

INTRODUCTION.

only vigilant, but suspicious and jealous guardians of the rights of the citizen, against encroachments from the federal government, will constantly have their attention awake to the conduct of the national rulers, and will be ready enough, if any thing improper appears, to sound the alarm to the people."

"Let any man attempt to resolve the foregoing sentence, if he can, or render it into another language."

"Cicero vindicated the truth, and inculcated the value of the precept, that nothing *was* [is] truly useful which *was* [is] not honest."

"He undertook to show that justice *was* [is] of perpetual utility."

"The author conceives much of his argument, and admits that the sea *was* [is] susceptible of dominion." [Better still; he admits the sea to be susceptible of dominion.]

"A nation would be condemned by the impartial voice of mankind, if it voluntarily *went* [should go] to war, on a claim of which it *doubted* [should doubt] the legality."

"The Supreme Court observed that they were not at liberty to depart from the rule, whatever doubt might have been entertained, if the case *was* [had been] entirely new."

"He held that the law of nations *prohibited* [prohibits] the use of poisonous arms."

"He insisted that the laws of war *gave* [give] no other power over a captive than to keep him safely."

"The general principle on the subject is, that, if a commander *makes* a compact with the enemy, and it be of such a nature that the power to make it could be reasonably implied from the nature of the trust, it would be valid and binding, though he *abused* his trust." Let any man translate this sentence into another language, if he can, without reducing the verbs to some consistency.

"Congress have declared by law, that the United States *were* [are] entitled to priority of payment over private creditors, in cases of insolvency."

"The Supreme Court decided, that the acts of Congress, giving that general priority to the United States, *were* [are] constitutional."

"It was admitted that the government of the United States *was* [is] one of enumerated powers."

"From his past designs and administrations we could never argue at all to those which *were* future." [This is an odd combination of words.]

"Jesus knows that the father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and *went* to God." John xiii. 3.

"Alexander dispatched Eumenes with three hundred horse to two free cities—with assurance that if they *submitted* and *received* him, [should or would] submit and receive,] as a friend, *neville should befall* them."

"The apostle *knew* that the present season *was* [is] the only time allowed for this preparation."

"That would be the real effect of that overpowering evidence, which our adversaries *required*, [should require,] in a revelation, it is difficult to *foretell*."

"It could not otherwise have been known that the word *had* [has] this meaning."

"I told him if he *went* [should go] to-morrow, I would go with him. This fault occurs in our hearing every hour in the day."

"A like fault prevails in other languages; indeed the English may have been led into it by reading foreign authors." Maes on a remarque avec raison, que l'espace conchoidal *était* infini. *Linnæus*. It has been remarked with reason that the conchoidal space *was* [is] infinite.

"But whatever may be the practice of other nations, there would be no difficulty in correcting such improprieties in our own language, if as much attention were given to the study of its true principles, as is given to other subjects of literature and science. But if in this particular, there is a British or American author who writes his vernacular language correctly, his writings have not fallen under my inspection."

"The is under fault very common among English writers, though it is less frequent in the United States; this is the conversion of an intransitive verb into a passive one. It is surprising that an error of this kind should have gained such an established use, in some foreign languages, as to be incurable. Barbarous nations may indeed form languages; but it should be the business of civilized men to purify their language from barbarisms."

"In the transitive verb, there is an agent that performs some action on an object, or in some way affects it. When this verb becomes passive, the agent and the object change places in the sentence. Thus, *John loves Peter*, is transitive, but *Peter is loved by John*, is passive. In the intransitive verb, the case is different; for the action is limited to the agent; and when it is stated that a thing is done, there is no agent by which it is done. *I perish* is intransitive; *I am perished* is the passive form; but the latter neither expresses nor implies an agent by which I perish."

"This fault occurs frequently in the common version of the Scriptures."

"Yea, whereto might the strength of their hands profit me, in whom old age *was* [had perished]." Job xxx. 2.

"The memorial is [has] *perished* with them." Ps. ix. 6.

"The heathen are [have] *perished* out of this land." Ps. x. 16.

"Israel is [has] fled before the Philistines." 1 Sam. iv. 17.

"David is [has] fled." 2 Sam. xix. 9.

"The days *were* [had] not *expired*." 1 Sam. xviii. 26.

"And when the year *was* [had] expired." 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10.

"I only *am* [have] escaped alone to tell thee." Job i. 15.

"And it came to pass, when he *was* [had] returned." Luke xix. 15.

Return is sometimes a transitive verb, and sometimes intransitive. When a sum of borrowed money is *returned*, the phrase is correct, for this is the passive form of a transitive verb. But when a *man is returned*, we may ask, who has returned him? In this case, the man returns by his own act, and he cannot be said to be *returned*.

"He found the Empress *was* [had] departed." Coxe.

"They *were* [had] arrived within three days journey of the spice country." Gibbon. Ch. i. Note.

"Neither Charles nor Diocletian *were* [had] arrived at a very advanced period of life." Ib. Ch. xiii.

"The posterity of so many gods and heroes *was* [had] fallen into the most abject state." Ib. Ch. ii.

"Silver *was* [had] grown more common." Ib.

"He *was* [had] risen from the dead, and *was* [had] just ascended to heaven." Milner. i. 20.

"Hearing that they *were* [had] arrived." Ib. 211.

"Claudius—vexed because his wife *was* [had] become a christian." Ib.

274.

"Does not the reader see how much we *are* [have] already departed from christian simplicity?" Ib. 299.

"My age is [has] departed." Isaiah xxxviii. 12.

"The man out of whom the demons *were* [had] departed." Luke viii.

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"Workmen *were* [had] arrived to assist them." Milford.

"A body of Attian horses *were* [had] just arrived." Ib.

"This fault is common in Milford's History of Greece. In the writings of Roscoe, which are more elegant, it occurs, but less frequently."

"The time limited for the reception of the cardinal *was expired*." Roscoe. Leo. X.

"He inquired whether the report was true, that a legate *was arrived*." Ib. L. Med.

"The nation *being* [having] once more *got* into a course of borrowing." Price on Liberty.

Coxe's Russ. Ib.

"When he *was* [had] retired to his tent."

"He *was* [had] not yet arrived." Ib.

"The intransitive verb *grow* is constantly used by the English as a transitive verb, as to *grow* wheat. This is never used in the northern states, unless by persons who have adopted it recently from the English."

It seems almost incredible that such errors should continue, to this time, to disfigure the language of the most distinguished writers, and that they should escape animadversion. The practice has evidently been borrowed from the French or Italian; but surely no lover of correctness can excuse such violation of the best established principles in our language.

This fault occurs in a few instances, in the writings of the best American authors, as in the writings of Ames and Hamilton. It is however very rare, either in books or in colloquial usage. Even our common people are remarkably accurate in using the auxiliary *have* with the participles of intransitive verbs. They always, I believe, say, a ship has arrived, a plant has perished, the enemy had fled, the price had fallen, the corn has or had grown, the time has expired, the man has returned, the vessel had departed. Such also is the language of our most eminent writers.

"The Generals Gates and Sullivan have both arrived."

Washington's Letters. B. Trumbull.

"Our Tom has grown a sturdy boy." Progress of Dullness.

"Our patriots have fallen." Discourse of D. Webster, Aug. 1826.

"Our commissary had not arrived." Elliott.

The exceptions to this correct practice are chiefly in the use of the participles *being* and *become*. It is very common to hear the expressions he is come or is gone, in which case, the participle seems to take the character of an adjective; although in most instances, the regular form of expression, he has come or has gone, is to be preferred. So *dead*, originally a participle, is used only as an adjective; and *deceased* and *departed* are often used in the like manner. We say, a *deceased*, or *departed* friend; but it should be remarked that the original expression was, our friend has deceased, or has departed this life; and this phraseology, by an easy but heedless transition, became *is deceased* or *is departed*. In general, however, the conversion of an intransitive verb or form of expression into the passive form, is very rare among the people of New England.

There is a grammatical error running through the writings of so respectable a writer as Milford, which ought not to be passed unnoticed; as it seems to be borrowed from the French language, whose idioms are different from the English, but which the English are too apt to follow. This fault is, in using the preterit or perfect tense, instead of the past tense indefinite, usu-

"On this use of intransitive verbs, as the ship *was departed*, if may be asked, who departed it? The mail is *arrived*, who has arrived it? The tree is *perished*, who has perished it? The enemy *seems fled*, who fled them? The time *was expired*, who expired it?