

ousness in regard to great ones. A glance at the Greek original shews, of course, that "out" is the proper word. Its blundered representative, "at," has implanted, in the popular mind, the notion, wholly wrong, and rather unbecoming, that there is, in the saying, an allusion to a difficulty experienced in getting some minute and, at the same time, disagreeable thing down the throat. In my black-letter Quarto, of 1615, already referred to, the passage is free from the erratum in question. And, among the notes in the margin, I observe one on this place which, judging from the way in which misprints are occasioned, may have been the cause of the original error. That note is an interpretation of the metaphor of the proverb: "Ye stay at that which is nothing, and let pass that which is of great importance." May not a compositor, setting up from a copy containing some such annotation as this, have had his eye drawn aside to the "at," which stands close to its beginning? This instance of typographical inaccuracy has been repeatedly pointed out, but never set right. So long ago as 1754, John Wesley, in his excellent "Explanatory Notes," exclaimed "It is strange that glaring misprint 'strain at a gnat,' which quite alters the sense, should run through all the editions of our English Bible!" (Vide p. 94, Quarto ed.) It is a curious phenomenon to observe how quickly verbal errors became established, and how their continuance is vulgarly preferred to their removal, even when their character is pointed out. Here we discern the ground of the sad Machiavellian maxim,—"*Vult populus decipi; ergo decipiatur.*"

In view of the ease with which a short-lived tradition will invest typographical mistakes with a sort of weight and authority, and of the reluctance with which many men submit to be informed of them, the world is to be congratulated that a certain bull of Pope Sixtus V., prefixed to an edition of the Vulgate (1585—1590), had little effect. It forbade all printers, on pain of excommunication, to vary one jot or tittle from the text then and there presented. The edition was speedily found literally to swarm with misprints. Could the prohibition have been enforced for a decade or two, a possibility, nay, as we see, a probability would have been established, of the perpetuation, in after-generations, under sanctions the most solemn, of a number of frivolous errors in language and common thought.

A local example of the influence of a typographical error, kept for a short space of time before the public eye, may be mentioned. It