

# **FAULTY DICTION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649396207

Faulty Diction by Various

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**VARIOUS**

**FAULTY  
DICTION**



# FAULTY DICTION

AS CORRECTED BY THE  
FUNK & WAGNALLS  
NEW STANDARD DICTIONARY  
OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

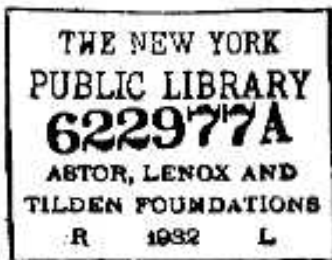
A Brief Statement of the General Principles Determining Correctness in English Speech and Writing, With Their Application to Some of the More Common Instances of Violation and to Some of the Mooted Questions Regarding Usage

*It has been truly observed that 'genius begins where rules end.' But to infer from this, as some seem disposed to do, that, in any department wherein genius can be displayed, rules must be useless, or useless to those who possess genius, is a very rash conclusion.*

ARCHBISHOP WHATELY *Rhetoric* preface



FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY  
NEW YORK AND LONDON  
1917



COPYRIGHT, 1915, BY  
FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY

*[Printed in the United States of America]*

---

Published, September, 1915

*All rights reserved*

NEW YORK  
OLSON  
WAGNALL

## FAULTY DICTION

---

THE DESIGN of this booklet is to aid those who consult it in the correction of many of the faults of speech and writing common among English-speaking people of some, or even considerable, education. The attempt to carry out such a design presupposes that the question whether a word or form of expression is faulty or not depends, not, upon the *ipse dixit* of the critic, but upon rational principles that furnish a basis for correct rules susceptible of critical application. A brief statement of the principles that have been applied in criticizing what is here deemed to be faulty diction is therefore made at the outset, in the belief that a careful consideration of these principles will enable persons using the book to avoid many faults not mentioned in the examples herewith given.

The faulty expressions treated are comparatively few; since rigid principles of exclusion have been enforced by the limitations of space. Slang, vulgarisms, provincialisms, and many other classes of words without literary value or authority, have been mentioned here in rare instances only, and usually with a view merely to give warning of a marked tendency to their introduction into the speech or writing of the educated. The examples given are sufficient to illustrate the various classes of faulty usage that need to be guarded against.

The decision whether diction or pronunciation is faulty or not rests on principles derived in the main directly from lexicology, grammar, and rhetoric; but the authority that makes such principles of obligatory application is the consensus of good usage. In the case of neologisms certain special principles apply.

To consider first the applicable scientific principles of the three fundamental sciences involved: 1.

**Scientific Principles.** Lexicology, the science that treats "of the etymology, definition, and application of words," opposes the use of lexical barbarisms, including (1) unauthorized modes of deriving and compounding words, (2) unauthorized words, and (3) words in unauthorized senses. These restrictions require, in general, the avoidance (a) of hybrid compounds and derivatives, combining elements from two languages, like *cablogram*, *free-optional*, *happy* (unless they have undoubted

literary authority); (b) of words and meanings, like *presentatise*, *retectate*, *cleer* (in the American sense), that have no claim to good lexical standing — embracing, in general, alienisms, archaisms, idiotisms, obsolescences, provincialisms, technicalities, etc.

2. **Grammar**, as the science that treats "of the principles that govern the correct use of language in either oral or written form," opposes (1) the improper inflection of words, as *het* for *heated*, *hadn't ought* for *ought not*, *beautifulst* for *most beautiful*, *animacule* for *animalcule*; (2) improper syntactical constructions (see **CONSTRUCTION**), etc.

3. **Rhetoric**, as the art of discourse, or "the art of perfecting man's power of communicating to others his mental acts or states by means of language," requires the avoidance of such forms of expression, arrangement, and construction as interfere with clearness, energy, and beauty of style. See **CONSTRUCTION**; **RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTION**.

To consider second the character of that **consensus of usage** that makes such scientific principles of binding application: In general, diction to be correct must accord with good **Usage**. It is commonly held that:

1. Usage to be good should be **national** — that is, general among the English-speaking peoples, or at least among some division of these peoples that has a literature of sufficient weight to give authority to usage — as opposed to local, provincial, dialectic, foreign, technical, cant, etc.

The wide extension of the peoples that use English speech, together with the broad lines of division that separate them, makes necessary certain obvious modifications of this requirement in its application to English diction. While, however, best usage must be racial, or that of the "Greater Britain," there may be circumstances or conditions that tend to justify a Britishism, an Americanism, or an Anglo-Indian expression, and to make it *national* with its own people.

Moreover, national usage often embodies itself in idiomatic forms that violate (really or apparently) the common principles of lexicology or grammar. (See **IDIOM**; **IDIOMATIC PHRASE**.) The efforts of the critics to "reform" such usage on the ground that it is illogical or ungrammatical may be praiseworthy, and even measurably successful; but denunciatory criticism or condemnation of such expressions as "had rather," "there is no water here," is altogether barred, especially in cases where the usage reaches far back in literature. Idioms will always abound in good, natural English, and frequently they will not submit to be parsed.

2. Usage to be good should be **reputable**, that is, it should have the sanction of good authors or (to be the best usage) of the best authors. That a form of diction is common to all the great writers of the language gives it an authority that places it above criticism; that it has been used by a few masters, as Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Macaulay, De Quincey, Cardinal Newman, Ruskin, is regarded as justifying its use by other writers; that it has not been used by any leading authors; or that it has been used by them only in representing colloquial or illiterate language, is looked upon as excluding it from use in the higher forms of literature.



It is further to be noted that while the colloquial, technical, or poetical use of words and forms does not justify their general employment in prose literature, and especially in literature in the stricter sense, it is still true that such expressions may be good and indispensable in their own proper spheres, and that many of them are gradually elevated in the process of use until they become essential parts of the language of the higher literature.

3. Usage to be good should be **present**, as opposed to that which has been accredited in the past but is now obsolete. That a word or form of expression was in national and reputable use in Shakespeare's day or in Milton's does not sanction its use in the English literature of to-day, unless it is used distinctly as an obsolete form, or unless its restoration is justified by the canons applicable to neoterisms.

To consider third the principles applicable to neoterisms, or words and meanings newly introduced into

the language: On what grounds are they to be accepted or rejected?

**Neoterisms.** Wherever life and progress mark a people, their advancing thought calls for new words for its adequate expression. In connection with the rapid development and progress and the world-wide relations of the English-speaking peoples, and the varied mental activity of the age, new words in extraordinary numbers are always seeking admission into the English language. Many of these come as if by national inspiration or out of new necessities, and take their places as authorized English almost before they attract the notice of even the most observing. Others are presented for quiet and perhaps extended consideration and careful scientific criticism, preparatory to a final judgment, favorable or unfavorable. Some — and these among the most attractive to writers of undisciplined taste — are put forward as mere idiotisms, the fantastic coinages of men of extraordinary but eccentric genius, such as Thomas Carlyle or Robert Browning. It is therefore necessary to bear in mind the general principles by which the reception or rejection of new words is to be governed, so far as the decision of the cases is to be a matter for the exercise of intelligence.

Fitzedward Hall (*Modern English, on Neoteristic Canons*) has proposed the following general neoteristic canons:

1. "First of all, a new word ought to supply an antecedent blank; or else, on the score of exactness, perspicuity, brevity, or euphony, it ought to be an improvement on a word already existing." That it is necessary furnishes in such a case the right of a word to be. *Cult, locomotive, electromotor*, and almost innumerable other terms have come as matter of necessity to fill blanks.

2. "Secondly, a new word should obey some analogy; and, the less remote the analogy, the better." The English language expresses a certain relation by the suffix *-able*, or *-ible*; when Shakespeare and Milton used *unsuppressible* for *unsuppressible* and *unexpressive* for *unexpressible*, the new forms were naturally rejected by the English people. Yet when words formed contrary to simple analogy come into general use, *analogy* gives way to *consensus of usage*. If *colligram* has come

to supply a blank, there is no helping it; it will live despite criticism.

3. "In the third place, a new word should be **euphonious**. And the inbred feeling of us who use English is, that a word should **not** be **very long**, any more than very harsh." Instances in which the cacophony is the result of imitation of harsh and disagreeable sounds are, of course, exceptions, increase of significance being in such cases more important than euphony.

The first of these canons is the most important and potent in deciding the right of a new word, or the use of a word in a new sense, to a place in the language. It is on this principle that the noun *trust* is used in a sense never contemplated by Shakespeare, Addison, Burke, and Macaulay; that the noun *combine* is struggling for literary recognition, and has already secured a place in the Statutes of the United States, and that *commune*, *communist*, *anarchist*, *nikhist*, *proletariat*, and *plutocrat* have established themselves in popular favor. In settling such cases of admission, analogy and euphony ordinarily play only a secondary part.

It is obvious that these general principles regarding diction are susceptible of very wide application to examples analogous to those that are here treated.

When references are from one part of "Faulty Diction" to another part, they are made without added specification: thus, "never so, etc., see *xviii* so, etc.," refers to the alphabetic place in "Faulty Diction."

The full names of various authors consulted, and complete titles of works treating directly or indirectly of matters of diction, with names of publishers, dates of publication, etc., will be found in the list following, and hence are not appended to quotations occurring in the course of the treatment.

Special acknowledgment is due to many professors and teachers in colleges and other schools for their helpful suggestion, in answer to letters of inquiry, of many popular faults of usage that have become inveterate through the influence of association or of early training.

N. B. The key to the phonetic alphabets used to indicate pronunciation will be found on page 8.

## LIST OF AUTHORS AND WORKS

- HENRY ALFORD *The Queen's English*. [BELL.]
- ALFRED AYRES *The Verbalist*. [A. '93.] Also, *The Orthoepist*. [A. '93.]
- JOHN RUSSELL BARTLETT *Dictionary of Americanisms*. [L. B. & CO. '89.]
- GOULD BROWN *Grammar of English Grammars*. [W. W. '80.]
- GEORGE CRABE *English Synonyms Explained*. [H. '90.]
- HENRY N. DAY *Art of Discourse*. [S. '87.]
- JOHN S. FARMER *Americanisms Old and New*. [Printed by T. Poulter & Sons, '89.]
- WILLIAM C. FOWLER *English Grammar*. [H. '59.]
- EDWARD S. GOULD *Good English*. [W. J. W. '87.]
- FREDERICK HALL *Recent Exemplifications of False Philology* (referred to as *False Philology*). [S. '72.] Also, *Modern English*. [S. '73.]
- WILLIAM B. HODGSON *Errors in the Use of English*: edited and revised by FRANCIS A. TEALL. [A. '82.]
- J. H. LONG *Slips of Tongue and Pen*. [A. '88.]
- MARTINER *An English Grammar* in three volumes, tr. by C. J. GREECE. [J. M. '74.]
- GEORGE P. MARSH *Lectures on the English Language* first series. [S.] Also, *Origin and History of the English Language*. [S.]
- WILLIAM MATTHEWS *Words: Their Use and Abuse*. [S. C. G. '77.]
- GEORGE WASHINGTON MOON *The Dean's English*. [S. & S. '81.]
- SAMUEL RAMSEY *The English Language and English Grammar*. [G. P. P. & '92.]
- CHARLES JOHN SMITH *Synonyms Discriminated*. [BELL '90.]
- H. J. STRANG *Exercises in English*. [D. C. H. '93.]
- RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH *Study of Words*. [W. J. W.] Also, *English Past and Present*. [K. P. & CO. '89.] *Select Glossary of English Words*. [K. P. & CO. '90.]
- RICHARD WHATELY *English Synonyms Discriminated*. [L. & S. '87.]
- RICHARD GRANT WHITE *Words and Their Uses, Past and Present*. [H. M. & CO. '90.] Also, *Every-day English*. [H. M. & CO. '80.]
- WILLIAM DWIGHT WHITNEY *Essentials of English Grammar*. [G. & CO. '90.] Also, *Language and the Study of Language*. [S. '74.] *Oriental and Linguistic Studies* second series. [S. '74.]