

POPULAR ERRORS.

A writer in the Jersey City Times mentions some very common errors which he would be pleased to see discarded. First, he says, I would notice the improper use so often made of the participle mistakes. I have often heard lawyers, when contesting a technicality in open court, say to the opposing counsel, "You are mistaken, sir." And I have known more than one eloquent passage in a sermon marred by a single expression. But two or three Sundays ago, a minister, in the course of an admirable apostrophe, addressed to the irreligious man, remarked, "How much he is mistaken, he will finally learn to his sorrow!" When this simple yet significant word is used in this connection, the meaning really conveyed is precisely the opposite to that which the speaker intends. To say "You are mistaken" implies that I have misunderstood you, or failed to take the precise purport of your words or actions; and therefore that I am in error and not you. The simple substitution of "have" for "are," or the contraction of the three words into two, viz: "You mistake," would render the statement correct and clear.

The pleasant meeting of two acquaintances often occasions the remark, "I am glad to have met." Instead "I am glad to meet you." The inaccuracy of the first consists in the improper joining of an infinitive having a present signification with *met*, a preterit. The sentence is almost directly from the French, viz: *Je suis enchanté d'avoir le plaisir de vous voir*, which, literally translated, is—I am glad to have the pleasure of meeting you. *Avoir*, to have, is here in the present tense in agreement with "I am glad" and "meeting," while in the erroneous rendering, "to have met," there is an apparent elimination of the subject of *avoir*, "the pleasure," and the preterit "met" is joined on, giving to the whole verbal form the character of a preterit infinitive. A Frenchman would call this *un usage terrible* of good French.

A gentleman or lady having committed, in company, some slight error of etiquette, apologizes, and is told in return, "You are very excusable; it is nothing." Certainly "You are excused" would be more in accordance with precise language, and not so likely to present the anomaly seen in "very excusable." A person of delicate discernment might justly object to the real significance of this phrase, if he did not appreciate the tone indicated and sentiment seriously felt by the one to whom his apology has been offered.

You are "very excusable," without any forced construction, may imply one's incapacity for good manners, or his lack of culture in the amenities of social life.

"Illy" for "ill" is made use of by many writers as well as speakers, who would be shocked did one venture any remarks calculated to throw a shade of doubt on their intelligence or education. The terminal *y* in this case is but implicating the admirable character of the word, and we could, with as much propriety, append it to "well," and speak of a thing as "welly done."

The employment of "who" for "whom" is widespread, viz: "Who do you vote for?" "Who would you advise me to consult?" "Who does this belong to?" etc. In all such cases the relative pronoun, although it begins the sentence, is the object of the predicate, and therefore should take the objective form "whom." This is so clear that scarcely any comment is necessary.

I recently heard an anecdote of a very wealthy merchant of New York who has in his counting room a safe in which are kept the most valuable papers relating to his business, and of which he keeps the key. The lock is one of those ingenious "combination" affairs which may be set to any particular word, and can then be unlocked only in accordance with that combination of letters which forms the word. Having locked the safe as usual one evening before going home, he was too full the next day to venture to his store. Some important business required the production of certain documents deposited in the safe, and the chief clerk called on the merchant and asked him what was the word which would enable him to open it. He was told that it was "boots." The clerk tried it but the safe would not open. He then tried several ways of spelling "boots," such as "booties," "booties," "booties," etc., and, until becoming weary with his bootless efforts, he hastened to his principal and told him he could not open the safe, and asked how he spelled "boots." "Why, you dunce, b-u-t-s, to be sure."—*Figaro*.

VEGETABLE PHYSIOLOGY.—M. P. Bert has addressed a paper to the Academy of Sciences on the influence of light on the sensitive plant (*Mimosa pudica*). The experimental method adopted by him consisted in placing the plants under shades of colored glass. One was black, another white, the remainder blue, green, yellow, and red. On the 12th of October, 1869, he put a certain number of these plants under these shades; the former had all been reared from the same seed, and at the same time, and were as nearly as possible of the same height and vigor. The experiment was effected in the hot-house of the Academy of Medicine. A few hours after the commencement of the trials, the sensitive plants already presented different appearances. Those under the green, yellow, and red shades had their foot-stalks and foliaceous erect; those under the blue and violet ones, on the contrary, had their foot-stalks nearly horizontal and their foliaceous spread out.

The *Mimosa* have their leaves similar to those of the acacia, that is, pinnate, but a great deal smaller. On the 19th the plants under the black shade had lost nearly all their sensitiveness; on the 24th they were either dying or dead. At the latter date, those under the green shades were quite lush; they died on the 25th. Meanwhile the sensitive plants under the other shades were perfectly alive and impressionable, but there was a great difference of growth among them. Those under the white glass had grown considerably; those under the red much less, and those under the yellow were somewhat less developed still; as for the violet and blue they had remained stationary. On the 25th the vigorous plants of the white shade were transferred to the green one. On the 6th of November they had very

little sensitiveness left; on the 9th, they had scarcely any, and on the 14th they were dead. Those under the violet, blue, yellow, and red shades appeared to be thriving beautifully.—*Galignani's Messenger*.

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