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translation of the *Njála* Icelandic saga, that of Morris is of his translation of the *Eyrbyggjasaga,* another Icelandic saga. Dasent translated the Icelandic tongue into the contemporary English of the late nineteenth century; Morris tried to capture the spirit and tone of the past in somewhat archaic English. Which is preferable? Professor Quirk feels that it would be invidious to take sides in the matter, though his preference seems to be for Morris:

> We would not wish to grade these two great translators, and we could not if we wished. Their public and their disciples and their disciples' public have amply demonstrated their recognition and appreciation of both approaches to translation. Dasent's sensitive attempt at equivalence of effect, Morris's equally sensitive attempt at transmitting the experience of a scholar-poet reading the literature of a people and an age that he loved.
>
> (p. 109)

The variety of linguistic activities that Professor Quirk discusses in this book makes it a comprehensive and detailed study of its subject. But its value lies, not so much in comprehensiveness and detail, as in the sensitive awareness of literature in context. It is an admirable example of the best in language studies.

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The Public Service Commission, *Talking about English,* Vol. 3, no. 1, November 1976.

In our September 1975 issue I expressed the hope to see more of this readable and instructive aid to the correct use of English in the Public Service. This wish has been granted in the November 1976 issue of *Talking About English.*

The Editor of this leaflet, which laces learning with laughter, quite obviously subscribes to the view that acceptable writing can be acquired without tears. His avowed aim in this issue is to

1. offer a few hints on the correct forms of *place names* in English, and
2. try to help people whose *spelling* lets them down.

By apportioning the blame under his second heading in such a tactful manner, he lets down the real culprits as gently as possible: 'Clearly, boys, the fault lies in our stars!'

The section on place names opens with some names which have the same written form in English as in Afrikaans; for example, Bloemfontein, Nelspruit, Rome, etc., followed by cases where the Afrikaans form differs from the English, e.g. Kaapstad/Cape Town, Somerset-Oos/Somerset East. But one is prompted to wonder whether the editor has ever witnessed, in Eastern Cape circles, the evidence of heightened blood pressure under tight 'purist' collars at his translation of *Grahamstown* as *Grahamstad*. Be that as it may, he makes a valid point when he claims that the use of the Afrikaans form in an English text may often not be a serious obstacle to communication. What he adds seems to me to be particularly applicable to foreign names:

> ... nevertheless it does strike the English reader as odd to see, for example, the form *Rysel* in an English text when for centuries it has been customary to call the place *Lille* in English. In this case communication may actually suffer, because the English reader — unless he is well read in Geography or knows Dutch or Afrikaans well — may not even realise that *Rysel* and *Lille* are one and the same place, not to speak of the confusion that, say, Keulen/Cologne or Leuven/Louvain may give rise to.
>
> (p. 1)

He then provides a list of foreign place names which often give rise to confusion, and helpfully supplies some of the German and French forms as well, thus enabling the reader to savour the confusion to the full. Space allows of no more than a few items on this list:

German	*French*	*Afrikaans*	*English*
Basel	Bâle	Basel	Basle/Basel
	Liège	Luik	Liège
Strassburg	Strasbourg	Straatsburg	Strasbourg
	La Haye	Den Haag	The Hague

When it comes to South African place names, the writer points out that *the officially recognized English forms* (my italics) for *Mooirivier, Witrivier* and *Kliprivier* are: *Mooi River, White River, Klip River.* One wonders whether these terms are, in their turn, anathema to the Afrikaans 'purist'. Fortunately the average English-speaking public servant is apparently required to do no more than *spell* Vereeniging correctly, leaving the intricacies of its pronunciation to his more highly initiated colleagues. 'We also speak of *Lake Chrissie,* not *Chrissie Lake* (cf. Afrikaans *Chrissiemeer*)'. But in river names the word order remains the same (cf. Berg River/Bergrivier) and we often, in both languages, omit the word 'river': *the Tugela,* as in the 'great fabled rivers of the world, like *the Tiber'.* The writer comments that the names of 'these great [overseas] rivers' do sometimes occur with the word 'river', in this order: *the river Thames* or *the river Tiber.* What he omits to mention is whether it is ever permissible to refer to South African rivers, great or small, in this fashion. Do we, in fact, ever say: *the river Vaal?* I doubt it. Perhaps geographical factors are responsible for this phenomenon: are our local rivers too rapid in their hurtling process towards the sea to allow of the inevitable restraint in midstream demanded by such inversion?

Whereas Afrikaans wallows in hyphenated place and other geographical names, English, on the whole, eschews the hyphen: *Aliwal-Noord/Aliwal North.* But once again geographical factors take their toll by introducing the exception to prove the rule. The points of the compass, provided they are indeterminate enough to be a compromise between two of the cardinal points, bring the hyphen with them like the rain or dust which their winds carry along from those climes: *South-East Asia, South-West Africa.* Names like *Graaff-Reinet, Groot-Marico, Groot-Drakenstein* and *Schweizer-Reneke* sport a hyphen, in both languages, for no clearly defined reason.

The introduction to part 2 of this issue is so delightful that I shall quote it in full:

> As many of our readers will know, Melrose House is one of the most imposing national monuments in the administrative capital. It was here that the treaty of the Peace of Vereeniging was signed and such luminaries of the Empire as Milner and Kitchener once resided. An interesting feature of the house is its stained-glass windows, which are rich in

literary allusion: the Lay of the Last Minstrel, The Seven Ages of Man, Paridise (yes, Par*i*dise!) Lost. The misspelt word is clearly inscribed upon the glass for all to see, including, one supposes, Milner and Kitchener in their day. One imagines that, if either of these personages noticed the error, he would have allowed himself no more than an inward smile of mild amusement at the glazier's inadvertency. Be that as it may, Melrose House's 'Paridise Lost' seems to suggest that almost a century ago the writing was on the wall, or to be more precise on the glass: English spelling in South Africa was beginning to show its penchant for the bizarre.

Indeed, outside the precincts of this mansion, so Victorian in every detail of interior and exterior decoration, there is today ample evidence of spelling that may be described either as fanciful or preposterous, depending on whether one subscribes to the view that it is bad for innocent children to have their mistakes pointed out to them.

A casual stroll in Pretoria's shopping districts will show that, for some years now, the city's children have undoubtedly had the benefit of that comfortable new philosophy which seeks neither to correct what is blatantly wrong nor to prescribe what is right and acceptable, and which is not dogmatic about anything except the virtues of anti-prescriptivism. One sees that it is quite the thing for brides-to-be to be fitted with *bridle* accessories by one of those small establishments that underscore their exclusiveness by calling themselves boutiques. In a permissive age like ours the word *bridle* certainly arrests the attention of those who still know that it should be *bridal,* setting them wondering about the outré gear that brides are likely to wear these days. [There is a circumspect omission of such items as bit or curb in the exclusive offer. Even the more gentle 'snaffle' is omitted. Firm believers in the institution of marriage, South Africans and, it would seem, especially Pretorians, valiantly encourage white weddings and starry eyes.] The butchery round the corner offers *briscet* at a very competitive price, endowing this humble cut of beef *(brisket)* with a vaguely Gallic aura of haute cuisine, that would not have occurred to one had it not been for the

seductive little c. The supermarket further along announces in the boldest of lettering that its meat *prizes* have been slashed, which goes to show that the small man and his *briscet* really can't win.

But, lest any of our non-Pretorians begin to gloat over the wretchedness of 'Pretoria English', let us add the following slogan, in huge letters upon bunting, adorning the facade of a bottle store in rural Natal:

ALL LIQUER AT DISCOUNT PRICES!

Well, at least there are vestiges of literacy in the form liquer, as compared with the correct spelling *liquor*, but somehow they only serve to make the blunder seem all the more pathetic. Why not go the whole hogshead and call the stuff *likker*, a vulgarism that has all the punch and kick of the Wild West and would go down well with those tough, brawny customers who ride the Midland range in Landrovers.

The editor goes on to quote and discuss a paragraph containing errors of style, and spelling mistakes, all of them examples gleaned from genuine documents submitted by Government departments to the Language Services Bureau:

Perhaps the time has come for some public-spirited person to take the inisiative and donate a throphee to be awarded to the South African who in the space of a calender year detects and corrects the greatest number of spelling mistakes, thus affecting the greatest saving of face to his organisation and unabling it to sent out letters that are alright. It would indeed be a priviledge to reward these people for there trouble on the occation of a special ceremony. Perhaps it could then also be announced that the winner's salary has been dubbled.

Examination reveals some of these mistakes to be due to:

1. False analogy with Afrikaans spelling:
   inisiative and *calender;*
2. false analogy with English words:
   already, hence *alright;*
   bubbled, hence *dubbled;*
   acknowledged, hence *priviledged;*

3. faulty pronunciation:
   unabling instead of *enabling;*
4. sheer ignorance and confusion:
   there instead of *their.*

Before going into helpful detail about correct spelling, especially about the use of the double or single consonant, and providing his readers with a list of recommended dictionaries, the writer devotes a few paragraphs to the most welcome straight talking on the problem that has come my way for some time. I quote:

> Fascinating though it may be to go into the possible causes of the bad spelling that is so common these days, one thing is certain: English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans are equally lacking in their ability to spell in either their mother tongue or their second language. What is even more disquieting is that so many people including university graduates are blissfully unaware of their inability to spell everyday words. A decent standard of spelling, which is so vitally important to the good image of an organisation, is more likely to be maintained by the efficient typist of the old school than by that bright young person who, armed with a crisp new school-leaving or degree certificate, has been sent out into the world to face the harsh, rather unreasonable reality that one is actually expected to concern oneself with such trifles as correct spelling. And talking of harsh realities, there is this one that the public servant is faced with: the people who condone the bad spelling of school children and university students on the ground that correct spelling is not essential to communication are often the very ones who object strongly to spelling mistakes in any document emanating from a Government department.
>
> Spelling, it should be remembered, is largely a matter of attention to detail; and if, as an American educational journal reports, school children write about the Indians who used to *mascara* their enemies and about *vacations* to prevent smallpox, it is clear that spelling no longer gets the careful attention it requires.
>
> (pp. 5–6)

Coming to the use of the double consonant, the author quite naturally, in these days of petrol inflation, discusses the present participle of the verb 'to bus'. One agrees with his dismissal of the double s in the sentence: 'Bussing college students from the one end of town to the other is no easy matter'. This would be an undesirable practice indeed: students are supposed to exercise their intellect, not their labial muscles!

The compiler of TAE concludes his amusingly instructive 'talk' as follows:

> We hope that, if nothing else, some of our readers have now been alerted to some of the pitfalls in English spelling and that they have become aware of some of the gaps in their knowledge. With spelling, as with most other things, knowing that one does not know is a great step forward. We trust that this will encourage them to be more observant and to come with TAE along the road from Par*i*dise Lost to Par*a*dise Regained, a place where people might not know how to spell all the words they use in everyday speech and writing, but where they do take the trouble to find out.
>
> (p. 14)

The niggling little question ever at the back of one's mind while reading this informative discussion is this: why should the Language Services Bureau and the Public Service Commission (not to mention others who shall be nameless!) be required to do remedial teaching? Although permissiveness has become the vogue in most spheres of life, the results of its infiltration into the camps of grammar and spelling at school level can hardly be accounted a success. And the question always remains: was this the work of 'instigators' alone, or was there 'collaboration' from within?

Still, our toast to the man who 'talks' about English is simply this:

More power to your jaw!

Mey Hurter