

THE BERKELEYAN.

"WESTWARD THE COURSE OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY."

Vol. II.

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No. 2.

IN THE FIRE:—A CHRISTMAS REVERIE.

The Christmas ball is over,
The mansion is at rest;
No sound is heard but the sleigh-bells,
Of the last departing guest.
Now these are hushed in distance—
And the moon-beams glimmer bright
Over snow-clad branches,
And fields all dazzling white.
The lights are all extinguished—
The good-nights have all been said—
The mistle-toe hangs forsaken,
The garlands are withered and dead.
The lover's farewell has been whispered,
The foot-falls have all died away
From off the marble stair-case
Within the mansion gray.
The portals all are fastened;
And the porter's echoing tread,
Melts at last into silence,
And the house is still as the dead.

But a maiden in rich attire,
Satin and lace like snow,
Leans over the oaken mantel
O'er the fire-light's ruddy glow.
And with vague imaginings
And wonderings, her eyes
See in its fitful glimmering
Strange forms and faces rise.

She sees the wise men kneeling
With gifts upon the ground,
Before that lowly manger,
And the Christ-child halo-crowned.

Where the back-log casts a shadow,
She sees a garden rise;
And a man in flowing garments
Within it prostrate lies.
Suff'ring a whole world's anguish!
Its crimes, its sin and pain,
And then the vision fadeth—
The Garden of Gethsemane
Gives place to Calvary's agony;
And she feels Life's fearful cost,
While a thorn-crowned Saviour
Hangs, mocked at, on the Cross.

Now all the dusky pulses
Of the slumbering coals beat low,
And before her deep eyes dreaming
Other visions come and go.

With pensive brow she stands
In the glow of the rhythmic fire—
With musing eyes she sees
A city—tower and spire,
Gleam in the throbbing coals
That mingle their light with the gloom,
And shine on the oaken panels
Of the ancient, stately room.
Here she sees a palace
With lighted windows gay—
And here, a shining cottage
And there, a hovel grey.
And here, a tall cathedral
Silently solemn and grand,
Holding upward lofty spires
Toward the gates of the other land.
And here rises a humble church,
As she dreamily watches on—
But then the glimmering brightness dulls,
The city has faded and gone.

And still she dreams and gazes
Into the fire's bed—
And another city rises

From the ashes of the dead.
Here frowns a monument tall
Above the church-yard moss,
Here gleams a marble tablet
And there a wooden cross.
And here a stately tomb
Solemn, and still, and lone,
Raising its arched roof upwards
On pillars carved in stone.
And many a humble slab
She sees in the ashes gray—
Then monument, tomb, and tablet,
Crumble and fall away.
And the light fades off the panels,
And the maiden in pensive mood,
Sees only ashes left to mark
The place where the cities stood.

Berkeley, Dec. 25, 1874.

ST. JAMES.

"IT WAS ME."

BY PROF. SILL.

The question is often asked, whether the above is a correct expression. That depends on the meaning attached to the word "correct." If compliance with the rules laid down in grammars is meant, the question must be answered—no. The rule requires the predicate pronoun, after the verb "to be," to take the case of the subject. If, however, by "correct" we mean supported by good usage (in spoken, or in written speech), and consistent with the principles of grammar because logically accurate, the question may be answered—yes.

The phrase is instinctively felt to be correct, in a certain definite class of cases (to be described below), and accordingly it is almost universally used in speech, whenever the idea is expressed suddenly, without any deliberate reference to remembered rules. Let us analyze this instinct, and discover the reason which underlies it.

Whatever the rules of grammarians may say, the principles of grammar demand that the inflectional form (or cases) of words shall express their true relations to each other. "Me" is the objective case of the pronoun, of which "I" is the nominative. "Me" therefore denotes the object, "I" the subject, of any conception. The phrase, "It was me" is correctly used, whenever the relation of the person designated by the pronoun is an object-relation. This relation to the action may not be formally expressed: it may even be only sub-conscious; but if it is a part of the fact, the case should express it.

For example, a person runs against you in a dark passage. He enquires, "Who is this?" You answer, "It is me." You instinctively use the objective case, because your meaning is that you were the object run into, not the subject of the action in any sense. If he had asked, "Who is holding me?" You would have properly replied, "It is I"; for in this case you wish to express that you are the subject of the action. This may perhaps be more evident, if we complete the phrase by adding a clause in each case. The whole idea would be, "It is me (whom) you ran into"; and "It is I (who) am holding you." Taking the pronouns in their abstract signification, it is as if to the former question you had replied,

"It is a *me* which you have run into; i. e. a person in the condition of receiving an action;" and to the latter question, "It is an *I* which is holding you; i. e. a person doing an action." Indeed, that is just what you have replied, since the two cases, "me" and "I," mean precisely those two things, and were formed for exactly that purpose.

Let us take another example. Suppose that some person of unstable equilibrium in entering a car treads heavily on your foot. He enquires anxiously of your neighbor, "Was that you?" You reply, with a twinge of pain that puts all grammatical rules to flight, "No, it was me." Your foot (and that is "you," for the time being, as you are only too deeply conscious) is emphatically not an "acting subject," but a "suffering object;" and the nominative case would be no adequate expression of its relation to the action.

Or, to take a more obscure case, you knock at a friend's chamber-door. He responds, "Who is there?" Your reply inevitably is (unless you have a grammar under your arm to which you hastily refer for directions) "It is me;" or more likely, "me," alone. It might at first sight seem that in this case you are the subject of the conception, as being the one who did the knocking, who is standing there, and who wishes to enter. But these are not the ideas that were uppermost in your mind. If they had been, you would have said, "I," or "I," merely. You say "me," because the prominent ideas were, "It is me whom you hear; it is me whom you may or may not wish to see: it is me to whom you will or will not give admission." You are in a meek, passive, objective relation to the person within. He is the subject of the affair, not you. If, on the other hand, you were an angry avenger, sword in hand, battering on the door, and a feeble and apprehensive voice said, "Who is it?" you would naturally shout, "It is I!" i. e. "It is I who am come to slay you." Now you are the subject, and he the object of the whole conception.

Why, then, it may be asked might we not say in the former cases, "Me am the one trodden on;" or "Me am the one at the door?" Because it would not express what we mean. It would imply, by its very form, a subject-relation which does not exist. It is precisely to avoid this error that we have universally adopted the other phrase. Moreover, if the "me" were to be made grammatically the subject at all, it could only be as a "third person," or thing spoken of, with its verb in the third person; which might be expressed by some such phrase as, "This particular 'me' is the one trodden on;" or "Left waiting at the door."

Nevertheless, it would be rash to advise any one to say "It is me," unless he is sure of his company. Among technical grammarians it might put him in extreme peril of his reputation. If one wishes to avoid even the appearance of evil he had better meekly obey the rule. The object of language is, after all, to communicate your thought; not necessarily to put it into the form you prefer. When you are among the Romans, it is certainly the best in the matter of speech to do somewhat as the Romans do. If in a company of three, all of them ask you as to the route you came, you will

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orders are received to the contrary.

WANTED.

We do not accept this position "fearlessly." We know that without help we shall fall short of our intentions. We fear that the students, to whom the paper owes its support, and to whom it looks for appreciation, will not take its reputation upon themselves, and consider it a personal matter to make the Berkeleyan a success. We cannot give a correct expression of our University life without help from all classes of students, without expression from all points of view. We need the aid of the students as a body. We want the benefit of their thoughts and advice, that we may the better meet their wishes; so that the Berkeleyan may become worthy of its origin, and of its generous support. With this view we propose to depart from established precedent during our term of office. We shall not occupy these columns exclusively with our own effusions. We have thought it better to divide the task, for the greater the responsibility, the greater the failure, as we have seen. We wish it plainly understood, that contributions of any kind from the students, will be thankfully received; that communications from the alumni of our institution will be twice welcome, for, as they are capable to judge of us and our efforts, they are the ones who should supply our wants and correct our faults. Any communications directed to the editors will receive attention.

A fear of criticism withholds many members of the University from writing. If you cannot write at least give us your thoughts, that we may represent your side of the question.

Your daily experience brings you something humorous or important. Give the benefit of this. You have thoughts and opinions respecting various University matters, the columns of the Berkeleyan are open to you, step forward and express them. We have told our needs, if you meet them we will gladly share with you our success, if you withhold your support we shall do that which has been done before. We would state in closing that this paper is *not* the organ of the students printing press. *Graduates* please take notice:

THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT DURANT.

On another page we give a fuller notice of the life of the venerable man of whom, within so short a time our community, has been deprived forever. There is no other name so firmly bound up in all the associations connected with the founding of the University, as is his. No other man on the Pacific Coast has received so large a share of public and private esteem and respect, without so much as a single dissenting voice, as he has done for a number of years past. Seldom, indeed, do we meet with one whose life is so rounded, so complete, so admirable as his has been. A long course of years has been spent by him in earnest labor, and in constant progress. He attained before his death to the highest honor a community can bestow on a man during his life-time, their universal confidence, esteem, goodwill. He saw the fruit of his labor in the Institution which will preserve the honor of his name as long as it shall last. And now, at length, in the fullness of time, he has departed in peace. We cannot begrudge to such a laborer the time of the setting of the sun. We cannot feel it but natural that so noble a tree, which for a long time has brought forth such rich fruit, should now be permitted to let fall its leaves, and to fade away in life's mellow autumn. But we shall never forget the noble character and elevating influence of our former President.

EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY. S.4

Notwithstanding the fact that a general understanding ought to exist, as to the duties of the Editors of the BERKELEYAN in supervising the matter that appears in the paper, we think there is and has been some misunderstanding as to precisely how far their power, individually and collectively, must be expected to extend. There is a tendency to blame the editors for certain faults that in reality do not spring from their negligence or inability. Perhaps, too, on their part, the editors have sometimes been inclined to throw the burden of inaccuracies on other shoulders, and themselves to overlook things which it is within their province to care for. We think, in consequence, that it may be proper at this, the outset of our career, to say a little in regard to what we conceive to be the true limits of the responsibility of the editors of this journal. We do not think that it can be a useless task to anticipate, and thus maybe to prevent, little difficulties that possibly may arise during the time we hold office.

In the first place, as regards the question of the individual responsibility of each editor, and its relation to the collective responsibility of the whole Board of Editors. Each one of us is empowered, according to all preceding custom, to write independently of the others, to receive outside matter, to supervise the printing of what he himself brings in. But it is of course expected that the whole Board take a common interest in seeing that nothing of a really objectionable nature enters the paper, that no article is admitted which will unnecessarily arouse bitter disputes or personalities, that in a word the general character of all that appears is such as to bring credit to the Institution and to the students. For failure in these directions, we suppose the whole Board is

consequently responsible, and not alone the particular editor through whose negligence the fault has happened.

But still, the independence which the different members of the Editorial Staff possess, renders it impossible that the entire body should be blamed for everything that may be worthy of blame in the work of the different individuals. If an editor is hasty in statement, or unjust in argument, or faulty in knowledge, unless his errors are such as to fall among those which we have already referred to, he and he alone must be held to answer. If he chooses to retain his editorial *incognito*, and refuses to reveal his name if it is inquired for, the body to which he belongs must not on that account suffer in its collective capacity. Criticise him if you will, attack him behind his wall of anonymous obscurity, speak of him if you like as "one of the editors of the BERKELEYAN," but do not, we beseech of you, condemn us all for his short-comings, nor tell how "the editorial management of the BERKELEYAN gives its support to this absurd," etc.

There is another and a less important matter, which comes under the same general head. That relates not only to the avoidance of mere typographical errors, but also to the correction of mistakes in language, whether as to spelling or as to grammar, in the contributions of correspondents. These do occur, and often unintentionally on the part of the authors. Whenever they are unintentional, when they are but oversights, we believe it to be the office of the editor to whom

the contribution is presented, to find them and to correct them. But mistakes that obviously spring from pure negligence or from ignorance, unless they are of a character to exclude the article containing them altogether from our columns, are to be laid on the shoulders of the contributors themselves. The BERKELEYAN will always endeavor to secure the best possible original matter, but where articles are of such a general nature as to deserve a place in the paper, if their authors write clumsy English, or voluntarily fall into error, they must bear the responsibility. So too is it if anything said by a correspondent wounds anybody's feelings, or arouses anybody's opposition. So long as there was nothing in the article to make it obviously improper to print it in the BERKELEYAN at all, the editors are not to be held individually or collectively amenable for its failings.

We have no doubt that these principles will be admitted to be obviously just, as soon as they are stated. But because it is easy to overlook them, or to forget them, and because we editors would suffer by such oversight or forgetfulness, we must ask indulgence for stating them plainly, so that the matter may be in future understood.

We do not expect that we shall act in all points fully up to our duty. But as we may have enough short-comings of our own, we would desire to guard against being blamed for those of other people.

A press of matter, consequent upon the unexpected event of the death of our ex-President, forces us to omit from this number several articles by correspondents. We apologize to them, and hope they will not cease to give us their productions on this account.