

teach grammatical rule by aid of the memory alone is the hardest work, and the results are always disappointing. To teach the parts of speech by isolated and arbitrary illustrations is more than hard work—it is useless into the bargain. It is endeavouring to reduce the colours of the rainbow to a monochrome, to compel a chameleon to assume but a single hue, both impossibilities. "A noun is the name of anything that exists, or of which we have any notion; as, *animal, man, tree*," says Lindley Murray, and the young and unpractised teacher, not seeing far enough, or rather not reasoning deeply enough, proceeds to string a number of verbal beads upon the thread of illustration: "What is *iron*?" "A noun." "What is *man*?" "A noun." "What is *to run*?" "A verb." Of course the definition of the verb has been taught after the fashion of the noun. "And what is *but*?" "A conjunction." What could be a more misleading or promiscuous method of instruction? What could be more rigidly inaccurate, or more solemnly absurd?

In order to puzzle a class most effectually, that is a class which has been instructed on lines like the preceding—I have tried the experiment more than once—let the curious in such matters proceed somewhat as follows:

Write down on a blackboard a few isolated words; "man," "in," "straw," and commence questioning after the approved fashion. "What part of speech is 'man'?" "Noun." "What is 'in'?" "Preposition." Here some incautious wight may probably sing out in stentorian tones, half a bar ahead of his fellow chanters, "conjunction." This causes a slight sensation and a titter; after the excitement subsides and the rash one has been overwhelmed "with hideous ruin and"—confusion, the questioning

continues. "What is 'straw'?" "Noun."

The questioner proceeds to write the following:

The seamen who *man* the boat sometimes wear *straw* hats.

John, you have *in* repeated five times in two lines.

He then proposes the words in italics for the consideration of the examined. The result may be imagined. The effect is somewhat like that produced by a full discussion of the old adjective question. "Johnny, what is an adjective?" Pat comes the answer, "adjective is a word that qualifies a noun." "I see." Examiner takes a white crayon and writes the word *ink* on the board. "Now, Johnny, what part of speech is the word *ink*?" "Noun," pipes the unarticled, articles are of no value to pupils of this stamp. "Now, Johnny, notice what I am about to write before this word '*ink*.' Examiner writes the word *black*. "What have I written?" "Black." "What part of speech is the word '*black*'?" "Adjective." "Why an adjective?" "Qualifies a noun." "I see, what does 'qualify' mean?" "Shows the quality of." "What sort of a noun, then, is this that I have written?" "Black." But, Johnny, I have written the noun '*ink*' with white chalk, what is the actual colour of that word or noun?" "White." "Then, Johnny, according to your own showing, this noun '*ink*' is black and white." *Tableau!*

I ask, in all sincerity, is this the rational or the irrational method of teaching language, to endeavour to deal with the most flexible vehicle of thought the ingenuity and genius of man has ever constructed by an initial code of rigid and absolute rules, whose absurdity is equalled only by their falsity? The glorious heritage of English is its many voicedness, its mutability, its wondrous flexibility