

a word in the hopper of his parsing machine, and grind out the empty phraseology; "Common noun, neuter gender, third person, plural number, and objective case to of," while his thoughts are on his sport, or on something equally removed from the subject under consideration. Yet, under the present system of teaching, the main thing which the pupil is required to do is to learn *verbatim et literatim et punctuatim*, page after page of rules, principles, and definitions, of the meaning and use of which he knows no more than a Hottentot does of higher mathematics.

But this is all wrong. Every definition should be fully explained to the pupil. We should never accept a verbal definition, however fluently given, without satisfying ourselves that the pupils know what it means. If we do, we shall find them all terribly deficient in true knowledge.

Prof. Russell thus gives a good example of the effect of the old system of teaching grammar: A boy who had studied grammar a long time got tired of it, and did not wish to go over the definitions again. To test him, the new teacher asked, "Do you think you understand all that you have studied?" "O yes, sir, I know it all." "Well, here is the definition of an indefinite article; what is that?" "A or an is styled an indefinite article, and is used in a vague sense; in other respects indeterminate." (Thus he learned word for word from his grammar.) "Do you understand that fully?" "O yes, sir." "Will you tell me what 'styled' means?" "Why, it means something sort of grand-stylish." "What does 'article' mean?" "It means—why it means anything which we see." "What does 'vague' mean?" "I do not know, sir." "Well, what does 'indeterminate' mean?" "Being very determined about it, sir."

A boy so trained would take the old definition of a noun as "the name of any person, place, or thing that can be known or mentioned, as George, York, apple, man;" and to him the idea of a noun, thus conveyed, would be George-York-apple-man, but without his having the slightest conception of who George-York-apple-man was.

And yet this lad, like many others, had "been through grammar," and thought he understood it so well that it would be derogatory to his character as scholar to learn the principles again.

When a child should begin this study, depends very much on how he is to begin it. If he is to be taught in the old way, the longer it is delayed the better for him; and if by any mistake he neglects it entirely he has, according to the saying, "escaped a terrible mercy." But, if properly taught, there is no reason why it may not be made as profitable and interesting to the young mind as any branch of study which the pupil can take. Even if we teach by the synthetic method, building up a sentence from its elements, beginning with the simpler and more common first, as, a noun is a name—as a horse, for instance—and the word used to describe the noun, an adjective or descriptor, as, a good horse; then, the good horse runs, thus introducing a verb to denote an action; then the adverb, to show how the act is performed, as, a good horse runs swiftly; thus introducing but one element at a time, giving copious illustrations of each, and requiring numerous examples of each from the pupils, there is no good reason why the young may not take up this study with pleasure and profit.

But especially if it is taken up analytically, allowing the *pupil* to dissect the sentence, the teacher, meantime, showing him the necessity of naming these parts to distinguish them from each other, and the use of the diagram to hold the parts thus sought out and named, the very novelty of the thing will beget in him a lively interest, far different from the general feeling of beginners toward grammar.

Let the teacher aim, at all times, to select such sentences for analysis as will create an interest in the class, often taking those which will produce merriment, or which are even ludicrous in themselves, to prevent the class from falling into that listlessness which is so detrimental to their progress.

The following hints, then, on the way by which the early study of grammar may be made both profitable and interesting, may be stated:

First. Do not plunge the pupil at first, à la Brown or somebody else, into a maze of rules for writing, rules for spelling, rules for punctuation, rules for the use of capitals, and rules for everything. If they must be learned at this time, do it yourself some night, after the fatigue of a hard day's teaching, but let the little scholar go free for a time.

Second. While you require correct definitions from the pupil, be sure to make them intelligible to his mind.

Third. Give abundant practice both in true and false syntax.

Let grammar be thus taught by a live teacher, and it will soon

cease to be the dread of the pupils, the trouble of the teacher, the "*pons asinorum*" of authors and publishers, and the fifth wheel of the scholastic coach in the minds of the public.—*J. R. Richards, in N. Y. Teacher.*

School days of Eminent Men in Great-Britain.

By JOHN TIMBS, F. S. A.

(Continued from our last.)

CLXII.

CHARLES LAMB AT CHRIST'S HOSPITAL.

This amiable poet and essayist, whose writings, serious and humorous, alike point to some healthy and benevolent moral, was born in the Inner Temple, in 1775. At the age of seven, he was received into the school of Christ's Hospital, and there remained till he had entered his fifteenth year. "Small of stature, delicate of frame, and constitutionally nervous and timid," says his biographer, Judge Talfourd, "he would seem unfitted to encounter the discipline of a school formed to restrain some hundreds of lads in the heart of the metropolis, or to fight his way among them. But the sweetness of his disposition won him favour from all; and although the antique peculiarities of the school tinged his opening imagination, they did not sadden his childhood."

"Lamb," says his schoolfellow Le Grice, "was an amiable, gentle boy, very sensible and keenly observing, indulged by his schoolfellows and his master on account of his infirmity of speech. His countenance was mild; his complexion clear brown, with an expression which might lead you to think he was of Jewish descent. His eyes were not each of the same colour: one was hazel, the other had specks of grey in the iris, mingled as we see red spots in the blood-stone. His step was plantigrade, which made his walk slow and peculiar, adding to the staid appearance of his figure."

He was unfitted for joining in any boisterous sport: while others were all fire and play, he stole along with all the self-concentration of a young monk. He passed from cloister to cloister—from the school to the Temple; and here in the gardens, on the terrace, or at the fountain, was his home and recreation. Here he had access to the library of Mr. Salt, one of the Benchers; and thus, to use Lamb's own words, he was "tumbled in a spacious closet of good old English reading, where he browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage."

When Lamb quitted school, he was "in Greek, but not Deputy Grecian." He had read Virgil, Sallust, Terence, selections from Lucian's Dialogues, and Xenophon; and evinced considerable skill in the niceties of Latin composition, both in prose and verse. But the impediment in his speech proved an insuperable obstacle to his striving for an exhibition, which was given under the condition of entering the church, for which he was unfitted by nature: to this apparently hard lot he submitted with cheerfulness. Towards the close of 1789, he quitted Christ's Hospital: thenceforth his employment lay in the South-Sea House, and in the accountant's office of the East India Company.

Lamb has left us many charming pictures of his school-days, and schoolfellows, which must have been as delightful to him as the accounts of them are to the reader. In his "Christ's Hospital Five-and-thirty Years Ago," he says:

"We had plenty of exercise after school hours, and, for myself, I must confess, that I was never happier than in them. The Upper and the Lower Grammar Schools were held in the same room; and an imaginary line only divided their bounds. Their character was as different as that of the inhabitants on the two sides of the Pyrenees. The Rev. James Boyer was the Upper-Master, but the Rev. Matthew Field presided over that portion of the apartment of which I had the good fortune to be a member. We lived a life as careless as birds. We talked and did just what we pleased, and nobody molested us. We carried an accidence, or a Grammar, for form; but, for any trouble it gave us, we might take two years in getting through the verbs deponent, and another two in forgetting all that we had learned about them. There was now and then the formality of saying a lesson, but if you had not learned it, a brush across the shoulders (just enough to disturb a fly) was the sole remonstrance. Field never used the rod; and, in truth, he wielded the cane with no great good will—holding it 'like a dancer.'... We had classics of our own, without being beholden to 'insolent Greece or haughty Rome,' that passed current amongst us—Peter Wilkins—the Adventures of the Hon. Captain Robert Boyle—the Fortunate Blue Coat Boy—and the like. Or we cultivated a turn for mechanic and scientific operations, making little