

**MISTAKES IN WRITING ENGLISH,
AND HOW TO AVOID THEM: FOR
THE USE OF ALL WHO TEACH,
WRITE, OR SPEAK THE
LANGUAGE**

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Mistakes in Writing English, and How to Avoid Them: For the Use of All Who Teach, Write, or Speak the Language by Marshall T. Bigelow

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MARSHALL T. BIGELOW

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MISTAKES
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AND HOW TO AVOID THEM.

FOR THE USE OF ALL WHO TEACH, WRITE, OR SPEAK
THE LANGUAGE.

BY
MARSHALL T. BIGELOW,
AUTHOR OF "PUNCTUATION, AND OTHER
TYPOGRAPHICAL MATTERS."

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P R E F A C E.

A WRITER in Blackwood once said that, "with the exception of Wordsworth, there is not one celebrated author of this day who has written two pages consecutively without some flagrant impropriety in the grammar." This may have been an exaggerated statement, nevertheless it is very near the truth in reference to the present time.

While mere slavish following of the rules of grammar does not necessarily constitute elegant English, and while all great writers have peculiarities of their own, it must be admitted that no writer, however brilliant, should be excused for grammatical errors that might be avoided.

It may be a sufficient reason for publishing another work on a subject on which so much has been written, to say that the object of it is entirely different from that of most works which have appeared within recent years, which seem to have been written

mainly for the purpose of picking every flaw possible in the author criticised.

It is hoped that this work may be of use to the teacher or scholar, by pointing out, in an orderly arrangement, the errors to which the best writers of English are liable. It is so arranged that any particular subject may readily be found, and is so brief that a full knowledge of all the points treated may be easily acquired. No space has been wasted on mere vulgarisms which every one with any claim to education is supposed to know and avoid, but such errors as my experience has shown to be common to all authors have received particular attention.

A large number of the ungrammatical sentences given were observed in proof-reading, and were corrected by their writers before the works in which they occurred were published. Others have been appropriated from any source whenever they served my purpose. It must be borne in mind, that, in the correction of erroneous sentences, the main object is clearly to show the error; and in merely correcting the grammar, the sentence may often be left inelegant, and in many cases should undoubtedly be entirely reconstructed.

In the examples cited, all the words printed in *Italics* are either ungrammatical, tautological, or super-

fluous. The words inserted in brackets are to take the place of the preceding *Italic* words, or are necessarily added to make the sentence correct.

Where an author's name is given for an erroneous sentence, it is done for the purpose of showing that the best writers are not infallible, — not even those who are considered standard authorities in matters relating to grammar.

The grammatical errors in the language of the Bible and of Shakespeare are not pointed out with any idea that they ought to be corrected, but to show that in writing modern English we are not to follow archaic forms.

The short chapter entitled "Construction of Sentences" might lead one to expect more than is there given; but as that is precisely the matter to which it relates, it is so entitled, though a thorough treatment of the subject would of itself require a volume.

In the Appendix are given rules for the formation of the plural, in which I have ventured to propose a change which simplifies this matter very much, and which I have no doubt will be generally approved, as in the line of true spelling reform. I have also given some rules as to compound words, together with remarks on some typographical matters with which authors ought to be acquainted.

Besides the Grammars of Murray, Gould Brown, Professors Whitney and Tweed, and others, I have made frequent use of Prof. A. S. Hill's "Principles of Rhetoric," Prof. A. P. Peabody's "Conversation, its Faults and its Graces," the various publications of Mr. Richard Grant White, and Professor Mathews's "Words, their Use and Abuse," and to all these works I am greatly indebted.

M. T. BIGELOW.

CAMBRIDGE, October 5, 1886.

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