

Educational Weekly

VOL. III.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH, 1886.

Number 60.

The Educational Weekly,

PUBLISHED BY

THE GRIP PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CO.,

SAMUEL J. MOORE, *General Manager.*

C. FRASER, *Business Manager Educational Weekly Dept.*
T. ARNOLD HAULTAIN, M.A., *Editor.*

TERMS: Two Dollars per annum. Clubs of three, \$5.00. Clubs of five at \$1.60 each, or the five for \$8.00. Clubs of twenty at \$1.50 each, or the twenty for \$30.00.

New subscriptions may begin at any time during the year.

Payment, when sent by mail, should be made by post-office order or registered letter. Money sent in unregistered letters will be at the risk of the senders.

The date at the right of the name on the address label shows to what date the subscription is paid. The change of this date to a later one is receipt for remittance.

Subscribers desiring their papers discontinued are requested to give the publishers timely notification.

In ordering a change of address, or the discontinuance of the paper, the name of the post-office to which the paper is sent should always be given.

Rates of advertising will be sent on application.

Business communications and communications intended for the Editor should be on separate papers.

ADDRESS— **EDUCATIONAL WEEKLY,**
GRIP OFFICE, TORONTO.

TORONTO, FEBRUARY 25, 1886.

In all probability but few will be found to object to the assertion that the English language as spoken upon this continent is on the whole less pure than the English language as spoken in the British Isles. By this is not meant that the uneducated upon this side of the Atlantic take greater liberties with their mother tongue than do their trans-Atlantic brethren, but that there is not here any general spirit evinced by the educated classes going to show that they look upon any encroachments upon the purity of English with a jealous eye. That such a spirit exists in England is true. Contrast the American and Canadian press with the English—and this is a fair test. The most cursory glance is sufficient to show the immense inferiority of the former. It is astonishing to find how often journals of high repute sin, not only against rules of general elegance and refinement of diction, but also against even the commonest rules of grammar. Many of our most valued United States

educational periodicals teem with solecisms which would excite the ridicule of a British provincial daily newspaper. Already the fears of Professor Fowler, as expressed in the preface of his "English Grammar," seem to have been realized. "As our countrymen," he says, "are spreading westwards across the continent, and are brought into contact with other races, and adopt new modes of thought, there is some danger that, in the use of their liberty, they may break loose from the laws of the English language, and become marked not only by one, but by a thousand Shibboleths." It would not be difficult, we think, to show that Professor Fowler's assertion is no hyperbole.

It is facts such as these that lead us to assert that English as written and spoken upon this continent is on the whole less pure than it is in its native land. Nor is this a trivial matter. Correctness, not to say elegance in expression, is very rightly taken as a test of culture. A man may possess extraordinary talents, may be a profound and original thinker, may show inventive genius of the highest order, but if he is unable to express himself at least correctly, he is reputed to be devoid of much that is included in the word 'culture.' And if a nation exhibits generally a similar misfortune, a like conclusion must be drawn.

But it is possible to go farther than this and to say that there is even a worse feature than a mere tendency to looseness of expression. Not only is there a general disregard of grammatical accuracy, but not seldom there is exhibited an impatience, not to say scorn, of grammatical accuracy, even amongst those from whom we might reasonably expect the very opposite. Fortunately, however, this is not wide-spread; and already there are evidences of its subsidence.

The question is, are we alive to our deficiencies? If so, what is our duty? Let us quote again from Professor Fowler:—"In order to keep the language of a nation one, the leading men in the greater or smaller communities, the editors of peri-

odicals, and authors generally, should exercise the same guardian care over it which they do over the opinions which it is used to express." To "leading men, editors, and authors," may we not add teachers? Upon teachers, more, perhaps, than upon any other class in the community, devolves this responsibility. It would hardly be asserting too much to say that it is the teachers who form the language of the country. It is in youth that modes of expression are formed; and it is with the youth of the country that teachers have to deal.

How, then, is a remedy to be found? Once again let us refer to Professor Fowler: "And, for this purpose," he continues, "they should be familiar with works which treat of its analogies and idioms, that they may understand what are the laws of normal and of abnormal growth, and by their own example and influence encourage only that which is strictly legitimate."

It may, of course, be urged that many of these so-called "Shibboleths" are natural to the country and, therefore, legitimate. Such an argument would be valid only if this continent were in possession of a language peculiarly its own. It falls to the ground if we hold that the language spoken and written here is after all and avowedly that of the mother country. One proof of this is seen in the fact that the language of the best American authors approaches more nearly to the latter than that of other writers. And since the more educated of this continent show the Shibboleths of their less cultured brethren, this may be taken as an earnest of the true feeling of the nation on this point.

But again, the vast majority of these Shibboleths are in reality errors in grammar, and these no arguments can support. That we are not over-stating the case it is only necessary to glance through the list headed "Common Errors of Speech," which will be found on another page. The words and phrases in this list will be found to contain, almost without exception, grammatical faults of the worst description.