

ERRORS IN SPEECH.

BY JAMES MASON.

THE following, collected from many sources, are by no means all the common errors met with in speech; but there are quite enough to put you on your guard. When people set about murdering the English language, they usually begin with the small words: thus we find a great many errors arising from the wrong use of pronouns.

"You are stronger than *her*," says Mary, "and she is taller than *me*." Here are two common errors in one sentence—*her* should be *she*, and *me* should be *I*. "This is a secret," says Alice, "between you and *I*." Wrong, Alice; you should say "between you and *me*."

"Eliza went with Kate and *I*." Here, again *I* should be *me*. "Was it *her* who called me?" *Her* should be *she*.

"It is *me* who am to blame." *Me* should be *I*. In "let each of you mind *their* own business," the *their* should be *his* or *her*.

Who and *which* are often confused. Long ago both words used to be employed to stand for persons; but nowadays *who* is used when speaking of persons, and *which* when alluding to things. Thus, "the lady *which* I spoke to" ought to be "the lady to *whom* I spoke." "*Who* do you think I saw to-day?" is a phrase often heard. *Who* should be *whom*, "*Who* do you mean?" Say "*Whom* do you mean?" Many of our errors arise from attaching wrong meanings to words.

Reverend and *reverent* are very different words, but they are often confused. *Reverend* is the subjective word, describing the feeling within a

man as its subject; *reverent* is the objective word, describing the feeling with which a man is regarded—of which he is the object.

The words *lie* and *lay* are often wrongly used. The first is a neuter verb—"a vessel *lies* in the harbour." The other is an active transitive verb—"a hen *lays* an egg." It is decidedly bad grammar, then, to say, "My cousin *lays* ill of a fever"; "The books were *laying* on the table"; "The boat was *laying* outside the bar."

Another common error in regard to the meanings of words is found in such sentences as: "Lena walked down the *centre* of the street," and "the stream ran down the *centre* of the town." Both Lena's walking and the stream running are impossible performances, for a *centre* is a *point*.

Some people fail to distinguish between *quantity* and *number*, and say, "There was a *quantity* of people present," instead of, "There were a *number*." Thackeray and Sir Walter Scott have both fallen into this error. In connection with numbers, one frequently hears the *two first* used when it ought to be the *first two*. It is by no means a matter of indifference which you say. The girls at the top of two different classes would be the two first girls. The first and second girls of the same class would be the first two girls.

There are also errors connected with superfluous words. "Open *out* the parcel," is one of these. The "*out*" is not needed. "Lead *sinks down* in water." *Down* is superfluous. "Equally as well." Omit the *as*. "Whose are these *here* pins?"