

of the mention of this as a great and crowning end; and of its being frequently accepted in that character. But to the consistent and conscientious dissenter, there is no basis for reply.

Nevertheless, it will be conceded, that this is *one* end of a leading kind; and, consequently, a course of instruction that does not point to it in a very considerable degree is insufficient as a system of English teaching. Even on this qualified assumption, the following remarks will perhaps not be devoid of force.

First, then, as to ENGLISH GRAMMAR. All will admit that one use of English grammar is correct composition. To say the least, grammar is the means of making us more steady and consistent in our adherence to the conventions and idioms of the language, than the generality of us would be, if we had no grammatical training. It goes a little further, and considers the quality of clearness or perspicuity; but the full attention to that and to other merits comes under the higher departments called composition, rhetoric or the laws of style.

Now, as regards grammar, there are two questions open to debate. The one relates to grammar considered as an intellectual discipline in a wider sense than the discipline in composition—a scientific or logical discipline. The second is, how early should grammar begin to be taught?

The first is the greater question. The assertion is constantly repeated that grammar is a discipline in accurate reasoning, having a distinct value on that score. Indeed, more stress is frequently laid upon this function, than upon the subservience to correctness in the conventions of the language. The supposed intellectual training of grammar is tendered as the most powerful reason for studying Latin, in which hardly any one has ever any occasion to compose, and few even to read. Yet, whether as regards English, or as regards Latin, Greek, or any other language, I hold that the allegation as to mental discipline is subject to very great qualifications.

I can see two ways that the discipline of grammar may be supposed to operate. For one thing, there is, in all composition, a necessity for fulfilling a certain number of conditions, indicated to some extent by general rules, which rules must be understood and correctly applied. You cannot write a good sentence, conveying a meaning, without attending to a variety of considerations; and, therefore, you must exert a certain amount of intelligent effort. In learning a foreign language, by grammar and dictionary, one is still more completely thrown upon the understanding and the applying of rules.

Now, this may be fairly called an intellectual exercise. But is it an exercise peculiar to grammar, or to language, to English, to Latin, or to Greek? Is it not rather the very thing demanded in every art and profession above the commonest manual labor? A clerk in a counting-house has a great many conditions to observe—rules to interpret and comply with. A lawyer writing a business letter, or drawing up a deed, has a still larger number of considerations to bring together with understanding. There is no profession that we can be engaged in, without undergoing such a discipline; and, in most, it is far more stringent than in grammar. This, therefore, is a discipline that will never be wanting to any one educated for a business of the smallest importance. The mistress of a household has abundant scope for the intelligent combining of means to ends, and for the application of rules to cases.

The point to be insisted on, then, is, that no study is justified merely by the circumstance that it contains a field for understanding and applying rules. We can cultivate this avocation in so many ways, that we are never driven to seek it on grounds in other respects barren. It adds nothing to the recommendation of grammatical studies; if these have no specific utility in regard to composition by pen or by mouth, they have no utility at all. As to the habit of overcoming difficulties, we need never make difficulties on purpose; we can always find some work fruitful in itself, as well as calculated to inure us to patient and intelligent combinations.

Besides, it does not follow that, because we have gone through

a certain training in one line, we shall transfer that training to other and different things. We may, or we may not. The only sure discipline is a discipline in the very subject on which we are to be occupied. A clerk is trained, not by grammar, but by accounts. A medical man is trained not by the Greek verb, but at the hospital.

The other way that grammatical study may be supposed to operate as a mental discipline, apart from its immediate purpose, is in exemplifying the processes of scientific reasoning—such as classifying, defining, generalizing, induction, and so on. Now, this granted, the foregoing remarks are still to the point; there are so many fruitful studies, so many useful branches of knowledge, more or less perfectly cast in the scientific mould, that we can always couple utility and discipline in the same exercise. We need never seek for examples of scientific method in an intrinsically unprofitable region; the valuable forms of science may be found in conjunction with valuable matter. There exist fruitful studies of every grade of difficulty for exemplifying all the reasoning processes; it is enough to instance mathematics, the wide compass of natural history, and the versatile studies comprised under natural philosophy.

But I do not concur in the assertion that grammar is a good model of scientific method. I find that its definitions have long been bad, and are only now in the course of being slowly amended; its inductions are still defective; the rules are often wanting both in accuracy and in perspicuity, while the qualifications and exceptions are insufficiently worked out. Even in that future day, when the subject shall attain its perfection, as to scientific form, it will be very unsuitable for initiating beginners in scientific method. Any science that thoroughly encompasses the vast structure of a cultivated language, accommodating itself to all the caprices of usage, as well as bodying forth the deep and subtle relationships, will not be an elementary science. If grammar is easy and elementary now, the result is gained by superficiality, by evading all serious difficulties, by leaving unexplained the very things most in want of explanation.

The truth is, that a certain amount of this ground is covered by the rules of grammar, and all the rest is left to be gathered in detail, like our English spelling. Between the two, a pupil may be tolerably educated in the languages, but he will not have seen any thing that can be called good science. Nor could the very best teacher accommodate the subject to scientific or logical discipline for beginners. The utmost that can be gained by grammatical training—the *forms* of classifying, defining, induction, and deduction—will not start forth from the *matter* of language in that clearness of manifestation that would make them easy to apply to other matter—to law, to medicine, or to theology. (1)

(1) Extraordinary eulogiums are occasionally passed on the power of grammar-rules to impress scientific or logical method. The pupil, it is said, has a rule set before him, with a certain number of examples, and he has to stretch the application to new cases, which is the substance of all scientific deduction. Thus, take the rule, or rules, for the formation of the plural. There is (1) the general rule (adding *s* to the singular); then (2) certain exceptional rules; and, finally, (3) a number of irregularities to be learned piecemeal. This instance typifies a large part of grammar. But how many pupils, we may ask, conceive this process in its scientific character or method? Most teachers would probably answer, none at all. The comprehending of such a scheme belongs essentially to the post-grammatical age, and is not aided by the examples furnished in grammar. The ordinary pupil does not even remember the rules themselves in after-life; our knowledge of the greater part of the grammatical proprieties is against our individual instances. We write "babies," not so much from the instigation of the rule learned at school, as from having repeatedly seen the form in the word itself, and in the close analogies, "ladies," etc.

A logical discipline, to be successful, must be worked like every other discipline; it must begin with simple forms, and proceed by degrees to the complex. Easy classifications and definitions, in the first instance, succeeded by more and more difficult; and inductions, on the same plan; deductions, on the same plan; deductions, first, for perfect rules, and, next, for rules liable to qualifying rules and exceptions—would be a scheme of logical discipline, such as a young pupil might follow. But