

more memorable by a reference to being born under the planet Saturn, and may be associated with jovial, mercurial, disaster, etc. But there is great danger, in this matter of derivation, of our trying to teach the unknown by the still more unknown: and of our playing the pedant by affecting knowledge which we either do not possess, or which is not wanted now. Words have a way of outgrowing their original meaning, as children do their frocks; and what we want in literature-teaching is not how a word came by the meaning it has now, but what the meaning actually is now and in the passage in question. In such a case the derivation is oftenest a hindrance rather than a help to the learner. The teacher should always think whether the added information will render the meaning now wanted more striking, more memorable. If so, give it; if not, refrain. Often, a word, somewhat unusual, may be made clear by grouping it with its near relatives, if these are in common use. So the verb "to ban" may be made clearer and easier to remember by associating it with abandon, banish, banish, bandit. By comparison we may form a general idea of the meaning common to them all. But oftenest our difficulties arise with words which have one very common meaning, and another not so common. For instance, children must often be puzzled, as I once was, how Gray's flower could "waste its sweetness on the desert air"—desert called up in my mind the picture of a vast extent of barren sand, not exactly a place where flowers would grow. But in Pope we find "roses that in deserts bloom and die"; Drayton makes a youth feed his flock "upon a desert near at hand that lay"; while, again, in "As You Like It," the Forest of Arden is frequently spoken of as a desert. Put these passages and other

like ones together, and compare them, and the meaning will soon show itself in a very striking way—that desert properly means an unpeopled solitary place, and has nothing necessarily to do with sand. You may clinch the result by introducing deserteer, desertion and to desert. So we may arrive at the meaning of all in

"A! in the wild March morning I heard the angels call,"

by comparing its use here with its use in Gay's

"A damsel lay deploring,
All on a rock reclined,"

his

"All in the downs the fleet was moored,"
and Coleridge's

"All in a hot and copper sky."

Our difficulties with phrases are of a somewhat different nature. They arise from our jumping to the conclusion that because we know the meaning of every word in a phrase, therefore we know the meaning of the phrase as a whole—at least, we take this for granted in the cases of our pupils. Because we know the meaning of "flattered" and "tears," it does not follow that we, or at any rate that our pupils, fully understand Keats when, in speaking of the Beadsman, he says that "music's golden tongue flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor." So again we must not take for granted that our pupils will understand Keats' "Sad spaces of oblivion," his vintage that "tastes of sunburnt mirth"; Gray's "the boast of heraldry," or Tennyson's "a streamer of the northern morn," and his "the full-faced presence of the gods," and the like. We understand "music" and "humanity." Will anyone tell me offhand what Wordsworth means by "the music of humanity" in the passage I quoted earlier in my paper? But this brings me into the domain of metaphors, of which I must now speak.