reasons against making the projected plunge, as that one's watch is probably fast, that insufficient sleep is harmful to the system, that the time between waking and rising is that most conducive to quiet meditation and the forming of good resolutions, and so forth. Such arguments are well enough when whispered to one's own indulgent conscience. But if a friend, who has already risen and dressed, assures us that the watch is not fast, but slow, describes the delights of being up and about, and taunts us with moral cowardice for not following his example, it becomes necessary to discover the exact time and to ascertain whether we, in fact, are the fool for being in bed, or he for being out of it. The S.S.S. have recently assumed the rôle of the strenuous friend towards English letters. It behoves us, therefore, to dispense for the time

being with all arguments inspired by sentiment or personal inconvenience, and to examine their contentions in the light of pure reason, in order to discover whether we, or they, are the deluded victims of prejudice and preconception.

In the first flush of annoyance which most of us feel on seeing the English language for the first time in its new apparel, the real merits and defects of the proposed changes are equally obscured. Now it is not possible that all the ability and learning enrolled under the banner of the Simplified Spelling Society have been concentrated on a single object for several years without achieving some noteworthy result. What, then, are the tangible fruits of their labours? For many years a respectable minority of thinking persons in England and America have been convinced that our system of spelling is far from ideal, that it is getting farther from the ideal every year, and that some changes must sooner or later be introduced. To arrive at this position was easy, but it inevitably led to the proposition that we should forthwith set about reform, and here the difficulty began; for among the hundreds of schemes suggested by individual enthusiasts none had any claim to be preferred before its competitors. Even the most moderate reformers, who advocated merely the abolition of a few

individual anomalies, were at a loss to decide how any particular word was to be represented if the present spelling were discarded.

The publication of *Simplified Spelling* has changed all this. Now for the first time the reformer can say exactly what reform means. Now for the first time the layman is in a position to estimate how much alteration is necessary to bring our system to complete uniformity, and to decide whether this is an end to be pursued or one to be hindered. To this it must be added that the S.S.S. have had some very difficult problems to face, and have solved some of them in a very praiseworthy manner. The decision, for example, to represent the long *a*, in doubtful cases, by the digraph *aa*, as in *faather*, is agreeable alike to old English usage, to reason, and to the genius of the language. It is as conspicuous a success as spelling "humour" *hyuemor* is a conspicuous failure. Considered from this point of view, *Simplified Spelling* cannot fail to have a certain amount of interest for any thinking person, and deserves a more respectful handling than it has received in some quarters. It is not, however, as an exercise in speculative phonetics that the new system has been put forward, but as a serious proposal of practical reform, and as such we propose to examine it.

Sophistry, like legal fraud, has two main tactics. One is to represent a simple issue as a complex one, and by a variety of intricate arguments to confuse the victim's better judgment. The other is to represent a complex issue as a perfectly simple one, and so gain his assent to a proposition he has never even considered, which logically involves the abandonment of some of his dearest and most vital convictions. The latter is the method adopted by the S.S.S. with no small effect in their recently published pamphlets. It will, therefore, be found necessary to examine some of their arguments with considerable minuteness.

One of the first features we notice with surprise in the new spelling is that some of the plurals are formed in *s* and some in *z*. The reason of this is as follows. All true consonants are divided into two classes, the voiced and the unvoiced. Thus *b*, *g*, *z* are voiced, and *p*, *k*, *s* are unvoiced. The voiced consonants are so-called because in forming them we start the vocal chords vibrating before releasing the closure of the mouth; in the unvoiced we do not. Now, it is a law of speech that when a voiced consonant is followed by a sibilant, the latter will also be voiced. Thus the plural of *cub* is sounded *cubz*. In like manner an unvoiced consonant will be followed by an

unvoiced sibilant. Thus the plural of *cup* is *cups*. The reason of this is very simple. When the vocal chords are vibrating on the first consonant they will, unless silenced by a special act of will, continue to vibrate for a fraction of time, thus giving to the succeeding sibilant the characteristic sound of a voiced letter.

What advantage is gained by representing this fact of phonetics in our spelling? None whatever. On the contrary, great disadvantages are entailed. We make this distinction in speech because (at least in rapid enunciation) we cannot help doing so. To observe it also in writing is to involve ourselves in the needless inconvenience of considering every time we form a plural whether the word ends in a voiced or an unvoiced consonant. On the side of retaining the present form of the plural in every case are also ranged all arguments from sentiment and old association. Not only in our own language, but in Greek, Latin, and French, the letter *s* and not the letter *z* has always been connected with this function. It will be seen, therefore, that the dictates of utility and sentiment, so far from conflicting, unite in condemning the proposed innovation.

This feature of the new system deserves special attention because it illustrates better than any other the fallacy which lies behind nearly all

the arguments put forward, namely, that the essence of a word is its sound, and that the spelling exists merely to represent the sound in writing. This proposition is nowhere explicitly stated, yet it will be found to be the major premiss of the great majority of their arguments. How false this assumption is may be seen at once by considering the position of deaf-mutes. To them a word is simply a combination of letters associated with an idea, but with no audible impression, and our present system of forming the plural presents little difficulty because the letter *s* is used to represent not only the sound of sibilation, but the idea of plurality, while the new system would be both difficult to master and impossible to understand.

It is true, of course, that letters are symbols of sounds. But it is equally true that they are, in many particular cases, symbols of ideas; and, historically speaking, this function is the older. The earliest letters were pictures; and although the former function is now the most important, neither must be ignored. Nor can a scheme which consistently suppresses this dual aspect of orthography have any practical value. Spoken language is full of letters which cannot be clearly articulated, although an integral part of the word to which they belong. For example, the

second *c* in sackcloth, the second *l* in wholly, the Greek iota subscript. These silent letters are, however, clearly visualised by the mind every time the word is spoken, and are properly represented in the spelling. The same is true of the *s* in French plurals, which is silent except before a succeeding vowel.

Another example of the same dialectical device is to be found in the argument which the reformers oppose to those who maintain that the existing spelling helps us to a knowledge of the origins of words. "The scholar," they reply, "does not need these indications to help him to the pedigree of the words with which he deals, and the ignorant are not helped by them; so that in either case they are profitable for nothing." The major premiss of this argument is clearly that humanity is divided into scholars and ignorant persons. Such a proposition needs only to be stated in order to be at once rejected. Most of us are neither perfect scholars nor perfect ignoramuses: we are something between the two. There is probably no one so ignorant that he has not learnt something about the words *cupboard* and *forehead* by seeing them spelt in the orthodox way, which he would not have learnt if they were spelt *cubord* and *forid*. There is probably no one so learned that he does not feel the force of such words

as *schism* or *hygiene*, spelt as they are, more easily than if they were spelt *sizm* and *haijyeen*.

Furthermore, the spelling of many English words conveys useful information even to the most ignorant, not only about their origin, but about their affinity to other existing words; it reveals their relationship not only to their dead ancestors, but to their living relatives. Thus, if *err* were spelt *ur*, its connection with *error* would be obscured; if *sign* and *resign* were spelt *sien* and *rezien*, the words *signatory* and *resignation* would no longer explain themselves; in removing one difficulty from the path of knowledge, we should have created another. From this we may see that those old scholars of the Renascence who restored in spelling the *h* which had been lost in the sound of "honest," "heir," "hour," etc., were not guilty of a piece of aimless pedantry, as is commonly said, for the recovered *h* served a useful purpose: it revealed to all the connection between these words and the new Latin forms of cognate meaning which the New Learning had recently introduced into the language; thus the spelling of "heir" shows its relation to "inherit" and "hereditary," which was not to be discovered in the older spellings "eir," "eyer."

Moreover, it is these very discrepancies between the sound and the form of words which start the mind reflecting about the origins of our speech. The same is true in all departments of thought; it is the apparent irrationality in the institutions of the present which starts the mind on a journey of enquiry into the past; it is the apparent contradictions in the phenomena of the senses which lead us to probe below in search for the thing in itself; it is the seeming purposelessness which we find in the universe which compels us to meditate till we arrive at a belief in immortality and God. If all institutions were perfectly adapted to present needs, if all effects could be instantly equated with their causes, if all the dispositions of destiny were manifestly for the best, there would be neither history nor science nor philosophy; for all speculation starts from the discovery of some apparent contradiction in things as we see them. We well remember the beginning of our own interest in philology; it was the spelling of "though" and "rough"; long and deeply we pondered the mystery, till an intelligent senior explained that the *gh* in each case was the relic of a lost sound, an explanation which we received with the keenest satisfaction.

It will be said that this line of argument amounts

to a defence of all existing anomalies and is a negation of progress. We reply that, for the moment, we are not defending anomalous spellings, but simply showing that they have a real educational value, inasmuch as they stimulate curiosity in regard to the origins of speech. The main object of reform is to save the time which children spend in learning to spell and apply it to more instructive studies. The reformers insist that it is a question of sweeping away something useless, in order to make way for something useful. This is not the case in spelling reform, nor, indeed, in reform of any kind; if it were, the path of progress would be easy. It is because all change in our institutions entails the destruction of something in itself excellent that the task of the reformer is so complex and difficult. "If the York or Townley Mysteries had been preserved to this day," writes Mr. William Archer, one of the foremost champions of reformed spelling, "not merely on the printed page but as a living art-form—if the plays had never ceased to be acted, but had been handed down from generation to generation with their language, their staging, their costumes, their conventions all unchanged —what a wonderful and priceless survival we should have thought them." Why, we ask, is a survival of ancient drama to be considered

priceless, but a survival of ancient spelling to be reckoned valueless?

The reformers go on to accuse the "derivationists" of inconsistency. "If those who think that *ph* in 'phantom' ought to remain because it shows the derivation from the Greek were consistent, they would write *phrenzy, phancy*, not *frenzy, fancy*." This argument hardly reaches the level of sophistry, because it has not even the appearance of logic. These ancient spellings are valued because they link the present to the past. Now, let us suppose that there were a question of destroying some other relic of antiquity which was valued for the same reason, some bit of old London, whose demolition was required to make way for some new scheme of urban sanitation. All who were imbued with the antiquarian spirit would oppose the demolition, but the promoters of the scheme would argue (and perhaps rightly) that the claims of historic sentiment must give way to those of national health; but they would not say to the would-be conservers: "You are inconsistent; if you wish to preserve these ancient buildings, why do you not commence demolishing the rest of modern London and start rebuilding the London of an earlier age?" The suggestion would be both useless and impossible. On the other hand, if

it transpired that certain of these ancient buildings were not ancient at all, but were modern imitations of antique structures, and if, moreover, it could be shown that as imitations they were inaccurate and misleading, yet were frequently mistaken by the ignorant for genuine antique structures, then the lovers of old London would say, "By all means let them disappear, if they are an inconvenience to the public." Such is the case with not a few of our English spellings, and it is against these that the attacks of the reformers should be directed.

We willingly grant—indeed, we have granted—that much of the opposition to reform springs from the dislike which most men feel for change, as such, irrespective of whether it is good or bad; this, however, does not prove that our dislike for change in this case has no deeper roots. "Just try to imagine," say the reformers, "that you had been differently accustomed; that you had learned to spell the language by some system that really represented the sounds. How would you have received the suggestion that 'det' and 'dout' should be written with *b*, because the Latin words, from which the French words are derived which gave us the English words, contained a *b*—two thousand years ago?" To this we reply: The proposal would seem to us

by no means absurd. For example, if it were suggested that we should restore the lost *s* in "exude" and spell it "exsude," to show its connection with the Latin "sudor," we should think the proposal an excellent one; in the same way "execute" would be better spelt "exsecute," to show its connection with "persecute"; "fantastic" would be better spelt "phantastic," to show its connection with "phantasy." The same principle might even be applied to words derived from English roots; for instance, "net" would be better spelt "knet," to show its connection with "knit" and "knot"; "rickets" would be a better word if it were spelt "wrickets," because in this form it would show its connection with a number of other words which convey the notion of distortion, e.g. "wring," "wrong," "wriggle," and others.

The reformers accuse the derivationists of inconsistency, yet they themselves are far from achieving the virtue which they advocate; if they really believed their own arguments, their scheme of language reform would be far more sweeping than it is. For if it is desirable to simplify our system of signifying sounds by letters, it is equally desirable to simplify our system of signifying ideas by sounds; if it is wasteful to have two letters to signify one sound, it is equally

wasteful to have two sounds to signify one idea; why then do they not exhort us to abolish from the language all synonyms and superfluous forms? Thus we have the words "decay," "decadence," "decomposition," "disintegration," "putrescence," "putrefaction," "sepsis," where one word alone, "rot," would suffice; would not the abolition of all these superfluous signs simplify study and economise the time spent in learning to read even more than the phonetisation of our spelling?

We were once involved in an argument with a Canadian on the question of roads, which in some regions of that country are, not approximately, but absolutely straight—so straight that from an elevation it is possible to see an approaching object many miles distant. Moreover, they are all drawn either parallel or at right angles to one another, and intersect at fixed distances. We objected to the ugliness and monotony which this feature imparted to the landscape. The Canadian replied by demanding how else a road should be built, except by the shortest distance between two points, and ridiculed the circuitous roads of England. He went on to point out that the perfect rectangularity of all boundaries was a great economy of land and labour; for, he said, in a perfectly rectangular field every inch

of land can be brought under cultivation, and no time is wasted in manipulating those awkward "headlands" which tax the ploughman's skill in this country of irregular boundaries. These arguments appeared at first sight unanswerable, but a short experience of the facts proved that they were not so. As long as one happened to be travelling between two points on the same road, this system provided the most expeditious route. But if one's destination (as often happened) lay in a diagonal direction, it was necessary to describe two sides of a rectangle in order to reach it. And even in the former case, the small economy of physical energy was more than counterbalanced by the mental fatigue induced by plodding along a seemingly interminable straight road which offered no variety of prospect to the eye and no distraction to the mind. Nor was the boasted saving of land and labour gained without some sacrifice. To plough straight in a straight field demands no skill and arouses no zeal. To plough straight in a crooked field is the test of a ploughman's ability and the pride of his craft.

Our winding English roads may be compared to our irregular spelling. Both have grown up in rather a haphazard way, and would be improved if certain extreme irregularities were

removed. The proposals of the S.S.S. may be compared to the proposition that we should resurvey the whole country and lay down a complete new system of rectilineal and parallel roadways, using the ancient ways only where they chanced to coincide with those of the new system.

Such a proposition would, of course, be fiercely resisted on sentimental grounds. What we wish to insist upon is that we should be justified in opposing both propositions on purely practical grounds alone. *Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas,* says Pascal; and these, it may be added, have often more reason behind them than those which parade in the livery of logic and common sense.

II

The Greeks had a charming system of determining the penalty in criminal cases; the accuser had to name one penalty and the condemned man another, and the jury had to decide between the two. English Spelling has been arraigned and condemned before the bar of Reason; the Spelling Society, the chief accuser, demands the extreme penalty of phonetisation; it behoves us, therefore, who are for the defence, to propose an

alternative penalty in order that the English public may have an opportunity to choose between them.

The starting-point of reform must be a recognition of the truth that the essence of a word is not its sound nor its spelling, but both together, and that where a discrepancy exists between the two, there is often a better case for adapting the sound to the spelling than for adapting the spelling to the sound. The truth of this is most strikingly apparent in the case of words which we have received from the Greek. Words of English origin, when represented phonetically, either suffer no change or such changes as do not impair their efficiency as thought-tokens. Words of Greek origin, however, often become impaired almost beyond recognition. Thus (in the system of the Simplified Spelling Society) "cynosure" appears as "sienosyuer," "psychology" as "siecology," the "Muses" as the "Myuezez," "physique" as "fizeek," "cycle" as "siecel." They become, in short, sheer monstrosities, mere agglomerations of letters, signifying nothing. The reason of this is clear. The modern pronunciation of these words has strayed so far from that of the original Greek that the orthodox spelling is the only link by which they are connected with their root. If, then, we

phonetise the spelling, this last link is severed and the significance of the word is destroyed. The Greek "kunosoura" is still discoverable in "cynosure," but is quite effaced in "sienosyuer."

The reformers, it is true, are of opinion that it is no part of the duty of a word to show its origin. This appears to us one of the most extraordinary fallacies which ever bore witness to the danger of blind adherence to a theory. Language is not merely a system of conventional signs; it is a living spontaneous growth. Now, all growth implies continuity. Language grows when old words are applied, in a modified form, to new meanings. The principle of continuity in language, then, is the connection in form between the new word and the old, and anything which helps to keep this connection clear helps to keep the word alive. The contention of the Spelling Society has, we admit, some measure of force in relation to a certain class of words, those, namely, which in form and content are simple and primary. It may be plausibly maintained that the origin of such words concerns no one but the student of philology. Yet even this view rests upon the assumption that philology is a domain of knowledge existing by itself, exerting no influence on other domains of knowledge, and possess-

ing no interest or value except for its own students, instead of being, as we hold, a most valuable aid to clear thinking, and therefore to clear expression, in all spheres of intellectual activity. Such words, however, although the most important in the language, are not the most numerous. The majority of English words are derivatives and express derivative ideas. The force and efficiency of such words depends upon their power to maintain connection with the root from which they are derived. When this connection is weakened, the word is weakened; when it is completely severed, the word dies.

As an example of the former, we may take the word *epicene*. This, like *cenotaph* and *cenobite*, is derived from the Greek *koinos* and means "common," especially of properties common to both sexes. The connection with the Greek, however, has been so obscured by the traditional spelling, that it is only discoverable by the aid of a dictionary. This word, therefore, which might have enjoyed a useful and active life, maintains only a bare existence by the favour of a few writers addicted to the use of obscure and unusual modes of expression.

An example of the latter is the word *accidie*. This is derived from the Greek *akedia*, meaning "listlessness" or "indifference." It was

borrowed in mediæval times by certain religious writers to express that causeless languor and discontent with life which we call "the blues." This state of mind was considered by these writers to be due to the direct influence of the Evil One, and was classed among the "seven deadly sins." It appears in Chaucer as *accidie*. If we bear in mind that in Chaucer's time *cc* was always hard, that *i* had the sound it bears in French, and that the final *e* was sounded like short *a*, we see that the Chaucerian spelling is an exact phonetic transcription of the Greek sound. *Accidie* was pronounced "*akeedia*." Since Chaucer's time, however, one of the consonants and two of the vowel sounds have become greatly altered. *Accidie* came to be pronounced *axidy*. In this way the word became severed both in sound and form from the Greek original, and though once popular among moral and religious writers, it has now passed into complete disuse, its place in the assembly of "deadly sins" being very inadequately filled by the word *sloth*.

The corruption of such words is due to the influence of the Latin tongue, through which they reached our own. When the Romans began to receive Greek words into their language, they met with two difficulties. The Greek language had several sounds which were not used by the Romans, and

several sounds which they had in common were not represented by the same characters. These difficulties were met in different ways at different times. An example of the first difficulty was the Greek *u*. This letter was pronounced in Greek as in modern French, or as the German "*u* modified." When the Romans first came in contact with the Greeks their intercourse was chiefly oral. At this period they represented the Greek *u* by its nearest phonetic equivalent, the Latin *i*. Thus, "dakruma" became "lacrima." When, however, Greek literature became widely read among the Romans, the appearance of this letter became more familiar than its sound, so that it came to be represented by its nearest literal equivalent, the Roman *u*. Thus, *kubos* became *cubus*. Later still, when Athens became the university of the world and a conversational knowledge of Greek was possessed by every cultured Roman, this method was considered unsatisfactory, and the peculiar form of the Greek *U*, which was that of our modern *Y*, was introduced into the Roman alphabet to express this peculiarly Greek sound. Thus the Greek *tupos* became the Latin *typus*. Similar difficulties resulted in the various other transliterations of Greek words which we find in Latin.

The Romans modified the spelling of Greek

words in order to represent the sound of them as accurately as possible to Roman ears. We have clung pedantically to the Roman system, although it has now exactly the opposite effect to that which the Romans intended, owing to changes in the value of many of the symbols. This adherence to the letter and not to the spirit of Roman tradition has affected our pronunciation, so as to destroy the last link of affinity between these words and their parental Greek. It is these decadent children of pedantry that the reformers would have us acknowledge as affording a true and legitimate standard of English orthography.

But it is not merely their decadence to which we object. Decadence is of two kinds. Milk which decays naturally turns first into curd, and then into cheese; in each successive stage it is an excellent article of food. Milk which is mixed with chemical preservatives in order to resist the processes of nature remains stable a short while longer, and then becomes putrid, in which stage it is of no use whatever. Language, too, has a natural decay, which is harmless and even useful, and an unnatural decay which is offensive. In the fate of the Greek word *kulindros* we have an example of both processes; this word has reached the language in two forms,

cylinder and *calender:* a cloth-roller, as in *John Gilpin*, "My good friend, the calender will lend his horse to go." The first is the learned form, introduced by scholars and men of science; the second is the popular form which has come to us through Low Latin and French. The popular form would still sound familiar to Greek ears, and would not be impaired by phonetisation; the learned form would be unrecognisable after such treatment. It is this artificial corruption of Greek words which we refuse to perpetuate in our spelling. The process which has changed *paralysis* into *palsy* we acquiesce in, but the process which has changed *kunik* into *cynic* we cannot.

The fact is that our spelling and our pronunciation have got into an intricate tangle; the problem is to unravel them; this can only be done by leading them back step by step, by the way they have come. It is easy enough to cut the knots, that is, to phonetise our spelling, but this leaves us with something in our hands which is useless, or at least greatly impaired for the purpose we have in view.

The reform of Greek words can be effected without much difficulty by encouraging a practice which is already coming into favour, that of using the Greek lettering in place of the Roman, and so

restoring the visible connection of such words with their originals. This visible connection is far more important than the aural, because the words of a dead language are seen a hundred times by the eye for once they are heard by the ear. It so happens that by restoring the Greek lettering we can partially restore the Greek pronunciation. The English *k* has never been sibilised like *c*; the English *u* still bears more affinity to the Greek *u* than the letter *y*. Therefore, if we write *hudrokephalous* for *hydrocephalous* there is no possibility of its being pronounced *hiedrosephalous*.

Public opinion to-day is undoubtedly favourable to this reform. One of the first to break with tradition in this matter was Browning, who scandalised the critics of his day by using the Greek spelling for Greek names in his "Balaustion's Adventure." Andrew Lang followed suit in his translation of Homer, and many subsequent writers on Greek mythology have done likewise. Moreover, several words which have only recently been taken into the language have been allowed to keep their Greek dress, e.g. *paideutics*, *kinetics*. The most remarkable of these is *kudos*. It is to be noted that if this word had come into English through the Latin it would have been spelt *cydus* and pronounced *siedus*, and its

connection with the Greek would have been completely effaced. Several words of recent formation seem to be in a transition stage. Thus in *criterion* we keep the Greek termination, but Romanise the *k* into a *c*. This word should be either *criterium* or else *kriterion*. In the same way, *kinematoscope* and *kaleidoscope* are usually spelt as here, the second *k* being Romanised, the first not. These words mark the turning of the tide.

The only other alternative would be to reject such compounds of Greek or Latin elements from our language, and make new ones from English elements. "I met this morning on my daily walk a fair friend not yet well stricken in months, who beamed and chuckled inarticulately (being still by necessity an inarticulate poet) at sight of me from the depth of her pushwainling (I hope you never use the barbaric word 'perambulator')." So wrote Swinburne to a friend. It is not often, however, that new formations are as pleasing as this. Swinburne would certainly have found it hard to discover an attractive substitute for "inarticulate." Nor must it be forgotten that the elements of Greek and Latin have one unique advantage over the elements of our living speech, that their meanings are not subject to change, and that for this reason they are

peculiarly fitted to express the unchanging facts of science.

It should be observed that our method of spelling Greek derivatives is full of inconsistencies, and that the principles which we profess are but lamely followed. For example, "aneurism," Greek "aneurusmos"=widening, should be spelt "aneurysm"; "baritone," Greek "barutonos"= heavy-toned, should be "barytone"; "trepan," Greek "trupanos"=awl, should be "trypan"; "acrostic," Greek "akrostichion"=end of line, should be "acrostich," like "distich"; "stratagem," Greek "strategema," should be "strategem," like "strategy." Beside these may be set a number of words which under the influence of assimilation have assumed the appearance of Greek derivatives. "Tyre"=a thing which ties, is spelt like Tyre, the Phœnician city; "scythe," Anglo-Saxon "sithe," is spelt like Scythia; "anchor, Anglo-Saxon "anker," is spelt like "anchorite."

Therefore, with regard to the general question of reform, we would welcome any measures which would help to undermine the reverence now paid to the dictionary as a standard of orthography and diminish the importance commonly attached to correctness in spelling, and we would commend the adoption of a simpler spelling of many

individual words, simply as a matter of literary style. At present it is so widely believed that to spell incorrectly is a mark of vulgar ignorance, that no one can afford to be unorthodox in this matter. We desire to see it universally acknowledged that to spell correctly is often a weak concession to error, and that to spell incorrectly is to dispute the authority of folly and to assert our spiritual independence of fashion. We would have individuality apparent in an author's spelling, as in all details of his mental apparel. In this matter our poets should give the lead.

This relaxation would be a welcome boon to all; at present no one in England can spell correctly without having recourse to a dictionary. This is a recurring nuisance; for dictionaries are not always to be had where inspiration finds us. Education is no help; indeed, it is a hindrance; the most difficult words to remember are those which are spelt similarly but differently in English and French or some other tongue, such as *apartment*, *marriage*, *literature*, *address*. Here the difficulty comes from having too much knowledge, and the unlearned, who have never seen these words spelt in more than one way, are at an advantage over the learned. Possibly this is the reason why so many eminent philologists are

spelling reformers. We can well understand that a scholar like Professor Skeat, who in the course of his researches has seen every common word in the language spelt in a score of different ways, finds considerable difficulty in remembering which of these happens to be in use in England to-day.

CHAPTER VII

THE ORIGIN OF COSIGNIFICANTS

THE English language of to-day is comparatively free from attached cosignificants, so that the origin of this feature of speech is better studied through Latin.

We will, however, begin by considering two which are found in English but not in Latin, "-ly" and "-some," as in the words "lonely" and "lonesome." The first meaning of "-ly" (originally "lich") seems to have been "a dead body," i.e. something which lies (compare Latin "cadaver," a corpse, from "cado," I fall). In this meaning it still survives in "lich-gate." After that it came to mean "an effigy," hence "that which resembles," as in God-like, which was shortened into God-ly.

"Some" appears to have traversed a similar series of ideas. "Soma" in Greek means a body, "sama"=image. "Sam" in Russian means "self." *Ona sama pribeela*, "she arrived

herself," i.e. in body. *Bog est sama premudrost*, "God is incarnate wisdom." "Sama" in Sanskrit means "equal to," "similis" in Latin means "like"; hence "lonesome," i.e. lonelike.

Its meaning "some" may also be derived from the meaning "body"; compare the use of "a body" for "some one," e.g. "gin a body meet a body." This word is also seen in the ending of the Latin superlative form, e.g. "fortissimus." In Russian the idea of superlation is expressed by prefixing "samo"=self, the very, to the adjective, e.g. "sami novi"=the newest; the same word we find suffixed in Latin, "novis-sumus" or "novis-simus"=the newest.

The Latin cosignificant "ivus," as in "dativus," may be referred to the Sanskrit "iva"=like.

We will next consider what are called the inflexions of the verb in Latin. These are for the most part not hard to explain, as they are evidently remnants of familiar words cohering with the stem. "Regam"=I shall rule, ends in the usual sign of the person speaking; compare Greek "kalēmi"=I call; Sanskrit "sunomi"=I push. Note that English and Russian have each one word in which this form is preserved: English "I am," Russian "ya dam"=I shall give. "Amas"=thou lovest, ends in the sign of the

person spoken to, found detached in Greek "su" =thou. "Amat"=he loves, ends in the sign of the person spoken of, seen detached in its simplest form in the Russian "to, ta, to"= that. The endings in "amamus"=we love and "amatis"=ye love are signs of the persons speaking and of the person spoken to (in another form), with the sign of plurality added. Note that in folk-speech "you-s" is employed as the plural of "you." The termination in "amant"=they love may be considered the same as in "amat," but prolonged by nasalising in sign of plurality. The *o* in "amo"=I love is perhaps only a prolongation of the stem vowel, in compensation for the lost *i*, as in the dative case, "logŏ"=logŏ-i. Note that some words in Latin end in *i* in the present tense, e.g. "odi"=I hate. In view of the fact that both *ti* and *si* are used to signify sometimes the second, sometimes the third person (e.g. Greek—

tithe-s=thou puttest	amavis-ti=thou lovedst
tithe-si=he puts	amavi-t=he loved)

and that the sound *ti* has a natural tendency to change into the sound *s* (compare the Greek collateral forms "tattein" and "tassein," "temeron" and "semeron"), we may perhaps consider

both to be sprung from a form *ti* signifying the person pointed at, whether spoken-to or spoken-of.

Past time is cosignified in Latin, as in English, either by the verb "to have" or the verb "to be," e.g. "I have come," "I am come." Thus, Latin "cantavi" = cant-hab-I = chant have I, "cantavisti"=cant-habes-tu=chant hast thou.

In other words, "es"=be performs the same office, e.g. "remansi"=reman-es-I=remain is I; compare French "je suis resté"=I remained.

Past time is signified in Greek in the same two ways, i.e. by "ek"=have and "es"=be, e.g. "tethekas"=tethe-eka-su=thou hast put; "eklausas"=eklau-esa-su=thou didst weep.

Future time is cosignified in Latin, as in English, by a word meaning "to go"; "bo," an obsolete word, but found nasalised in Greek "baino"= I go, is preserved in Latin to signify future time: "cantabo"=I am going to sing=I shall sing.

In Greek, however, future time is signified by the same means as past time, by the verb "to be," e.g. "poio"=I make, "poieso"=I shall make. It may seem strange at first sight that the same means should be used to signify future and past time; yet we do the same in English. "I'm to be queen of the May, mother," refers to future

time. That the *s* of the Greek future tense is the verb "to be" is confirmed by analogy:

Sanskrit, "et-as-mi"=go-is-I=I shall go:
Russian," ya budu khodet"=I be to go=I shall go.
German, "Ich werde gehen"=I become to go=I shall go.

Often, however, future time is signified without the aid of any auxiliary, e.g.:

Latin, "regam"=I shall rule.
Greek, "elo"=I shall drive.
Russian, "ya dam"=I shall give.

That the simple name of the action should acquire this by-meaning is not strange in the case of many actions, e.g. going, since we have far more frequent need to inform our neighbour of some future action, e.g. "I go to town to-morrow," which he cannot know, than of our present action, which he can see and does not need to be told. A few Latin verbs have a future form ending in "ero," e.g. "odero"=I shall hate. In Greek, "ero"=I desire; if these forms are identical, "odero" is formed exactly as the English future "I will hate," which originally means "I wish hate." The same root is seen in what are called desiderative verbs, e.g. "esurit"=esu-erit=he desires to eat, and also in the future participle, "amaturus"=about to love.

The origin of the infinitive, i.e. of a form signifying the thought of an action as a thing-in-itself, can best be seen from modern analogies. In English and German this by-meaning is conveyed by prefixing "zu," "to," to the name of the action; in French, by prefixing "de," as in La Rochefoucauld's *Il est plus aisé d'être sage pour les autres que de l'être pour soi-même.*

It is clear from this that one preposition serves the purpose as well as another, and that the preposition so used no longer carries its usual meaning, but simply betokens that the action is thought of thing-wise, just as the *e* in French "jugea" no longer signifies its usual sound, but simply that the *g* is soft.

In Greek the infinitive ends in "ein," another form of "en"=in; in Anglo-Saxon the infinitive ends in "an"=on; we may conjecture therefore that the Latin "amare"=to love was originally "ama-in," the *r* being interposed, as in "mensarum" for "mensa-um," and the *n* lost, as in the Greek "toisi" for "toisin."

The origin of the form in Latin signifying passive or reflex action is not so easy to discover. We may observe various methods of conveying this idea:

(1) The use of a different word, e.g. "to do wrong," "to suffer wrong."

(2) The use of a collateral form, e.g. "to fell," "to fall"; compare Greek "ἑl"=to take, "ἁl"=to be taken.

(3) The addition of a word meaning "self," e.g. Russian "uchu"=I teach, "uchu-sya"=I am taught; compare French "cela se sait"= that is known.

(4) The addition of the personal pronoun, e.g. Greek "luo"=I loose, "luo-mai"=I am loosed.

(5) The addition of the verb "to be," as in English "to cast," "to be cast."

In Latin, passive action is signified by adding the sound *er* to the verb, either before the pronoun ("amas"=thou lovest, "amaris"= thou art loved) or after the pronoun ("amat" =he loves, "amatur"=he is loved).

Perhaps this *er* is a survival of a word "er," meaning "to be," preserved also in English "are, art," Latin "eram."

The cases of a Latin substantive, in so far as they signify what in our own and other languages is signified by prepositions, may be supposed to be the result of the union of some preposition with a substantive. That the preposition should be attached after and not before the substantive, as the word "preposition" suggests, and as is usual to-day, need not surprise us, as there are many examples of prepositions following the

substantive, e.g. "thereby," German "darin"=therein, Latin "tecum"=with you, Greek "Athenethen"=from Athens.

Some cases in Latin suggest their origin; e.g. the "bi" in "tibi"=to thee, the "bus" in "omnibus"=for all, and the "by" in "thereby" would seem to be the same word.

The ablative case, "servo"=from a slave, ended formerly in *d*, which enables us to infer that "servo" was originally "servo-de"; that we should meet later with such expressions as "de servo"=de servode need not surprise us, as we often meet with reduplication of cosignificants which have lost their significants, as in Latin "deinde"; also French "nous avions" =nous-avai-nous. Compare Villon, *Deux estions et n'avions qu'un cœur.* That the *o* should be lengthened when the *d* is dropped is conformable to usage; e.g. Latin "leg"=law, when the *g* is dropped, becomes "law" and "loi"; English "Ik"=I, when the *k* is dropped, becomes "ai."

The dative case in words ending in *o*, as "servo," gives no clue to its origin, since in form it is the same as the word itself, but in words ending in *a* the dative case ends in *æ*, e.g. "mensæ," and earlier in *ai*, e.g. "mensai"; in words ending in a consonant, e.g. "reg"=king, the dative is "regi." In Greek the dative

in the dual and plural ends in *in*, e.g. "logoin," "logoisin," so that we may infer that *in* is the lost suffix in the dative case.

The dative plural "servis," then, must be an abbreviation of "servisin," as Greek "logois" is of "logoisin."

The ablative plural "servis" must be an abbreviation of "servisde."

The form of the neuter plural, e.g. "bella"= wars, is the same as that of the feminine singular, and must be considered as originally a singular. Thus we speak of "aeroplanes" as "aircraft," "pullets" as "poultry," "crocks" as "crockery." This is confirmed by the rule of Greek syntax that a neuter plural is followed by a singular verb. Any collection of inanimate things may be considered momentarily as a single unit, and even collections of animate units can be so considered; thus we use "people," "folk," for the plural of "person"; compare the French "beaucoup de monde." The nominative case is very strange, as it appears to carry no by-meaning. An explanation of this form may perhaps be found in the tendency observable in folk-speech to insert a pronoun, even when the person is mentioned. Compare Mark Twain's "Miss Watson she kept pecking at me." The *os* in "Peisandros" may be the word "'os"=he, preserved in

the phrase "ēd 'os"=said he. "Peisandros elexe"=Peisander said, is, then, originally "Peisander 'os elexe"=Peisander he said.

There remain to be considered the forms of the genitive, the nominative, and the accusative plural. The first two we shall consider together, and venture to suggest that they are originally the same. In English the forms are identical, e.g. "cat's," "cats." In Latin they are identical in some words, e.g. "servi"=slave's, "servi"=slaves; in others they are closely similar, e.g. "regis"=king's, "reges"=kings. In Attic Greek "philoi"=friends, "philou"=friend's, but it should be noticed that there is an older form, "philoio"=friend's; also that *ou* and *oi* are sometimes interchanged, e.g. in Aeolic Greek we have "Moisa" for "Mousa."

Let us now consider the logical relation of these two forms. There are in thought three numbers —which we will call the singular, e.g. "a man," the plural, e.g. "men," the universal, e.g. "man" —in the sentence "Man is mortal," i.e. all men are mortal. Now it will be seen that the plural can be considered either as a multitude of singulars or as a part of the universal. We can say "many fishes," or "a lot of fish," and mean the same. In French the word "de"=of is used to signify

plurality as distinct from universality, e.g. "*Les tigres* (universal) *sont des bêtes feroces* (plural)."

Let us now consider the historical aspect of the question. If the notion of plurality was first conveyed by the partitive form, we should expect to find some survival of this use to-day, and we should look for it naturally in the oldest part of language. Now, the oldest part of language is that which was invented first; it is certain therefore that the names of the first numerals are older than the names of the later ones, and we should expect the oldest syntax to be found associated with these. If, then, we should find a language in which the early numbers were followed by the partitive form of the singular or universal, it would tend to confirm this hypothesis. This is actually the case in Russian. "After the Cardinal Numbers, *dva*=2, *tri*=3, *chetire*=4, also *oba*=both, the following noun is put in the genitive singular."—*Russian Grammar.*

Even, however, if we suppose that the forms of genitive singular and nominative plural are the same, we have still no explanation of this form. The idea of partition we know to be often conveyed by a word meaning "out of," e.g. "multi ex captivis"=many of the captives. The words in Greek and Latin, "ab," "de," "ek" offer no clue. Perhaps a lost form sur-

viving in the Slavonic "is"=out of was the source of the genitive. "Is" may be a corruption of "ex." Compare Latin "sex," Sanskrit "sas."

The question of the accusative case involves a brief consideration of the question of gender. That man should attribute soul to anything which has form is natural, since soul is the cause of form. That he should divide these in thought by the prime division of animate things, i.e. "sexus," and that he should use two sounds differing only in their termination to indicate two forms differing only in their termination is equally natural.

The main problem in this connection concerns the neuter gender, and the fact that neuter names have no accusative case; this rule is carried further in Russian than in Latin or Greek. In that language, names of inanimate things of whatever gender are the same in the accusative as in the nominative; thus, if "clamor" were a Russian word, its accusative case would be "clamor." From this it may be deduced that the termination of the accusative case was used to signify something which does not need signifying, except in the case of animate beings: it was, in fact, used to indicate which of two names mentioned signifies the doer and which the done-by. When one of the names is of a thing and one of

a person, this signifies itself, e.g. if I say "John sugar fond," the meaning is clear, but if I say "John Mary fond," it is not clear whether John is fond of Mary, or Mary is fond of John, or each fond of the other. I can make it clear, however, by saying "John Mary-of fond," or "John Mary-on keen."

Such may be conjectured to be the origin of the accusative termination. It does not seem to matter much what preposition is used for this purpose. In Latin it seems to be a word similar in function to the English "of," as it is also found in the genitive plural, e.g. accusative "servum," genitive "servorum." In Russian we find an accusative singular ending in *avo*, e.g. "Tolstoy," accusative singular, "Tolstavo"; and an accusative plural ending in *of*, e.g. "ofitsyer," accusative plural, "ofitsyerof"=officers.

The difference in form between "servum" and "servorum," both of which are from "servorum," is that in one the two vowels have coalesced, in the other they have become separated by an intrusive consonant. In Sanskrit the forms are the same, e.g. "rayam"=both "rem" and "rerum."

Detached cosignificants may be explained by showing that they were once self-significants.

"Ara" is a Greek word usually untranslated;

its nearest rendering is "truly" or "indeed." It is the first word of a question. "Ara" also means a curse. In Latin "ara" means an altar, and may be connected with the Greek root "ar"=to raise; compare Latin "altaria" from "altus"=high. "Ara," then, when used to ask a question or reinforce an assertion, is originally an appeal to the altar, in proof that the speaker is not lying; compare Mark Twain: "Honest Injun, haint you been telling me a lot of lies. Honest Injun—says I."

"Num" in Latin has the same office as "ara" in Greek: it is the first word in a question. It may be a variant of the word "name," i.e. the name of God; compare "numen," a collateral form of "nomen," and signifying divinity: the veneration paid by the primitive religious mind to the name of God is familiar. In Sanskrit "nama" signifies "name," also "indeed."

Latin "pone"= behind may be the collateral form of "pene," from "penis"=tail; compare "pencillum"=paint-brush, whence English "pencil." For change of vowel compare Latin "genu," Greek "gonu." "Pone," then, signified originally "at the tail of."

Greek "epi"=on may be an abbreviation of "kepi"=at the head of; compare Latin "caput" =head, Greek "kephale"=head. For disappear-

ance of the *k*, compare Latin "ubi"=where, which we know to have been originally "cubi," as in "si-cubi"=if anywhere.

Greek "para"=beside may be the same word as the Latin "par"=equal, of which the first meaning is "a match," i.e. one of two combatants. For the same train of thought compare English a match, a mate, a meet (helpmeet), German "mit"=with.

Greek, "kata"=down, e.g. "kata ro-on"= down-stream, may be connected with Russian "skat"=slope.

Greek "apo" corresponds to English "away." It is clear that "to go away" meant originally "to go a journey." Many words relating to travel referred once to travelling by water, e.g. "arrive" from "adripare"=to come to shore, French "aller" from adnatare=to swim to. Greek "airein"=to start, originally "to raise anchor." Perhaps then "apo" is from Sanskrit "ap"=water.

Russian "pod"=under may be the Greek "pod"=foot, and have originally meant "at the foot of."

Latin "si"=if, originally allow; compare "sino"=I allow. Compare also Greek "ei"= if, "eo"=I allow, and English "if," of which the older form is "gif"=give. Scotch "gin"=if may be for "gi-en"=given.

CHAPTER VIII

PURISM

It is too late to protest against the Norman invasion. We cannot now hope to convert the Conqueror to the doctrine of Mr. Norman Angell, that foreign conquests are calamitous alike to victor and vanquished. Yet we feel that had William foreseen all its inconvenient consequences, he would at least have hesitated before embarking on that enterprise.

Not the least of these inconveniences is that we English are still endeavouring, with only partial success, to speak a foreign language; or rather, we are still labouring under the difficulty of having to speak two languages at once. Norman-French never supplanted Saxon-English in these isles; it simply arrested its growth. The alien took from the native language the faculty of development from within, by occupying beforehand every sphere into which such development was possible. As an arm of some huge ivy

fastens on a growing sapling, enveloping it with innumerable branches, leaning on its strength yet arresting its growth, burying it under the profusion of its own luxuriant leafage yet at every step dependent on it for support, so the language of the conquering Norman fastened on to that of the vanquished Saxon and refused it the least opportunity to expand into the higher realms of thought. To this fact we owe the most unfortunate peculiarity of modern English that its compound words are not developed from the simple ones ; the speech of manhood is not evolved from the speech of childhood, nor the vocabulary of philosophy from the vocabulary of experience. All the nobler functions of language have been usurped by the alien and the parasite. Nearly the whole apparatus of abstract thought has been constructed from foreign material, and though it is true that the most complex word in the language is originally compounded of simple elements, yet these elements are not the elements of English, but of Latin, Greek, or some other tongue. For this reason the appearance of such a word discovers no clue to its meaning, except to the scholar ; nor does the abstract idea which it conveys declare from what concrete notion it was originally drawn.

It is, therefore, no simple matter for an English-

man to master his own language. Before he can move familiarly in this, his native element, it is necessary that he should gain some acquaintance with those tongues which have usurped so many of the natural functions of his own, that is, that he should have some knowledge of Latin and Greek. The average Englishman has neither. When he comes upon an unfamiliar word he interprets it either by its context or its appearance, and as neither is a trustworthy guide, he will often carry away an erroneous notion of its meaning. When, therefore, a word is so misinterpreted by a large number of persons its value tends to become permanently altered.

When a word is misinterpreted by means of its appearance, that is, when the meaning of some similar but unrelated word is given to it, we get what is called a "malapropism." A considerable number of such errors are now embodied in standard English.

Trivial means properly "trite" or "hackneyed"; as in Keble's hymn, "the trivial round, the common task," or in Bacon, "These conceits which are now trivial were then new." It has now acquired the meaning of "trifling."

Petulant means properly "saucy" or "wanton," as in Boswell: "the petulance with which obscure

scribblers treat men of respectable character." It has now the meaning of "pettish."

Obnoxious means properly "liable to" or "exposed to," as in Sir William Davenant: "They leave the government a trunk, naked, defenceless, and obnoxious to every storm." It has now acquired the meaning of "noxious."

Exterminate means to exile, to drive beyond the boundaries, as: "They deposed, exterminated, and deprived him of communion." It has now the same meaning as "extirpate."

Impertinent means properly "not pertinent," as in Shakespeare: "I'll bring thee to the present business which now's upon us. Without the which this story were most impertinent." It has now the meaning of "impudent," and has perhaps also been influenced by "pert."

Ingenuity means properly "nobility," whether of birth or mind, hence "frankness," as in Jeremy Taylor: "When I find men are angry at my Ingenuity and openness of discourse." It has now the meaning of "ingeniosity," which it has pushed out of use. Compare Cudworth: "Nature, whose cunning and ingeniosity no art or human opificer can hope to reach." It is worthy of note that R. L. Stevenson, in the *Master of Ballantrae*, achieves an archaistic effect by using it correctly. "I told

her with all ingenuity, even as it is written here."

"To demean oneself" means properly "to behave oneself," as may be seen from the substantive "demeanour." It has now frequently the meaning of "to bemean oneself," as in Sheridan: "You base, scurrilous old—but I won't *demean* myself by naming what you are."

Defile, from the French *se defiler*, means to "march in line"; it has now often the meaning of "to befile"—"to make foul."

Restive means properly "inclined to rest or stop," as in Hume: "The imagination is extremely quick and agile, but the passions in comparison are slow and restive." It has now the meaning of "restless."

When a word is interpreted in the light of its context, it tends to lose something of its proper distinctness, and while it still retains its original meaning, it no longer fits it closely. Thus *prejudicial* has come to be co-extensive with "harmful"; we hear that "such conduct is prejudicial to health." An article appeared recently in a weekly journal entitled "Are Child Marriages Prejudicial?" *Pessimistic* and *Optimistic* are used to mean "despondent" and "hopeful." "Questioned as to his view of the negotiations now proceeding, Mr. McDonald said

he was very optimistic of a near settlement."—*Daily Paper*. *Unique* is used to mean "remarkable." "This book, madam, is unique," said the bookseller's clerk, "but not so unique as that."

"To transpire" is used for "to happen." "Things 'ave transpired 'twixt then and now," writes Mr. Kipling in one of his Cockney ballads.

Sometimes, however, the word acquires from its context a definite colouring to which it has no title. Thus *exorbitant* and *extravagant*, both of which mean simply *abnormal*, are applied now, the one to abnormal zeal in acquiring money, the other to abnormal zeal in spending it. *Egregious*, which also simply means *unusual*, is applied only to unusual badness. Perhaps the most striking example of this is the popular use of *chronic* in the sense of "unpleasant" or "irksome." Apparently this use originates in a misunderstanding of the pseudo-scientific language of the quack medicine advertisement, "chronic indigestion" or "chronic rheumatism" being supposed to denote an aggravated form of these complaints.

Under this head must also be considered a number of words which form a class by themselves and are in several respects peculiar. They may be called "the ex-philosophical terms." The

chief of these are: *substance, essence, quality, quantity, immediate, special, general, supposition, predicament, possible, principle, entity, actual, relation, element, premiss, term, instance, conclusion, proposition, subject, accident, definition, passive, affection, capable, susceptible, demonstrate, negative,* and a few more. The noteworthy fact about these is that they appear to be Latin words, but are not so in the ordinary sense, for they were never in general use among the Romans. The schoolboy who should translate "possible" by "possibilis" or "supposition" by "suppositio" would be guilty of a gross blunder. These words were nearly all invented in post-classical times to translate the metaphysical terminology of Aristotle, and owe their origin to him alone; they were at no time a part of spoken Latin. Thus, "immediate" is the equivalent of Aristotle's *amesos*, "predicament" of his *categoria*. All these words have long since passed from the seclusion of the schools into the language of daily life, and have lost much of their original precision. All that wonderful armoury of thought-weapons, which Aristotle forged with such immense labour and genius, has, during the twenty centuries which have since elapsed, been worn so thin that it is now of little practical use to the thinker. How weak these words have become may be

seen from the case of "principle." This word is the Anglicised form of the Latin *principium*, and corresponds to Aristotle's *arche* — beginning. When, however, it is required to be used in Aristotle's sense, it has to be reinforced by the word "first," so as to form the tautologous phrase "first principle."

It may be noted that whereas most of these words have merely lost some of their original definiteness, one of them, *predicament*, has gone a step farther and acquired a new definiteness of its own, to which it has no sort of title. *Predicament* is now an equivalent of *quandary*. This has necessitated the adoption of the original Greek word *category* to replace it in all its former offices. It is possible that the modern misuse of *predicament* is due to its appearance in a certain passage of the most popular dramatic scene in the English language, in which it has reference to the most awkward quandary in which man ever found himself.

> And the offender's life lies at the mercy
> Of the duke only, gainst all other voice,

says Portia to Shylock—

> In which *predicament* I say thou standest

(i.e. in which class or category I say thou standest).

The words which we have hitherto spoken of are those which have been taken into English through their Latin equivalents. There are, however, many Greek philosophical terms which have entered the language in their own person. These, however, have fared no better than the others; this is somewhat strange, since we should expect the terminology of science and scholarship to be used with more than ordinary care and precision. Many of these terms, however, have suffered a most violent perversion—some, in fact, a complete inversion of meaning.

For example, *organic* signifies in the language of modern science "vital," pertaining to the phenomena of life, as when we distinguish "organic" from "inorganic" chemistry. "Organic" in Greek means "mechanical" and is actually used by Aristotle to characterise a lifeless as opposed to a living agency.

The correct terms for "organic" and "inorganic" are "empsychic" and "apsychic." The use of the term *organic* in its modern sense reflects a phase of recent scientific thought. The scientists of the Victorian age were bent on explaining the universe without admitting the agency of "life" into their calculations, and in order to distinguish the phenomena of the living from those of the lifeless without allowing the word "life"

into their terminology, they adopted the word "organic."

Homogeneous (Greek *homogenes*) means in Greek "belonging to the same genus." *Homogeneous* in English means "having like parts," as when we speak of "a homogeneous mass," and is the exact equivalent of the Greek *homoiomeres*. It is hard to understand why a wrong term should have been here employed when a right one existed already to hand.

Two of the most important terms in Greek philosophy are *dynamis* (power or potentiality) and *energeia* (realisation or actuality). In English these two terms have almost exchanged meanings. By *energy* we mean "power of movement," as when we say "I have no energy"; in mechanics *energy* is defined as "capacity of doing work." *Dynamis*, on the other hand, means "actuality of movement," as when we speak of "hydrodynamics" as opposed to "hydrostatics," "dynamical electricity" as opposed to "statical."

The causes of word-perversion which we have considered are peculiar to our own language; there are others common to all languages. These may be roughly classed under two heads: the immoderate desire of, and the immoderate dislike of, forcible expression. The latter is sometimes

called " euphemism " ; the former we will venture to name " dusphemism."

A forcible word is one which, unaided and without reference to its context, causes a certain measure of emotional disturbance in the mind of the hearer. Two classes of words possess this quality in a very high degree : those which refer to the grosser facts of our physical nature, and those which refer to the more exalted concepts of our spiritual nature. Such words, therefore, are specially liable to be used simply to convey an emotional thrill or shock without regard to their proper notional import. It is unnecessary to give many examples of this tendency, because there is hardly a forceful word in the language which is not frequently so misused. Perhaps the most remarkable is the Irish use of *devil* in the phrase " Devil a bit," or the American use of *hell* in the phrase " Like hell I will," simply as forms of emphatic denial.

The converse motive, the desire to use such notions without arousing the sentiments they naturally awaken, is responsible for an equal number of perversions. Thus we speak of God as " Providence," of our bellies as " stomachs," of ugly people as " plain," of a child-bearing as a " confinement," and of sex as " the *racial function*."

It is clear that neither of these motives is confined to ignorant people. Indeed, the ignorant are less frequently guilty of this fault than the better educated, in proportion as the former have a smaller range of words at their disposal. For this reason the spread of education has tended to increase rather than diminish the number of words generally misused. Such expressions as "ghastly weather," "phenomenal success" are now used by all classes alike, regardless of the fact that they are thereby permanently injuring their common property, as every mechanism is injured, its joints dislocated, and its force weakened by being applied to improper purposes by reckless and unskilled hands. Those who would shrink from using a razor to sharpen a pencil, or a pair of scissors to open a canned-meat tin, do not shrink from the phrase "awfully nice."

The man of letters, on the other hand, like every other artist, is inspired by a tender solicitude for the tools with which he works. With him the tendency is to be hypersensitive in his choice of words, and to abhor all vagueness and indiscriminate handling of language. Hence we find among scholarly writers a tendency, both conservative and reactionary, to bring back to their original definition words whose fine significance has been blunted by popular misuse. This is a

mannerism peculiar to those reared under the temples of learning. It is the shibboleth which the mouths of the self-educated cannot naturally form. It flatters the *molles auriculæ* of those who write and of those who read. It is the language in which one scholar addresses himself to another, not now, as in the Middle Ages, in an Anglicised Latin, but in its nearest equivalent, a Latinised English.

This artifice of style is often very effective when used by a master. What, for instance, could be happier than Matthew Arnold's use of the word *urbanity* as opposed to *provincialism*, or the many examples of this mannerism to be found in the writings of Walter Pater? Even Carlyle's monotonous reiteration of arguments from derivation is not without effect. But this, like every other mannerism, inevitably generates its incompetent imitators. We have, for example, heard it seriously argued, in defence of vegetarianism, that *vegetarian* means "one who thrives"; because, forsooth, the root word *vegeo* signifies in Latin "to thrive."

The danger which lies in this direction is well illustrated by a passage from Mr. Chesterton's essay on *Phonetic Spelling*. "A certain magistrate," he says, "told somebody whom he was examining in court that he or she should always

be ' polite to the police.' I do not know whether the magistrate noticed the circumstance, but the word *polite* and the word *police* have the same original meaning. *Politeness* means the atmosphere and ritual of the city. The *policeman* means the representative and guardian of the city, the symbol of human civilization. If *politeness* means too often mere frippery, it is that it has not enough to do with serious patriotism and public dignity ; if policemen are coarse and casual, it is because they are not sufficiently convinced that they are the servants of the beautiful city and the agents of sweetness and light." With this idea Mr. Chesterton makes sport for more than two pages, concluding thus: "This does seem to me the case against any extreme revolution in spelling. If you spell a word wrong you have some temptation to think it wrong." The whole passage is very effective, but its force is considerably weakened when we remember that the word *police* and the word *polite* are in no way connected etymologically, the former being derived from the Greek *polis*, "a city," the latter from the Latin *politus*, "polished."[1]

[1] This error is especially interesting, as it proves how treacherous a science is etymology, and how large an element of uncertainty exists in all its deductions. For there exist two words in English meaning "polite" and derived from words meaning "a city," namely, *civil* and

The same disaster must overtake those moral lessons which Carlyle endeavours to draw from the supposed connection of *king* with the root meaning "knowledge" or "power," when we find that this derivation is rejected by most modern authorities. In short, when we use a word in its modern sense we are on certain ground; when we use it in its supposed ancient sense, we are dependent on our own or somebody else's historical knowledge, and if we fall into error it will be a particularly gross one, since it will be accompanied by an ostentation of learning.

Apart, however, from the blunders of amateur philologists, the practice of purism is fraught with many dangers. In the first place, it is eminently desirable that a nation's language, like its constitution, should combine the maximum of pliancy with the maximum of stability, and that it should readily respond to changing needs and new ideas. In the second place, it is one of the essential qualities of a language, as of a currency, that its units should possess a common value. It is better that a word should change its meaning than that it should acquire a varying significance. No greater disaster can overtake a language than that there should arise a distinct line of cleavage

urbane. Mr. Chesterton's error is entirely in accordance with reason and probability, though it is contrary to fact.

between the vernacular and the literary vocabulary, as happened to the Latin tongue under the early Empire, previous to the revolution initiated by Fronto and Apuleius, and as to-day exercises a paralysing effect on the development of a national literature in modern Greece. Thirdly, we must bear in mind that language is a living and growing thing, and that it is only by this tendency to extend the meaning of words that language has developed from its simple beginnings. If we started on the principle of restricting words to their so-called proper meaning, and pursued this theory to its logical conclusion, we should ultimately reduce language to the few inarticulate ejaculations from which it began. Lastly, there is something futile in the habit of deploring the degradation of words, for, after all, the menial offices of speech must be performed by some words, and if we are depressed by seeing noble words on the down grade we ought to be consoled by seeing humble words on the up grade. *Sward*, which used to mean the rind of a pig, is now used for the green garment of the hill-side. *Prestige*, which used to mean the tricks of a mountebank, is now used for the awe and veneration which powerful nations inspire in weak ones. *Urn* meant originally a receptacle for urine; *to foist* meant to break wind silently.

The principle, then, of growth in language must be accepted. All development which proceeds by a logical train of thought or a clear analogy is legitimate. Yet even this test must not be too rigidly enforced. It must be constantly borne in mind that language was made by ignorant people, with no historical sense, and is thus full of stupidities, incongruities, and grotesque blunders. The antecedents of many words, faultless in themselves, will not bear too close a scrutiny. Language grew, and reason and order came afterwards. There was no French Academy assisting at its birth, and no Lindley Murray presiding over its development in childhood. It is on this account a dangerous thing for a writer to look too closely into the language he is using, for it is apt to paralyse his productive power by suddenly revealing to him the futility of literary work. It was thus with Monsieur Lucien Bergeret, *maître des Conférences de la Faculté des lettres*, when he sat down to write his treatise on *Vergilius Nauticus: Il posa sa plume et se sentit rempli d'une tristesse soudaine; il venait de decouvrir tout à coup l'inanité de son ouvrage.*

A few concrete instances will perhaps best serve to indicate the border-line between pedantry and conformity to popular usage. Let us take the word *preposterous*, which, in Latin, has a very

definite meaning. It denotes a condition of things in which "the hind-part is in front"—"the cart before the horse." A scholarly mind may feel unwilling, if not in common speech at least in formal prose, to employ the term in its vague vulgar sense. The objection might be obviated, for example, by applying the term, in its original signification, to a state of society in which the women worked and the men sat idle. Let it be so applied. Yet the word will not convey the meaning we intended, for that is not its signification. *Preposterus* may mean "in inverted order," but *preposterous* means "preposterous" and nothing else; nor can we easily dispense with it in this sense.

"To use *individual* wrongly in the twentieth century," say the writers of *King's English*—perhaps the most authoritative treatise on such points of style—"stamps a writer more definitely than almost any other single solecism, not as being generally ignorant or foolish, but as being without the literary sense." They then proceed to indicate the criterion of correct use as follows: "An individual is not a person; it is a person as a single separate or private person, a person as opposed to a combination of persons; this qualification, this opposition, must be effectively present to the mind or the word is not in place." This,

we think, is a crucial case, because if we grant the principle on which this contention is based, we deny the very principle of growth in language. *Individual* is a Latin word invented to translate the Greek philosophical term *atom*, and means "something which cannot be divided." It has long been specially applied to the social atom, while the Greek word has been kept to signify the material atom. Its adoption as an equivalent of "human being" seems not only natural, but inevitable. If it be objected that when so used it loses much of its original force, we reply that *person*, the only possible substitute for *individual*, in many cases loses far more. The English language had to solve the problem of finding a single word to convey the idea of "human being," without specification of sex. Dramatic art provided one word, social science another; we see no objection to the use of either. As we have already shown, our language abounds in lax uses of philosophical terms. If we insist that every one who uses *individual* must have a clear presentation of some corresponding *dividual*, we must insist that every one who uses the words *general* and *special* must have a clear presentation of the distinction between *genus* and *species*. Let us take a case which affords a still closer parallel. The word *detachment* means "some-

thing detached." It is especially used for a small body of soldiers detached from an army. But surely when Byron describes the escort of armed men who accompanied him on some of his expeditions in Greece as "a detachment of soldiers," we are not conscious of any illiteracy in the use of the word, even though no contrast with any main body is "effectively" present to the mind of the writer.

It has been remarked that the words *example* and *instance* are not properly speaking equivalent terms; for by derivation an instance means "an example brought forward by way of objection." It would, of course, be quite possible to observe this distinction in practice; but to do so would be as futile as the actions of those whose hypersensitive conscience in moral matters leads them to deny themselves even when their self-denial contributes in no way to the good or happiness of themselves or others; for, unless the writer advert to his subtlety in a footnote, it will pass wholly unnoticed by his readers.

There seems to be a consensus of opinion among writers of authority condemning the use of the expressions "averse to" and "abhorrent to," in view of the meaning of the Latin preposition. The alternative "averse from" and "abhorrent from" sounds so stilted that it has been recom-

mended to avoid these terms altogether. Surely, however, common usage ought here to determine which preposition should be employed, and while French grammarians allow the phrases *s'approcher de* and *s'échapper à*, there appears to be no reason why "averse to" and "abhorrent to" should offend English ears.

Some popular usages, however, we think no self-respecting author should permit himself. The word *stark*, for instance, means "strong" or "stiff," as in the phrase "stiff and stark"; hence we get the expressions "stark-staring," "stark dead," and, by analogy, "stark naked," subsequently abbreviated to "stark," just as "a moral certainty" is abbreviated to "a moral" in the phrase "that is a moral"=that is a certainty. This solecism is by no means of recent origin, nor is it confined to illiterate speech, for in a letter dated March 5, 1762, Horace Walpole writes to the Countess of Ailesbury:

"There is a court dress to be instituted (to thin drawing-rooms), stiff-bodied gowns and bare shoulders. What dreadful discoveries will be made both on fat and lean! I commend to you the idea of Mrs. Cavendish, when half-*stark*."

It is strange that so scholarly a writer should countenance this vulgarism, though it might fairly be urged in his defence that in corresponding

with his friends a man may excusably adopt a certain *déshabille* in style—a quality which has its charms and has since been deliberately cultivated with success by many modern essayists. But surely a line must be drawn between conversational prose and conversation, between the raw material and the finished product (however coarsely spun), between what is literature and what is not ; and when Mr. H. G. Wells, in a philosophical treatise, writes " The true aristocrat goes *stark* as Apollo," we feel that the line has been overstepped. Surely, *naked* is a good word and would have served the author's turn well enough in this context.

Above all, where we have a word employed in a proper and in a spurious sense, and where it is of more use in its proper sense, there is good ground for so limiting it. A careful writer will not say " the heat is phenomenal," unless he means that it is not real. It would be a distinct gain to the language if we could agree to rescue the word *impertinent* from the results of its unfortunate entanglement in the popular mind with the word *impudent*, and restore it to its precise meaning as the antithesis of *pertinent*. In the same way *insignificant* is far more needed as the antithesis of *significant* than as a synonym of *mean*. It is not possible, of course, for any one writer to

rectify the errors authorised by custom. Nevertheless, an author should realise that in every page he writes he is not only using the language, but (if he have anything new to say) he is in some degree modifying it—he is giving it a gentle twist in one direction or the other: by careless use, he may twist it in the wrong direction; by careful use, he may not only avoid this, but even correct the damage inflicted by others. The true purist is he who deliberately and conscientiously endeavours by gentle pressure to correct those words which custom has depraved.

With regard to words vulgarly misused for the sake of emphasis, it is possible to advise a more decided line of conduct. Nothing should be done by any author to countenance this practice. For it should be noticed that when a word is used for a purpose for which it was not intended, not only is it injured for its proper purpose, but it very soon becomes useless for the new purpose to which it has been misapplied. The same criticism holds good of words vulgarly misapplied in the cause of prudery. It is no use throwing down clean words to make stepping-stones over the miry places of language; the clean words will in a short time be trodden into the mud and the place will be as foul as ever. Enough innocent

words have already been polluted by those who are *plus chastes des oreilles que de tout le reste du corps*. True purism in this direction will dictate a return to some of the outspokenness of our ancestors.

CHAPTER IX

CORRECT SPEECH

"KING'S ENGLISH" is a strange expression when used to denote the standard of correct speech in these isles. For among the various powers and functions exercised by the monarch now or in past times, those of supervising the speech of his people, of defending its boundaries against foreign invasion, of punishing the solecist and rewarding the purist, have, as far as we know, never been included. The expression must have sounded singularly inappropriate under certain of our kings. George I, for example, when he ascended the throne, could not speak a word of the language of his adopted country, whilst George II spoke it with the characteristic awkwardness of a foreigner. We may, however, commend the phrase in one respect, for it contains, by implication, the germ of an important truth. It points to the fact that the only acknowledged standard of correct English is not a democratic and impersonal, but an arbitrary and personal standard.

Most of us believe that the shock experienced when we hear the King's English "murdered" is caused by some violation of our logical sense. This view is quite mistaken. Whatever the seat of this disagreeable sensation, it is certainly not the logical faculty. Indeed, it may be shown that many of the idioms of vulgar and childish speech have better authority in the requirements of logic than those of "correct" English. For example, it is more logical to say:

I is,
Thou is,
He is,

than

I am,
Thou art,
He is,

since logic demands that we should always use the same sign to indicate the same idea.

Neither can the authority of antiquity be cited on behalf of standard English, for it will often bear witness on the opposite side. For example, no part of English speech has caused more discussion than that which ends in *ing*, as *walking*. Certain of its uses current in standard English have resisted the most strenuous efforts of grammarians to justify them. When Huxley writes: "It is said that *on a visitor once asking* to see his

library, Descartes . . .," grammarians find themselves in a quandary, for they cannot decide whether the word *asking* is a participle, a gerund, or a noun, and at last persuade themselves that it is probably a confusion of all three. On the other hand, when the Fat Boy in *Pickwick* says, " I see him a-kissing of her agin," that is, " in kissing of her," we have a specimen of the oldest and best authorised use of this form. The words *in* and *of* which precede and follow the word *kissing* prove it to be no other than the old substantival form in *ing*, corresponding to the German form in *ung*. To this use of the word no objection can be made either on logical or philological grounds.

The belief that the phrase " It is me " is incorrect is now perhaps defunct. It has not, however, been buried with all the publicity due to so venerable a superstition. The facts of its history are these: From the earliest times there have been used in the languages of Europe two sounds to signify the person speaking. In English they appear as *I* and *me*. The original meaning of *I*, of which the older form is *Ic*, was probably " Look ! " " See here ! " as in the Latin words *hic*, *hicce*, *ecce*, and may well be seen in the phrase " *Ego sum*," which originally meant the same as " *Ecce es me*," " Here is me." It has

been conjectured that the word *me* originated in the sound *ahem!* by which the speaker calls attention to his own presence.

Both these sounds are found as separate words and also compounded with other words. Of such compounds Greek and Latin contain numerous examples, e.g. "su*m*," "amaba*m*," "tithe*mi*," "amav*i*." English has only one, the word *am*.

Now it usually happens that when two words having the same meaning exist in the same language they acquire slightly different uses. If there is any difference in the value of *I* and *me*, it is that the latter is a trifle more robust and self-assertive than the former. Now, when the sign of the speaker is the subject of predication, it is usually unemphatic and can often be omitted without loss of clearness, as in the telegraphic style "Arrived safely." In this case *I* is used. Otherwise the form *me* is employed. This distinction in the use of the words has led grammarians to call *me* the accusative and *I* the nominative case of the pronoun; and, since there is a rule in Latin syntax that the verb "to be" is not followed by the accusative case, they have inferred that the phrase "It is me" is incorrect English.

Both the premisses of this inference are false. It is false to say that *I* and *me* are "cases" of

the pronoun ; first, because the distinction between these words is prior to all such things as cases—indeed, cases have come into existence only through the adhesion of such small words as these to others with which they were constantly associated ; secondly, the functions of *I* and *me* do not differ from each other as do those of the accusative and nominative case in Latin, as we have shown in detail elsewhere.

Furthermore, the Latin usage, if examined a little more closely, will be found not to invalidate, but rather to corroborate, the vulgar English usage. The words *sum, amabam,* if analysed into their parts, show that the form *me* was habitually used in Latin as a subject of predication.

It must be observed that grammarians have attempted to apply the same false logic to certain other English words, which, however, have not proved so amenable to discipline. Of these, the most noticeable is *who* in the phrase " than whom." This refractory pronoun has so exasperated the temper of grammarians by its refusal to conform to grammatical laws that they have advised stylists to boycott it. The second and third personals are equally obdurate. We all say " That is her," not " That is she." In fact, it may be doubted whether grammarians would have achieved so much with the first personal

pronoun but for the countenance given to their opinion by the translators of the Bible in the passage "It is I, be not afraid." Such is the history of the most famous attempt made by pedants to subject the English language to the laws of Latin grammar.

Many will think that the double negative is indefensible, as it seems to involve not only a redundancy but a contradiction. Yet this is not so. The question whether two negatives in the same clause are to be taken as cancelling or reinforcing each other is decided not by reason but by convention. The Greek language allowed both uses, and it is difficult to see how we can class the French idiom except as a case of double negative, seeing that the words *pas*, *rien*, etc., have long since acquired a negative force. Moreover, it is only since the double negative has come to be recognised as a distinguishing mark of the vernacular that it has been rigidly excluded from standard English. "My lord," says the Abbot of Canterbury to King John in the famous ballad, "I would it were known, I never spend nothing but what is my own." Rochester, who was certainly defective neither in birth nor scholarship, wrote, "For I am no Sir Sidrophel, Nor none of his relations"; Cowper wrote, "And taught him never to come back no more"; and

Lamb permitted himself to say, " Not too loving neither." In many cases the form has a distinctly pleasing effect, as " Ravenna which for antiquity will not bow her top to none in Italy " ; or, " For loneliness is not God, nor company is not God." There is, indeed, some reason to regret the disappearance of this form from correct English.

The phrase " Didn't ought " appears at first sight redundant and illogical, and if we accept the orthodox view that the word " ought " is here the past tense of " owe," it is certainly true. But the orthodox opinion is not wholly satisfactory, because it shows no clear reason why the past instead of the present tense is used. In the oldest English the present was certainly used, as in

> For men suld hold this haly tre
> In honore as it aw to be.

It seems probable, then, that the terminal *t* of *ought* is not the sign of the past tense, but the *t* of the word *to* which has become attached to the preceding word. In this case the phrase " didn't ought " really stands for " did not owe," and is perfectly logical.

If it be true that the idioms of folk-speech have as good authority in reason as those of correct English, it is also true that its peculiar

word-forms have as good a basis in the usage of antiquity. Indeed, it would seem as if some instinctive predilection for the original sound of words inspired the ignorant in their errors of speech. The pronunciation of *engine* as *ingine* seems like a reversion to the oldest form of the word, as in "He or sche sall be put and haldin in the stokkis or uther *ingine*," and recalls the derivation of the word from the Latin *ingenium*. *Sich*, the Cockney variant of *such*, as seen in Kipling's "She's human as you are, you treat her as sich," may be compared with Spenser's "He rather joy'd to be than seemen sich." The nursery phrase "I will give you what for" preserves the old substantival use of *what*, meaning "something." The Kentish *mushroon* for *mushroom* recalls the derivation of the word from the French *moucheron* (*mousseron*). *Axe* for *ask* was at one time the more widely accepted form of the word, as in Caxton's "He axed for mete, and specyally he axyd for eggys."

The pronunciation of the pronoun *one* as in the Cockney *young un* is of course nearer to the old pronunciation than the modern *wun*. The original sound is still to be found crystallised in the words *atone*, *alone*, *anon* (i.e. *in one*). The word was still sounded in this way in Shakespeare's time, as may be seen in *Love's Labour's Lost*,

Act IV, Sc. ii, wherein a play is made on the words *pierce one* and *person*, which until the old pronunciation is restored is quite pointless. We would like to believe that the old sound was still in use when Shelley wrote :

> Though the sound overpowers,
> Sing again, with thy sweet voice, revealing
> A tone
> Of some world far from ours,
> Where music, and moonlight, and feeling
> Are one ;

but we fear there is sufficient evidence to prove the contrary.

There is a vulgar proverb to the effect that

> He who takes what isn't hissen,
> If he's cotched he'll go to prison.

The two forms " hissen " and " cotch " would now be condemned as vulgarisms. Yet if it is correct to make a substantive form *mine* from *my*, it cannot be inherently incorrect to make a substantive form " hissen " from " his." If it is right to pronounce " watch " as " wotch," it cannot be a gross error to pronounce *catch* as *cotch*. At any rate, it is certain that the latter sound is nearer to the older pronunciation of the word.

The boundary between correct and incorrect English is not only arbitrary, but is often drawn

in a spirit of snobbish exclusiveness which it is difficult not to resent. The formation of adverbs, for example, with the word *like*, as *genteel-like*, "*permiscuslike*," still freely practised by the ignorant, is discarded from correct speech, yet in no other way have the great majority of English adverbs been formed, since the termination *ly* is only a corrupt form of the word *like*. Again, "correct" English allows us to treat the word *self* as a noun in the first and second person, e.g. *myself*, *thyself*, yet it is considered vulgar to do the same thing with the third person and say *hisself*. It is also considered vulgar, in many cases, to use the weak form of the past tense when a strong form exists, as *growed* for *grew*, or *knowed* for *knew*; whilst in other cases it is considered affected not to do so; thus we say *seethed* for *sod*, *worked* for *wrought*, although the strong forms are always used in the Bible, as "Jacob sod pottage" and "The workmen wrought."

The omission of the aspirate is a peculiarity of vulgar speech which demands separate consideration. It is usual to explain it as the result either of ignorance or carelessness in speaking. But this explanation is obviously quite inadequate. No degree of carelessness will cause a person who daily sees the word *Hampstead* to pronounce it *'Ampstead*. It is clearly a case of that phenomenon

familiar to linguists, the innate indisposition of certain nationalities towards certain letters. The Ephraimites could not pronounce *sh*, the English cannot pronounce *r*, the French cannot pronounce the aspirate, and the Italians decline even to write it. How then has it come about that the last-named idiosyncrasy is also common to the urban population of these isles? We can only suppose that it was introduced by French immigrants at the time of the Norman invasion, and that the confusion of usage in respect to the pronunciation of this letter originated at the same time as most of the other anomalies and inconsistencies of our language.

This piece of unrecorded history is remarkable for two reasons. In the first place it is interesting to note that the diction of the conquered Saxon triumphed over that of the conquering Norman, and that the descendants of the invader are now to be found most abundantly in the lowest strata of our town population—a fact deserving the consideration of all would-be conquerors. Secondly, it is interesting to observe that the now damnable heresy of ignoring the aspirate was—like the heresy of Arius—at one time in a fair way of being considered orthodoxy—a fact deserving the notice of all who regard the rules of correct English as fixed by immutable reason.

It is also worth noting, in this connection, that the phrases "this here," "them there" (the French *celui-ci, ceux-là*)—the vivid, demonstrative form so alien to the phlegmatic Saxon, so characteristic of the expansive Gaul, are usually found associated with the tendency to drop the aspirate.

It seems, then, that the aversion educated people feel towards what are classed as vulgarisms of speech is not caused by any violation of their logical or grammatical sense. To what cause, then, is it to be attributed? Many will reply that their chief objection to the vernacular is not to its idioms or its word-forms, but to its intonation of the vowel sounds. And it must be admitted that certain inflections of the human voice, heard whether on the pavement of Whitechapel or in the glades of Epping Forest, arouse in the hearer an instinctive and uncontrollable dislike of the speaker. Yet even here it is hard to find any reasonable ground for our dislike. What sounds more disagreeable, for instance, than the Cockney pronunciation of *Daily Mail* as *Dily Mile*? But if we consider the words phonetically, we shall at once see that the latter is the true sound of the diphthong in question, and there can be little doubt that it was originally so pronounced. So there is nothing intrinsically

hateful in the vulgar intonation. In fact, Cockney differs from educated English much as Doric differed from Ionic Greek, and many considered Doric the more pleasing.

The cause of our dislike must, clearly, be sought in some difference of speech more subtle than can be represented in writing. In this respect a bad accent may be compared to a bad tone in music. Just as a bad tone will neutralise the effect of a faultless performance, so a bad accent will prejudice us against an otherwise unimpeachable diction. Now the cause of this phenomenon in music has been minutely investigated by science. It has been discovered that the quality of tone depends simply on the presence or absence of dissonant overtones, and the art of the performer to produce a good tone is nothing but the power to reduce these dissonant overtones to a minimum. The same art may be practised with the human voice as with any other musical instrument, and there is no doubt that members of the class who devote much time to social intercourse do constantly practise the art of modulating their voices in such a manner as to produce the most agreeable result upon their hearers. This art the poorer classes have less motive and less opportunity to cultivate, and their intonation is, therefore, generally more harsh and ungrateful to the ear. For the rest,

we can only explain the aversion which most educated people feel for the diction of the masses by the force of association: vulgarisms are ugly simply because they recall certain ugly qualities of mind, which we are accustomed to meet with in those whose spiritual development has been stunted in childhood. The remedy for this is, as we shall try to show, to convert our national education from a sham into a reality. In Scotland, where the education of the people has never wholly forsaken the true path, no man, however cultured, regards the vernacular with aversion, nor did Professor Caird, late Master of Balliol, blush as he expounded the philosophy of Hegel to the assembled scions of the English aristocracy in an accent redolent of his native heath.

It is not our intention, however, to imply that the English of the poor is a superior language to that of the well-to-do. Although, after reading the Scotch poems of Burns or the dialect poems of Tennyson or Kipling, we are often tempted to believe that any natural dialect is superior in force, simplicity, power of vivid imagery and terse expression to the standard English of the educated classes, we suspect this is a delusion, and that these virtues reside, not in the dialects themselves, but in the master minds that used

them. To form a true opinion on this question it is necessary to escape from the charmed circle of literature and examine the language actually spoken by the people. For this purpose we will take a specimen of vernacular English quoted by Maria Edgeworth from the police court proceedings against a shoeblack arrested on a charge of assault. The prisoner gave the following account of the affair to the magistrate: "Why, my lard, as I was going past the Royal Exchange I meets Billy—'Billy,' says I, 'will you sky a copper?' 'Done,' says he.—'Done,' says I—'and done's enough between two jantlemen.'—With that I ranged them fair and even with my hook-em-snivey—up they go.—'Music!' says he—'Skull!' says I—and down they come three brown mazzards.—'By the holy, you fleshed 'em,' says he—'You lie,' says I.—With that he ups with a lump of a two year old and let's drive at me—I outs with my bread-earner, and gives it him up to Lamprey in the bread-basket."

It will be seen that this specimen of English, so far from being simple and natural, is obscure, affected, allusive, euphuistic—has, in fact, all the qualities of the most debased literary style. The same qualities are to be found in the urban vernacular of to-day.

The purport of our argument is simply to show

that a great deal of what is commonly called bad grammar is not bad grammar at all, but simply varying idiom. The problem of English teaching in our national schools is constantly before our educational authorities. From time to time indignant citizens write to the papers demanding to know why the children of the poor are not taught better English at school. But in all these discussions it is tacitly assumed that the English of the upper classes is right and the English of the lower classes wrong.[1] It is this delusion we are seeking to dispel. "King's English" is simply one among many dialects of our language, displaying the same virtues and the same vices as the others, and its only superiority over any other of these dialects proceeds from the social superiority of those who speak it. It is therefore wholly undesirable that the children of the poor should be laboriously schooled to imitate all its peculiarities—its vices as well as its virtues; rather they should be encouraged to honour their local dialect above that of any strangers, as we honour our native speech above that of any other

[1] In the *Cyclopedia of Education* recently published we read: "There are blunders to which the children in any given district are peculiarly liable, at least the children from homes where English is not well spoken. Of such mistakes the teacher ought to compile his own list, and upon this list he should base special exercises."

nation. "It is lawful, I think," says Theocritus, "for Dorians to speak Doric."

But, it will be said, is there no such thing as good English? Has speech no proper excellence? What did Spenser mean by calling Chaucer "a well of English undefiled"? What is the nature of the possible defilements to which he refers? Are there no faults in writing which a teacher must condemn in his pupil? Is there no difference between a pure and an impure style?

The questions are pertinent, and the answer is: There are such things as impurities of speech, and they are commonly known as "slang." The exact nature of these impurities, then, must now be investigated.

Under the heading "Language Reform," a writer in a literary weekly has been advocating the use of slang words in literary prose. The reforms he suggests are—we quote his own words: "(1) The acceptance of slang and dialect. (2) Let all speak slang without apology."

"To do these things," he continues, "is perfectly simple, requiring the initiative of journalists and authors, the acquiescence of publishers. Already in common speech it has won the approval of the public. I do not think that one realises enough the value of dialect phrases such as 'fair capped' (surprised), 'bored stiff,' or of terms

arising from new inventions. Our language has grown rather stagnant. Popular education has introduced an overnice, neat pronunciation, and the very proper use of respectable words in place of the fine, vigorous expressions of unspoilt countryfolk. The time has come to enrich our language with brief expressive words."

We do not apologise for quoting these muddle-headed remarks, because they bring into relief the very truth we are seeking to distinguish. It will be seen that the writer uses "slang" and "dialect" as though they were equivalent terms. Now, if by "slang" the writer means the same as "dialect," part of his prayer has been granted even before it passed his lips, and part will never be granted, even though he pray for it until the end of his days. There is no need to urge us to use dialect, because that is what we are all doing at present. All words are members of some dialect, and all men habitually use the dialect of the society among whom they live. The writer, however, clearly means that we should also use words taken from alien dialects. This, we fear, is a fond and impossible hope. When we speak to our neighbours, it is our desire to convey our thoughts. But if we make a point of using words which they do not understand, we frustrate our own purpose in speaking. If, however, we use

only such words as they understand, we are not using dialect words—that is, words of an alien dialect—for any word which we both understand is a part of our common dialect. There remains the alternative of our using words which we neither of us understand. But the band of idealists likely to be attracted by this kind of language reform would, perhaps, not be a large one.

The essential difference between dialect and slang is that the former is a property of words, the latter of ideas; one is on the lips, the other is in the mind. Slang is slang and pure speech is pure speech, no matter in what dialect or language it is clothed. When an American calls an odd job "a chore" he is no more using slang than a Frenchman when he calls a horse "*un cheval.*"

True slang consists solely in the use of metaphors, that is, the use of one idea to indicate another. Now, this can be done only when there is some connection between the two ideas. This link, however, may be one which holds good for all men at all times, or for a particular group of men at a particular time. For example, if we speak of a ruler as "the helmsman of the State," we use a metaphor which holds good wherever men exist in communities and employ the art of navigation—wherever, in short, men are found,

for man is by nature "a social animal" and cannot live far from water. Such metaphors, drawn from the common experience of mankind, are universally significant, and their use constitutes the purest form of speech. By calling speech "pure," we mean the same as when we call butter or a musical tone "pure"—that is, free from elements which tend towards its own frustration and dissolution. The sole purpose of language is to signify, and whatever tends to restrict, frustrate, or disintegrate the significance of speech is an impurity.

Besides these common experiences, however, every man has others which he shares only with a limited number of his fellows. Of these, the most important are the experiences he encounters in pursuing his daily trade or calling. For every man, then, there will exist connections of ideas which, while holding good for himself and all employed in the same business, do not exist for the rest of mankind. For example, the reaper, when his day's work is done, slings his hook over his shoulder in preparation for his homeward journey; hence he will naturally connect the idea of "slinging one's hook" with that of taking one's departure. The gold-miner washes the proceeds of his day's labour in a pan of water to separate the metal from the earth; hence the

" pan " in his mind is connected with the idea of estimating the probable fruits of labour.

Such metaphors, then, as " to sling one's hook " and " to pan out " are significant only among men employed in certain trades. Outside this area they are but imperfectly significant, and, therefore, constitute one species of what is called slang.

The other kind consists in using metaphors which, though significant now, will cease to be so in the course of time. For example, to refer to an ulterior motive as " an axe to grind," or an unattainable advantage as " sour grapes," is not to use slang, because Franklin's tale of the axe-grinder and Æsop's fable of the fox are likely to endure as long as man himself. But to refer to a foot as " a Trilby," or to a long time as " donkey's years," is to use slang, because Du Maurier's novel and the childish pun anent " long ears " and " long years " are not likely to survive the generation which produced them.

A slang phrase, then, is a metaphor of limited significance. Its significance may be limited in time, in place, or in both. If in time we may call it topical or ephemeral, and if in place, local or professional slang. To use the metaphors of one's trade is, of course, quite proper when conversing with another of the same trade; but to

use them outside that area implies an incapacity to adjust oneself to environment; whilst to use the metaphors of another calling is an affectation of knowledge which one does not possess. For a writer to use professional slang is to obstruct the understanding of his readers, whilst to use topical slang is to admit into his work the seeds of certain decay and disruption.

There are, of course, circumstances in which slang in literature is right and proper, and that is when an author is speaking in character. Thus, when Rudyard Kipling writes:

> To stand and be still at the Birkenhead drill, is a damned tough bullet to chew,

he is using a metaphor quite natural in the mouth of an able-bodied marine. If, however, Mr. Kipling had been speaking in his own character and had written: "This command appeared to the men a damned tough bullet to chew," he would have committed a manifest error of taste.

Slang, then, is the only fault which a critic or a teacher can wholeheartedly condemn in English speech, for this fault alone is deliberate, and therefore susceptible of correction, and alone militates directly against the essential function of speech.

CHAPTER X

THOUGHT WITHOUT WORDS

"THAT thought cannot exist without speech is a truth generally admitted. The negations of this thesis are all founded on equivoques and errors." So writes Benedetto Croce, last and not least of modern æstheticians.

The intimate relationship of thought to speech has been admitted implicitly ever since man could speak, and explicitly ever since man could think. *Phrazomai*, the Greek for "I meditate," means literally "I speak to myself." *Logos*, the Greek for "reason," also signifies "speech." When the Homeric heroes ponder, they are described as "talking to their own hearts." Again, when Huckleberry Finn says that "the noise was so great, you could hardly hear yourself think," the phrase seems to imply that thought is a kind of internal dialogue which can be interrupted from without.

Nevertheless, the broad assertion, as quoted

above, cannot be accepted without qualification. In the first place, thought is an elastic term. If by thought is meant any kind of mentation, the assertion is manifestly false, for it is clear that we can think about things and persons and places, that we can call up pictures of scenes visited and actions performed, without the co-operation of any verbal images. Moreover, it can be shown that the human mind, when it is concerned with concrete things, can perform highly complex operations without calling into play the speech faculty, as, for example, an architect in planning a house, a chess-player contemplating his next move, or an employer arranging his staff's time-tables of work.

There lives in London a clergyman of the Established Church who possesses a free pass over two of the great English railways. This privilege he receives in return for assisting these companies in arranging the time-tables of their trains, for he has the rare faculty of grasping and co-ordinating an immense number of time units—a faculty which is surely quite independent of the speech faculty. The same truth is well illustrated by a story told by Brillat Savarin in his *Physiologie du Goût.*

There lived in the town of Belley—his native place, of which he was mayor—a certain M. Chirol,

a retired member of the bodyguard of Louis XV, and an inveterate card-player. In his latter years he had a paralytic stroke, which extinguished all his intellectual faculties except that of playing cards, which continued unimpaired until his death. Shortly before that event he gave remarkable evidence of the continued integrity of this faculty. "There arrived at Belley," says the gastronomer, "a banker named M. Delines. He came to us with letters of recommendation; he was a stranger, a Parisian; this was more than enough, in a little provincial town, to make us anxious to render his visit agreeable. M. Delines was a gourmand and a card-player. On the first count, we gave him sufficient entertainment by keeping him six or seven hours a day at table; on the second, he was more difficult to amuse. He was very fond of piquet, and talked of playing for six or seven francs a point, which greatly exceeded the rate of our most reckless play. To obviate this difficulty we formed a society, in which all who desired took a share. And to whom, think you, did we entrust the business of defending our united interests? To M. Chirol. When the Parisian banker saw the pale, gaunt figure which came and sat down before him, he thought at first it was a pleasantry; but when he saw the spectre take the cards and shuffle them expertly,

he began to think that this adversary might at one time have been worthy of him. It did not take long to convince him that his opponent's skill still survived, for, not only in this round, but in many others which followed, M. Delines was so utterly and hopelessly beaten that, at his departure, he had to pay us more than six hundred francs, which were carefully shared out among the associates."

That this old gentleman, who could not speak, was still capable of effectively thinking is surely manifest.

If, however, we narrow the meaning of the word "thought" sufficiently to make Croce's proposition unquestionably true, it is in danger of becoming merely axiomatic; for, if by thought is meant the capacity of thinking in words, the thesis that thought cannot exist without words is self-evident.

The real question at issue is not whether we can think without speech, but whether without speech we can form general notions. That this faculty is particularly associated with speech is unquestionable. One school of philosophers, the so-called Nominalists, maintained that a general notion is nothing more than a name to which a number of images is attached, a sort of strap with a handle by which bundles of assorted

particulars are strung together for convenience of transport. Others, who hold that a generic notion is something different both from its name and the particulars from which it is extracted, nevertheless hold that such a notion cannot subsist in the mind without the support of a verbal image.

The first objection to this view is that it seems to preclude the possibility of growth in language; for language grows by the coalescing of names and notions, but in order to coalesce they must come together, and, in order to come together, they must have existed at some time apart.

Necessity is the mother of invention, but the mother must exist before the child; and what necessity can call into being a new word but a new notion lacking a name by which to utter itself?

Furthermore, if thought cannot be dissociated from words, all our thought must be tainted with the imperfections inherent in language. "Words," says Locke, "interpose themselves so much between our understanding and the truth that, like the medium through which visible objects pass, their obscurity and disorder cast a mist before our eyes and impose upon our understandings." If, then, we are for ever incapable of seeing behind this distorting mist, a true vision

of reality is unattainable. Language is an instrument in the fashioning of which all the dead generations of men have had their share. Not only all the truths which have ever been discovered, but all the falsehoods that have ever been believed, have left their mark upon it. Only the supreme intellects can presume to mould or modify it to their own purposes; the generality of men must use it as they find it. Through language we are, in truth, "heirs of all the ages," and in some respects it is an inheritance which we should be richer by repudiating, if it is our sole means of contemplating the truth.

To avoid these unacceptable consequences, let us for the moment suppose that it is possible to think in the abstract without words; yet we are no richer even though we possess this faculty; for, not only shall we be incapable of communicating the results of our meditations to others, but we shall be unable to retain and record them for our own use; since language is not only a vehicle of communication, it is a means of fixing and perpetuating ideas on our own behalf.

It appears from this that, in order to think effectively, we must be able to think with words, but not through them; we must be able, from time to time, to detach the notion from the name and view them apart; otherwise, we shall not

use language, but shall rather be used by it: words will not be the ministers but the masters of our thought. This is, indeed, the fate of the generality of men. What language has joined under one name they are incapable of putting asunder. For example, if a certain system of commercial relations is called "Free Trade," they will believe it is something to be fought and died for, like Free Thought and Free Speech. If a certain contagious distemper of the respiratory organs is called a "cold," they will believe that it is a result of chill and exposure, though science and experience with one voice assert the contrary.

Hence we may discern the great educational value of translating ideas into a foreign tongue. For notions which in one language are comprised under one name, are in another divided among two. Thus, in order to translate correctly, we must be constantly detaching the notion from its signifying name. For example, a schoolboy learns that "now" in French is *maintenant;* then he comes across the sentence, "Now there lived in this city . . . ," and he is told that "now" must be translated *or*, whilst in the phrase "Now listen" he must use *donc* for the same word. It is clear that he cannot know in future which word is to be used except by detaching the thre

notions signified by "now" in English from the sound which they have in common.

The greater the difference in the idiom of two languages, the greater is the capacity of detachment required in translating from one to the other. Hence the unique value of the time-honoured, but now often derided, school exercise of translating English into idiomatic Greek or Latin. Indeed, there is no better test of a boy's mental calibre than a capacity for doing Latin prose; and we need not ridicule the belief of George Borrow's father that no boy ever came to a bad end who had thoroughly mastered Lily's *Latin Grammar*.

CHAPTER XI

SPEECH AND EDUCATION

THE purpose of education is to educate, and the end of education is to produce an educated person. Judged by this simple criterion, the education conferred by our national schools must be in some way radically defective; for those children who are trained in these schools are classed in after-life as "uneducated" persons, no matter what aptitude and diligence they may have shown in their schooldays. On the other hand, those who have passed through any English "Public" School are classed as "educated," no matter how stubbornly they may have resisted the educational influences to which they were subjected. What, then, is this quality which our Public Schools confer on the most intractable material and which our National Schools fail to confer even on the most amenable?

An uneducated person is known by his speech, or rather by his want of speech, by the narrowness

of his range of expression and apprehension. The reason of this deficiency is not hard to discover. Two-thirds of English words are borrowed from the Latin. Therefore in order to understand the English language of to-day, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the elements of Latin. It is this knowledge which our Public Schools confer and which our National Schools do not; for this reason the product of our National Schools is incapable of understanding two-thirds of the words of his own language, as used to-day; he is therefore under the same disabilities, though in a less degree, as one who is completely illiterate, that is to say, he is incapable of participating in the spiritual life of the community to which he belongs.

It will be objected to this that many other languages besides Latin have contributed words to our language—for example, Greek, French, German, Italian, Arabic; and that if it is necessary to know Latin in order to understand modern English, it is also necessary to know all the other tributary sources of our tongue. This objection holds good only for one of the languages mentioned, namely, Greek; in fact, it may be admitted at once that a knowledge of Greek is educative in the same way as a knowledge of Latin, but not to the same degree, simply because the Greek

elements of our language are comparatively few in number.

The other languages mentioned, however, are not tributaries of our own in the same sense as are Greek and Latin. The elements of the classical tongues are a part of the living and growing language; they are constantly forming new words, either by transference to new ideas or by coalescing with other elements into new forms. Thus we have such words as *monoplane*, *automobile*, *pseudo-science*, *witticism*, and hundreds of similar formations. We could not take a French and a German word and make them form one English word, as we have taken a Greek and a Latin word to form the English *automobile*. Measured by this test, no other language enters into the composition of modern English in the same way as Latin and Greek. Let it then be understood that whatever may be said respecting the importance of a knowledge of Latin to the Englishman applies also to a knowledge of Greek, but with less force, in view of the relative fewness of the Greek elements in our language.

That learning to read is an essential part of education will, we think, be admitted by all. Yet, if once this is granted the rest of our contention is granted; for learning Latin is no more than the continuation and completion of the

process of learning to read. A written word is a sign of a certain sound, and that sound is in turn the sign of an idea. When we are teaching a child to read, we are engaged in establishing in his mind connections between the written and the spoken sign, and when we are teaching him Latin we are establishing connections between the spoken sign and the idea. The connection which we really desire to make is between the written sign and the idea; and this connection is not effected if either link in the chain is lacking.

It is clear from this that besides Greek and Latin the elements of certain other knowledges are necessary complements of a modern education, and notably ancient legend and history; for these have contributed words to the common currency of speech which cannot be changed into ideas by one ignorant of their origin. For example, a reader cannot understand properly the meaning of such words as *Olympian*, *Spartan*, *vandalism*, if he is wholly ignorant of the beliefs and events which gave rise to these terms.

Equipped with such knowledge, a modern Englishman may enter life without fear of experiencing that shame which, as Aristotle says, overtakes those who are conscious of possessing less education than those around them. "For it is a cause of shame," he writes, "not to have

a share of those fair things which all or most of our fellows have, as not to have schooling to the same degree."

An educated person then, in the sense in which we use the word when we speak of the educated and uneducated classes, is simply one who understands his own language. To lay a firm hold on this definition is most important, because it gives us the only criterion by which we may distinguish, among the vast heaps of knowledge which have accumulated to-day, those which are essentially educative and those which are not. We are sometimes tempted to think that education is merely a relative term and that we are all uneducated in relation to those who are better educated. This is not so. Education is something quite small and definite. It is not knowledge; it is a condition of acquiring knowledge. "It is not knowledge, but the means of gaining knowledge which I have to teach," wrote Thomas Arnold. It is not learning; for it would be possible to be perfectly educated and yet be quite unlearned, and it would also be possible to be very learned and yet very imperfectly educated.

The need of education in the sense in which we have defined it is in some respects peculiar to our time and even to our country. This may be clearly seen by contrasting the position

of a modern Englishman in this respect with that of a Greek of the fourth century. If we take a Dialogue of Plato, or a Treatise of Aristotle, or whatever might be chosen as representing the most abstruse and difficult product of Greek thought, we shall not find in it *a single word* which was not intelligible at sight to every Greek-speaking person. We do not say that the thought of these writers would necessarily be comprehensible to all, for many persons have no aptitude for this class of speculation, but if any one were capable of apprehending the thought, he would find no difficulty in the language, no matter in what class of society he was born.

Now, if I were to take a page of any serious writer of the present age, I should find in it perhaps half a dozen words whose meaning is not intelligible except to educated persons, that is, persons who either directly or by contact with others have acquired some knowledge of the elements of Latin and Greek and of the world's history. Let us take an example. There is no serious writer of to-day who employs a more direct and homely style, or who is more secure from the suspicion of wishing to express himself in a recondite manner, than Mr. Chesterton. In one column of an article by him chosen at random we find the words " myopia," " mono-

chrome," " supersession," " impressionism." None of these words is intelligible to an uneducated person. Now it would be possible to find substitutes for all these words which would be intelligible to everybody. " Myopia " means " blinking," " monochrome " means " one-coloured," " supersession " means " sitting above," " impressionism " means " sketchiness." Yet it would not have been possible for the writer to have used these words in place of the ones which he has used, for the writer's art consists in choosing from a number of alternatives the word which most exactly fits his meaning. Owing to the fact that English is a fusion of many languages, we have several words to express almost every simple notion, and almost every one of these synonyms has become specialised to denote a certain limited province of that notion. Now, it is almost impossible to generalise a word which has once become specialised, because the result in invariably ludicrous. This is the reason why schoolboy translations from another language are so often comic. For example, we have in English the word " tall," which is used to express a certain species of largeness. The French have no such word ; where we use the word " tall," they use the word for large. If, then, we translate " Mon père est très grand " by " My father is

very large," using the generic instead of the specific term, the result is ludicrous. Again, the Latin word "pila"=ball has been specialised in English to mean a medicinal pill; when, then, a schoolboy uses it again to mean a ball in general, the result is comic. The reason of this is to be found in that law of language which asserts that the content of a word varies inversely with its extent. Now, when we specialise a word, we limit its extent; therefore, we cannot fail to increase its content, and if we attempt to apply it once more generically, its newly acquired content will be found to conflict with the content of the word to which we apply it. For example, the words "sheep" and "mutton" originally meant the same thing, but "mutton" has been restricted to the meaning of "dead sheep," that is, its content has been increased by the additional notion of deadness. If, then, we say, "The muttons were grazing in the field," we bring together the incongruous notions of "deadness" and "grazing," and we tap the springs of merriment. As no writer can afford to be unintentionally ludicrous, no writer can, in the cause of simplicity, neglect that law which demands that he shall use the specific word where a specific word exists. It may here be remarked that many writers (and notably the American humorists) have often

deliberately used words in this way in order to obtain a droll effect, as, for instance, when Nathaniel Hawthorne refers to the American eagle as " that irascible fowl."

But there are other reasons why it is impossible for a writer of to-day to use a simpler vocabulary. Language may be compared to the keyboard of a musical instrument. When we touch a key, a note speaks, and when we utter a word an image rises in the mind. An educated person is like an organ in which all the keys are connected with pipes, and all the stops are in working order; whilst an uneducated person is like an instrument in which half the keys do not speak and many of the stops are lacking. A literary man of to-day addressing himself to the people is like a skilled organist playing on a damaged harmonium; in moments of great inspiration he may succeed in performing effectively, but normally he is constantly hampered by the necessity of avoiding the defective notes and replacing them by their nearest harmonics. A good musician will always prefer to play on the best possible instrument of music; in the same way a good writer will always wish to play on the best possible instrument of thought, which is the whole range of the English tongue, and we should be unreasonable if we expected him to do otherwise.

Furthermore, it is impossible for any writer to express himself forcibly in any but his native language. Now, most professional writers are educated, either because they come from the educated classes, or because they have acquired education through possessing a natural bias for study. Plato and Aristotle could express the profoundest thoughts in the simplest words, because no other words existed in which to express them; but in modern English there exists a specialised vocabulary of learned words for every scientific and philosophical subject, and those who are acquainted with the technical vocabulary of their subject cannot escape the necessity of employing it. For example, if we are writing on geometry we cannot help using such words as *equilateral, isosceles*; if we are writing on sociology we cannot avoid such words as *polyandry, exogamous*; to use plain English equivalents for these notions would be unnatural and affected.

For this reason much of the best of our literature is incapable of reaching any but educated readers. This fact explains the worthlessness of so much of the literary production of the present time. The literature of the uneducated classes is written mostly by persons without ideals, who make it their business to avoid using any words or allusions with which their readers are likely

to be unfamiliar. This literature is not real literature, but a manufactured and spurious imitation. It cannot be real because it is not spontaneous, and no writer can write spontaneously in any language but that which is the natural expression of his thoughts. If, then, this trade in inferior literature has been fostered by the grant of free education, the fault lies, not in this measure itself, but in its limitations. Education is to the mind what culture is to the soil. By the Act enforcing primary education on all citizens we ploughed up a vast quantity of once fallow land, but we left entirely to chance to decide what seeds should be sown there. Is it surprising, then, if the crop consists more of tares than of grain ?

We are forced, then, to conclude that if our national system of education is to realise fully the purpose of such a system, it must be made to include the best of that which is conferred by our Public Schools, that is to say, a rudimentary knowledge of those tongues which have contributed in so large a measure the elements of our own. The question then arises : How is this end to be realised ? In the first place, it is clear that we require a longer period for education than the present law allows ; but as the means of realising this end belongs to the province of

practical politics, we shall not discuss them here. Instead, we shall endeavour to show how much may be done under the present system by economising the time allowed, that is to say, by providing that all this time shall be directed towards the true end of education, and by removing needless difficulties from the path of the learner.

One hour of every school week is usually spent in teaching a science called English Grammar. As a matter of fact, there is no such science. What is usually comprised under that name is simply a heap of intellectual refuse composed of the decayed remnants of theoretical logic mixed with the dry bones of practical linguistic, severed from the structure which they were intended to support : a veritable nursery of sciolism, pedantry, false accuracy, and all the race of intellectual maggots. It is a subject which is painful alike to learn and to teach, not with that exhilarating pain which accompanies the effort to master the difficulties of real knowledge, but with a dull disgust which is the instinctive protest of the intellect against that which is unintelligible. It is a study which is not and never has been, and never can be, of the least use to anybody ; and, worst of all, it is calculated to engender an early repugnance to learning in the mind of the pupil, which is the worst foe that education encounters.

Let us, then, banish this subject from our National Schools for ever and ever, and let us put in its place the study of Greek Mythology. The Greek myths are to the æsthetic sense of Europe what the Bible is to its ethical sense. To be wholly ignorant of them is to be an æsthetic heathen. They have contributed several hundred words to our language, and they have permeated our literature ever since the time of Chaucer. Neither can be properly understood by one who is unacquainted with them. There is no time in which they can be so well learnt and enjoyed as in childhood, for human thought progresses through the same stages in the individual as in the race, and the products of the world's childhood are more perfectly adapted to the childish intelligence than the products of any later period. Moreover, some infusion of Hellenic spirit is necessary to the soul's health in order to counteract the effect of the Hebraic spirit which is instilled into all of us in our earliest years through the Bible, and which, taken by itself, tends to induce a distorted view of religion and of the meaning of life. The Puritanic spirit appears to be simply the effect of Hebrew literature on the Anglo-Saxon temperament. Indeed, we believe that the best medicine for many of the evils from which we are ailing to-day would be

a liberal infusion of the Greek spirit in our midst. "Greece," says Professor Gilbert Murray, "achieved on a very small scale the very kind of life we want to-day. We want a permanent revival of that on a bigger scale."

Another hour of the week is given to the study of English History. Now, there is no objection to be raised against this study, such as we have raised against the study of English Grammar; for a knowledge of history forms an essential part of education. It may be questioned, however, whether history in our National Schools is taught in the wisest possible manner. The ideal course of historical reading, considered not as a means of making a historian but as a means of making an educated person, is one which will enable the pupil to appreciate in after-life any legitimate historical allusion which he may meet in the course of reading. If, for example, he encounters the name of Alcibiades, or of Savonarola, or of St. Francis, he will know, not the full history of their life and time, but what virtues or vices they stand for, what eternal characteristics of human nature they represent; in short, he will know the meaning of all proper names which have become common names. It is clear that this end will be more rapidly and effectually attained by biographical than by continuous

history, and by a general survey of the past than by a special study of one portion of it.

The belief that an Englishman ought to learn English History first is a very natural, but, we think, a mistaken one. It is more important to know how Leonidas died at Thermopylæ than to know the dates of the Plantagenet kings. To lay down in detail what books would best supply the requirements of such a course would involve us in many issues foreign to the purpose of this discourse. There is, however, one book which must be mentioned as necessarily forming the nucleus of any such scheme of historical training, we mean Plutarch's *Lives*. This book narrates the most interesting and inspiring facts in the simplest language, and is, therefore, admirably adapted for teaching the young. Furthermore, it has been for many centuries the chief source of historical knowledge in Europe, and has, therefore, contributed largely to our own literature and language. A study of it is, therefore, in the highest degree, educative in the sense already defined.

The reforms above suggested do not involve the study of any dead language, and their realisation does not present any serious difficulty. The suggestion, however, that the Latin language itself should be taught will be met by numerous

objections. It is easy enough to say that a knowledge of Latin is useful and desirable, but how, it will be asked, can so large a subject as Latin be taught with any effect to children who are destined to quit study for ever at fourteen years of age? In order to answer this question satisfactorily, it will be necessary to keep our eyes firmly fixed on the goal we have in view. What the student of English most urgently needs is a knowledge not of the syntax, but the vocabulary of Latin. The Latin syntax is dead, but Latin language is living. The mortar of the structure has been disintegrated by time, but the bricks have been taken to build up our own and many other European tongues. It is with these, therefore, that we must become familiar, if we are to understand our own speech. And while it is impossible to study the Latin language without some study of Latin grammar, it is possible to give a maximum of attention to the former and a minimum of attention to the latter. For this purpose we believe no better subject could be found than the works of those late mediæval writers whose vocabulary is Latin, but whose syntax is in a great measure the same as our own.

The *Gesta Romanorum*, once among the most popular books in Europe, is now almost for-

gotten. It is a collection of tales and anecdotes compiled by an unknown monk in the Middle Ages, and is the source from which Shakespeare took the plots of "The Merchant of Venice," "Pericles" and "King Lear." In order that the reader may have a clear idea, both of the style and subject-matter of this book, we quote two of the tales, one in Latin and one in English.

"When Titus was Emperor of Rome he made a decree that the natal day of his first-born son should be held sacred; and that whosoever violated it by any kind of labour should be put to death.

"This edict being promulgated, he called Virgil, the learned man, to him and said, 'Good friend, I have established a certain law, but as offences may frequently be committed without being discovered by the ministers of justice, I desire you to frame such curious piece of art, which may reveal to me every transgression of the law.' Virgil replied, 'Sire, your will shall be accomplished.' He straightway constructed a magic statue, and caused it to be erected in the midst of the city. By virtue of the secret powers with which it was invested, it communicated to the emperor whatever offences were committed in secret that day. And thus by the accusation

of the statue an infinite number of persons were convicted.

" Now, there was a certain carpenter, named Focus, who pursued his occupation every day alike. Once as he lay in bed, his thoughts turned upon the accusations of the statue, and the multitudes which it had caused to perish. In the morning he clothed himself and proceeded to the statue, which he addressed in the following manner: ' O Statue! Statue! Because of thy informations many of our citizens have been apprehended and slain. I vow to my God, that if thou accusest me, I will break thy head.' Having so said, he returned home. About the first hour the emperor, as he was wont, despatched sundry messengers to the statue, to enquire of the statue if the edict had been strictly complied with. After they had arrived and delivered the emperor's pleasure, the statue exclaimed, ' Friends, look up; what see ye written upon my forehead? ' They looked and beheld three sentences which ran thus: ' Times are altered. Men grow worse. He who speaks truth will have his head broken.' ' Go,' said the statue, ' declare to his majesty what you have seen and read.' The messengers obeyed, and detailed the circumstances as they had happened.

" The emperor, therefore, commanded his guard

to arm and march to the place on which the statue was erected, and he further ordered that if any one presumed to molest it, they should bind him hand and foot and drag him into his presence. The soldiers approached the statue and said, 'Our emperor wills you to declare who have broken the law, and who they were that threatened you.' The statue made answer, 'Seize Focus the carpenter; every day he violates the law, and, moreover, menaces me.' Immediately Focus was apprehended and conducted to the emperor, who said, 'Friend, what do I hear of thee? Why dost thou break my law?'

"'My lord,' answered Focus, 'I cannot keep it, for I am obliged every day to obtain eight pennies, which without incessant labour I have not the means of acquiring.'

"'And why eight pennies?' said the emperor.

"'Every day through the year I am bound to repay two pennies which I borrowed in my youth; two I lend; two I lose; and two I spend.'

"'You must make this more clear,' said the emperor.

"'My lord,' he replied, 'listen to me. I am bound each day to repay two pennies to my father, for when I was a boy, my father daily expended on me a like sum. Now, he is poor and needs my assistance, and, therefore, I return

what I borrowed formerly. Two other pennies I lend to my son, who is pursuing his studies; in order that if by any chance I should fall into poverty, he may restore the loan, just as I have done to his grandfather. Again, I lose two pennies every day on my wife; for she is contradictious, wilful and passionate. Now, because of this disposition I account whatsoever is given to her as entirely lost. Lastly, two other pennies I expend upon myself in meat and drink. I cannot do with less; nor can I obtain them without unremitting labour. You now know the truth, and I pray you give me a righteous judgment.'

"'Friend,' said the emperor, 'thou hast answered well. Go and labour earnestly in thy calling.'

"Soon after this the emperor died and Focus the carpenter, on account of his singular wisdom, was elected in his stead, by the unanimous choice of the whole nation. He governed as wisely as he had lived, and at his death his picture, bearing on the head eight pennies, was reposited among the effigies of the deceased emperors."

In transcribing the following, we have preserved the mediæval spelling:

"Rex quidam regnavit, nomine Asmodemus, qui statuit, quod quicumque malefactor captus

esset et coram judice ductus, si tres veritates posset dicere tam veras, contra quas nullus posset objicere, quantum-cumque malefactor, vitam suam obtineret cum tota sua hereditate. Accidit casus, quod quidam miles contra legem forefecit (made transgression, cf. French " forfait "), fugam peciit (petiit) et in quadam foresta latuit, in qua multa mala commisit, quia omnes intrantes spoliavit aut occidit. Judex cum hoc audisset, insidias in circuitu foreste (forestæ) ordinavit, eum deprehendit et legatis manibus ad judicium venire fecit. At ei judex, ' Carissime, nosti legem ? ' Qui ait, ' Eciam (etiam) domine. Si debeo salvari oportet me dicere tres veritates, aliter mortem evadere non possum.' Ait ergo judex, ' Imple beneficium legis, aut hodie cibum non gustabis donec fueris suspensus.' At ille, ' Domine, fac fieri silencium.' Quo facto ait, ' Domine, ecce hec (hæc) est prima veritas. Vobis omnibus denuncio, quod toto tempore vite mee (vitæ meæ) exstiti malus homo.' Judex hoc audiens ait circumstantibus. ' Estne verum, quod ille dicit ? ' At illi, ' Si non esset malefactor ad istum punctum non venisset.' Ait ergo judex, ' Dic michi (mihi) secundam veritatem.' Qui ait, ' Secunda veritas est ista. Michi multum displicet quod in ista forma huc veni.' Ait judex, ' Certe credimus tibi. Dic ergo terciam

veritatem, et te ipsum a morte salvasti.' At ille, 'Hec est tercia veritas. Si semel potero evadere, ad istum locum in ista forma non venirem.' Ait judex, 'Amen, dico tibi; satis prudenter te liberasti; vade in pace.' Et sic per tres veritates salvatus est ille miles."

It will be seen at a glance that the interpretation of this Latin presents little or no difficulty, such as we encounter in almost every sentence of classical Latin. This is because the syntax is approximately that of modern European languages, the same which we have been accustomed to from our youth up; a word for word translation renders it into intelligible English. All that we require in order to read it as fluently as English is a knowledge of the elements of Latin Accidence and a vocabulary of about a thousand Latin *roots*. The former can be acquired easily in two or three years. Borrow tells us that in three years he had learnt the whole of Lily's *Latin Grammar* by heart. "You had only to repeat," he says, "the first two words of any sentence in any part of the book, and forthwith I would open cry, commencing without blundering or hesitation, and continue till you were glad to ask me to leave off, with many expressions of admiration for my proficiency in the Latin language." Moreover, the learning of new words

presents no difficulty to the child; in fact, the absorbent power of the memory is more developed at this period than at any other.

The whole difficulty, then, of teaching Latin in our elementary schools would be solved if we could agree to accept as the goal of our curriculum the faculty to read such Latin as the above. Let it be remembered that we are considering now how Latin may be most quickly and pleasantly taught, considered as the clue to understanding modern English; the question how Latin should be taught, considered as a means of reading Latin authors, is a wholly different one. We must, in fact, recognise two distinct courses of training in Latin, one occupying from two to three years and designed to produce an educated Englishman, and one occupying from ten to fifteen years and designed to produce a scholar and a *littérateur*. So long as we adhere to the view that the purpose, and only purpose, of the study of Latin is the acquisition of a pure Ciceronian style, it is impossible to effect any considerable simplification of Latin. Hundreds of books have been written during the last fifty years, designed to smooth the path of the beginner in Latin, but none of them bring the real problem a whit nearer solution, for the reason that, in spite of the earnest desire of the writers to com-

pose Latin which will be easy for the boy to construe, they dare not do it, for fear of the aspersions that would be cast on their Latinity. The only way to make Latin easy is to write it like English, and the aim of all modern method is to prevent Latin from being written in this way.

The study of Latin has for many years been falling more and more into disfavour even in schools originally founded for no other purpose than to teach Latin, because the Latin courses now in vogue involve about ten years' application, of which the first four or five are mainly devoted to monotonous exercises in syntax. Now, as the majority of students cannot afford time to complete the course, they incur all the labour of this discipline and reap none of its fruit. This evil has been constantly increasing in recent years, because the standard of idiomatic correctness now demanded has been constantly rising, and the period devoted to these preliminary exercises proportionately extended. Latin which our grandfathers would have thought excellent, such as Milton wrote, would now be rejected with scorn if offered by an English schoolboy.

The ability to write idiomatic Latin fluently cannot be attained without extraordinary application or extraordinary genius for language, and

even with these it may be doubted if the end in view is ever really attained. It is quite possible that the prose of a Tyrrell or a Nettleship would sound laughable to an ancient Roman. It is easier to master the vocabulary of ten languages than the idiom of one, if, as in the case of Latin, that idiom is profoundly different from our own. Almost every known language is found to have borrowed words from other languages, but no language has been discovered which has absorbed the syntactical forms of any other. From this we may infer that difference of idiom corresponds to a difference in thought mechanism, and cannot, therefore, be assimilated. That there is something insuperably difficult in acquiring the idiom of a foreign language is shown by the case of the American negro, who, although he knows no language but English, cannot speak it as English people speak it. It appears, then, that the goal of modern Latin teaching is literally unattainable, even though the effort to attain it be a valuable intellectual exercise. Let us, then, for the most part be content to direct our steps towards a less distant goal, the attainment of which is easy and in the highest degree desirable and useful.

We have not forgotten that the suggestions advanced above are directly opposed to the

trend of modern opinion on the subject. The belief which has been gaining steadily in favour for the last fifty years is that the old classical curriculum is entirely out of date, that it provides a pleasant means of wasting time for those who are wealthy enough to have time to waste, but is of no value, and, indeed, rather an encumbrance, to those whose foremost consideration must be the best and easiest means of earning their livelihood by their own exertions. We have attempted above to show that the classical curriculum is of some use, at least to those who can afford to take it. We shall now endeavour to weigh its claims against those put forward on behalf of what is called a practical education, and to consider which of the two has a better title to the support and encouragement of the State.

We once overheard a conversation between an Oxford don and an American lady doctor; the American was maintaining that the inventor of the "baby-jumper" (an automatic machine for keeping babies amused in the absence of their mothers) was a greater benefactor of humanity than the author of *Paradise Lost*. The fellow of Oxford was defending a contrary thesis, namely, that the benefits conferred by science on humanity are unreal and illusory; that the ingenuity of

inventors has created as many new wants as it has allayed; that the only true progress was the advance of the spirit from the slavery of the senses to the freedom of the intellect, and that, measured by this standard, the author of *Paradise Lost* had contributed more to the advancement of humanity than the inventor of the greatest labour-saving machine in the world.

Which of these two opinions contains the truer philosophy? Surely neither, or both. Let us take the "baby-jumper" as representative of all those applications of science whose aim has been to lessen the sum of monotonous labour imposed upon us by the necessities of our own existence and of those dependent on us, and *Paradise Lost* as representative of everything which provides pleasant and wholesome exercise for the spirit, when free from the necessities of irksome toil. Now, the object of the "baby-jumper" is to set free a certain portion of the mother's time. For what purpose? That she may sit on a chair and rotate her thumbs? Surely not, for she would be happier tending her baby. That she may go to the theatre? But this she can only afford to do on rare occasions. That she may dress up and seek to make herself attractive to men in the absence of her husband? But this will end in disaster, and bring her a greater

load of care than any imposed by the care of her baby. For what purpose, then, unless that she may study *Paradise Lost*? In short, if the mother set free from the charge of her baby has no occupation but those which proverbially fall to idle hands, she were better employed in her former occupation. It is only when we can assume that there is some better way of spending time than in necessary labour, some occupation which is as healthy as labour, but not so irksome, as pleasant as sensual enjoyment, but with a more enduring pleasure, that the reduction by science of the time and labour required to satisfy our bodily necessities can bring us any ultimate good.

But it is equally evident that unless science can procure man sufficient respite from the homely pressure of necessity, not only to read *Paradise Lost*, but to train his mind beforehand to a point at which he can both read and enjoy it, *Paradise Lost* has been written in vain. The art of life is like any other art; we must learn to live easily before we can aspire to live well. We must master the technique of life before we can proceed to its æsthetic. It is idle for ascetics to tell us to despise the senses. We cannot escape from the tyranny of the senses, except by fighting and conquering them on their own ground, the

field of matter. It is often cast in the teeth of philosophy that it cannot help a man who has got the toothache. Now, this is just what it can do. It extracts his aching tooth without pain, and gives a new and more efficient tool in its place; and so with all that host of other evils which press daily, hourly upon us, hunger, thirst, cold, disease, death, it is not till "philosophy practical" has expelled these to a safe distance and built stout walls to resist their unceasing incursions that "philosophy speculative" can lay out her territory in vineyards and orchards, gardens and temples, and invite the Muses to inhabit there.

In short, these two processes of the human intellect must advance hand in hand, each supporting each. Neither can safely advance a step before the other. In the economy of nature this matter has been well provided for. Nations do tend to advance concurrently in practical science and in the fine arts. Periods of great material prosperity, as in Athens under Pericles, Florence under the Medici, England under Elizabeth, have been times of great intellectual activity; and in general those races which have made great progress in the material arts and sciences have developed the liberal arts and sciences in proportion, while those who have little or no aptitude

for the latter are engaged with small cessation in the struggle for existence.

Sometimes this balance is disturbed by external influences, as when a barbarous nation comes into close contact with a civilized one; the barbarous nation absorbs the material science of its neighbour, that is to say, its superfluous wealth and leisure, but has no better way to spend those benefits but in idleness or soulless debauchery. Hence the contact of races differing widely in mental capacity is usually deleterious to the inferior of the two.

We must conclude, then, that any training which enables a man to earn more money with less labour than he could have earned without such training, but does not seek to develop in his mind interests capable of absorbing his increased wealth and leisure, is likely to prove rather a curse than a blessing. This is a consideration which should govern any parent in determining what course of training he will give to his child. The question, however, at issue now is a different one. It is, what sort of training shall the State give to its children at the public expense? And we think it can be shown that although it is part of the duty of every parent to give his children a practical training in some trade, this is not, and never can be, any part of the duty of the State.

If I were a doctor and you were a plumber, and if I paid you for your labour at the rate of 1s. 6d. per hour, and you paid me at the rate of 5s. per hour, I should then be purchasing three hours of your labour with one hour of mine. This would place me in a position of advantage over you, and it is this advantage over their fellows which men seek to attain by acquiring knowledge. But this sort of knowledge is valuable to me only in proportion to your ignorance; those kinds of skill which belong to all men, such as the power to walk erect on the hind legs, are not wealth, except in relation to the brute creation. If every man were by nature a skilled bootmaker as he is a skilled walker, bootmaking would be classed as unskilled labour and paid as such. Now, if the State confers any kind of practical knowledge, it must confer it either on some or all; if it gives it to some and denies it to others, it is guilty of grave injustice; if it confers it on all, it is giving something which has no commercial value to anybody.

To this it will be replied that the State shall give not the same training to all, but to each the specific training required for his chosen vocation. To this view there are two fatal objections. Some kinds of training are far more costly than others, and are fruitful in far greater

emoluments. If the State trains one man as a doctor and another as a cobbler, it is distributing its benefits with gross unfairness. Moreover, most practical trainings are given most economically and efficiently by the system of apprenticeship; the State, then, cannot undertake the training of all citizens, each in his chosen vocation, unless it becomes the one and only employer of labour. The actual effect at present of State grants in aid of practical education is to make a free gift of a certain benefit to one section of the community at the expense of the rest, who are either too poor to avail themselves of such benefit or too rich to require it.

On the other hand, the knowledge which is the key to the enjoyment of art and philosophy has not a relative but an absolute value. My capacity to enjoy *Paradise Lost* is not in any way diminished by the fact that you also possess this capacity; rather it is increased by the added joy of sympathy. Liberal education, then, is the only kind of education which the State can undertake safely, and with a reasonable hope of conferring any real benefit on the recipients.

We anticipate another objection from a wholly different standpoint. It will be said that the most important part of English is not the Latin, but the Anglo-Saxon element, and if it is neces-

sary to study ancient Latin in order to understand modern English, *a fortiori* it is necessary to study Anglo-Saxon. Now, while we admit that the study of Anglo-Saxon is a pleasant pastime for those with a natural bias towards philological research, we hold that there are few studies of less educational value in the sense heretofore defined. The ground of this belief is that the elements of Anglo-Saxon may be divided into two classes, those which have survived in modern English and those which are extinct. Knowledge of the latter belongs to the science of philology, which is a special branch of knowledge and not one of the conditions of acquiring knowledge, such as we hold to constitute the essence of education. Knowledge of the former is a common property of every Englishman, and does not need to be taught. The Latin elements in our language are in a different position ; they are not dead, like the extinct roots of English ; they are not alive, like the living roots of English : many of them are never met with in the language of everyday life and are no part of the vocabulary of common things, but form an essential part of the language of philosophy and literature and all the nobler products of the English tongue. They cannot be learned except by study, and the best method of studying them

must form the nucleus of any system of liberal education.

And even if we admit the study of philology into our scheme of education, the philology of English can be studied independently of Anglo-Saxon. For example, we can explain to a child that the words *share, sheer, shire,* are all related forms of the same word, and the relationship is clear and intelligible, even to one who has no knowledge of an Anglo-Saxon verb *sceran*; but there is no use in explaining to a child, wholly ignorant of Latin, that the word *belligerent* is derived from the Latin words *bellum* and *gero*, for, in that case, we should be explaining the unknown by the unknown, which is no explanation at all.

We will conclude by reiterating the words of Aristotle, " They teach us, who show us the causes and beginnings of each thing." Now, the causes and beginnings of most of what is obscure in modern English are to be found in Latin; therefore, it is through Latin and Latin alone that modern English can be intelligibly taught.

We have striven to show that the barrier which divides this nation midway into two sections incapable of understanding or amalgamating one with another is simply and solely a linguistic barrier, that the supposed superiority of the

upper class to the lower is a real superiority, but that it is not, as many believe, a natural superiority dependent on breed or inheritance. It is induced simply by the difference of intellectual food which each class receives during the years of mental formation and development. To many it may seem incredible that a man's spiritual development can be measured by the length of his vocabulary, or that his mind can be expanded to its uttermost or contracted to its innermost limit by knowledge or ignorance of "small Latin and less Greek," yet if once it be clearly apprehended that speech is to thought what the body is to the soul, it will be perceived as a necessary consequence that whatever affects a man's capacity of receiving or imparting ideas will in like manner affect his capacity of thought. There is something bitterly laughable in all that is written and spoken to-day about democracy when one has realised that nine-tenths of the persons who hear and read this word do not even know that it means "the rule of the people."

APPENDIX

ON ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF GRAMMAR

THE twentieth chapter of Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which he analyses the "parts of speech" μέρη λέξεως, is, from the standpoint of the educationist, one of the most important passages in all Greek literature ; first, because it is the earliest existing treatise on a subject which, for twenty centuries, has formed an integral part of elementary education throughout Europe ; and secondly, because it contains what we hold to be the truest and most illuminating utterance which has ever been made on this subject.

Unfortunately, however the Grammatic of Aristotle has suffered the same fate as his Logic. Most of what was essential and valuable in his system has been lost sight of, and only that which was unimportant and accidental has been preserved. We still employ his term "parts of speech," but in a wholly different sense from that which he intended ; we still speak of "parsing" a word, i.e. answering the question *quæ pars orationis?* we still say the "parts of speech" are eight ; we still employ the Latin equivalents of his terms, ὄνομα, ῥῆμα, σύνδεσμος, ἄρθρον, πτῶσις, but none of them are employed in the sense which he assigned to them, and of the thought

which underlay his system not a remnant has survived to this day.

The history of the parts of speech has more than a grammatical interest, for it illustrates what manner of regard the world pays to the teaching of its greatest masters. We give below the parts of speech as enumerated by Aristotle, Dionysius, Donatus, Lily.

Aristotle.	*Dionysius.*	*Donatus.*	*Lily.*
στοιχεῖον	ὄνομα	nomen	noun
συλλαβὴ	ἀντωνομία	pronomen	adjective
σύνδεσμος	ῥῆμα	adverbium	verb
ἄρθρον	ἐπίῤῥημα	verbum	pronoun
ὄνομα	μετοχή	participium	adverb
ῥῆμα	σύνδεσμος	conjunctio	conjunction
πτῶσις	πρόθεσις	præpositio	preposition
λόγος	ἄρθρον	interjectio	interjection

It will be seen that the number "eight" is religiously observed, but that the "parts" enumerated are in each case different. There is not the slightest basis in reason or experience for this number "eight." Pompeius the grammarian admits that in his day there existed grammatical heretics who distinguished eleven parts and others who allowed only two. He, however, decides that there are eight, because his predecessor Donatus had said so. The fact is simply that the *octo partes orationis* analysed by Aristotle survived as a stereotyped but meaningless phrase to which grammarian after grammarian felt in duty bound to conform. Such is the amazing force of tradition.

The failure of Aristotle's spirit to penetrate the

work of succeeding writers on the same subject, in spite of the superstitious deference paid to the letter of his remarks, is due, we think, mainly to a serious corruption which overtook this passage, the only passage in which his system is expounded, at a very early date. It is our purpose now to show what we hold to be the true reading of this passage and to expose the principle underlying Aristotle's theory of grammatic.

The passage in the *Poetics* is as follows :

Τῆς δὲ λέξεως ἁπάσης τάδ' ἐστὶ τὰ μέρη.
στοιχεῖον
συλλαβὴ
σύνδεσμος
ὄνομα
ῥῆμα
ἄρθρον
πτῶσις
λόγος

στοιχεῖον μὲν οὖν ἐστι φωνὴ ἀδιαίρετος, οὐ πασα δὲ ἀλλ' ἐξ ἧς πέφυκε συνετὴ (var. συνθετὴ)· γίγνεσθαι φωνή· καὶ γὰρ τῶν θηρίων εἰσὶν ἀδιαίρετοι φωναί, ὧν ουδεμίαν λέγω στοιχεῖον. ταύτης δὲ μέρη τό τε φωνῆεν καὶ τὸ ἡμίφωνον καὶ ἄφωνον.

ἔστιν δὲ φωνῆέν μὲν, ἄνευ προσβολῆς ἔχον φωνὴν ἀκουστήν, ἡμίφωνον δὲ τὸ μετὰ προσβολῆς ἔχον φωνὴν ἀκουστήν, οἷον τὸ Σ καὶ τὸ Ρ ἄφωνον δὲ τὸ μετὰ προσβολῆς καθ' αὑτὸ μὲν οὐδεμίαν ἔχον φωνήν, μετὰ δὲ τῶν ἐχόντων τινὰ φωνὴν γινόμενον ἀκουστόν, οἷον τὸ Γ καὶ το Δ ταῦτα δὲ διαφερει σχήμασίν τε τοῦ στόματος καὶ τόποις καὶ δασύτητι καὶ ψιλότητι καὶ μήκει καὶ βράχυτητι,

ἔτι δὲ οξύτητι καὶ βαρύτητι καὶ τῷ μέσῳ, περὶ ὧν καθ' ἕκαστον ἐν τοῖς μετρικοῖς προσήκει θεωρεῖν.

συλλαβὴ δὲ ἐστι φωνὴ ἄσημος, συνθετὴ ἐξ ἀφώνου καὶ φωνὴν ἔχοντος, καὶ γὰρ τὸ ΓΡ ἄνευ τοῦ Α συλλαβὴ καὶ μετὰ τοῦ Α, οἷον τὸ ΓΡΑ. ἀλλὰ καὶ τούτων θεωρῆσαι τὰς διαφορὰς τῆς μετρικῆς ἐστιν.

[σύνδεσμος δέ ἐστι φωνὴ ἄσημος, ἣ οὔτε κωλύει οὔτε ποιεῖ φωνὴν μίαν σημαντικὴν ἐκ πλειόνων φωνῶν πεφυκυῖαν συντίθεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄκρων καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μέσου, ἣν μὴ ἁρμόττει ἐν ἀρχῇ λόγου τιθέναι καθ' ἑαυτόν οἷον μέν ἤτοι δὲ. ἡ φωνὴ ἄσημος ἣ ἐκ πλειόνων μὲν φωνῶν μιᾶς, σημαντικῶν δὲ ποιεῖν πέφυκεν μίαν σημαντικὴν φωνήν.

ἄρθρον δ' ἐστὶ φωνὴ ἄσημος ἣ λόγου ἀρχὴν ἢ τέλος ἢ διορισμὸν δηλοῖ οἷον τὸ φμι καὶ τὸ περί καὶ τὰ ἄλλα, ἣ φωνὴ ἄσημος ἣ οὔτε ποιεῖ οὔτε κωλύει φωνὴν μίαν σημαντικὴν ἐκ πλείονων φωνῶν, πεφυκυῖα τίθεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄκρων καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μέσου.]

ὄνομα δέ ἐστι φωνὴ συνθετὴ, σημαντικὴ ἄνευ χρόνου, ἧς μέρος οὐδέν καθ' ἑαυτὸ σημαντικόν· ἐν γὰρ τοῖς διπλοῖς οὐ χρώμεθα ὡς καὶ αὐτὸ καθ' ἑαυτὸ σημαῖνον οἷον ἐν τῷ θεοδώρῳ τὸ δῶρον οὐ σημαίνει.

ῥῆμα δὲ φωνὴ συνθετὴ, σημαντικὴ μετὰ χρόνου ἧς οὐδὲν μέρος σημαίνει καθ' ἑαυτό, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων, τὸ γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ἢ λευκόν οὐ σημαίνει τὸ πότε, τὸ δὲ βαδίζειν ἢ βεβάδικεν προσσημαίνει τὸ μὲν τὸν παρόντα χρόνον, τὸ δὲ τὸν παρεληλυθότα.

πτῶσις δ' ἐστὶν ὀνόματος ἢ ῥήματος, ἡ μὲν κατα τούτου ἢ τούτῳ σημαῖνον καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ἡ δὲ κατὰ τὸ ἑνὶ ἢ πολλοῖς, οἷον ἄνθρωποι ἢ ἄνθρωπος, ἡ δὲ κατὰ τὰ ὑποκριτικά οἷον κατ' ἐρώτησιν, ἐπίταξιν. τὸ γὰρ ἐβάδισεν, ἢ βάδιζε πτῶσις ῥήματος κατὰ ταῦτα τὰ εἴδη ἐστίν.

λόγος δὲ φωνὴ συνθετὴ σημαντική, ἧς ἔνια μέρη καθ' αὐτὰ σημαίνει τι· οὐ γὰρ ἅπας λόγος ἐκ ῥημάτων καὶ ὀνομάτων σύγκειται οἷον ὁ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁρισμός ἀλλ' ἐνδέχεται ἄνευ ῥημάτων εἶναι λόγον, μέρος μέντοι ἀεί τι σημαῖνον ἕξει, οἷον ἐν τῷ βαδίζει κλέων ὁ κλέων.

The passage above bracketed from σύνδεσμος to μέσου is quite unintelligible as it stands. It carries, however, a logical clue to its own restoration.

We have, *firstly*, two contrasted terms, (1) σύνδεσμος and (2) ἄρθρον.

Secondly, two contrasted examples, (1) μεν ητοι δε and (2) ἀμφί περί καὶ τὰ ἄλλα.

Thirdly, two pairs of contrasted definitions :

(1) ἣ οὔτε κωλύει οὔτε ποιεῖ φωνὴν μιὰν σημαντικὴν ἐκ πλειόνων φωνῶν.

(2) ἣ ἐκ πλειόνων μὲν φωνῶν μιᾶς σημαντίκων δὲ ποιεῖν πέφυκε μιὰν σημαντίκην φωνήν.

(1) ἣν μὴ ἁρμόττει ἐν ἀρχῇ λόγου τιθέναι καθ' αὑτόν.

(2) πεφυκυῖα τίθεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄκρων καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μέσου.

Lastly, a definition which is not contrasted with any other : ἣ λόγου ἀρχὴν ἣ τέλος ἣ διορισμὸν δηλοῖ.

It remains to dispose these elements in their logical order. The passage then will run as follows :

σύνδεσμός ἐστι φωνὴ ἄσημος ἣ οὔτε κωλύει οὔτε ποιεῖ φωνὴν μιὰν σημαντικὴν ἐκ πλειόνων φωνῶν, πεφυκυίων συντίθεσθαι, ἣν μὴ ἁρμόττει ἐν ἀρχῇ λόγου τιθέναι καθ' αὑτὸν, οἷον μεν δη τοι δε ἣ φωνὴ ἄσημος ἣ λόγου ἀρχὴν ἣ τέλος ἣ διορισμὸν δηλοῖ.

ἄρθρον δ' ἐστὶ φωνὴ ἄσημος ἣ ἐκ πλειόνων μὲν

φωνῶν μιᾶς, σημαντικῶν δὲ ποιεῖν πέφυκε μιὰν σημαντικὴν φωνήν, οἷον τὸ ἀμφί καὶ τὸ περί καὶ τὸ ἀλλά, πεφυκυῖα τίθεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄκρων καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μέσου.

In addition to the rearrangement of the clauses we have altered three letters of the text :

πεφυκυίων for *πεφυκυῖαν.*
δη τοι for *ἠτοι* (Bywater).
τὸ αλλά for *τὰ ἀλλα.*

Also in the definition of *ῥῆμα* I read *τὸ δὲ βαδίζειν ἢ βεβαδικέναι.* The causes of the corruption will now be apparent.

In the definition of *σύνδεσμος* we read in the text *πεφυκύιαν συντίθεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄκρων καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μέσου.* This phrase *καὶ—μέσου* is pointless here, and its insertion is due to the passage *πεφυκῦια τίθεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄκρων καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ μέσου* which occurs afterwards in the definition of *ἄρθρον.*

Again the phrases *φωνὴ ἄσημος ἢ λόγου ἀρχὴν ἢ τέλος ἢ διορισμὸν δηλοῖ* and *φωνὴ ἄσημος ἡ ἐκ πλειόνων μὲν φωνῶν μιᾶς σημαντικῶν δὲ ποιεῖν πέφυκε μιὰν φωνὴν* which occur next to one another and both begin with *φωνὴ ἄσημος* have become transposed.

The distinction between *σύνδεσμος* and *ἄρθρον* is now clear. A *σύνδεσμος* is a *μέρος λέξεως* which adds nothing to the *σήμανσις* of the *λόγος* in which it occurs. This is true of the words which Aristotle quotes, i.e. *μεν δη, τοι δε.* There is, however, nothing in English which corresponds exactly to these Greek particles, which, as Aristotle says, merely mark

ἀρχαὶ καὶ τέλη καὶ διορισμοὶ λόγων; in translating Greek into English they are usually omitted; in written speech their function is performed by stops, dashes, etc., and in oral speech by pauses and inflections of the voice; it has, in fact, often been observed that these particles are only to be rendered in English by changes in the voicing of the words which they accompany. Thus Liddell and Scott say of τοι: "It is hard to render it by any English word, as we convey the same impression by peculiarity of emphasis or tone."

Although such particles usually mark ἀρχὴ or διορισμὸς λόγου, yet sometimes, as Aristotle says, they mark τέλος—

ἥ δε γὰρ γυνὴ
δούλη μέν, εἴρηκεν δ' ἐλεύθερον λόγον.
SOPH., *Trach.* 63.

τὸ γὰρ τετράγωνον σχῆμα μὲν, οὐχ ἔχει δὲ δύο ὀρθαῖς ἴσας (ARIST., *Top.*, Bk. iii. cap. 4).

An ἄρθρον, on the other hand, is a word which though not σημαντικὸς in itself, yet contributes to the σημάνσις of the λόγος in which it occurs; it covers, therefore, what we call prepositions and conjunctions; it is any vital link of speech; and, unlike the σύνδεσμος, it can occur in any part of the λόγος, in the middle or at the extremities.

What does Aristotle mean by saying that the σύνδεσμος οὐ κωλύει <τὸ γενέσθαι> μίαν σημαντικὴν φωνὴν ἐκ πλειόνων, πεφυκύιων συντίθεσθαι? This qualification is inserted to differentiate the σύνδεσμος from the preceding term συλλαβὴ, which is ἄσημος

pure and simple, just as the other qualification *οὐ ποιεῖ ἐκ πλειόνων φωνῶν μίαν σημαντικὴν φωνὴν* is inserted to differentiate it from the following term *ἄρθρον*, of which it is said *ποιεῖ ἐκ πλειόνων φωνῶν μίαν σημαντικὴν φωνήν*.

This principle will be found to have been followed throughout ; each term is assigned two qualifications, of which the first differentiates it from the term which precedes and the second differentiates it from the term which follows.

Why does Aristotle give two definitions of *σύνδεσμος*, seeing that he holds that there is only one true definition of any one thing? *πλείους οὐκ ἐνδέχεται τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὁρισμοῦς εἶναι* (*Top.* vi. 5). Because he regards definition by negation as imperfect, *οὐ καλῶς διαιρεῖ ἐὰν ἀποφάσει διαιρῇ* (*Top.* vi. 6), and all the qualifications assigned in the first definition are negative ; in his alternative he gives the positive function of the *σύνδεσμος*.

Why does Aristotle attach so much importance to these words, *μεν δη, τοι δε*, as to assign them a class by themselves, while he fails to distinguish adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, and other classes of words which have been subsequently distinguished by grammarians? Simply because these words, though few in number, are generically different from all others, inasmuch as they neither signify anything nor help other words to signify anything. What Aristotle is attempting is to establish a sort of hierarchy of grammatical terms in ascending order of *σημάνσις*, beginning with the *στοιχεῖον* and ending with the *λόγος*, in which each term will be found to be more *σημαντικὸς* than the preceding. The sort of

word which he calls *σύνδεσμος* is the lowest in order of *σημάνσις* which he can find ; it stands therefore between the *συλλαβή*, which is wholly *ἄσημος*, and the *ἄρθρον*, which is *ἄσημον* but *ποιητικὸν σημάνσεως*. We think it probable that before Aristotle the term *σύνδεσμος* was applied more widely than this ; in fact, that it was used in the same sense as *ἄρθρον* to signify any connecting word. Aristotle, however, perceiving that such words as *μεν*, *τοι*, etc., measured by his standard, were generically distinct from such words as *περί*, *ἀλλά*, attempts here to confine the term *σύνδεσμος* to the former and *ἄρθρον* to the latter. The word, however, tended to revert to its older significance, and the backspring of this word to its natural meaning has contributed to the wreck of Aristotle's grammatical system.

The principle of Aristotle's scheme is best seen by applying it to the analysis of numerical notation.

Thus *λόγος*, defined as *φωνὴ σημαντική, ἧς ἔνια μέρη σημαίνει τι*, corresponds to any numerical expression, such as 34, 3·4, 3+4.

ὄνομα, defined as *φωνὴ σημαντική, ἧς οὐδὲν μέρος καθ' ἑαυτὸ σημαντικόν*, corresponds to 3, 4, etc.

ἄρθρον, defined as *φωνὴ ἄσημος, ἢ ἐκ πλειόνων μὲν φωνῶν μιᾶς σημαντικῶν δὲ ποιεῖν πέφυκε μιὰν σημαντικὴν φωνην*, corresponds to +, −, =, etc.

πτῶσις, which is a *φωνὴ σημαντικὴ καὶ προσσημαντική*, may be perhaps compared to such a term as 3^2.

σύνδεσμος, which is merely *δηλωτικὴ διορισμοῦ*, might be compared to the decimal point.

The scheme in Aristotle's mind can best be shown

in the following tabular form, in which the positive and negative limits of each term are shown:

Term.	Example.	Positive Determination.	Negative Determination.
στοιχεῖον	β	φωνὴ	οὐ συνθετὴ
συλλαβὴ	ΓΡΑ	συνθετὴ	οὐ δηλωτικὴ
σύνδεσμος	τοι	δηλωτικὴ ἀρχῆς, etc.	οὐ ποιητικὴ σημάνσεως
ἄρθρον	Αμφί	ποιητικὴ σημάνσεως	οὐ σημαντικὴ καθ' αὑτὸν
ὄνομα	ἄνθρωπος	σημαντικὴ καθ' αὑτὸν	οὐ προσσημαντικὴ χρόνου
ῥῆμα	βαδίζειν	προσσημαντικὴ χρόνου	οὐ προσσημαντικὴ ἀριθμοῦ καὶ προσώπου
πτῶσις	βεβάδικε	προσσημαντικὴ ἀριθμοῦ καὶ προσώπου	ἧς τὰ μέρη οὐ σημαντικὰ
λόγος	βαδίζει κλέων	ἧς τὰ μέρη σημαντικὰ	— —

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