

BOOK REVIEWS.

A PRACTICAL AND CRITICAL GRAMMAR OF
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE—BY NOBLE
BUTLER, LOUISVILLE, KY.

JOHN P. MORTON & CO., 1874, (pp. 312.)

This is a grammar of the Morell-Bullion class, but a careful examination of the work shows many improvements and advances over its predecessors. In fact, for him who prefers this style of grammar to that of Abbott, Morris, Earle and Skeat, we know of no better work, if for no other reason than that as he will find many of his old notions receiving rough treatment, he will be set thinking.

Perhaps one of the first things new to him will be the placing of pronouns under nouns and treating them as such. "Pronouns are treated as being what they are, simple nouns; and they are introduced before the subject of case is mentioned." (Preface, page 4). The next thing that will strike him, may be the statement, "There are four moods;" namely: the indicative, the imperative, the infinitive, and the participle, or participial mood. This, however, will not be altogether new to such of our readers as have met with Miller's Bullion. But it is not on such points as these which, claiming novelty are good for the teacher, but which, unless they are real improvements are an injury to the scholar, that Mr. Butler's work claims support. Nor would we recommend the work on account of the text. As a work for schools, we do not think the definitions are always happily worded, granting what is very doubtful, that they are always correct. True we find no such wretched specimens as "A Noun is a name, *as* of a person, place or thing. (Authorized Grammar).

The real value of the book is contained in the "Remarks." They exhibit a wide knowledge of the class of grammars to which this one belongs, an extensive acquaintance with modern English literature, and what makes all else valuable, an acuteness of observation and induction, and an independence of thought seldom found out of the ranks of the masters of science. Lit

tle things mark finish,—many can hit the target, few the bull's-eye. The following the first we open at, will do as a specimen of these "Remarks."

"The positive degree implies comparison, though the comparison is not formally expressed. 'Mr. Smith is a *tall* man,' implies a comparison with other men; for he would not be called a tall man if he did not exceed the generality of men in stature."

"The office of the comparative and superlative degrees is not to express a higher degree of the quality than that which is expressed by the positive. The degrees, though related in form, have no logical relation to each other. When we say, 'Mr. Smith is a *tall* man,' we compare Mr. Smith with men in general; when we say, 'Mr. Smith is *taller* than Mr. Jones,' we compare two men and assert the former has more of the quality than the latter, without referring to the absolute *tall*; when we say, 'Mr. Smith is the *tallest* of the three men,' we compare Mr. Smith with two other men in a similar way. (See Note H.)"

"The comparative is used when the objects compared belong to different classes; the superlative when the objects belong to the same class. But the comparative is used more frequently than the superlative when *two* objects belonging to the same class are compared; as, 'The *wiser* of the two.'"

"It seems strange that any one who has taken the trouble of thinking about the matter a single moment should not see the true nature of the comparative and superlative degrees. And yet we find in popular grammars such language as this: 'The comparative denotes a higher state of the same quality than the positive; 'The superlative denotes a higher or lower state of the same quality than that expressed by the comparative; 'The comparative degree denotes an increase or diminution of the quality of the positive; 'The superlative degree denotes an increase or diminution of the quality of the positive to the highest or lowest degree.'"

These extracts are given as samples. The same error, variously expressed, is found in most of the grammars in common use. Even a child may be convinced in a moment that such definitions are entirely wrong. Take a duodecimo book in the right hand and a smaller one in the left, and ask the child, 'Is not this book in my right hand *larger*