

Again: take the words, "O that those lips had language!" Cowper of course means, Would that they now *had* language, and could speak to me! *Had* does not express a perfected or even a past possession, for the lips referred to never had spoken. It merely assumes a *present non-possession*, and helps to express the wish that the power of speech were possessed. How, then, consistently with facts, can Mr. White say that "nothing is more certain than that *had* expresses perfected and past possession," and that this is "its constant and universally accepted meaning in every other connection" than in the phrases *had rather*, *had as lief*, etc.? Mr. White may yet find the language to be less "grammarless" than he has imagined. If there is a "grammarless" language, it is not the English, however much some may suppose it to be.

Mr. White, moreover, thinks that *had* can not consistently be used to express future action." We suppose he means to say "to express futurity," for *had* does not ordinarily express "action." Commonly, futurity is not expressed in English by a single word. What is called the "future tense" of verbs is simply a combination of two present-tense forms. Thus, "shall go" as truly consists of two presents as "am to go." A verb in the present that conveys the idea of temporal proclivity or of reaching forward in time, when combined with another verb in the present, necessarily expresses more or less the idea of futurity; as, "I may go;" "You need not go;" "I hope to be present;" "You ought to give your consent;" "He is to come." Even the past forms of some verbs, such as *could*, *might*, *should*, *would*, may be used with certain presents to denote futurity: as, "I would go were I you;" "He could come if he wished;" "One might, after repeated trials, succeed." Where, then, the inconsistency or departure from English usage in employing *had*, if one wishes, to aid him in expressing futurity? Where the objection to saying, "I had rather be right than be president?"

It is replied, "*Had be* is not a logical form; it is not legitimate, it is not English; it cannot be parsed!" Of course not! But *had be* is not the form before us; it is "*had rather be*," "*had better be*," "*had as lief be*," etc.; and this is legitimate, idiomatic English, as logically correct as any other expression in the language. To see this, we need to consider the following points?

(a.) *Have* is frequently used to denote, sometime a wish or willingness, as "Deal with others as you would *have* others deal with you;" and sometimes compulsion or obligation, as "I *had* to inquire my way." When joined with *rather*, *sooner*, *as lief*, *as soon*, *had* generally expresses a wish, a preference or choice. Joined with *as well*, *better*, *best*, *need*, it usually denotes an obligation.

(b.) *Had* in these phrases, instead of being "an auxiliary, as generally supposed, plays, in connection with the accompanying adverb, the part of what is commonly, though perhaps improperly, called a "principal" verb. Thus, "I *had* rather be a door-keeper" is equivalent to "I *should* prefer to be a door-keeper." Formerly the *to* of the subjunctive infinitive was sometimes expressed after the qualifying adverb; as, "I had rather *to* adopt a child," etc.—*Othello*, i., 3. "A thousand books had they lever *to* be put forth," etc.—*Tyndale*. "I had rather be a door-keeper * * * than *to* dwell in the tents of wickedness."—*Psa.* lviii., 10 That *had* rather, *had as lief*, etc., virtually constitute a "principal verb" will be still more apparent from following examples: "I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines."—*Hamlet*, iii., 2. "I had as lief they would put ratsbane in my mouth, as offer to stop it with security."—*2d King Henry IV.* i., 2. In these cases *had* becomes a transitive verb, having the clause following the word *lief* as its object. Our stricklers for *would* instead of *had* will here find their theory fail them. Suppose we substitute *would* for *had*, and read "I *would* as lief the town-crier spoke my lines," and "I *would* as lief they would put ratsbane in my mouth." Does this help the case in any manner? To argue as they do, we ask how much better is "would spoke" than "had spoke," or "would would put" than "had would put?" The truth is, that neither of these combinations is found here. The only mode of dealing with *had* is to take it as a "principal" verb, just as we should the word *would* if Shakespeare had written "I *would* as lief the town-crier spoke my lines."

Now for the grammatical character of our *had*. Like *would* in the same connection, it is not in the "potential mood, imperfect

tense," as some teach; but it is the *present* tense formed of what, for want of a better name, is called the "subjunctive mood." English verbs, properly speaking, have but two tenses in this mood, a present and a past, generally involving an assumed negation or a supposition implied if not expressed. The form of the present subjunctive, except in the case of the verb *to be*, corresponds with that of the "imperfect" indicative; namely, *had*, *did*, *went*, *wished*, etc. As an example of *had* in the present subjunctive involving an assumed negation of possession, take the following: "I only wish I *had* his opportunities." In the phrases *had rather*, *had as lief*, etc., it presents examples of supposition either implied or expressed. "[*If I were to choose* between the two,] I had rather be right than be president." "*If you mouth it*, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines." "[*If such is the case*,] had we not better leave this Utica?" And so in every instance. This is the simple solution of the apparent difficulty—nothing more, nothing less.

Hence, consistently with grammatical principles as well as with long established, unquestioned English usage, and that too of the best and most careful writers in the language, we hesitate not to write "*had* rather," "*had* better," etc., whenever it suits our purpose. We have not that perception of the incongruity of this form of speech, or that uneasiness as to its grammatical soundness which some other writers have. And what is more, we do not care to have. We had rather continue in the old paths than go with them after the following fashion: "It appears with variations, slight indeed, but yet which *would better* have been avoided."—*Trench on Bible Revision*. A sentence that fairly bristles with errors! The dean wished to convey the idea that it would have been better to have avoided the variations referred to; and so, in his nervousness about *had better*, he stumbled on *would* instead of *might*, the true alternative of *had* here. He doubtless reasoned that "*had* is a 'corruption' of *would*;" therefore the uncorrupted form is the true one to use." We add two other examples, all we now have room for; "If there are any more committees to be sent up to dragoon the Legislature into passing the bill, they may *better* be quick about it."—*N. Y. Tribune*, Feb. 7, 1866. "Gov. Parsons said, he would like a million of dollars; and the eloquent apostle said, he thought Massachusetts *could better* lend it."—*W. Phillips, as reported in N. Y. Times*, Feb. 21, 1866. These are some of the fruits of such teaching as we find in the *Galaxy* for January. And the higher the source from which such teaching emanates, the wider and more deleterious its baleful influence.

The method which some have of trying to get over a seeming grammatical difficulty like this, is exceedingly, not to say provokingly, unsatisfactory. The expression may be authorized by the best and most correct of English scholars from time immemorial; but, if it can not be "analyzed," can not be "parsed," it is pronounced "a corruption," "illogical," "inconsistent," "unreasonable." The cry of "mad dog!" is raised, and at once countless nincompoops are pelting stones. Now, all this is wrong. The English language has modes of expression, and a grammar too, of its own. But because grammarians have failed fully to write that grammar and to explain all seemingly abnormal modes of expression, these should not therefore be condemned. Some of our sturdiest and best Saxon phrases would thus be either emasculated or rejected altogether, and the tongue be made to suffer. The fault is rather with the grammarians, than with the language.

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S. W. W.

BOOK NOTICES.—The *Canadian Illustrated News* of January is received. This number is accompanied by the *Favorites*, a magazine of amusing and useful reading. The *Illustrated News* is well sustained, both in reading matter and illustrations, and well deserves the increasing popularity which it evidently enjoys. The *Favorites* is a genuine Canadian enterprise, Canadian in its conception, its plan, its execution; written, edited, printed by Canadians, on Canadian paper, and with Canadian type. Issued weekly—16 pages—5 cents each number.

Scraper's Monthly is evidently adding to its attractiveness. Variety in historical sketches, poems, tales, and essays.—Secure for its popular favor. Its pages are always readable and pleasant, and very often instructive. We commend the work to our readers.

We also continue to receive the *University Monthly*, a journal of school and home education; the *Rhode Island Schoolmaster*, the *Alumni Journal*, the *Journals of Education* for Toronto and Quebec, the *American Educational Monthly*, the *American Journal of Education*. We would like to see these valuable contributions to education, in the hands of all our readers; and the *Teachers' Record*, a quarterly journal of general education intelligence.

We are requested by Mr. Ducon Campbell, to state that teachers disposed to subscribe for his forthcoming work in Nova Scotia—of which the prospectus appears elsewhere—may have copies for individual use, at 25 per cent. below the current price, by applying by letter to himself, at Circuit Court, Halifax, one month beyond the date of our present issue.

This exception is only made in the case of Teachers.

THE ONTARIO TEACHER.—As we were about issuing the present number of the *Journal*, the first copy of the *Ontario Teacher* came to hand. The object of this *New Monthly*, is to supply Teachers with a periodical thoroughly practical in whatever pertains to their work, and to exercise a watchful solicitude over all public measures, relating to the great educational enterprise of the day. The proprietors have chosen a wide and inviting field, and we most sincerely wish that they may see the interest to which the "Teacher" is consecrated, prospering in every part of their flourishing Province. The *Ontario Teacher* is published by Ross & McColl, Strathroy, Ont., at \$1.25 per annum.