

# Uncle Walt's Story

## GENTLE CORRECTION

“I observed the refined correction. I was talking to me this morning and shooting holes through the kid's brain in his most reckless way. I called his attention to a few of his grammatical errors. Instead of being grateful he shook his fist under my nose, and said that for three weeks he would push me back through the back of my head. I can't understand that sort of conduct. I'd thank any man who would correct me when I make errors in my speech.”

“In a horn you would,” commented the hotelkeeper. “You think you put up a fine line of English when you are talking. You are satisfied you never make any bad breaks, so you feel safe in saying you would welcome criticism, but if some sharp who is wise to all the fancy curves of the language came along, and showed you where you got off, you wouldn't wring his hand in an ecstasy of gratitude. No, doggone it, if you would climb on his person and discolor one of his eyes.”

“If there's any man makes me tired and sore, it's the one who calls me down when I am speaking a piece, and tells me I am making Lindley Murray roll over in his grave. I don't mind if there are only two of us present at the time, but when there are innocent bystanders around I get all worked up and insist upon a hand to hand conflict. No good sport would do such a thing. If you don't like the way I talk, you can pass up this hotel when making your daily rounds. If you must hand me a package of criticism for admittance, send it by mail. Then I can read it in the privacy of my own bed room, and there would be anybody around to raise a horse laugh.”

“My education was sadly neglected when I was young. I went to school only a few months and everything I learned, was wrong, for the teacher was a farmer who took up educational work as a recreation when the weather prevented him from cultivating his beans. The little I know I accumulated by reading the newspapers and a few dime novels.”

“Consequently I am always taking a fall out of my language. I never could wise myself to the fine points of grammar, and it was only recently I quit saying ‘I don't do it,’ and ‘I have went.’ Every now and then, an awkward slip in the middle of a discourse and shows me where I am wrong, and if there is any way of getting even with that man I always do. There was a drummer for a shoe house who used to frequent this place. I took a liking to him, and always gave him the best room and saw that his eggs were fresh from the vine, and looked after his comfort generally.”

“One day I was telling him a story, and he stopped me just when I was approaching the peroration, and began to explain the difference between ‘that’ and ‘which.’ It seemed that I always used one of these words when I should have used the other, and in the goodness of his heart he explained the whole business to me. When he had made everything clear, he asked me to finish my story, but I told him, in a biting sort of way, that I might wound him to the quick by misplacing a few more words, so I would spare him that infliction.”

“Then he saw he was in lard, and he began telling me how he always liked to be corrected, and he took it for granted that others felt the same way about it, and the next he jerked the legs out from under him.”

“He registered here many times after that, always got the worst room in the house and if there was a particularly tough steak on hand, it went to him. He tried his hardest to square himself, and was always looking at me, hoping to see a winking smile on my chaste lips, but he never got anything but the arctic glare, and I suppose he's kicking himself, even to this day, because he made that blab. And if you want to queer yourself with all your friends, you'll keep in this thing of telling people of their mistakes.”

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