

The Use of Foreign Words.

Clara Sterling Doolittle, in the *Chicago Record*, writes an interesting article relating to the use of foreign words in English Literature as follows:

The use of foreign, especially French, expressions in English writings has been carried to such an extreme in the last century that there is now a reaction against it. No good novelist of today sprinkles his page with French, as did the estimable writers fifty years ago. Only heroines of third-class writers ever waved their "mouchoirs" and made "moues," to be sure, and they do it still almost as much as ever, but Charlotte Bronte and Thackeray used many more French expressions than writers of their class would use now.

"Jane Eyre" was published in 1847. It contains between twenty and thirty French phrases, besides whole speeches in French. Of course there is the excuse that the child Adele is learning the language and has a governess to speak it to her, but that seems hardly more than a pretext for bringing in the foreign tongue. The author lets the other characters besides Adele dabble in it, and she dabbles in it herself. To mention a few instances, she says "faux air," "jeune encore," "tant pis," "par parenthese," and so on. The climax is reached when she uses "croquant" for devouring and in a parenthesis asks the reader to pardon it as a barbarism. Unlike most of the other expressions it is not commonly heard, and instead of begging pardon for it she would better have translated it. Besides the many French phrases there are five Latin and three Italian ones, all of them common, but no better than their English equivalents.

ooo

Thackeray in "Vanity Fair," published in 1846-48, uses nearly 200 French expressions. Over half of these he puts in the mouths of his characters. The others he uses when speaking in his own person. Much of the French he puts in because he is writing of society, and the society people of that time used it. Much of it he makes intentionally bad in order to be true to life. Part of it is given an English and part of it a German pronunciation and flavor. The author himself says in regard to Becky's ability to speak French well: "It is a fact, that in a fortnight, and after three dinners in general society, this young woman had got up the genteel jargon so well, that a native could not speak it better; and it was only from her French being so good that you could know she was not a born woman of fashion." As part of the satire of the novel, then, that could be indicated in no other way, much of the French in "Vanity Fair" is permissible. Unless one understands French, however, the satire is lost upon him. Not all of the French can be excused even in this way. Every one must feel that there is too much of it when he reads in this English book, the scene of which is laid mainly in England, "en garçon," "engoument," "eclaircissement," "locataires," "tartines," "comite," "fredaines," "Que voulez-vous?" and so forth, almost indefinitely. Besides the French, Thackeray uses eleven Latin expressions—some of them whole sentences—three German and one Italian. One must needs be a polyglot, indeed, to understand every word in "Vanity Fair."

ooo

No writer of Thackeray's high rank would think nowadays of putting so much that was not English into a supposedly English book. The only book of much prominence of late years that has been heavily interlarded with French is "Trilby." Here the scene is laid in France and the introduction of the French phrases and songs may be regarded as a legitimate device to give local color. Even if this is not granted the expressions may be defended on the ground that many of them are practically untranslatable. No English words could express just what they express. In any case, idiomatic and connected as they are, they stand in quite a different category from the ordinary French expression in the ordinary English

novel. But the objection can be made against them even that they stand in an English book made for English readers, half of whom in all probability can understand none of them. If this objection had been made to Du Maurier probably he would have said that he preferred to produce exactly the right effect even if the number of those who could thoroughly appreciate it were small.

The common-sense opinion that voices the tendency of today is that foreign expressions should be rarely used. They should never be used to impress and mystify any one else or to show off one's own knowledge. Now and then, if one is sure of being understood, and especially if one is speaking of foreign things, pointed and characteristic foreign expressions give pleasure to both speaker and listener. They are like familiar quotations or references. They arouse associations that belong with them and set old memories vibrating.

ooo

It need hardly be added that they should never be used unless they are thoroughly understood. Mistakes are frequently made by persons who misuse foreign expressions because of not knowing the literal meaning of them. Every one has heard such expressions as "She has the la grippe." "La" is of course "the" in French, so that the English "the" is unnecessary, the expression being as it stands, "She has the the grippe." Adams Sherman Hill, in his "Foundations of Rhetoric" quotes a number of ridiculous instances of such mistakes. "Nee" of course means "born," being the past participle of the French verb "naitre," "to be born." It is frequently used for "born" in adding a woman's maiden name after mentioning her married name; for example, "Mrs. Brown nee Jones." Some one, not understanding the meaning of the word and evidently thinking that it meant "formerly" or "before," wrote "Mrs. Parnell, nee Mrs. O'Shea, is still confined to the house." Another person having heard "pro and con" used to mean "for and against" thought that they might as well mean "in both directions" literally, and wrote, "The horse cars run pro and con on my street."

Almost as objectionable is the use of "nom de plume" for "pseudonym." "Nom de plume," though it is literally "name of pen," does not mean in France a writer's assumed name. The proper words to express that are "nom de guerre," or, more commonly, "pseudonyme," which our "pseudonym" so closely resembles. In America the French word "depot" is frequently used for "railway station." The French word for "station" is "gare," "depot" never being used in this particular sense. There seems in this case and in many others of which it is typical every reason for using the English word and no reason for using the French.

English Politics.

It is full time for those who have at heart the maintenance of the rule of the people of these realms to see that it is not swept aside and replaced by the sort of oligarchical government which existed in the days of the Georges, and which Lord Beaconsfield termed in his novels a Venetian oligarchy. At present we have a government of twenty cabinet ministers, only three of whom are not either members of titled families or of families belonging to the untitled landed aristocracy. In this cabinet the working classes are entirely unrepresented, whilst trade and commerce hardly figure in it. The same system has been adopted in regard to the secondary administrative parliamentary appointments. Lord Salisbury, the head of the government, is a man of exceptional ability, but he has stuffed the cabinet with members of his own family; and in order to make place for them he has "reorganized" out of existence gentlemen like Sir Matthew White Ridley, against whose administrative action as home secretary nothing could be alleged. It is openly admitted that there is an inner cabinet within the cabinet which decides upon all political issues. The names of this council of three or four are more or less kept secret, and thus their direct responsibility to the country is evaded.

Fully one-half of the government has been selected from the house of lords—an assembly inde-

pendent of the people and owing no allegiance to them. The house of commons has been tricked out of its true position, as the ruling council of the nation, and its authority has been reduced to a vanishing point. Our legislative machine consists, therefore, of (1) an hereditary house of legislators, augmented each year by men—themselves enjoying the right to transmit their functions to their posterity—who are drawn from the ranks of the plutocracy, and who often pay for their promotion to this assembly; and (2) a house of commons, which partially, but only partially, represents the nation, owing to plural votes being given to the rich at elections and to the operation of our scandalous registration laws which exclude from the franchise hundreds of thousands of the working classes; whilst it is reduced to impotence by its rules of procedure. Thus a ministry with a mechanical majority behind it becomes the absolute master of our destinies, and in that ministry there is a council of a few of its members like the "council of three" in Venice, whose names are unknown, but who rule with unrestricted sway over us.—Labouchere in London Truth.

Mockery of Truth.

The beginning of this recent exploitation of war as a means of furthering Christian civilization, so called, was occasioned by the decision of the United States to punish Spain for the brutal treatment of Cubans who did not assent to the claim that three hundred years of conceded sovereignty justified the repression of efforts to establish a government of the people for themselves.

Can any one claim truly that there is a real distinction between the present treatment by the United States troops of the Filipino in rebellion (so called) and by the Spanish troops of the reconcentrados who had often given sympathy and aid to the soldiers or guerillas, if you will, who desired freedom from Spanish rule?

Is it not a mockery of truth to assert that any considerable portion of ten millions of people who had never even heard there was a United States of America three years ago can now have any intelligent desire to be governed by any one living seven thousand miles away?

War is denominated the final appeal, a most conclusive proof of its utter defiance of both reason and justice, for the appeal to force must be decided in favor of the most forceful, whether right or wrong.

I know that many agree with me that the more they reflect upon the assertions made in favor of war by Christian professors, the temptation is strong to lead them to conclude it to be utterly useless, and, in fact, a mockery of the rational action of the mind, to expend either time or money in the effort to maintain and extend churches to further the teaching of such doctrine.—George Foster Peabody, in the Churchman.

The surrender of the West Point cadets to public opinion is a result justifying the investigations held. It is well that the youths being educated at the public expense have recognized that they owe a decent respect to the views of their benefactors.

The difference in the two investigations has been very marked. To those who have believed in the searching efficacy of military rule, it will come as a surprise that the officers had failed completely in the effort to reach the bottom of the trouble, while, with hands down, the civilian committee carried off every cover and laid bare the whole disorder. For the first time the students were brought face to face with authority, and hastened to make their submission.—Atlanta Constitution.

"Lucy has gone away to boarding school," said one East End girl to another.

"So I heard."

"But I don't think it is a very high-toned school."

"Why?"

"Because it has terms, instead of semesters."—Pittsburg Chronicle Telegraph.

She—I wonder why they hung that picture?

He—Perhaps they couldn't catch the artist.—Exchange.