

# **ERRORS IN THE USE OF ENGLISH**

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Errors in the use of English by William B. Hodgson

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**WILLIAM B. HODGSON**

**ERRORS IN THE  
USE OF ENGLISH**



*George Simpson*

ERRORS IN THE USE OF ENGLISH.

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FOR

DAVID DOUGLAS.

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ERRORS IN  
THE USE OF ENGLISH.

BY THE LATE  
WILLIAM B. HODGSON, LL.D.,

FELLOW OF THE COLLEGE OF PRECEPTORS  
AND  
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL ECONOMY IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.



Second Edition.

EDINBURGH:  
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1882.

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1882

## INTRODUCTORY.

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ACTING on the principle that example is better than precept, the Spartans impressed upon their children the wisdom of sobriety by showing them the folly of intemperance in the person of the drunken Helot. Similarly this work is meant to set forth the merits of correctness in English composition by furnishing examples of the demerits of incorrectness—to bring home the abstract rule that ‘a sentence must be lucid in order and logical in sequence,’ by citing such concrete specimens of obscure dis-order as ‘The beaux of that day painted their faces as well as the women.’ Rule and correct example of that rule might go in at one ear to come out at the other; but the notion of gallants painting their lady-loves a brilliant pink is not so easily forgotten, and, so long as it is kept in mind, this blunder of Isaac D’Israeli’s attests the need, as the task of correcting it shows a mode, of arranging one’s words in lucid order.

So with our other examples. Let the teacher select a dozen at random, and give them to his learners, to be by them, if necessary, corrected with the aid of dictionary and grammar. ‘Of dictionary and grammar,’—because this little work can no more supersede the use of formal helps to English composition than a picture-gallery or a museum does away with the need for handbooks on art and science. ‘If necessary,’—because in these pages many instances occur of correct usage, and many more of ‘blunders’ about which doctors differ whether the

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same are blunders indeed or not ; whether, for instance, *between* may not or may be used with more than two objects of reference. Whatever the ultimate conclusion reached, assuredly a study of this moot point will leave the student more conversant with the different functions of *between* and *among* than he was before, and will convince him that some have unquestionably erred in their indiscriminating use of these two prepositions.

Books somewhat similar to this have been published before ; among such may be noticed *Modern English Literature : Its Blemishes and Defects* (London, 1857), by H. H. Breen ; *The Queen's English* (London, 1864), by Dean Alford ; *The Dean's English* (5th ed., London, 1866), by G. W. Moon ; *Bad English* (London, 1868), by the same author ; and *Good English* (New York, 1867), by E. S. Gould. But Mr. Breen confined himself mainly to the blemishes of a single author, Sir Archibald Alison ; Dean Alford and Mr. Gould are occupied with abstract errors ; and Mr. Moon is a critic of these and of other critics. All four in their way are excellent, though one wearies a little of Sir Archibald and yet again Sir Archibald,—though the abstract may seem less lively than the concrete,—and though a doctor may have some skill to heal in spite of his own head-cold or other ailment. As to this book, it is founded on actual blunders, verified by chapter-and-verse reference, and gathered in a course of desultory reading extending over the last thirty years. It does not aim at being exhaustive, that were unhappily no easy aim ; but at least it comprises all those every-day breaches of every-day rules against which writers should stand on their strictest guard.

For fuller exposition of these rules the student is referred to the following works, to which the writer here acknowledges his own indebtedness :—Professor Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary of the English Tongue arranged on an Historical Basis*

(parts i.-iii., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1880), and the older dictionaries of Johnson, Webster, Richardson, Chambers, and Wedgwood; the English Grammars of Dr. Crombie, Dr. Latham, Mr. C. P. Mason, Dr. Angus, and Professor Bain; Professor Bain's *Companion to the Higher English Grammar* (London, 1874); Dr. Abbott's *Shakesporean Grammar* (London, 1876); Dr. Morris's *Outlines of English Accidence* (London, 1876); Professor Earle's *Philology of the English Tongue* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1873); Mr. Kington Oliphant's *Standard English* (London, 1873); and Dr. Fitzedward Hall's *Modern English* (London, 1873).

W. B. H.

[The materials of this little volume were selected by my husband from notes of many years' extensive and varied reading, and before his death they were arranged for publication in their present form. In now conducting the book through the press I have had the assistance of kind friends to whom his memory is dear. But, deprived of his own revisal, there may be errors and imperfections that have escaped our notice, and for such I must ask the reader's considerate indulgence.

E. H.

DONALD TOWER,  
September, 1881.]

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