

modes and habits—of language, the learner would have to study several particular languages, which a very young learner cannot do effectively and should not be encouraged to attempt at all. But what I want to point out is that in directing the study of any particular language there are always certain matters on which we have to lay special stress and make as clear as we can. Amongst these will naturally be the characteristics peculiar to the language in question; but there should also be amongst them characteristics which it shares in common with language in general; and these should have special attention and be made specially clear. So that, in the case I have been referring to, a boy would pass from English to Latin not only with a knowledge of what is peculiarly English, but also with some knowledge, informal no doubt, of the general modes and habits of language—the functions of the parts of speech, the nature of a sentence, the use of inflexions and auxiliaries, etc., etc. That the ordinary boy does not bring this informal general knowledge with him in any noticeable quantity is a fact familiar to us all. And the reason for this is partly that we are in such a desperate hurry to get him into Latin or French, and partly that we teach English—and Latin too, for the matter of that—so mechanically and unintelligently. I do not make this assertion about our English teaching at random. Every year I have to examine in this subject some hundreds of candidates who have either just left school or are just about to leave. Or, if you wish to verify the assertion for your selves, you have but to glance into any one of the myriad English grammars that cast their baleful twilight over the junior forms of our schools. The writers themselves do not understand the general modes and habits of language; and when they try to deal

with them they do but darken the air with the dust of old formulas and fallacies which they raise. You will find words and things constantly confused, talks about the *gender* of English nouns, calculated to cloud a boy's mind on the meaning of gender for the rest of his natural life, phrases called "prepositional" because they happen to *begin* with a preposition, that which is really a *limitation* almost always called an *extension*, and so on, and so on. But enough of this for the present, or you will think that I consider grammatical details all-important at the very beginning of a language—which is not the case.

THE EARLIER STUDY.

It seems to me that, from the very start, we confuse our pupils by failing to bring home to them that language is the means employed by human beings to make themselves intelligible to one another; and that the habits and ways of language spring directly or indirectly from that fact. (This would have to be slightly modified later on, when we deal with purely artistic literature; but here I am only dealing with beginnings) To accomplish this, in my opinion, we should deal with simple thoughts and feelings, and the manner in which a knowledge of these can be conveyed from one to another—with simple literature, in short. We may take some simple thought, with its attendant feelings, and, having talked them over sufficiently, we may try to put them into words, and then turn to a master of good English and see how he expresses them; or we may start with the author's words and arrive inductively at the thought and feelings, which he intended to convey. The uses and values of metaphores, similes, epithets, order of words, etc., will be considered, though in a quite rudimentary and untechnical way—but always from the point of view that