

**GOOD ENGLISH; OR,  
POPULAR ERRORS  
IN LANGUAGE**

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Good English; or, Popular errors in language by Edward S. Gould

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**EDWARD S. GOULD**

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GOOD ENGLISH.

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# GOOD ENGLISH;

OR,

## POPULAR ERRORS IN LANGUAGE.

BY

EDWARD S. GOULD,

AUTHOR OF "ABBREVIATION OF ALISON'S EUROPE," ETC., ETC.

REVISED EDITION.

"POLONIUS. What do you read, my lord?"

"HAMLET. Words, words, words!"



NEW YORK:

A. C. ARMSTRONG & SON, PUBLISHERS.

1880.

LONDON: TRÜBNER & CO.

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## P R E F A C E.

THE present edition of "Good English" is very different from its several predecessors. Somewhat more than fifty of its former pages are omitted, and an equal number of pages are put in their place. The latter are made up of new material on the old subject.

The greater part of the omitted pages are those devoted to Webster's orthography. The war on that topic was waged for five-and-twenty years; and, as it was won by the opposing critics, there is no need of prolonging it. Webster and his successors have been gradually driven from their orthographical positions, until nothing remains in their hands but *seventy* primitive words; and their possession even of the seventy is not exclusive. They hold it jointly and in common with their adversaries. That is to say, they have assented to right spelling side by side with wrong spelling in their dictionary, thus:

|                 |                |                    |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| <i>Defense,</i> | <i>Moldy,</i>  | <i>Saber, etc.</i> |
| <i>Defence,</i> | <i>Mouldy,</i> | <i>Sabre, etc.</i> |

through the disputed territory. That concession on

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their part, however, leaves them in the predicament of certifying that there are two correct ways of spelling certain words. Moreover, the Webster style of spelling those seventy words and their derivatives is falling into disrepute. The largest publishing-house in the United States, and one of the best class of New York newspapers — which respectively were the first to adopt Webster's orthography — have quietly abandoned it; and no doubt some other publishers who followed their bad example will soon follow the good one, if they have not done so already. American authors of distinction — Irving, Cooper, Bancroft, Hawthorne, Bryant, and many others — have wholly and from the beginning rejected Webster's attempt to *reform* our orthography.

The author and the publishers of this new volume indulge a hope that, in its improved form, it may meet with the approval which was liberally bestowed on its precedent editions.

NEW YORK, August, 1879.

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

MANY of the following hints on philology have already appeared in print, in the form of occasional contributions, through a series of years, to newspapers and periodical publications, — chiefly in the *New York Evening Post*. They are now, for the first time, brought together in a volume.

Several books on philology, a part of them of English authorship, have, in the interim, been published in the United States; and some of them have occupied portions of the same ground as is here reviewed. But the author of this book has borrowed nothing for its pages from any source other than his own previous essays, except in those instances where he mentions the fact of borrowing, or quoting.

He makes that remark, however, to disclaim direct borrowing from other books of philological criticism; not to claim originality, properly so called, for anything in his own book: for, in the nature of the case, philological criticism is noth-

ing more than a re-assertion of principles, which are much older than is any one who now writes or reads them. If there is anything *strictly* "original" in such criticisms, it is limited to a mere selection of subjects, — the subjects themselves being the handiwork of the people.

On that point, it is proper to say that the author has not extended his comments beyond such errors in language as are familiar to everybody, — such errors as are strictly popular, — and which, unfortunately, are to be found in the pages of nearly all of those who are termed good writers. Possible, or imaginary, errors do not seem to be worth the trouble of exposure or refutation.

In the winter of 1865, at the request of his friend, the Right Reverend WILLIAM BACON STEVENS, Bishop of Pennsylvania, the author delivered three lectures on Clerical Elocution, before the Divinity School of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in Philadelphia. The lectures consisted of written precepts, and illustrative readings from the Bible and Prayer Book. The former part was afterward published in the *Boston Church Monthly*, and was thence transferred to the *New York Christian Times*. But copies of the lectures, beyond what the regularly printed numbers of those periodicals could supply, have often been called for; and the