

see why they should not be able to eliminate for themselves in the same way. To prevent mere conjectures, mere blind rushes at the meaning, I would insist that each definition should be accompanied by a sentence made by the boy, or quoted from some author, exemplifying the use of the word in accordance with his definition.

At the end of this process of elimination would come, in cases where boys studied Latin, the confirmation of the derivative process, which, in the particular word above, *oppress*, would show that the word once meant "to come suddenly on and crush," or else to "crush up," whereas now it means merely "to crush" or "keep down," without any sense of motion or completeness. The same double process of elimination and derivation might be applied to other words, some of which are sadly and unnecessarily ill-used—such as *circumstance* and *individual*. Custom would tell a boy, perhaps, that he could not say, "The assassination of Cæsar was an important *circumstance*," but that he could say, "The assassination of Cæsar was one of the most important *circumstances* that influenced the life of Octavianus." And the inference from this elimination would be confirmed by the derivation, which would of itself indicate, not any occurrence, but an occurrence considered in relation to some person or thing as a centre. And so of *individual*.

To give one word as an explanation for another, I need scarcely say to teachers, the common method of definition adopted by English boys. If you ask what "precious" means, you may expect the answer "nice"; and in the same way, "original," or "versatile," or "thoughtful," would all be explained by "clever." Against this boyish tendency we must take careful precautions. First, we can point out how absurd it is to suppose that two words can mean precisely the same thing, or, at all events, can be used in precisely the same way. For if it were so, there would be a waste of words which we have no right to impute to our ancestors. Unfortunately the English language, more than any other, is calculated to encourage this boyish delusion that one word can be represented and defined by another. The quality of English, has given rise to a few pairs of words which are so nearly similar that we can only distinguish them by saying that the one is more colloquial than the other, or that the idiomatic use of the two is not quite the same. The meaning of the two words is sometimes indistinguishable. Thus *commence* is somewhat less colloquial than *begin*, and *commence* seldom or never takes an infinitive after it, while *begin* does; but as regards meaning it would be difficult to distinguish the two words.

Against the possible misunderstanding arising from these very few exceptional synonyms, we ought to fortify our pupils by warning them that they are emphatically exceptions, and that it is next to impossible that in any language any two words should be precisely synonymous. Some additional help might be given by a careful explanation of the meaning of definition or "drawing of boundaries." After pointing out that more than one word is absolutely necessary for the definition of another word, we may illustrate the defining process by a diagram on the black board. Take the definition of a lion: A lion is a quadruped; but the class of quadrupeds, which may be represented by a parallelogram, is too large, and must be narrowed; a lion is a quadruped with a mane; the diminishes the parallelogram, but it includes lions and horses: a lion has claws, which a horse has not, and thus, by gradually taking slices from our parallelogram, we narrow it down, or *define* it, till we have nothing left but the slice representing lions.

Or again, any two straight lines that are not parallel will mark out a point by their intersection. Suppose we

want to define *resentment*. Resentment is a kind of anger. Now feelings may be excited by different motives. Anger, for instance, may be prompted by the sense of inconvenience, or by injured pride, or by jealousy, or a sense of injustice done to one-self, or by a simple sense of injustice without any thought of one-self. Draw a straight line, then, not parallel to the first, representing the feelings that spring from the sense of injustice. That line does not define *resentment*, for it includes many other feelings, as sorrow, pity. But let this line be produced till it intersect the first. The intersection will define at once the kind of anger, and also the kind of feeling excited by injustice, and will denote *resentment*.

It will be necessary to warn boys not to select, for their defining classes, a class that does not explain any important peculiarity of the object we are endeavouring to define. We may remind them that man was once defined as a biped without feathers. The definition was at once ridiculed by the exhibition of a plucked cock, and has since been rendered untenable by our familiarity with monkeys.

I attach great importance to the exercise of defining words, and have been for some time in the habit of making it a regular part of the preparation of an English lesson. I should not restrict myself to the words that happened to be in the passage that was to be prepared for the next lesson. There are some important words in common use of which it may be said that the majority of our pupils use them and misunderstand them; and there are others which our pupils would be the better for using, but never use at all, because they do not understand them. These last are not misunderstood, for no conception whatever has been formed of their meaning. Among the former class are the words mentioned above, *circumstance* and *individual*, and others of which the misuse is far serious, such as *resentment*. Some words are notoriously used in double senses, which require careful distinction, such as *nature*, *representative*. It has always seemed to me, therefore, a valuable part of an English lesson that boys should explain the differences between a certain number of pairs, or groups, of such words as *power* and *authority*, *definition* and *description*, *thoughtful* and *prudent*; *fault*, *crime*, *sin*, *vice*, and *immorality*; *clever*, *original*, and *able*; *anger*, *veiation*, *resentment*, *wrath*, and *annoyance*. No answer should be received which does not clearly delineate the common thread of meaning which pervades each pair or group of words. In this way we shall ascertain that the answer is not mere string of excerpts from a dictionary. But there is another class of words which few ordinary men use in the course of their whole lives. Some of these are technical words imported from various sciences, and now used in a metaphorical sense. Thus politicians speak of "the unstable equilibrium of power," "the leverage of past success," "the resultant of many political forces;" and other scientific terms have been utilized in the same way. I do not so much speak of these, though I consider a lesson on such terms would be of value, as of others, to be destitute of which is to be in danger of being destitute of the corresponding conception—*imaginative*, *conventional*, *intellectual*, *vindictiveness*, *esoteric*, *electic*, *analogy*, *synthesis*, *analysis*, *hypothesis*, *pedantry*, *disinterestedness*, *impassioned*, *indiscriminate*, *phenomena*, *induction*, *syillogistic*, *sensation*.

Doubtless there is great exaggeration in the statements that have been made about the limited vocabulary of a ploughboy; and I should be sorry to originate any similar exaggerations about the classes of schoolboys. But I think we should be startled at finding how very small a store of words relating to things that are not the immediate objects of our senses, is found sufficient not only for an English schoolboy, but even for an ordinary English