

THE LITERARY DECALOGUE.

(For the benefit of Contributors.)

I

Thou shalt not commit tautology, The tautologist has need of a private stamp factory.

II

Thou shalt not allow thy pronouns to stray too far from their governing nouns. When a lot of strange "he's" and "hims" get mixed it would puzzle a Texas cowboy to get them properly herded.

III

Thou shalt not create a succession of harsh sounds. Euphonious paragraphs persuade the weary editor to write for thee a well developed check.

IV

Thou shalt use no connecting or qualifying word that adds nothing to the sense. Wit is the kernel of epigram, and the finer the shell the fuller the kernel.

V

Thou shalt not cast thy sentences in one unchangeable mould. An ounce of art is worth ten pounds of grammar, and conventional phrasing will keep thee empty on a feast day.

VI

Thou shalt use only adjectives which have restricted meanings. Anything under the dome of heaven may be called *nice*, excepting only the

temper of the editor whose fate it is to read nice stories. Blue pencils cost money, and profanity is a device of the devil.

VII

Thou shalt write five Saxon derivatives to one from other sources. The proportion of Anglo-Saxon words in the English language is five-sixths, and inasmuch as many of them must be frequently repeated, the average number used may rise above that.

VIII

Thou shalt write no Latin prefix before a Saxon word. "Per" day is an abomination in the eyes of wise men.

IX

Thou shalt not give the editor an epitome of thy history, or a retrospect of thy life in the letter which accompanies thy manuscript. A tale which does not tell itself has a hopeless case of paresis. Moreover, thy personal history may become valuable when fame overtakes thee.

X

Thou shalt not make thy narrative subordinate to dialect. Place the language of nature on the tongue of thy characters, but introduce no figure merely as a rack upon which thy excessive knowledge of dialect shall be displayed. Dialect is a color, and nature directs true artists in laying on colors. Art has no acquaintance with the painter who is superior to his model.

