

"Mabel isn't, 'cause she's only one leg. She really had two, only one day, Raymond hanged her up from the ceiling, and when I sawed her, I cried, and pulled wif my hands, and one leg came off. So now I want a pramulator."

"And she shall have one, bless her! and the best that can be bought," muttered Miss Carr beneath her breath; while Norah whispered eager questionings into her companion's ear.

"You might tell me, Rex—you might! I won't tell a soul. What did you wish?"

"Don't be so curious. What does it matter to you?"

"It does matter. I want to know. You might! Do—o—!"

"No—o! I won't now. There's an end of it."

"Oh, Rex, look here—I've sixpence in my pocket. I'll buy you a packet of gingerbread if you will."

"I don't want the gingerbread. What a girl you are. You give a fellow no peace. I didn't wish anything particular, only—"

"Yes! Yes!"

"Only that she," with a nod of the

head towards where Miss Carr sat sipping her tea—"that she might choose Hilary to live with her in London."

"Oh—h—. You wouldn't like it if it were Lettice?"

"Of course not, neither would you."

"But—but—it might be me!"

"It might. There's no saying. I'll have another cup of tea, if you please," said Rex, coolly.

Aggravating boy! It would be just as easy to draw water from a stone, as to persuade him to say anything nice and soothing to one's vanity!

(To be continued.)



A PRETTY ACCENT, AND HOW TO ACQUIRE IT.

AN eminent German scholar called Schlegel says that "he considers the care of the national language as at all times a sacred trust, and a most important privilege of the higher orders of society. Every man of education should make it the object of his unceasing concern to preserve his language pure and entire, to speak it, so far as is in his power, in all its beauty and perfection."

I wonder how many of us have ever considered it a duty we owe to our country and to each other, to speak our own language well? If the importance of this subject were more generally acknowledged, I do not think we should hear so much slipshod English spoken by girls who have received a good education, and therefore who ought to know better. It is troublesome of course always to select the right word to express what we wish to convey to those with whom we are conversing, and young people are naturally thoughtless, and do not realise that the habits they acquire when chatting familiarly to their school-fellows or friends, are influencing their method of speaking, possibly for all their lives. It is well worth while to take some pains to avoid falling into the habit of using bad English, or the local idioms or peculiar pronunciation of the place in which our lot is cast, if only for ourselves alone, for do we not all know the charm of a musical voice well used? We may not all possess a musical voice, but we can all make the best of the one we have got, and it is wonderful what may be done for its improvement by a little attention.

To speak a language perfectly two things must be observed. First, the choice of words, and secondly, the way in which the words when chosen are articulated. It is of the latter branch of the subject I wish to write, because there may be many girls who wish to improve their accent, and who are prevented

doing so by shyness, because they imagine that in order to speak nicely, they must affect a fine lady style of talking which would immediately attract attention, and make them feel ridiculous. There is no greater mistake than to imagine that an affected accent ever could be a pretty one, or that by putting on an unnatural and fine lady voice, you can improve your manner of talking in any way. We can easily find out for ourselves how great a fallacy it is, by observing persons who have adopted this erroneous plan.

People who go about a great deal naturally speak nicely without any trouble to themselves, because they do not hear any special dialect spoken for a sufficiently long time to make any of it unconsciously their own, and after all the secret of nice speaking is to avoid all local peculiarities. It is not possible for many of our girls to travel about from place to place, and so pick up a pretty way of speaking without effort; but that is no reason why we should make up our minds that we cannot speak well. The first step a girl should take, if she would improve herself, is to find out from someone upon whom she can rely, and who is not a native of the neighbourhood, what are the local peculiarities. These, she may be quite sure, if she has not hitherto fought against them, she has adopted to a greater or less degree, if she has always lived there. For example, a common fault in some parts of both England and Ireland is to pronounce the vowel *i*, as if it were *oi*; to say "noice" for nice. If the reader is a well-educated native of any of these parts, very likely she will indignantly affirm that she does not fall into that error at any rate. Well, probably she does not say anything quite so pronounced as "noice" or "loike;" but she should take care that she does not unconsciously say something halfway between, while she flatters herself she is

saying nice and like, for what one hears always for years one is very apt to pick up without knowing it. I am certain that no London girl who has received a good education would say "disies" or "rowses," but she should be particular to make sure that she actually says what other people hear as daisies and roses.

These are only a few specimens of local peculiarities; there are hundreds of them to be met with all over the United Kingdom, no two places having them exactly the same. When a girl has found out what the characteristics of the accent of her own locality are, she has only to fight them one by one, till she overcomes them all.

There are other things besides actual pronunciation to be overcome also. In some places the natives speak so rapidly that the words run into one another, so as to make one syllable of two; while in others they drawl so that the reverse takes place, and they make two syllables of one. Both these defects should be avoided, and every syllable should be clearly articulated. A monotonous way of speaking prevails in some localities which is very tiresome, but just as unpleasant is the habit of raising the voice to a little scream at the end of every sentence, which prevails in others.

A great assistance in getting rid of tricks of speech is to read aloud, even if it has to be done in a room alone without any audience; indeed I believe if it be done for the sake of getting over a habit of faulty pronunciation, of which the reader is herself thoroughly aware, it is better to read aloud without a listener. Any one who has a good voice for singing should, if possible, have it cultivated; peculiarities of accent can never be tolerated in singing, and therefore all good teachers do their best to eradicate them.

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