

INTRODUCTION.

Ch. xii. 26. *Εἰ οὐ σατανᾶς ποὺ σατανᾶν ἐκβάλλει*, if Satan cast [casteth] out Satan.

Ch. xix. 10. *Εἰ οὗτος ἐστὶν ἄγιος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός*, if the case of the man be [is] so with his wife.

Ch. xxii. 45. *Εἰ οὐ Δαβὶδ καλεῖ αὐτὸν Κύριον*, if David then call [calletth] him Lord.

2 Cor. iv. 16. *Εἰ οὐ ἐξω ἡμῶν ἀνθρώπος διαφθείρεται*, though our outward man perish, [perishes or is perishing.]

In all these passages, the English verb, in the subjunctive, properly expresses a conditional, contingent or hypothetical future tense, contrary to the sense of the original, except in the last passage cited, where the apostle evidently speaks of the perishing of the outward man as a fact admitted, which renders the translation still more improper.

Let us now attend to the following passages.

Matthew vii. 9. *Ἡ τις ἐστὶν ἐξ ὑμῶν ἀνθρώπος, οὐ τὰν ἀσκήρ οὐκ ἀπορῶν*, or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask [shall ask] bread, will he give him a stone.

Καὶ τὸν ἐκθὺν ἀσκήρ, if he ask [shall ask] a fish, will he give him a serpent.

Here the original tense is varied to express a future or hypothetical event, yet the verb in English is in the same tense as in the first class of examples; and what renders the version more objectionable, is, that the verb in the first clause, does not correspond with that in the second clause. There is no possible way of making good English of the translation, but by supposing the verb in the first clause *ask*, to be in the future tense. So it would be in Latin, and so it is, "si petierit." If thy son shall ask (or should ask) a fish, will he give, (or would he give) him a serpent?

This fault runs through the whole English version of the scriptures, and a distinction of tenses clearly marked in the original languages, is generally neglected in the translation.

Now the most unlettered man in this country, would express the sense in English, with the same marked distinction of tenses, which appears in the Greek. If thou art the son of God; if thy right eye *offends* thee; if the case of the man is such; if David *calls* him Lord; or if the sense is understood to be future and contingent, if thy son *shall* ask bread, or if he *should* ask bread, would be the uniform language of any of the common people of our country. There would not probably be a single exception, unless in the case of the subjunctive verb, which is often used in the subjunctive form. And the most unlettered man could use the corresponding verbs in the two clauses, if he *shall* ask, will he give; or if he *should* ask, would he give. The use of the verb in all similar phrases, is perfectly well settled in this country, and perfectly uniform among the higher and lower classes of men; unless when the practice has been varied by the influence of Grammarians, in which the conjugation of the verb is according to the antiquated practice of the age of Elizabeth.

1 Tim. v. 4. *Εἰ δὲ τις χεῖρα ἔτεκεν ἡ ἐκποῦρα ἔχει*, if any widow, have [has] children or nephews.

Vases 8. *Εἰ δὲ τις τὸν ἰδὼν καὶ μαλακὰ τὸν οὐκὸν οὐ πρὸσποι*, if any provide [provideth] not for his own, and especially for those of his own house.

This subjunctive form of the verb, if he *be*; if he *have*; if he *go*; if he *say*; if thou *write*; whether thou *see*; though he *fall*, which was generally used by the writers of the sixteenth century, was, in a great measure, discarded before the time of Addison. Whether this change was in consequence of the prevalence of colloquial usage over grammar rules, or because discerning men perceived the impropriety and inconsistency of the language of books, I am unable to determine. Certain it is, that Locke, Watts, Addison, Pope, and other authors of the first distinction, who adorned the close of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, generally used the indicative mode to express condition, uncertainty, and hypothesis in the present and past tenses. Thus Locke writes—"If these two propositions are by nature imprinted." "If principles are innate." "If any person *hath* never examined this notion." "Whether that substance *thinks* or no." "If the soul *doth* think in sleep." "If one *considers* well these men's way of speaking." "If he *does* not reflect." "Unless that notion *produces* a constant train of successive ideas." "If your Lordship *means*." Such is the language of Locke.

Now what is remarkable, the learned Dr. Lowth, the very author who has, by his grammar, done much to sanction the subjunctive form of the verb, in such cases, often uses the indicative in his own writings. "If he *does* not carefully attend to this—if this pleasure *arises* from the shape of the composition—if this is not firmly and well established." These verbs are in the indicative, in his own principles.

On Isaiah. *Preface Diss.*

Addison. "If the reader *has* a mind to see a father of the same stamp." "If exercise *throws* off all superfluities—if it *clears* the vessels—if it *dissipates* a growing distemper." Such is the language of Addison, the most elegant writer of the genuine English idiom in the nation.

"If the thief *is* poor—if it *obliges* me to be conversant with scenes of wretchedness."

Wiberforce.

"If America *is* not to be conquered."

Lord Chatham.

"If we *are* to be satisfied with assertions." "If it *gives* blind confidence to any executive government." "If such an opinion *has* gone forth."

"If our conduct *has* been marked with vigor and wisdom." Fox.

"If my bodily strength is equal to the task." "A negro, if he *works* for himself and not for a master, will do double the work." "If there is any aggravation of our guilt." If their conduct *displays* no true wisdom." "The honorable gentleman may, if he *chooses*, have the journals read again." "Whether this is a sufficient tie to unite them." "If this measure *comes* recommended." "If there *exists* a country which contains the means of protection." Pitt.

"If the prudence of reserve and decorum *dictates* silence." "If an assembly is viciously or feebly composed." "If any persons are to make good deficiencies." "If the King of the French has really deserved these murderous attempts." "If this representation of M. Necker *was* false."

"Whether the system, if it *deserves* the name." "The politician looks for a power that our workmen call a *purchase*, and if he *finds* the power."

"If he *feels* as men commonly feel."

Burke.

"If climate *has* such an effect on mankind." "If the effects of climate

are equal."

Coxe's Russ.

"If he *finds* his collection too small." "If he *thinks* his judgment not sufficiently enlightened."

"Whether it *leads* to truth." "If he *warns* others against his own failings." This is generally the language of Johnson.

In regard to this distinguished author, I would observe that, except the substantive verb, there is in his Rambler but a single instance of the subjunctive form of the verb in conditional sentences. In all other cases the use of the indicative is uniform.

Such also is the language of the most distinguished men in the United States, particularly of those who wrote their native language as they received it from tradition, and before grammars had made any impression on its genuine construction.

"The prince that acquires new territory, if he *finds* it vacant." "If we *are* industrious we shall never starve." "If one *has* more corn than he can consume, and another *has* less." Such is the language of Franklin.

"If any persons thus qualified *are* to be found."

"If it is thought proper."

"If the congress *does* not choose to point out the particular regiment."

"If I *am* rightly informed."

"If the army *has* not removed."

"If a proposition *has* not been made."

Such is the language of Washington.

"If any philosopher *pretends*."

"If he *has* food for the present day."

"If a revelation *is* not impossible."

"If the Christian system *contains* a real communication to mankind."

"If the former of these facts *opposes* our reception of the miraculous history of the gospel."

"If the preceding reflections *are* just."

Such is the language of the late President Smith.

"If any government *deems* the introduction of foreigners or their merchandise injurious."

"Unless he *violates* the law of nations."

"If a person *has* a settlement in a hostile country."

"If he *resides* in a belligerent country."

"If a foreign Consul *carries* on trade as a merchant."

Such is the language of the ex-Chancellor Kent.

But neither the authors here mentioned, nor most others, even the most distinguished for erudition, are uniform and consistent with themselves in the use of the tenses. In one sentence we find the indicative used, "If it is to be discovered only by the experiment." "If other indications *are* to be found."

In the next sentence, "If to miscarry in an attempt *be* a proof of having mistaken the direction of genius."

Johnson.

"If the former *be* refined—if those virtues are accompanied with equal abilities."

Gibbon.

"If love *rewards* him, or if vengeance *strike*."

Couper.

"Or if it *does* not brand him to the last."

Couper.

"If he *is* a pagan—if endeavors are used—if the person *hath* a liberal education—if man *be* subject to these miseries."

Milner.

The following expressions occur in Pope's Preface to Homer's Iliad, in the compass of thirteen lines.

"If he *has* given a regular catalogue of an army."

"If he *has* funeral games for Patroclus."

"If Ulysses *visit* the shades."

"If he *be* detained from his return."

"If Achilles *be* absent."

"If he *gildeth* his hero a suit of celestial armor."

I recollect one English author only, who has been careful to avoid this inconsistency; this is Gregory, who, in his *Economy of Nature*, was uniformly used the indicative form of the verb in conditional sentences of this kind.

The like inconsistency occurs in almost all American writings. "If moral disposition *lie* here." "If preference necessarily *involves* the knowledge of obligation." "If the proposition *is* true." "If the proposition *be* confirmed."

"If he *refutes* any thing."

In a pamphlet now before me, there are not less than fifty of these inconsistencies in the compass of ninety pages; and three of them in one sentence.

"The substantive verb is often used in the subjunctive form by writers who never use that form in any other verb. The reason doubtless is that *be* is primarily the indicative as well as the subjunctive mode of that verb. *I be, we be, are*, as used in Scripture. So in German *Ich bin*.