

them in such sense, and when they fix a wheel immovably, they will say they have fixed it; but when they mend or repair the same wheel, they will find no inconvenience in using one of the latter terms as equally apt and less ambiguous. And so also when they make a guess at some fact beyond their certain knowledge they will say so; but when they speak of what they actually do know, they will state it as a fact, and not guess about it.

An amusing illustration of the manner in which such misuse of words can obscure the sense of their true meaning even in the minds of educated men, is furnished by a critical comment in the "Shakespear's Scholar," of Richard Grant White, A. M., (1) on the following passage in "Richard III." Act IV, Scene IV:—

STANLEY. Richmond is on the seas.
K. RICHARD. There let him sink—and be the seas on him.
White livered runnagate;—what doth he there?
STANLEY. I know not, mighty sovereign, but by guess.
K. RICHARD. Well, as you guess?

A better illustration of the correct use of the word could no where be found. Stanley says he does not know, he only guesses; and the king replies; well tell me what your guess or suspicion is. But hear the American critic:—"If there be two words for the use of which, more than any others, our English cousins twist us, they are 'well,' as an interrogative exclamation, and 'guess.' Milton uses both, as Shakespear also frequently does, and exactly in the way in which they are used in America; and here we have them both in half a line. Like most of those words and phrases which it pleases John Bull to call Americanisms, they are English of the purest and best, which have lived here while they have died out in the mother country." To such "*English of the purest and best!*" are we fast hastening, if some check is not put on the present tendencies of our colloquial speech, and the style adopted in our periodical literature.

It may be assumed that enough has now been said to shew the truth of the complaint with which this paper began. How then is the evil to be remedied? One or two suggestions occur to me which may not seem unworthy of some attention, as means calculated to check in some degree this growing evil. The first is that, educated men in private stations should carefully guard against the errors indicated, and others germane to them, and use their influence to check them when introduced. The second is, that our common school teachers should not only do likewise, but should correct the children under their care, whenever they utter slang or corrupt English, not only in the school, but in the play-ground, and on the streets; and the third is that, our newspaper and other writers should abstain from the attempt to add new force to the English tongue by improving the language of Shakespear, Bacon, Dryden, and Addison. It is true that these are antiquated names; and it may be that some among us rather know them by the hearing of the ear than the sight of their works; still, weak though it may seem, and—to cull once more, for the sake of illustration, one of the choicest phrases of Canadian letters,—"old foggyish" though it may appear, I cannot get rid of the impression, that those men understood English fully as well as any American or Canadian author, and that, though they never wrote slang, no one either on this side of the Atlantic, or on the other, has written, or is likely to write, either with augmented force, or greater clearness.—*Canadian Journal of Science.*

Grammar.

I.

Sometimes we are asked (and the enquiry is an interesting one) at what age children may be taught grammar. All such inquiries depend upon two other questions. First,—What particular faculties of the mind does the subject appeal to? Secondly,—At what age of the child do those faculties begin to develop themselves? The faculty of *observation* is the earliest in the order of development, and such subjects of instruction as excite and direct the power of observation should be the first to which the attention of children should be introduced. On this account, *object lessons on natural history* may be given to infants even before the power of reading is attained. On this account also *geography* should be taught before *arithmetic* and *grammar*. To limit our observations to grammar, it should be borne in mind that it has not to do with the perceptive or observing powers so much as with the faculties of *abstraction, classification, and induction*. It is important,

* Shakespear's Scholar; being historical and critical studies of his text, characters and commentators, &c. By R. G. White, A. M. Appleton & Co., New York, 1854.

therefore, to ascertain at what periods of child-life these faculties are beginning to be developed. Of course it is possible to override the question of mental science altogether, and to make lessons of grammar—what they too often are—lessons of mere memory, the understanding being left uncultivated and unfruitful. And, again, although grammar, for the right comprehension of its principles, requires the exercise of faculties higher in the order of development than perception, and so should be taught later than geography or natural history; yet there are portions of it that do not require these faculties, or at least may be simplified by a skillful use of the power of observation, and so be brought down to the level of younger children. To make our meaning clear, we may give very young children a clear notion of a *noun* by bidding them look about them for objects which they can see around them; and as clear a notion of an *adjective* may be mastered by pointing out the properties of that object. For example, the teacher takes a flower, which the child has named as an object he can see. The word *flower* is a *noun*. It is *white, beautiful, fair*, or whatever other properties the class may observe; for the co-operation of the whole class should be expected, and their attention by this means secured. *White, beautiful, fair are adjectives.*

There are other particulars which the teacher should observe if he would make the subject of grammar intelligible to young children:—

1.—He should employ oral teaching before employing textbooks. By this means he can not only dispose of difficulties which are foreseen, by simple and familiar illustrations, but also deal with others as they arise, and which books cannot anticipate.

2.—He should keep back every rule until its necessity has first been felt.

3.—He should allow no rule to be committed to the memory until it has first passed through the understanding.

4.—He should use familiar metaphors where there is a difficulty in comprehending the definition of the harder parts of speech. Conjunctions may be called *hooks*: propositions are *pointers* or *finger-posts*.

5.—Rules and definitions should be first given which are general; the rules without the exceptions, and the definitions without the inflexions. The great, broad, roads of the district are to be traversed, and the by-paths left at present for after and closer investigation. The larger and more prominent features of the edifice are to be made familiar to the mind, rather than each individual stone of which the edifice is composed.

Questions to which the above remarks supply material for answers:—What particular faculties of the child does the subject of grammar appeal to? Upon what previous question depends the question as to the order in which school subjects should be taken? By what method may Grammar be brought down to the level of younger children? Give examples of their method. What advantages does oral teaching possess over teaching by books? Enumerate some general rule which should be observed in early lessons on Grammar.—*Papers for the Schoolmaster.*

NOTES OF A L. TISON IN NATURAL HISTORY.

Children between the ages of 7 and 9.

THE GOAT.

METHOD.

As I was passing down a lane, not far from this school, the other day, I saw something lying in the road that I first thought was a dog. Well I walked towards this thing that was lying in the road, and when I came near it it got up and walked towards me, and then I saw that it had horns, and then I knew that it was not a dog, for dogs do not have horns. So I looked at it, and saw that it was not quite so big as a sheep, that it had two horns curling backwards, and underneath its chin there was some hair like a beard; and then I said "this is a goat."

If the children did not give it now, I should refer to some more characteristics: its fearlessness, liveliness, &c.

On commencing the lessons, I should question on the facts already mentioned, viz.—its beard, horns, &c.

Where shall we find the goat? In the lane.

Yes! but all goats do not live in the lanes.

Then where shall we find them? No Ans.

If we go into the green fields, what animals do we find most of?—Sheep. Now what do we get from the sheep?—Meat. Yes! and we get meat also from the goat.

Why then do we see so many sheep and so few goats?—No Ans.

If I were to put some bread and some potatoes before you when you