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## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

On teaching the English Language .....	73	The McGill Normal School— Presentation of Diplomas..	92
Theory and Practice in the School Room.....	80	The Royal Arthur School— Award of Prizes.....	94
The Brotherhood of Teachers. 81		The Montreal High School— Prize list, &c .....	95
The Study of Languages. ....	82	The Model Schools.....	98
Two hours in a Kindergarten. 84		Distribution of Prizes at the Congregation de Notre Dame, Ottawa.....	99
Poetry—A legend of Niagara. 84		Laval Model School—List of Prizes .....	99
Poetry—Ocean Beach on a stormy evening.....	85	Montreal Collegiate School— Prize list.....	100
Prize Stories—Advertisement, 85		Distribution of Diplomas and Prizes at Villa Maria .....	100
Catholic Commercial Academy —Opening Ceremonies..	85	Domestic Arts in Our Schools...101	
Presentation to the Honorable the Minister of Public Instruction .....	83	Convocation at Lennoxville...101	
The Natural History Society— Montreal .....	89	Official Notices.....	102
Natural History Notes from Isle Perrot and St. Anne's. 91		Advertisements .....	103
Annual distribution of Prizes. 91		Meteorology .....	104

Some mysterious cause has hitherto made English grammar a very unsatisfactory affair. Whether the subordination of English to Latin and Greek has diminished the tribute of attention due to the mother tongue; or whether the pre-occupation of the field by Latin, the pre-existence of Latin grammars and Latin rules, and the attempt to study English by these Latin rules, are entirely responsible for our failure, I cannot pretend to say. Failure there certainly is: and of this I may be allowed to give a practical proof. I am in the habit of examining candidates for admission to my school every week. The average age of the boys is about twelve. I took the trouble to register, for about a hundred boys, the answers to this very simple question. "What part of speech is quickly?" Of the hundred, rather less than a half could answer rightly. Of course it is an obvious explanation to say that the teachers of these boys were inefficient. But I happen to know this simple solution would not hold good in all cases: and I am therefore driven to look for another reason. Perhaps the two causes suggested above—I mean the subordination of English to Latin, and the application of Latin rules, fit or unfit, to English sentences—may at all events bear a good deal of the blame. I venture to think, therefore, that at starting we may lay down one law for our teaching—that it shall be independent of Latin.

It is very difficult to assert this independence fully, because our dependence seems so natural. The domination which for three hundred years the Latin language has exercised over the teaching of English has left us so unconsciously and completely servile; we have come to wear our fetters so willingly; and even where they have been shaken off, the bonds and badges of our slavery have left such a cramping influence behind them, that I shall endeavour to concentrate my remarks on this one point, the necessity of claiming our freedom. I will ask you to consider this Lecture as a kind of declaration of independence on the part of our mother tongue, a protest that the English language ought to be recognized as requiring and enjoying laws of its own, independent of any foreign jurisdiction. This independence we assert, not out of any national sentiment, but because it is natural and useful. We want to teach English efficiently, and we

## On Teaching the English Language.

### LECTURE I.

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A KNOWLEDGE of English grammar does not imply a knowledge of English language. There is a good deal to be taught in language besides parts of speech and inflections, or even the analysis of sentences. It is quite possible that our pupils may be able to distinguish any parts of speech and analyse any sentences, and yet be ignorant of the etymological structure and the exact significations of words, of the process by which we arrive at the simplest conclusions, or detect the most obvious errors, and of the formation of the metaphors which form the basis of all language. Probably all good teachers are in the habit of teaching language and thought more or less at the same time. I should certainly endeavour to do this myself. I trust therefore that, if I devote the present lecture almost solely to the consideration of the teaching of English grammar, I shall not be thought to ignore another kind of English teaching, which has, as it seems to me, especial interest. That kind of teaching I hope to discuss in my next Lecture. For the present, let us consider English grammar, and how to teach it.