CHANGES IN ENGLISH STYLE

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waves, after a storm, break heavily upon these rocky coasts, driving furiously among the many opened crevices or passages, and careering and foaming before the precipitous walls, there is an opportunity to study and appreciate the action of the sea in the degradation of cliffs. The islands everywhere bear evidence that they are losing ground in the conflict; yet not so rapidly that the owners of property need fear speedy dispossession. This work of destruction is aided essentially by the growth of the roots and trunks of trees in crevices, and by the liability of the rock to alteration or decomposition.

The gneiss undergoes degradation also through a slow scaling away of the exterior, without any decomposition. The rock over a large vertical surface sometimes sounds hollow for several square yards, when struck with a hammer, and where this is the case a heavier blow will peel off large sheets a fourth to two-thirds of an inch thick; and these sheets are often cracked parallel to the surface, owing to thinner scalings in progress, some not over a line through. This scaling, or *exfoliation* as it is termed, has been attributed to successive heatings by the sun and the consequent expansions and contractions of the surface. It is seldom observed in the same rocks on the mainland away from the sea. The dash of cold water that comes with the change of tides may perhaps make the difference, if there is any virtue in this explanation.

We find, in the fact that the granite rocks (or gneiss and granite) of this region undergo easy degradation, reason for the existence of so many rocky islets ont his coast. The islands lie mostly in four or five lines trending northeast-and-southwest, and nearly all are elongated in the same direction: as if they were the tops, or the remains, of as many granitic ridges. In the course of this work of destruction through past time, many changes in the level of the coast took place which varied the way or direction of the attack; and the great glacier had its share in the results. The length of time that elapsed during its progress is so great that it is well enough expressed by the word indefinite.

(*To be continued.*)

CHANGES IN ENGLISH STYLE.

BY PROF. J. M. HOPPIN.

We who speak the English tongue should rejoice to feel that it is a language capable of change. It is a living and growing language. It is not like the Latin or Greek, which are incapable of the slightest change or improvement. It is not even like the French, which with its aversion to dialect and its gravitation toward Parisian French, has almost lost its power of making new words and combinations. The tendency given by Malherbe nearly three centuries ago to an extreme purism, has been judged to have stopped the growth of the French language, or, at least, to have done it far more injury than good. There is also no language which admits of more varieties of style than the English, though no longer an inflected language; as seen especially in our poetry, in its almost unlimited range compared with the narrow and rigid forms of French poetry.

The English is the language of progress—it is the speech of free people; and since, as Prof. Whitney has so successfully proved that language is more the creature of the human will than a mere physical product, we ought to expect that as the Anglo-Saxon race advances, and assimilates other nations and cultures to its own civilization, its language will continue to exhibit changes—to acquire new forces—sometimes perhaps to suffer reaction and degradation—but on the whole to gain power and beauty as an instrument of the thought and spirit of the race.

In regard to the subject of the changes of language and style in modern writing and speaking, we would remark generally, that while there is a decided improvement going on in some respects, yet the language at the present day seems to have become more formal than instrumental, more of the character of an end than a means. The language of writers belonging to the best epochs of English literature—of the Elizabethan age for instance—was a plastic instrument in the hand of the writer; he thought less of the form than of the thought; he strove to express himself and not hide himself in his language; he had a *soul*, and was not ashamed of it, and considered himself of more importance than the dressing of his soul—his language; he made language the servant of his spirit; hence the spiritual richness, the "lactea ubertas," as Quintilian calls it, of the writing of that period, not only of the greatest writers, such as Shakspeare, Bacon and Hooker, but of the lesser dramatists, and the later writers, such as Jeremy Taylor, Sir Thomas Browne, and above all Milton in his prose.

Notwithstanding the admixture of classical words and Latinisms in their styles, those writers used language as subject to thought. Bunyan, Swift, Defoe, belong also to this instrumental period of language, where, however false the thought, however burdened the style with learned words and conceits, the language was a true instrument of the soul, and was therefore more noble and spiritual than it now is.

Another marked distinction between the ancient and modern style, is, that in the older writers the representative quality—the imagination—was allowed a free play. This gave the style its creative and plastic energy. If literature is divided, as it has been by De Quincey, into the literature of *knowledge* and the literature of *power*, this present period in which we live, or at least the last half century, peculiarly represents the literature of knowledge; it marks the development of a scientific age; it is a critical and not a creative period. While this condition brings with it some positive improvements of style, such as precision, analytic fineness, realness, logical method, substance and solidity, yet in other respects, the language loses some of the greatest qualities of the former period, such as vividness of conception and vital beauty.

There is however at the present time, in some departments of literature, in poetry, and especially in novel-writing, a great gain in the direction of what may be called, subjectivity of style. Whether we owe this to the influence of Germany, or no, our novels, especially those of society, have opened a deeper vein than formerly. Some of the second-rate novels now, and those written by women, (indeed, the best novels we have are written by women) would have made a splendid reputation, and been looked upon as miracles of art in the last century. The spring has deepened because it has opened into deeper life. Compare the gradual development of character, the delineation of motive and mind, the psychology of action, in the novels of Walter Scott (with all their vast superiority in every vivid, natural and objective element) with the novels of Mrs. Lewis and Charlotte Brontë, and how vastly inferior they are. The conversations in Scott's novels are for the most part like those on the stage, rather than the talking of real men and women. And in poetry, this subjective element introduced by Wordsworth, and increased by the philosophical thinking and restless doubting of the age, has carried us into profounder depths. This too has its weakness—as everything subjective has—seen glaringly in the vagueness, obscureness and spasmodic unreality of the best poets of the age. This has been called the Tennysonian age of poetry. Tennyson, though a great poet, sometimes, as Goethe says, "puts too much water in his inkstand." Much of Robert Browning's poetry is the most prosaic philosophizing. In his last poem "The Ring and the Book," while there is marvelous power of subtle thought, a great deal of the thought is not in its most beautiful and universal forms. It is not poetic thought. It does not bear us beyond the hard facts of the world into the pure ideal regions of beauty and truth. It is not a 'Cleopatra's barge' or a 'Chariot of the sun,' but it is like a long Western train of cars, in which are palace-cars and baggage-cars, crowded with men, women and children, sheep, hogs, gold, flour, timber and coal, and thundering along with an infernal racket and din.

The influence of the Emersonian school of writers is also felt upon modern English style, as seen in the freshness and charm of new forms of thought, but also in the elliptical sentences, the straining after originality, the determination to be undetermined and vague, the enigmatical and sensational as preferred to the plain and thoughtfully clear. This has got into the pulpit style. Many preachers think they cannot interest an audience unless they speak, not as "the lively oracles of God," but in the oracular way of transcendantal writers—unless everything they say has a garb of philosophical thinking. Hence an affected and spasmodic style, concealing often real superficialness. In the very mechanism of style this is seen; instead of the grand sweep, and long, pliant, rhythmical sentences of the old English preachers, there are the short, interjectional sentences, each standing by itself, and proclaiming its own barrenness. Nevertheless, English style is gaining, on the whole. This improvement is seen in the manner of the best preaching in England and America. Preaching is becoming more manly, fresh, popular, earnest and free. It is 'limbered up,' so to speak. It is less technically theological in form, and is more in the manner of every-day conversation among men—more concrete, not dealing in abstractions. The early New England preachers, of whom Cotton Mather, in point of style is a representative, had an uncouth dialect made up of learned words, and of Latinisms which could never become good English. Jonathan Edwards (in his sermons at least) had a plainer and purer style than his contemporaries, and that was one of his many claims to superiority.

Since the character of the age, and its pursuits, are exactly reflected in a language so impressionable as the English, and as this is eminently a scientific and industrial age, we see this in the forms of our writing and speaking. Style is growing rapid and sketchy. It is fitted for rail-way reading, for the magazine and the journal. Men seem to have no time to read thoughtful books. It almost seems a question sometimes whether there will be any more books that *are* books, or whether our whole literature will not come to be that of the magazine and the newspaper. Indeed, some of the best as well as worst writing we have is now to be found in the newspapers. This at least is the case with English newspapers. The writing is good because it is real, practical, condensed—writing that will be read.

If we should speak comprehensively of the false tendencies of modern style, we would say, that it is losing somewhat of that spiritual or moral element in which the English language has always been rooted, and from which it has drawn its vital power and richness. It is becoming critical and artificial; the language of the intellect rather than of the heart, keenly and nervously fine; and it is losing somewhat of that honest strength and roundabout completeness which always comes from a deep and simple religious faith. It is losing the quality of geniality and repose. The humour of Thackeray and Dickens, which come from Charles Lamb, is less genial and good than it was in Charles Lamb; and it is growing less genial and good in the imitators of Thackeray and Dickens. What false, impure and artificial wit, and how little like the sweet and healthy humour of Chaucer, Shakspeare, Defoe, Lamb, Scott, and the genuine English writers, do we now have in many of modern essayists and novel writers, that ape the most perverted modern schools of Germany and France.

But at the same time to this ebb there is also a flow—a decided improvement and advancement in many respects. The language is now written and spoken as a general thing with more idiomatic beauty and vigor than Addison, or even Goldsmith, wrote and spoke it; and surely than Dr. Johnson did.

For the higher and more vital qualities of style, we

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don't take Addison for our model, but we go further back. The "Andrea-del-Sarto" perfection of Addison is not enough. Greater qualities are sought after. The style of the best modern English writers has come in many particulars nearer the language of the English Bible, and of Shakspeare, than the Queen Anne writers were—or than any of the writers of the last century were. There was not a writer of the moral vigor and rugged picturesque beauty of Motley, in all the so-called "Augustan age" of English literature. Every body writes and speaks now better English than those who wrote and spoke a hundred years ago.

The English language changes, but on the whole makes progress with the advancement of the English-speaking nations. It is receiving new element of power and beauty into it—for example, the German element, which is a rich and noble one when it becomes entirely assimilated. The greater writers it is true were in the past, but the greater number of good writers and speakers will be in the future. There is a wonderful conservative element in the English language, which resides in the moral character of the people who speak it, and which will preserve it in all its changes from any very marked degeneracy and deterioration.

COLLEGE NEWS.

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, (Princeton, N. J.)—We take the following, relating to the Fellowship in Mental Science, recently endowed by Chancellor Green, from a slip printed by the college authorities. "The sum of $500 quarterly, will be appropriated to that one of the class of 1870 who may write the best essay on the *a priori and a posteriori philosophies*, (to be given in on or before June 1st, 1870), and who may stand highest at a special examination to be held in June, 1870, on the following: A general knowledge of the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Kant, and Hamilton; Cicero DeOfficiis, B. III; Course of Ethics in Senior Year; Psychology and Metaphysics, (McCosh's Intuitions, Parts I, II, and III, Book I: The Syllogisms).

N. B.—the student obtaining any one of these Fellowships, must pursue studies in the departments for which the Fellowship is provided for one year after June, 1870, under the superintendence of the Faculty, and will be required to live in Princeton, or appear in Princeton from time to time as may be appointed, or if he study at a foreign university to furnish regular written reports of what he is doing." *

PRINCETON CLASS DAY.—A correspondent of the Newark *Courier* thus writes in regard to the coming Class Day at the College of New Jersey:

"The Senior Class are now very much occupied with preparations for Class-day. A short time since they held their election of orators and officers for that occasion. It may seem early to be thinking of Class-day now, as it does not take place until next June; but "Senior Final" is coming, and polling for that will take up a great deal of time next session, so that the orators want to commence writing their speeches as soon as possible. One of the most interesting features of Class-day at Princeton is the time-honored custom of making presents to prominent members of the graduating class. For this purpose prizes are chosen, and elections held for them. The "honors" to be taken this year are as follows:

1. The Infant. 2. The Smallest Foot. 3. The Least Inquisitive Man. 4. "The Wickedest Man." 5. The Largest Man. 6. The Wittiest Man. 7. The Nobbiest Man. 8. The Best Moustache. 9. The "Mean Grin" Man.

The names of the successful candidates for the above honors will be kept secret until Class-day, when suitable prizes will be awarded to each. I suppose the above list will be perfectly intelligible, except the last prize, "The *Mean Grin* Man." The term *mean grin* has been but lately introduced here, and is used to denote the sickly smile that a man puts on when he is badly "bored." If any one, for instance, is guilty of an abominably poor joke, and if nobody can see the joke, some one is sure to inform him that he has the *mean grin*, although such information is generally superfluous.

THE BRONZE AND SILVER COINS PRESENTED TO BROWN UNIVERSITY.—The *College Review* publishes the following letter, from Professor J. L. Lincoln, describing the valuable gift of Roman coins lately presented to the corporation of Brown University:

"PROVIDENCE, R. I., Nov. 15, 1869.

"In reply to your letter, asking for some account of the coins lately presented to our University, by Dr. Shepard, I take pleasure in sending you a few particulars, additional to what you already have.

"The coins were collected by Dr. Shepard only incidentally, when he was in Rome last year, and as he chanced to come across them in course of his antiquarian studies. About fifty of the coins consist of specimens of the *as*, the unit of the Roman currency, and of fractions of the *as*, belonging to different eras of the Consular Period and of the Empire. Only a few, however, are fractions of the *as*, some being the half *as*, and a few the fifth of the *as*. One of them is very rare, and is supposed to belong to the time of Numa Pompilius; it has a Janus on the obverse, and on the reverse a ship, and weighs a little over nine ounces. Such heavy coins of this denomination are very scarce. One of the lighter specimens of the *as* weighs 151 grains troy weight, and probably all the others are about the same weight. The silver coins, about 120 in number, are mostly *denarii*, some *half-denarii* or *quinarii*, of the time of the Consuls, and of different periods of the Empire. One of the *sestertii*, taken at random from the collection, was found to be of the weight of 28 grains. Only two *sestertii* are among the coins; these are very small, not so large as our three-cent piece. This coin is rare compared with the others. These weigh each 15 grains. Some of these coins were obtained by Dr. Shepard where they were excavated; he was present at the spot just when they were turned up from the soil. The others were purchased some in Rome, and others in Paris. He brought them home with him and gave them to the University—in which he was educated—in the hope that by the efforts of other graduates and friends of the college, they might be the nucleus about which might be gathered a large and valuable collection of ancient coins. It is hoped that this example may stimulate some of his brothers, alumni of the same college, to take some measures to bring about so desirable a consummation. I have been informed that the present is a time most favorable for making such a collection, and that one might be made for a comparatively small sum, which would be a most valuable accession to the classical treasures of the University. Yours, truly, J. L. LINCOLN."

— The annual dinner of the alumni of Brown University took place in New York, November 30, at the Metropolitan Hotel. About 70 persons were present, nearly all graduates of the university. The Hon. S. S. Cox presided, and among those present were Mr. Caswell, President of Brown University, Professor Chase, Judge Barnard, Judge Thomas of Massachusetts, and ex-Senator Foster of Connecticut. President Caswell made an able speech, in response to the toast "Our Alma Mater," upon the benefit of education as an agency in preserving our free institutions. Senator Foster spoke of the many eminent men who had graduated from Brown University. The dinner was the best attended and the most successful ever yet held.

— There was, once upon a time, at a certain college a vice-president who could not resist his inclination to act as college spy and detective. On a pitch-dark night some students, (Southerners, of course) seized him as he was prowling about the campus, gagged him before he could utter any cries and put him under the college pump. When he was thoroughly saturated, he was released, the students swearing that they had mistaken their man. What was done to the students we know not but, it is said that the vice of the vice-president was altogether cured by his ducking.

— Miss Mary C. Bryant of Boston, a grand-daughter of Rev. John Smith, D.D., a graduate of Dartmouth of the class of 1773, and subsequently tutor, professor, librarian and trustee, has just given $6000 to the college as a permanent fund for the benefit of the library, the income of which is to be annually appropriated to the filling of an alcove set apart and designated as a memorial of her grandfather. Professor Smith was one of the most eminent scholars and divines of his day.

— The library of Brown University now contains about thirty-five thousand volumes, and is constantly receiving additions at the expense of a permanent fund, appropriated for that purpose, of twenty-five thousand dollars. A scholarship has been founded by the pupils and friends of the late Professor Robinson P. Dunn, in order to perpetuate his name in the University with which he was so long connected. The income of this scholarship is to be given as a prize, at the end of the Junior year, "to the student having the highest standing in the rhetorical studies of the year."

— Several hundred volumes have been added to the library of Princeton College within the past few months, a number of them relating to the war.

— Two of the members of the Cabinet, the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy are graduates of Princeton.

— Between one hundred and one hundred and fifty students of Oberlin, have been converted during the recent revival.

— The Colver Institute, at Richmond, Va., for the training of colored ministers, has over forty students.

COLLEGE PERSONALS.

— President McCosh is delivering a lecture on "The Association of Ideas and its Influence on the Training of the Mind."

— It is said that the *Tribune* has engaged Professor James Law, of Cornell University, a learned veterinary surgeon, to answer conundrums about diseases of cattle.

— Rev. Dr. D. V. McLean, for several years President of Lafayette College, Easton, Penn., died in Red Bank N. J., on the 24th ult. While President, he raised an endowment of $100,000 for the college.

— Prof. Frank Preston, a scholar of bright promise, who had only just entered upon the duties of his professorship in William and Mary College at Williamsburg, Va., died, November 19th, in the 28th year of his age.

— The Rev. Dr. Schaff will soon resume his duties as professor in the Theological Seminary in Hartford. He has made a valuable donation of $500 worth of books, purchased while abroad, to the library of the seminary.

— Rev. Joel S. Bacon, late President of Columbian College, Washington, a Baptist institution, died recently at Richmond, Va. He was a graduate of Brown University and Newton Theological Institution, and was in turn President of Georgetown College, Kentucky, Professor at Hamilton, and pastor of a church in Lynn, Mass. In 1844 he was elected President of Columbian College, and continued in that office for thirteen years, resigning in 1857.

— Professor Huntington, assistant State geologist of New Hampshire, a few days since took up his residence at the Prospect House, on the summit of Moosehillock Mountain, 5000 feet above the sea level, where he will devote his time to meteorological observations, the measurement of that and neighboring White Mountains, and to the completion of the topographical survey of that section of the State.

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