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SOME ERRORS IN TEXT-BOOKS ON ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

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THE proper scope of the study of English grammar is but vaguely defined in the text-books, and grammarians have not yet come to an agreement as to what should be included and what should be omitted in a treatise on the subject. Most of us remember when grammar was defined to include orthography, etymology, syntax and prosody. But in our authorized school-books nowadays we find no mention of either orthography or prosody, and etymology seems to be treated chiefly in relation to inflection. Virtually, then, it has come to this, that English grammar, as we have it, may be considered as treating of certain functions and relations which words have when used as means of expression, and of certain variations in form which some words take to indicate these functions and relations.

It is the doctrine of some grammarians that formal grammar should be confined to the usual or standard modes of verbal expression. These scholars define grammar as the science of sentences, and when they are called upon to deal with forms of expression which are not sentences, they remodel the expression so as to convert them into sentences and then deal with them as such. Suppose

you ask them to parse the imperative expression, "run!" They first declare that this expression is incomplete for, say they, a sentence must consist of two words, a subject and a verb, of which the verb must agree with the subject. So they add to the expression the word "thou" or "you," which they say is "understood," and then they assert that the verb "run" agrees with its alleged subject.

This is surely a most unscientific mode of procedure. It is not worth while to add a word as subject of "run" for the sake of being able to say that there is now a complete sentence and that there is an agreement of the verb with that subject. For this agreement is, after all, a pure fiction even when the word is supplied. And though the command "run!" as it stands, be not a sentence, that matters not. The resources of the scientific grammarian are surely not so limited that he cannot deal with such an expression. Whether we call it a sentence or not, the expression is a good one. If, then, it does not fit our grammars let us fit our grammars to it.

Suppose at the outset we distinguish between things and names and we shall see that in giving the command "run!" the speaker is thinking not of