



英文芻言

A WORD TO THE
WISE

葛 傳 樂 著

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A WORD TO THE WISE

BY

HERTZ C. K. KÊ

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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, 絮言. It is a pun: it is significant, as readers can no doubt see, but it also alludes to my literary name, 獻鶴.

HERTZ C. K. KÊ.

April, 1939

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Books on English and Books in English	1
Learning English Conversation by Imitation	2
Something More Important than Enlarging One's Vocabulary	4
Is It English?	6
Observation <i>Versus</i> Asking Questions	7
Mere Knowledge not Enough	9
"Is He a Nice Man?"	10
What Kind of English?	12
Words, Common and Uncommon	14
Basic English	15
Reading Dictionaries	17
Idiom <i>Versus</i> Idioms	19
Make Your Own Dictionary!	20
Tongue and Pen	22
Make Another Dictionary of Your Own! ..	23
Mistaking Woman for Man	24
The Language is the Main Thing	26
Simply Didn't Know	27
So Many Points!	28
The Question of Background	31
<i>The Word</i>	32
Beware of Guess-work	34
Better Short than Long	35
A Good Knowledge of Bad English	37
Does He Write English Correctly?	39
Unconscious Word-making	40

	PAGE
Where to Drop a Letter to His Sweetheart ..	41
As If One Could Die More than Once	43
Only a Slip, But—	44
'A Young Man in a Black Dress	46
Something Unnatural	48
"More Presently"	49
At a Wedding	51
Summer	52
Shopping	53
Misunderstanding	55
Out of the Frying-pan	57
Excuses	58
He Owes Me Half an Hour	59
You Meant Well, But—	61
Are You a Thief?	62
Don't be Extravagant!	64
Nosy Parker	65
Are You a Child?	68
When Something is Up	69
Borrowing Books	71
What is the Chief Cause of Divorce?	72
Of Sentimental Value	74
"Ways"	76
Negative Happiness	77

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.²

Books on English are intended for students of the language³; 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 of⁴ 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 diagrams⁵. Books on English are helpful, but no-one can master⁶ English by reading such books only. Perhaps the very fact of⁷ there being so many such books today accounts for⁸ the frequency with which we meet with people who can talk and write *about* English without being able to talk and write it⁹. This is due to¹⁰ 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 sketches¹¹? Or is it a biography or a diary or merely a text-book of history or geography? Well, if you happen to¹² spend your days and nights on books *on* English, it is time you acted on my warning¹³.

【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 know¹ some returned students² from England and America who do not speak English correctly; they make mistakes in grammar, idiom, and pronunciation. But the other day³ I met a Chinese lady who spoke perfect English⁴. She does not seem to be so well up in English as I am⁵, but she speaks it more like an English person than I do⁶. Upon inquiry⁷ I was given to know⁸ 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 it in the way she does⁹, not because she thinks it is the right way but because she knows no other¹⁰. She is free

from¹¹, and probably ignorant of¹², the thousand and one¹³ mistakes peculiar to¹⁴ Chinese students of English.

This lady learnt to speak English by imitating—unconsciously¹⁵. It is no doubt¹⁶ the best way. But all Chinese students do not¹⁷ 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 abroad¹⁸. They have carried their mistakes over¹⁹ and then carried them back, though they ought to have left them there.

I am perhaps in danger of being understood to mean²⁰ that all who go to England or America ought to do so for the sole purpose²¹ of learning English conversation. No; I simply²² mean that by careful imitation one can very well²³ learn it—and that²⁴ not only in countries where English is the mother tongue²⁵ 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 realized²⁶ among Chinese students of English that good speaking leads to good writing and that language is essentially²⁷ 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 VOCABULARY¹

“How to enlarge my vocabulary”—this is one of the commonest questions that I have been asked. True², the average³ Chinese student of English has a very limited⁴ 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 do⁵. But I think the average Chinese student of English has something more important to do about his limited vocabulary than to enlarge it⁶. He has yet to know many more words before he can master English⁷. Nor can he master English till he has acquired a better understanding of most of the words that *are*⁸ in his vocabulary.

For he may think he knows a word when he does not really know it. By knowing a word I mean⁹ knowing its true sense or senses instead of¹⁰ merely knowing one or more of what we call its Chinese equivalents¹¹. Take¹² 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 at¹³ being called students of English simply because they are no longer¹⁴ at school. As a matter of fact¹⁵, 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 neglect¹⁵ common words. Apart from¹⁷ the possibility of misuse and misunderstanding we are apt to neglect their various senses, or rather idiomatic uses¹⁸. Take the word "read", which you of course¹⁹ think you know very well. But do you know all the senses (or uses) as illustrated²⁰ below?

Can you *read* dreams²¹? She cannot *read* the clock²²

He is *reading* her thoughts.²³ The sentence *reads* smoothly.²⁴

Don't *read* too much into the text.²⁵ The thermometer reads 68.²⁶

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

【注】 1. Enlarging One's Vocabulary, 增加自己所識的字; 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. arc, 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當語。 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, 看鐘錶上所指示的時刻。 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°, 記出六十八度。

IS IT ENGLISH?

Some time ago I overheard¹ a teacher condemn² “. . . asked him what was the matter” and correct it to³ “. . . asked him what the matter was”. He was apparently well versed in English grammar⁴ and particularly in the construction known as indirect speech⁵. But for once⁶ he was wrong. Whatever he might say⁷, “. . . asked him what was the matter” is English, and “. . . asked him what the matter was” is not English.

Thanks to their grammatical sense⁸, many Chinese students of English are apt to⁹ make mistakes that they might not make if they had read widely and carefully in general literature but had not learnt much grammar¹⁰. Armed with a knowledge of parsing and analysis¹¹, they often invent unEnglish expressions that might well be justified by some rule or other¹².

Grammar is indeed a very important subject, and I myself take a keen interest in it. But it is not everything¹³, as many students might think. It is quite possible for a non-English-speaking students of the language¹⁴ to attach too much importance to the study of grammar to care about¹⁵ idiom, idioms, and the idiomatic¹⁶—in other words¹⁷, to care about the question “Is it English?”

To return to¹⁸ “. . . asked him what was the matter” and “. . . asked him what the matter was”. Why is the former¹⁹ English and the latter²⁰ not? Because Englishmen would say the former but not the latter. English is the language of the Eng-

lish²¹, and should be used only in ways in which the English use it. We are free to²² use forms of expression that it is natural for normal Englishmen to use²³, but need not stop to consider²⁴ why they should prefer the particular form to others²⁵ that would be good enough for the idea in question²⁶ so far as grammar is concerned²⁷.

【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, 攜著單字分解和句語分析的知識。 12. un-English 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 VERSUS¹ ASKING QUESTIONS

Is there any difference in pronunciation² 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 average³ Englishman would answer “Yes”, and perhaps would think this question simply⁴ un-

necessary. But listen to his talk, and you will find that the difference is imaginary rather than real⁴.

This is because he is not conscious of⁷ the way in which he actually speaks though he has a vague idea of⁸ the pronunciation of these words. And the same reason accounts for⁹ the fact that there are points of pronunciation and idiom¹⁰ that he denies the existence of because he thinks they are non-existent¹¹. For instance, though he has the phenomenon known in phonetics as r-linking¹², he would not admit that he has it; he would even say that this “'neve re'ke:z”¹³ (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 to¹⁴ do it” are common enough, but an average Englishman would condemn the use of “got”, saying perhaps that it simply makes no sense¹⁵. Well, he is right, and I admire his objection to superfluous¹⁶ words. But he says “have got” himself.

All this shows that observation is more important than asking questions when it comes to¹⁷ learning English conversation. And there are many everyday expressions¹⁸ that one cannot learn to use without careful observation. For instance, “Fancy!¹⁹” is common enough, but everyone that knows this word cannot use this expression happily in conversation²⁰.

【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...的原因. 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. "neve rə'keɪz" 請注意 "never" 的末尾字母 "r" 和 "occurs" 的開首字母 "o" (讀作[e]) 相排. 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, 話. 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話用得適當.

MERE KNOWLEDGE NOT ENOUGH

There are some men of my acquaintance¹ who persist in² mispronouncing certain words³. Not that they do not know how to pronounce those words correctly, but that⁴ they do not pronounce them correctly. They are often aware of their mistakes as soon as they make them⁵. They need no more pulling up⁶. They are simply too lazy to make an effort at correct pronunciation⁷.

The fact is that when one has formed the habit of making certain mistakes, one cannot get them corrected⁸ without making an effort to correct them. It makes little difference⁹ for one merely to know¹⁰ that a certain word that he accents on the second syllable¹¹ 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 usual¹²; for the mistake is so natural and so comfortable to one. Just think of the pains that we should have to take¹³ if we were required to pronounce "a" as if¹⁴ it were "b", or "c" as if it were "d".

Correct English is not merely a matter of¹⁴ knowledge but chiefly a matter of habit. And when saying this, I do not mean pronunciation particularly. In spelling, in punctuation¹⁶, in diction¹⁷, 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 cannot¹⁸ 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 passage¹ from a book published about seventy years ago:

"Is Mr Grant² a nice man?" asked Bessie³. "Nice? You mean particular about things."⁴ "No, I don't; I mean, do you like him?" "You should speak with precision⁵" he said, laughing.

This passage illustrates⁶, and also condemns⁷, the modern vague use of "nice", which is now a term of mild agreeableness⁸ and is applied to a book, a letter, a day, a dress⁹, a cigar, a smile, a man, in

short¹⁰ to everything. This use is generally condemned as stupid vulgarism¹¹ due to¹² sheer poverty of thought¹³ or fear of saying anything definite. And those who condemn this use say that the word should be confined to¹⁴ 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 street¹⁵ may not even know of any of the more proper sense. And even those who would prefer precision to¹⁶ any other quality in composition and conversation may often use the word in the very sense they condemn¹⁷.

For “nice book”, “nice letter”, “nice man”, etc. are now natural English. And what is natural comes natural to one¹⁸ right or wrong theoretically or etymologically¹⁹.

I agree with H. W. Fowler²⁰ that everyone who uses “nice” in its more proper senses and avoids the modern one that tends to oust them all²¹ “does a real if small service to the language”²². But I wish he had added²³ that in actual usage this modern sense may now be considered established²⁴. And I think that anyone who should call a man nice when he means the man is particular about things would more often than not²⁵ be misunderstood—in spite of the accuracy of his English²⁶.

；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, 說...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的了. 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, Scotch¹ English, Irish² English, and other kinds of English. Examples: "half past three"³ is English English, "half after three"⁴ is American English, "bairn"⁵ is Scotch English, "I am after having my dinner"⁶ is Irish English, "nor gold nor silver"⁷ is archaic⁸ English, "Thank you for same"⁹ is business English¹⁰, and "I don't know nobody here"¹¹ is vulgar English.

Advanced¹² students of English ought to pay attention to such details, and I think they will find it very interesting to go into the subject¹³. But every student of English is not an advanced one¹⁴. I call it foolish of one to¹⁵ attempt the subject before one has acquired the ability to speak, read, and write English as it is used by the average¹⁶ educated Englishman or American of today. One has yet much to learn¹⁷ before one can be properly called an

advanced student of English so long as¹⁸ one cannot read the news¹⁹, or cannot express oneself²⁰ intelligibly to Englishmen or Americans in speaking and writing.

By “English as it is used by the average educated Englishman or American” I mean²¹ everyday idiomatic English. It is practical, if that means *actually used*, but not if that means *pecially adapted to Chinese psychology*²². I have to mention this because it seems that many Chinese students have the mistaken idea²³ that what is written about things Chinese²⁴ is practical but what is written about things foreign²⁵ is not practical. The fact is, however, that, one cannot master²⁶ English—that is²⁷, what I call practical English—by reading about things Chinese only. I would advise those who are in the habit of²⁸ confining themselves to²⁹ Chinese news when reading newspapers in English, to give up³⁰ 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 ..., 以為 ... 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. *pecially 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' papers¹. Commenting on² 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 that³ in each paper I use one or two words that the pupil will have to look up⁴ in his dictionary for the meaning. This is the only way to show that I have a good knowledge of English."

On another occasion⁵ an editor⁶ of a grammar⁷ asked me to write a few simple sentences as illustrative examples^{8,9}. 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 enough¹⁰ though they were perfect simple sentences. Not good enough¹¹ simply because there were no uncommon words in them.

Neither of these two men knew—I say "knew"—instead of¹² "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 words¹³—that perfect English does not consist in¹⁴ the use of uncommon words, but in the correct use of common words. One cannot master English till one realizes this¹⁵. It is a pity that¹⁶ there are many persons who realize it only after years of groping¹⁷—if they realize it then¹⁸.

Strange as it may appear¹⁶, the mastery of common words is much more difficult than committing uncommon words to memory¹⁹. And the trouble is that one is apt to²⁰ neglect common words — perhaps not because they are difficult to master but because they are common. -

“A word deserves attention²¹ because it is common” I hope you will always say to yourself²².

【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, 這件事雖然好像是可怪的。 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 ENGLISH¹

I have been several times asked what I think about² Basic English. I myself neither speak nor write it though I very occasionally³ 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 definition⁴, “the English language systematically restricted to a vocabulary of 850 words⁵ (together with compounds⁶ and combinations of these), not counting⁷ words that may be considered as technical⁸ or of international currency⁹”;

It is an attempt to give everyone a knowledge of English that will take up as little of the learner's time as possible¹⁰. It is devised by C. K. Ogden¹¹, an English scholar, who is to be congratulated on this clever invention¹².

Vocabulary is admittedly¹³ not the only problem confronting students of English¹⁴, and one who has acquired a large vocabulary has still far to go¹⁵. But it does not follow that¹⁶ it is not an advantage to have English limited to the smallest number of words necessary for everyday use¹⁷. 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 words¹⁸.

When Basic English comes into general use—I mean when it comes to be¹⁹ used in most, if not all²⁰, books, newspapers, magazines, letters, documents²¹, and conversations—it will not be necessary for the average²² Chinese student of English to bother about ordinary English²³, the large vocabulary of which is a great difficulty. I am only sorry that²⁴ there is no telling²⁵ when the Basic era is likely to set in²⁶.

[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

質。 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, 變為。 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 of¹ this title you would perhaps say to yourself² "Only fools would do that. I know better³." But I have read of⁴ several famous men who did⁵ read dictionaries. They gloried in⁶ dictionaries and read them with the delight that some travellers find in guide-books⁷ and time-tables⁸. Robert Browning⁹, the English poet, when he determined to make poetry his career¹⁰, read every word in Johnson's Dictionary¹¹. John Ruskin¹², the English author, wrote to¹³ the editor¹⁴ of the Great Oxford Dictionary¹⁵ that he had read and studied every word in its first volume. Henry Thomas Buckle¹⁶, the English historian¹⁷, once solemnly stated¹⁸ that a certain¹⁹ dictionary was "one of the few dictionaries I have read through with pleasure²⁰".

These men were not fools! I can hardly say¹¹ that they could not have been the masters of English they were²² had they not been dictionary readers. But I am sure that reading dictionaries is, after all²³, not so foolish as you might think.

I myself have never read any dictionary through; no, not³¹ even those²⁵ that bear my name²⁴ on the title-page²⁷. But, as I have said in my *How to Master English Without a Teacher*²⁸, I used many years ago to²⁹ read through many articles on common words in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*³⁰. I found that very helpful in the mastery³¹ of common words and phrases.

Such common words and phrases can be very easily picked up³² by English-speaking boys and girls. But they are not likely to be acquired by Chinese students without any special effort in this respect³³. The reading of articles on common words in dictionaries is no doubt³⁴ 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, 生在一八一二年, 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 (鏡文書局出版)。 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, 隨時學得。 33. in this respect, 在這一方面。 34. no doubt, 當然。

IDIOM VERSUS¹ 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 grammarian² 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 abstract³ noun.

"At once"⁴ is an idiom. "By no means"⁵ is also an idiom. "At once" and "by no means" are both idioms. To give a few other idioms: "cannot but"⁶, "do without"⁷, "each other"⁸, "for good"⁹, "give up"¹⁰, "How do you do?"¹¹. One cannot master English without learning a thousand or more of such common idioms by heart¹².

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 mean¹³ the genius¹⁴ or habit of the English language—or, in plainer terms¹⁵, 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 words¹⁶, it may be unidiomatic or unnatural English.

There is no accounting for¹⁷ idiom. It is chiefly a matter of feeling. While it is possible to commit

so many¹⁸ idioms to memory¹⁹ a week, idiom is too elusive²⁰ to be numbered or classified. It can be conquered²¹ 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 written¹ to inquire about my dictionary of English usage². It was always going to³ be published, and it has not yet been published. This is partly because of my occupation with⁴ other literary matters; in fact⁵, I work on⁶ the book only off and on⁷. But the chief reason is that being a conscientious⁸ student of English I am always careful to avoid slipshod⁹ or perfunctory¹⁰ work. I take notes¹¹ for the book almost every day—both from reading and from the questions about usage that I am asked by persons interested in the subject¹². Very often a seemingly simple question reminds me of¹³ some important point that I might not otherwise¹⁴ think of. I hope that the delay in publication will be compensated for¹⁵ 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-book¹⁶ in which to record, in alphabetical¹⁷ order, such points of usage as he might find of particular interest to him. Such a book would serve *him*¹⁸ 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 total¹⁹ of the books he reads. I mean that he might make a usage index²⁰, so to speak²¹, to those books. For a particular point he would have to record only the book, the page, and the line concerned²². He would some day²³ be able to point to his library and say "This is my dictionary of English usage". What a great work²⁴!

Indeed, I wish I could²⁵ find time to do this. And I believe that I could thus lay the foundation of²⁶ a live²⁷ and original²⁸ dictionary—quite different from those²⁹ based on nothing but³⁰ one or two 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, 將來有一天地。 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 contact¹ than “Do you write English?”. They would perhaps laugh at the idea of² having studied English for years³ without being able to speak it.

In fact⁴, language is essentially a spoken thing. To study English without trying to speak it is not advisable⁵. And it is absurd to read a conversation book in just the same manner as to read a grammar.

Besides⁶, 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 right⁷. Many everyday phrases and everyday constructions come natural to⁸ one who uses them in speaking. For example⁹, one who says “in fact⁴” and “as a matter of fact¹⁰” cannot possibly write the non-existent¹¹ phrases “in a fact”, “as a fact”, and “as a matter of the fact”. And if the surest sign of those¹² 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 words¹³. One who says “sick of¹⁴”, “interested in”, “prefer. . . to . . .¹⁵” 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 as¹⁶ learning speaking for

a pupil to talk to his teacher about whatever subject the former¹⁷ is interested in and to have himself corrected¹⁸ whenever he makes a mistake. I am only sorry that¹⁹ I do not think it practicable²⁰ in the class-room, where there are of course²¹ 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; 以為決沒有...的事。 3. for years, 多年。 4. In fact, 實在。 5. advisable, 足以為訓的; 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..., 如在...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 ago¹ 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 name², I think we may as well³ call it a topic⁴ dictionary. I mean a dictionary in which a certain number of topics are arranged in alphabetical⁵ order and useful phrases and sentences about each topic are grouped together. For instance⁶, under the topic “books” may be grouped phrases and sentences having to do with⁷ books but not necessarily⁸ containing the same word.

This can be done by reading and making notes⁹. It is not necessary to copy the phrases and sentences. It is enough to jot down¹⁰ 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 fairly¹¹ complete topic dictionary.

What I call a topic dictionary does not seem ever to have appeared¹² 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 for¹³ the right expression¹⁴ about a certain topic, and an ordinary dictionary cannot meet¹⁵ our need.

Would I had enough time to carry out¹⁶ my own suggestion!¹⁷

【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, 想不著... 的。 14. expression, 語。 15. meet, 適合。 16. carry out, 實行。 17. Would...!, 但願...!; 巴不得...!

MISTAKING WOMAN FOR MAN¹

A friend of mine who has a fine knowledge of English made a ridiculous² mistake recently in a letter to an American lady. He addressed her as “Mr . . .”! And he made the mistake not through³ carelessness but through ignorance. The fact was that the lady had written to him⁴ first and did not

mention her sex⁵ in her letter. She signed "Audrey⁶..." and must have thought that my friend could certainly find out her sex from her name. But my friend did not⁷!

"Audrey" is a feminine⁸ name. There is no doubt about its femininity⁹. I do not think any English-speaking person would ever make the mistake that my friend made. But my friend made it in spite of¹⁰ his fine knowledge of English.

Now that¹¹ I speak of my friend's mistake, I recall¹² the mistake that a certain¹³ Chinese scholar of English used to¹⁴ make of¹⁵ addressing Sir James Lockhart¹⁶ as "Sir Lockhart" instead of¹⁷ "Sir James". This is a mistake peculiar to¹⁸ those whose mother tongue¹⁹ is not English.

All this reminds me of²⁰ the importance of learning about things English and American²¹ besides learning English words and phrases. The mastery of English requires²² 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 seem¹. 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 to² study the use of words and phrases in it. For instance³, they cherish the memory of⁴ how the mystery of the eternal triangle⁵ is solved, but do not remember a single sentence in the story and cannot tell⁶ what preposition is used before or after a certain⁷ word in the speech of a certain character⁸.

Of course⁹, it is all right¹⁰ to read and enjoy and remember a story, and so long as¹¹ one wants to know the story only, one need not bother about¹² the language. But the case¹³ is quite different with¹⁴ a student of *English*. I mean a student of English as distinguished from¹⁵ a student of stories or what is called the general reader¹⁶.

Whatever a student of English reads, he should, in my opinion, regard the language as the main thing¹⁷. For instance, on reading this preceding sentence, besides¹⁸ understanding its meaning, he should notice such points as the concessive¹⁹ use of "whatever", "*in my opinion*", "regard . . . as . . .", and "*the main thing*". In this way, he does learn some English²⁰ though what he reads may happen²¹ to be otherwise²² 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-called²³ principles of the subject²⁴.

Incidentally²⁵, I would advise teachers of English to question²⁶ their pupils on points of diction²⁷ and construction²⁸ 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, 雖然學到些英文。 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(指英文作文)。 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 vocabulary¹ of three or four thousand words. You know one or two thousand idioms. You are rather careful about usage². You ought to be able to write fairly well³.

But are you⁴? If you are not⁵, why not?⁶ One of your troubles, I think, is that you often cannot express what you want to say. You cannot⁷, but when you have seen your meaning expressed by someone⁸ who can express it, you will most probably say to yourself⁹ "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 in¹⁶ 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 to¹¹ the fact that they do not read widely, nor carefully enough. There are thousands of useful expressions¹² that are not generally considered idioms. They are so easy to understand that they are apt to be neglected¹³. But those who neglect them will forget them, and fail to¹⁴ use them when they need them.

You cannot learn to write with much freedom of expression¹⁵ till you have laid in¹⁶ a stock¹⁷ 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 understand¹ 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 who² write correct English know them all by heart³ and pay regard to⁴ them whenever they write, and whether it is at all possible for one to learn to write English fairly well⁵ without bothering about⁶ those tiny⁷ points.

Yes, most of the points seem to be tiny ones⁸. But it is just these tiny points that show whether one is really at home in⁹ English or not. Occasional errors in grammar, which should of course¹⁰ be avoided by all means¹¹, may most probably be due to¹² mere carelessness and are not at all peculiar to¹³ those whose English is imperfect. But lapses¹⁴ in idiom always betray¹⁵ one's unfamiliarity with¹⁶ correct English. It follows that¹⁷ the seemingly trifling¹⁸ points of usage are well worthy of the attention of¹⁹ all who wish to write English correctly.

As to²⁰ knowing them by heart, those who are born to the language²¹ do not need to make any conscious effort. They learn correct usage by intuition²², so to speak²³. They speak English every day, and the use of many idiomatic expressions²⁴ and constructions are second nature²⁵, with them, so that²⁶ when they write they cannot possibly be²⁷ incorrect where they are correct when speaking²⁸.

The case is certainly different with²⁹ Chinese students of English, who are most of them English-reading rather than³⁰ English-speaking. They must take care³¹ to master³² many points of usage that are quite natural to those whose mother tongue³³ is English.

What I call points of usage, however, are not so formidable³⁴ an enemy as they may seem to you. Close attention to them helps to conquer³⁵ them. Besides³⁶, what English-speaking persons get from speaking you may get from reading aloud³⁷, which will help you in the same way as speaking would³⁸, though perhaps less quickly. And there is an advantage in reading aloud over speaking³⁹ in the fact that in reading good written English you are not in danger of⁴⁰ getting those common solecisms⁴¹, barbarisms⁴², and improprieties⁴³ in the speech of persons of limited culture⁴⁴.

【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 BACKGROUND¹

If your reading in English is not confined to² things written by Chinese writers about Chinese life—I hope it is not³—you must often meet with difficulties quite apart from⁴ the meanings of words and phrases. These difficulties arise from what I call for want of a better term⁵ the background⁶ of English, which I believe deserves the attention of⁷ all students of English—all⁸ but⁹ those¹⁰ who do not care to¹⁰ read anything in English that is not written by Chinese writers on Chinese subjects.

By the background of English I mean¹¹ the sum total¹² of all points other than linguistic¹³ that are quite natural to those born to the language and brought up on it¹⁴. For example¹⁵, the name Grub Street¹⁶—a London¹⁷ street formerly much inhabited by¹⁸ writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary¹⁹ poems and so giving rise to²⁰ its use as an epithet²¹ referring to²² literary hack-work²³.

The subject is indeed a very large one. It includes history, geography, mythology²⁴, the Bible²⁵, characters²⁶ and facts in fiction²⁷, proverbs, customs²⁸, games and sports, superstitions²⁹, and other things. And in order to³⁰ understand fully the works³¹ of any author, one needs to possess as much knowledge of these things as he does. This is practically impossible³² with the average³³ Chinese student of English.

What I think must be considered carefully³⁴ is what parts of the background of English are

more important and how they may be made available to³⁵ Chinese students so as to³⁶ 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 day¹, I experimented with² several words before I got the word that expressed the shade of meaning intended³. The word was “admonish”, and the words I had experimented with were “advise”, “counsel”, “warn”, “exhort”, “reprove”, “rebuke”, and “reprimand”. “Admonish”, roughly speaking⁴, means *exhort* or *reprove*, but it carries the implication⁵ of kindness or gentleness coupled with⁶ seriousness, and also of warning and counsel.

Sometimes I fail to⁷ get the exact word in spite of much thinking and weighing⁸. In such cases I have to content myself with⁹ using a word that I regard as¹⁰ being nearest to the meaning I want to express. This is a common experience with writers of English, and is one¹¹ they ought to feel sorry for.

The study of synonyms¹² is no doubt¹³ 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 that¹⁴ of trusting to¹⁵ the so-called Chinese equivalents¹⁶ as given in English-Chinese dictionaries¹⁷. The other is that¹⁸ of studying the explanations in articles on synonyms but neglecting the illustrative examples¹⁹.

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 upon²⁰ what is known as²¹ usage. For instance²², a writer of correct English may not be able to tell you in detail²³ how "for" and "to" differ from each other²⁴, **but** he never uses one when he ought to use the other. He uses *the* word²⁵ as a matter of habit rather than²⁶ as a result of²⁷ 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 supplant²⁸.

【注】 1. the other day, 不久以前的某天。 2. experimented with, 把... 試驗。 3. the shade of meaning intoned, 意欲中的微細的意思。 4. roughly speaking, 大略說來。 5. implication, 含蓄。 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, 使自已把...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*”該專讀) 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 OF¹ GUESS-WORK

A story has been told of a German resident² in England who spoke English fairly well³ for ordinary purposes, but who once recommended some wine to a guest with the remark⁴ “You might drink a bottle of it, and it would not set you up”. Another foreigner, whose nationality⁵ is not mentioned, is said to have written in England that he wished to recommend a tonic⁶ 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 natural⁷. When a person who knows one of these two expressions⁸ sees the other, he is liable to think it has the same meaning, though in fact⁹ it has not¹⁰.

This is due to¹¹ 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 troubled¹³ to consult a dictionary.

I know a gentleman who always sounds¹³ the *p* in the word “receipt”, the correct pronunciation of which is [riˈsi:t]. He sounds it not because any person has told him to sound it, nor because any book has told him to¹⁴, but because he has *guessed* that he ought to do so.

True, it is possible to guess right, but¹⁵ it is more possible to guess wrong. I would advise you to avoid guess-work by all means¹⁶.

【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. tonic, 補品。 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 finished¹ an essay by Hilaire Belloc², in which, towards the end of a very long sentence, the author says “I cannot refrain from remarking³ that all the discussions of the silly critics⁴ as to⁵ whether sentences in English should be long or short are mere spoiling of paper⁶”.

I fully agree with him. A sentence is not good or bad merely because it is long or short. Length is a false test⁷ of a sentence. It is wrong to think that a series of long sentences is a proof of one's good command of English⁸. It is equally wrong to think that simple and clear English requires

every sentence to contain a certain number of⁹ words at most¹⁰.

I remember that I myself formerly acted on¹¹ these wrong opinions one after the other¹². For some time I tried to use as many words in a sentence as grammar and sense could justify¹³. The result was an obtrusively dignified style¹⁴. Then followed a period¹⁵ in which I tried to make every sentence a grammatically simple one¹⁶ and as easy to understand as those¹⁷ in first books¹⁸ for beginners. The result was affected¹⁹ simplicity.

However, while I would warn all students of English composition against these two mistakes, I think that that²⁰ of writing long sentences is the commoner one²¹. 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 who²² have not had much practice in the use of words and phrases and idiomatic constructions²³, long sentences are much harder to manage than short ones²⁴. And it must not for a moment²⁵ be supposed that an error in grammar or idiom embedded²⁶ in a long sentence can easily escape detection²⁷.

【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, 紙的質壞; 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 to¹ 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 learning², and that the English of the average³ Chinese student of the language⁴ is bad enough without his ever making any effort to learn to be bad. Well⁵, read the following story:

An old negro approached a white man⁶ in a Southern⁷ town and asked: "Marse Tom⁸, you ain't⁹ seed¹⁰ anything of dat¹¹ ole¹² mule of mine, is you?"¹³

"Why¹⁴ no, Henry¹⁵, I haven't seen that mule. Have you lost it?"

"Well, Ah¹⁶ doan¹⁷ know ef¹⁸ Ah've¹⁹ lost him or not, but he is shore²⁰ 'nuff²¹ gone."

"Henry, I think the best way you can find that mule would be to put a want ad in the paper²² for him."

"Shuck!²³ Dat wouldn't do no good²⁴, Marse Tom."

"Why not?"

"Why, Marse Tom, you all know puffickly²⁵ well dat dat mule can't²⁶ read."

Do you understand the negro's speech without the help of my notes²⁷? If not²⁸, you have not got much knowledge of bad English, and I hope you realize²⁹ that as a student of English you ought to get more of it.

By bad English I mean³⁰ the English as used³¹ by English-speaking persons who somehow³² do not use good English. It may be called illiterate³³ or uncultured³⁴ English. It is not found in formal writing, but is very common in modern fiction³⁵ and drama³⁶ 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 speak³⁷.

Bad English means bad grammar, bad spelling, bad usage, and bad pronunciation. All these things form³⁸ an interesting and useful study. Without a good knowledge of these one will miss much in modern literature and will fail to³⁹ understand any uneducated Englishman or American⁴⁰ one ever has occasion to⁴¹ 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=Marse 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. dean=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. puffykly=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. 因其種緣故 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, 遺字後面省去 relative pronoun. 41. has occasion to ., 有 .的必要.

DOES HE WRITE ENGLISH CORRECTLY?

I have heard much talk about “methods” and “secrets”¹ of mastering² 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 deplorable³ is that there are now too many “methods” and “secrets” for students to know which to adopt⁴. As a matter of fact⁵, the originator⁶ of every “method” and “secret” has a great deal⁷ to say for it, and also a great deal to say against⁸ other “methods” and “secrets”.

I have recently been asked by a reader whether a certain⁹ “method”—or rather¹⁰ a course¹¹ based on¹² a certain “method”—is a good one¹³ or not. The said¹⁴ “method” is described as enabling one to write English correctly by¹⁵ the time one has finished the course, which takes only about half a year. As I have not got enough particulars¹⁶ about it, I am afraid I cannot venture¹⁷ an opinion.

All that I can say about such matters is¹⁸ 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 can¹⁹, his “method” or “secret” is worth considering²⁰. If he cannot²¹, well²², let it go hang²³.

【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 night¹ I had a dream in which I was talking to an Englishman. When I meant² to say “account for³”, by a slip of the tongue⁴ I said “accountify”, which, for all I know⁵, simply does not exist⁶. I flatter myself that⁷ I cannot possibly⁸ make this mistake in my waking hours⁹.

It is not uncommon, however, to find in school compositions words¹⁰ that would be looked for vainly¹¹ in dictionaries. Not that¹² they are coinages¹³. I do not think the average¹⁴ Chinese student of English would make bold¹⁵ to coin¹⁶ words. The fact is simply that a certain¹⁷ spelling is used in a certain meaning in the belief that¹⁸ there is¹⁹ such a word. This belief, it seems to me²⁰, is always based on²¹ some real word or words. For example²², the words “sleep”, “sleepy”, and “sleepiness” may account for (not accountify!) the non-existent²³ word “sleepness”, which I have occasionally²⁴ found in English by²⁵ Chinese students.

Students of English composition would hardly expect to be asked²⁶ whether they were sure that they never used non-existent words. But the question is not really so foolish as you may think²⁷. I have made no attempt at making a list of such mistakes, but I am under the impression that²⁸ I have come across²⁹ dozens³⁰ of them. Would you mind rereading some pages of your English to see³¹, with the help of a dictionary, whether you had never been guilty of unconscious word-making³²?

[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...?, 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 linguistic¹ interest. A newly-arrived Irishman² in New York³ was standing in front of⁴ the Post-Office⁵, where he found three letter-boxes, labelled⁶ City, Domestic, and Foreign. He was wondering⁷ into which⁸ he ought to drop a letter to his sweetheart. “Faith⁹,” he

said “this is a problem. Maggie’s¹⁰ a domestic¹¹. She lives in the city. And she’s¹² a foreigner. What beats me¹³ is how to put the letter into the three holes at once¹⁴.”

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 course¹⁵ not unEnglish¹⁶, but is much more common in American than in English usage¹⁷.

Now Chinese students of English often fail to¹⁸ understand a sentence simply because they do not know the particular sense in which a certain¹⁹ word in it is used. I myself remember giving up²⁰ a sentence as unintelligible²¹, about ten years ago, which²² contained the verb “discuss” followed by the noun “wine”. It was not till some days later that I²³ thought of the sentence again, and began to doubt whether the “discuss” was not used in some²⁴ sense unknown to me. Upon²⁵ consulting²⁶ a dictionary I found the sense of *eat or drink in a leisurely²⁷ way*.

That we should refer to²⁸ a dictionary whenever we come across²⁹ a word that we do not know is³⁰ only too³¹ evident. What is not so evident is that a very common word may sometimes be used in a sense that we do not even suspect³².

【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,

覺般 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, 安閒的。 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 IF¹ ONE² COULD DIE MORE THAN ONCE

An American schoolboy is said to have written³ in an essay on⁴ health “When children under one year of age⁵ have tuberculosis⁶, they usually die very seldom⁷”. This sentence is written in perfect English so far as grammar and idiom are concerned⁷. But it is pure nonsense. For one dies but once⁸: one cannot die *seldom* any more than one can die *often*⁹.

Evidently the schoolboy really meant “*It is very seldom that*¹⁰ 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 once¹¹.

But what a howler¹² he made! He said what he did not mean—what no-one could ever mean.

Such amusing¹³ mistakes should of course¹⁴ be carefully avoided. So far as I can see¹⁵, English-speaking people are far less apt to make them in writing than in speaking. One of the most ridiculous¹⁶ verbal infelicities¹⁷ that I have ever heard is what a genial¹⁸ English hostess¹⁹ said to a well-known novelist²⁰ who arrived very late at a

dinner-party. Overcome with confusion²¹ he said apologetically²² “I am truly sorry to be so shockingly²³ late”. The hostess, only meaning to²⁴ assure him that he was not the last, emphatically replied “O, Mr—, you can’t be too late²⁵”. As if she had meant that she *disliked* his company²⁶! Which was far from²⁷ true.

I think that both the American schoolboy and the English lady would have said afterwards, “I would rather have put it differently²⁸”. Well, if English-speaking people are capable of²⁹ such mistakes, how far more so³⁰ we Chinese students³¹ 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；不週切的句語。 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 SLIP¹, BUT—

I was reading a paragraph or two in a selection² of Cowper's letters³ not long ago. I thought I came across⁴ the phrase “a poor literary poet”, by which Cowper referred to⁵ himself. I paused and

thought, wondering what the poet meant by "literary poet" and whether a poet could possibly be unliterary⁶ or non-literary⁷. I soon discovered, however, that Cowper did not write "literary" at all. The word was "solitary". The mistake was mine; I had somehow⁸ mistaken "solitary" for "literary"⁹.

People talk of slips of the pen¹⁰ and of the tongue¹¹. I think slips of the eye are as much to guard against¹²; 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"¹³ in a letter to an Englishman. In his reply he was kind enough to point out¹⁴ 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 to¹⁵ confuse those two perfectly different words. But a mistake is a mistake¹⁶, and I was very sorry to think that I could have made such a ridiculous¹⁷ one. Now I should have corrected it if I had read over my letter carefully before I posted¹⁸ it. The mistake was a slip of the eye as well as¹⁹ one of the pen.

If the mistake were to occur in print²⁰, it would of course²¹ be called a misprint. But would it be really a mistake in printing? Would the printer be to blame²²? Well, the very word "misprint" is an insult to the poor printer!²³ What we call a misprint or typographical²⁴ error ought to be charged upon²⁵ the author, or the typist²⁶, or the compositor²⁷,

or the proof-reader²⁸, but certainly not the printer. And no matter²⁹ 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 letter., 英國詩人 Wilham 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" 這個字樣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 title¹ perhaps does not strike you as ridiculous², does it? If not³, you have not mastered⁴ English yet. I fancy⁵ 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 black⁶, he is not usually expected to wear a black dress. In fact⁷, 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—well⁸, what a perfect sight he would look!⁹

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 expression¹⁰ in a context¹¹ that clearly shows that it is meant to mean not what it really means but what it does not mean¹², a *young man dressed in black*—which is the wording¹³ that ought to have been used¹⁴.

Once I spoke to an English woman about this mistake. She simply could not¹⁵ understand my meaning, however. She did not object to¹⁶ 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 course¹⁷ means a dress!”

It was perhaps stupid of the Englishwoman not to understand my meaning¹⁸. 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 it¹⁹, there are many Chinese words and idioms that you always use correctly because you instinctively²⁰ know what they mean so that²¹ you do not need to study or explain them. As to²² the mastery of English, the same principle applies²³. I hope that you will steadily increase the stock²⁴ 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, 也許是她的墨筆. 19. when you come to think of it, 當你想起這事的時候; 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' calls Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* "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 misunderstood³. Indeed, it is very simple and very clear, and perhaps no Englishman or American would ever think it capable of⁴ a meaning other than⁵ the true one⁶. But a Chinese student of English, who reads and writes English carefully enough⁷, has recently told me of his imperfect understanding of that remark. "Why 'for a long time'?" he said. "I simply cannot⁸ understand what Wells thinks the greatness of a novel has to do with⁹ the length of the time he¹⁰ has spent in reading it."

The student misunderstood Wells's remark. As a matter of fact¹¹, the critic¹² does not mean to say how much time he has ever devoted to reading any novel. The remark might be paraphrased¹³ as: "For a long time past¹⁴ 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 somehow¹⁵ twisting¹⁶ Wells's words. I should fancy¹⁷ 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 to¹⁸ understand a group of simple words put together in a simple way. My advice is to stop to think again¹⁹ when you find something unnatural in an expression²⁰. 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, 以為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 以為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, 以為。 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 to¹ what he calls a mistake in a biographical sketch² of a literary man: the name of a person followed by "of whom more presently". In fact³, there is no mistake in the expression⁴ at all. "More presently" is elliptical⁵ for "more will be said presently". My friend does not know this idiomatic ellipsis⁶, having apparently taken "more" to be the adverb modifying "presently" and thought a subject and verb ought to have been supplied so as to⁷ make a complete clause.

Equipped with⁸ 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 reach⁹. What is more¹⁰, they are too ready to¹¹ dismiss as wrong¹² any combination of words that does not seem to him to be capable of grammatical analysis¹³.

Important as grammar is¹⁴, there are many turns of expression¹⁵ that are generally considered blameless English though they are not quite defensible¹⁶ from a narrowly grammatical point of view¹⁷. So that the mastery of English grammar in its narrow sense does not enable one so much as¹⁸ to read English intelligently.

When you come across¹⁹ in good writing any construction that you do not find grammatical, I would advise you to note it down instead of²⁰ calling it a mistake, and to see if²¹ you will not meet with a similar one²² in your reading. You will²³ very soon, perhaps, and then you will most likely²⁴ understand the construction.

[注] 1. called my attention to, 使我注意。 2. biographical sketch, 傳略。 3. In fact, 實在。 4. expressions, 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; 可以取用的。 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 day¹. The wedding was a very quiet affair. I was the chief witness². Another friend of mine was the best man³.

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 doubt⁴ I am too small a man to officiate⁵ at any grand wedding. Not that⁶ I cannot do that. Everybody can⁷—at least, everybody who can read simple Chinese can⁸. 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 have⁹ cannot possibly¹⁰ pass to the couple¹¹, 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 than¹² any big man. I am punctual¹³; I am too small a man to have cultivated the virtue of unpunctuality¹⁴. I am not ashamed of being punctual. Nor am I afraid of being thought¹⁵ too small a man because of my punctuality¹⁶—in fact, I could not acquire any prestige by being unpunctual¹⁷. 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 that¹⁸ the wedding would probably have had to be postponed till some time after the hour previously fixed¹⁹.

I did not give an address²⁰ at the wedding. I could have said a few words, of course²¹. 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 who²² 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, 男傖相。 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 longer¹. But it has not. The heat has returned² all too soon³.

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 all⁴, man⁵ 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 two⁶.

If he thinks so, it is because he finds himself suffering from it. He does not stop to think⁷ how he would find himself suffering if he were suddenly landed⁸ 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 rigours⁹ 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 not¹⁰. I mean that it will afford comfort in the thought that one is *not* suffering from that other season¹¹. You would indeed find much consolation in thinking that you no longer¹² has the nasty¹³ cold that you caught on such-and-such a day¹⁴ last winter.

【注】 1. wish the cool weather had lasted longer, 巴不得那涼爽的天氣會持續得長些。 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. True¹, people have visited shops to make purchases ever

since there were shops, and shops there were¹ hundreds of years ago. But not every such visit is shopping. For instance³, 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 mistaken⁴, nobody who uses the word properly would call that shopping.

For shopping has its characteristics⁵. It is used of⁶ buying luxuries rather than⁷ the necessities of life. It is used of visiting a large shop or several small shops and buying several things instead of⁸ one or two. It implies the pleasure of buying as well as⁹ the value of the things bought.

Shopping has become a craze¹⁰ 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 on¹¹.

Besides, it seems that they take a pride in¹² buying things in the presence of¹³ many strangers, especially when they buy things at prohibitive prices¹⁴. So that¹⁵ they visit the stores¹⁶ more frequently than ordinary shops. And this sense of pride perhaps accounts for¹⁷ the fact that in spite of¹⁸ the apparently convenient mail order¹⁹ business and telephone order²⁰ 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 with¹, misunderstanding is not an altogether unpleasant word. It has its humorous side². The point³ 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 of⁴ fun and pleasure. For instance⁵, when we read of⁶ a would-be customer⁷ asking "Can I try on⁸ that gown in the window?" and the saleswoman replying "Certainly not⁹, madam!", we cannot help¹⁰ laughing unless we don't see¹¹ the point. Another example: A man seeing the newspaper head-line¹² "Ford's Motor Works¹³" said to himself¹⁴: "That's nothing¹⁵. So does ours¹⁶."

If joke writers can think of such misunderstandings, similar ones are not quite impossible in real life. How many quarrels, estrangements¹⁷, and tragedies, may have come of¹⁸ 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 of¹⁹ seeing that the saleswoman has misunderstood her, misunderstands the saleswoman and thinks her reply impolite²⁰ and says something to that effect²¹, a quarrel is likely to arise.

A common cause of misunderstanding is to read something into²² what is said to or of one²³. There seem to be many people given to²⁴ so doing. They are always taking offence where there is none given²⁵. 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 ironic²⁶ way. If you happen to²⁷ mention the rising cost of living²⁸, they will think you are going to²⁹ 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 trouble³⁰ without their own knowledge³¹. They deserve it³²!

【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, 那沒有什麼稀奇。 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; 諷諷的。 27. happen to, 恰巧... 28. rising cost of living, 逐漸增加的生活費用。 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 of¹ a ridiculous mistake made by the manager of a film studio² in America. He had long been annoyed by the aeroplanes³ passing overhead, so that⁴ in order to⁵ stop the nuisance⁶ he had a large sign painted on the roof⁷ “FILM STUDIO—QUIET, PLEASE”. The result, however, was that the acroplanes seemed to make more noise than ever⁸; for the pilots⁹ often had to¹⁰ drop down to read the sign.

This is a good illustration¹¹ 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 pity¹² that an attempt to get out of the frying-pan should result in¹³ getting into the fire, and one ought to be sorry to find that instances of this are only too¹⁴ common.

And how many of them are afforded by those who¹⁵ are proud of their cleverness! We often hear people say they know better than to¹⁶ 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 upon¹⁷ the device about the sign on the roof. Clever, indeed, but what a reward the clever man received!

【注】 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. illustration, 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. knew better than to. ., 聰明得不.... 17. hit upon, 想出.

EXCUSES

A story is told of a policeman in England who used to¹ excuse his inability to spell² with the remark³ "I don't reckon a man's much of a scholar⁴ if he can spell a word only one way".

What a curious⁵ excuse! Taking a leaf out of his book⁶, a schoolboy might be able to excuse any sort of mistake he might make. Even a howler⁷ might be looked on as⁸ a result of literary genius⁹!

I have heard of¹⁰ a man who excuses his incorrect English by calling all grammar nonsense¹¹. Great authors, he contends¹², do not care much for¹³ books on¹⁴ grammar, and yet they write excellent English. He does not care much for such books either¹⁵, 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 to¹⁶ speak of every defect in his books as a distinguishing feature¹⁷. For instance¹⁸, he leaves many difficult points unexplained¹⁹ 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 fact²⁰, he either is puzzled by those points or is too lazy to explain them.

Many people are always ready to²¹ excuse something or other²² that they know they ought to be ashamed of. And indeed with such people there is hardly anything under the sun²³ for which they can find no excuse. There are excuses for things ranging from unpunctuality²⁴ to²⁵ murder. "The tram moved so slow" is a likely²⁶ excuse for late arrival. As for²⁷ murder, well, every student of English might kill his or her mother and say with pride "The writer of charming English Mary Lamb²⁸ did²⁹ 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 ME¹ HALF AN HOUR

Nobody owes me a single cent, but quite a number of² friends owe me a lot of³ that something which all schoolboys know is money⁴. Only yesterday a friend borrowed half an hour of me⁵ 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 right¹, full of apologies for being late². But he would have saved my time and spared his own blushes³ if he had made the appointment⁴ for half an hour later.

Do you ever make appointments that you are not sure you can keep⁵? It is a very bad habit. There are jokes about waiting for lady friends¹¹ on the street corners, and it is said that lateness is a lady's privilege¹², and even that a gentleman ought to consider it a pleasure to wait for a lady friend beyond the fixed time¹³.

But I hope that a true lady will not think this way¹⁴. Appointments are promises, and the performance of a promise is a test of integrity¹⁵.

It is so very easy to make an appointment without giving it due thought. But in doing so you are mortgaging¹⁶ 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 up¹⁷ ten minutes after five instead of five¹⁸. But if you do it often, your friends begin to take both your appointments and your other promises with a grain of salt¹⁹. You are thus discredited²⁰.

After all²¹, one man has no right to²² 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" 該重譯 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, 不合五點而在五點十分. 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 WELL¹, BUT——

But² what? Well, “All mean well,” says George Bernard Shaw³ “but the difference between promise and performance⁴ 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 resolutions⁵. “I will try to——” you said to yourself⁶.

But where are your resolutions now? How many of them still stand? How many of them have been given a thought⁷ since? The chances are that⁸ many, if not all, of them have had to go by the board⁹ because you ceased to think them quite desirable or convenient soon after you had made them. You *meant* to get up¹⁰ at seven every morning, but you may have never got up till eight.

It is indeed none too¹¹ easy to keep a resolution. It requires some effort. I myself have failed to¹² carry out¹³ 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 is¹⁴, 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 comes¹⁵. This is an English proverb that should be written in large letters¹⁶ 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 strong¹⁷.

A promise is worth nothing till it is fulfilled, and so long as¹⁸ it remains unfulfilled, it is dope¹⁹ for the conscience, though it may affect none but yourself²⁰.

【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 it¹. But nearly every one of us may be called a thief, if we look at the word in a certain light².

For there are thieves of time, thieves of peace, thieves of happiness, thieves of character and reputation. It is just as much of a theft³ 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

into⁴ houses and dip their hands into the pockets of the unsuspecting⁵.

One of the commonest forms of thieving⁶ 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 by⁷ any person to whom one does not care to⁸ show it.

Men talk of stolen kisses, stolen pleasures, stolen fruit, etc. as if⁹ stealing were the spice¹⁰ of life. No, they ought not. Even if it is true that what is got by stealth¹¹ is more enjoyable than what is got by more honest means¹², stealing is not therefore justified¹³.

One of the English words for which there are no Chinese equivalents¹⁴ is "kleptomania¹⁵", which means a persistent impulse¹⁶ to steal in persons who do it not because of¹⁷ poverty. It is said that there are even rich people who are in the habit of¹⁸ stealing things that people of moderate means¹⁹ can well afford²⁰. In England and most of the United States²¹ it has been held that kleptomania is not a legal defence²² except in the case of²³ persons who cannot distinguish between right and wrong. Well, is kleptomania in the broad sense²⁴ any²⁵ more excusable than the same tendency in the narrow sense²⁶?

【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, 偷竊癖. 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 EXTRAVAGANT¹!

Perhaps you have had enough of² advice against extravagance, and are imagining that I am going to³ advise you to save⁴ cents and dollars that you either cannot save or cannot afford to spend. I myself have heard well-to-do⁵ people talk of economy and throw out⁶ suggestions about it that they themselves do not care to⁷ put into practice⁸, and know that they cannot⁹.

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 of¹⁰.

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 best¹¹ she had ever seen when delighted with something about it but would call it the worst¹² as soon as¹³ it got into a scrape¹⁴.

Extravagance in speech may not always matter much¹⁵. When you write¹⁶ to ask a friend to come to see you, you may be extravagant and say that you are *dying* to¹⁷ see him; but your friend is not likely to be prepared to find you dead if he calls

on¹⁸ you later than you expect him to turn up¹⁹. And when you say "I have told you fifty²⁰ times before", you are not in danger of²¹ being asked to name the fifty occasions specifically²².

There are cases, however, where extravagance may lead to²³ trouble. Mountains made out of mole-hills²⁴ 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 to²⁵ me for the last time because he was so very ill as not to live another day²⁶. As a matter of fact²⁷ he is still living today. He should have saved me the days of uneasiness²⁸ before I heard from²⁹ him again. Probably he did³⁰ 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 PARKER¹

Nosy Parker—No, I am not going to² write a biographical sketch³. I do not know of¹ any person called Nosy Parker.

But there are so many Nosy Parkers among us. You may be one⁵. I myself am one, in a sense⁶.

For Nosy Parker is a nickname⁷ for one who is⁸ inquisitive⁹ about other people's business. Incidentally¹⁰, as both you and I are students of English, I am sure you will not mind¹¹ my telling you that "nosy", being an adjective formed from "nose", has the slangy¹² sense of *inquisitive*. The origin of the name, however, is unknown, and I do not think the "Parker" has ever been accounted for¹³.

Now let me tell you a story. A young man who lived in a block of flats¹⁴ was walking down the stairs one day when he heard the sounds of a terrible row¹⁵ between a man and woman going on¹⁶ behind one of the doors¹⁷. Instinctively¹⁸ 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 offered¹⁹ to help to put an end to²⁰ the trouble. He little expected²¹ to hear the husband say: "I wish you would mind your own business²². For your information²³, we are rehearsing a part²⁴. But even if we were having a real row, I should still object to²⁵ interference. Good day to you²⁶, sir!"

The young man no doubt²⁷ considered himself unlucky because his intentions were good. But it is far from²⁸ 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 less²⁹ advisable to ask questions

about other people's business merely out of curiosity³⁰. They may not care to³¹ answer such questions though they do not necessarily³² have cause to³³ be ashamed about the information the answers would reveal.

As I have said, I myself am more or less³⁴ a Nosy Parker. I am curious about the personal life of English-writing authors, and about the preferences³⁵ of students of English and those who I suppose are interested in such matters. Not long ago I asked a Scotchman³⁶ who his favourite authors³⁷ 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 with³⁸ the study of English, and that, even as far as my subject is concerned³⁹, it will not cause me to give offence⁴⁰—unwittingly⁴¹.

【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。 28. 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 not¹. I myself am no longer² one³. However, I wish I thought⁴ that I had much of a child in me⁵.

The word "child", as you probably know, has given rise to⁶ two adjectives, "childish" and "childlike", which form one of the most useful pairs of English synonyms⁷. "Childish" used of⁸ adults⁹ and their qualities has a bad sense and means *foolish* or *silly*. "Childlike", which should always be so used¹⁰ 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 ones¹¹, mind¹²,

Well¹³, I do not think there is much danger of being childish in the rising generation¹⁴. Rather¹⁵ there seems to be too much sophistication¹⁶. But I am sorry to note that there is as little childlikeness as childishness, and that people¹⁷ are apt to confuse the two¹⁸. I myself sometimes fail to¹⁹ see whether the enthusiasm with which something is done²⁰ 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 grow²¹ hard. I hope you sometimes do

something in a childlike manner even at the risk of²² being childish.

By the way²³, 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 them²⁴.

【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 UP¹

Perhaps hardly does an hour pass without there being something “up” in Shanghai². Fighting³, quarrelling, pocket-picking⁴, fires⁵, and all kinds of⁶ incidents and accidents are the order of the day⁷.

When something is “up”, there is always a little knot⁸ of people. For man⁹ is curious¹⁰. He wants to know about even things that he is sure has nothing to do with him¹¹. He asks “What’s the matter?¹²” quite naturally. He cranes his neck¹³ to see what is wrong. If he finds a person lying injured on the pavement¹⁴, he inquires of some other spectators¹⁵ how the unfortunate¹⁶ has got injured¹⁷, where he lives, whether any policeman has witnessed¹⁸ the accident, and when an ambulance¹⁹ may

be expected to arrive. If he finds a man and a woman calling each other names²⁰, 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 so²¹, he would not read, he would not go to the theatre²², he would not even marry. To stop and look on²³ when something is "up" in the street is a natural way to satisfy one's curiosity²⁴. It is not unlike²⁵ reading a story or seeing a play²⁶ gratis²⁷.

So far, so good²⁸. But all is not good²⁹ as regards³⁰ this stopping and looking on. Those who do it may not find anything blamable in it. They honestly think that it is harmless. In fact³¹, however, they may do harm without knowing it³². For an injured or quarreling person is likely to be distressed by seeing a crowd of sightseers³³ standing round gazing at him. Besides³⁴, where there is need for help, the presence of idle lookers-on³⁵ often proves a hindrance³⁶.

Where we can offer no help, we should at least³⁷ let those who can offer help do it³⁸.

【注】 1. Up, 發生的。 2. Perhaps hardly...in Shanghai, 也許上海沒有一個鐘頭不發生事故。 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。 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, 並不像, 有些像. 26. play, 戲劇. 27. gratis, 不費錢地. 28. So far, so good, 像上面所講, 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 boast¹ a large library. But I do not think I have finished² even half of the books that I have bought. When I buy a book, I mean³ to read it through⁴. The fact, however, is that I usually read only a part of it, sometimes no further than⁵ the preface and one or two pages at random⁶. 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 time⁷ in spite of myself⁸, and I am afraid that I shall not be able to act on⁹ my own advice even if I should live to be a hundred¹⁰.

I have, however, read through many a¹¹ book that is not mine. I mean that I have borrowed many a book and finished it—quickly.

What is borrowed has to¹² be returned. That is why I scarcely ever fail to¹³ finish a borrowed book. As to¹⁴ those I have bought, I put off¹⁵ reading them because I am certain that they are mine for ever¹⁶ and therefore that I may well wait till I have more time to read them at leisure¹⁷. The trouble is that “more time” never comes. But more books do¹⁸ come; for I buy one from time to time. I wish I could bring myself to¹⁹ treat every book I have as if²⁰ 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 less²¹ advisable is it to borrow a book and lend it as if it were one's own. Not being a lawyer, I wonder²² 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 DIVORCE¹?

Well, don't expect me to dwell upon² marriage and divorce, an old, old³ subject. No, I cannot say much about it. I can only agree with a certain⁴ apparently⁵ stupid fellow who, when asked⁶ what he thought was the chief cause of divorce, gave the simple and prompt answer—marriage. Whatever authorities on social sciences⁷ 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 to⁸ talk about marriage, however. I have only been reminded by the said⁹ question and answer of¹⁰ 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 repairing¹¹. What was the chief cause of the trouble? The watch, of course¹². So I left it alone¹³. I have never bought another watch since¹⁴, 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 naked¹⁵ in order to¹⁶ avoid trouble about food or clothing. But can't one do without¹⁷ all luxuries? Can't one live without a wireless set¹⁸? Can't one study English without a costly fountain-pen¹⁹? Can't one go about²⁰ without a motor-car?

To return to²¹ the question of marriage and divorce. It seems that many young people are too prone to fall in love²². The result is that they are liable to be crossed in love²³. They cannot but²⁴ feel sad unless they can find some consolation in Tennyson's lines²⁵:

'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.²⁶

The chances, however, are that²⁷ 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 too²⁸ 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, 所說及的。 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..., 俱大約... 28. only too, 却很.

OF SENTIMENTAL¹ VALUE

The following small notice² is from a provincial newspaper published in England:

If this³ should catch the eye of⁴ the men who entered the house of⁵ Mrs—at—, she would like them to know that she is grateful for the return of her personal trinkets⁶, which were only of sentimental value.

This paragraph reminds me of the common phrase "Honour' among Thieves". Yes, there is honour even among thieves. If it had not been for this⁸, the lady would not have had her personal trinkets returned to her⁹. The burglary¹⁰ could not be excused on that account¹¹. But it does seem that the thieves concerned¹² had great consideration for¹³ 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 to¹⁴ tamper with¹⁵ what is of sentimental value to others?

A cup, a postcard, a photograph, or a paper-weight¹⁶ may be worth very little in the monetary

sense¹⁷, but in the eyes of¹⁸ the person who considers it of sentimental value it may be a priceless possession¹⁹. He keeps it with loving care, touches, views²⁰, 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 it²¹—a relative or a friend, or a man or woman whom he loves or admires for some reason or other²².

What is of sentimental value can never be replaced²³. It has no equivalent. It is unique²⁴. When it is lost or stolen, its owner might be willing to pay a hundred times its worth²⁵ for its recovery. But when it is spoilt or destroyed, well, nothing can be substituted²⁶. It is small wonder that²⁷ the lady who had been robbed and had her trinkets returned to her inserted a paragraph in the newspaper to thank the thieves.

After all²⁸, we ought not to have less honour than thieves so far as what is of sentimental value to others is concerned²⁹.

【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. . ., . . .是不足為奇的。28. After all, 畢竟。29. so far as . . . is concerned, 就 . . . 而論。

“WAYS”¹

“In his high-flying vanities², his low-lying oddities³, what we call his ‘ways’”—Augustine Birrell⁴. The “ways” here is one of a number of⁵ common words that do not seem to me to be capable of being accurately translated. Reference⁶ to some dictionaries has given me the following further examples.

has a *way* of blinking.

has a little *way* of leaving his bills unpaid⁷.

It is only his *way*⁸.

After you get used to⁹ his *ways*, you don't care so much.

Well, I wonder whether it is common to say “I have a way of. . .”. At any rate¹⁰ 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 it¹¹, 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 there¹² in a book of reference¹³ when I am looking for some information that those paragraphs have nothing to do with¹⁴, have a way of writing letters very quickly and adding one or two or even more postscripts¹⁵, some-

times the latter¹⁶ occupying more space than the letter proper¹⁷, 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 doubtless¹⁸ form delightful reading¹⁹.

We say "It is only his way" when we mean to excuse someone for a piece of strange or objectionable²⁰ conduct. But of course²¹ 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...不關。 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 Belloc¹ that I found the expression² "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 of³ something quite different that I should think deserves it as well⁴. I mean the happiness not of doing nothing but of not doing something⁵ (I do not say *anything*⁶, mind you⁷).

When it comes to⁸ the question of happiness, it is not always what one is doing but often what one is not doing that matters⁹. For instance¹⁰, 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 windy¹¹ 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 time¹² of some sort or other¹³, 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 theatre¹⁴ 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 queue¹⁵, nor sitting between a talkative boy and a tobacco-smelling old man, nor hearing a tedious soliloquy¹⁶, nor seeing a disgusting or creepy¹⁷ scene¹⁸, nor returning home tired and sleepy, nor fearing that you cannot get up¹⁹ early enough the next morning. Don't you think such an evening a pleasant²⁰ 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 stuffy²⁰ 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 —

