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To Our Readers: Review of President Dew's Address

N. Beverley Tucker

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TO OUR READERS.

"REVIEW OF PRESIDENT DEW'S ADDRESS."

We received with gratitude, and published with pleasure and approbation, the article, the name of which is prefixed to this. We admired the chaste style, the classic taste and the gentlemanly spirit that characterize it. But we do not assent to all its doctrines, nor concur in its criticisms. Yet we gladly surrendered, for the time, our chair of office, to a writer so well qualified to fill it. He has acquitted himself well; but in resuming our function we feel it our duty to mark an error or two in his performance. He will know us to be incapable of departing from the example of candid courtesy which he has set us, and will take our censures in the same spirit in which his own were conceived.

His criticisms are addressed first to the style, and then to the matter of his author. We shall take him up in the same order; and in doing this we are happy to say that to his style we have nothing to object. It is clear, simple, chaste and graceful. The author of *that review* can ask no higher praise than this. It will certainly satisfy all his canons of criticism in regard to mere style. It satisfies ours too. We might say more (though not truly), which might sound like praise to some, but in his, and in our estimation, it would not be praise.

But we feel ourselves bound to throw our Ægis over Mr. Dew; and though in doing this we may leave bare the heel of Achilles, yet we doubt not to screen him securely from any shaft which may be aimed at the head or the heart. We therefore at once avow that there are some inaccuracies of style which we shall not attempt to defend. What these are will be understood by referring to the review. It is needless to specify them. They will be distinguished by not being made the subject of any remarks by us.

We entirely agree with the reviewer that the usage of good writers is the only standard by which the English language is to be ascertained. But we perhaps differ from him in the manner of applying this standard. Our language is the subject of continual accretion, and from age to age (indeed from year to year) is enriched by the addition of new words and new idioms. To the authors of these we are certainly deeply indebted, and we shall continue to incur fresh debts, as often as any one shall contribute to our facilities of giving clearness, force, piquancy and grace to expression of our thoughts. But how can these valuable contributions go on, if they who offer them are considered as forfeiting, by the very act, their place among those good writers whose compositions are to be taken as standards of language? The effect of this must be to stop all farther improvement. But does the language admit of none? Say that it does not. What then? There was a time when it did; and the law of language was the same then as now. How happens it then that so much has been added to it, in defiance of this supposed law, and that they who have furnished the additions have been honored and rewarded; while such as, at this day, follow their example, are to be censured?

With due submission we will venture a solution of this ques-

tion, which will at once vindicate all contributors, past, present and future, whose suggestions of words or phrases may abide the test we shall propose.

We will say then that the English language consists *actually* of all the words found in our dictionaries, and in all our standard authors, and, *potentially*, of such other words as necessity or convenience may suggest the use of, and in the formation of which certain conditions are observed. It might savor of pedantry to specify these; and we are not sure that we could specify them all. But a few examples will illustrate our meaning.

The adjective indicates a quality, which it predicates of the noun substantive. Now this quality has, or ought to have, a name. Sometimes that name is made the root of the adjective, and sometimes is derived from it. Now we do not scruple to say that if there be an adjective and no noun expressive of the quality which that adjective predicates of its adjunct noun, it is lawful to make such a one. If we had no such word in any book as "*badness*," the use of the word would be perfectly proper. Again, it may happen, that although there is a noun expressive of the generic quality predicated by an adjective derived from it, if any modification of that quality were found unprovided with its appropriate word, it would be quite right to form one from the adjective. Thus, if we had but the word "*joy*" belonging to the whole family of gladness, the formation of "*joy-ous*" and "*joyous-ness*" would be as legitimate as the use of the generic word itself.

In the exercise of this privilege we will suggest one rule which is sometimes overlooked, and produces results unpleasant to the classical taste. It is this—that whether the radical which it is proposed to expand into a new word is of Saxon or of Latin origin, the increment which is supplied should be chosen in conformity to the genius of the language from which the word is derived. If this rule be uniformly observed, the innovator may rest assured that the new word thus grafted on the old stock of the language will incorporate with it, and become a part of it. Thus, if we suppose that we had no word to express "*badness*" in any of its modes, we should adopt that word, and also "*toickedness*," thus adding the Saxon increment "*ness*" to the adjective. But we should not say "*malevolentness*," but "*malevolence*," according to the Latin formula.

To come nearer to the point in controversy: We maintain that, as a general rule, it is lawful to use most nouns verbally, making little and often no change in their form. Hence, if the word "*based*," which is used as a participle, were not to be found in any book on earth, such use would be perfectly legitimate. We would say the same of the verb to "*ornament*." It happens that both these words, which are condemned as barbarisms by the reviewer, are found in Webster; as well as the word "*incipiency*," which he also condemns. But we lay much less stress on this authority than on the principle we have stated. Why should not such words be used? Can their meaning be mistaken? Is not their formation in perfect harmony with the rules and genius of the language? Have they not unequivocal marks of legitimacy, whether born yesterday or an hundred years ago?

We would beg the reviewer to task his black-letter lore, and find us in any ancient author the word "*teash*" used as a verb. What authority had Shakspeare for making it a participle, in that magnificent passage with which all his readers are familiar? Shall we join with Green and his other censors in condemning him too as a licentious innovator? Use was as much the *jus* and *norma loquendi* in his day as now. But Shakspeare used a freedom as pardonable, and as much practiced now as then—*Hanc veniam danus petimusque vicissim*.*

In these remarks it will be seen that it is hardly any part of our object to vindicate Mr. Dew. Webster has all the words excepted to but "*pervasive*." That word is a desideratum. It is a legitimate formation which expresses in a state of rest the quality which "*pervading*" exhibits in action. If it is not English, it deserves to be, and will be. The first use of it by a good writer naturalizes it *de facto*.

We were edified and pleased with the reviewer's critique on the quotation from Virgil. His rule is true as a general rule. But he errs in denying any exceptions to his maxim, that the quotation should be used in the exact sense of the original pas-

* We remember seeing the use of the word "*notice*" as a verb severely criticised by Gifford in the Quarterly. Yet he himself thus uses the same word in the same work.

sage. This very line was applied by Doctor Johnson to his boasted work, his Dictionary. The passage is in Boswell's life of him.

But an example is at hand of a quotation used with the happiest effect in a reversed sense. It was in a speech of the late Mr. Randolph, which all who heard it felt, and which none can forget. When the confidence of the opposition was claimed for Mr. Adams, and a pledge of confidence was asked, he gave his answer in the words of Apollo to the son of Clymene—"Pignora cula petis, do pignora cula timendo." The fear of Apollo was for his son. That of Mr. Randolph was of Mr. Adams. Yet the effect of this quotation, so applied, was electrical, and was considered by many as one of the most felicitous examples of Mr. R.'s fine classic taste.

So much for verbal criticism. *Paulo majora canamus.* Yet we cannot dismiss this philological discussion without avowing, that to us the subject is one of great interest. We would respectfully request those who preside over the language of our country and race, to consider well of the ideas we have presented. Should they be received with favor, they may have the effect of composing the strifes of verbal critics, and of blending into harmony the contributions of literature, and art, and science, to a language so happily qualified to adapt itself to all the modifications of thought which the progressive improvement of the human mind must elicit.

When the reviewer, turning from the work of verbal criticism, undertakes to examine and controvert the doctrines taught in Mr. Dew's address, he seems to us engaged in the unprofitable task of refuting that for which his adversary does not contend. He does, indeed, assert the importance of moral and political science; and, in doing this, displays somewhat of that zeal, which is always awakened by the sneers of others against what we approve. President Dew is aware, that in most other seminaries, and especially in some of those in Virginia, these subjects are held in little repute, and are decidedly postponed to the exact sciences. We do not understand him as doing more than to contend for their equal claim to consideration. In doing this, it was not necessary that he should recapitulate all that could be said in favor of mathematics, natural philosophy, and chemistry. This was already done by those with whom he was contending. His part was to say as much, if as much could be said with truth, in favor of what the reviewer calls his favorite studies. They are perhaps his favorite studies; but it is not on that account that he spoke on their behalf. He advocated them because of their intrinsic importance, and he advocated them as the head of an institution where they have been always particularly cherished. He knew that this had been imputed to his college as a fault, and from this imputation he felt it his duty to defend her.

If any thing was wanting to make good his defence, his reviewer has supplied it. We beg the reader's attention to the following passage:

"Among the greatest evils that has ever afflicted this commonwealth, is the morbid desire of her sons for political distinction. It has been the bane of the republic, destroying every thing like useful enterprize in Virginia, and banishing from their homes thousands of our citizens, to find preferment among the people of other states, or from the patronage of the federal government. No sooner do our young men leave their seminaries of learning, than, deeming themselves politicians and statesmen, ready made according to the philosophy of the best schools, they rush with ardor into the political arena. Disappointed in their ambitious aspirations, with their taste depraved, and having lost all capacity for useful employment, they become reckless and abandoned; or falling in with a dominant party, they sacrifice all independence of character, and stoop to the lowest arts of the demagogue, hoping to creep to that eminence to which they had vainly attempted to soar. Nor is this passion for political life confined to the educated portion of our people. Truly has President Dew said, 'our whole state is a great political nursery.' It swarms with politicians of every age, and hue, and size. But, unfortunately, for one statesman we have a hundred demagogues. Next to a standing army in time of peace, a class of professed politicians, set apart expressly for the business of public life, is most dangerous to the liberties of a free state. Such men must necessarily be the Swiss of party. Considering politics as their vocation, they must needs seek for employment. If they fail to find it in the independent discharge of their duty as representatives of the people, they must seek it in mean compliances with the imperious mandates of party leaders, or in a course of degrading servility and sycophancy to the dispensers of federal patronage. Let us do nothing to increase this numerous swarm of hungry politicians. What we need in Virginia, is a class of educated country gentlemen, well instructed, not only in moral and political philosophy, but in

polite literature, and especially in those physical sciences so intimately connected with agriculture, that most ancient, honorable and independent of all pursuits. Such persons would be qualified at once to discharge well the duties of citizens and of statesmen; and like one of the most celebrated of the ancient Romans, could step from their ploughs to the most important offices of the state, without elevating their own dignity, or degrading the high stations to which they might be called.

"If we were disposed to detract from the dignity of the study of moral and political philosophy, we might join issue with President Dew on the proposition which he has so broadly stated, that 'the great mass of high intellect, in all ages and countries, has been employed in morals and politics;' and we might appeal to the history of the world, and the testimony of many of the wisest of mankind, to disprove the doctrine that seems to be a corollary from this proposition, that the highest intellect is necessary to political success. The truth of the remark of the celebrated Chancellor Oxenstern, who, with great abilities, had the opportunity of extensive observation and experience in one of the most distinguished courts of his age, has been so universally acknowledged, that the remark has become almost proverbial: 'Go,' said he to his son, who expressed diffidence of his capacity for office, 'Go, and see for yourself, quam parva sapientia regitur mundus.' The philosophic historian of the 'Age of Louis XIV.' has added the weight of his opinion to that of this distinguished statesman. He thus expresses himself: 'In reading Mazarin's letters, and Cardinal de Retz's memoirs, we may easily perceive de Retz to have been the superior genius; nevertheless, the former attained the summit of power, and the latter was banished. In a word, it is a certain truth, that to be a powerful minister, little more is required than a middling understanding, good sense and fortune; but to be a good minister, the prevailing passion of the soul must be a love for the public good; and he is the greatest statesman, who leaves behind him the most noble monuments of public utility.' But it is needless to multiply proofs upon this subject. In this country we have so many living witnesses, that men of very moderate abilities, and of still more slender acquirements, may rise to the highest offices in the state, that to doubt it, would imply a degree of skepticism, sufficient to resist the strongest evidence, or the most conclusive demonstration."

The particular evils here enumerated are, "the morbid desire of distinction;" "the swarms of politicians of every age, hue and size;" the insufficiency of their acquirements, and the fearful excess of demagogues over statesmen. The general evil is expressed in the language of Chancellor Oxenstern: "*Quam parva sapientia regitur mundus.*"

These are evils. None feels them more than ourselves or President Dew; and none can paint them more strikingly than his reviewer. What then? Because there is an acknowledged evil, shall there be no remedy? And if a remedy, shall it be one which we can, or one which we cannot administer?

Is it for mere schoolmen to correct "the morbid desire of distinction" nourished by our institutions? "The democratic commonwealth," says Burke, "is the foodful nurse of ambition." The evil, such as it is, inheres in the nature of the thing, with its consequent "swarms of politicians." It may be rendered harmless, but while liberty exists, it can never be destroyed. Like the name of Phidias on the shield of Minerva, envy cannot obliterate it without spoiling the whole work. But why is it an evil? Because our "politicians are not qualified for their task," and are rather "demagogues than statesmen."

Now, for this, President Dew proposes a remedy—moral and political education. We beg the reviewer to re-examine the address with critical care, and say whether he there sees any reason to believe that the author would be content to turn out from his classes, tyros in politics, and demagogues? Does he see any indication that such, though undesigned, would be the effect of his instructions? Our present number contains another lecture from the same institution, and on this very subject. We request him to read that, and ask himself whether he sees there any reason to apprehend that the student will be led to think himself a statesman, as soon as he has got by rote a breviary of popular sayings.

If we rightly understand (and we think we do) the plans of President Dew and his fellow laborers, it is their object, if practicable, to correct the very evils of which the reviewer speaks. No doubt frequent disappointments await them; but until we are convinced that their means are not adapted to their ends, we shall wish to see them persevere. And we shall watch their labors with a hope rendered cheerful by past experience. However demagogues may abound among us, few of them, in proportion, have been reared at William and Mary. The course of instruction there is essentially the same pursued thirty or forty years ago; and we live surrounded by the proofs of its excellence in the very point in question. We have but to step into the Court of Appeals, and we see on the bench, the President,

and Judges Cabell and Brockenbrough, and at the bar, Messrs. Johnson, and Leigh, and Stanard, and Robertson. We know that they are all alumni of William and Mary, and almost all contemporaries; the rich fruit of one abundant harvest. While we think of these men, may we not be allowed to hope that the system of education which has given them to their country, may continue to furnish others, in whose presence the ignorant pretender shall blush, and the demagogue shall stand rebuked? In such a result no one would rejoice more than ourselves—no, not even our friend the reviewer; and for its accomplishment, there is no man to whom we look with more confidence than President Dew. Praying God to speed him in his labors, of him and his reviewer we take a courteous farewell. To the latter we feel ourselves obliged by his neat and elegant critique, and beg him to believe, that our sense of its merit and his own, is not the less; because we have felt it our duty to screen another friend from a censure, originating, as it seems, in misapprehension. The question of authority for the use of certain words, is one to be settled between Walker and Webster. We wish, for our parts, that all lexicographers would fight their own battles, instead of setting honest men by the ears. If they must fight by champion, we should like to see the "battle of the books" renewed, and folio meet folio in fair field. If the strife should end in the extermination of all the dictionaries of the English tongue, we are not sure that the language would lose any thing by it. No well-read man has need of them. They do but save illiterate clowns from betraying their ignorance and low breeding. And even this they do but imperfectly. By the initiated, the language learned from a dictionary will never be mistaken for that acquired in the parlor or in the halls of science.

The remarks which we made, in our number for February last, upon some reflections which a writer in the Pittsburg Times, and the editor of the paper, had suffered themselves to cast upon us for ascribing the "Lines to my Wife" (published in our number for October preceding,) to Lindley Murray, have brought us several letters from different hands, which we shall lay before our readers for their amusement. It is curious, indeed, to find from them that we were all out—if we are even now exactly in. Thus our correspondent A. B. L. surprises us with the discovery that the Lines are evidently borrowed (with few alterations) from an old Scotch song by one Lapraik; and very interestingly identifies the original as a favorite of Burns himself. He agrees with us, however, that the imitation which we published was probably written by Murray, rather than by Huddesford; and we were thanking him in our hearts for his aid on this point, when we received the letter of "Oxonensis," who, not dreaming that the Lines were borrowed or altered from Lapraik, assigns them without hesitation to Huddesford, and indeed seems to prove that they are his, by tracing them to the "Wiccamental Chaplet," which he certainly edited. At least, their coming out in that work would appear to establish the fact of their having been written by some Wiccunist, and Murray, we suppose, was hardly one of that tribe. So we must now think that the Lines are most probably Huddesford's; and we are glad to learn from our correspondent, that the author of them is not the "Englishman of very little celebrity" that our Pittsburg pair supposed him to be, but an eminent Oxonian, a man of learning and letters, and justly esteemed an elegant poet for his time. Indeed, these Lines, if he had writ no other, would fairly entitle him, in our opinion, to the praise of possessing no small share of poetical tenderness and taste. But our correspondent X. Y. has here furnished us with another specimen of his Muse, which raises him still higher in our favor; as it shows that he had also no small genius, or at least talent, for the sublime.

But what do we say to the fifth, or additional stanza, which our "Oxonensis" informs us is not in the copy in the "Wiccamental Chaplet?" Why, we think, with him, that it is manifestly unworthy of the rest, and most probably by another hand. We cannot, indeed, altogether assent to his sharp condemnation of the figure of the Ivy, which we think justifiable upon the soundest principles of criticism—for it is sufficient, we take it, that a figure shall be, in law language, "true to a common intent," without being so to "every intent;" and if the Ivy, as he charges, draws its nourishment from the tree to which it attaches itself, that is obviously no more than it has a right to do, as a wife may, very lawfully, claim support and subsistence from her husband, (though both, we confess, may happen to extract a little too much) and, at any rate, its secret fault does not ap-

pear, and ought not to be remembered, in the admirable fondness and fidelity with which it clings to the trunk which it adorns— alike through storm and sunshine—even to its death. The poets, accordingly, have done ample justice to its merit in this point of view; and the very figure is, in fact, sanctioned by the best usage, ancient and modern. We could quote a hundred examples from the Greek, Latin, and English classics, to prove it; but we refrain. We admit, however, that the writer, whoever he was, might perhaps have found a better plant for his purpose. We observe, indeed, that the song of Lapraik, which he evidently had before his eyes when he wrote, has the "woodbine" instead of the "Ivy," and we feel at once that if one could fairly imagine himself to be a tree, he might, very reasonably, choose to be clasped by that beautiful flower, rather than by any Ivy in the world (unless, indeed, it were one of those sweet *Ivys* that happen to be growing and blooming in or near a certain *borough* that we know.) But we keep our readers too long from the Letters. Here they are at last.

Augusta, Georgia, 18th March, 1837.

Sir:—From the last number of the Messenger, I learn that you have been rudely handled, by a writer in the Pittsburg Daily Times, for ascribing the ode "To My Wife," in the October number of your truly valuable periodical, to Lindley Murray. Surely, your mistake was quite too natural, to justify the sharp reproof of the writer in the Times. But what will he, and his indorser (the Editor of the Times) say, when they learn, that Mr. Huddesford has no more claims to the authorship of that piece, than Lindley Murray! In point of fact, it was written by a Scotchman, of the name of John Lapraik, a contemporary and companion of Burns. It is to be found at page sixty-seven of the first volume of the Glasgow edition of the *Encyclopedia of Songs*; which was published nearly twenty years before the *Western Songster*. The ode appears in the Messenger a little changed, both in measure and dialect, from the original; but not so much so, as to raise a doubt even in the mind of the writer in the Times, as to its identity with Lapraik's. Let me lay them both before the reader.

From the Messenger.

TO MY WIFE.

When on thy bosom I recline,
Enraptur'd still to call thee mine,
To call thee mine for life;
I glory in the sacred ties,
Which modern wits and fools despise,
Of Husband and of Wife.
One mutual flame inspires our bliss;
The tender look, the melting kiss,
E'en years have not destroyed;
Some sweet sensation ever new,
Springs up, and proves the maxim true,
That Love can ne'er be cloyed.
Have I a wish?—'tis all for thee;
Hast thou a wish?—'tis all for me.
So soft our moments move,
That angels look with ardent gaze,
Well pleased to see our happy days,
And bid us live—and love.
If cares arise—and cares will come—
Thy bosom is my softest home;
I'll lull me there to rest:
And is there aught disturbs my fair?
I'll bid her sigh out every care,
And lose it in my breast.
Have I a wish!—'tis all her own,
All hers and mine are rolled in one—
Our hearts are so entwined,
That, like the ivy round the tree,
Bound up in closest amity,
'Tis Death to be disjoined.