"Just like you, Belle dear," answered Gracie, carelessly; "you are always thinking about some one or other, and very unnecessarily, too, I think. One might begin to fancy all sorts of things if one chose, and make oneself miserably uncomfortable about matters that are no concern of ours. I confess I don't see the fun of it."

"But I believe it really is so," Belle persisted, quietly. "Mamma says the poor workgirls are terribly overdone sometimes when there is a press of business, and they dare not complain, because there are so many others who would be ready to do the work if they refused, and then they would have nothing else to turn to."

"Well, I'm very sorry for them," answered Gracie in the same tone; "but I don't see how I am to prevent it. It is for Madam to see that they are not overworked, and I don't think it is my business, any more than it is hers to see that *we* do not give *our* servants too much to do: and I think you'll admit she has nothing to do with that? I don't see that I have any responsibility about it. I suppose when there is a press of work, people like Madam just employ more helpers. Any way, I can't see that it has anything to do with our new ball dresses."

The other girls agreed unanimously with Gracie's verdict, and laughed in a good-natured, half-scornful way at Belle for her championship of the sewing girls. Then the conversation branched off to other topics and the discussion was forgotten, for Belle was shy and said no more.

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In a close, ill-ventilated apartment, smelling strongly of gas, a group of six or eight girls was collected; very different these from the little party assembled at Miss Saunders' kettle-drum. They were pale melancholy girls, from whom hard work and hard living seemed to have crushed all the life and spirit.

The room was littered all about with costumes completed or in the course of construction; with yards of delicate fabrics; with costly fringes and trimmings, and with boxes of artificial flowers. The windows of the workroom looked upon a tall and blank wall, built at a distance of a few feet, which very efficiently excluded the light of day, making gas a necessity even at noon on such a day as the present, when a dense December fog was filling the air.

Very little conversation passed between the group of young women; an occasional question and answer respecting the work was all. Perhaps they had no energy left for talking; perhaps the constant noise and whirr of the sewing machines acted as a deterrent.

A wan, sad little party they seemed to be; patient and uncomplaining, but so utterly hopeless, plodding on at their work as if life held nothing beyond the toil of the present moment.

"Five o'clock," sighed one of the girls wearily, after a long pause; "seems to me the day never *will* be over. What a good thing that it is Sunday to-morrow, when one can rest a bit; I'm about done up, and you don't look much better, Mary Lynes."

The last words were addressed to a pale, consumptive-looking girl sitting near, bending over the folds of a delicate silk dress, in which she was wearily setting stitches—a task which seemed almost beyond her power. She let her hands fall upon her lap as the other spoke, and gave a sad hopeless sigh of utter exhaustion. But before she could reply the door opened suddenly, and an eager, black-eyed little woman entered quickly, talking loudly, in a sharp authoritative tone.

"You must hurry on with the work, young ladies," she said. "Another order for mourning has just come in, which *must* be ready by the middle of the week. It is from Mrs. Strangway, and I would not disappoint her for the world! You must get all the things you have on hand completed to-night, and then we will start fresh on Monday. You are going to have tea served here now, so that you need not leave off work. You have no time to lose, I can tell you. Miss Lynes!"—this very sharply—"What do you mean sitting idle there? Did not I say you'd got no time to lose? And there you are sitting with your hands before you, doing just nothing. Come, hurry now."

The girl with a hasty movement resumed her work without a word. Her companion, who had spoken before, muttered in a low indignant tone, "Madam Robertson thinks we're just like machines, and have no right ever to be tired, and no need ever to rest. She thinks of nothing but her customers and obliging them, no matter how unreasonable they are."

Mary Lynes made no answer. She had roused up for a moment at her mistress's rebuke, but now resumed her listless attitude, her face looking ghastly white.

Her friend regarded her for a moment anxiously. "Are you ill, dear?" she asked gently.

"I think I'm always ill, Kate," was the answer; "but where's the use of complaining? Madam never takes any notice, and the work *must* be done. I shall feel better maybe when I've had a cup of tea." And she made another effort to go on with her work.

The tea came, and the girls snatched a hasty meal in the intervals of their interminable stitching. Poor Mary eagerly drank a cup of the weak tepid infusion, but turned away with a shudder from the sight of food.

"You'd better eat something," said Kate anxiously, trying to force upon her a not very tempting slice of thick bread-and-butter.

"I can't eat," the poor girl answered, in her low, weak voice. "Oh, Kate, I feel so ill. Won't you ask Madam to let me go to bed? I feel as if I cannot work any more."

But Madam would not grant the timid request when Kate preferred it; she wondered Miss Lynes dare ask such a thing, just when she had been telling them how pushed for time she was. It was most inconsiderate, she was lazy and just ready to make any excuse she could. Madam would not hear of such a thing.

Kate's brow flushed with honest indignation at the cruel speech, but Mary said not a word. She thanked her friend with a look and a wan little smile, and slowly and painfully resumed her task. Not for long, however. Suddenly her face grew even whiter than before, the work slipped from her nerveless hands, and she fell back in her chair in a dead swoon.

Madam Robertson was highly indignant; Miss Lynes was so utterly unreasonable, being ill just when her services were the most needed. But Madam's indignation did no good, and was powerless to restore the poor girl to consciousness. It was not until she had been carried up to her bed, and strong restoratives applied, that she at last opened her eyes.

"I am better now," she said, feebly. "I must go back to my work." But though she made an effort to rise, she found herself entirely powerless, and sank back again upon her pillow.

Madam saw that it was hopeless to expect any more work from her that day, and she muttered an angry ejaculation to herself.

"I suppose you will have to rest to-night," she said harshly; "but mind, you will have to work to-morrow to make up for this, so I warn you."

And while the poor girl lay there, utterly worn out and exhausted, her young companions toiled on hour after hour. Evening grew to midnight, but still the weary fingers toiled and stitched; still the machines kept up their ceaseless whirr until long after midnight was past, and the early hours of the Sabbath morning had come.

It was four o'clock when Kate, shivering with cold and almost blind with weariness, crept up to the bed which she and Mary shared between them. Very softly she undressed, so as not to disturb her companion, who was sleeping calmly and quietly with low regular breathing, and a soft smile on her worn features, as if oblivious of all toil and care.

It was late when Kate awoke next morning, and the church bells were ringing joyfully their invitation to the house of God. Slowly the girl opened her heavy eyes and turned to look at her friend.

"How tired she must have been—poor Mary!" she said, sympathetically. "Why, she's never moved all night. She'll be better for her long sleep."

Then, as she looked at the white face lying there, still and cold as chiselled marble, a sudden fear struck to her heart. How was it she had never moved? why did she sleep so long? She whispered her name gently, but there was no answer. Then she ventured to touch the hand lying outside the coverlet. It was icy cold, and, with a shriek of terror, she sprang from the bed, calling loudly for assistance. For while she had been sleeping the sleep of weariness and exhaustion, her friend, lying by her side, had fallen into the still deeper sleep that knows neither dreams nor awakening. The pain and trouble of life were over for ever, and never again would she know either toil or weariness.

A PLEA FOR THE QUEEN'S ENGLISH.

AND who shall say it does not need a plea? For I would ask is there a subject of Her Majesty the Queen that is more disrespectfully treated throughout the whole extent of her vast dominions?

It is misapplied, mispronounced, clipped, expletived—if I may coin a word—in fact, unfairly used in every way.

Among our poorer neighbours it is not surprising that it should suffer, for we can hardly expect those who have had neither the advantages of education nor the opportunities of associating with others better informed than themselves to treat it with the consideration it deserves.

But my remarks apply rather to those whose advancement in learning is confessedly beyond the *three R's*, and who pass current in social circles as quite among the *well-to-do's*.

It is not so much through ignorance, I ween, as carelessness that these little sins of commission and omission occur, and therefore it is to you, *thoughtless sisters*, I address this plea, in the hope that my feeble efforts may perhaps tend to diminish some of the hardships our mother-tongue so frequently undergoes. First, then, let us turn our attention to the wounds we may inflict through misapplication.

It is not an uncommon occurrence to hear

persons speak of having enjoyed a "most perfect walk," as if a walk which can be termed perfect could possibly admit of any degree of comparison.

Again, who has not heard an enthusiastic, and I might add gastronomic, friend exclaim, "What a beautiful pudding!" as if the qualities of a pudding could be judged according to the ordinarily accepted lines of beauty?

Many other examples might be quoted, but I will only allude to the common blunder into which so many of us fall when, in comparing two objects, we designate one as the "best," instead of the "better," of the two.

It will not be necessary to mention the various mispronunciations which continually fall from our lips, as most individuals have their own pet pronunciations often dependent upon their native county.

But such words as "cough," pronounced korf instead of kof; "coffee," as korf'y instead of kofly; and "courteous," as koor-teous instead of kurteous, suffice to illustrate my meaning.

But oh! what sufferers are those poor little possessive pronouns, "my" and "your," for they are so generally clipped into "me" and "yer." I daresay some would scorn the idea of being guilty of such a vulgarism of speech; but ah! my indignant friend, kindly lend an attentive ear, and I fear you will hear yourself, as well as others, not always Irish, talking of *me hat* or *yer gloves*.

We are often in such a hurry when we have occasion to use the word "perhaps" that its substitute, "p'r'aps," is constantly on our lips, and the expression "I des say," instead of "I dare say," is repeated more often than is agreeable to ears that would not be considered hyper-critical.

A scientific friend was once looking at some instruments in the workshop of an optician, when his auditory nerves were sadly shocked by hearing a voice near inquire if a certain object did not look splendid under the "mike," meaning, I need not say, the microscope.

As to the vulgar abbreviation of 'bus for omnibus, if it is sometimes heard by "ears polite," there can be no necessity for its use among those who pretend to anything above the minimum of refinement.

But if, on the one hand, we clip some of our words and phrases, how frequently, on the other, do we employ expletives which often make our expressions ridiculous, or nullify their meaning! Who has not heard a story related in which "Of course" and "You know" have been introduced at least a dozen times, until the listeners are provoked to wonder why the tale is told at all?

But among all the ungrammatical expletives none are called upon to work so hard as *the negatives*, for young and old use two when one only is required. How many are there, it is sad to say, who would exclaim on looking at a steady downpour of rain, "It won't be fine to-day, I don't think"?

Of course, the speaker is unaware that she means just the opposite of what she says. "I don't think it won't be fine" certainly means that the weather will clear; but it is obvious that this is not the impression intended to be conveyed to your mind. She is under the delusion that by introducing "not" twice into her sentence she cannot fail to be clearly understood, forgetting that, in grammar, "two negatives make an affirmative."

There is a story I remember hearing of a schoolmaster who was particularly sensitive about the introduction of the two negatives, and it so happened that a sharp-witted boy was deputed on one occasion by his school-fellows to ask for a half-holiday. The master's temper had been somewhat sorely tried just previous to the request, and he hurriedly dismissed him with "No, no."

The boy returned to his comrades in great glee, exclaiming, "It's all right; he used the double negative, and so we've got it!" They accordingly suited the action to the word. Great, indeed, was the indignation of the master when he found the class-room empty; and, calling the delinquent to him, he demanded an explanation.

It is needless to add this was given in a most satisfactory manner, the boy remarking to his master that, in saying "No, no," he had used the two negatives, which he had always taught them were equivalent to an affirmative.

We also speak of "another one," and sometimes ask for a song "to be repeated again," it being perfectly clear that "one" following "another," or "again" after "repeat," are only expletives.

It is very surprising so many persons forget that there is a difference of case in "who" and "whom." It is not even necessary to listen attentively to hear the greatest liberties taken with this pronoun. How commonly one says, on receiving a letter, "I wonder who this comes from," instead of using the correct expression, "I wonder from whom this comes!" Or, again, "Who are you talking about?" instead of "About whom are you talking?" Now, I admit "who" and "whom" are not distant relations, but it is scarcely right they should be called upon to do duty for each other indiscriminately. Take another instance. How seldom we put into practice the rule with which we are nearly all well acquainted, viz., that the verb "to be" requires the same case after as before it! I will only notice, as illustrative of my meaning, the common answer to the question, "Who is there?" "It's only me," instead of "It's only I." So with the preposition "between," which is often made to govern an objective case coupled with a nominative, as in the expression, "Between you and I," instead of "Between you and me."

In the foregoing remarks I do not pretend to have mentioned all the errors which so many of us inadvertently commit, but I shall be satisfied if I have succeeded in drawing attention to a few of the most prominent, and will conclude with the hope that my readers will agree with me that, in our daily conversation, as well as in other matters, "Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well."

C. M. C.

TWO DEAD FLOWERS.

It is a strange, sad feeling that steals over us as we open some drawer in an old oak cabinet, from which streams forth the scent of long dead and dried lavender and rose-leaves; there rise up before us dreams of the suns which once warmed those flowers, of the hands which once gathered them, and for a few moments we live in the far distant past. Something of the same sort of feeling wakes within us as we speak the names of Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, and Catharine Philips. Like the dead flowers, each of these women bloomed sweetly and graciously in her own day, both as a poetess and as a woman of strong influence through the powers of her mind and heart; and, like the dead flowers, if we look into their stories the lives of these women send forth perfume still.

These two women, at whose portraits we are going to glance to-day, were contemporaries. Each showed forth a high, fair type of womanhood in her writings and her life; but here the likeness between them ends—their characters and their histories were most radically different. Yet the contrast between the two brings out more brightly and distinctly the especial charms in the pictures of both; and this is why we hold them up, at the same moment, for the eyes of the 19th century to gaze upon. Let us then photograph them in turn, and bring them in this familiar form into our English homes.

In the first years of Charles I.'s reign, a quick-witted girl, with thought and music in her face, with a lively, cheery spirit, that found its outward and visible sign in the light step that went dancing from still-room to herb-garden, from tapestried chamber to moon-lit woodland glade, was the sunbeam and the melody of an old manor house near Colchester in Essex. She had a most delicate and rare hand in all sweetmeats and confections, she had most skilful and dainty fingers in embroidery and needlework; but she had fancies yet more busy than her little feet, as they sped hither and thither to do reverently and dutcously the bidding of her father, the good old knight, and her prim lady mother. This girl's name was Margaret Lucas.

Thus time went on till Margaret was a woman; then the question rose up in her parents' minds, how should they find her an opening in life worthy of her intellect and her beauty? She had many suitors, it is true, among the young Essex squires; but it seemed to them that their Margaret was meant for something more than a life in a quiet, sleepy country district; besides her heart, when they consulted it, did not speak in favour of any of these perhaps rather awkward lovers. At length, what the old knight and his lady had been hoping for and looking for came, through the influence of a friend a place was offered to Margaret Lucas in the household of Queen Henrietta Maria. It was gladly accepted. In those days a young lady of talent and lively parts naturally longed for nothing so much as to enter into the brisker and keener current of thought that flowed through society in the capital. Her parents knew that their girl was well armed against all the subtle dangers of a Court by her brave, simple religious faith, and so they blessed her and she went.

There is wondrous airiness and sparkle in the picture of Margaret Lucas in these first days of her life at the English Court; it is the airiness of the morning breeze when it bounds over the green summer fields; it is the sparkle of the dewdrop, it is so pure, and yet so bright. Queen Henrietta Maria, who, with all her many and grave faults, was a woman of undeniable keenness of perception, quickly found out that her new maid of honour was a girl of no ordinary sense and spirit, and treated her with especial favour and affection; but she assumed no airs of a high and mighty Court lady, she was still the playful girl who had tripped about in the old house down in Essex. The young gallants fluttered round her beauty, but though they got many a merry and often many a saucy word, not a man among them could boast of a tender glance from those queenly eyes. Like a radiant meteor she glided through the palace, now listening with pretty reverence to some great divine, now flashing out repartee to meet the attack of a professional wit. She chattered, she shone, she trod grandly in Court pageants, she was grave, she was gay, she poured forth the ripple of her own sweet young nature over hearts that were all withered and hardened. She sat, sometimes, amid the glare of lights, and the glitter of jewels, and the glow of many-coloured silks, lost in dreamy musing; but, do what she might, it was all marked with a maidenly dignity, a winsome majesty, that sets her aloft