

MISCELLANY.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE—Curious Specimens of Affecting Elocution.—Let us call a spade a spade, says a writer in the last number of the Cornhill Magazine...

Wife vs. Lady, and "Esquire."—Akin to our subject is the love of affected finery to titles. In almost every newspaper you may see this announcement: "The lady of W. Smith, Esq., of a son..."

More Specimens.—A horse doctor now calls himself a "veterinary surgeon." An author is a "literary gentleman," a farmer, an "agricultural gentleman," a bagman, a "commercial gentleman," a plumber, a "gentleman of the long robe," a thief, a "high-fingered gentleman," and a merchant, a "gentleman engaged in mercantile pursuits..."

W. H. HAYS, ATTORNEY-AT-LAW. OFFICE: WALNUT STREET, BETWEEN SECOND & THIRD, HARRISBURG, PA.

On the doors of the rooms set apart for men or women on the French railways, you see the words Hommes or Femmes. On our doors you see Gentlemen or Ladies. The French, in general, are more given to compliment than we, and in this instance right, and we are vulgar and foolish.

Juries are always addressed as "gentlemen of the jury," but I think it would be better to use only the word "jurymen;" for in nine cases out of ten, except to the grand and special juries, the title "gentleman," both by courtesy and law is inapplicable.

There is, too, the fine English of the shopkeeper who styles himself "the proprietor of the establishment." He that used to "sell by auction" now "submits to public competition;" instead of "giving notice," he "intimates to the public;" instead of "raising" his clerk's wages, he "augments his salary." Somebody going into a shop in Regent street to buy half mourning, was referred by the shopman to the "mitigated affliction department." A tradesman of whom I bought some lamp oil, sent it home with "Mr. Clark's compliments and solicitations." One man sells "unsophisticated gin," and another tells "gentlemanly apartments in close proximity to the bank." They call floorcloth "kamptulion;" and boots, "antigropoles;" and soap, "pyrophagous;" and though least, not least, a snuffing notice, "the inspection."

I have tried to show by these examples how destructive of our beautiful language, and how foolish it is to use fine words and expressions in common talk and writing upon common things. "To clothe," says Fuller, "low creeping matter with high-flown language, is not fine fancy, but flat foolery. It rather loads than raises a wren to fasten the feathers of an ostrich to her wings." We may consider it a general rule that the best English is that in which Saxon derived words are used the most freely; that is, better, for common purposes, at least, to say "clothe," than "garment," "clothe," than "assist," "give," than "procure," "obey," than "sollicit," "kinsman" than "relative," "neighborhood" than "vicinity," "praise" than "eulogium."

That is good advice of the author of Guess at Truth: "When you doubt between two words, choose the plainest, the commonest, the most idiomatic. Eschew fine words as you would poison; love simple ones as you would native roses on your cheeks."

Let us then call a spade a spade. Let us use the plainest and shortest words that fit grammatically and gracefully express our meaning.

SCENE AT THE PATENT OFFICE.—A Down-Easter in SEARCH OF A BIRTH.—The Washington States and Union relates the following amusing incident: As the time for the new administration approaches, the time for the new Washington to increase. Those who make names for themselves altogether disinterested. Some are on the hunt for what best to drive their stakes—that is so; what post would best suit their genius. It has even come to this; that some have gone as far as to look into the different departments in advance, and to make inquiry of the incumbent clerk as to the probable time, &c., of his decease as such. An instance of this kind happened the other day at the Patent Office. A long, slab-sided, rickety, carryot-topped individual, who, like the "New Englander," with the richest Yankee patois, walked into the library of the Patent Office, presided over by Professor Jilison, late of Columbian College, an urbane gentleman, fine scholar, no politician, but with a sense of humor.

"Wal, stranger, kin I look at books here? 'Spose they're public property?" "Certainly," said the Professor; "what book would you desire?" "And the Professor marched towards the cases of heavy French and German tomes, which he has to sift for the benefit of our inventors. "Wal, I'd like to see the book they call the Blue Book."

"Ah, sir, I'm sorry we haven't it here. You are at liberty to read any of the books which we have."

"Fact is, I want to find out the best berth I can, expectin' Mr. Linkin to put me in when he comes into power. I rath'er like this berth stranger; 'spose you don't 'spect to stay here? What's the salary? Couldn't you let me know as to the duties?"

"I am sorry, friend, to say the salary hardly pays for the duties. It is only what you would earn by close labor in a corn-field out West."

"Never mind that; what's the duties? Think I can do 'em."

"I am not well enough acquainted with your acquisitions to answer. First, I have to keep an eye to all the books here."

"Well, that's not so hard; guess could do that as well as any."

"Next, have to make indexes and read proof of Patent Reports."

"That would come, I guess, by a little practice."

"Then," said the Professor, with a merry twinkle, "I have to translate for the use of the cases from these books, most of which I have to edit and modern, and from the various cities, Hebrew, Hindoo, Swedish, French, German, Chocklaw, Kickapoo."

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