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their minds, certain criteria of good prose style, but few will complacently accept their standards, if the style displayed in their own comments is to be taken as a sample. They criticize candidates for the use of jargon, gush, ornate alias and circumlocution. The influence of Quiller Couch still seems to be at work on the examiners. They seem to have made a belated discovery of "Studies in Literature", and are still blind disciples of the author. Many of us, several years ago, when we read this breezy book, were similarly affected, but we have long since come to the conclusion that Quiller Couch is not to be taken as the final arbiter of style.

English idiom—to a greater extent than, say, Latin—not merely tolerates, but demands, judicious use of ornate alias, has a distinct place for circumlocution, and even admits of some gush and jargon. For my part, I see nothing particularly objectionable in many of the usages criticized by the examiner, e.g.

"Man's apparel"; "male attire"; (both are better than coat and breeches) "a fine type of man" (for "a fine man"); "another point in Richard's character". The examiners, presumably believing that Euclid has a monopoly of the word "point" say with unction that "Characters do not have points.". I leave it to someone else to defend "feathered songsters" which figured (the "figured" is the examiners' journalese) in many essays. Such methods, one admits, may become objectionable, but for examples of unprovoked assaults on propriety and simplicity of diction, one need not look beyond the language of the examiners' report.

It would be profitless to analyse in detail the twenty pages of this murky effusion, but a few examples will show that the intensely specialized literary training, which the examiners have no doubt received, has not freed their style from the very faults which they consider capital offences in a young student.

They are surely victims of auto-suggestion when they criticise verbosity thus: "Reference again has to be made to the verbosity which in particular characterized the answers to this question. A citation of fact can speak for itself." Incidentally, the "in particular", one supposes, should read with "this question". Another verbose extract from the examiners' English is "The comparative absence of the cultivated artificiality that characterized the work of last year". Indeed, I think, the examiners would gain something by putting into practice the doctrines of Quiller Couch. They might thus be saved from such verbosity, as also from this kind of journalese: "In only one case would the essay lend itself to grammatical analysis.". Personally I see no grave objection to using the word "case" as a blank cheque, to be filled in from the context, but competent critics ridicule it, and indeed the writers of this report do make undue calls on the resources of the word. The rest of this extract is surely jargon.

Only those who have read the report will believe that examiners, who advise candidates to "prune their adjectives severely and all but obliterate their superlatives", could be guilty of the following:

"Loose slovenly English and unsanctioned colloquial usages"; "the comparative absence of cultivated artificiality"; "strange jargon"; "strange fascination"; "one strange candidate"; "produced perhaps the strangest results"; "equally strange was the common use of human"; (Is there not by the way, a suspicion of drawing-room gush about this favourite word "strange"?); "delightful embellishment"; "surprisingly large number"; "glaring

examples"; "It cannot be stated too plainly that—"; "Examiners are only too ready to welcome—"; "One of the most noticeable things in this paper was the rooted objection"; "Any conceivable term"; "Infinitely better"; "in numberless papers"; "high time"; "a gross case of this fault" (not a gross case of jam!); "young people, of course, are gross little materialists". (Why "of course"? Wordsworth and other simple souls hold the opposite view.)

The examiners draw attention to the use of pronouns without an obvious antecedent, and to the use of "ugly participial phrases". Here is an extract from their own English: "The next step is to frame in the mind an outline of what they intend to say and to jot down headings, taking care that, etc." What is the antecedent of "they"? The participle "taking" has not a very safe anchorage, but it is not so obviously adrift as "speaking" in the next example: "Speaking generally, these questions were least satisfactorily answered of all".

Here are some more examples in which the syntax is at least questionable: "Direct their energies to answer the question"; "To train pupils in passing off as their own the views of other people is an unsound moral training" (to train is a training); "a not dissimilar error to this".

Another sentence from the report is as follows: "Some did not more than give a synopsis of the novel they had studied in writing the essay. Similarly, candidates must realize that being asked to comment on a quotation is not the same as being asked to give the reasons for Richard II's deposition, and still less to give a character sketch of Richard.". "Did not more" is an obvious slip; "in writing the essay" should, one presumes, immediately follow "some"; "similarly" does not apply at all; the rest of the sentence will become intelligible to diligent readers if they supply the words "is it the same as being asked" after "still less".

The whole report abounds in ugly constructions and here are a few more samples: "Another common error of treatment arose from a wrong approach having been made to the play"; "One candidate devoted a whole page of writing to telling"; "In a few cases there was evidence that certain passages had a quite definite appeal to the candidates. When this was the case, and when they expressed their feelings in terms of moderate ability, generous marks were given"; "In those cases, where success was achieved, it was the result not so much of real merit as of its being very difficult to say so much without occasionally hitting the nail on the head"; "The study of metre is becoming a thing of mechanical rule rather than a matter of feeling." ("thing" and "matter" are both barren words, but why the change?).

I have taken up much space with what, I trust, is destructive criticism because any other method of attack on the English examiners' stronghold seems impossible.

I would suggest however that the Board of Examiners should no longer make English a compulsory subject; that examiners in this subject should set their own house in order and, with a proper realization of the inadequacy of present methods, refrain from the attempt to probe into the souls of young people with a few hackneyed questions. In their report they talk of "the crying need for education rather than instruction". This sentence may possibly contain the germ of a solution to the problem, if we can only discover what education and instruction are, or if the examiners can tell us what education is without instruction. In their next sentence they refer, with some incon-