

NEW BOOKS.

Continued From Seventh Page.

but you cannot give an account of thoughts and emotions in foot-pounds. Why? Because thought is devoid of extension, and cannot, therefore, be submitted to mechanical measurements. It appeared to Mr. Fiske that what we should find, if we were able to trace in detail the metamorphosis of motions within the body, from the sense organs to the brain, and thence onward to the muscular system, would be something as follows: "The inward motion of carrying the message into the brain, would perish in giving place to the vibration which accompanies the conscious state; and this vibration in turn would perish in giving place to the outward motion, carrying the mandate out to the muscles. If we had the means of measurement we could prove the equivalence from step to step. But here would the conscious state, the thought of feeling, come into this circuit? Who, nowhere. The physical circuit of motion is complete in itself, the state of consciousness is accessible only to its possessor. To him it is the subjective equivalent of the vibration within the brain, whereas it is neither the cause nor the effect, neither the producer nor the spring, but simply the concomitant."

It is evident that this conclusion is not at all in harmony with the materialistic view of the case. If consciousness is a product of molecular motion, it is a natural inference that it must lapse when the motion ceases. But, if consciousness is a kind of existence which, within our experience, accompanies a certain phase of molecular motion, then the case is entirely altered, and the possibility or probability of the continuance of the one without the other becomes a subject of further inquiry. Mr. Fiske reminds us that "Materialists sometimes declare that the relation of conscious intelligence to the brain is like that of music to the harp, and when the harp is broken there can be no more music. An opposite view long familiar to us is that the conscious soul is an emanation from the Divine Intelligence that shapes and sustains the world, and during its temporary imprisonment in material forms the brain is its instrument of expression. Thus the soul is not the music, but the harp, and, obviously, this view is in harmony with the conclusions which I have deduced from the correlation of forces."

Of course, Mr. Fiske did not profess to be able to base directly upon these conclusions an argument sustaining man's immortality. All he claimed was that he had removed the only serious objection that had ever been alleged against it, and had left the field clear for those general considerations of philosophic analogy and moral probabilities, which are all the guides upon which man can call for help in the arduous inquiry. It is much, unquestionably, to demonstrate that we are at liberty to treat the question of man's immortality in the disinterested spirit of the naturalist. Mr. Fiske, for his part, was convinced that in the course of evolution there is no more philosophical difficulty in man's acquiring immortality than in his acquiring the erect posture and a articulate speech. M. W. H.

Sound Sense About English.

Next to the weather there is no subject that is more general, interest or that is surer to start animated conversation in all kinds of society than the English language. Every one knows something about that and has ideas or experiences to impart about pronunciation or meanings or usage or derivation. Consequently the books of Dean Trench and Max Muller and W. D. Whitney found appreciative readers far removed from scholastic sanctuaries. The American edition of the dictionary, fostered in the common schools, has supplied us with a tribe of self-appointed preceptors, ever ready to instruct us, whether right or wrong in what we should and what we should not say. They are listened to with respect, usually out of all proportion to their deserts and of late their number has increased woefully, perhaps on account of the colleges taking up the study of English in earnest. It is a relief, and a delight, therefore, to come across a book like "Words and Their Ways," (Macmillan's) written by two thorough scholars, James Bradstreet Greenough and George Lyman Kittredge, and filled from cover to cover with plain talk and good sense about language. Prof. Greenough was the most human, unconventional, enthusiastic of teachers, as young in mind and spirit as interested in his classroom work and a score of outside matters up to his last illness as when he began to teach some forty years back. He died only a few days ago. Prof. Kittredge is one of the best examples of the newer Harvard scholarship. Both are detesters of shams and they dedicate their book to Francis James Child, the greatest English scholar America has produced and a hater of humbug too. There is no artificial pedantry or of the schoolmaster here, no talking down to the comprehension of less intelligent persons. It is plain good English setting forth clearly facts that are extremely interesting in the way in which modern scholarship regards them. There is no question of right and wrong, no regrets about what should be and is not. The English language is taken as it is, what we have, what is gone and what is coming is examined and explained and accounted for, but there is no dogmatic fiat as to what should be, and the only standard accepted is the usage of the time. "Words have no character in themselves, being only conventional signs for the ideas they express. Even bad grammar is essentially just as good as good grammar; it becomes bad merely because it is associated with persons that we dislike or look down on. And bad language is only such because it is not the accepted form of speech. Yet the recognized connotations of particular words are an integral part of expression, and when these are such as to shock or offend our association, the words themselves should be avoided." "So long as a language is alive, it is constantly changing, so that the grammar and rhetoric of a living language can never be absolutely fixed. It is only when the language has ceased to be spoken—that fixed rules can be framed which every one who undertakes to write it must observe. Now all rules of grammar and rhetoric must be based on usage; for there is no other standard in linguistic matters, and in order that they may be capable of intelligent statement, the usage from which they are derived must be limited in time. Yet at the very moment when the rules are committed to writing, usage is shifting; for language never stands still until it ceases to move altogether."

We can never know how language began. When it did begin, poetry at once, for the common figures of rhetoric were at once applied to words, metaphor simile, synecdoche, metonymy, hyperbole and so on. "Language is fossil poetry which is constantly being worked over for the purposes of speech. Our commonest words are worn-out metaphors." So depend is "to hang from," precocious is "too early ripe," to get is "to get up." The root pet—flashing across the sight," gives the Latin petra, "a means of flying," "a wing," "a feather," then "a quill pen" and now a steel, gold or stylographic pen. The same root gives us the words impetus, appetite, repeat, petition, competition, petulant, each with its history of gradual change of meaning.

The language is made up of "learned" and of "popular" words, but the distinction depends not upon etymology but upon usage. A word of learned etymology like *contradict*, for instance, is found driving out the original popular words *with*, which is obsolete, and *gainsey*, which has become learned. *Temperament*, *complexion*, *maizine*, *bilious*, *meanchow*, *lunatic*, *spirals*, some from the mediæval physiology which as science is dead, as *diaster*, *aspect*, *influence* come from the dead astrology. So the professions have contributed technical terms to the popular language, *school*, *monk*, *clerk*, *convey*, *diocese*, *alibi*, *hell*, *shift*, *accout*, *scuttle*, *steer clear of*, *anchor*. Words have been drawn from every language under the sun, but English has found room and a place for them all. The extraordinary complexity of the sources is shown in a paragraph of about a hundred words of narrative prose. In hunting up the derivation of the words we find, besides the native element, Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, the Celtic of Gaul, the Iberian of aboriginal Spain, Gothic and Old High German. They were borrowed at all periods—before the Anglo-Saxon conquest, during the Anglo-Saxon period, between the Norman conquest and Chaucer, in the learned sixteenth century and in recent days. There are Latin words that come from French, others that came directly from Latin and some taken bodily; technical terms of law, medicine and theology, slang, chivalry and seamanship.

A great many Latin words have been taken into English; not only through French, but directly. Though it is difficult in many cases to make out whether French was or was not intermediary, it is probable that fully as many words of Latin origin came into English directly as did through the daughter language. The Norman influence, great as it was, is much exaggerated in popular belief. Latin was used before the coming of the Anglo-Saxons. It was borrowed from freely by Anglo-Saxons, as familiar to the English after the conquest as Norman French was, and from Chaucer's time on was well known to the educated classes until the last century. The number of words taken from Latin was enormous.

Toward slang the authors maintain a respectful attitude, as they must looking at the history of the language. No doubt there are objections to it; it is often offensive, it is vulgar, because it is slang, it is not easy of comprehension, it is anomalous, and it is detestable to the mind because it has no fixed meaning. Yet there is no real difference between the processes of slang and those of legitimate speech. "We may say with propriety a *caraval of crime* but not a *perfect circus*. A man may be *recalcitrant*, but only in colloquial style can he be a *kicker*. We cannot with dignity allude to the *curves of baseball*, but a *base*, from the game of *base*, is proper enough. You can hardly *jump on* a man, nor can you go at him, but you can readily *assail* or *assault* him. *Insult* means literally to jump at or upon." *Apprehend* is merely Latin for "catch on." So attend to domestic language for "punish," but the Romans used *animadvertens* not only for "attend to" in the literal sense but for "punish" as well, and *animadvertens* is in good literary use. There is the striking of Swift who objected two hundred years ago to another refinement, "the choice of certain words invented by some pretty fellows, such as *baster*, *bamboozle*, *country put* and *kidney*, some of which are now struggling for the vogue and others are in possession of it." "I have done my utmost for some years past, to stop the progress of *mobb* and *bender*, but have been mainly sort, down by numbers." And he is troubled by young clergymen who "in their sermons use all the modern terms of art, *sham*, *baster*, *mobb*, *bubble*, *bully*, *cutting*, *shuffling* and *paiming*." Some slang words will force their way into the language, the greater number must die, but which shall live and which disappear, it is beyond the power and the knowledge of the purists and the scholars to decide.

The chapter on "Fashion in Language" is instructive and perhaps the most suggestive is that on "Fossils," the words that have been left stranded in the language while others like them have disappeared, fragments of by-gone constructions and lost grammatical forms. Such are *whithon*, *needs*, *once*, *twice*, *thrice*, since, remnants of lost cases. "There are many adverbs in modern English which have no ending, but are identical in form with the corresponding adjectives. Such are *fast*, *slow*, *quick*, *sheep*, *sound* and the like. These give the young grammarian much trouble, and he is seldom assisted by his schoolbooks, which usually inform him (erroneously) that such words are 'adjectives used as adverbs.' There is even a tendency to banish them from the language; but until the language has actually shown some disposition to reject the *fat* and *thin* it is pedantic to attempt to put them under ban. Another survival is the ending *-en in golden*, *sadden*. Then, the fine English idiom that the ignorance of would-be purists is trying to drive out. "A peculiar idiom with the preterite subjunctive *had* survives in a few phrases. Thus: 'I *had* as lief go as stay,' 'You *had* better not do this.' We *had* rather ride than walk. In this particular use *had* is really the preterite subjunctive of *have* in the sense of 'regard.' Naturally, I *had*, we *had*, *Ac.*, were contracted to *I'd*, *we'd*, *Ac.*, in these phrases (as elsewhere), and many persons suppose that *I had* in the expression just quoted is a mistaken expansion of *I'd* the contraction of *I would*. The result has been a determined effort to stigmatize the idiom as an error and to substitute *I would* rather, *I would* better, *Ac.* for it. The idiom, however, is perfectly established, has been in use for centuries, and is habitually used by the best writers. In some cases the substitution of *I would* results in downright error. Thus, 'I would better go' is positively ungrammatical. In case of idioms like 'I had better,' one frequently hears the objection that *had* will not parse. As a matter of fact it will parse easily enough, if one knows how to parse it. But the objection would have no validity even if the phrase were grammatically inapplicable. The grammarian has no business to object to an established idiom, for idioms are superior to paragraphs and sentences in that they are made (or made pretty imperfectly) from language, not language from grammar." A partial note to judgment! Some curious instances are given

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A Boston Chestnut for Girls. Timidly and with averted eyes we approach the mystic toilet between young women, and it is delicious to the mind because it has no fixed meaning. Yet there is no real difference between the processes of slang and those of legitimate speech. "We may say with propriety a *caraval of crime* but not a *perfect circus*. A man may be *recalcitrant*, but only in colloquial style can he be a *kicker*. We cannot with dignity allude to the *curves of baseball*, but a *base*, from the game of *base*, is proper enough. You can hardly *jump on* a man, nor can you go at him, but you can readily *assail* or *assault* him. *Insult* means literally to jump at or upon." *Apprehend* is merely Latin for "catch on." So attend to domestic language for "punish," but the Romans used *animadvertens* not only for "attend to" in the literal sense but for "punish" as well, and *animadvertens* is in good literary use. There is the striking of Swift who objected two hundred years ago to another refinement, "the choice of certain words invented by some pretty fellows, such as *baster*, *bamboozle*, *country put* and *kidney*, some of which are now struggling for the vogue and others are in possession of it." "I have done my utmost for some years past, to stop the progress of *mobb* and *bender*, but have been mainly sort, down by numbers." And he is troubled by young clergymen who "in their sermons use all the modern terms of art, *sham*, *baster*, *mobb*, *bubble*, *bully*, *cutting*, *shuffling* and *paiming*." Some slang words will force their way into the language, the greater number must die, but which shall live and which disappear, it is beyond the power and the knowledge of the purists and the scholars to decide.

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