PREFACE.

THIS book is not intended to supply the place of an English Grammar. It presupposes a knowledge of Grammar and of English idiom in its readers, and does not address itself to foreigners, but to those who, having already a familiar knowledge of English, need help to write it with taste and exactness. Some degree of knowledge is presumed in the reader; nevertheless we do not presume that he possesses so much as to render him incapable of profiting from *lessons*. Our object is, if possible, not merely to interest, but to *teach;* to write lessons, not essays, — lessons that may perhaps prove interesting to some who have passed beyond the routine of school life, but still lessons, in the strictest sense, adapted for school classes.

Aiming at practical utility, the book deals only with those difficulties which, in the course of teaching, we have found to be most common and most serious. For there are many difficulties, even when grammatical accuracy has been attained, in the way of English persons attempting to write and speak correctly. First, there is the cramping restriction of an insufficient vocabulary; not merely a loose and inexact

apprehension of many words that are commonly used, and a consequent difficulty in using them accurately, but also a total ignorance of many other words, and an inability to use them at all; and these last are, as a rule, the very words which are absolutely necessary for the comprehension and expression of any thought that deals with something more than the most ordinary concrete notions. There is also a very common inability to appreciate the differences between words that are at all similar. Lastly, where the pupil has studied Latin, and trusts too much for his knowledge of English words to his knowledge of their Latin roots, there is the possibility of misderiving and misunderstanding a word, owing to ignorance of the changes of letters introduced in the process of derivation; and, on the other hand, there is the danger of misunderstanding and pedantically misusing words correctly derived, from an ignorance of the changes of meaning which a word almost always experiences in passing from one language to another. The result of all this non-understanding or slovenly half-understanding of words is a habit of slovenly reading and slovenly writing, which when once acquired is very hard to shake off.

Then, following on the difficulties attending the use of words, there are others attending the choice and arrangement of words. There is the danger of falling into "poetic prose," of thinking it necessary to write "steed" or "charger" instead of "horse," "ire" instead of "anger," and the like; and every teacher, who has had much experience in looking

over examination papers, will admit that this is a danger to which beginners are very liable. Again, there is the temptation to shrink with a senseless fear from using a plain word twice in the same page, and often from using a plain word at all. This unmanly dread of simplicity, and of what is called "tautology," gives rise to a patchwork made up of scraps of poetic quotations, unmeaning periphrases, and would-be humorous circumlocutions, — a style of all styles perhaps the most objectionable and offensive, which may be known and avoided by the name of *Fine Writing*. Lastly, there is the danger of *obscurity*, a fault which cannot be avoided without extreme care, owing to the uninflected nature of our language.

All these difficulties and dangers are quite as real, and require as much attention, and are fit subjects for practical teaching in our schools, quite as much as many points which, at present, receive perhaps an excessive attention in some of our text-books. To use the right word in the right place is an accomplishment not less valuable than the knowledge of the truth (carefully recorded in most English Grammars, and often inflicted as a task upon younger pupils) that the plural of *cherub* is *cherubim*, and the feminine of *bull* is *cow*.

To smooth the reader's way through these difficulties is the object of the first three Parts of this book. Difficulties connected with Vocabulary are considered first. The student is introduced, almost at once, to *Synonyms*. He is

taught how to *define* a word, with and without the aid of its synonyms. He is shown how to *eliminate* from a word whatever is not essential to its meaning. The processes of *Definition* and *Elimination* are carefully explained: a system or scheme is laid down which he can exactly follow; and examples are subjoined, worked out to illustrate the method which he is to pursue. A system is also given by which the reader may enlarge his vocabulary, and furnish himself easily and naturally with those general or abstract terms which are often misunderstood and misused, and still more often not understood and not used at all. Some information is also given to help the reader to connect words with their roots, and at the same time to caution him against supposing that, because he knows the roots of a word, he necessarily knows the meaning of the word itself. Exercises are interspersed throughout this Part which can be worked out with, or without, an English Etymological Dictionary,[1] as the nature of the case may require. The exercises have not been selected at random; many of them have been subjected to the practical test of experience, and have been used in class teaching.

The Second Part deals with Diction. It attempts to illustrate with some detail the distinction — often ignored by those who are beginning to write English, and sometimes by others also — between the Diction of Prose, and that of Poetry. It

[1] An Etymological Dictionary is necessary for pupils studying the First Part. Chambers's or Ogilvie's will answer the purpose.

endeavors to dissipate that excessive and vulgar dread of tautology which, together with a fondness for misplaced pleasantry, gives rise to the vicious style described above. It gives some practical rules for writing a long sentence clearly and impressively; and it also examines the difference between slang, conversation, and written prose. Both for translating from foreign languages into English, and for writing original English composition, these rules have been used in teaching, and, we venture to think, with encouraging results.

A Chapter on Simile and Metaphor concludes the subject of Diction. We have found, in the course of teaching, that a great deal of confusion in speaking and writing, and still more in reading and attempting to understand the works of our classical English authors, arises from the inability to express the literal meaning conveyed in a Metaphor. The application of the principle of Proportion to the explanation of Metaphor has been found to dissipate much of this confusion. The youngest pupils readily learn how to "expand a Metaphor into its Simile;" and it is really astonishing to see how many difficulties that perplex young heads, and sometimes old ones too, vanish at once when the key of "expansion" is applied. More important still, perhaps, is the exactness of thought introduced by this method. The pupil knows that, if he cannot expand a metaphor, he does not understand it. All teachers will admit that to force a pupil to see that he does not understand any thing is a great

stride of progress. It is difficult to exaggerate the value of a process which makes it impossible for a pupil to delude himself into the belief that he understands when he does not understand.

Metre is the subject of the Third Part. The object of this Part (as also, in a great measure, of the Chapter just mentioned belonging to the Second Part) is to enable the pupil to read English Poetry with intelligence, interest, and appreciation. To teach any one how to read a verse so as to mark the metre on the one hand, without on the other hand converting the metrical line into a monotonous doggerel, is not so easy a task as might be supposed. Many of the rules stated in this Part have been found of practical utility in teaching pupils to hit the mean. Rules and illustrations have therefore been given, and the different kinds of metre and varieties of the same metre have been explained at considerable length.

This Chapter may seem to some to enter rather too much into detail. We desire, however, to urge as an explanation, that in all probability the study of English metre will rapidly assume more importance in English schools. At present, very little is generally taught, and perhaps known, about this subject. In a recent elaborate edition of the works of Pope, the skill of that consummate master of the art of epigrammatic versification is inpugned because in one of his lines he suffers *the* to receive the metrical accent. When one of the commonest customs (for it is in no sense a license) of English poets — a custom sanctioned by Shakspeare,

Dryden, Milton, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Tennyson — can be censured as a fault, and this in a leading edition of a leading poet of our literature, it must be evident that much still remains to be done in teaching English Metre. At present this Part may seem too detailed. Probably, some few years hence, when a knowledge of English Metre has become more widely diffused, it will seem not detailed enough.

The Fourth Part (like the Chapter on Metaphor) is concerned not more with English than with other languages. It treats of the different Styles of Composition, the appropriate subjects for each, and the arrangement of the subject-matter. We hope that this may be of some interest to the general reader, as well as of practical utility in the higher classes of schools. It seems desirable that before pupils begin to write essays, imaginary dialogues, speeches, and poems, they should receive some instruction as to the difference of arrangement in a poem, a speech, a conversation, and an essay.

An Appendix adds a few hints on some Errors in Reasoning. This addition may interfere with the symmetry of the book; but if it is found of use, the utility will be ample compensation. In reading literature, pupils are continually meeting instances of false reasoning, which, if passed over without comment, do harm, and, if commented upon, require some little basis of knowledge in the pupil to enable him to understand the explanation. Without entering into the details of formal Logic, we have found it possible to give pupils some few hints which have appeared to help them.

The hints are so elementary, and so few, that they cannot possibly delude the youngest reader into imagining that they are any thing more than hints. They may induce him hereafter to study the subject thoroughly in a complete treatise, when he has leisure and opportunity; but, in any case, a boy will leave school all the better prepared for the work of life, whatever that work may be, if he knows the meaning of *induction*, and has been cautioned against the error, *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. No lesson, so far as our experience in teaching goes, interests and stimulates pupils more than this; and our experience of debating societies, in the higher forms of schools, forces upon us the conviction that such lessons are not more interesting than necessary.

Questions on the different paragraphs have been added at the end of the book, for the purpose of enabling the student to test his knowledge of the contents, and also to serve as home lessons to be prepared by pupils in classes.[1]

A desire, expressed by some teachers of experience, that these lessons should be published as soon as possible, has rather accelerated the publication. Some misprints and other inaccuracies may possibly be found in the following pages, in consequence of the short time which has been allowed us for correcting them. Our thanks are due to several friends who have kindly assisted us in this task, and who have also

[1] Some of the passages quoted to illustrate style are intended to be committed to memory and used as repetition-lessons. — See pp. 180, 181, 212, 237, 238, etc.

aided us with many valuable and practical suggestions. Among these we desire to mention Mr. Joseph Payne, whose labors on Norman French are well known; Mr. T. G. Philpotts, late Fellow of New College, Oxford, and one of the Assistant Masters of Rugby School; Mr. Edwin Abbott, Head Master of the Philological School; Mr. Howard Candler, Mathematical Master of Uppingham School; and the Rev. R. H. Quick, one of the Assistant Masters of Harrow School.

In conclusion, we repeat that we do not wish our book to be regarded as an exhaustive treatise, or as adapted for the use of foreigners. It is intended primarily for boys, but, in the present unsatisfactory state of English education, we entertain a hope that it may possibly be found not unfit for some who have passed the age of boyhood; and in this hope we have ventured to give it the title of *English Lessons for English People*.