

SOMETHING ABOUT GRAMMAR.

To preface the something which we wish to say about grammar, we are going to tell a true story. If we were writing blank verse we would call it "an ower true tale," but since we are only editing plain prose we will call it a very true story, or, a too-too true story, if you prefer the æsthetic phraseology.

To begin: There was once a boy whom, for convenience' sake, we will call John Smith. This boy had a teacher, whom, also for convenience, we will call Miss Jones. Now, John was not one of Miss Jones' brightest pupils, neither was he one of the dull-est. He was not particularly fond of study; still, under the stern pressure of necessity, or a strong reason of any kind, he would apply himself diligently and well. He himself was always desirous of excusing any remissness on his part in school work, by referring to his pronounced utilitarian principles. "There's no use in learning that," he would say. But if he could be made to see the use to which any branch of knowledge could be put by him, he would apply himself to it with an ardour which was most encouraging.

Now, Miss Jones, one fine day, decided that it was time for the class in which John Smith was, to begin the study of grammar. We will exonerate Miss Jones from part of the responsibility for this folly of thrusting a class of lads headforemost into an abstruse and difficult study for which they had had no preparation; it was the decision of the School Board, and the Board had but adopted a graded outline whose wooden proportions had been chiselled out by a so-called magnate, assisted by a school-book agent; the pair astutely imagining that to make the plan of study resemble their own heads as nearly as possible would be the very crowning glory of success.

John Smith and his companions felt, but did not understand, what a brilliant move was accomplished, when the somersault from mental arithmetic landed them, without injury to life or limb, in the midst of the study of grammar. The boys undertook the work with expressions of disgust that augured ill for their good scholarship in it. Miss Jones was undaunted, however; she had taught boys grammar before. The work was not pleasant, she acknowledged; it was too much like giving them castor-oil or rhubarb. But she had done both, and she knew that if she could get the boy's mouth open she could empty the medicine into it, and blow it down his throat, if necessary. So, if she could get his mental receptacle opened, she could pour in the grammar lesson, and by some means worry it down. But when she came to a boy who would not open his mouth, then, indeed she was nonplussed.

John Smith proved to be one of the troublesome ones. He had objected to undertaking the study to begin with, and he only took his place in the class under protest. He sat with black and lowering brow all through the first recitation, while Miss Jones explained—with as much vivacity as she could get up on so dry a subject—the different names and offices of the parts of speech. It is possible that had some preliminary language lessons prefaced this sudden plunge into the chilly waters of grammar—some lessons showing the boys that the aim and use of the study were to give them an intelligent mastery of their own tongue rather than to store their minds with a list of (to them) useless, meaningless definitions and rules, the objections of our hero might have been forestalled, and his dark countenance would not now have warned Miss Jones of an impending battle.

On the second day the battle began. John Smith, when the grammar