

**A GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE,
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS: INTENDED FOR THE
USE OF SCHOOLS AND OF YOUNG
PERSONS IN GENERAL; BUT MORE
ESPECIALLY FOR THE USE OF SOLDIERS,
SAILORS, APPRENTICES, AND PLOUGH-BOYS**

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A Grammar of the English Language, in a Series of Letters: Intended for the Use of Schools and of Young Persons in General; But More Especially for the Use of Soldiers, Sailors, Apprentices, and Plough-Boys by William Cobbett

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WILLIAM COBBETT

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SOLDIERS, SAILORS, APPRENTICES, AND PLOUGH-BOYS.

BY WILLIAM COBBETT.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

SIX LESSONS, INTENDED TO PREVENT STATESMEN FROM USING
FALSE GRAMMAR, AND FROM WRITING IN AN
AWEWARD MANNER.

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DEDICATION.

TO HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY,
QUEEN CAROLINE.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

A WORK, having for its objects, to lay the solid foundation of literary knowledge amongst the Labouring Classes of the community; to give practical effect to the natural genius found in the Soldier, the Sailor, the Apprentice, and the Plough-boy; and to make that genius a perennial source of wealth, strength, and safety to the kingdom; such a work naturally seeks the approbation of your majesty, who, amongst all the Royal Personages of the present age, is the only one that appears to have justly estimated the value of The People.

The Nobles and the Hierarchy have long had the arrogance to style themselves, the Pillars that support the throne. But, as your Majesty has now clearly ascertained, Royalty has, in the hour of need, no efficient supporters but The People.

During your Majesty's long, arduous, magnanimous, and gallant struggle against matchless fraud and boundless power, it must have inspired you with great confidence to perceive the wonderful intelligence and talent of your millions of friends; while your Majesty cannot have failed to observe, that the haughty and insolent few who have been your enemies, have, upon all occasions, exhibited an absence of knowledge, a poverty of genius, a feebleness of intellect, which nothing but a constant association with malevolence and perfidy could prevent from being ascribed to dotage or idiocy.

That to Her, whose great example is so well calculated to inspire us with a love of useful knowledge, and to stimulate us to perseverance in its pursuit; that, to Her, the records of whose magnanimity and courage will make mean spite and cowardice hide their heads to the end of time; that, to Her, who, while in foreign lands, did honour to Britain's throne, and to Britain herself, by opening the Debtor's prison, and by setting the Captive Christian free; that, to Her, who has so long had to endure all the sufferings that malice could invent and tyranny execute; that, to Her, God may grant, to know no more of sorrow, but long to live in health, prosperity, and glory, surrounded and supported by a grateful and admiring People, is the humble prayer of

Your Majesty's

Most dutiful

And most devoted Servant,

WM. COBBETT.

London, Nov. 25th, 1820.

MR. JAMES PAUL COBBETT.

LETTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

North Hempstead, Long Island, Dec. 6, 1817.

MY DEAR LITTLE JAMES,

You have now arrived at the age of fourteen years without ever having been bidden, or even advised, to look into a book; and all you know of reading or of writing you owe to your own unbiassed taste and choice. But while you have lived unpersecuted by such importunities, you have had the very great advantage of being bred up under a roof, beneath which no cards, no dice, no gaming, no senseless pastime of any description, ever found a place. In the absence of these, books naturally became your companions during some part of your time: you have read and have written because you saw your elders read and write, just as you have learned to ride and hunt and shoot, to dig the beds in the garden, to trim the flowers, and to prune the trees. The healthful exercise, and the pleasures, unmixed with fear, which you have derived from these sources, have given you "a sound mind in a sound body," and this, says an English writer, whose works you will by and by read, "is the greatest blessing that God can give to man."

It is true, that this is a very great blessing; but, mere soundness of mind, without any mental acquirements, is possessed by millions; it is an ordinary possession; and it gives a man no fair pretensions to merit, because he owes it to accident, and not to any thing done by himself. But knowledge, in any art or science, being always the fruit

of observation, study, or practice, gives, in proportion to its extent and usefulness, the possessor a just claim to respect. We do, indeed, often see all the outward marks of respect bestowed upon persons merely because they are rich or powerful; but these, while they are bestowed with pain, are received without pleasure. They drop from the tongue or beam from the features, but have no communication with the heart. They are not the voluntary offerings of admiration, or of gratitude; but are extorted from the hopes, the fears, the anxieties, of poverty, of meanness, or of guilt. Nor is respect due to honesty, fidelity, or any such qualities; because, dishonesty and perfidy are crimes. To entitle a man to respect there must be something of his own doing, beyond the bounds of his well known duties and obligations.

Therefore, being extremely desirous to see you, my dear James, an object of respect, I now call upon you to apply your mind to the acquiring of that kind of knowledge which is inseparable from an acquaintance with books: for, though knowledge in every art and science, is, if properly applied, worthy of praise in proportion to its extent and usefulness, there are some kinds of knowledge which are justly considered as of a superior order, not only because the possession of them is a proof of more than ordinary industry and talent, but because the application of them has naturally a more powerful influence in the affairs and on the condition of our friends, acquaintances, neighbours, and country. **BLAKE**, the Titchfield thatcher, who broke his leg into splinters in falling from a wheat-rick, was, on account of the knowledge which he possessed beyond that of labourers in general, an object of respect; but, in its degree, and in the feelings from which it arose, how different was that respect from the respect due to our excellent neighbour **Mr. BLUNDELL**, who restored the leg to perfect use, after six garrison and army surgeons had declared that it was impossible to preserve it, and that, if the leg were not cut off,