

Educational Comments.

No branch of rhetoric is more beneficial to, or more neglected by students, than that which relates to precision. Our language, on account of its composite character, is especially prolific in words virtually synonymous, and the ability to detect the slight shades of difference in their meaning is one of the elements which make the correct writer and critical reader of the English tongue.

To appreciate delicate coloring, we must not only be able to note the harmony of the whole, but to observe by what combination of tints that harmony is produced; so to appreciate elegance in composition, we must not only understand when an entire sentence is well expressed, but how each word, by its peculiar fitness, adds strength and beauty to the whole.

A practical musician, amid the din of the whole orchestra, can trace a false note to the instrument from which it proceeded; so one skilled in the use of words can tell instantly whence a discord comes, and detect errors in what a less discriminating judge would consider correct. Let us illustrate: "The prisoner confessed the deed, and added that he gloried in having committed it." This sentence would pass unnoticed by many readers, but the practiced ear would soon detect the clashing of terms. In the first place, since the prisoner confessed the deed, that deed must have been a crime. That is implied to the word confess; we do not confess a virtuous action, but we know to have been wrong; so, if confessed is used, deed would be more properly written crime. It would then read, "The prisoner confesses his crime, and added that he gloried in having committed it."

The sensitive ear would still note a confusion of chords. Confession implies a certain degree of penitence, and the spirit of penitence for, and glorying in an action, cannot consistently be said to move any one at the same time. To make all parts of the sentence agree, another word must be substituted for confessed. Acknowledged, would, perhaps, be the next to suggest itself; but it is only a shade less forcible than the first, and is open to the same objections. Trying still another, we make it, "The prisoner avowed his crime, and added that he gloried in having committed it." A critic will see at once that the last clause is entirely superfluous. When we avow a deed, the word avow includes the idea that we glory in what we have done. We avow what we are proud of, hence we need only say, "The prisoner avowed his crime."

To the casual reader the sentence as it first stood would seem to mean more than the last arrangement; but to those acquainted with the exact meaning of the words employed, the last, besides being the more correct, is equally expressive. Precision is one of the properties of a good style. One who is not able to make this nice distinction, loses much of the beauty of the writings of Addison and Washington Irving. The difficulty of writing precisely will be more fully understood when we consider that we have in 9 words, each of which conveys the same general idea. You can say, I aroused his anger, fury, indignation, ire, resentment, rage, rath, animosity, or enmity. The careful writer will select from these the one best expressing his meaning; the careless or unskilled writer will use the first one of them that occurs to him, and it is usually the wrong one.

We smile at the story of the man who refused to pass by the house of a neighbor who was sick of a contagious disease; yet we hear every day people of intelligence misapply contagion and infection. The same may be said of enough and sufficient, congratulate and laudate, invent and discover, example and instance, pride and vanity, and many other words in common use, or rather in common misuse.

The subject is one that is not sufficiently attended to in our schools. It need not be taught as a separate study, but should be made a part of every exercise. Whenever a pupil expresses an idea, he should be corrected not only for faulty grammar, but for misuse of terms. Most teachers will reprove a pupil for saying "It is me" for "I" is I, but will sit by with perfect composure and hear him say, "Teacher learned me how to do this." We need not wait until the study of rhetoric is taken up to teach precision. As for more advanced students, they should endeavor, by close attention and frequent consultation of the best authorities, to attain what will be of great value to them, either as speakers, readers or writers—a precious use of language.

Its existence makes the common school better by the incentive to more careful and thorough work in the latter which its portals offer by opening at stated seasons. Its demise would be a death-blow to the common schools, and it, therefore, is under a twofold obligation to be beyond reproach—obligation to itself and obligation to the system of which it is the cerebellum, if not the cerebrum.

There is a strong opposition to the High School in many quarters. The objection to it on the score of expense has a plausible appearance to many minds. Then comes the politico-theoretical objection that the state has no right to go beyond the rudiments in educating the citizen. But far the most formidable hostility is that of denominationalism; on the part of the Catholics, the opposition is against a system of education that is secular from beginning to end; on the part of many Protestant sects the hostility grows out of the fact that the High School is supplanting the seminaries by which the denominational colleges were fed in the palmier days of sectarianism. On the whole, the opposition is dangerous enough to place the friends of popular, free, unsectarian education somewhat on their guard.

A review of the common English branches is down in the curriculum of nearly every High School; but such review is seldom if ever made; so that it is not uncommon for young people to graduate from the High School poorer English scholars than they were when first entered. Our higher class "professors" the students think it beneath them to apply their knowledge to its true purpose, the explanation of every day facts and practical operations, or to treat the elementary studies with anything but supercilious indifference.

The result is that business men find that the graduate of our high schools often cannot add, cannot write legibly—though the same children were good penmen at the time of their leaving the common school—that such young people have to be, as scholars, unmade and remade to fit them for the practical duties of life.

Too many High School professors are narrow-minded in two respects: they are ignorant of the imperfection of the youthful mind and unjustly attribute all its shortcomings to imperfect training in the common school; and worse, learning their pupils' deficiencies in the elementary branches, they scornfully neglect to supply such deficiencies by the only proper means of so doing—a frequent recurrence to the fundamental studies, a constant sharpening of the tools of learning. They expect mere chits of girls and little chaps of boys to have the judgment of philosophers and the self-discipline of Stoics, because, forsooth, the little creatures have passed an examination, framed not to test, but to admit to the High School, the children of "our respected citizens."

In all kindness and with more solicitude that we choose to express, we should say to the faculties of High Schools: Remember the fate of the Bourbons.

G. A. WALKER.

A Triple Killing.

ROSEBURG, Or., March 25.—In the old story of the farmer's wife's infatuation for the hired man lies the keynote of the grim tragedy near Elkton yesterday, as a result of which the dead bodies of A. E. Cooper, Paul Howse and Herman Shook lie monuments of the most shocking affair this part of the state has known in years. Later reports from the scene, which is nine miles from Roseburg, show that Cooper's anger at Shook's alleged relations with his wife was the primary cause of the triple killing.

Shook, the murderer and suicide, is a farmhand, about 25 years old, who for almost a year has been working for Cooper.

Cooper's recently acquired suspicion that all was not right between Mrs. Cooper and Shook was enhanced a week ago yesterday when he took some medicine and violent convulsions with indications of strychnine poisoning, resulted. Dr. Wade, of Drain, who was hurried to Elkton found that Cooper had taken so much strychnine that it acted as an overdose and saved his life. Cooper suspected an attempt to murder, but said little, preferring to wait developments.

Night before last Shook took Mrs. Cooper and her two children to a dance in the neighborhood. Cooper staying at home with Paul Howse, who had called on the family. Shook did not get back with Mrs. Cooper and the children until 3 o'clock yesterday morning. Howse had stayed over night.

Next morning the three children went to school, leaving the three men and the woman alone. It was decided that Shook was to go, and Cooper had paid him his wages and he had packed his belongings. All that is known of what took place at breakfast or of discussion of the domestic tangle among the men is what Mrs. Cooper tells, but it appears that after breakfast Cooper made a direct charge that the poison had been placed in his medicine the week before by Shook. The men were then between the house and woodshed.

"You are a ——— liar," shouted Shook, and seized a 30-30 Winchester and shot. His employer fell dead, the bullet having struck him in the back and come out at the breast as he was entering his door.

way. It is presumed he was in flight.

Howse was also shot in the back. He had interfered with Shook, and the latter turned the weapon on him. Both men died instantly. Stepping outside Shook a moment later put a bullet through his own brain.

Shook and Howse were both single men. The latter is from Eastern Oregon; the former from this county. Cooper is quite well known and had a good reputation.

LOSS IS ENORMOUS.

Russia Admits Sacrifice of Half a Million Men.

ST. PETERSBURG, March 25.—Stung by the wholesale criticism lately heaped upon the War Office for its unpreparedness and incapacity in providing the Manchurian army with men, guns and munitions, the government today lays bare what has been done since the opening of hostilities, giving the exact figures. From these it appears that up to March 12 the War Office had dispatched 13,087 officers, 761,467 men, 146,308 horses, 1521 guns and 316,321 tons of munitions and supplies to the front. Declaring that the transportation strained the Siberian railroad to its utmost capacity, the army organ admits that the army in the Far East when the war opened was hardly worth the name (no figures being given), but it is known that the troops did not exceed 60,000 men, practically defenseless, because the Emperor desired to avoid war and therefore refrained from sending reinforcements which surely would have provoked it.

The criticism of the War Office's failure to supply Port Arthur adequately is met by the statement that it was provisioned for a garrison of 12 battalions, the decision to put 30 battalions there being taken so late that the original calculations could not be remedied. While affirming that the quick firing guns and field guns of the Russians are superior to those of the Japanese, the War Office explains that the misfortune in the insufficiency of the mountain guns was due to the fact that when the war broke out Russia was just adopting a new pattern.

It is denied that the War Office was deprived in regard to the available strength of the Japanese army, or the organization of the Japanese reserves, but the army organ frankly admits that the talents of the officers and the wonderful spirit of the soldiers were miscalculated.

The publication of this article has created a sensation among military men and in public circles. Many of the former are ensuring the General Staff for disclosing valuable military secrets, and the latter finds from the figures a practical admission that the war has cost almost 500,000 men in killed, wounded, prisoners and sick, and as the whole effective army in the Far East is now believed not to exceed 300,000 men.

Shot Dead at Door.

OAKLAND, Or., March 25.—Jacob Reuter, a farmer, living 14 miles west of Oakland, was shot and instantly killed Thursday afternoon between 4 and 5 o'clock. Reports did not reach Oakland till late yesterday afternoon.

As nearly as can be learned, Jacob Reuter and his brother Peter and a man not known to those making the report were sitting in the house. Jacob Reuter went out upon the porch, and soon after four shots were heard in rapid succession. The others ran to the door and found him dead.

Peter Reuter, it is said, immediately informed the neighbors, and when questioned as to who had committed the murder, answered:

"I didn't."

It is well known that Peter and Jacob did not get along well together, although both lived in the same house, and it is generally believed that Peter committed the murder.

The five bullet holes found in Reuter's breast are so close together that all can be covered with the palm of the hand. Sheriff H. T. McClallen, of Roseburg, is at the scene of the murder, and will make a thorough investigation. The Reuters do not bear the best of reputation in their community and the disappearance of one or two men living near them has been laid at their door, although it could not be definitely proven.

ROSEBURG, Or., March 25.—The latest reports from the killing of Jacob Reuter, 14 miles west of Oakland, show that the tragedy occurred about 4 o'clock Thursday afternoon, instead of Friday morning.

Reuter was at the door of his house when shot by someone 100 or 125 yards away on the hillside above. Four bullets from a 25-30 caliber rifle struck him, smokeless powder evidently being used.

His father, Caspar Reuter, and brother, Peter Reuter, were in bed at the time, both being ill. The latter, upon hearing the shots, went outside and found his brother dead, but saw no one around the premises. He went and called to his neighbor, George McElroy, across the river, three-quarters of a mile, but he was away from home, so no report was given out till next day. When Peter Reuter went to another neighbor's, further away on the main road.

The shooting could not have been done by Reuter's brother, as had been intimated as probable.

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were an old 45.60 Winchester rifle and a shot gun, neither of which had been fired for a long time. No cartridges could be found from which the fatal bullets were fired, and a heavy rain had obliterated the tracks of the assassin before the officers arrived.

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