English.

All articles and communications intended for this department should be addressed to the ENGLISH EDITOR, EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL, Room 5, 11½ Richmond Street West, Toronto.

LESSONS IN ENGLISH METRES.

The basis of English mètres is accent; the measure of the verse being made by a regular succession of accented and unaccented syllables. Children almost unconsciously recognize the charm of metrical language, and there is usually little difficulty in bringing them to an intelligent recognition of the characteristics of different metres. The easiest plan is to take some passage of well-marked rhythm, and have the class, while the teacher slowly reads aloud, or everybody reads aloud, mark the fall of the accent by beating with the finger. This exercise should take in not only pieces like *Lucy Gray*, where the accent falls on every other syllable, but those like Sangster's *The Rapid*, where the unaccented syllables are more numerous, or Longfellow's *Wreck of the Hesperus*, where they are irregular.

(1) The main point in this initial work is to recognize the ACCENT; and the teacher may neglect everything else for the time. It is very necessary at the outset that the pieces he chooses for class exercises should be of regular measure, otherwise he may do violence to the poetic variations (see III.) of the measure and read with wrong emphasis in order to restore the regularity.

When the class has caught the idea of an accented as against an unaccented syllable, written exercises may be given to examine the metre of various verses, in which the pupils will mark the fall of the accent by ′ and each unaccented syllable by x. For example—again the teacher takes care to choose fairly regular pieces:

"He wrapped her warm in his seaman's coat,
x ′ x ′ x x ′ x ′
Against the stinging blast."
x ′ x ′ x ′
"All peacefully gliding, the waters dividing."
x ′ x x ′ x x ′ x x ′ x

(2) The second step is to recognize the FOOT. The class is asked to mark the accent with the finger as at first; but the teacher (taking a regular stanza) at the end of each line asks the number of accents in the line, then the number of unaccented syllables. For example:

"You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet you are seven!—I pray you tell,
Sweet maid, how this may be."

The class will see that there are in each line four accents, and that there are four unaccented syllables. The teacher asks, *Are the accents and unaccented syllables jumbled in all together, any way, or is there a regular arrangement?* The class will then discover that there is a regular arrangement, that the syllables are arranged x ′ x ′ x ′ x ′, four sets of x ′ in each line. Continuing, they will find in

"The honeysuckle round the porch has wov'n its wavy bowers,"

there are seven sets of x ′.

In

"Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace,"

there are four sets of x x ′.

In

"All peacefully gliding, the waters dividing,"

there are four sets of x ′ x.

After further examination of regular measures, the teacher may introduce the term FOOT, as the name of each regular set or group in the metrical line. Exercises should then follow on paper, in which the class will mark the accented and unaccented sylables as before ′ x, and in addition will divide the line into feet by a mark |, giving a formula with each line; as,

"The armaments which thunderstrike the walls."
x ′ | x ′ | x ′ | x ′ | x ′ | = 5 x ′.

III. The next point to observe is the VARIATION of the metre. The great fault of reading poetry—the sing-song that is the despair of all teachers, and the anguish of all hearers—lies to a great extent in a failure to recognize variation in the metre. The boy with a good ear for common-place rhythm tries to read,

"It was the schooner Hesperus:"

x ′ | x ′ | x ′ | x ′ |

instead of

′ x | x ′ | x ′ | x ′ |

We must insist on reading poetry nearly as we read prose, not letting the normal metre run away with us. Variations are of various kinds, and the interest of the class can be greatly aroused in the effort to detect them. The teacher should introduce these variations in skilful gradation.

(*a*) Variation by substitution of a different foot,

| "Blue were her eyes as the fairy flax,"

(*b*) Variation by using ′ x for x ′ in the first foot—reversing the accent.

| "And he watched how the veering flaw did blow,"

(*c*) Variation by an additional x in each of the first two feet.

"'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near."

(*d*) Variation by omitting one x from the first foot.

"Leave me, comrades, here I drop."
′ x | ′ x | ′ x | ′

This last departure, the apparent incompleteness of the last foot, which lacks the x, is so common and necessary as not to seem a variation. It will be remarked that if the x were present as "dropping" instead of "drop" it would necessitate a double rime "stopping"; and the double rime in English is difficult to carry on successfully.

(*To be continued.*)

TEACHING GRAMMAR.

Grammar is the knowledge of the uses of words in expressing thought. The chief purpose in the study is to discover these different uses of words, and to see how groups of words are employed to perform the office of single words in sentences.

(1) The first step in teaching grammar is to make plain the constituent elements of the sentence. These were shown in our last article to be subject, predicate, and the word which shows what relation exists between them. This last is called *verb* (*the* word) or copula (*the* connective). It is *the* word, that is, the *essential* word, in the sentence, because it is essential to all thought that the relation between subject and predicate shall be discerned. Of all the *connecting* words in the sentence the verb or copula is the chief in importance. These three functions of words, viz., to denote the subject, to denote the predicate, and to denote the relation discerned between subject and predicate, are the fundamental ones. These give the three uses of words that are named nouns, attribute words (adjectives), and verbs (copula).

(2) The next step in learning grammar is to discover the different uses of the words employed to denote the subject, the predicate, and the relation between them, or copula. Here it is important that the learner dwell long enough to see the fundamental distinctions between the uses of these words, which we call parts of speech. The best way to discover these different uses is to form a thought about some object which he wishes to express, and then observe the office of each word in expressing it. To illustrate:

Suppose that each member of the class has an apple. Attention is directed to the color. Immediately each declares his judgment about his apple; it is green, or red, or russet, as the case may be. Note the analytic-synthetic movement of the mind in distinguishing the color, and at the same time seeing it as united in the subject, or thing, apple. It is one of the attributes by which the thing, apple, is distinguished from other apples or other things. The device for expressing this judgment is the words, "The apple is red," or, "The apple is green," in which the attribute is *affirmed* of the subject. Words thus used to denote attributes of subjects of thought are called *adjectives*. We study the apples further by tasting them. The green apples are sour, the red apples are sweet, the russet apples are bitter. We now distinguish two attributes of each apple; the one is made more prominent than the other by being used as a predicate. But when we say "green apple" there is an implied relation of subject and predicate. It is understood that the apple is green.

After some such method of the study of actual things, and of reflection upon the uses we make of words in expressing our thoughts, until the adjective relation of words is clearly seen, we continue our study of the apples. Some of the apples are dark red; others, light red; others, grass green, etc. We are now discriminating between the attributes of these apples, and use words to show these distinctions. "Dark," "light," "grass," are attributes of the other attributes, which is a different use of words from that of adjectives. The grammatical name of this class is *adverb*. The name is merely technical. The literal meaning of the word has no application to its use in expressing the thought.

When the distinction between the adjective and the adverb is made clear by the study of many different things, after the manner indicated, the study of the apples can be renewed by placing them in different places—on the teacher's desk, on the floor, on the stove, on Mary's desk, etc. The pupils now distinguish one apple from the others by describing them as follows: "The green apple is on the teacher's desk," "the red apple is on the stove." Now the attribute pointed out is each apple's relation to other objects. It is just as much adjective as before, for it is the attribute of the apple that is considered. Here a group of words is used instead of one. Only children who have developed some power of thinking can follow this lead, but the supposition of the writer is that it is such children that are entering upon the study of *grammar* considered as the science of the sentence. Up to this point the child has had much instruction and training in the correct use of language, if he has been properly taught. He has learned the rules of good usage through his language training. He studies grammar to discover how the rules came to be.

Now, to describe the apple which is "on the teacher's desk," the learner sees that to express that relation a new use of a word has been made. The apple might have been *under* the desk, or *over* it, or *beside* it. But it is *on* it. I am still describing the apple by showing its relation to the desk. What is the word that tells this relation?

By some such method as is above suggested, the teacher can keep the child's conviction strong from the first, that words are used for the purpose of indicating our thoughts, and that they must always be studied in connection with the thoughts they express. It is the thought which determines the use of the word, and its use can never be known until the thought is known. This is the first truth to fix in the mind of the child beginning this study, and every lesson should tend to deepen the conviction. It will then be impossible for a person who has completed the school course to declare, as a teacher does in another place in this number, that whether "to eat" is a transitive or an intransitive verb depends upon whether you study Rigdon's grammar or Holbrook's grammar. That is, it is merely a matter of text-book authority. The writer was present at a grammar lesson in a county institute last summer where the teacher of grammar said, *sotto voce*, that if the statement should be made to the class that "it was the meaning in every case that must determine how to parse words and analyze sentences," only a small per cent. would understand what the statement meant. We thought that he was mistaken at the time, and became convinced of it later. . . . Until the pupils are able to see just what a noun does that an adjective cannot do, what is the peculiar office of a verb which no other part of speech can perform, and so on of all the others, it is vain to suppose that they can go on to the mastery of the greater difficulties of the subject. A knowledge of the parts of speech involves the knowledge of the entire subject of grammar. But it is only after one knows the subject that he sees this to be true.—*G.P.B. in an Exchange.*