

Nothing better explains the affection in which John McCrae was held than the passages describing his love of children and animals. 'Through all his life, and through all his letters, dogs and children followed him as shadows follow men. To walk in the streets with him was a slow procession. Every dog and every child one met must be spoken to, and each made answer.' The letters to his nephews and nieces are full of delightful stories of his horse Bonfire and his dog Bonneau, and many of them are written in the person of the former and signed with a horseshoe—'Bonfire his mark.' Bonneau accompanied him round the wards; Bonfire was full of tricks, and when his master sat down within his reach would pick off his cap; he also 'made a great hit with the Sisters, because he licks their hands just like a dog.' And the picture of little Mike, four months old, who had lost an eye and had a leg broken, but 'is a very good little boy all the same'; of Sir Bertrand Dawson's spaniel Sue, and 'poor old Windy,' the regimental dog of the 1st Battalion of the Lincolns, who came to the hospital to be healed of his second wound, will move the hearts of all dog-lovers.

McCrae's health was failing when he came to Boulogne. All his life he had suffered from asthma, and he felt the cold terribly. But he did his work, and did it well. He died after a few days' illness, and was buried with full honors in the cemetery at Wimereux 'on this sunny slope, facing the sunset and the sea,' as one of the nurses put it, adding: 'The nurses lamented that he became unconscious so quickly that they could not tell him how much they cared. To the funeral all came as we did, because we loved him so.' Many fine tributes were paid to John McCrae by his colleagues and friends. But after quoting their testimony Sir Andrew

Macphail, with a sure instinct, finds the best memorial in McCrae's own words, in which he set forth the ideal of the noble profession he adorned—an ideal which he came so near realizing:

To his own students John McCrae once quoted the legend from a picture, to him 'the most suggestive picture in the world': 'What I spent I had; what I saved I lost; what I gave I have; and he added: 'It will be in your power every day to store up for yourselves treasures that will come back to you in the consciousness of duty well done, of kind acts performed, things that, having given away freely, you yet possess. It has often seemed to me that when in the Judgment those surprised faces look up, and say: Lord, when saw we Thee anhungered, and fed Thee; or thirsty, and gave Thee drink; a stranger, and took Thee in; naked, and clothed Thee; and there meets them that warrant-royal of all charity: Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me, there will be among those awed ones many a practitioner of medicine.'

The Spectator

ONE'S MORNING PAPER AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

BY IVOR BROWN

It is commonly supposed that the man who talks of 'journalese' refers to the viscous jargon which calls a catch-word 'a slogan.' But it is not the vocabulary of the reporter and sub-editor that is the real menace to our tongue. Dead metaphors are as ugly as most corpses, and as harmless. The stuffed bird, however objectionable to the bird lover, is not bad taste in the bar parlor: it is the stuffed bird in the study that infuriates. So we can pass over the lifeless metaphor in the morning's news without noticing it, but shudder to see it in a book of quality. Slang, too, when it is spontaneous, has a particular liveliness of its own, and, kept in its place, does nobody any

harm; and slang as a rule stays in its place, which is the headline and the gossip column. The English language is in no danger from the seductions of the *Tatler's* 'Eve,' or the *Bystander's* 'Blanche,' for Eve and Blanche do not essay to write treatises on the soul of man or pamphlets on our present discontents. The peril does not come from flippancy and triviality and the popular craze for loquacious imbecility. It is the hidden hand of the leader-writer that we dread; it is when men begin to write in serious vein that they write so vilely. Not that they fall into slang, for slang does at least hit you in the eye; and that is something. But the publicist of to-day waves his arms in a wild frenzy of abstraction, and hits nothing at all. The reporter may be an earthy fellow, but that has its advantages, if he avoids being lost in the fog.

The modern leader-writer is placed, let us grant, in a most exasperating position. The hour of going to press becomes, for various reasons, continually more early, and thus articles on events of the day are written under greater pressure and strain. Furthermore, the buying and selling of daily papers for parties by industrial and political magnates renders the journalist's fate more wretched. He writes more than ever to orders, and those orders come in outline from the owner of the paper. But in these volcanic times opportunism ousts principle, and, policy being as unsettled as the world, it is the leader-writer's task to say just enough and never too much. The conciliation of interests and personalities drives him into the dangerous arts of compromise. This fact, coupled with the continuous spread of half-defined abstract ideas, muddies the stream of thought; and the result of muddy thought is muddy language. Our speech is loaded with isms and ologies, which may be harmless, perhaps

really useful, in the hands of men who are prepared to define every term they use, but which are completely fatal to reason and clearness when ladled out in bucketfuls. In nearly all writing about political and social affairs, the flow of thought is dammed by a cumbersomely evasive phraseology. It is all hedging and hesitation. Who is not familiar with the article that begins: 'We are disinclined to believe that a tendency toward Bolshevism [undefined] is commencing to manifest itself among some sections of the British working classes. Far be it from us to attempt to prescribe to the man in the street the sphere and confines of his legitimate aspirations, but we feel it our duty to point out,' etc.? This is not slang; it is something far worse. It is mere evasion. How miserable are those 'tendencies toward' and 'disinclinations to believe'! It is they, not the stunts of subalternese, that are turning our gold into dross.

The objection arises that the journalist is not, after all, an important person: his work is purely ephemeral and his day is short. But, unfortunately, journalism is the apprenticeship of most men of letters. A man must live, and the writing of books is notoriously an unremunerative calling: accordingly, he earns his bread and butter through the press, and makes authorship a spare-time occupation. It is not surprising that those who pass through the fire should come out singed, not strange that the muddy phraseology should stick to its user. When a man is given an hour or two to turn out something specious and acceptable on a subject of which he knows almost nothing,—when, in fact, he accepts the rôle of professional sophist,—he turns to ambiguity as a hungry man snatches food. There follow the studied moderation, the padding of sentences, the cult of the mean-

ingless abstraction. And the resulting feebleness infects the entire health and strength of a once vigorous language.

The point is easily made plain if we turn back to English political writers of the nineteenth century, let alone those of earlier epochs. An admirable instance is to be found in the essays of Lord Macaulay. Macaulay was a typical Whig, a man of much sense and little sensibility, a drastic logician, a violent and often a pedantic critic. We pride ourselves nowadays on a finer quality of imagination, a greater susceptibility to delicate impressions. But, whether we agree with Macaulay or not, we do not close the book and wonder what it is all about. He says what he means, and he says it hard. A lucid virility is the essence of his style. Here at least is a clear bright flame of reason, not a muzzy glow. English utilitarianism is out of fashion; our Hegelians and mystics pass it contemptuously by. We have yet something to learn from utilitarian politics; after all, we are in no position to laugh. And we have still more to learn from the utilitarian writing. It would be hard to find more agreeable English than the prose of Lord Morley and Sir Leslie Stephen. Here are clarity and strength well compounded, a stream never sluggish, yet never tossing in the rapids of verbosity. Morley's *Voltaire* is instinct with passion; yet there is not a vague phrase, nor an empty one. Every word plays its part, and every line has dignity.

Should one follow the English publicists still further back, the contrast is even more marked. What have we in these days to match Swift's *Conduct of the Allies*? Only Mr. Shaw, another Irishman, approaches Swift in power, and the secret of Mr. Shaw's power is his sincerity. Of Swift, in his full flight of passionate reasoning, it may be said, as of the clerk of Oxenford,

Not one word spak he more than was need;
All that he spak it was of heye prudence,
And short, and quyk, and ful of gret sentence.

There could be no finer description of a good prose style.

Direct writing is the counterpart of direct practice, and honesty in English prose vanishes with honesty in public life. The corruption of the eighteenth century was at least an open corruption: it never troubled to hide its ugly head, and there is less guilt in knavery when all are knaves confessed. But the corruption of to-day is a backstairs business that carries our minds to the freedmen of Imperial Rome: all the dealing is done on the quiet, and bills are paid in jobs and honors rather than in hard cash. Statesmanship has yielded to Big Business, and the substitution of business men for statesmen means the substitution of opportunism for principle and policy. We live in the 'wangler's' day of triumph, and are fed with 'wangler's' English, a diet of cheap narcotics. Yet if our books are compact of studied nothingness, the public must accept its share of the blame. Never was truth more openly spurned. We run from it like children from a bogey; and crouch shivering beneath the skirts of Dora, there to be nursed with the drowsy syrups of the censorship. In a world where truth is dishonored there may be cleverness of affectation and neat trickery of the tongue. But style is dead.

The Athenæum

MR. FRANK BRANGWYN, R.A.

BY E. T. RAYMOND

BEHIND a high and rather forbidding wall in a street off the Broadway at Hammersmith, where few prospects please and most of the architecture is