

"He said unto them, It is I; be not afraid." Who does not feel that here is a majesty and prominence given by the nominative pronoun, which makes the assurance what it was to the disciples; what God grant it may be to us in our hour of need?

But now let us pass to an ungrammatical way of speaking of somewhat the same kind, which is *not justified*, and ought never to be used. Some people are fond of saying "*whom*," where "*who*" is required. "The man whom I thought was the person" is clearly wrong, because, in this sentence, the relative ought to be the nominative case to the verb "*was*;" "The man who I thought was the person. We often find persons using superfluous conjunctions or prepositions in their usual talk. Two cases are more frequent than others. One is the use of *but* after the verb *to doubt*. "I do not doubt but that he will come," is often found in print and heard in conversation. The "*but*" is wholly unnecessary, and a vulgarism. "I do not doubt that he will come," expresses precisely the same thing, and should always be used. The same may be said of the expression *on to*. "The cat jumped on to the chair;" the *to* being wholly unneeded, and never used by any careful writer or speaker.

From the use of superfluous prepositions we may pass to the use of the prepositions themselves. There is a peculiar use of prepositions which is allowable in moderation, but must not be too often resorted to. It is the placing them at the end of a sentence, as I have just done in the words "*resorted to*;" as is done in the command, "Let not your good be evil spoken of;" and continually in our common discourse and writing. But let us go farther still: *Going to* has not only a local, it has also a mental meaning, being equivalent to *intending* in the mind. And this usage rests on exactly the same basis as the other. The "*to*" of the infinitive mood is precisely the same preposition as the "*to*" of motion towards a place. "Were you going to do it?" simply means "Were you in your mental intention approaching the doing of it?" And the proper conversational answer to such a question is, "I was going to," or "I was not going to," as the case may be; not "I was going," or "I was not going," inasmuch as the mere verb *to go* does not express any mental intention. This kind of colloquial abbreviation of the infinitive comprehends several more phrases in common use, and often similarly objected to, as *e.g.* "*ought to*," and "*ought not to*," "*neglect to*," &c., some of them not very elegant, but all quite unobjectionable on the score of grammar. In many cases of this kind we have a choice whether the preposition shall precede or follow the object of the sentence. Thus I may say "*the man to whom I had written*," or "*the man whom I had written to*." In this particular instance, the former is the more elegant, and would usually be said: but this is not always so; *e.g.*, "*You're the man I wanted to have some talk with*," would always be said, not "*You're the man with whom I wanted to have some talk*," which would sound stilted and pedantic.

We will now pass on to another matter—the use of *singulars* and *plurals*. It is a general rule, that when a verb has two or more nominative cases to which it belongs, it must be in the plural number. But let us take care what we mean by this in each case. When I say, "*John and James are here*," I mean "*John is here and James is here*;" but when I say, "*the evening and the morning were the first day*," I do not mean "*the evening was the first day and the morning was the first day*," but I mean "*the evening and the morning together made up the first day*." So that here is an important difference. I may use a plural verb when it is true of both its nouns separately, and also when it is only true of them taken together. Now, how is this in another example? Am I to say "*two and two are four*," or "*two and two is four*?" Clearly I cannot *are* in the first explanation, for it cannot be true that two is four and two is four. But how on the second? Here as clearly I may be grammatically correct in saying "*two and two are four*," if, that is, I understand something for the two and the four to apply to: two apples and two apples make (*are*) four apples. But when I assert the thing merely as an arithmetical truth, with *no apples*, I do not see how "*are*" can be right. I am saying that the sum of both numbers, which I express by *two and two*, *is*, makes up, another number, *four*; and in all abstract cases, where we merely speak of numbers, the verb is better singular: *two and two is* four, not "*are*." The last case was a somewhat doubtful one. But the following, arising out of it, is not so:—We sometimes hear children made to say, "*twice one are two*." For this there is no justification whatever. It is a plain violation of the first rules of grammar; "*twice one*" not being plural at all, but *strictly singular*. Similarly, "*three times three are nine*" is clearly wrong, and all such expressions; what we want to say being simply this, that three taken three times makes up, *is* equal to, nine. You may as well say, "*nine are three times three*," as "*three times three are nine*."

A word or two about the use of adverbs. I have heard young ladies, fresh from school, observe how *sweetly* a flower smells, how *nice*ly such an one looks, and the like. Now all such expressions

are wrong. These verbs, *to smell*, *to look*, as here used, are neuter verbs, not indicating an action, but merely a quality or state. To *smell sweetly*, rightly interpreted, could be applied only to a person who was performing the act of smelling, and did it with peculiar grace; to *look nicely*, could only be said as distinguishing one person who did so, from another whose gaze was anything but nice. The Queen's English requires us to say, "How sweet the flower smells;" "How nice such an one looks."

It is impossible that an essay of this kind can be complete or systematic. I only bring forward some things which I believe might be set right, if people would but think about them. Plenty more might be said about grammar; plenty that would astonish some teachers of it. I may say something of this another time. But I pass on now to *spelling*, on which I have one or two remarks to make. The first shall be, on the trick now so universal across the Atlantic, and becoming in some quarters common among us in England, of leaving out the "*u*" in the termination "*our*;" writing *honor*, *favor*, *neighbor*, *Savior*, &c. Now the objection to this is not only that it makes very ugly words, totally unlike anything in the English language before, but that it obliterates all trace of the derivation and history of the word. It is true that *honor* and *favor* are derived originally from Latin words spelt exactly the same; but it is also true that we did not get them direct from the Latin, but through the French forms, which ended in "*eur*." Sometimes words come through as many as three steps before they reach us—

"'Twas Greek at first; that Greek was Latin made;  
That Latin, French; that French to English straid."

The omission of the "*u*" is an approach to that wretched attempt to destroy all the historic interest of our language, which is known by the name of *phonetic* spelling; concerning which we became rather alarmed some years ago, when we used to see on our reading room tables a journal published by these people, called the *Phonetic News*, but from its way of spelling looking like *frantic nuts*. There seems to be considerable doubt in the public mind how to spell the two words *ecstasy* and *apostasy*. The former of these especially is a puzzle to our compositors and journalists. Is it to be *extasy*, *extacy*, *ecstasy*, or *ecstacy*? The question is at once decided for us by the Greek root of the word. This is *ecstasis* (*ἐκστασις*), a standing, or position, out of, or beside, one's-self. The same is the case with *apostasy*, *ἀποστασις*, a standing off or away from a man's former position.

*Lay* and *lie* seem not yet to be settled. Few things are more absurd than the confusion of these two words. To "*lay*" is a verb active transitive; a hen *lays* eggs. To "*lie*" is a verb neuter; a sluggard *lies* in bed. Whenever the verb *lay* occurs, something must be supplied after it; the proper rejoinder to "Sir, there it *lays*," would be "*lays what*?" The reason of the confusion has been, that the past tense of the neuter verb "*lie*" is "*lay*," looking very like part of the active verb, "*I lay* in bed this morning." But this, again, is perverted into *laid*, which belongs to the other verb. *Sanitary* and *sanatory* are but just beginning to be rightly understood. *Sanitary*, from *sanitas*, Latin for soundness or health, means, appertaining to *health*; *sanatory*, from *sano*, to cure, means, appertaining to *healing* or *curing*. "The town is in such a bad sanitary condition, that some sanatory measures must be undertaken." I have noticed that the unfortunate title of the ancient Egyptian kings hardly ever escape misspelling. That title is Pharaoh, not Pharoah. Yet a leading article in the *Times*, not long since, was full of PHAROAH, printed, as proper names in leading articles are, in conspicuous capitals.

I pass from spelling to pronunciation. We still sometimes, even in good society, hear "*ospital*," "*erb*," and "*umble*,"—all of them very offensive, but the last of them by far the worst, especially when heard from an officiating clergyman. The English Prayer-book has at once settled the pronunciation of this word for us, by causing us to give to God our "*humble and hearty thanks*" in the general thanksgiving. *Umbled* and *heartly* no man can pronounce without a pain in his throat; and "*umblanarty*" he certainly never meant was to say; *humble* and *heartly* is the only pronunciation which will suit the alliterative style of the prayer, which has in it not only with our *lips*, but in our *lives*. If it urged that we have "*an humble and contrite heart*," I answer so have we the "*strength of an horse*;" but no one supposes that we were meant to say "*a nose*." The following are even more decisive: "*holy and humble men of heart*;" "*thy humble servants*;" not *thine*.

From pronunciation we come to punctuation, or stopping. Many words are by rule always hitched off with two commas. "*Too*" is one of these words; "*however*," another; "*also*," another; the sense in almost every such case being disturbed, if not destroyed, by the process. I remember beginning a sentence with, "However true this may be." When it came in proof, the inevitable comma was after the "*however*," thus of course making nonsense of my unfortunate sentence. I have some satisfaction in reflecting, that,