

By some such method as this, I believe the reading of the District Schools would be materially benefitted.

I remain, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

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FRANK M. WEBB.

SIR,—I have been somewhat tardy in replying to Mr. Hubbard, who, I regret to see, differs from me. I think he will admit that there has been great confusion amongst modern grammarians with respect to the pronouns "my" and "mine," &c., and I venture to suggest my theory as to the cause of that confusion. It results from the abandonment of the old classification of substantive and adjective nouns.

A "noun" is the name of a thing, and hence of a quality; when it qualifies or describes, it is an adjective noun, when it does not, it is a substantive. Hence a pronoun is either a substantive or an adjective pronoun.

Bearing this in mind, the words 'mine,' 'thine,' &c., are not adjective but substantive pronouns, as will readily be granted; the whole discussion, therefore, resolves itself into the question whether they directly stand for the possessor or for the thing possessed. If they stand immediately for the possessor, they are adjective pronouns, for the possessive case of substantives is virtually an adjective, and *cannot be used without a substantive expressed or understood*, but if they stand for the thing possessed the y are substantives.

I think Mr. Hubbard will agree with me so far, and that he will go a little further with me, and regard the personal, as substantive pronouns. Now for the question whether they have a possessive case. I hope to be able to show that they have *not*; but before I do that I must disabuse Mr. Hubbard of the idea that mine, thine, &c., are ever used except as substantive pronouns; the words he has in view as simply euphonisms formy and thy, in exactly the same manner as the Greek "n" was added on to the plural datives, &c., for the sake of euphony.

It is undoubtedly true that the possessive substantive pronouns convey the idea of possession, but they stand, not for the possessor, but for the thing possessed, and it is utterly impossible to parse them in the possessive case. Take two examples, "That book is mine," the pronoun is in the nominative case, as the indirect completion of an intransitive, or rather neuter verb. "Whose letter did he reply to? He replied to yours," the pronoun is in the objective case after the preposition. "Whose cow did he pound? He pounded his." The pronoun is the direct completion of a transitive verb, and in the objective. Now in these cases there is no ellipsis whatever: in the parallel cases "That book is John's"; "He replied to Mr. Proctor's"; "he pounded Brown's," there is an ellipsis which has to be supplied; John's, Mr. Proctor's and Brown's are clearly possessive cases and cannot be parsed otherwise, whereas mine, yours, and his, are as clearly *not* possessive cases, and cannot be parsed as such, as I said before, "mine," and thine, are sometimes euphemistic for "my" and "thy," but it is impossible to take their plurals, "ours" and "yours" and use them in the same way.

Take those plurals, and give me an instance in which they can be parsed in the possessive case, or an instance in which they can be retained under the supposition of an ellipsis. It is obviously impossible to say "That book is mine book"; in which case I grant mine would be used as the possessive case of the first personal pronoun.

From these considerations I have come to the conclusion that there are two kinds of possessive pronouns, substantive and adjective, and that the personal pronouns have *no* possessive case.

JOHN J. PROCTOR.