

which they cannot hope to understand, but never to hope to understand a thing which they have not learnt to know.

In a Greek text-book, which is learnt by most English school-boys, there occurs, as the introduction to an elaborate system of tense-forming, the following statement,—“*Præsens medium et passivum formatur a præsentis activo mutando o in omai, ut *tupto, tuptomai.*” This rule is supposed to be learnt by young boys in order that they may the better understand the Greek language. Now, in the first place, the statement is, as so many other rules of the same kind, absolutely false. The present passive was never yet formed from a verb in *o*. The comparatively simple form in *omai* was in existence long before the contracted termination of the active. But, a grammarian may say, the pupil who has the active before him will now be able to form the passive for himself. Did any pupil ever do so since the world began? Why, he has just been learning the inflexion of *tuptomai* in his very last lesson. As a matter of fact, school-boys know very well that, when they want to think of a rule for the formation of a tense, they have to thin' first what the word is, and then what is the best way to get it. Their instinct reverses the illogical order which the grammar has tried to force upon them. Monstrous as these arbitrary rules are, they are but a sample of the substance of which grammars are generally full; and they are expressed in a language which the boys, however much they may translate it, can never at the period understand and make their own. It has sometimes occurred to us to fancy—but that the thing can hardly be fancied—a teacher of some other department of study attempting to succeed by the same means as those which we have described. We will suppose that a professor of Chemistry is beginning work with his class. Proceeding upon the classical principle, he will first commit the whole of his knowledge to a volume, which he will draw up in a dry and technical style, and if possible, in a dead language. Of this, he will ask his class to learn a certain portion every day, and to believe the time may come when they may want it. He will perform a few experiments, every detail of which he will refer to their position in the book. He will urge as carefully as he can that the phosphorus takes fire, not because chemical force is set at liberty, but because the book says that it shall. He will introduce into his book-lessons the rarest metals and the most elaborate combinations, not because the pupils will commonly use them in the laboratory, but because his system is not complete without them. And when he finds that his disciples hate their work, and, in practice, hardly know an acid from a base, he will believe that the fault lies not in his mode of teaching, but in the unfortunate incompleteness of his book.*

Waste of time and waste of energy generally go together. The perpetual routine of text-books wearies, distresses, dissipates. That one method of study is more pleasant than another is no small argument in its favour, if this pleasure mainly consists in a rapid process of the intellect. Lexicons, by what we have said, are to beginners almost as noxious as grammars. Every one who knows Greek in the end, must remember well how dreary have been the hours which he has spent upon the simply mechanical exercise of turning over leaves, with his eye fixed upon the heading of the page. It is monotonous, it is unintellectual, it is distasteful in the highest degree; and there is not a public schoolmaster in the kingdom who has the courage and the benevolence to dispense with it. Lexicons must no doubt exist, for they are needed in many ways; but there is no worse way of discovering the English equivalent of a simple word than looking it out in a dictionary. It is better to have a glossary; it is better to ask a teacher; it is better even to have a literal translation: better, simply because these methods do not waste the time of the learner, and do not spoil his temper. In his first book of Homer, an average boy will look out somewhere between two and three thousand words in his lexicon, and spend, on a moderate computation, from forty to fifty hours in the search. Grievous, however, as his waste of time in this direction is, it is work of the fingers alone, the lessons of Grammar that he learns will torture his brains as much, and will not even give

the satisfaction of feeling in the end that he has gained his grain of knowledge. He will have done something, it is true; he will not have been idle, he will have done as hard work as people do who turn a treadmill. The use of Grammar has been defended on the score that it, after all, does give something for dull boys to do. The argument is perfectly clear. It is upheld as being, after all, an excellent substitute for education.

Hitherto we have considered Grammar as a help to the knowledge of Greek and Latin, and from the idea of Grammar we exclude a few simple paradigms, and all kind of oral explanation. We assert that systematic Grammar, complete, technical, printed in a book, for the purpose of learning the dead languages, is more an encumbrance than a help. The value of Grammar itself, we have not for a moment denied.

But it is as an end, not as a means, that it is valuable. When once a language has been mastered, there are few uses to which the knowledge can be more appropriately turned, than that of obtaining some insight into its organism. One student may care chiefly to investigate the history of its inflexions and the architecture of its words, another may find more interest in analysing their mutual connexion. Both paths of study are worth pursuing for their own sake, and some steps may be made towards both, even while the language itself is being learnt. Only let it be accepted as a cardinal law of education, that before it can do any profitable work, the mind must have material to work upon. The study of Logic presents a close parallel to the study of Grammar. It would be possible to conceive a boy taught to argue from first principles. If, by enormous labour, he could instil into his mind the various rules of Aldrich, and regard them as a code of laws which he was bound to obey whenever a sequence of propositions presented itself to his mind, it is conceivable that he might produce the requisite conclusion from the premises before him, though he had never conducted an argument in his life. Supposing that a system of this kind existed at our English schools, it is more than likely that a great deal would be urged in its favour. It is necessary, it would be said, to imbue the mind with true and proper rules, in order that it may be prepared to use them when the time comes. To argue, we should be told, is nothing, unless one argues from a comprehension of the rules of argument. The defenders of this system would be no more driven from their position by the fact that many people are logical without having been to Oxford, than the Grammar writers of the present day are confounded by the circumstance that Euripides wrote excellent Greek without having ever heard of an optative mood.

Putting aside that part of Grammar which depends on memory, the rest is simply a logical training. It would be hard to find a better practising-ground than Grammar for the logical studies of manhood or even of adolescence, simply because it is so copious and ready to hand. Once given that the subject can be fairly grasped, and it is one which repays a liberal expenditure of time. But it is curious that it should be regarded at schools as the only vehicle through which logical ideas should be instilled. Not till after many years of Latin and Greek does a boy really come face to face with the thoughts which the grammars put before him; while considerations about all men being animals, but all animals not being men, are so simple that boys of fifteen might well sit down to attack them. “The dative,” say the grammars, “is the case of the remoter object.” Nothing could be simpler to the understanding of any of us who write or who read this volume. We have a clear, an educated comprehension of the remoter object; the notion is something more to us than a mere form of words. But an average boy does not, will not, cannot actually get at it. He can be taught to know a remoter object when he sees it in print; he will say to himself that it is a kind of thing which won't do for an accusative, and yet comes in and seems to make sense. He knows it as it were on the outside; he knows it as he knows a word that is put in italics. Give him time, make him familiar with dative constructions, let his mind get strength and flexibility; and these grammatical conceptions will come to have a meaning to him; but tell him