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Gazette of the United States.

PUBLISHED WEDNESDAYS AND SATURDAYS BY JOHN FENNO, No. 69, MARKET-STREET, BETWEEN SECOND AND THIRD STREETS, PHILADELPHIA.

[No. 58, of Vol. II.]

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1790.

[Whole No. 162.]

The Tablet.—No. 149.

[General subject of the two last numbers continued, and further illustrated.]

“Whether luxury should be denominated a public good or evil, depends very much on the situation of the people among whom it prevails.”

MANY persons, who have the prosperity of their country seriously at heart, seem to be agitated with a strong degree of anxiety, at the approach of that luxury which flows from a flourishing commerce. The men who cherish this patriotic concern suffer their imaginations to pry into future events, and to realize it, with horror, as a certainty, that when wealth and luxury have arrived at an high pitch, the liberties of their country will be overwhelmed and lost forever. If we enquire of one of these desponding patriots, why he anticipates so melancholy a catastrophe, he will gravely tell us that the spirit and even the forms of the ancient republics fell a sacrifice to the effects of overgrown luxury. When riches become enormous, he will ask, are not the principles of the people vitiated, and their fortitude destroyed; and how easily will they yield up the precious blessings of freedom to the magic delusions of pleasure? Why then, he will reply, should not opulence and luxury produce the same effects in our age and country; and why should not our liberties meet a like disaster with those of antiquity? These questions and many others, of similar import crowd themselves upon the inquisitive and anxious patriot, while his contemplations are turned into the channel of political speculation. The point upon which he will most incessantly harp, is that ancient liberty was extinguished by licentious manners. This will be his favorite theme; and this will sharpen the edge of all his declamation. It is of no small importance therefore that every man, who is conversant in public affairs, should possess a fixed, a determinate opinion on these subjects; *whether ancient liberty did fall a sacrifice to wealth and luxury; and if it did, whether modern liberty is in danger of a similar fate.*

The real source of mistake and delusion in this matter lies in the difference of character and circumstances, between the present and ancient times. Cases are compared which, in many essential respects, are not parallel. And by falling into an error of this stamp, the whole subject takes an improper complexion. A small degree of investigation will convince us, that the licentious manners of Rome, for example, were so very different from what now prevail, that their vices and misfortunes afford no just criterion, by which to estimate our own. To illustrate the truth of this position nothing further is requisite, than a comparative view of the characters, which may respectively be ascribed to us, and them. Before I run off these sketches, however, I will offer a few reflections to the reader, that I may thus elucidate the propriety, and explain the purpose, of the examples which may be introduced.

It deserves to be noticed, that it is not the quantity of wealth a nation possesses, so much as their modes of acquiring it, that lead to the extremes of pernicious luxury. A fierce, martial people who make sudden acquisitions of riches, by plunders, have no suitable ideas of their use or value. They act consistently with themselves in squandering their money in folly and extravagance; and in such a manner as will most effectually destroy every appearance of virtue and decorum. From a people thus circumstanced, nothing is to be expected, but that their morals and privileges will be swept away, beyond the power of recovery. But how very different a picture do we behold, when we turn our eyes upon the conduct of a nation, which has accumulated wealth by the slow and regular steps of commerce and honest industry! Such a community will unavoidably form habits of order and economy, which make them averse to such a riotous sort of profligacy, as a plundering army delights in; and which deserves to be called by a far worse name than luxury. That nation which depends on the industry and ingenuity of its inhabitants, for its wealth and importance, acts upon a system that will regulate and take care of itself. It contains inherently those principles which will give it as much safety and duration, as can attend the institutions of man. For it should be remarked, that men habituated to an industrious occupation, learn also to be frugal; and they will of course shun

that excess of licentiousness, which characterized the downfall of the ancient republics. The wealthy part of a community, grown rich by arts and industry, will assume some splendor in their expenses, but it will still be managed with purity of taste, and decency of manners. It will be subjected to such restraints as are not incompatible with the character of a free and virtuous community. Perhaps the arts of elegance and utility, rising up, as the fruits of industry and enterprise among a people, render the state of society not only more eligible, but increase the probability of preserving the most rational sort of civil liberty. A populous community cannot employ its hands, so safely, or so beneficially in any other way, as by diversifying their labors, in agriculture, commerce, arts and manufactures. But such a distribution of industry will create many private fortunes, and probably some degree of public prosperity. This is the stage of affairs, when the vigilant patriot sees danger approaching. We will in the next number endeavor to shew him that his fears and suspicions assume too high a tone, and that the character of the people under the ancient republics exposed them to evils, which we cannot but escape.

(The subject to be continued.)

REMARKS ON THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

IT is frequent for people to say, *the facts stated are true.* This is no more than to say, *the facts are facts.* Can facts be otherwise than true? The expression should be thus varied, *the things stated are facts.* Or what is told is fact.

The use of the word *interest* for *estate* or *property* is perhaps peculiar to New-England. We say a man of *interest*, for a man of *estate* or *property*. I do not find this meaning annexed to the word in good English writers. In Great Britain a man of *interest* is a man of *influence* or *respectability*; as one has a great *interest* at court. We say also with propriety, it is *for a man's interest*; that is, something is a benefit or advantage to him, either in point of property or reputation, and we say one man is *interested* in another's concerns. But the use of the word for the *estate* or *property* itself is local and not well established.

It is common to hear the phrase *bad economy*, instead of *want of economy* or *bad management*; and one *enjoys a bad state of health*. But it would be difficult to say how *economy* can be *bad*, or how a person can *enjoy* indisposition. Economy when carried to excess takes the name of *parsimony* or *avarice*.

It has been disputed whether we should use the word *contemporary* or *cotemporary*: But a single experiment as to the ease of pronunciation, will decide for *cotemporary* in all cases.

Many people mistake in using *ingenious* for *ingenuous*. It would be well therefore to remark that *ingenious* signifies *skilful in inventing or imitating*, as an *ingenious artist*: But *ingenuous* means *frank, sincere, open hearted*.

Our well meaning and very civil people who have little education, use the third person instead of the second, in addressing those whom they respect: How does the Colonel do? How is uncle? Does the squire know any thing of the matter? This is a very awkward mode of speaking to a man. How do you do, sir. How do you do, col. This mode of address should be used to all ranks of men; it is equally respectful and more polite.

The use of *Mifs* for *Mistress* in this country is a gross impropriety, and occasions an inconvenience in conversation. The word *mistress* [or *madam* to an old lady] should always be applied to a married lady, and *mifs* to one who has never been married. The application of *Mifs* to a married woman is very inconvenient, for scarcely a day passes without my hearing *Mifs* so used, that I do not know whether it is meant for the mother or the daughter. *Amer. Mercury.*

From WEBSTER'S DISSERTATIONS on the ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

OF MODERN CORRUPTIONS in the ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION.

(CONTINUED.)

I AM sensible that some writers of novels and plays have ridiculed the common pronunciation of *creator* and *natur*, by introducing these and similar words into low characters, spelling them *creator, nater*: And the supporters of the court pronunciation alledge, that in the vulgar practice of speaking, the letter *e* is sounded and not *u*: So extremely ignorant are they of the nature of sounds and the true powers of the English letters. The fact is, we are so far from pronouncing *e* in the common pronunciation of *natur, creator, &c.* that *e* is always sounded like short *u*, in the unaccented syllables of *over, sober, banter, and*

other similar words. Nay, most of the vowels, in such syllables, sound like *i* or *u* short. * Liar, elder, factor are pronounced *liar, eldur, factur*, and this is the true sound of *u* in *creator, nature, rapture, legislature, &c.*

I would just observe further, that this pretended diphthong *iu* was formerly expressed by *ew* and *eu*, or perhaps by *eo*, and was considered as different from the sound of *u*. In modern times, we have, in many words, blended the sound of *u* with that of *ew*, or rather use them promiscuously. It is indifferent, as to the pronunciation, whether we write *fuel* or *feuel*. And yet in this word, as also in *new, brew, &c.* we do not hear the sound of *e*, except among the Virginians, who affect to pronounce it distinctly, *ne-ew, ne-oo, fe-oo*. This affectation is not of modern date, for Wallis mentions it in his time and reprobates it, “Eu, ew, eau, sonant per e clarum et u; ut in neuter, fev, beauty. Quidem tamen acutius efferunt, ac si scriberentur *niew ter, fev, beuty*. At prior pronuntiatio rectior est.”—Gram. Ling. Ang.

Here this author allows these combinations to have the sound of *yu* or *iu*; but disapproves of that refinement which some affect, in giving the *e* or *i* short its distinct sound.

The true sound of the English *u*, is neither *ew*, with the distinct sound of *e* and *oo*; nor is it *oo*; but it is that sound which every unlettered person utters in pronouncing *folitude, rude, threw*, and which cannot easily be mistaken. So difficult is it to avoid the true sound of *u*, that I have never found a man, even among the ardent admirers of the stage pronunciation, who does not retain the vulgar sound, in more than half the words of this class which he uses. There is such a propensity in men to be regular in the construction and use of language, that they are often obliged, by the customs of the age, to struggle against their inclination, in order to be wrong, and still find it impossible to be uniform in their errors.

The other reason given to vindicate the polite pronunciation, is *euphony*. But I must say, with Kenrick,† I cannot discover the euphony; on the contrary, the pronunciation is to me both disagreeable and difficult. It is certainly more difficult to pronounce two consonants than one. *Ch*, or, which is the same thing, *sh*, is a more difficult sound than *t*; and *dzh*, or *j*, more difficult than *d*. Any accurate ear may discover the difference in a single word, as in *natur, nachur*. But when two or three words meet, in which we have either of these compound sounds, the difficulty becomes very obvious; as the *nachural* feachurs of individuals. The difficulty is increased, when two of these *churs* and *jurs* occur in the same word. Who can pronounce these words, “at this junctur it was conjestur’d”—or “the act passed in a shumultuous legislatur,” without a pause, or an extreme exertion of the lungs? If this is euphony to an English ear, I know not what sounds in language can be disagreeable. To me it is barbarously harsh and unharmonious.

But supposing the pronunciation to be relished by ears accustomed to it (for custom will familiarize any thing) will the pleasure which individuals experience, balance the ill effects of creating a multitude of irregularities? Is not the number of anomalies in our language already sufficient, without an arbitrary addition of many hundreds? Is not the difference between our written and spoken language already sufficiently wide, without changing the sounds of a number of consonants?

If we attend to the irregularities which have been long established in our language, we shall find most of them in the Saxon branch. The Roman tongue was almost perfectly regular, and perhaps its orthography and pronunciation were perfectly correspondent. But it is the peculiar misfortune of the fashionable practice of pronouncing *d, t, and f*, before *u*, that it destroys the analogy and regularity of the Roman branch of our language; for those consonants are not changed in many words of Saxon origin. Before this affectation prevailed, we could boast of a regular orthography in a large branch of our language; but now the only class of words, which had preserved a regular construction, are attacked, and the correspondence between the spelling and pronunciation, destroyed, by those who ought to have been the first to oppose the innovation.‡

Should this practice be extended to all words, where *d, t, and f* precede *u*, as it must before it can be consistent or defensible, it would introduce more anomalies into our tongue, than were before established, both in the orthography and construction. What a perverted taste, and what a singular ambition must those men possess, who, in the day light of civilization and science, and in the short period of an age, can go farther in demolishing the analogies of an elegant language, than their unlettered ancestors proceeded in centuries, amidst the accidents of a savage life, and the shocks of numerous invasions! (To be continued.)

* Ast observes, that “in unaccented, short and insignificant syllables, the sounds of the five vowels are nearly coincident. It must be a nice ear that can distinguish the difference of sound in the concluding syllable of the following words, altar, alter, manor, murmur, satyr.”—Gram. Diss. pref. to Dic. p. 1.

† For my part I cannot discover the euphony; and tho the contrary mode be reprobated, as vulgar, by certain mighty fine speakers, I think it more conformable to the general scheme of English pronunciation; for tho in order to make the word but two syllables, *t* and *te* may be required to be converted into *ch*, or the *i* and *e* into *y*, when the preceding syllable is marked with the acute accent as in question, minion, courteous, and the like; there seems to be little reason, when the grave accent precedes the *t*, as in *nature, creature*, for converting the *t* into *ch*; and not much more for joining the *t* to the first syllable and introducing the *y* before the second, as *natur*. Why the *t* when followed by neither *i* nor *e*, is to take the form of *ch*, I cannot conceive: It is, in my opinion, a species of affectation that should be discontinued.—Kenrick Rhet. Gram. page 32. Dic.

‡ Well might Mr. Sheridan assert, that “Such indeed is the state of our written language, that the darkest hieroglyphics, or most difficult cyphers which the art of man has hitherto invented, were not better calculated to conceal the sentiments of those who used them, from all who had not the key, than the state of our spelling is to conceal the true pronunciation of our words, from all, except a few well educated natives. Rhet. Gram. p. 22. Dic. But if these well educated natives would pronounce words as they ought, one half the language at least would be regular. The Latin derivatives are mostly regular to the educated and uneducated of America; and it is to be hoped that the modern hieroglyphical obscurity will forever be confined to a few well educated natives in Great-Britain.

THE HARVEST.

THROUGHOUT the United States, the latter as well as the former, has rewarded the toil of the husbandman with a rich abundance, both for man and beast. POMOHA has not been less profuse of her favors than CERES of her's; and the great plenty of that federal beverage, Cyder, will, we hope, by rendering the use of that antifederal liquid, Rum, less excusable, make it less common. [Columbian Centinel.]