

It is difficult to locate the responsibility of this defect. Much of it doubtless may be charged to the account of those methods of teaching which build wholly on the theory of learning to do by doing. There is no doubt that we learn to do by doing. We learn to spell by practice, we learn to write by writing, we grow strong everywhere by exercise. So we learn to speak correctly by speaking correctly.

But who ever knew of a man to learn temperance by practising gluttony and drunkenness? Who ever knew a child to learn English by associating and imitating the language of those whose English was impure and ungrammatical, and yet this is practically the school in which we find the child for the greater number of hours in the day?

He needs a guide when he has none, and the only plan of furnishing him with this guide is to acquaint him early and as thoroughly as possible with the principles and practice of the language he is to speak.

It won't do to say that he must hear only correct speech and learn by imitation. He will hear incorrect speech in spite of all we can do for him, and the only sensible thing is to give him the power to judge and protect himself. This cannot be done by any attempts to teach him to imitate and construct correct language, unless he has a knowledge of the foundation principles and rules of usage of that language. A great deal of criticism has been passed on the propriety of teaching these rules and principles. The practice has also furnished much material for the use of sarcastic and witty lecturers and instructors, but we have yet to find the man who writes and speaks first-class English who has found it necessary to bolster himself with arguments of this kind.

But there is another phase of this question equally serious. It is that of the college graduate's bad use of English. Here we have a letter from a professor, a graduate of an institution believed to be one of the great institutions of learning in this country, who writes about his department as "effecting" any of the others in the institution. Another, a young graduate writes to a friend begging that he will "except" his gratitude for some kindness rendered. But worse than all, here is a letter from another graduate of twenty years' experience as a college professor who closes his letter with "your's truly," writing "your's" with an apostrophe.

No college education, no higher education of any grade, ought to be permitted to compensate for such ruthless abuse of the English language.