

its trim gardens, its broad stretches of deep grass, its fantastic gables, its endless vista of boudoirs, libraries, and drawing-rooms, *each more homelike and habitable than the last.*"¹

"This made several women look at one another slyly, *each knowing more than the others*, and nodding while sounding the others' ignorance."²

Evidently, in these instances, the literal statement cannot be true; but the imagination makes it seem true, by making each one of the objects compared appear, at the moment it is looked at, superior to the others in the point in question.

SECTION III.

SOLECISMS.

As compared with highly inflected languages, English undergoes few grammatical changes of form. Its syntax is easily mastered, and for that very reason is often neglected. In conversation, indeed, slight inaccuracies may be pardoned for the sake of colloquial ease, and in oratory fire tells for more than correctness; but a writer is expected to take whatever time he needs to make his sentences grammatical. Hence, the grosser faults of common speech are avoided by good authors; but even they sometimes fall into constructions not English, — that is, they are guilty of SOLECISMS.

"Grammar," says De Quincey, "is so little of a perfect attainment amongst us, that, with two or three exceptions (one being Shakspeare,³ whom some affect to con-

¹ G. O. Trevelyan: *The Early History of Charles James Fox*, chap. ii.

² R. D. Blackmore: *Cripps the Carrier*, chap. xii.

³ *Per contra*, see Introduction to "A Shakespearian Grammar" by E. A. Abbott.

sider as belonging to a semi-barbarous age), we have never seen the writer, through a circuit of prodigious reading,¹ who has not sometimes violated the accidence or the syntax of English grammar."²

I. Nouns of foreign origin are sometimes used incorrectly. Errors in the use of foreign nouns.

Cherub and *seraph* may form their plural either according to the Hebrew idiom, as *cherubim*, *seraphim*, or according to the English, as *cherubs*, *seraphs*; but it is equally incorrect to speak of "a *cherubim*,"³ and of "two little *cherubims*."⁴

A similar fault is committed by Addison: "The zeal of the *seraphim* [Abdiel] breaks forth in a becoming warmth of sentiments and expressions, as the character which is given us of *him* denotes that generous scorn and intrepidity which attend heroic virtue."⁵

The elder Disraeli says in one place, "The Roman Saturnalia were;" in another, "Such *was* the Roman *Saturnalia*."⁶ "The *minuties*" and "the *minutia*" (as a plural) are sometimes seen. "In the *Daily News* of Saturday last, April 19th, we are informed that in the excavations at Luxor three new *necropoli* have been discovered."⁷ A speaker in the House of Representatives, 1877, said that "The Electoral Commission had made the two Houses of Congress a mere *addenda* to a conspiracy." A college student wrote, "A natural *phenomena* is under the control of natural law;" another, "a *strata*;" another, "this *fungi*."⁸

II. The possessive case is sometimes used as if it were coextensive with the Latin genitive. The possessive case.

¹ Query as to the position of this phrase.

² Thomas De Quincey: *Essay on Style*.

³ Shakspeare: *The Tempest*, act i. scene ii. Thus modern editions: the folio of 1623 has *cherubin*.

⁴ George Eliot: *The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton*, chap. i.

⁵ *The Spectator*, No. 327.

⁶ Quoted by Henry H. Breen: *Modern English Literature; Its Blemishes and Defects*.

⁷ *The [London] Athenæum*, April 26, 1884, p. 536.

⁸ For additional examples, see "The Foundations of Rhetoric," pp. 47, 48.

"In modern English," says Mr. Marsh, "the inflected possessive of nouns expresses almost exclusively the notion of property or appurtenance. Hence we say a *man's hat* or a *man's hand*, but the *description of a man*, not a *man's description*. And, of course, we generally limit the application of this form to words which indicate objects capable of possessing or enjoying the right of property, in a word,¹ to persons, or at least animated and conscious creatures, and we accordingly speak of a *woman's bonnet*, but not of a *house's roof*. In short, we now distinguish between the possessive and the genitive."²

The rule laid down by Mr. Marsh is sustained in the main by the best modern usage, but it has many exceptions. Though we should not speak of a *house's roof*, there is the best authority for "a year's work," "a day's pleasure," "at death's door," "for conscience' sake," "the law's delay," "for mercy's sake," "for pity's sake." Though careful writers avoid *in our midst*, *in our humble midst*, no one hesitates to write "on our account," "in my absence," "to their credit," "for my sake," "in his defence."

Such expressions, however, as *Bennington's Centennial*,³ *silver's death*,³ *the fire's devastation*,³ *London's life*,⁴ whether regarded as examples of the objective genitive or of vicious personification, are indefensible.⁵

Nominative
or objective
case?

III. The object of a verb is sometimes put in the nominative case, the subject in the objective.

"Let *they* who raise the spell beware the Fiend."⁶

"*Thou* Nature, partial Nature, I arraign!"⁷

"Lay on, Macduff;

And damn'd be *him* that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'"⁸

"You know as well as *me* that he never swerves from his resolutions."⁹

¹ Query as to the position of "in a word," as punctuated.

² Marsh: Lectures on the English Language, lect. xviii.

³ American newspaper. ⁴ Biography of Disraeli (anonymous), chap. ii.

⁵ For additional examples, see "The Foundations of Rhetoric," pp. 43, 44.

⁶ Bulwer (Lytton): Richelieu, act ii. scene i.

⁷ Robert Burns: To Robert Graham.

⁸ Shakspeare: Macbeth, act v. scene viii.

⁹ Benjamin Disraeli: Coningsby, book viii. chap. vi.

"What would be the feelings of such a woman as *her*, were the world to greet her some fine morning as Duchess of Omnium!"¹

"On the other side, we have in the second part, 'On the Social Condition of France,' a specimen of the style and manner of Louis Blanc, a style which belongs to no other than *he*."²

"With a freedom more like the milk-maid of the town than *she*³ of the plains, she accosted him."⁴

"Now I hope I shall demonstrate, if not, it will be by some one abler than *me* demonstrated, in the course of this business, that there never was a bribe," &c.⁵

"He found two French ladies in their bonnets, *who* he soon discovered to be actresses."⁶

"Mrs. Hemans and L. E. L. were the favorite poets *who* young ladies were expected to read."⁷

"Seated on an upright tombstone, close to him, was a strange unearthly figure, *whom*, Gabriel felt at once, was no being of this world."⁸

"Those *whom* he feels would gain most advantage by being his guests, should have the first place in his invitations."⁹

"A correspondent, describing what he thinks the disastrous effects of my advocacy of 'it is me,' says, 'I have heard persons *whom* I knew were in the habit of using the form "it is I," say instead, "it is me."'"¹⁰

"He entered the service of Sir William Temple, *whom* he expected would advance him by his influence."¹¹

Usage, however, justifies the awkward phrase *than whom*.¹²

¹ Anthony Trollope: Phineas Finn, vol. ii. chap. liv.

² The [London] Spectator.

³ Would the substitution of *her* for *she* remove the difficulty?

⁴ Scott: The Abbot, vol. i. chap. xix.

⁵ Burke: Speech in the Impeachment of Warren Hastings.

⁶ Disraeli: Coningsby, book viii. chap. vii.

⁷ Mrs. Oliphant: The Sorceress, chap. i.

⁸ Dickens: Pickwick Papers, vol. ii. chap. i.

⁹ Helps: Social Pressure, chap. x.

¹⁰ Henry Alford: The Queen's English, chap. iv. sect. 355.

¹¹ Student's theme.

¹² Professor Conington, in his translation of Virgil, has *than who*.

"Which when Beëlzebub perceived, *than whom*,
Satan except, none higher sat."¹

"I am highly gratified by your commendation of Cowper, *than whom* there never was a more virtuous or more amiable man."²

"Two subjects, *than whom* none
Have been more zealous for Assyria's weal."³

IV. The emphatic pronoun in *-self* is sometimes confounded with the reflexive. The reflexive pronoun stands alone, the emphatic is usually joined with the corresponding simple personal pronoun. Instances of misuse are:—

"He told me amongst other interesting things, 'Doctor Welsh's death was the sorest loss ever came to the place,' that *myself* 'went away into England and — died there!'"⁴

"And then — it was part of his honest geniality of character to admire those who 'get on' in the world. *Himself* had been, almost from boyhood, in contact with great affairs."⁵

... "that long quiet life (ending at last on the day *himself* had predicted, as if at the moment he had willed) in which 'all existence,' as he says, 'had been but food for contemplation.'"⁶

"Bedford was forced to be still at times, for Bulkeley was nine inches taller than *himself*."⁷

V. Sometimes a pronoun or an adjective is made to refer to a word which is suggested but not expressed.

"He will know more clearly and thoroughly than ever he knew before that English policy, so far as it is pro-Turkish, is policy in which *she* stands alone."⁸

¹ Milton: Paradise Lost, book ii. line 299.

² Landor: Conversations, Third Series; Southey and Porson.

³ Lord Byron: Sardanapalus, act ii. scene i.

⁴ Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, letter 113.

⁵ Walter Pater: Macmillan's Magazine, March, 1886, p. 349.

⁶ Ibid.: Appreciations; Sir Thomas Browne.

⁷ Thackeray: Lovel the Widower, chap. iv.

⁸ The [London] Spectator.

"As a text-book, the volume has one technical defect,—the lines ought to have been numbered either as in the other volumes or on each page. *Its* absence is a source of annoyance."¹

"She went up Grange Lane again cheerful and warm in her sealskin coat. It was a thing that suited her remarkably well, and corresponded with her character, and everybody knows how comfortable *they* are."²

"Though he slurred woman as a sex, he loved some of *them* passionately."³

"She had not yet listened patiently to his heart-beats, but only felt that *her own* was beating violently."⁴

"The first project was to shorten discourse by cutting polysyllables into *one*."⁵

"This one [a portrait] is rouged up to the eyes, and Madame du Barri never wore *any* at all."⁶

"To-morrow is Hospital Sunday, and we trust that it may result in a liberal subscription for *those* most useful of London charities."⁷

"The forefinger of the right hand touching successively *those* of the left."⁸

"The gray plover, our accurate observer remarks, is a winter shore bird, found only at *that* season and in *that* habitat in this country."⁹

"Luckily, however, they [the elephants] did not keep straight below me, but a little on one side; and one huge animal, which, as I could not see *those appendages*, was probably a tuskless cow, came and stood within ten yards of me."¹⁰

"The captain saluted the quarter-deck, and all the officers saluted him, *which* he returned."¹¹

¹ American newspaper.

² Mrs. Oliphant: Miss Marjoribanks, vol. ii chap. xii Tauchnitz edition.

³ Student's theme.

⁴ George Eliot: Middlemarch, book ii. chap. xxx.

⁵ Swift: Gulliver's Travels; Voyage to Laputa.

⁶ Souvenirs of Madame le Brun, letter x.

⁷ The [London] Spectator.

⁸ Scott: Rob Roy, vol. i. chap. xx.

⁹ Principal Shairp: Life of Robert Burns, chap. v.

¹⁰ W. H. Ponsoby: Large Animals in Africa.

¹¹ Charles Reade: Hard Cash, chap. vii.

VI. The pronouns *either, neither, the former, the latter*, are sometimes incorrectly used. Each of these pronouns properly signifies one of two persons or things. Instances of misuse are:—

Misuse of
either, neither,
the former,
the latter.

“Dryden, Pope, and Wordsworth have not scrupled to lay a profane hand upon Chaucer, a mightier genius than *either*.”¹

“Country journalism offers better opportunities than *either* of the ‘three learned professions.’”²

“Each of the three is constituted of such genuine stuff that *neither* of them will lose anything by having his name thus early brought to the front.”³

“The most prominent among them were Ligarius, Cassius, and Brutus, the *latter* being Cæsar’s dearest friend.”²

VII. No error is more common than that of using a word in the singular instead of the plural number, or in the plural instead of the singular.

Singular or
plural?

Sometimes this fault occurs in the use of pronouns.

“She studied his countenance like an inscription, and deciphered each rapt expression that crossed it, and stored *them* in her memory.”⁴

“Mr. Rodney was generally silent, and never opened his mouth on this occasion except in answer to an inquiry from his wife as to whom a villa might belong,⁵ and it seemed always that he knew every villa, and every one to whom *they* belonged.”⁶

“Everybody had been dull, but had been kind in *their* way.”⁷

“Not a servant was ever allowed to do anything for me but what it was *their* duty to do.”⁸

“Who can judge of *their* own heart?”⁹

“He assured us he had known many a man who . . . could

¹ Marsh: Lectures on the English Language, lect. v., note.

² Student’s theme.

³ American newspaper.

⁴ Charles Reade: Hard Cash, chap. ii.

⁵ Is a word omitted here?

⁶ Disraeli: Endymion, chap. xxii.

⁷ Thackeray: Vanity Fair, chap. xli.

⁸ Ruskin: Praeterita, vol. i. chap. ii.

⁹ Scott: Rob Roy, vol. i. chap. ii.

carry off *their* six bottles under *their* belt quietly and comfortably.”¹

“The Mountfords felt that they had done their utmost for any guest of theirs when they had procured *them* this gratification.”²

“The parliament was assembled; and the king made *them* a plausible speech.”³

“My mind at the time was busy with the matter, and, thinking that the Government was right, I was inclined to defend *them* as far as my small powers went.”⁴

Sometimes a plural verb is put with a singular subject, or a singular verb with a plural subject.

“Over his face was the bleach of death, but set upon it *was* the dark and hard lines of desperate purpose.”⁵

“The numerous elaborate bills which each government of England has in late years attempted to pass, but generally without success, *is* the best indication of the needs felt.”⁶

“Each of the ladies, like two excellent actresses, *were* perfect in their ⁷ parts.”⁸

“To do them justice, neither of the sisters *were* very much displeased.”⁹

“When a thing or a man *are* wanted they¹⁰ generally appear.”¹¹

“A harmless substitute for the sacred music which his instrument or skill *were* unable to achieve.”¹²

“Isabel or Helena, wife no. 1 or no. 2, *are* sitting by, buxom, exuberant, ready to be painted.”¹³

“Neither law nor opinion *superadd* artificial obstacles to the natural ones.”¹⁴

¹ Scott: Rob Roy, vol. i. chap. xii.

² Mrs. Oliphant: In Trust, chap. xiv.

³ David Hume: History of England, vol. vi. chap. lxxvi.

⁴ Anthony Trollope: An Autobiography, chap. v.

⁵ American novel (1896).

⁶ The Fortnightly Review.

⁷ See page 54.

⁸ Scott: Waverley, vol. ii. chap. xvi.

⁹ Thackeray: Vanity Fair, chap. xxiii.

¹⁰ See page 54.

¹¹ Disraeli: Endymion, chap. lxxviii.

¹² Scott: Waverley, vol. i. chap. xxxiv.

¹³ Thackeray: Roundabout Papers; Notes of a Week’s Holiday.

¹⁴ J. S. Mill: The Subjection of Women, chap. i.

"No nation but ourselves *have* equally¹ succeeded in both forms of the higher poetry, epic and tragic."²

"If Mr. Darwin and Mr. Wallace both hesitate to claim the greater honour in the discovery, it is to the outside reviewer a matter of absolute impossibility to determine who³ of these two naturalists *have* laboured the harder or the more honestly, and is the more free from points of attack."⁴

"All this time, what was now, and ever, remarkable in Waldershare *were* his manners."⁵

When the subject though plural in form is singular in sense, the verb should be singular; when the subject though singular in form is plural in sense, the verb should be plural. Under this rule the following sentences are correct:—

"Houses, not 'housen,' is the correct plural."

"The news is entirely satisfactory."

"Positive politics does not concern itself with history."⁶

"It seemed that to waylay and murder the King and his brother was the shortest and surest way."⁷

"It never was any part of our creed that the great right and blessedness of an Irishman is to do as he likes."⁸

"The gold and silver collected at the land-offices is sent to the deposit banks; it is there placed to the credit of the government, and thereby becomes the property of the bank."⁹

The following sentence is incorrect:—

"'Gulliver's Travels' *are* Swift's most enduring work."¹⁰

¹ *Is equally* in the proper position?

² De Quincey: *Essay on Style*.

³ Query as to this pronoun.

⁴ The [London] *Spectator*.

⁵ Disraeli: *Endymion*, chap. xxii.

⁶ Sir George C. Lewis: *Observation and Reasoning in Politics*, vol. ii. chap. xxiv. sect. xiv.

⁷ Macaulay: *History of England*, vol. i. chap. ii.

⁸ Matthew Arnold: *Culture and Anarchy*, chap. ii.

⁹ Daniel Webster: *Speech at Niblo's Saloon, New York, March 15, 1837*.

¹⁰ Student's theme.

A collective noun, when it refers to the collection as a whole, is singular in sense, and therefore requires a singular verb; when it refers to the individual persons or things of the collection, it is plural and requires a plural verb. Under this rule the following sentences are correct:—

"The numerical majority is not always to be ascertained with certainty."¹

"In early times the great majority of the male sex were slaves."²

"He is shy of having an opinion on a new actor or a new singer; for the public do not always agree with the newspapers."³

"The populace were now melted into tears."⁴

"Mankind have always wandered or settled, agreed or quarrelled, in troops or companies."⁵

"The watch below were busy in hanging out their clothes to dry."⁶

The following sentences are incorrect:—

"The congregation *was* free to go their way."⁷

"There *was* also a number of cousins, who were about the same age."⁸

"Yes; what is called, in the jargon of the publicists, the political problem and the social problem, the people of the United States *does* appear to me to have solved, or fortune has solved it⁹ for them, with undeniable success."¹⁰

¹ Henry Hallam: *Constitutional History*.

² J. S. Mill: *The Subjection of Women*, chap. i.

³ William Hazlitt: *The Round Table*, No. xlvi.; *On Commonplace Critics*.

⁴ Hume: *History of England*, vol. vi. chap. lxxviii.

⁵ Adam Ferguson: *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, sect. iii.

⁶ W. Clark Russell: *The Sailor's Sweetheart*, chap. xi.

⁷ Anthony Trollope: *Barchester Towers*, chap. vi.

⁸ Disraeli: *Endymion*, chap. lii.

⁹ Two problems or one?

¹⁰ Matthew Arnold: *A Word about America. The Nineteenth Century*, February, 1885, p. 222.

VIII. *Can* is often used where *may* is the proper word.

"Can I trouble you to pass me the butter?"

"Courses 1, 2, 3 and 4 are graded courses of which no two *can* be taken together."¹

IX. No solecisms are more frequent than those which consist in the misuse of *shall* and *will*. A person who has not been trained to make the proper distinctions between *shall* and *will*, *should* and *would*, never can be sure of using them correctly; but he will make few mistakes if he fixes firmly in his mind that *I* (or *we*) *shall*, *you will*, *he* (or *they*) *will*, express simple futurity, and that *I* (or *we*) *will*, *you shall*, *he* (or *they*) *shall*, imply volition on the part of the speaker.

Some writers hold that *shall* was the original form of the future, that on grounds of courtesy it was changed in the second and the third person to *will*, and that, whenever courtesy permits, *shall* is to be preferred to *will*. It is doubtful whether this be the true history of the distinction between *shall* and *will*; but at all events the doctrine of courtesy furnishes a rough-and-ready rule for choice between the two.

In "I shall," *shall* is not discourteous, for the matter is in the hands of the person speaking, who cannot be discourteous to himself; *shall* is, then, in the first person, the proper auxiliary to express simple futurity. In "you shall," "he shall," "they shall," *shall*, disregarding the feelings of the person or persons spoken to or spoken of, expresses compulsion; *will* is, then, in the second and the third person, the proper word to express simple futurity.

¹ Catalogue of an American university.

As in the second and the third person *will* is the proper auxiliary to express simple futurity, errors in the second and the third person are rare; for the common error is the use of *will* where *shall* is the proper word. As in the first person *shall* is the proper word to express simple futurity, the first person is that in which errors are most frequent.

The interrogative forms to express futurity are: "shall I?" "shall you?" "will he?" "Shall I?" and "shall you?" manifestly imply no compulsion. "Shall he?" does imply compulsion: "will he?" is therefore correct.

The interrogative forms to express volition on the part of the person represented by the subject of the verb are: "will you?" "will he?" "Will I?" would mean "is it my intention?"—an absurd question unless it echoes the question of another person.

Examples of the correct use of *shall* and *will* are:—

"I will resign it; for ever I will resign it: and the resignation must be good, because I will never marry at all. I will make it over to my sister, and her heirs for ever. I shall have no heirs but my brother and her; and I will receive, as of my father's bounty, such an annuity . . . as he shall be pleased to grant me."¹

"Well, we shall all miss you quite as much as you will miss us," said the master."²

"But as to Ravenswood—he has kept no terms with me—I'll keep none with him—if I can win this girl from him, I will win her." "Win her?—'sblood, you shall win her."³

"But she shall have him; I will make her happy if I break her heart for it."⁴

"Your father, mother, and I will divide the pleasure, and the

¹ Samuel Richardson: *Clarissa Harlowe*, vol. i. letter lx.

² Thomas Hughes: *Tom Brown at Rugby*, part ii. chap. viii.

³ Scott: *The Bride of Lammermoor*, vol. i. chap. xxi.

⁴ George Colman: *The Jealous Wife*, act ii. scene i.