

PRACTICAL IDEAS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR.*

BY A. STEVENSON, HIGH SCHOOL, WELLAND.

ENGLISH GRAMMAR is defined to be the art of speaking and writing the English language with propriety. The question at once arises, "What constitutes propriety in this respect?" There is a great diversity of opinion between those who profess to expound the science, and others who actually practise the art of English Grammar. It is affirmed by lexicographers and grammarians that certain words and expressions constitute the English Language. On the other hand many of these, the great mass of the nation, have never heard, and express their ideas in a manner quite at variance with the established rules of the grammarians. If, in the republic of letters, one man's word is as good as another's (and who will maintain that it is not?), then the speech of the people is certainly the speech of the nation. The chief cause of the great difference between the language of the unlearned and that of the learned is the persistent adherence of the latter to the languages of Greece and Rome as an infallible standard by which to regulate ours. As well expect us to regulate our dress, our food, our manners and our religion by these much-worshipped models. Many classical scholars have been so carried away by the beauties of these tongues, some of which are real but most of them fancied, that they have forgotten

that classical grammar did not produce classical language, but was deduced from it, and thus they have foolishly endeavoured to bring the free and independent tongue of our Saxon forefathers into an unnatural bondage. This absurd idea was so far carried out that it is only about sixty years since most of the so-called English grammars were written in the Latin language, and contained, word for word, many of the rules of the grammar of that tongue. Now, any word or expression that conveys a definite and reasonable idea to the minds of a majority of the people of any nation has certainly a right to a recognized position in the language of that nation. Thus, if it is correct Latin to say, *It is I*, it does not follow by any means that it is incorrect English to say, *It is me*. The French in fact do use the latter expression because they do not regard themselves as tied to the leading strings of Latin or any other tongue. In orthoepy we are not at all guided by the Latins. Take for instance our common words *bonus* and *colour* which it is generally admitted the Latins called *bōnus* and *cōlor*. When we are not subject to Latin laws in the case of *words* adopted from that language, why should we be governed by those laws in expressions which are purely Anglo-Saxon? that is to say, if Latin does not govern English orthoepy, why should it govern English syntax? In addition to the disagreement that we have just noticed,

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