

ever. If fault is found with a school, the teacher of English scarcely ever seems to escape. But the teacher of English is often a victim, not an offender; he is bound down to a system which deprives him of liberty of action. In these days when children are supposed to become omniscient about the age of fifteen, it would be strange indeed if the older training could not hold its own sometimes, even in the matter of English. When one thinks of the classics and the modern languages and the histories and the geographies and the mathematics and the numerous "ologies" that are let loose on a mind developing in a young body which insists on notice and care if it is to be developed wisely and well, and is not to contribute to human feebleness, one is not surprised to hear a cry for fewer books, for more leisure, for more thought. And it is just possible that English suffers owing to so much being attempted. But it seems possible so to educate a child in English that he could write a letter in simple prose, which, in the matter of expression, should satisfy a school board deliberating on the choice of a head-master. The facts are few and simple, and although the formal mode could not be expected from a child of twelve, a child of twelve might convey all the information required without blunder or blemish. Indeed, it may be suspected that English itself is the cause of bad English. Children who cannot spell ordinary words or write ordinary English are worried at too early an age about abstract nouns and numerous classes of adverbs and conjunctions. Derivations which examiners expect and examiners ask are committed to memory, only to be forgotten for the most part as soon as the examination is over. Pages of rules are learnt by heart, but the constant application of rules to an interesting page of some English classic is neglected. The detaching of thought from thought,—in other words, Analysis,—an exercise which concerns English no more than it concerns any other language, since it gives a firm hold not merely on English construction, but also an equally firm one on the construction of Latin and Greek, is looked on as a dreadful thing of modern invention because it bears a new scholastic name and has an exact vocabulary of its own. As soon as the functions, not the minute subdivisions, of the parts of speech are comprehended, the learner is enabled to begin simple Analysis; and if he is in doubt as to his phrasing, he can often detect errors where detection was previously impossible. Bad English spelling can be corrected only through good English spelling and good English spelling can be acquired only by the constant writing of exercises and constant reading. Constant reading will do a great deal gradually and insensibly, but firmly nevertheless. Nor must it be forgotten that good clear pronunciation in the practical every day use of English would afford help in cases where words are pronounced as they are spelt. Not long ago I had to mark the dictation papers from a school which was not conspicuous for bad spelling. The majority of the candidates spelt brethren, *brethern*, and one might be inclined to infer that *brethern* was the general pronunciation of the word in the district where the school is situated; but correct

spelling in a few cases told against any such inference, and so the only conclusion to be drawn was that the pronunciation of the reader proved superior to the spelling powers of the scholars. If brethren had been pronounced correctly, it would have been spelt correctly. From what has been said it may be gathered that too much attention is given to the mere memorizing of grammar rules, and that this practice is begun too early. In fact, grammar beyond the elements should be made a comparatively late study. At any rate, there is a great deal of English teaching that may be designated by the title dead formulas, so far as its bearing on the activities of life and on sound education is concerned. This is particularly the case with what might be termed the historical side of the language's, as taught in High Schools. It is interesting, of course, to know that such disguised compounds as barn, stirrup, orchard yield a great deal more than meets the eye, if they are only teased apart and examined: that the simples whereof the compounds are made show barn to be a place where barley is stored; stirrup, a rope for ascending; orchard a yard for vegetables,—a vegetable and not a fruit garden. Yet these are really curiosities, not staples. If the organism of English is to be treated historically, it must be done by means of language and not by means of grammar lists of Anglo-Saxon forms. A student who might be able to give the derivation of a classical word with assurance, owing to familiarity with the forms in classical languages, often produces impossibilities or talks nonsense when he is treading on the uncertain ground of Old English. If an examiner should ask in an elementary paper the older form of *I*, he is told that it is *Ich*, showing that the idea, once widely prevalent that English is in some mysterious way or other derived from German, lurks in holes and corners yet; or that *I* has always been *I* because it is a primitive vowel sound! Again, the word *that* is quite correctly stated to be the neuter singular of the definite article *se*—*that*, by the way, is known to be a favorite word with examiners—but the value of the answer is impaired in a moment when the statement is made that *that* was always used as an article in Old English. The time will come when the study of the English language in its higher aspect will be put on a rational footing, and the subject approached from the right end and not from the wrong. The upper forms in some large schools both in Europe and America are being led down to modern English in a scholarly and scientific manner, and in a manner which may be made interesting from first to last. When it began to dawn on the scholastic mind that the English language had a history of more linguistic moment than sporadic references in grammars might imply, I cannot say. One of the first public schools to treat English as a language with an important history was the City of London School. In 1866, the Rev. E. A. Abbott, the head master, introduced the historical study of English into school work, with a range extending back to *Piers the Plowman*.

The derivation of classical words adopted by English is, however, of some value, because the classical words used by science are so numerous and enfold so much.