

COMMON ERRORS IN DAILY LIFE.

By JAMES MASON.

I.—ERRORS IN SPEECH.



THE day is past—if ever there was such a day—when a good word on behalf of ignorance had any chance of being listened to.

“Much learning does not become a young woman.”

Doesn't it? That maxim might do well enough a hundred years ago; but, girls, we all now know better.

The object of the following papers is to point out a few of the errors into which people are liable to fall, whether in connection with speaking, spelling, thought, taste, or anything else.

None of us, you are aware, are faultless, and the work of correcting errors and guarding against them must, especially in early life and before good habits are fully formed, occupy a great deal of attention. It is not a task, however, that falls in with the humour of many of us; we want to be hurrying on, and are impatient of what only appears to keep us back. But now is the time, girls, for correcting mistakes. They must be taken in hand some day, and the present day is by far the best, by far the easiest, and by far the most convenient.

First of all, we have to deal with errors in speech, and there are few mistakes that ought to be more anxiously shunned. When an error in speech is heard, we naturally draw the inference that the speaker has been unaccustomed to refined society, and, what is of more importance, we are apt to come to an unfavourable conclusion as to her character; for “purity of speech,” as someone says, “is allied to purity of thought and rectitude of action.”

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. The study of them may perhaps induce you to go farther in the same field, till at last you are able to say, with more truth than Mrs. Malaprop, “Sure if I reprehend anything in this world it is the use of my *oracular* language and a nice *derangement of epitaphs*.”

When people set about murdering the Queen's English 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 Rosa, “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 out 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, of course, be *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 *whom* I spoke to.”

“*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. In some cases we are led away by the mere sound, like the lady we have already quoted, when she said of Lydia Languish, that “She is as headstrong as an *allegory* on the banks of the Nile.” It was the sound, too, that led astray the young lady who told me the other day about a little village on the east coast, and finished off an enthusiastic description by saying it was “such an *embracing* place!”

Reverend and *reverent* are very different words, but they are often confused. “Dean Swift,” says the author of “The Queen's English,” “might be very *reverend*, but he certainly was not *reverent*. *Reverent* is the subjective word, describing the feeling within a man as its subject; *reverend* 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 very often wrongly used. The first is a neuter verb—“a vessel *lies* in a 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, “Rosa walked down the *centre* of the street,” and “the stream ran down the *centre* of the town.” Both Rosa's walking and the stream's 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?” is a very vulgar phrase, to be mended by omitting the “*here*.”

For is often employed unnecessarily, as in, “She came to Bath *for* to drink the waters.” This would have passed as good grammar in old English, but it will not do in these times.

In the phrase, “The cat jumped on to the chair,” the “to,” according to Dean Alford, is wholly unneeded and never used by any careful writer or speaker; but Mr. Washington Moon in his “Dean's English” comes to a different conclusion. “I beg leave to observe,” he remarks, “that when we say ‘The cat jumped on to the chair,’ we mean that the cat jumped from somewhere else to the chair and alighted on it; but when we say, ‘The cat jumped on the chair,’ we mean that the cat was on the chair already, and that

while there she jumped. The circumstances are entirely different; and according to the difference of circumstances, so there should be a difference in the language used to describe them respectively.”

“One of my great difficulties,” says Annie, “is in connection with verbs. Should I say ‘news *is*’ or ‘news *are*?’”

That depends entirely on circumstances. Sometimes the verb should be in the plural, sometimes in the singular.

“Another difficulty! Should one say, ‘Either you or I *am* wrong,’ or ‘Either you or I *am* wrong?’”

The latter is grammatically correct, but we must employ the former, for popular usage is in its favour.

We have an example of a verb in the wrong number in the sentence, “One of these houses *were* sold yesterday.” Here the ear is misled by the plural noun “houses”: we forget that the verb should be “was,” agreeing in number with “one.”

“Each of the girls *are* to have a separate share.” This is an error of the same sort. *Are*, of course, should be *is*.

The question has been raised whether we should say, “two and two *is* four, or *are* four,” and it has been laid down by some people as a rule that in all abstract cases, when we merely speak of numbers, the verb is better singular. But there is as much authority, perhaps more, on the other side.

A number of miscellaneous errors remain to be mentioned.

“I shall be very pleased to accept your kind invitation for Wednesday first.” This should be “I accept with pleasure,” for there is nothing future about your acceptance.

Let no one in accepting an invitation call it “your kind *invite*”: nothing could be more vulgar.

An everyday mistake amongst the half-educated consists in the use of *like* in place of *as*. For example: “*Like* she did;” “*Like* I do now;” “*Like* we were;” “*Like* she told me.”

To some people such combinations as *hareskins* and *hares-skins* present a difficulty. The first certainly is right, but we might speak correctly enough of “hares' skins.”

“Six *spoons full*” and “six *spoonfuls*” are different things, though often confounded. To take “six spoonfuls” only one spoon is needed, but for six spoons full you must have six spoons.

The use of *directly* instead of *immediately* is a common Cockney error. “*Directly* Mary came,” says a London girl, “I went away.”

May one say “*well-looking*” instead of “*good-looking*”? No. *Well-looking* has no standing in respectable society.

“Blanche is as different to Georgina as she could be.” Here to should be *from*.

“Minnie has a good hand of *write*.” Say “Minnie writes well.”

“I *know'd* her at once.” *Know'd* should be *knew*. An odious vulgarism.

“I intended to have *played* on the piano to-day.” This should be “I intended to play.”

A great many errors are to be ranged under the head of *Scotticisms*—that is to say, forms of speech not recognised by cultivated English people, but in everyday use among all classes in the northern portion of Great Britain. They constitute a highly respectable body of mistakes; indeed, it seems almost an injustice to give to many a *Scotticism* the name of mistake. The worst that can be said of it, per-

haps, is that whilst having its root in reason quite as much as, if not more than, the corresponding English phrase, it has the misfortune to be made use of by the minority.

One of the errors often cast in the teeth of Scotch people is their employment of *shall* and *will*, and the anecdote is told of a Lowlander falling into a river, and shouting out, "I *will* be drowned! I *will* be drowned! and nobody *shall* help me." Now that man was not a Lowlander, he was an Irishman. In Ireland we find *shall* and *will* constantly reversed, but in Scotland it is only *will* that is used contrary to the practice of modern English.

For the benefit of any who find a difficulty about these words, it is enough to say that *will* in the first person and *shall* in the second and third express resolution, whereas *shall* in the first person and *will* in the second and third express simple futurity.

Thus the future of determination runs:—

I will; thou shalt; he shall.

We will; ye or you shall; they shall.

And the simple future is:—

I shall; thou wilt; he will.

We shall; ye or you will; they will.

Connected with the weather there are several Scotticisms, "A *coarse* day" or "*coarse* weather" is said instead of "a *bad* day" or "*bad* weather," though one may be pardoned for inquiring from the Scotch point of view, why, if it be right—as is the case—to speak of a *fine* day, we may not with as much propriety speak of a *coarse* one.

"This day is *dull*," says a Scotch lassie.

"Say *overcast*, Ellen."

"Yesterday was a *soft* day."

"You mean *wet*."

"And all last week," she adds, "we had *fresh* weather."

"*Open* weather, you mean."

Another Scotch girl out for a walk talks about *going the length of the Castle*, or the Post Office, or the Railway Station, when she ought to say *as far as*. And if you ask her how far her cousin kept her company, be not in the least surprised to hear her answer, "*No more than to the foot of the street*."

"The teapot is *sitting in the press*," instead of *standing*, is another Scotticism. Then there is a wrong use of *standing* in the phrase "The clock is *standing*," which intimates that the clock *has stopped*. You ask whether it has been wound up, and most likely are told that want of winding up is not the matter, for "The clock is *out of sorts*."

One hears in Scotland of an industrious lassie "*sorting the room*," instead of *putting it in order*. She is in a hurry, she says, for it must be finished by midday, and it is now "five minutes *from twelve*," instead of five minutes *to twelve*.

When Maggie was in London, she *stopped*, she says, with her cousins at Gloucester Gate, meaning *stayed* or *resided*. When she arrived there, she lamented that, having lost the key, she couldn't "*get into her box*," "*get into*" being a Scotch equivalent to "*open*." Then she sat down to write home and asked, "Have you any *word* to my brother?" meaning "*any message for*."

When Sunday came she inquired, "*Who do you sit under?*" by way of asking her cousins to what church they went; and this question she followed up by, "*When does the church go in?*" the true Scotch way of saying, "When does service begin?"

"Bessie," says a Glasgow lady of her daughter, "*is turned a great scholar*." She should have said "*has become*." If you call Bessie from her book, she comes and says, "*What's your will?*" meaning what do you want. "Go and play *yourself*," Bessie," says her mother, not seeing that the "*yourself*" is quite superfluous.

"She has been *ailing*," is Scotch for "She has been unwell." "What is the matter?"

you ask. "She had a *sore head*" (that is to say a *headache*); "she was very *bad*" (*ill*).

If you are taking breakfast in Scotland that is called "*getting your breakfast*," and likely enough you will be asked if you "*wish ham and eggs to breakfast*," instead of *for breakfast*. Whilst breakfast is being prepared, perhaps you feel cold, so you are invited to "*come into the fire*," that is to say, towards the fire.

At a hospitable Scotch dinner table you are asked "if you *are for* any pudding," instead of "will you take any." Then someone says, "Let me *give you a clean plate*," instead of "change your plate."

When the ladies retire to the drawing-room Jeanie goes up to Lizzie and says, "Lizzie, do you *mind* me?" "No," says Lizzie, "I don't *mind* that I ever saw you before." This use of *mind* for *remember* appears peculiar to Scotland. It is only a sensible native of the North who would say, "I shall do my best to *mind* all these errors."

Amongst the most amusing errors are those of pronunciation. Take, for example, the substitution of *w* for *v*, and *v* for *w*, so often heard amongst uneducated English people, and particularly Cockneys. Everyone has heard of the worthy citizen who said to his servant:—

"Villiam, I vants my vig."

"Vitch vig, sir?" asked the servant.

"Vy," said his master, "the vite vig, in the vooden vig box, vitch I vore last Vednesday at the westry."

It might very well have been the same speaker who gave it as his opinion that "vine, weal, and winegar are werry good wittles."

We have all, too, met with an illustration of this peculiarity of speech in the famous trial scene in "Pickwick."

Sam Weller is giving his evidence.

"What is your name, sir?" inquires the judge.

"Sam Weller, my lord."

"Do you spell it with a V or a W?" asks the judge.

"That depends upon the taste and fancy of the speller, my lord," replies Sam. "I never had occasion to spell it more than once or twice in my life, but I spells it with a V."

Here a voice in the gallery exclaims, "Quite right too, Samivel; quite right. Put it down a We, my lord, put it down a We!"

The letter "H" is more unfortunate even than either V or W. Poor letter H! how often do we miss hearing it when it ought to be sounded, and hear it in words where no "h" should be. All the world over, and for many a long day, it has had a bad time of it. Misplaced "h's" were common even among the early Christians of Rome and Gaul, as is shown by inscriptions in the catacombs and elsewhere. The Greeks also had the same difficulty as many of ourselves, and it is not to be wondered at that in some languages the problem of knowing when to "hexasperate the haitch" has been solved by allowing the letter to disappear from articulation altogether.

Not only amongst the vulgar do we find reckless habits in regard to "h's." They are to be met with—no doubt on account of defective early training—in society where people really should know better. It is to be hoped, however, that in these enlightened days it would be hard to encounter a schoolmaster like one I read about lately, who told a pupil that there was "only one hen in Venice"—the pupil having written "Venice" in his copybook—and who failed to see the joke when his pupil made the very natural observation that "eggs must be very scarce there."

To illustrate this peculiarity there are a great many similar anecdotes in circulation. If not quite true, many of them deserve credit for being exceedingly well invented—the story,

for example, of the barber who one day amazed a customer by saying—

"The cholera is in the hair, sir," and immediately explained, "It was not the 'air of the 'ed I meant, sir, but the hair of the hatmosphere."

"R" is another letter that gives quite unnecessary trouble. Sometimes we hear it sounded just as if it were a *w*, and this is one of the most absurd of affectations. Road is pronounced *woad*, rubbish *wubbish*, Rome *Wome*, and so on.

At other times, and with another set of people, r's are tagged on to the end of words in an extraordinary manner. They say, "The lawr and the prophets," and "the idear of it!" With them, Louisa, Laura, Emma, and Julia are transformed into Louisar, Laurar, Emmar, and Juliar. "I sawr Jane," says our friend Molly, "with a brown boar round her neck."

"Victoria our Queen" is spoken of by those who are thus great in superfluous r's as "Victoriar our Queen;" and a very good Cockney example of this peculiarity, united with the omission of the letter "h," is met with in *Maidar 'ill*, for Maida Hill.

It excites surprise that this affectation has become so deeply rooted in the conversation of many of good education, that they are often quite unconscious of any transgression of the sort. You may hear superfluous r's in the pulpit, at the bar, on the platform, and on the stage, and from men and women, too, of whom one might reasonably have expected better things.

This is a common error also in America, where, however, people do not, in addition, drop their h's, and are not lacking in respect to v's and w's.

Amongst miscellaneous errors in pronunciation, it may be as well to point out that *u* is often given a wrong sound, as in *dooty* for duty, and *Toosday* for Tuesday.

The *is* in *is* is often carelessly omitted, as in *persists*, which is made *persis*, and in *insists*, to which the sound is given of *insis*.

A frequent mistake is also to drop the *g* in "ing." Walking, running, eating, reading, thus become walkin', runnin', eatin', readin'.

There are some names of persons the pronunciation of which is peculiar, and it is as well to take note of these when we hear them. They include the well-known examples of Cholmondeley, pronounced Chumley; Marjoribanks, shortened into Marchbanks; Charteris, which becomes Charters; and Cowper, pronounced as if spelt Cooper.

Names of places are also often pronounced wrongly, but it is hardly in good taste to make oneself conspicuous in company by giving the local rendering of the name of any town or district when the general and outside public have made up their minds that it should be pronounced another way.

In connection with provincial pronunciation a good deal might be said; but considerations of space forbid, and the most that can be done is to point out a few of the errors which give such a marked character to the conversation of the Irish. The uneducated in Ireland, and sometimes even the educated, err in the pronunciation of the following: a, e, i, o, u, ea, ei, ey, oo, ou, d, t, l, and r. For example, they say—

bould instead of bold	plinty instead of plenty
būsh " bush	resate " receipt
kētch " catch	resave " receive
cowl " cold	schame " scheme
convey " convey	shuk " shook
coorse " course	sinsare " sincere
desate " deceit	soorse " source
fut " foot	stud " stood
helum " helm	tay " tea
lave " leave	tuk " took
loudher " louder	twinty " twenty
nate " neat	watther " water
plase " please	pūsh " push

So much, then, for errors of pronunciation. Beware of them, girls, for they often render ridiculous what would otherwise command attention and respect.

It is a good rule in every case of doubt to consult a pronouncing dictionary, and one may easily be had, both good and cheap. Write down the words in which you find yourselves tripping, and read them over and over aloud till the right sound at last becomes so familiar that your ears would as soon tolerate the wrong pronunciation as put up with a discord in music. In fact, an error in grammar or pronunciation should strike the ear just like such a discord.

Errors in pronunciation arise most often from ignorance, and half the battle is over when we know exactly what they are. Other fertile sources are carelessness and affectation; and if any girl suspects that she is either careless or affected, let her at once begin to mend her ways. A few errors arise from pedantry, but that is hardly a woman's failing.

One can excuse ignorance, and once in a while perhaps pardon carelessness, but it is difficult to tolerate affectation. Affectation in pronunciation comes out strongly in singing, and everyone has heard songs sung in the style in which an American critic says "The Last Rose of Summer" was given by a distinguished vocalist at the New York Beethoven Centennial:—

"'Tis ze las rose of zummare,
Leff pluming alone.
All ees luffly gampanyuns
Are fated um cawn."

The "Minstrel Boy," to give another example, is sometimes sung thus:—

"Tha minstrel bo-hoy to tha wa-a-har as gone,
In tha ranks of de-e-heth youll foind im.
His father's sworrd e as gurred on,
And is harrup ee as hu-hu-hung behoind im."

This example must be our last, for our space is exhausted. But a great deal remains to be said, and of other errors in speech, and the means of correcting them, we may perhaps speak another time.

THE GIRL'S OWN HOME.

By the COUNTESS OF ABERDEEN.

To the Readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER.

It is just a year ago since your Editor was good enough to allow me to ask you to join together to help your sisters, the "working girls" of London, by founding and helping to support a home of your own for them. With his constant kindness and sympathy he has more than once since then commended this object to you, besides publishing the lists of subscriptions and donations; and now he allows me to encroach again on his valuable space in order to convey my most hearty thanks to those who have responded so kindly and generously to my appeal. I have myself received very many kindly and sympathetic notes, and some of these from persons who, though but poor themselves, have been anxious to lend a helping hand to other struggling ones, knowing well from their own experience the temptations, the sorrows, the dangers of a life alone in London. The Hon. Director of the Homes has also received many such letters, and he has quoted one in the interesting report of the Homes just published. It is one from your own Editor, enclosing a collecting-card with £1 14s. 6d., and saying—

"The poor little Miss Mary E. Craig, who collected the money, filled in the last name

the night before her death. She wished to do the last stroke (for it was all written by her); then that the money might be sent in immediately she had been called to her 'own home.'"

Another very pretty letter has just been received from a young lady in the Barbadoes, who sends back her collecting-card, with no less a sum than £16 10s., and who apologises for not sending more. We have another kind friend who sent us a legacy of £100 which had been left her, but who will not allow us to mention her name; so that altogether we have now got together the sum of £545 2s. 2d.

And, again, let me say that we are most grateful for this; but—but you must now let me have a little bit of a grumble.

The number of subscribers to THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER is now very large, and if (as I pointed out last year) each subscriber gave one shilling towards the Girl's Own Home, you would be surprised to find how much it would exceed the thousand pounds that we want for the starting of this home. And surely no reader of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER, who has a home herself, can think without sympathy of a girl working away day after day, with oftentimes long hours and insufficient food, without friends, without a home, in that dreary waste of London. If I liked, I could tell you many and many a story of girls who have been sheltered in these Homes which are already started, which would fill your eyes with tears and your hearts with compassion; but we would not lift the veil from the privacy of home life, and so we only ask you to think of many a sorely-tried and tempted one living now in the shelter of a home, brightness and comfort surrounding her, a motherly friend from whom to seek advice, and, above all, an atmosphere full of happiness because full of true Christianity. If any of you wish to know more about the working of the Homes, you have but to ask the Hon. Director to send you a Report, which differs from usual reports by being full of interesting matter. But do let me appeal to you earnestly not to let this year close without making an effort to raise the sum still required. Please let every reader who has not already done so, write to J. Shrimpton, Esq., 38, Lincoln's Inn Fields, W.C., and ask him to send a collecting card for the Girl's Own Home.

A young and beautiful woman, to whom God had given every good gift in this world, and whose heart was filled with all noble aspirations and unselfish desires, once asked Thomas Carlyle to tell her the way in which he thought she could best do some good in her generation. "I'll tell you what you can do," said he; "just find out some poor lassie and be kind to her." We have now the opportunity of acting on this advice. Shall we turn a deaf ear to the pleading of these thousands of Christ's little ones whom He asks us to remember for His sake?

P.S.—It will perhaps be of interest to mention that we are about to establish a registry for female servants in connection with one of the Homes (Gordon House). This, it is hoped, will afford valuable opportunities for mistresses to obtain good servants, especially when they wish to engage German girls.

LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

ALICE, 1s.; One of the Girls, 2s.; Sympathy, 1s.; collected by Miss Spencer, £1; an English Reader, 2s.; Readers at Lamington, 10s.; collected by Miss M. F. Hurt, 7s. 6d.; How Slow the Readers are in Helping You, 1s.; Isabelle, 10s.; collected by Miss Gale, 13s.; Three E's, 2s.; Waratah and Lily, 6s.; total, £3 15s. 6d. Total amount received to August 31st, 1883, £545 2s. 2d.

VARIETIES.

BE CAUTIOUS.—Don't judge a man by the clothes he wears; God made one, and the tailor the other. Don't judge him by his family relations, for Cain belonged to a good family. Don't judge a man by his failure in life, for many a man fails because he is too honest to succeed. Don't judge a man by the house he lives in, for the lizard and the rat often inhabit the grander structure. When a man dies, they who survive him ask what property he has left behind; the angel who bends over the dying man asks what good deeds he has sent before him.

A WOMAN should have the principles of various things—observe, not a smattering of the superficialities, but the principles, well laid, so as to be able with ease to go on with anything which may be necessary, and to feel no great disappointment in having to turn from one to the other.—Mrs. Schimmelpenninck.

SELF IMPROVEMENT.—I do not advise you, my young countrywomen, to fly from the world, but I earnestly recommend it to your particular attention never to allow your minds to sink below the tone and vigour which mark their natural strength. Be as gay and playful if you will as those who assume gaiety to conceal their weakness, but never cease at any period of life to increase your knowledge, and by exercise to improve the powers of your understanding.—The Ettrick Shepherd.

FEAR, this effects—that I do not the ill;
Love, more—that I thereunto have no will.
Trench.

I CAN understand people's losing by trusting too little to God, but I cannot understand any one's losing by trusting too much to Him.—Rev. C. Kingsley.

PERHAPS the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned, and, however early a man's training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly.—Prof. Huxley.

OLD PROVERBS.

Willows are weak, yet they bind other wood.

Get thy spindle and thy distaff ready, and God will send thee flax.

The best physicians are Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Merryman.

Who looks not before, finds himself behind.

JUDGING BY EVENTS.—Mankind are too apt to judge of things solely by events, and to connect wisdom with good fortune and folly with disaster.

A MAD INTERVAL.

One day, an emperor, who was a tyrant, went to the outside of the city by himself. He saw a man standing under a tree, and asked him:—

"What sort of a person is the emperor of this country? Is he a tyrant or a just man?"

The man answered, "He is a great tyrant."

The emperor said, "Do you know me?"

"No."

"I am the emperor of this country."

The man was much frightened, and asked in reply, "Do you know me?"

"No," said the emperor.

"Then," said the man, "I am the son of a certain merchant; every month during the space of three days I become mad. To-day is one of those three days."

The emperor laughed and left him.