

CURRENT MISUSAGES

This is the introductory chapter of a draft M.A. dissertation by the late A.A.G. Anderton. The thesis was incomplete at the time of his death in 1968, and it is with the kind permission of his widow that we are reproducing this chapter. We hope in future to include further chapters from A SURVEY OF CURRENT MISUSAGES IN ENGLISH (the title Mr Anderton gave to his work.)



“Then consider the incidents growing out of insults in the international fields. What is an insult? It is usually pure verbalism with great affective characteristics manipulated to sway others as the swayer directs.”

– A. Korzybski, *Science and Sanity*.

...

I am a veteran of three years service and still under 26.

– Letter to *Time* magazine, 6.11.50.

...

Every inch is femineered.

– *The Saturday Evening Post*, 8.7.50.



When Dr Johnson planned his celebrated Dictionary in 1747, he could never have foreseen the divergent streams which have since coursed their way from that source through linguistic history to this day. Since his time there have been changes in morphology, in pronunciation of his words, and in their meanings and in their usages. Indeed the coming of the dictionary established the diarchy of spelling and pronunciation. Even on one language-level, spoken English and written English have converged and diverged; that is to say, for instance, that Oscar Wilde’s

Duchess probably spoke approximately as he wrote, whereas the modern girl does not speak as fluently or as accurately as the heroine Rattigan writes for. All the above changes and divergences are patently obvious in all languages; Arabic is a good example.

Current English has now added to these streams an additional flow of misusages in grammar and word-choice, in that they are deliberate. Modern advertisements and "headline" are two germane examples.

This dissertation seeks to discuss the above trends, to collate the opinions of writers, and to present them in the light of the usages of today.

Words are influences, words can change meaning to an absurd degree, and words can be coined at a writer's convenience, as the introductory examples indicate. People of average intelligence possess two vocabularies: a stock of speech-words (including favourite clichés, pet phrases, and idiosyncratic words which very often – "it was most aggravating" – span a lifetime of misuse); and words known but hardly ever used except spasmodically on paper. That this results in banal speech, insipid writing and uninteresting platitudes, is hardly to be wondered at. (That it also results in muddled thinking and faulty communication is a matter to be further considered.) The good writer and the good speaker are those who know this and who deliberately set out to develop a facility in ready, concise and accurate word-choice coupled with a fluency of expression. These dicta are readily and universally accepted; but, as in any walk of life, there are traps for the tyros, pitfalls for the pundits, and snares for the sophisticated.

At the other end of the scale we may quote a reference to a passage in John S. McIntosh's *The Potency of English*¹: there are "words that crush like the battle-axe of Richard, or (cleave?) like the scimitar of Saladin; words that sting like a serpent's fangs, or soothe like a mother's kiss; words that can unveil the nether depths of Hell, or point out the heavenly heights of purity and peace; words that can call a Judas; words that reveal the Christ." Of such a nature, continues Wain, are words like *reverberate*, *forlorn*, *assassin*, *despicable*, *caress*, *adoration*, *desolation*, *liberty*, *celestial*, *eternal*.

"The eighteenth-century poets", says Rose Macaulay, "called on nymphs, verdant lawns, enchanting groves, embowered towers, and the like features of a neat and park-like landscape, to convey the aroma of poetry.

¹ Quoted by F.J. Wain, "Consider your English," Pitman, 1948, p. 38.

The verse of the late nineteenth and quite early twentieth centuries abounds in such words as purple, pale, dim, strange-coloured, opaline, crystalline, chrysoptase, shimmering, glimmering, shadowy, grey, blind, swooning, orchard, honey-coloured moon..."

It will be noticed that these are epithets; and F.J. Wain² gives us the timely reminder that a noun requires an epithet only when the application of the noun in a particular context would remain vague without it, or when the nature of the passage demands that the image conveyed should be sharpened or illuminated... The poets provide numerous striking and inspired examples of their use, ... the glowing violet, cowslip wan, the cold fruitless moon, azure-lidded sleep, drowsy Death, blue bitter smoke, the wrinkled sea... One is reminded of unpolished spectacles, which fail in their purpose when they want for a discerning rub.

It would not be unreasonable to call this an Age of Epithets. In these days all experiences are labelled either *wonderful* or *awful*, and people are described as being either *terribly* happy or *terribly* sorry. ... Lord Dunsany, in an address to the Royal Society of Literature, declared "It is autumn, not spring, with our language, and the adjectives are fluttering to the ground." ... He criticized especially, on the one hand, such combinations as "luxury utility stone house," where the relationship of the words to one another is uncertain, and on the other he deplored the tendency to use as an adjective a noun which has already an established adjectival form, as in "our Rome correspondent." (cf. "The England Team.") The latter tendency is revealed almost daily in our newspapers... It may appear that Lord Dunsany's verdict is an extravagant and over-pessimistic one, and that the cases cited are unusual or fastidious, but one does not need to look far to admit that there is a grave danger of many of our epithets losing any real value.

"A fine woman, under this head I comprehend all fine gentlemen too, ... is *vastly* obliged, or *vastly* offended, *vastly* glad, or *vastly* sorry. Large objects are *vastly* great, small ones are *vastly* little; and I had lately the pleasure to hear a fine woman pronounce, by a happy metonymy, a very small gold snuff-box that was produced in company to be *vastly* pretty, because it was *vastly* little. (Chesterfield, *The World*, No. 101, 1754.) (This is a "Vogue-word".)

² *Ibid.* p. 68.

It may then be superfluous, but it is necessary, to remind ourselves that there must be a degree of accuracy of word-choice depending upon our medium of expression, upon the intended recipient, upon the importance given to the communication, and upon the character itself of the locutor. We cannot, and need not, measure up to Flaubert's insistences on *le mot juste* on all occasions, nor to Oscar Wilde's epigrams, whether they be wittily spoken or polished in prose; but we should, if we are not ungrudging pedants, constantly remind ourselves that these degrees of accuracies of word-choice do exist.

Breal lucidly helps us here: "Many objects are inaccurately named. ... Nevertheless words answer the same purpose as though they were of faultless accuracy. No one dreams of revising them. They are accepted by a tacit consent of which we are not even conscious. The reader will here recognise the subject of many discussions in Greece and India. The debate begins for us in the Cratylus of Plato." We might add, that it is still continuing.

Shakespeare had the advantage of living in an age when the language was in a state of flux and was capable of being moulded; an advantage which writers such as Carlyle, Dickens and Lewis Carroll probably envied. Yet many of the words either coined or adapted by Shakespeare himself fell by the wayside. George M. McKnight³ instances *congree*, to agree; *congreet*, to agree mutually; *congrue*, to agree; *definement*, description; *dislikin*, disguise; disproperty, to alienate a possession. "A similar fate awaited some of his applications of words to new meanings": *ceremony*, portent, omen; *to channel*, to furrow; *citizen* (adj.), city-bred; *crack*, pert little boy; *distaste*, to render distasteful.

COINAGES

English as the language of Science, by Alison Megroz, B.A. (Discovery, May 1958, p. 193; pub. Jarrold & Sons Ltd., Norwich.)

This article deals with the necessary coinages of new words and phrases as the frontiers of science expand. The author quotes *metal fatigue*, *creep*, *critical*, *pile*, *core*, *clean/dirty bombs*, *heavy water*, and initial-words such as *UNESCO*. She observes that many new words of atomic science borrowed from the Greek are short and easy to

³ Modern English in the Making: Appleton, N.Y. 2930, p. 189.

pronounce and spell, many of them using the Greek neuter noun ending *-on*. Such adaptatory powers of English are rendering the language peculiarly suitable to the international scientific medium, despite its difficulties of spelling and pronunciation, and despite chauvinism. The importance of these coinages, for the future, cannot be overlooked. It may be that the clarity and succinctity of the majority of these neologisms owes itself to the rationalism which is the province of pure science.

But:

EXCERPT FROM REPLY BY THE EARL OF HALSBURY TO
QUESTIONS PUT BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF "EVERYBODY'S"
ON THE UNFAMILIAR WORD

A U T O M A T I O N –

published in "EVERYBODY'S" on February 16th 1957. – p. 31.

"Destroy faith in words – suggest that they may be no more than spellable noises devoid of meaning – and you tamper with the mental security based on the control of precept, concept, logic and contract. Destroy mental security and you release anxiety; release anxiety at one point and it gushes out at every other point. The mind has only one refuge in this situation: to clamp down on the origin of the disturbance and shut it out."

and 51, refers to "... the non-committal timorousness of the official style. ... One of the common emasculating devices is to convey decisions in the conditional tense." Yet – perhaps because he worked for the British Council – Ifor Evans' pet phrase is "I *would* examine (etc)." One half expects such clauses to be followed by "but I can't." He goes on to say (Ibid, pp. 22 and 23) "The use of Direct English in all official communications would necessitate a change in the ethical, as well as in the linguistic, habits of our public life. ... It is very difficult to convince men and women, even those who suffer most, of this danger of words." One might add, that this difficulty stems from lack of proper schooling, not only in education but also in the process of learning to think.

Jargon and its concomitants are more fully discussed in Chapter 4; but it may be germane to insert here these general observations.

It may certainly be permissible for the civil servant at times (but not always) to use his jargon, if only to soften a blow to a taxpayer, or

to guard himself against an indiscretion, or to make himself misunderstood to a colleague in an inter-departmental minute. But if he is wise to discard his bowler hat when crossing a field of mielies, he would be equally wise (and indeed polite) to discard his jargon when writing to the farmer.

The writer has observed that during the past decade this is being increasingly done, especially since the pioneer promptings of A.P. Herbert and Sir Ernest Gowers. The cry was and is being taken up by (besides those listed in the attached Bibliography) dozens of authors, some of whom unconsciously plagiarize one another, and some of whom seem blissfully unaware that the same points have been made – and often better made – by writers as far back as, say, *Dean Swift* in his *Polite Conversation* (1738), or *Archbishop R.C. Trench* in his *On the Study of Words* (eleventh edition, Macmillan, 1864) over a century ago. And if Swift was “borne down by the weight of numbers” in his objections to neologisms, so our jargonists appear to be increasingly borne down by the weight of number of authors in their objections to misuse; which is a pointer in the right direction.

Thus, for example, a fillip was given by the commonsense British war-time and post-war ration book which must have been read by every British housewife, and which contained lucidities such as: “If you lose this ration book, report the fact at once to your nearest Food Office” and “Do not tear out any of the pages of this book.” – Though how many housewives realized that it *was* lucid English, is a moot point. One notices the effectiveness of the Active Voice “you”; and one shudders at the thought of what might have been: “In the eventuality of this booklet being mislaid by or stolen from the holder it is essential that...” etc. etc.

Again, there is the Post Office notice quoted by Gowers:⁴ “Postmasters are neither bound to give change nor authorised to demand it.” This means what it says and says what it means. In the matter of trade, too, I found this in a tobacco tin: “Put the lid on the bottom of the tin – give a half turn and it will be held while you fill your pipe.” I did so.

(The last-quoted example probably unintentionally supports the Fowler brother’s advice in *The King’s English* (O.U.P., 3rd ed., p. 16) to Prefer the Saxon Word to the Romance – which has often since been disputed.)

⁴ Plain Words, H.M.S.O. 1948, p. 3.

A good summary of the trends of misusage, and of one of the important remedies now almost universally accepted, is that of B. Ifor Evans (*Ibid*, pp. 56, 58, 63): “Precision of thought is the foremost and essential condition of clear writing.” Yes; but clear writing is not always the objective, and he therefore rightly goes on to say’ “It may well be that in literary English a phrase or long word may add to the rhythm or the charm of a sentence. ...Nor would I suggest that Direct English should be employed on all occasions. By all means let private communications (for example) be written easily and if necessarily (*sic*) lazily.”

Indeed, if that were not so, literature would be bereft of most poetry, and Mr Pickwick, and Polonius, and the famous Diaries that have come down to us. The gist, then, of the author’s dicta is that clear writing, and the habit of it, must be a primary inculcation; and that once this has become habitual, the writer is free to write according to style and characterisation and according to his whim. (We may also observe that this holds true in art. Picasso shows in his earlier drawings that he had mastered the art and the mechanics of naturalism before he turned to his idiosyncratic abstractions.) It follows that another important requirement – or remedy – is a good education. It follows again that an important part of good education is to give the schoolchild at least an outline of the pitfalls of misusages, so that the scholar may at least have an awareness of them. How? Certainly not in a dull grammar lesson. (“Don’t say ‘between you and I’. ‘Between’ is a preposition and demands the object.”)

These are matters for school curricula, and are now the constant subject of research by educationists. But what of the adults who have “missed the bus” and who influence their children in speech?

On the bright side, we may note a slowly increasing desire of those who have reached an ‘awareness’ to improve their speech and communication and writing, with the help of the growing army of present-day writers attempting to plant such an awareness. On the gloomy side, we may note the deliberate malformations in syntax and word-forms now being practised in the Press, in advertisements, in popular comics, etc. Some of their reasons for doing so are discussed in the chapters which follow.

MISUSAGE IN GRAMMATICAL AND SYNTACTICAL FORMS

“ ‘Grammar’ is subject to change by usage in precisely the same way that other aspects of language are subject to change.”

– Stuart Robertson: *The Development of Modern English*⁵

...

“But operating from far earlier, and perhaps even yet unfinished, is a vast process of change that has been going on in Britain from the days of King Alfred to the days of King Coal; that process affects the elaborate grammatical systems of Case in noun and pronoun, of Person in the verb, and of Gender, this last at one time including not only noun and pronoun but also the adjective... . Language will not for ever allow itself to be hampered, instead of being facilitated, by a needlessly complicated accident, especially when that accident contains numerous irregularities and inconsistencies and not a few ambiguities. ...Old English accident being an incongruous jumble, confusion ensued. ...This ‘principle of ease has powerfully influenced almost every aspect of language-development”.

– E.H. Partridge: *English*.⁶



In this dissertation we propose examining those faults of usage, not dealt with elsewhere, which may be considered to lie within the broad terminology “grammar”; and in particular within the range of etymology, phonology, morphology, vocabulary (both oral and written), and accident and syntax.

⁵ Prentice-Hall, New York, 1936.

⁶ Winchester, 1949.

What ever we may say here, and what ever has been asseverated by eminent grammarians past and present, will matter little to the users of speech beyond that which has stuck in their minds from schooling and the custom of speech with their neighbours. We might then come to the conclusion that the grammarian has no place in living speech beyond didacticism, and that, in the oft-quoted words of Stephen Leacock, "grammar is only a post-mortem on usage."⁷ We may go further and recognise that, when a great writer such as Carlyle or Shakespeare or Browning coins a word or a figure of speech or departs from an established grammatical formula, the grammarian should consider revising his dicta: for the established author will influence language to a far greater degree than the grammarian can; and if he can influence language, he can influence that part of it which is grammar (though not perhaps with the felicity or facility with which he can influence style). In this case the grammarian becomes only the neophyte apostle while remaining the scribe of convention: an unenviable position in which, throughout our linguistic history, the best of grammarians have found themselves ensnared. He it is who has erred in his formula, when a great writer flouts his pronouncements. Furthermore, "speech, the product of reason, tends more and more to conform itself to reason; and when grammar, which is the formulation of usage, is opposed to reason, there arises, sooner or later, a conflict between logic, or the law of reason, and grammar, the law of precedent, in which the former is always victorious."⁸

We find the flaw in the above arguments when we point out that even the best of writers make occasional errors which they do not necessarily repeat, even as they develop faults of style, and it is here that the grammarian should draw his line of demarcation. "The best usage", says Rickard,⁹ "is not the usage of the best writers, but the best usage of the best writers. Even the best of them make slips and fall occasionally into a bad habit. No writer is impeccable." And if impeccability implies a standard, then the standard requires an interpreter: an interpreter of "the crystallisation of accepted convention."⁹ This we must accept. We must accept not necessarily the permanent standardisation, but the right of interpretation, and this is the first broad justification for the existence of the grammarian and of the rules of grammar.

⁷ Quoted by L.A.G. Strong: *A Tongue in Your Head*: Pitman, 1945, p. 66.

⁸ R. Grant White: *Words and their Usages*: Sampson Low, 1886.

⁹ T.A. Rickard: *Technical Writing*: J. Wiley & Sons, N.Y., 1934.

The *pronunciamentos* of grammarians in Dean Alford's time were so arbitrary, fixed and biased that he was constrained to say that "most of the grammars and rules, and applications of rules, are in reality not contributions towards its purity, but main instruments of its deterioration."¹⁰ Hard words. The object of his book is thus "not so much to enquire in each case what is according to strict rule and analogy, as to point out what is the usage of our spoken language." There have been pedants and zealots before and since Dean Alford's time; inconsequential hairs have been split, and fine points have been machined and smoothed to such infinitesimal standards that (to pursue our mixed metaphors) the grammarians, "if they are not quite botanizing upon their mother's grave, are at least clapping a strait waistcoat upon their mother's tongue, when wiser physicians would refuse to certify the patient."¹¹ Here we might aptly quote Ballard:¹²

"G. W. Moon argues that such a sentence as, 'When John meets his uncle he always lifts his hat,' is ambiguous; for it admits of four interpretations. We are not told whether John lifts John's hat, or John lifts his uncle's hat, or the uncle lifts the uncle's hat, or the uncle lifts John's hat. The Dean's (Dean Alford's) reply to this criticism was that he did not write for idiots. This made Moon very angry; and when the Dean explained that the remark was not intended for him personally, but for a hypothetical person, Moon returned vigorously to the attack, asserting that his blows were not aimed at Dean Alford personally, but at a hypothetical Dean."

If we split enough hairs, the head will soon be bald. Ballard (*ibid.*, at p. 105) quotes Moon criticising one of Lindley Murray's sentences: "The importance of obtaining, in early life, a clear, distinct, and accurate knowledge..." Ballard asks, "Has the reader found the error?" – Supplying each ellipsis, we get "a clear, (a) distinct, and (a) accurate knowledge." We have here reached the stage where we are tempted to observe merely that life is too short; where we can't see the wood for the trees – roots, foliage, and circumambient brambles.

¹⁰ G.H. McKnight: *Modern English in the Making*: Appleton, N.Y. 1928 p. 524.

¹¹ G.H.M. Bobbins: *The Twilight of English*: Maskew Miller, C.T., 1951.

¹² Dr P.B. Ballard: *Teaching & Testing English*: U.L.P., 1948.

If errors in accident and syntax are serious, they are serious in that they inhibit the clear expression of thought. Yet, where the thought is clear, euphony and vigour and style may waive the principles of syntax, as is demonstrated in the writings of Carlyle. To preserve the heritage of the language we must continue to permit the customary latitude of style and expression which gives the writer his individuality; *but the permission should cease to operate when his individuality consists mainly in the repetition of errors in grammatical usage.* These errors, such as tend to inhibit the clear flow of thought, are fully discussed below.

The above few remarks may serve to indicate that, though the path of the interpretation of grammar is a tricky one, there must essentially be a guide in linguistic usage and usefulness. "The business of a doctor", says Empson,¹³ "is to heal people, but it is also considered his duty (among other things) to help the police in murder cases. Similarly, it might be the duty of a grammarian not to limit himself to his business... because it need not stop a grammarian from doing anything useful." What usefulness may be found in the prevention by the grammarian of the murder of language may be more fully appreciated in the detailed study which follows. Guidance, therefore, is the second broad justification for the existence of the grammarian and of the rules of grammar.

Though it is not necessary for us to enter deeply into the history of grammatical dicta, it is interesting to observe its universal conservatism. This is inevitable; the grammarian can never be the *voorloper* of a span of usages; he may give an intelligent guess that "It's me" will almost certainly become accepted usage, but he cannot condone it until the usage is accepted. In general terms, he may expect, but he may not anticipate, since he is an historian and not a prophet. His main problem is to judge by what decent interval he may follow newly-accepted usage, after he has judged that it has been accepted. Though a conservative, he must eschew traditionalism, for it is the traditionalists who, from Dean Alford's time to the present day, have rightly merited the scourge. Nesfield's grammar is a case in point, and it is surprising the number of schools still using grammars which are fifty years out of date. These works still preserve such obsolescences as the vastly complicated set of distinctions between *Shall* and *Will*; the disallowance of the split infinitive, and of "these kind of chairs" and "between each

¹³ William Empson: *The Structure of Complex Words*: Chatto & Windus, 1951.

window”; and many other locutions once considered venial. Let us not however lead ourselves into the trap of trespassing upon the grammarian’s ground; let it suffice to say that though we might generally condone the above examples on the colloquial speech level, together with “someone else’s”, “none are” and “had rather”, we would condemn “like he does” and “one...his” as slovenly solecisms of incorrect usage. “There are, alas”, writes Stuart Robertson, “no formulas for tact and taste.”¹⁴ What perhaps is required and what we do not possess, is a table of Degree of Condonation in grammatical dicta. Yet if we approach such a suggestion in a logical manner we find ourselves sailing once more dangerously close to the principle of the Academy, and renewed conservatism.

Just as we conclude elsewhere that the rendering obsolete or the pejorative weakening in meaning of a word is an unfortunate fact to be deplored but not to be ignored (despite the efforts of Ivor Brown¹⁵), so also the passing of some grammatical usages leaves us the poorer. For instance, *that*-clauses preceded by a comma became obsolete about a century ago. Yet this style was one of the secrets of the success of writing such as Gibbon’s; and we may aver without precocity, that Edward Gibbon gave to the classical style its most brilliant and yet controlled employment in England. This method of punctuation seems to provide a springboard from which to plunge into a clear pool of meaning, and it should be welcomed if it were to bring itself back into the language.

We discussed in a previous chapter the fruitless attacks by early purists on what were, to them, neologisms. It has since been found out that the spoken word is the fore-runner of the written, and not the other way round. It is interesting to observe that the colloquial “I’ve got” has nevertheless been under continuous fire ever since the 17th century, and still is. Though the purists are ignored, they still keep at it. *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*¹⁶ quotes an old example which might have killed by ridicule, but did not:

“I got on horseback within ten minutes after I got your letter. When I got to Canterbury, I got a chaise for town; but I got wet through and have got such a cold that I shall not get rid of it in a hurry. I got to the Treasury about noon, but first of all got

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ivor Brown: *A Book of Words* (et ff.): Cape, 1952.

¹⁶ Cassell. No date of publication; p. 473 under “get”. This passage is quoted by F.J. Wain, *ibid.*, p. 16.

shaved and dressed. I soon got into the secret of getting a memorial before the Board, but I could not get an answer then; however, I got intelligence from a messenger that I should get one this morning. As soon as I got back to my inn, I got my supper, and then got to bed. When I got up next morning, I got my breakfast, and, having got dressed, I got out in time to get an answer to my memorial. As soon as I got it, I got into a chaise, and got back to Canterbury by three, and got home for tea. I have got nothing for you, and so adieu.” (Attributed to Dr Withers.)

This overworked auxiliary is still with us, though we may observe in passing that the standard colloquial English “Have you got...?” has been displaced in American English by “Do you have...?”

This short foray into some of the views of pedants and purists (concerning whom Professor Weekley observes that even the owls are beginning to say “to whit, to whom”!) would be incomplete without reference to the healthy grammatical duels between such giants as Alford and Moon, and Fowler and Jespersen. In particular, Jespersen’s acceptance and Fowler’s condemnation of the fused participle (“on you(r) being here”) is worth study.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the best guide in the matter of the interpretation of grammatical usage is given by A.G. Kennedy in “English Usage”¹⁸ He says:

“It is in syntactical practice, in the putting together of words into sentences, that most of our more insistent questions of grammatical usage arise, and these appear on various cultural levels... It is the use of a locution on one of these levels that should be the deciding factor in any controversy, and it is not just a question of right or wrong, correct or incorrect, that we have to answer...”

In addition to these levels, we also have to decide *when* and *how far*. That it is necessary indeed to have a constant and up-to-date deciding factor is pointed out by Breal.¹⁹ “To appeal to grammatical

¹⁷ Sir Ernest Gowers: Plain Words; H.M.S.O., 1948, pp. 77-78. And see S.P.E. Tracts XXII et seq.

¹⁸ Appleton. Cent. 1942, p. 31.

¹⁹ Appleton. Cent. 1942, p. 32.

methods that no longer exist in the popular consciousness," he says, "is the most subtle form of *archaism*. If it be comparatively easy to restore ancient words to circulation, it is much more difficult to revive and render intelligible the ancient turns of phrase." Nor indeed do *obsolescent* locutions in present-day speech find it easy to revive. Survival, in fact, is a law of language.

It is now necessary to discuss in more detail those constructions in syntax, style and accident which lead to semantic error and misuse. The manner in which they lead to error should now occupy us. (For the sake of convenience, the headings and examples quoted from Fowler²⁰ are designated (F) below.)

An example of good syntax, good accident, and good style which accords with the subject-matter, and which avoids our criticisms, might be the following passage from *H. V. Morton*:*

"I saw the great Plain of Esdraelon stretching like a smooth, green sea to the distant hills of Samaria. The shadows of the clouds moved over it as if the ghosts of old armies were crossing the haunted plain. There are over twenty battle-fields down there. The level arena has known the thunder of chariots from Egypt, Assyria and Babylon.

"Somewhere on the plain, Barak smote the Canaanites. From its green levels Gideon drove the Midianites towards the Jordan. On the hills at the back Saul went by night to consult the Witch of Endor, and by day saw his armies scattered and his sons slain. It was down there, too, that the dead body of Josiah was hurried from the triumphant Egyptians and borne in sorrow to Jerusalem."

We perceive here the shades of Gibbon and Macaulay in the modern author. Though we may disagree with some of their opinions, we can but admire this usage of English.

²⁰ H.W. Fowler: *Modern English Usage*: O.U.P., 1930.

* In the *Steps of the Master*, Methuen, 23rd ed. 1959, pp. 176-7.