

BOWDEN'S
COMMON-SCHOOL
ENGLISH GRAMMAR

AN
ELEMENTARY TREATISE
ON THE
PRINCIPLES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE;

BY
✓
RICHARD H. BOWDEN.



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

IN entering on a brief explanation of the motive and plan of my present undertaking, I do so with a full conviction of the inefficiency of such explanation to atone for any defects in the execution itself; and, as its best defense, I confidently request for the work the impartial examination of those whose qualifications entitle them to judge, and whose experience enables them to decide with justice, on the merits or demerits of an accomplishment, with the difficulties besetting which they must needs be familiar.

The motive, then, of the present treatise on English grammar is, the systematizing and simplifying of the study, that, at once, the labors of the teacher may be facilitated, and the tasks of the student, by a removal of the obstructions that unnecessarily impede his progress, and often discourage his perseverance, be rendered profitable and pleasant. In reviewing most of the grammars now in use, it can scarcely escape the notice of even the casual investigator, that one or the other, if not both, of two charges may, with propriety, be brought against them — first, the introduction of useless material, thus distracting the attention of the scholar, and multiplying his occasions for effort; second, the absence of a due principle of classification — a defect that soon makes itself visible in the increased demand on the memory, sometimes bewildering it altogether, and turning the learner, mentally disgusted, from the most worthy pursuit that the regard of youth can be bestowed on.

Although there neither is nor can be a "royal road" to advancement in knowledge, yet the smoothing of the great highways of education, that the feet of infancy or decrepitude may

tread them the more easily, is certainly an important and praiseworthy employment; and, in the particular department under consideration, there were arduous ascents and thickly scattered stumbling-blocks, which needlessly obstructed the thoroughfare. In short, to drop the figure, the tasks presented the student were sadly disproportioned to the promised result. Toil is required for every valuable attainment; but the expense of industry without a commensurate object is in no respect commendable. Hence, it will be seen, the design of this volume has been, in the first place, to refrain from all discussion which is not fundamentally requisite to a proper comprehension of the science—the abscision of those theoretical excrescences that so often repress the practical development of the mind.

Were it not that the practice of pressing the unwilling classics into the service of latter-day authors is deservedly growing into disrepute, I should, perhaps, have inscribed on the title-page, or prefixed to this preface, “*Brevis esse laboro,*” or something else equally pithy and pertinent, trusting to the circumscribed bulk of the attendant tome for a ready vindication of the “*brevis,*” even if the contents should not happen to disclose any very patent evidences of the “*laboro.*”

Another respect in which I have cautiously ventured an innovation on the generality of former systems, has been in endeavoring to methodize the classification embraced, especially in the etymological section. Classification, in any science, is only useful in so far as it arranges into convenient form the various items of information which are afterwards to be availed of in practice. It may be defined as a determinate order of laying up, in the storehouse of memory, the disjointed and irrelative fragments which hereafter are to be taken forth, and combined in the correct proportions of the intellectual structure. In the scheme of elucidating any subject, the position occupied by classification, of whatever character, is a secondary one; and, whenever it ceases to bear directly on the purpose for which it was devised, this classification becomes, immediately, an incumbrance, rather than an aid. In grammatical science, therefore, any presentation of material, or any manner adopted in the presentation itself, which is not manifestly designed with an especial reference to the requirements of syntax—the purpose and practice of all grammar antecedent thereto,—should

be rejected. Nay, from consistency of reasoning, and adherence to acknowledged truth, a given plan may possess many specious claims to approval, and yet, by imposing study which subserves no real end, be, in fact, utterly futile. For instance, the subdivision of Active Verbs into active-transitive and active-intransitive, though superficially logical, still, from the deficiency of underlying principle extending into the syntax, is productive of no consequence to compensate the labor of committing to memory the extra detail. The same may be said of the system of conjugation adopted by at least two grammarians—Drs. ALLEN and CORNWELL,—which, by greatly increasing the number of tenses, fuses into one complicated method the simple and compound inflections of the verb—a scheme in whose construction its authors seem to have forgotten the one, sole object of determining distinction of tense—namely, the bearing it maintains on the relation of tense afterward to be observed in composition, and in which relation their multiplied tense-modifications exercise no kind of influence.

It is but just to concede, however, to the work of these gentlemen, (for they formed, in some degree, a literary copartnership,) the precedence in the adoption of the form of exercises used in this volume. Of course, no claim to extensive originality can be maintained in the treatment of a subject so trite as English grammar has now become; and I cheerfully confess that, to the system of another professor—namely, LENNIE,—the following treatise bears, in many points of its general disposition, a close resemblance. But our language is eminently a progressive one; and the developments that are almost daily proceeding from it demand that no old system, however perfect it may once have been, can be safely held as an exposition of the character or degree of change to which the language has now attained; and that the special conformations of the science, in order to eliminate the principles which they are devised to represent, must assume modifications correlative with the vicissitudes which these principles undergo.

I trust that, at the present day, when education is so fast becoming reduced and modeled according to the element of utility and definite purpose, no apology is required for the omission which my plan has constrained me to make, of the departments of prosody usually appropriated to the analysis of

versification, and to the rules of orthoepy. With regard to the first of these, it would be difficult to produce a single argument in defense of its claims to consideration as a branch of useful knowledge; and as to the second, if there really are any rules serviceable to the acquirement of a correct English pronunciation, they fall under a head that covers no part of elementary grammar. The province of lexicography is a distinct one; and I have endeavored, in the present treatise, to preserve its boundaries unviolated, and its peculiarities untrampled on.

With the completion of the syntax, my responsibilities as author are resigned. The section on punctuation is from a work by Mr. DAY, parts of which I have altered so far as to form a continuation of the system adhered to in my etymology, and to be more adapted to the exercises which I have thrown in after the rules, whenever it was advisable to do so. Any commendations of this author would here be devoid of weight, and, indeed, entirely out of place.

If it be not an unwarrantable interference with the function of the author's conclusion, make a few suggestions as to the manner in which these to be pursued in connection with this volume as a text-book. The portions printed in the larger type are all intended to be learned perfectly by heart; and, if, in any case, the expressions used should happen to lie beyond the ability of the pupil wholly to comprehend them, the teacher should supply such explanations as circumstances render necessary, it being taken for granted, that every person of intelligence is sufficiently acquainted with the inutility of committing to memory a rule or definition which is only partially understood. The exercises should be carefully and neatly written; for, by writing them, the double advantage will be secured, of having more deeply impressed on the mind the instruction they relate to; and, at the same time, the acquisition of a habit of accuracy, which can not be too highly estimated. In writing these, as any other matter from a printed copy, let it be borne in mind that the omission of punctuation, or the insertion of a point incorrectly, is as much an error as is the omission of a word, or the insertion of one misspelled. As the rules of syntax are incomprehensible without a knowledge of etymology, it will be evident that the proficiency of the pupil in the latter must

be ascertainable, before he can conveniently proceed with the study. The questions on pages 96, 97, and 98 will afford no unvaluable assistance in a comprehensive examination; and the parsing exercises appended, let them be fully and regularly handled, will be found to involve a recapitulation and confirmation of all the preceding lessons.

Above all, teachers, remember that, inasmuch as language is but the representation, or sensible attire, of the mind, and grammar the result of that logical disposition of thought which the mind, in its well circumstanced condition, invariably employs; so no amount of inculcated precept can enable the student to dispense with reflection, for no exercise of the memory can be productive of beneficial consequence, unless it is based on the strength of a correctly rational intellect. The educing of the reflective faculties, whose development constitutes the deep foundation of intellectual excellence, and the training of them into a habitually systematic and consistent action, must therefore be the first step in entering on the study of grammar, if that study is expected to evolve any other effect than the accumulation of a few barren phrases, that burden the recollection for a while, and give place, at length, to the uniformity of an unmitigated ignorance. It is in the demand made on the operation of the latent abilities of the mind, that the high importance of elementary grammar consists; and any attempt at teaching the science, which is undertaken in disregard of this tendency, will eventually be demonstrated as labor lamentably misdirected.

BUFFALO, N. Y., March 2, 1859.

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

THE author of this grammar, RICHARD H. BOWDEN, was born in the city of Bristol, England; in the schools of which city he received but a rudimentary knowledge of the English language. He came to the United States with his mother and other of her children; and they settled in the now suburbs of Buffalo, New York. To that mother, the opportunities for the best development of her little ones, and for their success in life, seemed more promising in this, our favored country, than they were in the land of their birth. In the old world, ancestral trees were then, and are still, considered material if not indispensable requirements to success. Not so was it then, nor is it now, with us. With character as the base, and natural ability of fair order as an aid, and with personal effort, honestly and persistently continued, a child without favored ancestral name and influence could here obtain equal fame with the otherwise more favored, in any of the many desirable avocations or positions in life.

So thought the mother of the then young lad, RICHARD H. BOWDEN. Richard also realized that, even in this land of possibilities and of unequalled opportunities, it would require unceasing effort, if one's ambition it were to obtain place or prominence beyond that reached by the ordinary lad. Effort without system, also, he thought, was as a boat without rudder,—it might drift to a safe haven, but more likely it would not; hence, in all his school and industrial work, he never varied from his self-formulated and adopted method. His desire

was to become a learned person, and specially a linguist; but not having means for his physical support without labor, he early engaged himself to the undersigned as a printer's apprentice. His daily formula, thereafter, memory serving the undersigned, was, one hour in the morning at exercise—walking from his home to the place of employment,—and another hour in the evening returning to his home; ten hours at labor—the then minimum requirement of trades-organizations and of employers; four hours at study; and the remainder of the twenty-four hours each day were assigned for refreshment and sleep. Studies in English, in the several branches as taught in our common-schools; and the Latin, and French, and German, and Greek languages were, in course, the objects for his acquirement. Self-taught, save when, during the third and final year's apprenticeship, he employed teachers, with his scanty earnings, to instruct him in pronunciation, he became so proficient that, when his apprenticeship expired, he readily secured employment as chief proof-reader in one of the largest and most exacting book-printing houses in the city of New York.

But it was during his apprenticeship that he wrote, put in type, and read the proof of, this grammar, the title-page of which is adorned by his name. It was stereotyped, and a single plate-proof copy only was printed from the plates; and from that copy the present, and first, edition has been made; all the work of which—type-setting, press-work, and binding,—has been done by the inmates of the Illinois State Reformatory, for the benefit of whom the use of the grammar has been given by its publisher.

That this brief historical sketch may stimulate each student toward success, not only while in school, but also throughout life, is the sole wish of the publisher. But let him remember, success depends upon personal effort—the utilization of the means offered, and the unceasing determination of each student inmate to make the best use of the talent given him.

THE PUBLISHER.

English Grammar.

INTRODUCTION.

LANGUAGE is the combination of vocal sounds, in such a manner as to express related thoughts. These different sounds are connected into words; and the words are arranged into sentences. Language may be either spoken or written. Writing is the embodiment of words to the eye, by means of certain marks, or characters, called letters, which have been invented to represent the elementary utterances of the human voice.

Grammar is the science which teaches the rules to be observed in the formation of words and sentences. It consists of four departments—namely, orthography, etymology, syntax, and prosody. Orthography relates to letters, and the modes of uniting them into words; etymology treats of words, their classification, inflection, and derivation; syntax contains the principles of the correct structure of sentences; while prosody has regard to pronunciation, the varieties of metrical composition, and punctuation.