

ing. "To *Let*" is the verb which should be used in such cases; the lender "*LETS OUT for hire*," and the borrower "*HIREs*" the article.

A similar perversion, and more glaringly apparent, is that of the verb "*to learn*."—Very commonly do we hear people say, that a teacher did not "*learn*" a boy anything; or that such a person will "*learn*" another no good; or that they hope "*you will learn* the child better things;" thus thoughtlessly using the verb of acquisition for that of communication. It can scarcely be necessary to do more, than to remind those who commit this careless mistake, that "*to teach*" is to impart or communicate knowledge, and "*to learn*" is to acquire or gain it; to induce them henceforth to avoid this common error.

The verbs "*affect*" and "*effect*" are frequently confounded with each other, both verbally and in print; more especially in the latter use. "*To affect*" is to have an influence upon, to excite, to move the passions; to *effect* is to bring to pass, to accomplish. One little letter only marks the variance of orthography between these two verbs; but their sense is widely different; and those who pretend to correctness in speech or writing should carefully remember the distinction.

Precisely similar is the perversion which substitutes "*ingenuous* for *ingenious*," and *vice versa*. "*Ingenious*" means "*witty, inventive, clever*;" "*ingenuous*" is "*open, candid, fair, generous*." The distinctive pronunciation should be correctly remembered and marked in speaking; the definition of the two adjectives is expressly different; and therefore, the thoughtless or ignorant substitution of the one for the other sounds very ill.—Many other such examples might be adduced; but the foregoing are sufficient of their class for the present purpose.

I now pass on to a few instances of prevalent ungrammatical construction, which will bring me nearly to the close of my subject.

A very common colloquial error is the use of the awkward and inharmonious phrase, "*you was*," instead of "*you were*." This uncouth combination of singular and plural arises, most probably, from forgetting or not being aware of the reason for the conventional substitution of the plural pronoun "*you*," for the singular "*thou*," in addressing individuals; and from an idea, that as only one person is alluded to, a plural verb cannot be employed. Strictly, this idea is correct; but universal consent having adopted the plural pronoun, harmony and concord must be maintained, the gram-

matical rules of construction must be observed and consequently the verb must agree in number with the pronoun. Anciently, when singular "*thee* and *thou*" were universally used, there was no difficulty with regard to the verb; "*thou wast*," or "*thou wert*" fitted the natural and correct phrase. As the process of time, as manners softened, decorum became more polished, and modes of speech more courteous and refined, the use of the singular pronouns "*thee* and *thou*" was considered too harsh and abrupt; and imitating, therefore, the magnificent style of monarchs and grandees, whose puissance and greatness could not be supposed to be included within the limited bounds of one ordinary man, and who therefore habitually used the plural terms "*we* and *us*" to express their preeminent and voluminous importance, society in general began to substitute the plural for the singular pronoun, in common conversation. It became a mark of politeness to address an individual in a style, which supposed his importance to be more than ordinary, and implicitly exalted his consequence; and the adoption of the phrase "*you were*" instead of "*thou wast* or *wert*," was established and became universal. But this altered style consists merely in employing a figurative speech in common conversation; in plain addressing an individual in a style, which assumes his multiplied distinctions, and flatters his self-esteem; but it does not alter the rules of grammar. Those rules unerringly require that nouns, pronouns and verbs shall agree in number; the plural "*you*" must still belong to the plural "*were*;" and therefore the phrase "*you was*" is ungrammatical and incorrect.

I may next briefly mention the frequent placing of the words "*first*" and "*last*" in ordinary phraseology. How often do we hear such expressions as "*the first first*," "*the last last*," and similar errors of speech. A slight reflection will shew the fallacy of this mode of utterance; since the terms "*first*" and "*last*" have a single, indivisible, and *gentous* meaning, and cannot be applied to more than one individual.

\* It may here be incidentally mentioned, that the Editorial "*we*" is a species of grammatical consequence of the same genus; excepting that it is a self-assumed importance, not a conventional compliment of society. Its effect is the same as that of "*you*"—that of expressing an individual by a plural pronoun. Yet we see it conjoined with a singular verb, "*we is*" or "*we are*" would sound strangely to the most careless speaker; yet it was no more ungrammatical or improper than "*you was*."