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would insist that the same rule be applied to the Senate, as well as to the House. But is not the remedy worth considering, in spite of its difficulties? Indeed, in the midst of the loud and various cries for reform in congressional elections both South and North, will their advocates stop for a moment to tell us how any of their schemes are feasible as laws so long as disputes under them are still to be decided as party questions by a majority of the House, and not as questions of law by judges?

The English Language in America.

THERE is now only one important point in which our right as a nation to be individual, or the great significance of the individuality we possess, is seriously questioned by our English cousins, and that is our use of our mother tongue. If "the great American language" and "Americanisms" of every shade are accepted by them as facts, they are certainly still accepted under protest. And it may be confessed that most Americans feel that this protest is, on the whole, justifiable. We are disposed to admit that we have been forced into an unfavorable position by the questionable character, as regards literary quality, of a large part of our special contributions to the development of English speech. The American freeman is not readily restrained by considerations of taste or style, or by linguistic laws; but from the merely literary point of view, which is that of the purist and often even of the more broad-minded scholar, these considerations are all-important.

It will not do for us, however, to concede too much to our transatlantic critics. It is very possible that their objections to details, however justifiable they may be, may blind both them and us to what is really essential in the matter. First of all both need to realize the fact that we have a proprietary right in the great common heritage of the English-speaking world. There is no divine right in matters verbal vested in English-speakers on the other side of the sea. Our language is not lent us by them on the condition that it shall not be tampered with, but is our own to mold or forge to all the purposes of our multifarious and peculiar practical and intellectual life.

Furthermore, whether we approve it or not, some real divergence of American from British usage, the extent and character of which are not yet clear, and indeed can be guessed only after estimating the joint effect of all the disturbing and all the conservative forces at work, is inevitable. The great fact about language is that it is a tool — that it comes into existence solely for the sake of its utility. It may be, as Emerson says, "fossil poetry," or, as stylists and purists insist, a mine of glittering crystals suited chiefly to adorn the periods of the littérateur; but it is poetry or gem only after it becomes fossil or crystallized. In its origin, in its generative and most vital stage, it is the veriest prose, the most amorphous and utilitarian of substances. But it cannot fulfill its end as a tool unless it can be adapted to all the changing conditions of the practical and mental life of those who use it; and as a matter of fact no language has ever been to any great extent restricted in its development by any other consideration. The only language that can satisfy the purist is a dead language: wherever there is life there is change, adaptation, neologism. The usage which really in the long run governs speech is that which is best adapted to the true needs of actual life in all its phases; and that usage *must* be variable. To one who reflects upon the subject along this line, the theory that the usage of 35,000,000 people living under one set of conditions can by any possibility control, or by any rule of reason ought to control, the usage of 60,000,000 — soon to be 200,000,000 — living under another and quite different set of conditions must seem radically absurd. If in the evolution of the life of the former it becomes necessary, or for any reason advantageous, or simply customary, to use certain words with novel extensions or restrictions of meaning, or to invent new terms and modes of expression, or to vary the pronunciation of words, there is no reasoning, linguistic or moral, which can or should prevent it; and if the same thing happens to the latter, the situation in all its aspects is precisely the same. If the result in the latter case is an "Americanism," it is in the former a "Briticism," and the one is just as legitimate and valuable as the other, the conditions of utility and taste being equally fulfilled. Americanism in language (whatever it may turn out to be) has a right to exist, and must exist — a genuine product of the new soil.

Upon the comprehension of this fact follows the most important of all the problems connected with this subject — namely, what is the probable outcome as regards the English language and literature of the American branch of this divided stream of usage? As a rough answer, the statement may be ventured, with due modesty, that Americanism in our language has a better evolutionary chance of survival as *the* English of the future than has Briticism. The linguistic heritage of the past is common to both: in that neither has preëminence or advantage; the future, however, cannot well belong to both equally, but the lion's share must fall to the stronger, and that we shall be the stronger we can hardly be expected to question. If the forces which are to govern the result were identical with those which determine material preëminence there could be little doubt about it; but of course they are not. A thousand additional dollars in a man's pocket do not change his habitual enunciation of a single letter, or modify his use of a single word. Nor is mere increase of population, fast though it will here undoubtedly be, of much account. The augmentation of the number of Chinamen by a hundred millions would not have much effect on Chinese speech. Neither does mere practical activity and enterprise count for much by itself; for it may be counterbalanced by extreme conservatism in other equally important directions. In brief, in order that English-speaking men on this side of the Atlantic shall be able to make their use of their language the language itself rather than a dialect of it,— in comparison with its use by Englishmen on the other side,— they must possess not merely such advantages of position as regards material prosperity and energy as will give them a predominating material influence, but also masterful intellectual qualities which will enable them to impress themselves on the world as the dominant branch of the Anglo-Saxon race. To these must also be added a certain independence and originality in linguistic matters. If these conditions are fulfilled, whatever in language establishes itself in American common life will of a certainty establish itself in American literature, and therefore as the English of the world. To what extent these favorable elements are present should perhaps be left for foreign eyes as unprejudiced and friendly as those, for instance, of Professor Bryce to discover. But Americans who see the enormously increasing population of their country, brought from all quarters of the globe into stimulating contact with new phases of nature and life, stirred by contagious, restless, New World activity, and amassing enormous wealth, and believe that throughout this mass of humanity there is a strenuous intelligence and an eagerness and capacity for mental growth paralleled nowhere else, may be pardoned for thinking that the elements demanded cannot be lacking. That we possess the last-mentioned requirement, readiness to adapt and change, certainly cannot be denied. Not the least notable evidence of it is, for example, our comparatively great openness to conviction in the direction of a scientific and practical simplification of our spelling. Thus one can hardly imagine that, as has happened on the other side, if our Philological Association were constructing a great English dictionary which from its nature must be quite independent of popular support, it would practically throw its influence in favor of the most conservative and certainly obsolescent orthography. It is also worth noting that our temper in this direction is precisely that which is needed to make English, what all who speak it hope it will be, the universal language of the future commercial, as French has been of the past political and social world. In a word, the hope that the English language as spoken by our descendants will be its dominant and most widely adopted form is entirely reasonable, and the determination that it shall be such is a worthy national ambition.

Lincoln's Disinterestedness.

THE very heart and substance of the authorized Life of Lincoln are to be found in the installments published in THE CENTURY for December, January, February, and March. No quality that helped to make Lincoln one of the ablest as well as one of the noblest of men fails of illustration in these thrilling chapters. We say thrilling, because we believe that no intelligent student of history — especially no patriotic American of any party or locality — can read these pages without emotion. Has the mental history of a single sublime and world-approved act ever before been so minutely and authoritatively described? The published and hitherto unpublished documents, letters, records of companions, and reported conversations are here gathered together by his private secretaries and displayed in orderly and lucid array. So interesting is every paragraph that one longs for even fuller information — but as it is, the data are full beyond precedent.

As is well known, there were, technically speaking, two Emancipation Proclamations, the preliminary one of September, 1862, and the final proclamation of January 1, 1863, which carried out in due course the programme of executive action laid down in the preceding document. As it was the January edict which actually gave freedom to the colored race in America, it is this which is generally called the great "Emancipation Proclamation." But the two documents are really one act, and it was the September utterance that reverberated through the world and put forward the march of civilization. For this reason the present installment of the Life is illustrated with facsimiles of both documents — preceded by the original draft, which never appeared till given to the public by Messrs. Nicolay and Hay, in the December CENTURY. It was this original draft with which Lincoln surprised his Cabinet in July, 1862, and it has a peculiar interest as showing how the official utterance first shaped itself in his mind. In the present installment the authors give (on pp. 691 and 699) the first draft of the proclamation of January 1, 1863, as well as the facsimile of the document in its final shape.

One cannot but be impressed anew by the fact that one of the most effective equipments of Lincoln for the performance of difficult duties was a quality which he shared with Washington, and which each possessed to a conspicuous degree — the simple but tremendously powerful quality of disinterestedness. It was tact, *i. e.*, intelligence added to kindliness, which helped make Washington a successful leader; it was tact which helped Lincoln to steer his Administration not only through the perils of war but between the rocks of selfishness and faction — but without purity of purpose, without absolute disinterestedness, neither could have done so well, so completely, the work assigned.

With the enormous and enormously increasing populations, the seething social movements, and the ever-threatening political dangers of the New World, there are not and never will be times of perfect peace and quiet. Every Administration, every Congress, State, community, every year, every day, has its emergency. In our uncertain and ever-shifting scheme of general and local governments good men, bad men, half-good and half-bad men, are continually pushing or being pushed to the front as leaders. Now and again an unscrupulous schemer attains a notable official or unofficial eminence; and his disgraceful and pestiferous "success" tends towards the imitation of his methods on the part of men of easy consciences. The example of Washington, the centennial of whose inauguration is so near at hand, and of Lincoln, who was with us only yesterday, and whose pure and devoted life is now being told for the first time — there will never be a moment when the example of these men will cease to be among the most saving forces of the nation.

It would be a poor investment of energy to talk to some busy and party-honored dispenser of corruption funds or political bargainer with liquor-dealers about the public virtues of Washington and Lincoln; but to the young, or to those who in public life still retain somewhat of the delicacy of innocence, it is always worth while to uphold our most prominent instances of political success, and to repeat continually that selfishness is weakness; that honesty is strength; that disinterestedness is a mighty weapon and often the only one wherewith a man may do what with his whole heart he desires to do.