

## PREFACE

The present volume is made up of selections from my little essays first published in *The Ching Wen English Magazine*. The first thirty-two relate to the study of English. The next six are from "The First Person Singular". The last twelve originally appeared under the title "What Uncle Tom Says". No essay has been selected from the 34th and later issues.

An explanation of the title of the book is perhaps not out of place here. "A word to the wise" is the usual translation of the Latin phrase *verbum sapienti*. I have adopted it because I think all the essays herein reprinted have some suggestive value.

Also a word about the Chinese title, 芻言. It is a pun: it is significant, as readers can no doubt see, but it also alludes to my literary name, 獻芻.

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# A WORD TO THE WISE

## BOOKS ON ENGLISH AND BOOKS IN ENGLISH

“On” and “in”—well, there is often a wide difference between these two little words. A book *on* English is ‘one that deals with’ the English language; a book *in* English is one that is written in the English language. The former may be written in Chinese, French, German, or any other language; the latter may deal with any subject under the sun.<sup>2</sup>

Books on English are intended for students of the language<sup>3</sup>; and it is very gratifying to note that far more such books are now available than twenty or more years ago. I myself have written several, and am glad to say that I often receive letters telling of<sup>4</sup> their usefulness to students of English.

But I must give a word of warning here. Language is not an exact science, nor a mere matter of principles, rules, exceptions, definitions, formulas, and diagrams<sup>5</sup>. Books on English are helpful, but no-one can master<sup>6</sup> English by reading such books only. Perhaps the very fact of<sup>7</sup> there being so many such books today accounts for<sup>8</sup> the frequency with which we meet with people who can talk and write *about* English without being able to talk and write it<sup>9</sup>. This is due to<sup>10</sup> their ignorance of the fact that without wide and careful reading the mastery of English is impossible.

I would advise all students of English to devote more time to reading books *in* English and less time to reading books *on* English. What book in English are *you* reading? Is it a book of stories or essays or travel sketches<sup>11</sup>? Or is it a biography or a diary or merely a text-book of history or geography? Well, if you happen to<sup>12</sup> spend your days and nights on books *on* English, it is time you acted on my warning<sup>13</sup>.

【注】 1. deals with, 論述. 2. under the sun, 在天下. 3. the language = the English language. 4. telling of, 說及. 5. diagrams, 圖解. 6. master, 精通. 7. the very fact of, 即...這事實. 8. accounts for, 是...的原因. 9. can talk... write it. 能夠說和寫關於英文的話, 却不能說和寫英文. 10. due to, 因為. 11. travel sketches, 遊記. 12. happen to..., 恰巧.... 13. it is time you acted on my warning, 這時候你該實行我的警告了 (注意 "it is time..." 裏的 verb 屬 past tense).

## LEARNING ENGLISH CONVERSATION BY IMITATION

I know<sup>1</sup> some returned students<sup>2</sup> from England and America who do not speak English correctly; they make mistakes in grammar, idiom, and pronunciation. But the other day<sup>3</sup> I met a Chinese lady who spoke perfect English<sup>4</sup>. She does not seem to be so well up in English as I am<sup>5</sup>, but she speaks it more like an English person than I do<sup>6</sup>. Upon inquiry<sup>7</sup> I was given to know<sup>8</sup> that she had never even gone to college but had been taught by English teachers only! She speaks English not quite like a foreign language. She speaks<sup>9</sup> it in the way she does<sup>10</sup>, not because she thinks it is the right way but because she knows no other<sup>11</sup>. She is free

from<sup>11</sup>, and probably ignorant of<sup>12</sup>, the thousand and one<sup>13</sup> mistakes peculiar to<sup>14</sup> Chinese students of English.

This lady learnt to speak English by imitating—unconsciously<sup>15</sup>. It is no doubt<sup>16</sup> the best way. But all Chinese students do not<sup>17</sup> have the chance of learning in this way. ~Well, there is the second best way; I mean learning by imitating *consciously*. If there are returned students from England and America who do not speak English correctly, it is because they did not do any conscious imitating when abroad<sup>18</sup>. They have carried their mistakes over<sup>19</sup> and then carried them back, though they ought to have left them there.

I am perhaps in danger of being understood to mean<sup>20</sup> that all who go to England or America ought to do so for the sole purpose<sup>21</sup> of learning English conversation. No; I simply<sup>22</sup> mean that by careful imitation one can very well<sup>23</sup> learn it—and that<sup>24</sup> not only in countries where English is the mother tongue<sup>25</sup> but also in some places in China. Nor do I mean that one's object in learning English is simply to speak it. But it needs to be generally realized<sup>26</sup> among Chinese students of English that good speaking leads to good writing and that language is essentially<sup>27</sup> something spoken.

【注】 1. know, 認識。 2. returned students, 回國的留學生。 3. the other day, 不久以前的某天。 4. a Chinese lady who spoke perfect English, 一個講正確英語的中國女子。 5. so well up in English as I am (well up in English), 英文程度和我相同。 6. do=speak it. 7. Upon inquiry, 詢問了以後立即。 8. was given to know, 被告知；知道。 9. does=speaks it. 10. other=other way. 11. free from, 沒有...的。 12. ignorant of, 不知道...的。 13. thousand and one, 無數的。 14. peculiar to,

... 所特有的. 15. unconsciously, 不知不覺地. 16. no doubt, 大約; 當然. 17. all... not..., 並非一切... 都.... 18. when abroad = when they were abroad. 19. carried their mistakes over, 把他們的錯誤帶去. 20. in danger of being understood to mean, 有被人以爲有... 的意思的危險的. 21. sole purpose, 惟一的目的. 22. simply, 祇不過. 23. well, 容易. 24. that = one can very well learn it. 25. mother tongue, 本國語文. 26. realized, 認識; 明白. 27. essentially, 根本上地; 主要地.

### SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN ENLARGING ONE'S VOCABULARY<sup>1</sup>

“How to enlarge my vocabulary”—this is one of the commonest questions that I have been asked. True<sup>2</sup>, the average<sup>3</sup> Chinese student of English has a very limited<sup>4</sup> vocabulary, and I have heard some English teachers complain that some of their Chinese pupils do not even know so many words as their children do<sup>5</sup>. But I think the average Chinese student of English has something more important to do about his limited vocabulary than to enlarge it<sup>6</sup>. He has yet to know many more words before he can master English<sup>7</sup>. Nor can he master English till he has acquired a better understanding of most of the words that *are*<sup>8</sup> in his vocabulary.

For he may think he knows a word when he does not really know it. By knowing a word I mean<sup>9</sup> knowing its true sense or senses instead of<sup>10</sup> merely knowing one or more of what we call its Chinese equivalents<sup>11</sup>. Take<sup>12</sup> the word “student”. Very often it is misused and misunderstood by us Chinese. It is misused and misunderstood by those who call schoolboys students and take offence at<sup>13</sup> being called students of English simply because they are no longer<sup>14</sup> at school. As a matter of fact<sup>15</sup>, a

schoolboy is not a student, but one who studies English is a student of English though he may be an old man and may have already written many books.

We are apt to neglect<sup>16</sup> common words. Apart from<sup>17</sup> the possibility of misuse and misunderstanding we are apt to neglect their various senses, or rather idiomatic uses<sup>18</sup>. Take the word “read”, which you of course<sup>19</sup> think you know very well. But do you know all the senses (or uses) as illustrated<sup>20</sup> below?

Can you *read* dreams<sup>21</sup>? She cannot *read* the clock<sup>22</sup>  
He is *reading* her thoughts.<sup>23</sup> The sentence *reads*  
smoothly.<sup>24</sup>

Don't *read* too much into the text.<sup>25</sup> The thermometer  
reads 68.<sup>26</sup>

If not, you can hardly be said to know the word “read”.

【注】 1. Enlarging One's Vocabulary, 增加自己所已識的字; 增加自己的字彙. 2. True, 固然; 誠然 (和下文 “But” 呼應). 3. average, 一般的. 4. limited, 有限的, 狹小的. 5. do=know. 6. has something. enlarge it, 對於他的狹小的字彙, 有比使它增加更重要的事. 7. has yet. master English, 還得多識許多字, 然後能通英文. 8. *are*, 實在; 確然. (這字印作斜體, 該重讀.) 9. By knowing a word I mean, 我的所謂認識一個字, 就是說... 10. instead of, 而不是. 11. what we call its Chinese equivalents, 我們所說的它的中文相話語. 12. Take, 舉... 做例. 13. take offence at, 因... 而見怪. 14. no longer, 不再. 15. As a matter of fact, 在事實上. 16. apt to neglect, 易於忽略的. 17. Apart from, 在... 以外. 18. idiomatic uses, 習慣用法; 活用法. 19. of course, 當然. 20. illustrated, 例解. 21. *read* dreams, 詳夢. 22. *read* the clock, 看懷鐘上所指出的時刻. 23. *reading* her thoughts, 猜測她的思想. 24. *reads* smoothly, 讀上去流暢; 讀起來是流暢的. 25. *read* too much into the text, 以為本文裏有某某意思而實在沒有. 26. *reads* 68°, 說出六十八度.



## IS IT ENGLISH?

Some time ago I overheard<sup>1</sup> a teacher condemn<sup>2</sup> “. . . asked him what was the matter” and correct it to<sup>3</sup> “. . . asked him what the matter was”. He was apparently well versed in English grammar<sup>4</sup> and particularly in the construction known as indirect speech<sup>5</sup>. But for once<sup>6</sup> he was wrong. Whatever he might say<sup>7</sup>, “. . . asked him what was the matter” is English, and “. . . asked him what the matter was” is not English.

Thanks to their grammatical sense<sup>8</sup>, many Chinese students of English are apt to<sup>9</sup> make mistakes that they might not make if they had read widely and carefully in general literature but had not learnt much grammar<sup>10</sup>. Armed with a knowledge of parsing and analysis<sup>11</sup>, they often invent unEnglish expressions that might well be justified by some rule or other<sup>12</sup>.

Grammar is indeed a very important subject, and I myself take a keen interest in it. But it is not everything<sup>13</sup>, as many students might think. It is quite possible for a non-English-speaking students of the language<sup>14</sup> to attach too much importance to the study of grammar to care about<sup>15</sup> idiom, idioms, and the idiomatic<sup>16</sup>—in other words<sup>17</sup>, to care about the question “Is it English?”

To return to<sup>18</sup> “. . . asked him what was the matter” and “. . . asked him what the matter was”. Why is the former<sup>19</sup> English and the latter<sup>20</sup> not? Because Englishmen would say the former but not the latter. English is the language of the Eng-

lish<sup>21</sup>, and should be used only in ways in which the English use it. We are free to<sup>22</sup> use forms of expression that it is natural for normal Englishmen to use<sup>23</sup>, but need not stop to consider<sup>24</sup> why they should prefer the particular form to others<sup>25</sup> that would be good enough for the idea in question<sup>26</sup> so far as grammar is concerned<sup>27</sup>.

【注】 1. overheard, 偶然聽到. 2. condemn, 說...不對. 3. correct it to, 把它改作.... 4. was apparently well versed in English grammar, 顯然精通英文文法. 5. known as indirect speech, 被人稱做“indirect speech”的. 6. for once, 至少一次. 7. Whatever he might say, 不論他有什麼話說. 8. Thanks to their grammatical sense, 因為他們有文法觀念. 9. are apt to..., 易於.... 10. had read... much grammar, 曾經細心廣讀一般文字而不會多學文法. 11. Armed with a knowledge of parsing and analysis, 擁有單字分解和句語分析的知識. 12. unEnglish expressions... rule or other, 不合英文習慣而却能以某條文規辯護的句語. 13. is not everything, 並非惟一的重要的事. 14. non-English-speaking students of the language, 並非英語國家的人而研究英語者. 15. attach too... care about, 因過於重視研究文法而不介意於... 16. idiom, idioms, and the idiomatic, 習用, 習語, 和習用的一切. 17. in other words, 換句話說. 18. To return to, 再述及. 19. the former, 前者. 20. the latter, 後者. 21. the English, 英國人. 22. are free..., 儘可.... 23. forms of... to use, 一般英國人所自然應用的句語. 24. stop to consider, 停止而考慮; 細想. 25. prefer the particular form to others, 用某語而不用它語. 26. in question, 所說及的. 27. so far as grammar is concerned, 就文法而論.

## OBSERVATION VERSUS<sup>1</sup> ASKING QUESTIONS

Is there any difference in pronunciation<sup>2</sup> between “court” and “caught”, “flour” and “flower”, “formally” and “formerly”, “gentleman” and “gentlemen”, “higher” and “hire”, “profit” and “prophet”, “saw” and “sore”? I think an average<sup>3</sup> Englishman would answer “Yes”, and perhaps would think this question simply<sup>4</sup> un-

necessary. But listen to his talk, and you will<sup>4</sup> find that the difference is imaginary rather than real<sup>5</sup>.

This is because he is not conscious of<sup>7</sup> the way in which he actually speaks though he has a vague idea of<sup>8</sup> the pronunciation of these words. And the same reason accounts for<sup>9</sup> the fact that there are points of pronunciation and idiom<sup>10</sup> that he denies the existence of because he thinks they are non-existent<sup>11</sup>. For instance, though he has the phenomenon known in phonetics as r-linking<sup>12</sup>, he would not admit that he has it; he would even say that this “‘neve re’ke:z”<sup>13</sup> (never occurs) in any Englishman’s speech. “Have got” may be given as an example about idiom. Sentences like “I have got no time” and “I have got to<sup>14</sup> do it” are common enough, but an average Englishman would condemn the use of “got”, saying perhaps that it simply makes no sense<sup>15</sup>. Well, he is right, and I admire his objection to superfluous<sup>16</sup> words. But he says “have got” himself.

All this shows that observation is more important than asking questions when it comes to<sup>17</sup> learning English conversation. And there are many everyday expressions<sup>18</sup> that one cannot learn to use without careful observation. For instance, “Fancy!<sup>19</sup>” is common enough, but everyone that knows this word cannot use this expression happily in conversation<sup>20</sup>.

【注】 1. *Versus*, 對; 和...相比 (是拉丁文). 2. difference in pronunciation, 聲音上的差別. 3. average, 一般的. 4. simply, 竟然. 5. But listen to his talk, and you will=But if you listen to his

talk, you will. 6. imaginary rather than real, 是想像的而不是真有的。 7. is not conscious of, 不覺得。 8. has a vague idea of, 彷彿知道。 9. accounts for, 是...的原由。 10. idiom, 習用法。 11. that he... are non-existent, 因為他以為它們是不在的所以不承認它們的存在。 12. the phenomenon known in phonetics as r-linking, 在語音學裏所說 r-linking 的現象。 13. “/nevə rə'keɪz” 請注意 “never” 的末尾字母 “r” 和 “occurs” 的開首字母 “o” (讀作[ə]) 相拚。 14. have got to ..., 必須.... 15. makes no sense, 沒有意思。 16. superfluous, 贅用的。 17. when it comes to, 就...而論。 18. expressions, 語。 19. Fancy!, 試想!; 真的麼! 20. everyone that... in conversation, 認識這個字的人未必能在談話中把這語用得適當。

### MERE KNOWLEDGE NOT ENOUGH

There are some men of my acquaintance<sup>1</sup> who persist in<sup>2</sup> mispronouncing certain words<sup>3</sup>. Not that they do not know how to pronounce those words correctly, but that<sup>4</sup> they do not pronounce them correctly. They are often aware of their mistakes as soon as they make them<sup>5</sup>. They need no more pulling up<sup>6</sup>. They are simply too lazy to make an effort at correct pronunciation<sup>7</sup>.

The fact is that when one has formed the habit of making certain mistakes, one cannot get them corrected<sup>8</sup> without making an effort to correct them. It makes little difference<sup>9</sup> for one merely to know<sup>10</sup> that a certain word that he accents on the second syllable<sup>11</sup> should be accented on the third syllable. Unless one makes an effort to accent that word on the third syllable, one is likely to accent it on the second syllable as usual<sup>12</sup>; for the mistake is so natural and so comfortable to one. Just think of the pains that we should have to take<sup>13</sup> if we were required to pronounce “a” as if<sup>14</sup> it were “b”, or “c” as if it were “d”.

Correct English is not merely a matter of<sup>15</sup> knowledge but chiefly a matter of habit. And when saying this, I do not mean pronunciation particularly. In spelling, in punctuation<sup>16</sup>, in diction<sup>17</sup>, in sentence construction, and in other details of composition and conversation, habit is of great importance. To know that “go” is present and “went” is past is one thing, but to use “go” and “went” correctly is another. We must make every effort to use correct English so that we simply cannot<sup>18</sup> use incorrect English.

【注】 1. of my acquaintance, 我所認識的。 2. persist in, 繼續。 3. mispronouncing certain words, 誤讀某某若干字。 4. Not that..., but that, 並不是因為... , 却是因為... 5. are often ... make them, 往往一誤了就知道。 6. pulling up, 制止。 7. are simply ... correct pronunciation, 祇因懶惰而不努力於正確的讀音。 8. get them corrected, 使它們被改正。 9. makes little difference, 無甚關係。 10. merely to know, 僅僅知道（而並不實行）。 11. that he accents on the second syllable, 他把它重讀在第二音節。 12. as usual, 如常。 13. Just think...to take, 試想一想我們將必須操的辛苦。 14. as if, 好像。 15. a matter of, 一個...的問題。 16. punctuation, 標點。 17. diction, 用字。 18. so that we simply cannot..., 使得我們竟不能....

### “IS HE A NICE MAN?”

Below is an interesting passage<sup>1</sup> from a book published about seventy years ago:

“Is Mr Grant<sup>2</sup> a *nice* man?” asked Bessie<sup>3</sup>. “*Nice*? You mean particular about things.<sup>4</sup>” “No, I don’t; I mean, do you like him?” “You should speak with precision<sup>5</sup>” he said, laughing.

This passage illustrates<sup>6</sup>, and also condemns<sup>7</sup>, the modern vague use of “*nice*”, which is now a term of mild agreeableness<sup>8</sup> and is applied to a book, a letter, a day, a dress<sup>9</sup>, a cigar, a smile, a man, in

short<sup>10</sup> to everything. This use is generally condemned as stupid vulgarism<sup>11</sup> due to<sup>12</sup> sheer poverty of thought<sup>13</sup> or fear of saying anything definite. And those who condemn this use say that the word should be confined to<sup>14</sup> its more proper senses, which fill most of the space given to it in any dictionary.

The fact, however, is that “nice” is now far more often used in the condemned sense than in the more proper senses. In talk it is nearly always used in the condemned sense, and perhaps the man, and especially the *woman*, in the street<sup>15</sup> may not even know of any of the more proper sense. And even those who would prefer precision to<sup>16</sup> any other quality in composition and conversation may often use the word in the very sense they condemn<sup>17</sup>.

For “nice book”, “nice letter”, “nice man”, etc. are now natural English. And what is natural comes natural to one<sup>18</sup> right or wrong theoretically or etymologically<sup>19</sup>.

I agree with H. W. Fowler<sup>20</sup> that everyone who uses “nice” in its more proper senses and avoids the modern one that tends to oust them all<sup>21</sup> “does a real if small service to the language”<sup>22</sup>. But I wish he had added<sup>23</sup> that in actual usage this modern sense may now be considered established<sup>24</sup>. And I think that anyone who should call a man nice when he means the man is particular about things would more often than not<sup>25</sup> be misunderstood—in spite of the accuracy of his English<sup>26</sup>.

；注] 1. passage, 一段文字。 2. Grant, 姓。 3. Bessie, 女子名。 4. particular about things, 對於一切事物都苛求的。 5. precision, 正確。 6.

illustrates, 例解. 7. condemns, 譏...不正當. 8. term of mild agreeableness, 表示尋常合意的字. 9. dress, 女衫. 10. in short, 概括地說. 11. vulgarism, 粗俗. 12. due to, 因為. 13. sheer poverty of thought, 思想的完全貧乏. 14. confined to, 限於. 15. the man, and especially the woman, in the street, 一般人, 尤其一般女子. 16. prefer precision to ..., 要精確而不要.... 17. the very sense they condemn, 就是他們所說它不正當的那意義. 18. comes natural to one, 自然而然被人用. 19. right or wrong theoretically or etymologically, 不論在理論上或語源上是對的或是錯的. 20. H. W. Fowler, 英國文法家, 生在一八五八年, 死在一九三三年. 21. tends to oust them all, 有擠去一切的傾向. 22. does a real if small service to the language, 對於這語文(指英文)有雖小而實在的功勞. 23. I wish he had added, 我但願他曾經附加地說(實在他不曾說). 24. may now be considered established, 現在可以被認作成立了. 25. more often than not, 往往. 26. in spite of the accuracy of his English, 不顧他的英文的正確; 雖然他所用的英文是正確的.

### WHAT KIND OF ENGLISH?

There are English English, American English, Scotch<sup>1</sup> English, Irish<sup>2</sup> English, and other kinds of English. Examples: "half past three"<sup>3</sup> is English English, "half after three"<sup>4</sup> is American English, "bairn"<sup>5</sup> is Scotch English, "I am after having my dinner"<sup>6</sup> is Irish English, "nor gold nor silver"<sup>7</sup> is archaic<sup>8</sup> English, "Thank you for same"<sup>9</sup> is business English<sup>10</sup>, and "I don't know nobody here"<sup>11</sup> is vulgar English.

Advanced<sup>12</sup> students of English ought to pay attention to such details, and I think they will find it very interesting to go into the subject<sup>13</sup>. But every student of English is not an advanced one<sup>14</sup>. I call it foolish of one to<sup>15</sup> attempt the subject before one has acquired the ability to speak, read, and write English as it is used by the average<sup>16</sup> educated Englishman or American of today. One has yet much to learn<sup>17</sup> before one can be properly called an

advanced student of English so long as<sup>18</sup> one cannot read the news<sup>19</sup>, or cannot express oneself<sup>20</sup> intelligibly to Englishmen or Americans in speaking and writing.

By “English as it is used by the average educated Englishman or American” I mean<sup>21</sup> everyday idiomatic English. It is practical, if that means *actually used*, but not if that means *specially adapted to Chinese psychology*<sup>22</sup>. I have to mention this because it seems that many Chinese students have the mistaken idea<sup>23</sup> that what is written about things Chinese<sup>24</sup> is practical but what is written about things foreign<sup>25</sup> is not practical. The fact is, however, that, one cannot master<sup>26</sup> English—that is<sup>27</sup>, what I call practical English—by reading about things Chinese only. I would advise those who are in the habit of<sup>28</sup> confining themselves to<sup>29</sup> Chinese news when reading newspapers in English, to give up<sup>30</sup> the habit.

【注】 1. Scotch, 蘇格蘭 (Scotland) 的。 2. Irish, 愛爾蘭 (Ireland) 的。 3. half past three, 三點半鐘。 4. half after three, 三點半鐘。 5. bairn, 小孩。 6. I am after having my dinner, 我剛才進過餐。 7. nor gold nor silver, 沒有金, 也沒有銀。 8. archaic, 古氣的。 9. same—the same, 這個。 10. business English, 商業英文。 11. I don't know nobody here—I don't know anybody here—I know nobody here. 12. Advanced, 高級的。 13. go into the subject, 研究這問題。 14. every student of English is not an advanced one, 並不是每個研究英文者都是高級研究者。 15. call it foolish of one to ..., 以爲... 是愚笨的事。 16. average, 一般的。 17. has yet much to learn, 還得學習許多。 18. so long as, 在... 的時候。 19. the news, 每天的新聞。 20. express oneself, 表達自己的意思。 21. By ... I mean ..., 我的所謂..., 就是說... 22. *specially adapted to Chinese psychology*, 特別合於中國人的心理的。 23. mistaken idea, 錯誤的觀念。 24. things Chinese, 中國的事物。 25. things foreign, 外國的事物。 26. master, 精通。 27. that is, 就是。



28. in the habit of, 有...的習慣的. 29. confining themselves to, 自限於. 30. give up, 放棄.

## WORDS, COMMON AND UNCOMMON

Once a teacher of English asked me to correct some of his pupils' papers<sup>1</sup>. Commenting on<sup>2</sup> my work he said he was sorry he had not thought of telling me to use one or two uncommon words in each paper. "My pupils wouldn't like your way of correcting" he said. "I always see that<sup>3</sup> in each paper I use one or two words that the pupil will have to look up<sup>4</sup> in his dictionary for the meaning. This is the only way to show that I have a good knowledge of English."

On another occasion<sup>5</sup> an editor<sup>6</sup> of a grammar<sup>7</sup> asked me to write a few simple sentences as illustrative examples<sup>8</sup>. I wrote "I am a boy", "He has a book", and some other easy and short sentences. He complained that those sentences did not look good enough<sup>9</sup> though they were perfect simple sentences. Not good enough<sup>10</sup> simply because there were no uncommon words in them.

Neither of these two men knew—I say "knew"—instead of<sup>11</sup> "know" because the teacher is dead and because I do not know whether the editor has yet come round to my view of the choice of words<sup>12</sup>—that perfect English does not consist in<sup>13</sup> the use of uncommon words, but in the correct use of common words. One cannot master English till one realizes this<sup>14</sup>. It is a pity that<sup>15</sup> there are many persons who realize it only after years of groping<sup>16</sup>—if they realize it then<sup>17</sup>.

Strange as it may appear<sup>16</sup>, the mastery of common words is much more difficult than committing uncommon words to memory<sup>19</sup>. And the trouble is that one is apt to<sup>20</sup> neglect common words—perhaps not because they are difficult to master but because they are common.

“A word deserves attention<sup>21</sup> because it is common” I hope you will always say to yourself<sup>22</sup>.

【注】 1 papers, 課卷. 2. commenting on, 評論. 3. see that..., 使得... 4. look up, 查得. 5. On another occasion, 另外有一次. 6. editor, 校閱者. 7. grammar, 文法書. 8. illustrative examples, 例證. 9. did not look good enough, 看起來不很好. 10. Not good enough= Those sentences did not look good enough. 11. instead of, 代; 不. 12. has yet... of words, 轉到我的對於選字的意見. 13. consist in, 在於. 14. till one realizes this, 直到他明白這點為止. 15. It is a pity that..., ...是一件可歎的事. 16. years of groping, 多年的摸索. 17. then=after years of groping. 18. Strange as it may appear, 這件事雖然好像是奇怪的. 19. committing... to memory, 把...記在心裏. 20. is apt to..., 有...的傾向. 21. deserves attention, 值得注意. 22. say to yourself, 想.

## BASIC ENGLISH<sup>1</sup>

I have been several times asked what I think about<sup>2</sup> Basic English. I myself neither speak nor write it though I very occasionally<sup>3</sup> read something written in it. But as I am a student of English I think I ought to be able to say something about it.

Basic English, or simply Basic, is, according to a dictionary definition<sup>4</sup>, “the English language systematically restricted to a vocabulary of 850 words<sup>5</sup> (together with compounds<sup>6</sup> and combinations of these), not counting<sup>7</sup> words that may be considered as technical<sup>8</sup> or of international currency<sup>9</sup>”;

It is an attempt to give everyone a knowledge of English that will take up as little of the learner's time as possible<sup>10</sup>. It is devised by C. K. Ogden<sup>11</sup>, an English scholar, who is to be congratulated on this clever invention<sup>12</sup>.

Vocabulary is admittedly<sup>13</sup> not the only problem confronting students of English<sup>14</sup>, and one who has acquired a large vocabulary has still far to go<sup>15</sup>. But it does not follow that<sup>16</sup> it is not an advantage to have English limited to the smallest number of words necessary for everyday use<sup>17</sup>. Basic English, therefore, is really much easier to learn than ordinary English, though it is not quite so easy as those think who regard learning it as merely a matter of learning 850 words<sup>18</sup>.

When Basic English comes into general use—I mean when it comes to be<sup>19</sup> used in most, if not all<sup>20</sup>, books, newspapers, magazines, letters, documents<sup>21</sup>, and conversations—it will not be necessary for the average<sup>22</sup> Chinese student of English to bother about ordinary English<sup>23</sup>, the large vocabulary of which is a great difficulty. I am only sorry that<sup>24</sup> there is no telling<sup>25</sup> when the Basic era is likely to set in<sup>26</sup>.

【注】 1. Basic English, 基本英文 (詳見本文). 2. what I think about, 我對於... 的意見. 3. occasionally, 偶或. 4. according to a dictionary definition, 依據字典上的定義所說. 5. systematically restricted to a vocabulary of 850 words, 有系統地限於共有八百五十字的字彙. 6. compounds, 複字 (例如 “horse-power”). 7. counting, 算入. 8. technical, 專門的. 9. of international currency, 世界通行的. 10. take up ... as possible, 愈省學習者的時間愈好. 11. Ogden, 姓. 12. is to be congratulated on this clever invention, 該爲了這巧妙的發明物而受人慶

贊. 13 admittedly, 可以承認地. 14 the only problem confronting students of English 研究英文者當前的唯一的問題. 15. has still far to go, 還得多多進行. 16. it does not follow that ..., 並不因而有... 的結論. 17. have English ... everyday use, 使英文限於日用所必需的最低限度的字數. 18. those think who ... 850 words=those who ... 850 words think. 19. comes to be, 變爲. 20. most, if not all, 雖非全體, 却是大半. 21. documents, 文件. 22. average, 一般的. 23. ordinary English, 普通英文 (別於 Basic English 而說). 24. I am only sorry that ..., 我祇恨着 .... 25. there is no telling, 無從知道; 不知道. 26. when the Basic era is likely to set in, 通用基本英文的時代, 將在什麼時候開始.

## READING DICTIONARIES

At the very sight of<sup>1</sup> this title you would perhaps say to yourself<sup>2</sup> "Only fools would do that. I know better<sup>3</sup>." But I have read of<sup>4</sup> several famous men who did<sup>5</sup> read dictionaries. They gloried in<sup>6</sup> dictionaries and read them with the delight that some travellers find in guide-books<sup>7</sup> and time-tables<sup>8</sup>. Robert Browning<sup>9</sup>, the English poet, when he determined to make poetry his career<sup>10</sup>, read every word in Johnson's Dictionary<sup>11</sup>. John Ruskin<sup>12</sup>, the English author, wrote to<sup>13</sup> the editor<sup>14</sup> of the Great Oxford Dictionary<sup>15</sup> that he had read and studied every word in its first volume. Henry Thomas Buckle<sup>16</sup>, the English historian<sup>17</sup>, once solemnly stated<sup>18</sup> that a certain<sup>19</sup> dictionary was "one of the few dictionaries I have read through with pleasure<sup>20</sup>".

These men were not fools! I can hardly say<sup>21</sup> that they could not have been the masters of English they were<sup>22</sup> had they not been dictionary readers. But I am sure that reading dictionaries is, after all<sup>23</sup>, not so foolish as you might think.

I myself have never read any dictionary through; no, not<sup>21</sup> even those<sup>25</sup> that bear my name<sup>26</sup> on the title-page<sup>27</sup>. But, as I have said in my *How to Master English Without a Teacher*<sup>28</sup>, I used many years ago to<sup>29</sup> read through many articles on common words in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*<sup>30</sup>. I found that very helpful in the mastery<sup>31</sup> of common words and phrases.

Such common words and phrases can be very easily picked up<sup>32</sup> by English-speaking boys and girls. But they are not likely to be acquired by Chinese students without any special effort in this respect<sup>33</sup>. The reading of articles on common words in dictionaries is no doubt<sup>34</sup> a great aid.

【注】 1. At the very sight of, 一見到。 2. say to yourself, 想。 3. know better, 是聰明些（而不做那個）。 4. read of, 讀及。 5. did. ., 確實曾經... 6. gloried in, 把... 當作可樂的。 7. guide-books, 旅行指南；導遊書。 8. time-tables, 火車時刻表。 9. Robert Browning, 英國詩人，生在一八一二年，死在一八八九年。 10. make poetry his career, 把詩歌做他的事業。 11. Johnson's Dictionary, Johnson 就是 Samuel Johnson, 英國大文豪，生在一七零九年，死在一七八四年，他編過一本大字典。 12. John Ruskin, 英國文學家，生在一八一九年，死在一九零零年。 13. wrote to, 寫信給。 14. editor, 主編者。 15. Great Oxford Dictionary, 就是英國 Oxford University Press 出版的 *An English Dictionary on Historical Principles*。 16. Henry Thomas Buckle, 英國歷史家，生在一八二一年，死在一八六二年。 17. historian, 歷史家。 18. solemnly stated, 鄭重地說。 19. certain, 某。 20. one of ... with pleasure, 我所曾經快活地讀完過的若干字典中的一種（“dictionaries” 後面省去 “that” 或 “which”）。 21. can hardly say, （幾乎）不能說。 22. could not ... they were, 不會得是他們那樣精通英文的人。 23. after all, 畢竟。 24. not—I myself have never read through. 25. those=those dictionaries. 26. bear my name, 載着我的名字。 27. title-page, 裏封面。 28. *How to Master English Without a Teacher*, 怎樣讀通英文（競文書局出版）。 29. used many years ago to ... 多年前慣常... 30. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 簡明牛津字典（英國 Oxford University Press 出版）。 31. mastery, 精通。 32. picked up, 臨時學得。 33. in this respect, 在這一方面。 34. no doubt, 當然。

## IDIOM *VERSUS*<sup>1</sup> IDIOMS

Read the following sentences:

That is an idiom.

Those are idioms.

That is idiom.

He is interested in idiom.

Here is an interesting point of idiom.

Now I must play the grammarian<sup>2</sup> for a little while. In the first sentence "idiom" is a common noun. In the second sentence "idioms" is also a common noun. In the other sentences "idiom" is an abstract<sup>3</sup> noun.

"At once"<sup>4</sup> is an idiom. "By no means"<sup>5</sup> is also an idiom. "At once" and "by no means" are both idioms. To give a few other idioms: "cannot but"<sup>6</sup>, "do without"<sup>7</sup>, "each other"<sup>8</sup>, "for good"<sup>9</sup>, "give up"<sup>10</sup>, "How do you do?"<sup>11</sup>. One cannot master English without learning a thousand or more of such common idioms by heart<sup>12</sup>.

Examples of idiom are not so easy to find, however; or rather we may say that every correct phrase or sentence is an example. By idiom we mean<sup>13</sup> the genius<sup>14</sup> or habit of the English language—or, in plainer terms<sup>15</sup>, idiomatic or natural English.

Idioms are important. But idiom is also important. A piece of English may contain one or more correct idioms used correctly and yet is not correct in its idiom; in other words<sup>16</sup>, it may be unidiomatic or unnatural English.

There is no accounting for<sup>17</sup> idiom. It is chiefly a matter of feeling. While it is possible to commit

so many<sup>18</sup> idioms to memory<sup>19</sup> a week, idiom is too elusive<sup>20</sup> to be numbered or classified. It can be conquered<sup>21</sup> only by careful reading.

【注】 1. *Versus*, 和 . 對比 (是拉丁文). 2. play the grammarian, 做出文法家的行動. 3. abstract, 抽象的. 4. At once, 立刻. 5. By no means, 決不; 絕非. 6. cannot but, 不得不. 7. do without, 不必用. 8. each other, 互相. 9. for good, 永久. 10. give up, 放棄. 11. How do you do?, 你好麼? 12. learning .. by heart, 把... 記在心上. 13. By idiom we mean ..., 我們所說的 idiom, 便是 ... 14. genius, 特性. 15. in plainer terms, 用明白些的話來說. 16. in other words, 換句話說. 17. There is no accounting for, 不能說明. 18. so many, 若干. 19. commit... to memory, 把... 記在心上. 20. elusive, 捉摸不定的. 21. conquered, 精通.

### MAKE YOUR OWN DICTIONARY!

I must thank very sincerely the many readers who have written<sup>1</sup> to inquire about my dictionary of English usage<sup>2</sup>. It was always going to<sup>3</sup> be published, and it has not yet been published. This is partly because of my occupation with<sup>4</sup> other literary matters; in fact<sup>5</sup>, I work on<sup>6</sup> the book only off and on<sup>7</sup>. But the chief reason is that being a conscientious<sup>8</sup> student of English I am always careful to avoid slipshod<sup>9</sup> or perfunctory<sup>10</sup> work. I take notes<sup>11</sup> for the book almost every day—both from reading and from the questions about usage that I am asked by persons interested in the subject<sup>12</sup>. Very often a seemingly simple question reminds me of<sup>13</sup> some important point that I might not otherwise<sup>14</sup> think of. I hope that the delay in publication will be compensated for<sup>15</sup> by the richer and better contents of the book.

Now I think that every student could make his

own dictionary of usage. He could keep a note-book<sup>16</sup> in which to record, in alphabetical<sup>17</sup> order, such points of usage as he might find of particular interest to him. Such a book would serve *him*<sup>18</sup> as a constant companion to composition, though many things in it might seem quite dull or useless to others.

And I think that every student could make his dictionary of usage as large as the sum total<sup>19</sup> of the books he reads. I mean that he might make a usage index<sup>20</sup>, so to speak<sup>21</sup>, to those books. For a particular point he would have to record only the book, the page, and the line concerned<sup>22</sup>. He would some day<sup>23</sup> be able to point to his library and say “This is my dictionary of English usage”. What a great work<sup>24</sup>!

Indeed, I wish I could<sup>25</sup> find time to do this. And I believe that I could thus lay the foundation of<sup>26</sup> a live<sup>27</sup> and original<sup>28</sup> dictionary—quite different from those<sup>29</sup> based on nothing but<sup>30</sup> one or more dictionaries.

【注】 1. written, 寫信。 2. usage, 習慣用法。 3. going to ..., 將要.... 4. occupation with, 忙於; 從事於。 5. in fact, 在事實上。 6. work on, 著作。 7. off and on, 時作時輟地。 8. conscientious, 忠實的。 9. slipshod, 粗心的; 不精細的。 10. perfunctory, 敷衍了事的。 11. take notes, 做札記。 12. interested in the subject, 注意這件事的 (“the subject” 指 “usage”)。 13. reminds me of, 使我想到。 14. otherwise, 否則 (就是說「要是沒有人提醒我」)。 15. compensated for, 補償。 16. note-book, 筆記簿。 17. alphabetical, 依照字母次序的。 18. *him*, 這字印作斜體, 該重讀。 19. sum total, 總數; 全體。 20. index, 索引。 21. so to speak, 可以說得。 22. concerned, 有關的, 被涉及的。 23. some day, 將來有一天。 24. work, 著作物。 25. I wish I could, 我但願我能夠; 我恨不能。 26. lay the foundation of, 立... 的基礎。 27. live, 活的。 28. original, 創作的。 29. those=dictionaries。 30. nothing but, 祇有; 在... 以外沒有什麼。



## TONGUE AND PEN

“Do you speak English?” This is far more commonly asked by Englishmen and Americans of the Chinese with whom they come into contact<sup>1</sup> than “Do you write English?”. They would perhaps laugh at the idea of<sup>2</sup> having studied English for years<sup>3</sup> without being able to speak it.

In fact<sup>4</sup>, language is essentially a spoken thing. To study English without trying to speak it is not advisable<sup>5</sup>. And it is absurd to read a conversation book in just the same manner as to read a grammar.

Besides<sup>6</sup>, as ordinary written English is not quite different from ordinary spoken English, to learn to speak is a very good way to learn to write. One who speaks good English writes good English too. The pen cannot go wrong where the tongue goes right<sup>7</sup>. Many everyday phrases and everyday constructions come natural to<sup>8</sup> one who uses them in speaking. For example<sup>9</sup>, one who says “in fa<sup>ct</sup>” and “as a matter of fa<sup>ct</sup><sup>10</sup>” cannot possibly write the non-existent<sup>11</sup> phrases “in a fact”, “as a fact”, and “as a matter of the fact”. And if the surest sign of those<sup>12</sup> whose English is not perfect is their misuse of prepositions, good speaking is of great help in learning the idiomatic use of those little tricky words<sup>13</sup>. One who says “sick of<sup>14</sup>”, “interested in”, “prefer. . . to . . .”<sup>15</sup> will write the same right prepositions in right places without any conscious effort.

I think it would be an excellent method of learning writing as well as<sup>16</sup> learning speaking for

a pupil to talk to his teacher about whatever subject the former<sup>17</sup> is interested in and to have himself corrected<sup>18</sup> whenever he makes a mistake. I am only sorry that<sup>19</sup> I do not think it practicable<sup>20</sup> in the class-room, where there are of course<sup>21</sup> many pupils.

【注】 1. with whom they come into contact, 他們所遇到的。 2. laugh at the idea of, 聽到...的話而笑; 以爲決沒有...的事。 3. for years, 多年。 4. In fact, 實在。 5. advisable, 足以爲訓的; 可採用的。 6. Besides, 而且。 7. The pen... goes right, 在說得不錯的場合, 決不會寫錯。 8. come natural to, 對於...是自然的。 9. For example, 例如。 10. as a matter of fact, 在事實上。 11. non-existent, 不存在的。 12. those, 那些人。 13. those little tricky words, 那些小小的難用的字(指一切 preposition)。 14. sick of, 對於...厭惡的。 15. prefer... to..., 要...而不要.... 16. as well as, 不但..., 加在...上。 17. the former, 指那“pupil”。 18. have himself corrected, 使他自己被(那教師)矯正。 19. I am only sorry that..., 我祇恨... 20. practicable, 辦得到的; 可以實行的。 21. of course, 當然。

## MAKE ANOTHER DICTIONARY OF YOUR OWN!

Some time ago<sup>1</sup> I suggested that every student of English could make his own dictionary of usage. I have since thought of another kind of dictionary that every student of English could make for his own use. For want of a better name<sup>2</sup>, I think we may as well<sup>3</sup> call it a topic<sup>4</sup> dictionary. I mean a dictionary in which a certain number of topics are arranged in alphabetical<sup>5</sup> order and useful phrases and sentences about each topic are grouped together. For instance<sup>6</sup>, under the topic “books” may be grouped phrases and sentences having to do with<sup>7</sup> books but not necessarily<sup>8</sup> containing the same word.

This can be done by reading and making notes<sup>8</sup>. It is not necessary to copy the phrases and sentences. It is enough to jot down<sup>10</sup> the page number and the line number, and give one or two words as a hint. In this way, any book may be turned into a topic dictionary by merely providing it with a topic index. And several such dictionaries may be turned into a fairly<sup>11</sup> complete topic dictionary.

What I call a topic dictionary does not seem ever to have appeared<sup>12</sup> in this country before. I wonder why nobody has even thought of compiling one. It would be of great use to all who write English. For we are often at a loss for<sup>13</sup> the right expression<sup>14</sup> about a certain topic, and an ordinary dictionary cannot meet<sup>15</sup> our need.

Would I had enough time to carry out<sup>16</sup> my own suggestion!<sup>17</sup>

【注】 1. Some time ago, 參看本書 “Make Your Own Dictionary!” 一篇。 2. For want of a better name, 因為沒有一個更好的名稱。 3. may as well, 不妨。 4. topic, 題目。 5. alphabetical, 依照字母次序的。 6. For instance, 例如。 7. having to do with, 和...有關係的。 8. not necessarily, 不必; 不一定。 9. notes, 筆記。 10. jot down, 錄下。 11. fairly, 尚稱...地; 還算...地。 12. appeared, 出版。 13. at a loss for, 想不着...的。 14. expression, 語。 15. meet, 適合。 16. carry out, 實行。 17. Would...!, 但願...!; 巴不得...!

### MISTAKING WOMAN FOR MAN<sup>1</sup>

A friend of mine who has a fine knowledge of English made a ridiculous<sup>2</sup> mistake recently in a letter to an American lady. He addressed her as “Mr . . .”! And he made the mistake not through<sup>3</sup> carelessness but through ignorance. The fact was that the lady had written to him<sup>4</sup> first and did not

mention her sex<sup>5</sup> in her letter. She signed “Audrey<sup>6</sup>...” and must have thought that my friend could certainly find out her sex from her name. But my friend did not<sup>7</sup>!

“Audrey” is a feminine<sup>8</sup> name. There is no doubt about its femininity<sup>9</sup>. I do not think any English-speaking person would ever make the mistake that my friend made. But my friend made it in spite of<sup>10</sup> his fine knowledge of English.

Now that<sup>11</sup> I speak of my friend’s mistake, I recall<sup>12</sup> the mistake that a certain<sup>13</sup> Chinese scholar of English used to<sup>14</sup> make of<sup>15</sup> addressing Sir James Lockhart<sup>16</sup> as “Sir Lockhart” instead of<sup>17</sup> “Sir James”. This is a mistake peculiar to<sup>18</sup> those whose mother tongue<sup>19</sup> is not English.

All this reminds me of<sup>20</sup> the importance of learning about things English and American<sup>21</sup> besides learning English words and phrases. The mastery of English requires<sup>22</sup> something more than the study of the language itself.

【注】 1. Mistaking Woman for Man, 誤認女人作男人。 2. ridiculous, 可笑的。 3. through, 因為。 4. written to him, 寫信給他。 5. mention her sex, 說及她的性別; 說她自己是女人。 6. Audrey, 女子名。 7. did not = did not find out her sex from her name. 8. feminine, 女性的。 9. There is no doubt about its femininity, 對於它的女性並沒有疑問; 它一定是女性的。 10. in spite of, 雖有。 11. Now that . . ., 既然 . . . 12. recall, 回想, 想起。 13. certain, 某。 14. used to . . ., 慣常 . . . 15. of, 這字連接上文 “mistake”。 16. Sir James Lockhart, 英國人。 (“Sir” 通常譯作「爵士」, 表示他是 knight 或 baronet.) 17. instead of, 而不是。 18. peculiar to, . . . 所獨有的。 19. mother tongue, 本國語文。 20. reminds me of, 使我想到。 21. things English and American, 英國和美國的一切事物。 22. The mastery of English requires . . ., 要精通英文, 須得 . . .

## THE LANGUAGE IS THE MAIN THING

When you read a story in English, do you read it for the story or for the English? This is a question that is not so foolish as it may seem<sup>1</sup>. For I find that many students of English pay far more attention to the story than to the English. They read and enjoy and for a long time afterwards remember the story, but do not care to<sup>2</sup> study the use of words and phrases in it. For instance<sup>3</sup>, they cherish the memory of<sup>4</sup> how the mystery of the eternal triangle<sup>5</sup> is solved, but do not remember a single sentence in the story and cannot tell<sup>6</sup> what preposition is used before or after a certain<sup>7</sup> word in the speech of a certain character<sup>8</sup>.

Of course<sup>9</sup>, it is all right<sup>10</sup> to read and enjoy and remember a story, and so long as<sup>11</sup> one wants to know the story only, one need not bother about<sup>12</sup> the language.✓ But the case<sup>13</sup> is quite different with<sup>14</sup> a student of *English*. I mean a student of English as distinguished from<sup>15</sup> a student of stories or what is called the general reader<sup>16</sup>.

Whatever a student of English reads, he should, in my opinion, regard the language as the main thing<sup>17</sup>. For instance, on<sup>18</sup> reading this preceding sentence, besides<sup>18</sup> understanding its meaning, he should notice such points as the concessive<sup>19</sup> use of "whatever", "*in* my opinion", "regard . . . as . . .", and "*the* main thing". In this way, he does learn some English<sup>20</sup> though what he reads may happen<sup>21</sup> to be otherwise<sup>22</sup> uninteresting or un-instructive. It may safely be said that this is a far

better way of learning English composition than to read and consider the so-called<sup>23</sup> principles of the subject<sup>24</sup>.

Incidentally<sup>25</sup>, I would advise teachers of English to question<sup>26</sup> their pupils on points of diction<sup>27</sup> and construction<sup>28</sup> more than on facts and thoughts.

【注】 1 is not so foolish as it may seem, 並不像它外貌的那樣愚笨。 2. do not care to ..., 不肯.... 3. For instance, 例如。 4. cherish the memory of, 牢記。 5. eternal triangle, 三角戀愛。 6. cannot tell, 說不出。 7. certain, 某。 8. character, 小說裏的人物。 9. Of course, 當然。 10. all right, 不錯的。 11. so long as, 在...的時候。 12. bother about, 關心於; 因...而費心。 13. case, 情形。 14. with, 關於。 15. as distinguished from, 和...分別的。 16. general reader, 閱讀一般書報者。 17. main thing, 主要的事。 18. besides, 除...以外。 19. concessive, 表示讓步的(例如中文「雖然」,「儘管」等語)。 20. does learn some English, 確然學到些英文。 21. happen ..., 恰巧.... 22. otherwise, 在別方面(指在文字以外的方面)。 23. so-called, 所謂...的。 24. subject, 科目(指英作文)。 25. Incidentally, 順便說一句。 26. question, 向...發問。 27. diction, 用字。 28. construction, 句語的結構。

### SIMPLY DIDN'T KNOW

You have a good knowledge of grammar. You have a vocabulary<sup>1</sup> of three or four thousand words. You know one or two thousand idioms. You are rather careful about usage<sup>2</sup>. You ought to be able to write fairly well<sup>3</sup>.

But are you<sup>4</sup>? If you are not<sup>5</sup>, why not?<sup>6</sup> One of your troubles, I think, is that you often cannot express what you want to say. You cannot<sup>7</sup>, but when you have seen your meaning expressed by someone<sup>8</sup> who can express it, you will most probably say to yourself<sup>9</sup> "That seems easy enough. I simply didn't know."

You are right. You simply didn't know. Just a few common words arranged in a simple grammatical order by someone who is at home in<sup>10</sup> English. That expresses your meaning, and yet you simply didn't know which common words to choose and how to arrange them.

This is a very common trouble with Chinese students of English. It is due to<sup>11</sup> the fact that they do not read widely, nor carefully enough. There are thousands of useful expressions<sup>12</sup> that are not generally considered idioms. They are so easy to understand that they are apt to be neglected<sup>13</sup>. But those who neglect them will forget them, and fail to<sup>14</sup> use them when they need them.

You cannot learn to write with much freedom of expression<sup>15</sup> till you have laid in<sup>16</sup> a stock<sup>17</sup> of useful phrases and sentences, and you cannot do it without reading widely and carefully.

【注】 1. vocabulary, 字彙. 2. usage, 習慣用法. 3. fairly well, 大致尚好地. 4. But are you? = But are you able to write fairly well? 5. not = not able to write fairly well. 6. why not = why are you not able to write fairly well. 7. cannot = cannot express what you want to say. 8. someone, 某人. 9. say to yourself, 想. 10. at home in, 精習... 的. 11. due to, 因為. 12. expressions, 句語. 13. are apt to be neglected, 易於被人忽略. 14. fail to .., 不... 15. freedom of expression, 表達的自由; 寫作自如. 16. laid in, 儲藏 ("in" 是 adverb). 17. stock, 大量; 原料.

### SO MANY POINTS!

Having read much of what I have said about points of usage, some readers have given me to understand<sup>1</sup> that they think it simply impossible to remember so many points, about which there

seem to be no rules at all. They wonder whether all who<sup>2</sup> write correct English know them all by heart<sup>3</sup> and pay regard to<sup>4</sup> them whenever they write, and whether it is at all possible for one to learn to write English fairly well<sup>5</sup> without bothering about<sup>6</sup> those tiny<sup>7</sup> points.

Yes, most of the points seem to be tiny ones<sup>8</sup>. But it is just these tiny points that show whether one is really at home in<sup>9</sup> English or not. Occasional errors in grammar, which should of course<sup>10</sup> be avoided by all means<sup>11</sup>, may most probably be due to<sup>12</sup> mere carelessness and are not at all peculiar to<sup>13</sup> those whose English is imperfect. But lapses<sup>14</sup> in idiom always betray<sup>15</sup> one's unfamiliarity with<sup>16</sup> correct English. It follows that<sup>17</sup> the seemingly trifling<sup>18</sup> points of usage are well worthy of the attention of<sup>19</sup> all who wish to write English correctly.

As to<sup>20</sup> knowing them by heart, those who are born to the language<sup>21</sup> do not need to make any conscious effort. They learn correct usage by intuition<sup>22</sup>, so to speak<sup>23</sup>. They speak English every day, and the use of many idiomatic expressions<sup>24</sup> and constructions are second nature<sup>25</sup>, with them, so that<sup>26</sup> when they write they cannot possibly be<sup>27</sup> incorrect where they are correct when speaking<sup>28</sup>.

The case is certainly different with<sup>29</sup> Chinese students of English, who are most of them English-reading rather than<sup>30</sup> English-speaking. They must take care<sup>31</sup> to master<sup>32</sup> many points of usage that are quite natural to those whose mother tongue<sup>33</sup> is English.



What I call points of usage, however, are not so formidable<sup>34</sup> an enemy as they may seem to you. Close attention to them helps to conquer<sup>35</sup> them. Besides<sup>36</sup>, what English-speaking persons get from speaking you may get from reading aloud<sup>37</sup>, which will help you in the same way as speaking would<sup>38</sup>, though perhaps less quickly. And there is an advantage in reading aloud over speaking<sup>39</sup> in the fact that in reading good written English you are not in danger of<sup>40</sup> getting those common solecisms<sup>41</sup>, barbarisms<sup>42</sup>, and improprieties<sup>43</sup> in the speech of persons of limited culture<sup>44</sup>.

【注】 1. given me to understand, 使我知道. 2. all who ..., 一切... 的人. 3. know them all by heart, 記憶着它們的全體. 4. pay regard to, 注意. 5. fairly well, 尚好地; 還說得去地. 6. bothering about, 因... 而麻煩. 7. tiny, 微細的. 8. ones=points. 9. at home in, 精通... 的. 10. of course, 當然. 11. by all means, 必然. 12. due to, 因為. 13. peculiar to, ... 所特有的. 14. lapses, 小錯. 15. betray, 顯露. 16. unfamiliarity with, 對於... 的不熟悉. 17. It follows that..., 因而有... 的結論; 所以.... 18. seemingly trifling, 似乎不重要的. 19. well worthy of the attention of, 很值得... 的注意的. 20. As to, 至於. 21. are born to the language, 生出來就用這語文; 把這語文用做本國語文. 22. intuition, 直覺. 23. so to speak, 可以說. 24. expressions, 語. 25. second nature, 第二天性; 習慣. 26. so that, 所以. 27. cannot possibly be, 決不會. 28. when speaking=when they are speaking. 29. different with, 對於... 不同的. 30. rather than, 而不是.... 31. take care, 當心. 32. master, 精習. 33. mother tongue, 本國語文. 34. formidable, 難於對付的. 35. conquer, 克服. 36. Besides, 而且. 37. what English-speaking ... reading aloud—you may get from reading aloud what English-speaking persons get from speaking. 38. would =would help you. 39. advantage in reading aloud over speaking, 出聲讀的勝於談話的地方. 40. in danger of, 有... 的危險的. 41. solecisms, 文法錯誤. 42. barbarisms, 不正的字或語. 43. improprieties, 句或語的用錯. 44. of limited culture, 所受教育不多的.

## THE QUESTION OF BACKGROUND<sup>1</sup>

If your reading in English is not confined to<sup>2</sup> things written by Chinese writers about Chinese life—I hope it is not<sup>3</sup>—you must often meet with difficulties quite apart from<sup>4</sup> the meanings of words and phrases. These difficulties arise from what I call for want of a better term<sup>5</sup> the background<sup>6</sup> of English, which I believe deserves the attention of<sup>7</sup> all students of English—all<sup>8</sup> but<sup>9</sup> those<sup>10</sup> who do not care to<sup>10</sup> read anything in English that is not written by Chinese writers on Chinese subjects.

By the background of English I mean<sup>11</sup> the sum total<sup>12</sup> of all points other than linguistic<sup>13</sup> that are quite natural to those born to the language and brought up on it<sup>14</sup>. For example<sup>15</sup>, the name Grub Street<sup>16</sup>—a London<sup>17</sup> street formerly much inhabited by<sup>18</sup> writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary<sup>19</sup> poems and so giving rise to<sup>20</sup> its use as an epithet<sup>21</sup> referring to<sup>22</sup> literary hack-work<sup>23</sup>.

The subject is indeed a very large one. It includes history, geography, mythology<sup>24</sup>, the Bible<sup>25</sup>, characters<sup>26</sup> and facts in fiction<sup>27</sup>, proverbs, customs<sup>28</sup>, games and sports, superstitions<sup>29</sup>, and other things. And in order to<sup>30</sup> understand fully the works<sup>31</sup> of any author, one needs to possess as much knowledge of these things as he does. This is practically impossible<sup>32</sup> with the average<sup>33</sup> Chinese student of English.

What I think must be considered carefully<sup>34</sup> is what parts of the background of English are

more important and how they may be made available to<sup>35</sup> Chinese students so as to<sup>36</sup> enable them to read general literature in English. Would you like to acquire such a knowledge?

【注】 1. Background, 背景. 2. is not confined to, 並不限於. 3. not = not confined to things written by Chinese writers about Chinese life. 4. apart from, 和...不關涉的. 5. for want of a better term, 因為沒有好些的名稱. 6. background, 這字是“call”的 complement. 7. deserves the attention of, 值得...的注意. 8. all = all students of English. 9. but 除了...以外. 10. do not care to..., 不要... 11. By the background of English I mean..., 我所說的英文的背景就是... 12. sum total, 總共. 13. other than linguistic, 不是語文上的. 14. those born on it, 那些生來就用英文而用了英文長大起來的人們. 15. For example, 例如. 16. Grub Street, 這條街現在叫“Milton Street”. 17. London, 英國京城. 18. inhabited by, 被...居住的. 19. temporary, 暫時性質的. 20. giving rise to, 致成. 21. epithet, 形容詞. 22. referring to, 關於. 23. literary hack-work, 被雇者的文字工作. 24. mythology, 神話. 25. the Bible, 耶教聖經. 26. characters, 人物. 27. fiction, 小說 (的總稱). 28. customs, 風俗. 29. superstitions, 迷信. 30. in order to..., 把...做目的. 31. works, 作品. 32. practically impossible, 幾乎不可能的. 33. average, 一般的. 34. What I think must be considered carefully, 我以為必須仔細考慮的. 35. available to, 被...所可以得到的. 36. so as to..., 把...做目的.

## THE WORD

In doing a piece of translation the other day<sup>1</sup>, I experimented with<sup>2</sup> several words before I got the word that expressed the shade of meaning intended<sup>3</sup>. The word was “admonish”, and the words I had experimented with were “advise”, “counsel”, “warn”, “exhort”, “reprove”, “rebuke”, and “reprimand”. “Admonish”, roughly speaking<sup>4</sup>, means *exhort* or *reprove*, but it carries the implication<sup>5</sup> of kindness or gentleness coupled with<sup>6</sup> seriousness, and also of warning and counsel.

Sometimes I fail to<sup>7</sup> get the exact word in spite of much thinking and weighing<sup>8</sup>. In such cases I have to content myself with<sup>9</sup> using a word that I regard as<sup>10</sup> being nearest to the meaning I want to express. This is a common experience with writers of English, and is one<sup>11</sup> they ought to feel sorry for.

The study of synonyms<sup>12</sup> is no doubt<sup>13</sup> very helpful in the careful choice of words, which is essential to precision, one of the qualities of good writing. But there are two mistakes against which I think students ought to be warned. One is that<sup>14</sup> of trusting to<sup>15</sup> the so-called Chinese equivalents<sup>16</sup> as given in English-Chinese dictionaries<sup>17</sup>. The other is that<sup>18</sup> of studying the explanations in articles on synonyms but neglecting the illustrative examples<sup>19</sup>.

Correct English, however, is largely a matter of the use of common words, the correct use of which depends not so much upon their “meanings” as upon<sup>20</sup> what is known as<sup>21</sup> usage. For instance<sup>22</sup>, a writer of correct English may not be able to tell you in detail<sup>23</sup> how “for” and “to” differ from each other<sup>24</sup>, **but** he never uses one when he ought to use the other. He uses *the* word<sup>25</sup> as a matter of habit rather than<sup>26</sup> as a result of<sup>27</sup> the careful choice of words. The study of synonyms is of no help in this matter. One can improve only by the careful reading of idiomatic English—which no amount of word study can supplant<sup>28</sup>.

【注】 1. the other day, 不久以前的某天。 2. experimented with, 把... 試驗。 3. the shade of meaning intended, 意欲中的微細的意思。 4. roughly speaking, 大略說來。 5. implication, 含蓋。 6. coupled with,

和...合併. 7. fail to..., 不.... 8. in spite of much thinking and weighing, 雖然想了許多和斟酌了許多. 9. content myself with, 使自己把...當作滿足. 10. regard as, 當作. 11. one=an experience. 12. synonyms, 同義字; 意義相仿的字. 13. no doubt, 當然. 14. that=the mistake. 15. trusting to, 信任. 16. equivalents, 相當語. 17. English-Chinese dictionaries, 英漢字典. 18. that=the mistake. 19. illustrative examples, 例解. 20. depends not so much upon... as upon..., 靠着...的少而...的多. 21. is known as, 被叫做. 22. For instance, 例如. 23. in detail, 詳細地. 24. differ from each other, 互不相同. 25. the word, 正確的字 (“the” 該重讀) 26. rather than, 而不是. 27. as a result of, 是...的結果地. 28. no amount of word study can supplant, 不論怎樣多的單字研究也不能代替.

### BEWARE OF<sup>1</sup> GUESS-WORK

A story has been told of a German resident<sup>2</sup> in England who spoke English fairly well<sup>3</sup> for ordinary purposes, but who once recommended some wine to a guest with the remark<sup>4</sup> “You might drink a bottle of it, and it would not set you up”. Another foreigner, whose nationality<sup>5</sup> is not mentioned, is said to have written in England that he wished to recommend a tonic<sup>6</sup> because it had “quite upset him”. One of these men used “set up” when he ought to have used “upset”, and the other used “upset” when he ought to have used “set up”.

“Upset” and “set up”, as you probably know, are almost exactly opposite in meaning, and whenever one is used for the other the mistake is absolutely absurd. But quite natural<sup>7</sup>. When a person who knows one of these two expressions<sup>8</sup> sees the other, he is liable to think it has the same meaning, though in fact<sup>9</sup> it has not<sup>10</sup>.

This is due to<sup>11</sup> guess-work, which seems to me to be responsible for many mistakes made by Chi-

nese students of English who could easily avoid them if they only troubled<sup>12</sup> to consult a dictionary.

I know a gentleman who always sounds<sup>13</sup> the *p* in the word “receipt”, the correct pronunciation of which is [ri’si:t]. He sounds it not because any person has told him to sound it, nor because any book has told him to<sup>14</sup>, but because he has *guessed* that he ought to do so.

True, it is possible to guess right, but<sup>15</sup> it is more possible to guess wrong. I would advise you to avoid guess-work by all means<sup>16</sup>.

【注】 1. Beware of, 謹防; 避免。 2. resident, 居民。 3. fairly well, 尚好地。 4. remark, (評)語。 5. nationality, 國籍。 6. tone, 神品。 7. quite natural—the mistake is quite natural. 8. expressions, 語。 9. in fact, 實在。 10. has not=has not the same meaning. 11. due to, 因為。 12. troubled, 操勞。 13. sounds, 發...的音。 14. to=to sound it. 15. True..., but..., 固然..., 但是.... 16. by all means, 必然。

## BETTER SHORT THAN LONG

I have just finished<sup>1</sup> an essay by Hilaire Belloc<sup>2</sup>, in which, towards the end of a very long sentence, the author says “I cannot refrain from remarking<sup>3</sup> that all the discussions of the silly critics<sup>4</sup> as to<sup>5</sup> whether sentences in English should be long or short are mere spoiling of paper<sup>6</sup>”.

I fully agree with him. A sentence is not good or bad merely because it is long or short. Length is a false test<sup>7</sup> of a sentence. It is wrong to think that a series of long sentences is a proof of one’s good command of English<sup>8</sup>. It is equally wrong to think that simple and clear English requires

every sentence to contain a certain number of<sup>9</sup> words at most<sup>10</sup>.

I remember that I myself formerly acted on<sup>11</sup> these wrong opinions one after the other<sup>12</sup>. For some time I tried to use as many words in a sentence as grammar and sense could justify<sup>13</sup>. The result was an obtrusively dignified style<sup>14</sup>. Then followed a period<sup>15</sup> in which I tried to make every sentence a grammatically simple one<sup>16</sup> and as easy to understand as those<sup>17</sup> in first books<sup>18</sup> for beginners. The result was affected<sup>19</sup> simplicity.

However, while I would warn all students of English composition against these two mistakes, I think that that<sup>20</sup> of writing long sentences is the commoner one<sup>21</sup>. And students ought to take more care to avoid it, not only because it is commoner but also because it is more harmful. For in the hands of those who<sup>22</sup> have not had much practice in the use of words and phrases and idiomatic constructions<sup>23</sup>, long sentences are much harder to manage than short ones<sup>24</sup>. And it must not for a moment<sup>25</sup> be supposed that an error in grammar or idiom embedded<sup>26</sup> in a long sentence can easily escape detection<sup>27</sup>.

【注】 1. finished, 讀完。 2. Hilaire Belloc, 英國當代文學家, 生在一八七零年。 3. remarking, 說。 4. critics, 文學批評家。 5. as to, 關於。 6. spoiling of paper, 紙的毀壞; 白費紙張。 7. test, 試驗的標準。 8. one's good command of English, 某人的精通英文。 9. a certain number of, ...的某數; 若干。 10. at most, 至多。 11. acted on, 實行。 12. one after the other, 一個而另一個。 13. use as .could justify, 就文法和意義所可能的範圍以內在一句裏用字愈多愈好。 14. obtrusively dignified style, 過份莊嚴的文體。 15. followed a period=a period followed, 一個時期跟着而來。 16. one=sentence. 17. those=sentences.

18. first books, 入門書 19. affected, 做作的; 不自然的. 20. that=the mistake 21. one=mistake. 22. those who ., 那 ..的人們. 23. constructions, 結構 24. ones=sentences. 25. must not for a moment, 決不可. 26. embedded, 嵌; 藏. 27. escape detection, 不被發現.

## A GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF BAD ENGLISH

So many books and persons profess to<sup>1</sup> teach good English! But none profess to teach bad English. I am almost sure that anyone who should advertise lessons in bad English would be called crazy and would get no pupil at all. Nor do I think you have ever thought of learning it. Perhaps you think that bad English is not worth learning<sup>2</sup>, and that the English of the average<sup>3</sup> Chinese student of the language<sup>4</sup> is bad enough without his ever making any effort to learn to be bad. Well<sup>5</sup>, read the following story:

An old negro approached a white man<sup>6</sup> in a Southern<sup>7</sup> town and asked: "Marse Tom<sup>8</sup>, you ain't<sup>9</sup> seed<sup>10</sup> anything of dat<sup>11</sup> ole<sup>12</sup> mule of mine, is you?"<sup>13</sup>

"Why<sup>14</sup> no, Henry<sup>15</sup>, I haven't seen that mule. Have you lost it?"

"Well, Ah<sup>16</sup> doan<sup>17</sup> know ef<sup>18</sup> Ah've<sup>19</sup> lost him or not, but he is shore<sup>20</sup> 'nuff<sup>21</sup> gone."

"Henry, I think the best way you can find that mule would be to put a want ad in the paper<sup>22</sup> for him."

"Shuck!<sup>23</sup> Dat wouldn't do no good<sup>24</sup>, Marse Tom."

"Why not?"

"Why, Marse Tom, you all know puffickly<sup>25</sup> well dat dat mule can't<sup>26</sup> read."



Do you understand the negro's speech without the help of my notes<sup>27</sup>? If not<sup>28</sup>, you have not got much knowledge of bad English, and I hope you realize<sup>29</sup> that as a student of English you ought to get more of it.

By bad English I mean<sup>30</sup> the English as used<sup>31</sup> by English-speaking persons who somehow<sup>32</sup> do not use good English. It may be called illiterate<sup>33</sup> or uncultured<sup>34</sup> English. It is not found in formal writing, but is very common in modern fiction<sup>35</sup> and drama<sup>36</sup> and in the writing and speech of uneducated English-speaking persons. It is quite different from your English, which, if it is bad, is bad in the Chinese way, so to speak<sup>37</sup>.

Bad English means bad grammar, bad spelling, bad usage, and bad pronunciation. All these things form<sup>38</sup> an interesting and useful study. Without a good knowledge of these one will miss much in modern literature and will fail to<sup>39</sup> understand any uneducated Englishman or American<sup>40</sup> one ever has occasion to<sup>41</sup> talk with.

【注】 1. profess to..., 自認爲.... 2. worth learning, 值得學習的。 3. average, 一般的。 4. the language, 指英文。 5. Well, 語助詞。 6. white man, 白種人。 7. Southern, 美國的南部的。 8. Marse Tom=Master Tom, Tom 少爺。 9. ain't=haven't=have not. 10. seed=seen. 11. dat=that. 12. ole=old. 13. is you?=have you? 14. Why, 語助詞。 15. Henry, 人名。 16. Ah=I. 17. doan=don't=do not. 18. ef=if=whether. 19. Ah've=I've=I have. 20. shore=sure. 21. 'nuff=enough. 22. put a want ad in the paper, 在報紙上登徵求廣告。 ("want" 是 noun. ad=advertisement.) 23. Shucks!, 瞎說!; 呸! 24. wouldn't do no good=would not do any good=would do no good, 沒有用。 25. puffedly=perfectly. 26. cain't=can't=cannot. 27. notes, 注解。 28. If not=If you do not understand the negro's speech without the help of my notes. 29. realize, 確知。 30. By bad

English I mean. ., 我所說的 bad English, 便是.... 31. as used—as it is used 32 somehow. 因某種緣故 33 illiterate, 不識字的. 34. uncultured, 不受教育的. 35. fiction, 小說(的統稱). 36. drama, 劇本 (的統稱). 37. so to speak, 可以說得. 38. form, 做成; 成爲. 39. fail to ., 不... 40. American, 這字後面省去 relative pronoun. 41. has occasion to ., 有 .的必要.

## DOES HE WRITE ENGLISH CORRECTLY?

I have heard much talk about “methods” and “secrets”<sup>1</sup> of mastering<sup>2</sup> English, and, as many of my readers are aware, I myself have written much on the subject how to master English. What strikes me as deplorable<sup>3</sup> is that there are now too many “methods” and “secrets” for students to know which to adopt<sup>4</sup>. As a matter of fact<sup>5</sup>, the originator<sup>6</sup> of every “method” and “secret” has a great deal<sup>7</sup> to say for it, and also a great deal to say against<sup>8</sup> other “methods” and “secrets”.

I have recently been asked by a reader whether a certain<sup>9</sup> “method”—or rather<sup>10</sup> a course<sup>11</sup> based on<sup>12</sup> a certain “method”—is a good one<sup>13</sup> or not. The said<sup>14</sup> “method” is described as enabling one to write English correctly by<sup>15</sup> the time one has finished the course, which takes only about half a year. As I have not got enough particulars<sup>16</sup> about it, I am afraid I cannot venture<sup>17</sup> an opinion.

All that I can say about such matters is<sup>18</sup> that we ought to find out whether the person who has invented and recommended a certain “method” or “secret” of learning to write English correctly can himself write English correctly. If he can<sup>19</sup>, his “method” or “secret” is worth considering<sup>20</sup>. If he cannot<sup>21</sup>, well<sup>22</sup>, let it go hang<sup>23</sup>.

【注】 1. secrets, 秘訣. 2. mastering, 精通. 3. strikes me as deplorable, 使我感覺可歎. 4. there are now too many .for students to know which to adopt, 現在有太多的. , 因而學生們不知道該採用那一個. 5. As a matter of fact, 在事實上. 6. originator, 首創者. 7. a great deal, 許多(話). 8. against, 反對. 9. certain, 某. 10. or rather, 或者寧可說. 11. course, 學程. 12. based on, 以... 爲根據的. 13. one=method. 14. said, 所述及的. 15. by, 至遲至. 16. particulars, 詳情. 17. venture, 隨意發表. 18. All that I can say about such matters is ., 關於這種事, 我祇能說. 19. can=can write English correctly. 20. worth considering, 值得考慮的. 21. cannot=cannot write English correctly. 22. well, 語助詞. 23. let it go hang, 別管它; 隨它去 (“hang” 是 infinitive).

## UNCONSCIOUS WORD-MAKING

The other night<sup>1</sup> I had a dream in which I was talking to an Englishman. When I meant<sup>2</sup> to say “account for<sup>3</sup>”, by a slip of the tongue<sup>4</sup> I said “accountify”, which, for all I know<sup>5</sup>, simply does not exist<sup>6</sup>. I flatter myself that<sup>7</sup> I cannot possibly<sup>8</sup> make this mistake in my waking hours<sup>9</sup>.

It is not uncommon, however, to find in school compositions words<sup>10</sup> that would be looked for vainly<sup>11</sup> in dictionaries. Not that<sup>12</sup> they are coinages<sup>13</sup>. I do not think the average<sup>14</sup> Chinese student of English would make bold<sup>15</sup> to coin<sup>16</sup> words. The fact is simply that a certain<sup>17</sup> spelling is used in a certain meaning in the belief that<sup>18</sup> there is<sup>19</sup> such a word. This belief, it seems to me<sup>20</sup>, is always based on<sup>21</sup> some real word or words. For example<sup>22</sup>, the words “sleep”, “sleepy”, and “sleepiness” may account for (not accountify!) the non-existent<sup>23</sup> word “sleepness”, which I have occasionally<sup>24</sup> found in English by<sup>25</sup> Chinese students.

Students of English composition would hardly expect to be asked<sup>26</sup> whether they were sure that they never used non-existent words. But the question is not really so foolish as you may think<sup>27</sup>. I have made no attempt at making a list of such mistakes, but I am under the impression that<sup>28</sup> I have come across<sup>29</sup> dozens<sup>30</sup> of them. Would you mind rereading some pages of your English to see<sup>31</sup>, with the help of a dictionary, whether you had never been guilty of unconscious word-making<sup>32</sup>?

[注] 1. The other night, 不久以前的某夜. 2. meant, 意欲. 3. account for, 是...的理由. 4. slip of the tongue, 說話上的錯誤. 5. for all I know, 據我所知. 6. simply does not exist, 竟然不存在. 7. flatter myself that..., 自以爲.... 8. cannot possibly, 決不會. 9. waking hours, 醒着的時候. 10. words, 這字是上文“find”的 object. 11. looked for vainly, 找不到. 12. Not that..., 並不是因爲.... 13. coinages, 故意杜造的字. 14. average, 一般的. 15. make bold, 冒險. 16. coin 鑄; 故意杜造. 17. certain, 某. 18. in the belief that..., 以爲.... 19. there is, 果然有; 真有. 20. it seems to me, 我覺得. 21. based on, 以...爲根據的. 22. For example, 例如. 23. non-existent, 不存在的. 24. occasionally, 間或地. 25. English by, ...所寫的英文. 26. would hardly expect to be asked, 未見得以爲會被人問. 27. is not really so foolish as you may think, 並不真正像你也許以爲的那樣笨. 28. am under the impression that..., 我覺得.... 29. come across, 碰到. 30. dozens 許多; 幾十個. 31. see, 找出. 32. Would you mind rereading...f, 你將反對再讀...麼?; 你肯再讀...麼?

## WHERE TO DROP A LETTER TO HIS SWEETHEART

Here is a story of great linguistic<sup>1</sup> interest. A newly-arrived Irishman<sup>2</sup> in New York<sup>3</sup> was standing in front of<sup>4</sup> the Post-Office<sup>5</sup>, where he found three letter-boxes, labelled<sup>6</sup> City, Domestic, and Foreign. He was wondering<sup>7</sup> into which<sup>8</sup> he ought to drop a letter to his sweetheart. “Faith<sup>9</sup>,” he

said “this is a problem. Maggie’s<sup>10</sup> a domestic<sup>11</sup>. She lives in the city. And she’s<sup>12</sup> a foreigner. What beats me<sup>13</sup> is how to put the letter into the three holes at once<sup>14</sup>.”

The fact was that the Irishman did not know the very common American use of the word “domestic” in the sense of *not foreign*. This use is of course<sup>15</sup> not unEnglish<sup>16</sup>, but is much more common in American than in English usage<sup>17</sup>.

Now Chinese students of English often fail to<sup>18</sup> understand a sentence simply because they do not know the particular sense in which a certain<sup>19</sup> word in it is used. I myself remember giving up<sup>20</sup> a sentence as unintelligible<sup>21</sup>, about ten years ago, which<sup>22</sup> contained the verb “discuss” followed by the noun “wine”. It was not till some days later that I<sup>23</sup> thought of the sentence again, and began to doubt whether the “discuss” was not used in some<sup>24</sup> sense unknown to me. Upon<sup>25</sup> consulting<sup>26</sup> a dictionary I found the sense of *eat or drink in a leisurely<sup>27</sup> way*.

That we should refer to<sup>28</sup> a dictionary whenever we come across<sup>29</sup> a word that we do not know is<sup>30</sup> only too<sup>31</sup> evident. What is not so evident is that a very common word may sometimes be used in a sense that we do not even suspect<sup>32</sup>.

【注】 1. linguistic, 語文上的。 2. Irishman, 愛爾蘭 (Ireland) 人。 3. New York, 美國城名。 4. in front of, 在...的前面。 5. Post-Office, 郵政總局。 6. labelled, 有...的標明的。 7. wondering, 疑惑。 8. which= which of the letter-boxes。 9. Faith, 實在(是 interjection)。 10. Maggie’s=Maggie is; Maggie, 女子名。 11. domestic, 僕。 12. she’s =she is。 13. beats me, 使我為難。 14. at once, 同時。 15. of course,

登錄 16. unEnglish, 不合英文習慣的. 17. usage, 慣用法. 18. fail to..., 不.... 19. certain, 某. 20. giving up, 放棄. 21. unintelligible, 不可了解的. 22. which, 指 "sentence". 23. It was not till some days later that I. , 幾天以後我才.... 24. some, 某. 25. Upon, 在...後立即. 26. consulting, 查(字典). 27. leisurely, 安閑的. 28. refer to, 查(字典). 29. come across, 碰到. 30. is, 這字的 subject 是 "That we ...not know"—clause. 31. only too, 却很. 32. suspect, 疑有.

### AS IF<sup>1</sup> ONE<sup>2</sup> COULD DIE MORE THAN ONCE

An American schoolboy is said to have written<sup>3</sup> in an essay on<sup>4</sup> health "When children under one year of age<sup>5</sup> have tuberculosis<sup>6</sup>, they usually die very seldom". This sentence is written in perfect English so far as grammar and idiom are concerned<sup>7</sup>. But it is pure nonsense. For one dies but once<sup>8</sup>; one cannot die *seldom* any more than one can die *often*<sup>9</sup>.

Evidently the schoolboy really meant "*It is very seldom that*<sup>10</sup> children under one year of age who have tuberculosis die" or "When children under one year of age have tuberculosis, *they do not usually die*". He did not at all imply the possibility of one's dying more than once<sup>11</sup>.

But what a howler<sup>12</sup> he made! He said what he did not mean—what no-one could ever mean.

Such amusing<sup>13</sup> mistakes should of course<sup>14</sup> be carefully avoided. So far as I can see<sup>15</sup>, English-speaking people are far less apt to make them in writing than in speaking. One of the most ridiculous<sup>16</sup> verbal infelicities<sup>17</sup> that I have ever heard is what a genial<sup>18</sup> English hostess<sup>19</sup> said to a well-known novelist<sup>20</sup> who arrived very late at a

dinner-party. Overcome with confusion<sup>21</sup> he said apologetically<sup>22</sup> “I am truly sorry to be so shockingly<sup>23</sup> late”. The hostess, only meaning to<sup>24</sup> assure him that he was not the last, emphatically replied “O, Mr—, you can’t be too late<sup>25</sup>”. As if she had meant that she *disliked* his company<sup>26</sup>! Which was far from<sup>27</sup> true.

I think that both the American schoolboy and the English lady would have said afterwards, “I would rather have put it differently<sup>28</sup>”. Well, if English-speaking people are capable of<sup>29</sup> such mistakes, how far more so<sup>30</sup> we Chinese students<sup>31</sup> are!

【注】 1. As if, 好像；豈。 2. One, 任何人。 3. is said to have written, 據說曾經寫。 4. on, 論述。 5. under one year of age, ...不滿一歲的。 6. tuberculosis, 癆病。 7. so far as ..are concerned, 就...而論。 8. but once, 祇有一次。 9. one cannot ..die often, 一個人不會得屢次死，也不會得難得死。 10. It is very seldom that..., ...這種事是難得有的。 11. imply the possibility of one’s dying more than once, 含着一個人有死幾次的可能。 12. howler, 大錯。 13. amusing, 可笑的。 14. of course, 當然。 15. So far as I can see, 據我所知道。 16. ridiculous, 可笑的。 17. verbal infelicities, 語文上的不適當；不適切的句語。 18. genial, 和氣的。 19. hostess, 女主人。 20. novelist, 章回小說家。 21. Overcome with confusion, 很窘的。 22. apologetically, 道歉地。 23. shockingly, 驚人地；極。 24. only meaning to. ., 意思祇在於... 25. can’t be too late, 不會太晚；愈晚愈好。 26. disliked his company, 不喜歡他作伴；不要他來。（“disliked”的“dis”印作斜體，該重讀。） 27. far from, 很不。 28. would rather have put it differently, 但願曾經用不同的方法表達它。 29. capable of, 會得...的。 30. so=capable of such mistakes. 31. students, 這字是“we”的 appositive.

### ONLY A SLIP<sup>1</sup>, BUT—

I was reading a paragraph or two in a selection<sup>2</sup> of Cowper’s letters<sup>3</sup> not long ago. I thought I came across<sup>4</sup> the phrase “a poor literary poet”, by which Cowper referred to<sup>5</sup> himself. I paused and

thought, wondering what the poet meant by "literary poet" and whether a poet could possibly be unliterary<sup>6</sup> or non-literary<sup>7</sup>. I soon discovered, however, that Cowper did not write "literary" at all. The word was "solitary". The mistake was mine; I had somehow<sup>8</sup> mistaken "solitary" for "literary"<sup>9</sup>.

People talk of slips of the pen<sup>10</sup> and of the tongue<sup>11</sup>. I think slips of the eye are as much to guard against<sup>12</sup>; for they often cause unnecessary thinking or even unnecessary misunderstanding.

A slip of the pen often remains uncorrected only because of a slip of the eye. Once I wrote "flatter" for "flapper"<sup>13</sup> in a letter to an Englishman. In his reply he was kind enough to point out<sup>14</sup> the mistake. He was sure that I had merely made a slip of the pen, and that I was not so weak in English as to<sup>15</sup> confusc those two perfectly different words. But a mistake is a mistake<sup>16</sup>, and I was very sorry to think that I could have made such a ridiculous<sup>17</sup> one. Now I should have corrected it if I had read over my letter carefully before I posted<sup>18</sup> it. The mistake was a slip of the eye as well as<sup>19</sup> one of the pen.

If the mistake were to occur in print<sup>20</sup>, it would of course<sup>21</sup> be called a misprint. But would it be really a mistake in printing? Would the printer be to blame<sup>22</sup>? Well, the very word "misprint" is an insult to the poor printer!<sup>23</sup> What we call a misprint or typographical<sup>24</sup> error ought to be charged upon<sup>25</sup> the author, or the typist<sup>26</sup>, or the compositor<sup>27</sup>,



or the proof-reader<sup>28</sup>, but certainly not the printer. And no matter<sup>29</sup> who is responsible for it, he has made it by a slip of the eye.

【注】 1. Slip, 小錯誤。 2. selection, 選集。 3. Cowper's letters, 英國詩人 William Cowper (生在一七三一年; 死在一八零零年) 的信札。 4. came across, 碰到。 5. referred to, 觀及。 6. unliterary, 不合文學的; 不文的。 7. non-literary, 無關於文學的; 文學以外的。 8. somehow, 因某種原因。 9. mistaken "solitary" for "literary", 把 "solitary" 誤認作 "literary"。 10. slips of the pen, 筆誤。 11. (slips) of the tongue, 說話錯誤。 12. guard against, 預防。 13. wrote "flatter" for "flapper", 該寫 "flapper" 而誤寫了 "flatter"。 14. point out, 指出。 15. was not so weak in English as to..., 並不這樣地不通英文, 以至於... 16. a mistake is a mistake, 錯誤總是錯誤。 17. ridiculous, 可笑的。 18. posted, 郵寄。 19. as well as, 不但... 20. print, 印的文字。 21. of course, 當然。 22. be to blame, 該受責備。 23. the very...poor printer!, 就是 "misprint" 這個字便是對於可憐的印刷人的一種侮辱! 24. typographical, 印刷上的。 25. ought to be charged upon, 應該歸咎於... 26. typist, 打字人。 27. compositor, 排字人。 28. proof-reader, 校對人。 29. no matter, 不論...

### A YOUNG MAN IN A BLACK DRESS

This title<sup>1</sup> perhaps does not strike you as ridiculous<sup>2</sup>, does it? If not<sup>3</sup>, you have not mastered<sup>4</sup> English yet. I fancy<sup>5</sup> that every Englishman and American and everybody who speaks or writes perfect English would find it ridiculous. For while a young man may certainly be dressed in black<sup>6</sup>, he is not usually expected to wear a black dress. In fact<sup>7</sup>, he is not expected to wear a dress at all.

For "a dress" is a gown for a woman or girl or occasionally for an infant. A young man wearing his wife's, sister's, or baby's gown—well<sup>8</sup>, what a perfect sight he would look!<sup>9</sup>

Now I have actually found "a young man in a black dress" written by a Chinese writer and

teacher of English. I have found this ridiculous expression<sup>10</sup> in a context<sup>11</sup> that clearly shows that it is meant to mean not what it really means but what it does not mean<sup>12</sup>, a *young man dressed in black*—which is the wording<sup>13</sup> that ought to have been used<sup>14</sup>.

Once I spoke to an English woman about this mistake. She simply could not<sup>15</sup> understand my meaning, however. She did not object to<sup>16</sup> the use of “a dress” but insisted that the author must really mean a young man wearing a woman’s or girl’s gown because “‘a dress’ of course<sup>17</sup> means a dress!”

It was perhaps stupid of the Englishwoman not to understand my meaning<sup>18</sup>. But just because she thinks “a dress” of course means a dress, she herself never misuses “a dress”.

Similarly, when you come to think of it<sup>19</sup>, there are many Chinese words and idioms that you always use correctly because you instinctively<sup>20</sup> know what they mean so that<sup>21</sup> you do not need to study or explain them. As to<sup>22</sup> the mastery of English, the same principle applies<sup>23</sup>. I hope that you will steadily increase the stock<sup>24</sup> of words and idioms that you do not need to study or explain.

【注】 1. title, 標題. 2. strike you as ridiculous, 使你當作可笑的. 3. If not=If it does not strike you as ridiculous. 4. mastered; 精通. 5. fancy, 以爲. 6. be dressed in black, 著黑衣. 7. In fact, 在事實上. 8. well, 語助詞. 9. what a perfect sight he would look!, 他將做出怎樣的奇形怪狀! 10. expression, 語. 11. context, 上下文. 12. it is ...not mean, 它被用在不是它的真正的解釋, 却用在它所沒有的解釋. 13. wording, 句語; 措詞. 14. ought to have been used, 該已被用(實在未被用). 15. simply could not, 竟然不能. 16. object to, 反對. 17. of

*course*, 當然. 18. It was...my meaning, 那英國女人的不懂我的意思, 也許是她的愚笨. 19. when you come to think of it, 當你想起這點的時候; 想起來. 20. instinctively, 自然而然地. 21. so that, 因而; 所以. 22. As to, 至於. 23. applies, 有關係; 適合(是 intransitive verb), 24. stock, 數量.

### SOMETHING UNNATURAL

H. G. Wells<sup>1</sup> calls Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*<sup>2</sup> "one of the greatest novels I have read for a long time". I do not think Wells has ever believed it possible for his remark to be misunderstood<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, it is very simple and very clear, and perhaps no Englishman or American would ever think it capable of<sup>4</sup> a meaning other than<sup>5</sup> the true one<sup>6</sup>. But a Chinese student of English, who reads and writes English carefully enough<sup>7</sup>, has recently told me of his imperfect understanding of that remark. "Why 'for a long time'?" he said. "I simply cannot<sup>8</sup> understand what Wells thinks the greatness of a novel has to do with<sup>9</sup> the length of the time he<sup>10</sup> has spent in reading it."

The student misunderstood Wells's remark. As a matter of fact<sup>11</sup>, the critic<sup>12</sup> does not mean to say how much time he has ever devoted to reading any novel. The remark might be paraphrased<sup>13</sup> as: "For a long time past<sup>14</sup> I have read many novels, some of them being great ones. *Babbitt* is one of the greatest."

The student, being a careful one, doubted whether he was not somehow<sup>15</sup> twisting<sup>16</sup> Wells's words. I should fancy<sup>17</sup> that he would have eventually got the right meaning even if he had not inquired of me.

Chinese students of English often misunderstand or fail to<sup>18</sup> understand a group of simple words put together in a simple way. My advice is to stop to think again<sup>19</sup> when you find something unnatural in an expression<sup>20</sup>. That something is perhaps not in the expression itself but in your interpretation of it.

【注】 1. H. G. Wells, 就是 Herbert George Wells, 現代英國文學家, 生在一八六六年. 2. Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*, Lewis 是現代美國文學家, 生在一八八五年, *Babbitt* 是章回小說, 也是它的主角的姓. 3. believed it possible for his remark to be misunderstood, 以爲他的話有被人誤解的可能. 4. capable of, 可有...的. 5. other than, ...以外的; 非...的. 6. one=meaning. 7. carefully enough, 很細心地. 8. simply cannot, 竟然不能. 9. what Wells...do with..., Wells 以爲一本章回小說的偉大和...有什麼關係. 10. he, 這字前面省去 relative pronoun "that" 或 "which". 11. As a matter of fact, 實在. 12. critic, 批評家. 13. paraphrased, 解釋. 14. For a long time past, 在過去的長時期以內. 15. somehow, 因某種緣故. 16. twisting, 曲解. 17. fancy, 以爲. 18. fail to..., 不.... 19. stop to think again, 停了再想. 20. expression, 語.

### "MORE PRESENTLY"

A friend of mine has recently called my attention to<sup>1</sup> what he calls a mistake in a biographical sketch<sup>2</sup> of a literary man: the name of a person followed by "of whom more presently". In fact<sup>3</sup>, there is no mistake in the expression<sup>4</sup> at all. "More presently" is elliptical<sup>5</sup> for "more will be said presently". My friend does not know this idiomatic ellipsis<sup>6</sup>, having apparently taken "more" to be the adverb modifying "presently" and thought a subject and verb ought to have been supplied so as to<sup>7</sup> make a complete clause.

Equipped with<sup>8</sup> a knowledge of grammar, Chinese students of English are apt to think they are quite

able to read general literature without much difficulty so long as they have a good dictionary within reach<sup>9</sup>. What is more<sup>10</sup>, they are too ready to<sup>11</sup> dismiss as wrong<sup>12</sup> any combination of words that does not seem to him to be capable of grammatical analysis<sup>13</sup>.

Important as grammar is<sup>14</sup>, there are many turns of expression<sup>15</sup> that are generally considered blameless English though they are not quite defensible<sup>16</sup> from a narrowly grammatical point of view<sup>17</sup>. So that the mastery of English grammar in its narrow sense does not enable one so much as<sup>18</sup> to read English intelligently.

When you come across<sup>19</sup> in good writing any construction that you do not find grammatical, I would advise you to note it down instead of<sup>20</sup> calling it a mistake, and to see if<sup>21</sup> you will not meet with a similar one<sup>22</sup> in your reading. You will<sup>23</sup> very soon, perhaps, and then you will most likely<sup>24</sup> understand the construction.

【注】 1. called my attention to, 使我注意. 2. biographical sketch, 傳略. 3. In fact, 實在. 4. expression, 語. 5. elliptical, 省略語的. 6. ellipsis, 省略語. 7. so as to.., 以.. 做目的. 8. Equipped with, 備着...; 有了.... 9. within reach, 在附近的; 可以取得的. 10. What is more, 而且. 11. too ready to..., 太易於...的. 12. dismiss as wrong, 把...當作錯誤而不去想它. 13. capable of grammatical analysis, 可能在文法上分析的. 14. Important as grammar is, 文法雖然重要. 15. turns of expression, 結構; 句法. 16. defensible, 可被辯護的. 17. point of view, 觀點. 18. so much as, 即使. 19. come across, 碰到. 20. instead of, 不. 21. if=whether. 22. one=construction. 23. will=will meet with a similar one in your reading. 24. most likely, 大約.

## AT A WEDDING

A friend of mine got married the other day<sup>1</sup>. The wedding was a very quiet affair. I was the chief witness<sup>2</sup>. Another friend of mine was the best man<sup>3</sup>.

It was the simplest wedding I have ever attended. It was also the first time that I had ever acted as the chief witness at a wedding. No doubt<sup>4</sup> I am too small a man to officiate<sup>5</sup> at any grand wedding. Not that<sup>6</sup> I cannot do that. Everybody can<sup>7</sup>—at least, everybody who can read simple Chinese can<sup>8</sup>. But the fact remains that people like to choose some big man for that. They will do so, though they are well aware that whatever prestige the big man may have<sup>9</sup> cannot possibly<sup>10</sup> pass to the couple<sup>11</sup>, and that any social or official distinction is really as unimportant in the chief witness as a knowledge of English.

My friend was indeed wise in choosing me rather than<sup>12</sup> any big man. I am punctual<sup>13</sup>; I am too small a man to have cultivated the virtue of unpunctuality<sup>14</sup>. I am not ashamed of being punctual. Nor am I afraid of being thought<sup>15</sup> too small a man because of my punctuality<sup>16</sup>—in fact, I could not acquire any prestige by being unpunctual<sup>17</sup>. As I have just said, my friend was wise in choosing me. If he had chosen any big man, he would probably have had to wait some time for the big man's arrival, so that<sup>18</sup> the wedding would probably have had to be postponed till some time after the hour previously fixed<sup>19</sup>.

I did not give an address<sup>20</sup> at the wedding. I could have said a few words, of course<sup>21</sup>. But I could not have said anything useful to the couple. For I myself am not well experienced in married life, and I do not think my own marriage is the kind of success that I had expected. If I had given an address, I should have acted like one who<sup>22</sup> cannot write correct English and yet tries to teach others to do it.

【注】 1. the other day, 不久以前的一天。 2. chief witness, 證婚人。 3. best man, 男僮相。 4. No doubt, 當然。 5. officiate, 奉職。 6. Not that ., 並不是因爲.... 7. can=can do that. 8. can=can do that. 9. whatever prestige the big man may have, 那大人物所有的任何威望。 10. cannot possibly, 決不能。 11. couple, 一對夫婦。 12. rather than, 而不是。 13. punctual, 守時刻的。 14. unpunctuality, 不守時刻。 15. being thought, 被人當作。 16. punctuality, 守時刻。 17. unpunctual, 不守時刻的。 18. so that, 因而。 19. the hour previously fixed, 預定的時刻。 20. address, 演說。 21. of course, 當然。 22. like one who..., 好像...的一個人。

## SUMMER

Summer is here. It is warm, often uncomfortably warm. Sometimes it is a little cooler. Then it is warm again. We wish the cool weather had lasted longer<sup>1</sup>. But it has not. The heat has returned<sup>2</sup> all too soon<sup>3</sup>.

Many of us are complaining of the heat. They are complaining of it just as they complained of the cold only a few months ago. After all<sup>4</sup>, man<sup>5</sup> is apt to complain. In summer he wishes it were winter. In winter he wishes it were summer. He makes comparisons and always thinks the present season is the worse of the two<sup>6</sup>.

If he thinks so, it is because he finds himself suffering from it. He does not stop to think<sup>7</sup> how he would find himself suffering if he were suddenly landed<sup>8</sup> in a place where the other season was prevailing.

It is summer, whether we like it or not. There are various ways of making it more tolerable. Drinking something cold is one of them. Eating water-melons is another. The use of fans is still another. All these, however, are too common to talk about. I have a new way. It is mental in nature. I mean thinking about the rigours<sup>9</sup> of a severe winter. I do not mean that it will induce a feeling of cold, though I am not quite sure that it will not<sup>10</sup>. I mean that it will afford comfort in the thought that one is *not* suffering from that other season<sup>11</sup>. You would indeed find much consolation in thinking that you no longer<sup>12</sup> has the nasty<sup>13</sup> cold that you caught on such-and-such a day<sup>14</sup> last winter.

【注】 1. wish the cool weather had lasted longer, 巴不得那涼爽的天氣曾經繼續得長些。 2. returned, 又來。 3. all too soon, 太快。 4. After all, 畢竟。 5. man, 人類。 6. two=two seasons. 7. stop to think, 停着想一下；好好地想。 8. landed, 使到。 9. rigours, 極冷。 10. will not=will not induce a feeling of cold. 11. that other season, 指冬季。 12. no longer, 不再。 13. nasty, 難治的。 14. such and-such a day, 某天。

## SHOPPING

Shopping is modern, both the word and the thing, perhaps. I do not think it is ever mentioned in any book published fifty years ago. True<sup>1</sup>, people have visited shops to make purchases ever



since there were shops, and shops there were<sup>2</sup> hundreds of years ago. But not every such visit is shopping. For instance<sup>3</sup>, one may go to a shop to buy some rice and some wheat. He makes purchases. But that is not shopping; if I am not mistaken<sup>4</sup>, nobody who uses the word properly would call that shopping.

For shopping has its characteristics<sup>5</sup>. It is used of<sup>6</sup> buying luxuries rather than<sup>7</sup> the necessities of life. It is used of visiting a large shop or several small shops and buying several things instead of<sup>8</sup> one or two. It implies the pleasure of buying as well as<sup>9</sup> the value of the things bought.

Shopping has become a craze<sup>10</sup> with many young men and women, especially with the latter. They feel they must go shopping once a week or even oftener. They enjoy the spending of money more than what they spend money on<sup>11</sup>.

Besides, it seems that they take a pride in<sup>12</sup> buying things in the presence of<sup>13</sup> many strangers, especially when they buy things at prohibitive prices<sup>14</sup>. So that<sup>15</sup> they visit the stores<sup>16</sup> more frequently than ordinary shops. And this sense of pride perhaps accounts for<sup>17</sup> the fact that in spite of<sup>18</sup> the apparently convenient mail order<sup>19</sup> business and telephone order<sup>20</sup> business shopping is still widely practised.

【注】 1. True..., 的確...; ...固然是對的(和下文“*But*”呼應). 2. shops there were=there were shops. 3. For instance, 例如. 4. if I am not mistaken, 要是我的意見不錯. 5. characteristics, 特性. 6. of, 關於; 涉及. 7. rather than, 而不是.... 8. instead of, 而不是.... 9. as well as, 不但.... 10. craze, 風行的事. 11. what they spend money on, 他們所買的東西. 12. take a pride in, 因...而自豪. 13. in

the presence of, 在...面前. 14. prohibitive prices, 極高的價錢. 15. So that, 所以. 16. stores, 百貨商店. 17. accounts for, 是...的原因. 18. in spite of, 雖有. 19. mail order, 通信買物. 20. telephone order, 電話買物.

## MISUNDERSTANDING

To begin with<sup>1</sup>, misunderstanding is not an altogether unpleasant word. It has its humorous side<sup>2</sup>. The point<sup>3</sup> of many good jokes lies in the misunderstanding of some word or phrase, and such misunderstandings give modern newspaper and magazine readers a great deal of<sup>4</sup> fun and pleasure. For instance<sup>5</sup>, when we read of<sup>6</sup> a would-be customer<sup>7</sup> asking "Can I try on<sup>8</sup> that gown in the window?" and the saleswoman replying "Certainly not<sup>9</sup>, madam!", we cannot help<sup>10</sup> laughing unless we don't see<sup>11</sup> the point. Another example: A man seeing the newspaper head-line<sup>12</sup> "Ford's Motor Works<sup>13</sup>" said to himself<sup>14</sup>: "That's nothing<sup>15</sup>. So does ours<sup>16</sup>."

If joke writers can think of such misunderstandings, similar ones are not quite impossible in real life. How many quarrels, estrangements<sup>17</sup>, and tragedies, may have come of<sup>18</sup> misunderstandings that would have made good material for joke books! To talk about the would-be customer and the saleswoman again. If the incident actually occurs and if the would-be customer, instead of<sup>19</sup> seeing that the saleswoman has misunderstood her, misunderstands the saleswoman and thinks her reply impolite<sup>20</sup> and says something to that effect<sup>21</sup>, a quarrel is likely to arise.

A common cause of misunderstanding is to read something into<sup>22</sup> what is said to or of one<sup>23</sup>. There seem to be many people given to<sup>24</sup> so doing. They are always taking offence where there is none given<sup>25</sup>. If you advise them about something they will think you mean to disparage their intelligence. If you praise them for something, they will think you are speaking in an ironic<sup>26</sup> way. If you happen to<sup>27</sup> mention the rising cost of living<sup>28</sup>, they will think you are going to<sup>29</sup> borrow from them. If you happen to speak of something that you are proud of, they will think you are laughing at them for being less fortunate.

Such people look for trouble<sup>30</sup> without their own knowledge<sup>31</sup>. They deserve it<sup>32</sup>!

【注】 1. To begin with, 開首先說. 2. side, 方面. 3. point, 要點; 關鍵. 4. a great deal of, 許多. 5. For instance, 例如. 6. read of, 讀及; 讀到. 7. would-be customer, 意欲中的顧客; 或許的顧客. 8. try on, 試着. 9. Certainly not, 當然不可. (那顧客的意思, 是把 “in that window” 做 adjectival phrase, 形容 “gown”, 但那女售貨員誤解了, 以為那 phrase 是 adverbial, 形容 “try” 的) 10. cannot help, 不能免. 11. see, 見到; 了解. 12. head-line, 標題. 13. Ford's Motor Works, 福特馬達工廠. (Ford 就是 Henry Ford, 美國汽車大王, 生在一八六三年.) 14. said to himself, 想. 15. That's nothing, 那沒有什麼希奇. 16. So does ours=Our motor works, 我們的馬達也會開動的. (誤解了那標題裏的 “works” 了, 其實它是 noun, 把它誤解作 verb.) 17. estrangements, 友誼的疎隔. 18. come of, 因...而起. 19. instead of, 不. 20. thinks her reply impolite, 以為她的回答是不敬的. 21. to that effect, 表示那個意思的. 22. read something into, 誤以為...有某種含意. 23. what is said to or of one, 向某人所說的話或說及某人的話. 24. given to, 老是...的. 25. are always taking offence where there is none given, 老是在並無冒犯的地方感到冒犯. 26. ironic, 反語的; 譏諷的. 27. happen to ..., 恰巧... 28. rising cost of living, 逐漸增高的生活費用. 29. are going to..., 將. 30. look for trouble, 自尋煩惱. 31. without their own knowledge, 他們自己不知道地. 32. it, 指 “trouble”,

## OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN

I well remember reading of<sup>1</sup> a ridiculous mistake made by the manager of a film studio<sup>2</sup> in America. He had long been annoyed by the aeroplanes<sup>3</sup> passing overhead, so that<sup>4</sup> in order to<sup>5</sup> stop the nuisance<sup>6</sup> he had a large sign painted on the roof<sup>7</sup> “FILM STUDIO—QUIET, PLEASE”. The result, however, was that the aeroplanes seemed to make more noise than ever<sup>8</sup>; for the pilots<sup>9</sup> often had to<sup>10</sup> drop down to read the sign.

This is a good illustration<sup>11</sup> of the common English idiom “out of the frying-pan into the fire”. It is bad enough to be in the frying-pan, but isn't it worse to be in the fire? It is indeed a pity<sup>12</sup> that an attempt to get out of the frying-pan should result in<sup>13</sup> getting into the fire, and one ought to be sorry to find that instances of this are only too<sup>14</sup> common.

And how many of them are afforded by those who<sup>15</sup> are proud of their cleverness! We often hear people say they know better than to<sup>16</sup> do this or that foolish thing. But it is also a fact that clever people often make mistakes that less clever people would never make. The manager of the American film studio must have thought himself unusually clever for having hit upon<sup>17</sup> the device about the sign on the roof. Clever, indeed, but what a reward the clever man received!

【註】 1. reading of, 讀到. 2. film studio, 影片攝製場. 3. aeroplanes, 飛機. 4. so that, 所以. 5. in order to..., 把...做目的. 6. nuisance, 討厭的東西. 7. had a large sign painted on the roof, 叫人把一個大的牌示漆在屋頂上. 8. make more noise than ever, 發出比平常更大的聲音.

9. pilots, 飛機駕駛人. 10. had to .., 不得不.... 11. illusration, 例證. 12. pity, 可恨的事. 13. result in, 有...的結果. 14. only too, 却很. 15. those who. ., 那...的一種人. 16. know better than to ., 聰明得不.... 17. hit upon, 想出.

## EXCUSES

A story is told of a policeman in England who used to<sup>1</sup> excuse his inability to spell<sup>2</sup> with the remark<sup>3</sup> “I don’t reckon a man’s much of a scholar<sup>4</sup> if he can spell a word only one way”.

What a curious<sup>5</sup> excuse! Taking a leaf out of his book<sup>6</sup>, a schoolboy might be able to excuse any sort of mistake he might make. Even a howler<sup>7</sup> might be looked on as<sup>8</sup> a result of literary genius<sup>9</sup>!

I have heard of<sup>10</sup> a man who excuses his incorrect English by calling all grammar nonsense<sup>11</sup>. Great authors, he contends<sup>12</sup>, do not care much for<sup>13</sup> books on<sup>14</sup> grammar, and yet they write excellent English. He does not care much for such books either<sup>15</sup>, and *therefore* he writes excellent English. That is his logic! Well, *his* logic, like *his* English.

I have also heard of a professional maker of books—or rather an employer of professional makers of books—who makes it a rule to<sup>16</sup> speak of every defect in his books as a distinguishing feature<sup>17</sup>. For instance<sup>18</sup>, he leaves many difficult points unexplained<sup>19</sup> though he explains many common words and phrases; and he declares that he leaves the difficult points for the readers to consider and explain because the readers ought to do some thinking. As a matter of fact<sup>20</sup>, he either is puzzled by those points or is too lazy to explain them.

Many people are always ready to<sup>21</sup> excuse something or other<sup>22</sup> that they know they ought to be ashamed of. And indeed with such people there is hardly anything under the sun<sup>23</sup> for which they can find no excuse. There are excuses for things ranging from unpunctuality<sup>24</sup> to<sup>25</sup> murder. “The tram moved so slow” is a likely<sup>26</sup> excuse for late arrival. As for<sup>27</sup> murder, well, every student of English might kill his or her mother and say with pride “The writer of charming English Mary Lamb<sup>28</sup> did<sup>29</sup> kill her mother”.

【注】 1. used to..., 慣常.... 2. inability to spell, 不能拼字; 拼法不正確. 3. remark, 語. 4. I don't reckon a man's (=man is) much of a scholar, 我想一個人不能算作識字的人. 5. curious, 奇怪的. 6. Taking a leaf out of his book, 仿效他. 7. howler, 意思大錯的句語. 8. be looked on as, 被當作. 9. literary genius, 文學天才. 10. heard of, 聽說有. 11. calling all grammar nonsense, 把一切文法都看作胡說. 12. contends, 辯. 13. do not care much for, 不很顧到. 14. books on, 述及...的書. 15. either, 這字增加 “does not” 的語氣. 16. makes it a rule to..., 把...當作規則; 常常.... 17. distinguishing feature, 特點. 18. For instance, 例如. 19. leaves many difficult points unexplained, 留着許多難點不解釋. 20. As a matter of fact, 在事實上. 21. ready to..., 預備...的. 22. something or other, 某事. 23. under the sun, 在天下. 24. unpunctuality, 不守時刻. 25. ranging from...to..., 從...到...; 包括...和...等不同的一切. 26. likely, 很可能的. 27. As for, 至於. 28. Mary Lamb, 英國女文學家, 生在一七六四年, 死在一八四七年. 29. did, 確然曾經.

### HE OWES ME<sup>1</sup> HALF AN HOUR

Nobody owes me a single cent, but quite a number of<sup>2</sup> friends owe me a lot of<sup>3</sup> that something which all schoolboys know is money<sup>4</sup>. Only yesterday a friend borrowed half an hour of me<sup>5</sup> and became my debtor. The fact is that I had to wait

half an hour for him, who had promised to see me at my home.

He came all right<sup>6</sup>, full of apologies for being late<sup>7</sup>. But he would have saved my time and spared his own blushes<sup>8</sup> if he had made the appointment<sup>9</sup> for half an hour later.

Do you ever make appointments that you are not sure you can keep<sup>10</sup>? It is a very bad habit. There are jokes about waiting for lady friends<sup>11</sup> on the street corners, and it is said that lateness is a lady's privilege<sup>12</sup>, and even that a gentleman ought to consider it a pleasure to wait for a lady friend beyond the fixed time<sup>13</sup>.

But I hope that a true lady will not think this way<sup>14</sup>. Appointments are promises, and the performance of a promise is a test of integrity<sup>15</sup>.

It is so very easy to make an appointment without giving it due thought. But in doing so you are mortgaging<sup>16</sup> not only your own time but also the time of the persons whom you expect to wait for you till you eventually arrive.

It may seem a small matter to you if you show up<sup>17</sup> ten minutes after five instead of five<sup>18</sup>. But if you do it often, your friends begin to take both your appointments and your other promises with a grain of salt<sup>19</sup>. You are thus discredited<sup>20</sup>.

After all<sup>21</sup>, one man has no right to<sup>22</sup> waste another's time.

【注】 1. Owes Me. ., 欠我 ... 2. quite a number of, 許多. 3. a lot of, 許多. 4. that something which all schoolboys know is money, 指時間; 英文有成語 "Time is money."; "is" 該重讀 5. borrowed. of me, 從我借 ... 6.. all right, 不誤地. 7. full of apologies for be-

ing late, 因太遲而滿口道歉. 8. spared his own blushes, 省了他自己的面紅. 9. appointment, 約會. 10. keep, 遵守. 11. lady friends, 女朋友. 12. privilege, 特權. 13. beyond the fixed time, 過了預定的時刻. 14. think this way, 這般想. 15. integrity, 正直. 16. mortgaging, 抵押. 17. show up, 到來. 18. ten minutes after five instead of five, 不在五點而在五點十分. 19. take . with a grain of salt, 不很信任. 20. discredited, 不信任. 21. After all, 畢竟. 22. has no right to..., 沒有...的權利.

### YOU MEANT WELL<sup>1</sup>, BUT—

But<sup>2</sup> what? Well, “All mean well,” says George Bernard Shaw<sup>3</sup> “but the difference between promise and performance<sup>4</sup> is so very great”.

It is eight months and a half since this year began. Eight months and a half since you made your new year resolutions<sup>5</sup>. “I will try to—” you said to yourself<sup>6</sup>.

But where are your resolutions now? How many of them still stand? How many of them have been given a thought<sup>7</sup> since? The chances are that<sup>8</sup> many, if not all, of them have had to go by the board<sup>9</sup> because you ceased to think them quite desirable or convenient soon after you had made them. You *meant* to get up<sup>10</sup> at seven every morning, but you may have never got up till eight.

It is indeed none too<sup>11</sup> easy to keep a resolution. It requires some effort. I myself have failed to<sup>12</sup> carry out<sup>13</sup> many good resolutions. Often I have bought a book and said to myself “I must finish it in a fortnight”. I did read some pages in it, that is<sup>14</sup>, besides the preface. But somehow I left it unread for one day, two days, three days, and so on till I bought another book and did the same thing with it.



Tomorrow never comes<sup>15</sup>. This is an English proverb that should be written in large letters<sup>16</sup> on the wall of every room where any resolution maker lives. He ought to know the value of good intentions carried out while they are strong<sup>17</sup>.

A promise is worth nothing till it is fulfilled, and so long as<sup>18</sup> it remains unfulfilled, it is dope<sup>19</sup> for the conscience, though it may affect none but yourself<sup>20</sup>.

【注】 1. Meant Well, 有好的意向。 2. But, 這字指題目裏的“*But*”。 3. George Bernard Shaw, 愛爾蘭 (Ireland) 文學家, 生在一八五六年。 4. performance, 實行。 5. new year resolutions, 新年裏所立的志願。 6. said to yourself, 想。 7. have been given a thought, 曾經被想到。 8. The chances are that..., 大約... 9. go by the board, 消滅。 10. get up, 起身。 11. none too, 極不。 12. failed to..., 不... 13. carry out, 實行。 14. that is, 就是說。 15. Tomorrow never comes, 明天永不來。(一再遷延, 永不實行。) 16. letters, 字母。 17. while they are strong, 當它們 (指 “good intentions”) 強烈 (不曾冷淡下去) 的時候。 18. so long as, 在...的時候。 19. dope, 毒藥。 20. none but yourself, 祇有你自己。

### ARE YOU A THIEF?

I must hasten to explain my question. I am sure that you are not a thief, if by this word we mean the type of person the man in the street means by it<sup>1</sup>. But nearly every one of us may be called a thief, if we look at the word in a certain light<sup>2</sup>.

For there are thieves of time, thieves of peace, thieves of happiness, thieves of character and reputation. It is just as much of a theft<sup>3</sup> to steal peace of mind as to steal a piece of furniture, as much of a theft to steal five minutes as to steal five dollars. So there are many thieves who never break

into<sup>4</sup> houses and dip their hands into the pockets of the unsuspecting<sup>5</sup>.

One of the commonest forms of thieving<sup>6</sup> among those who can read is to steal a glance at letters and postcards for others. It may not do much harm to either the writer or the receiver. Still it is stealing, and perhaps one does not usually like to have one's private correspondence read by<sup>7</sup> any person to whom one does not care to<sup>8</sup> show it.

Men talk of stolen kisses, stolen pleasures, stolen fruit, etc. as if<sup>9</sup> stealing were the spice<sup>10</sup> of life. No, they ought not. Even if it is true that what is got by stealth<sup>11</sup> is more enjoyable than what is got by more honest means<sup>12</sup>, stealing is not therefore justified<sup>13</sup>.

One of the English words for which there are no Chinese equivalents<sup>14</sup> is "kleptomania<sup>15</sup>", which means a persistent impulse<sup>16</sup> to steal in persons who do it not because of<sup>17</sup> poverty. It is said that there are even rich people who are in the habit of<sup>18</sup> stealing things that people of moderate means<sup>19</sup> can well afford<sup>20</sup>. In England and most of the United States<sup>21</sup> it has been held that kleptomania is not a legal defence<sup>22</sup> except in the case of<sup>23</sup> persons who cannot distinguish between right and wrong. Well, is kleptomania in the broad sense<sup>24</sup> any<sup>25</sup> more excusable than the same tendency in the narrow sense<sup>26</sup>?

【注】 1. the type...by it, 一般人用這個字的時候所指的那種人。 2. certain light, 某方面。 3. theft, 偷。 4. break into, 闖入。 5. the unsuspecting, 不疑(有人摸他們的袋)的人們。 6. thieving, 偷。 7. have one's private correspondence read by, 被...讀他的私人通信。 8. care to...,

肯.... 9. as if, 好像. 10. spice, 興味. 11. by stealth, 用偷的方法地. 12. means, 方法. 13. is not therefore justified, 並不因而可以算做正當. 14. equivalents, 相當語. 15. kleptomania, 偷竊病. 16. impulse, 衝動. 17. because of, 因為. 18. are in the habit of, 有...的習慣. 19. of moderate means, 不富裕的. 20. can well afford, 買得起. 21. most of the United States, 美(洲合衆)國的大半的州(state). 22. legal defence, 法律上辯護的理由. 23. in the case of, 關於. 24. broad sense, 廣義. 25. any, 多少; 有些(是 adverb.) 26. narrow sense, 狹義.

### DON'T BE EXTRAVAGANT<sup>1</sup>!

Perhaps you have had enough of<sup>2</sup> advice against extravagance, and are imagining that I am going to<sup>3</sup> advise you to save<sup>4</sup> cents and dollars that you either cannot save or cannot afford to spend. I myself have heard well-to-do<sup>5</sup> people talk of economy and throw out<sup>6</sup> suggestions about it that they themselves do not care to<sup>7</sup> put into practice<sup>8</sup>, and know that they cannot<sup>9</sup>.

But I am not referring to money at all. Nowadays few of us have enough money to be extravagant with, and it would be foolish to warn one against what one cannot possibly be guilty of<sup>10</sup>.

What I am talking about is speech, with which nearly all of us are apt to be extravagant, especially when under some sort of strong feeling. A mother would call her child the best<sup>11</sup> she had ever seen when delighted with something about it but would call it the worst<sup>12</sup> as soon as<sup>13</sup> it got into a scrape<sup>14</sup>.

Extravagance in speech may not always matter much<sup>15</sup>. When you write<sup>16</sup> to ask a friend to come to see you, you may be extravagant and say that you are *dying* to<sup>17</sup> see him; but your friend is not likely to be prepared to find you dead if he calls

on<sup>18</sup> you later than you expect him to turn up<sup>19</sup>. And when you say “I have told you fifty<sup>20</sup> times before”, you are not in danger of<sup>21</sup> being asked to name the fifty occasions specifically<sup>22</sup>.

There are cases, however, where extravagance may lead to<sup>23</sup> trouble. Mountains made out of mole-hills<sup>24</sup> are responsible for much of the unhappiness on earth. Once many years ago I received a letter from a friend saying that he was writing to<sup>25</sup> me for the last time because he was so very ill as not to live another day<sup>26</sup>. As a matter of fact<sup>27</sup> he is still living today. He should have saved me the days of uneasiness<sup>28</sup> before I heard from<sup>29</sup> him again. Probably he did<sup>30</sup> cause his relatives and some other friends much anxiety that was entirely unnecessary.

【注】 1. Extravagant, 奢侈的。 2. have had enough of, 已經有了太多的...; 對於...覺得可厭了。 3. going to, 將。 4. save, 節省。 5. well-to-do, 富裕的。 6. throw out, 隨意提出; 吐露。 7. do not care to .., 不肯.... 8. put into practice, 實行。 9. cannot=cannot put into practice. 10. cannot possibly be guilty of, 決不會犯。 11. the best=the best child. 12. the worst=the worst child. 13. as soon as, 一等到了.... 14. scrape, 困難; 麻煩。 15. matter much, 關係重大。 16. write, 寫信。 17. are dying to..., 渴望.... 18. calls on, 訪。 19. turn up, 來到。 20. fifty, 許多。 21. in danger of, 有...的危險的。 22. specifically, 特別地; 個別地。 23. lead to, 引到。 24. Mountains made out of mole hills, 小題大做; 過甚其詞。 25. writing to, 寫信給。 26. was so...another day, 病得不能再活一天; 危在旦夕。 27. As a matter of fact, 實在。 28. saved me the days of uneasiness, 使我不有那若干天的心中不安。 29. heard from, 接到...的信。 30. did, 確然曾經。

### NOSY PARKER<sup>1</sup>

Nosy Parker—No, I am not going to<sup>2</sup> write a biographical sketch<sup>3</sup>. I do not know of<sup>4</sup> any person called Nosy Parker.

But there are so many Nosy Parkers among us. You may be one<sup>5</sup>. I myself am one, in a sense<sup>6</sup>.

For Nosy Parker is a nickname<sup>7</sup> for one who is<sup>8</sup> inquisitive<sup>9</sup> about other people's business. Incidentally<sup>10</sup>, as both you and I are students of English, I am sure you will not mind<sup>11</sup> my telling you that "nosy", being an adjective formed from "nose", has the slangy<sup>12</sup> sense of *inquisitive*. The origin of the name, however, is unknown, and I do not think the "Parker" has ever been accounted for<sup>13</sup>.

Now let me tell you a story. A young man who lived in a block of flats<sup>14</sup> was walking down the stairs one day when he heard the sounds of a terrible row<sup>15</sup> between a man and woman going on<sup>16</sup> behind one of the doors<sup>17</sup>. Instinctively<sup>18</sup> he stopped to listen. He knocked at the door and waited. Still the row went on. He knocked again, louder. This time the door opened, and the husband and wife appeared. The young man asked them what they had been quarrelling about and offered<sup>19</sup> to help to put an end to<sup>20</sup> the trouble. He little expected<sup>21</sup> to hear the husband say: "I wish you would mind your own business<sup>22</sup>. For your information<sup>23</sup>, we are rehearsing a part<sup>24</sup>. But even if we were having a real row, I should still object to<sup>25</sup> interference. Good day to you<sup>26</sup>, sir!"

The young man no doubt<sup>27</sup> considered himself unlucky because his intentions were good. But it is far from<sup>28</sup> advisable to give help or advice where it is not wanted.

If it is not advisable to give unrequired help or advice, it is still less<sup>29</sup> advisable to ask questions

about other people's business merely out of curiosity<sup>30</sup>. They may not care to<sup>31</sup> answer such questions though they do not necessarily<sup>32</sup> have cause to<sup>33</sup> be ashamed about the information the answers would reveal.

As I have said, I myself am more or less<sup>34</sup> a Nosy Parker. I am curious about the personal life of English-writing authors, and about the preferences<sup>35</sup> of students of English and those who I suppose are interested in such matters. Not long ago I asked a Scotchman<sup>36</sup> who his favourite authors<sup>37</sup> were, and got the answer "You might better ask me who my favourite *girls* are".

I hope that my "nosiness" will not extend to things that have nothing to do with<sup>38</sup> the study of English, and that, even as far as my subject is concerned<sup>39</sup>, it will not cause me to give offence<sup>40</sup>—unwittingly<sup>41</sup>.

【注】 1. Nosy Parker, 參看本文。 2. going to..., 將.... 3. biographical sketch, 略傳。 4. know of, 知道。 5. one—a Nosy Parker. 6. in a sense, 在某一意義上; 有幾分。 7. nickname, 綽號。 8. one who is..., ...的一個人。 9. inquisitive, 喜歡多問的。 10. Incidentally, 順便說及。 11. mind, 反對。 12. slangy, 俚俗的。 13. accounted for, 解釋; 說明...的理由。 14. block of flats, 一所公寓房子。 15. row, 爭吵。 16. going on, 進行。 17. behind one of the doors, 在一扇門的裏面; 在一間房子裏。 18. Instinctively, 直覺地; 自然而然地。 19. offered, 說他自願。 20. put an end to, 停止。 21. little expected, 不曾想到。 22. mind your own business, 管你自己的事(勿管閒事)≡ 23. For your information, 使你知道。 24. rehearsing a part, 演習一個說白。 25. object to, 反對。 26. Good day to you, 向你祝日安(請你去罷)。 27. no doubt, 當然。 28. far from, 極不。 29. still less, 更不。 30. merely out of curiosity, 祇因為好奇。 31. may not care to..., 也許不肯.... 32. do not necessarily, 未必。 33. have cause to..., 有...的理由。 34. more or less, 多少; 有幾分。 35. preferences, 喜歡

的事物。 36. Scotchman, 蘇格蘭 (Scotland) 人。 37. favourite authors, 愛好的作家。 38. have nothing to do with, 和...沒有關係。 39. as far as...is concerned, 就...而論。 40. give offence, 使人見怪。 41. unwittingly, 無意地。

## ARE YOU A CHILD?

Are you still a child? I am afraid not<sup>1</sup>. I myself am no longer<sup>2</sup> one<sup>3</sup>. However, I wish I thought<sup>4</sup> that I had much of a child in me<sup>5</sup>.

The word "child", as you probably know, has given rise to<sup>6</sup> two adjectives, "childish" and "childlike", which form one of the most useful pairs of English synonyms<sup>7</sup>. "Childish" used of<sup>8</sup> adults<sup>9</sup> and their qualities has a bad sense and means *foolish* or *silly*. "Childlike", which should always be so used<sup>10</sup> and never of children, has a good sense and means *innocent* or *frank*.

You are no longer a child. But I hope you are still something of a child. I mean that I hope you have some childlike qualities—not childish ones<sup>11</sup>, mind<sup>12</sup>,

Well<sup>13</sup>, I do not think there is much danger of being childish in the rising generation<sup>14</sup>. Rather<sup>15</sup> there seems to be too much sophistication<sup>16</sup>. But I am sorry to note that there is as little childlikeness as childishness, and that people<sup>17</sup> are apt to confuse the two<sup>18</sup>. I myself sometimes fail to<sup>19</sup> see whether the enthusiasm with which something is done<sup>20</sup> is of the childish or childlike kind.

As I have said, I hope you have some childlike qualities. I hope you always try to avoid letting your heart grow<sup>21</sup> hard. I hope you sometimes do

something in a childlike manner even at the risk of<sup>22</sup> being childish.

By the way<sup>23</sup>, one of the best ways of remaining childlike is to read books for children. I hope you are not yet too much sophisticated to care for them<sup>24</sup>.

【注】 1. not=you are not still a child. 2. no longer, 不再. 3. one=a child. 4. I wish I thought, 我巴不得我以為. 5. I had much of a child in me, 我很多孩子性質. 6. given rise to, 生出. 7. synonyms, 同義字. 8. of, 關於. 9. adults, 成年人. 10. so used=used of adults and their qualities. 11. ones=qualities. 12. mind, 注意 (這裏屬 imperative mood). 13. Well, 語助詞. 14. rising generation, 一般青年. 15. Rather, 却; 倒是. 16. sophistication, 懂得人情世故. 17. people, 一般人. 18. two, 指 childlikeness 和 childishness. 19. fail to ..., 不.... 20. the enthusiasm with which something is done, 做某事所用的熱情. 21. grow, 變成. 22. at the risk of, 冒...的險. 23. By the way, 順便說一句. 24. are not...for them, 尚未因太懂人情世故而不喜歡它們.

### WHEN SOMETHING IS UP<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps hardly does an hour pass without there being something “up” in Shanghai<sup>2</sup>. Fighting<sup>3</sup>, quarrelling, pocket-picking<sup>4</sup>, fires<sup>5</sup>, and all kinds of<sup>6</sup> incidents and accidents are the order of the day<sup>7</sup>.

When something is “up”, there is always a little knot<sup>8</sup> of people. For man<sup>9</sup> is curious<sup>10</sup>. He wants to know about even things that he is sure has nothing to do with him<sup>11</sup>. He asks “What’s the matter?<sup>12</sup>” quite naturally. He cranes his neck<sup>13</sup> to see what is wrong. If he finds a person lying injured on the pavement<sup>14</sup>, he inquires of some other spectators<sup>15</sup> how the unfortunate<sup>16</sup> has got injured<sup>17</sup>, where he lives, whether any policeman has witnessed<sup>18</sup> the accident, and when an ambulance<sup>19</sup> may



be expected to arrive. If he finds a man and a woman calling each other names<sup>20</sup>, he inquires what is the relation between them, whether there is a third man or woman in the matter, and how the trouble has started.

Man, as I have said, is curious. If he were not so<sup>21</sup>, he would not read, he would not go to the theatre<sup>22</sup>, he would not even marry. To stop and look on<sup>23</sup> when something is "up" in the street is a natural way to satisfy one's curiosity<sup>24</sup>. It is not unlike<sup>25</sup> reading a story or seeing a play<sup>26</sup> gratis<sup>27</sup>.

So far, so good<sup>28</sup>. But all is not good<sup>29</sup> as regards<sup>30</sup> this stopping and looking on. Those who do it may not find anything blamable in it. They honestly think that it is harmless. In fact<sup>31</sup>, however, they may do harm without knowing it<sup>32</sup>. For an injured or quarreling person is likely to be distressed by seeing a crowd of sightseers<sup>33</sup> standing round gazing at him. Besides<sup>34</sup>, where there is need for help, the presence of idle lookers-on<sup>35</sup> often proves a hindrance<sup>36</sup>.

Where we can offer no help, we should at least<sup>37</sup> let those who can offer help do it<sup>38</sup>.

【注】 1. Up, 發生的。 2. Perhaps hardly...in Shanghai, 也許上海沒有一個碼頭不發生事故。 3. Fighting, 打架。 4. pocket-picking, 摸竊。 5. fires, 火災。 6. all kinds of, 種種。 7. the order of the day, 盛行的事。 8. knot, 羣。 9. man, 人類。 10. curious, 好奇的。 11. has nothing to do with him, 無關於他。 12. What's the matter?, 有什麼失常的事? 13. cranes his neck, 伸長他的頸。 14. pavement, 路邊的人行道。 15. spectators, 旁觀者。 16. unfortunate, 不幸的人。 17. got injured, 受傷。 18. witnessed, 目擊。 19. ambulance, 救護車。 20. calling each other names, 互相辱罵。 21. so=curious. 22. go to the theatre, (到戲院裏去) 看戲。 23. look on, 旁觀。 24. curiosity, 好奇心。

25. not unlike, 並不<sup>不</sup>像, 有些像. 26. play, 戲劇. 27. gratis, 不費錢地. 28. So far, so good, 像上面所<sup>所</sup>講, 還算不壞. 29. all is not good, 並不完全是好的. 30. as regards, 關於. 31. In fact, 在事實上. 32. without knowing it, 自己不知道地. 33. sightseers, 觀覽者. 34. Besides, 而且. 35. lookers-on, 旁觀者. 36. proves a hindrance, 被證明爲阻礙. 37. at least, 至少. 38. do it=offer help.

## BORROWING BOOKS

I do not boast<sup>1</sup> a large library. But I do not think I have finished<sup>2</sup> even half of the books that I have bought. When I buy a book, I mean<sup>3</sup> to read it through<sup>4</sup>. The fact, however, is that I usually read only a part of it, sometimes no further than<sup>5</sup> the preface and one or two pages at random<sup>6</sup>. I have often advised myself not to buy another book till I have finished all those I have already bought. But I buy a book from time to time<sup>7</sup> in spite of myself<sup>8</sup>, and I am afraid that I shall not be able to act on<sup>9</sup> my own advice even if I should live to be a hundred<sup>10</sup>.

I have, however, read through many a<sup>11</sup> book that is not mine. I mean that I have borrowed many a book and finished it—quickly.

What is borrowed has to<sup>12</sup> be returned. That is why I scarcely ever fail to<sup>13</sup> finish a borrowed book. As to<sup>14</sup> those I have bought, I put off<sup>15</sup> reading them because I am certain that they are mine for ever<sup>16</sup> and therefore that I may well wait till I have more time to read them at leisure<sup>17</sup>. The trouble is that “more time” never comes. But more *books* do<sup>18</sup> come; for I buy one from time to time. I wish I could bring myself to<sup>19</sup> treat every book I have as if<sup>20</sup> it were a borrowed one.

Well, if I do not now treat my own books as if they were borrowed ones, nor do I treat borrowed books as if they were my own. To borrow a book and neither to read it nor to return it does not seem to be advisable. Still less<sup>21</sup> advisable is it to borrow a book and lend it as if it were one's own. Not being a lawyer, I wonder<sup>22</sup> if it is at all lawful to lend what one has borrowed.

【注】 1. boast, 有。 2. finished, 讀完。 3. mean, 意欲。 4. read it through, 讀完。 5. no further than, 並不比...多。 6. at random, 隨意地。 7. from time to time, 不時, 時時。 8. in spite of myself, 不願自己地; 不能自主地。 9. act on, 實行。 10. a hundred, 一百歲。 11. many a, 許多 (的一本)。 12. has to, 必須... 13. fail to, 不... 14. As to, 至於。 15. put off, 遲延。 16. for ever, 永久。 17. at leisure, 從容地。 18. do, 確然。 19. bring myself to..., 使我自己... 20. as if, 好像。 21. Still less, 更不。 22. wonder, 不知道; 要知道。

### WHAT IS THE CHIEF CAUSE OF DIVORCE<sup>1</sup>?

Well, don't expect me to dwell upon<sup>2</sup> marriage and divorce, an old, old<sup>3</sup> subject. No, I cannot say much about it. I can only agree with a certain<sup>4</sup> apparently<sup>5</sup> stupid fellow who, when asked<sup>6</sup> what he thought was the chief cause of divorce, gave the simple and prompt answer—marriage. Whatever authorities on social sciences<sup>7</sup> may have to say, no-one can deny that there can be no divorce without previous marriage. The best way to avoid divorce is *not* to marry.

I am not going to<sup>8</sup> talk about marriage, however. I have only been reminded by the said<sup>9</sup> question and answer of<sup>10</sup> the fact that many of our petty troubles can be easily avoided by removing

their chief causes. I remember how I was once annoyed by the frequency with which my watch wanted repairing<sup>11</sup>. What was the chief cause of the trouble? The watch, of course<sup>12</sup>. So I left it alone<sup>13</sup>. I have never bought another watch since<sup>14</sup>, and consequently have never had the same trouble again.

You may call me foolish or even crazy in saying this. But there *are* petty troubles that are quite unnecessary. I do not advise going hungry or naked<sup>15</sup> in order to<sup>16</sup> avoid trouble about food or clothing. But can't one do without<sup>17</sup> all luxuries? Can't one live without a wireless set<sup>18</sup>? Can't one study English without a costly fountain-pen<sup>19</sup>? Can't one go about<sup>20</sup> without a motor-car?

To return to<sup>21</sup> the question of marriage and divorce. It seems that many young people are too prone to fall in love<sup>22</sup>. The result is that they are liable to be crossed in love<sup>23</sup>. They cannot but<sup>24</sup> feel sad unless they can find some consolation in Tennyson's lines<sup>25</sup>:

'Tis better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all.<sup>26</sup>

The chances, however, are that<sup>27</sup> they cannot find any consolation in them. Now the question is what is the chief cause of being crossed in love. The answer is only too<sup>28</sup> evident.

【注】 1. Divorce, 離婚. 2. dwell upon, 詳論. 3. old, old, 很老的; 很舊的. 4. certain, 某. 5. apparently, 表面上地. 6. asked—he was asked. 7. authorities on social sciences, 社會科學專家. 8. going to . . ., 將. . . 9. said, 所談及的. 10. of, 這字和“reminded”呼應. 11.

the frequency with which my watch wanted repairing, 我的錶的時常需要修理. 12. of course, 當然. 13. left it alone, 任它去. 14. since, 從那時候到現在. 15. going hungry or naked, 挨餓或裸體. 16. in order to..., 以...做目的. 17. do without, 省去; 不用. 18. wireless set, 無線電收音機. 19. fountain-pen, 自來水筆. 20. go about, 來來去去, 行. 21. To return to, 再說到. 22. fall in love, 發生戀愛. 23. crossed in love, 失戀的. 24. cannot but, 不得不. 25. Tennyson's lines, Tennyson 的詩. (Tennyson 就是 Alfred Tennyson, 英國詩人, 生在一八零九年. 死在一八九二年.) 26. 'Tis better...at all, 曾經戀愛而失戀, 比從未戀愛的好 ('Tis=It is). 27. The chances, however, are that..., 但大約... 28. only too, 却很.

### OF SENTIMENTAL<sup>1</sup> VALUE

The following small notice<sup>2</sup> is from a provincial newspaper published in England:

If this<sup>3</sup> should catch the eye of<sup>4</sup> the men who entered the house of<sup>5</sup> Mrs—at—, she would like them to know that she is grateful for the return of her personal trinkets<sup>6</sup>, which were only of sentimental value.

This paragraph reminds me of the common phrase "Honour<sup>7</sup> among Thieves<sup>8</sup>". Yes, there is honour even among thieves. If it had not been for this<sup>9</sup>, the lady would not have had her personal trinkets returned to her<sup>9</sup>. The burglary<sup>10</sup> could not be excused on that account<sup>11</sup>. But it does seem that the thieves concerned<sup>12</sup> had great consideration for<sup>13</sup> the lady.

If we talk about Honour among Thieves, do we all, who are not thieves, always exercise that honour ourselves? Do we all take care not to<sup>14</sup> tamper with<sup>15</sup> what is of sentimental value to others?

A cup, a postcard, a photograph, or a paper-weight<sup>16</sup> may be worth very little in the monetary

sense<sup>17</sup>, but in the eyes of<sup>18</sup> the person who considers it of sentimental value it may be a priceless possession<sup>19</sup>. He keeps it with loving care, touches, views<sup>20</sup>, and kisses it every day, and shows it proudly to his friends again and again. For it represents to him someone who is in some way associated with it<sup>21</sup>—a relative or a friend, or a man or woman whom he loves or admires for some reason or other<sup>22</sup>.

What is of sentimental value can never be replaced<sup>23</sup>. It has no equivalent. It is unique<sup>24</sup>. When it is lost or stolen, its owner might be willing to pay a hundred times its worth<sup>25</sup> for its recovery. But when it is spoilt or destroyed, well, nothing can be substituted<sup>26</sup>. It is small wonder that<sup>27</sup> the lady who had been robbed and had her trinkets returned to her inserted a paragraph in the newspaper to thank the thieves.

After all<sup>28</sup>, we ought not to have less honour than thieves so far as what is of sentimental value to others is concerned<sup>29</sup>.

【注】 1. Sentimental, 情感上的。 2. notice, 通告。 3. this, 指通告。 4. catch the eye of, 被...見到。 5. the men who entered the house of ..., 到...家裏（偷東西）的人們。 6. trinkets, 小裝飾品。 7. Honour, 人格；道德。 8. If it had not been for this, 倘若不是這樣。 9. had her personal trinkets returned to her, 被人把她個人的小裝飾品還給她。 10. burglary, 偷竊。 11. on that account, 爲了那個原因。 12. concerned, 所涉及的。 13. had great consideration for, 很關切於。 14. take care not to ..., 留心弗.... 15. tamper with, 妨礙。 16. paper-weight, 壓紙的東西。 17. may be worth very little in the monetary sense, 也許在金錢上所值極少。 18. in the eyes of, 在...看來。 19. priceless possession, 無價之寶。 20. views, 看。 21. is in some way associated with it, 在某方面和它有關係。 22. for some reason or other, 爲了某種

原因。 23. replaced, 代。 24. unique, 天下無雙的。 25. a hundred times its worth, 百倍於它的價值。 26. nothing can be substituted, 沒有什麼可以用作代替物。 27. It is small wonder that. . . 是不足爲奇的。 28. After all, 畢竟。 29. so far as...is concerned, 就...而論。

### “WAYS”<sup>1</sup>

“In his high-flying vanities<sup>2</sup>, his low-lying oddities<sup>3</sup>, what we call his ‘ways’”—Augustine Birrell<sup>4</sup>. The “ways” here is one of a number of<sup>5</sup> common words that do not seem to me to be capable of being accurately translated. Reference<sup>6</sup> to some dictionaries has given me the following further examples.

has a *way* of blinking.

has a little *way* of leaving his bills unpaid<sup>7</sup>.

It is only his *way*<sup>8</sup>.

After you get used to<sup>9</sup> his *ways*, you don't care so much.

Well, I wonder whether it is common to say “*I have a way of. . .*”. At any rate<sup>10</sup> I do not think I have ever found it written anywhere. The fact is perhaps that ~~one~~ hardly thinks one has any “way” at all.

When you come to think of it<sup>11</sup>, however, we all have our “ways”. I myself have a way of reading a few pages of a book and leaving it unread for weeks, months, or even years, have a way of reading a paragraph here and there<sup>12</sup> in a book of reference<sup>13</sup> when I am looking for some information that those paragraphs have nothing to do with<sup>14</sup>, have a way of writing letters very quickly and adding one or two or even more postscripts<sup>15</sup>, some-

times the latter<sup>16</sup> occupying more space than the letter proper<sup>17</sup>, and have a way of keeping little pieces of paper for writing short and very informal messages on.

What are *your* “ways”? Possibly you have some that I cannot even imagine. A collection of essays by different authors on their “ways” would doubtless<sup>18</sup> form delightful reading<sup>19</sup>.

We say “It is only his way” when we mean to excuse someone for a piece of strange or objectionable<sup>20</sup> conduct. But of course<sup>21</sup> one should never try to excuse oneself by saying “It is only my way”.

【注】 1. Ways, 習慣; 癖。 2. vanities, 虛榮。 3. oddities, 癖。 4. Augustine Birrell, 英國文學家, 生在一八五零年, 死在一九三三年。 5. a number of, 若干。 6. Reference, 查 (字典)。 7. leaving his bills unpaid, 不付帳。 8. It is only his way, 那不過是他的習慣 (不足為奇的)。 9. get used to, 對於...變成慣常。 10. At any rate, 不論怎樣。 11. When you come to think of it, 當你想了一想的時候。 12. here and there, 隨處。 13. book of reference, 參考書。 14. have nothing to do with, 和...無關。 15. postscripts, 附啓; 再啓。 16. the latter, 指 “postscripts”。 17. letter proper, 信的本部。 18. doubtless, 當然。 19. reading, 讀物。 20. objectionable, 討厭的。 21. of course, 當然。

## NEGATIVE HAPPINESS

It was in an essay by Hilaire Belloc<sup>1</sup> that I found the expression<sup>2</sup> “negative happiness”, by which the author evidently means the happiness of doing nothing or perhaps of worrying about nothing. The term, however, has reminded me of<sup>3</sup> something quite different that I should think deserves it as well<sup>4</sup>. I mean the happiness not of doing nothing but of not doing something<sup>5</sup> (I do not say *anything*<sup>6</sup>, mind you<sup>7</sup>).



When it comes to<sup>8</sup> the question of happiness, it is not always what one is doing but often what one is not doing that matters<sup>9</sup>. For instance<sup>10</sup>, I am at this very moment writing. Whether I am enjoying it or not does not concern us here. But certainly I am having the pleasure of not walking in rain, nor waiting at a windy<sup>11</sup> railway station, nor jostling in a crowded tram or bus, nor attending a tiresome lecture, nor suffering from any other petty trouble.

You sometimes feel sorry for not being able to have a good time<sup>12</sup> of some sort or other<sup>13</sup>, don't you? Well, why not look at the negative side of the question? Let us suppose that you are sorry that you cannot go to the theatre<sup>14</sup> this evening. Just imagine the pleasure of not going to the theatre by imagining the trouble of going to the theatre—and coming home from it. Just imagine an evening that you will pass in not standing in a long queue<sup>15</sup>, nor sitting between a talkative boy and a tobacco-smelling old man, nor hearing a tedious soliloquy<sup>16</sup>, nor seeing a disgusting or creepy<sup>17</sup> scene<sup>18</sup>, nor returning home tired and sleepy, nor fearing that you cannot get up<sup>19</sup> early enough the next morning. Don't you think such an evening a pleasant or jolly one?

Only yesterday a friend of mine entertained me in a fashionable tea-house. I am thankful to him for his kindness. But I am also thankful to him for not entertaining me today; for I really did not like the stuffy<sup>20</sup> room. Today my friend is entertaining me by not entertaining me.

【注】 1. Hilaire Belloc, 現代英國文學家, 生在一八七零年. 2. expression, 語. 3. reminded me of, 使我想到. 4. as well, 也. 5. not doing something, 不做某事. 6. anything, 注意 “not doing anything” 作「不做什麼事」解釋, 和 “not doing something” 不同. 7. mind you, 請你注意. 8. When it comes to, 講到; 關於. 9. matters, 關係重大; 有問題. 10. For instance, 例如. 11. windy, 有風的. 12. have a good time, 作樂. 13. some sort or other, 某種. 14. go to the theatre, (到戲院裏去) 看戲. 15. queue, (候在戲院門口買票的) 一串人. 16. soliloquy, 獨白. 17. creepy, 嚇人的; 極可怕的. 18. scene, 幕; 情景. 19. get up, 起身. 20. stuffy, 不通風的; 悶的.

— THE END —