

**A COMPANION TO
ENGLISH
GRAMMARS**

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A Companion to English Grammars by John Foster

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BY

JOHN FOSTER, M.A. (EDIN.)



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PREFACE.

IN manuscript these fragmentary notes have already been helpful in preparing pupils for examinations connected with the Leaving Certificate, University Local, and Pupil Teachers' courses, and it is in the belief that they may have a wider service that they are now given in their present form. It is not intended that they should supersede in any degree the use of a text-book on English Grammar. They assume that the student has already an adequate acquaintance with the elementary principles of the subject by means of one of those excellent treatises so easily accessible. The object is rather to summarize, and, suggestively, to remove some of the difficulties met with in a searching examination on *parsing* and *analysis*. It is also hoped that they may help the student to habituate himself to become minutely critical regarding the exact use which each word serves in discourse, in order that he may thereby gain a deeper insight into the idioms and genius of the language. There is some justification for the complaints made by those who decry the value of *parsing* and *analysis* as an educative instrument, when we consider either the methods of presentment sometimes adopted, or the results obtained. Under skilful treatment, however, with the subtleties of words nicely balanced, the science of language

may be raised to its proper sphere among disciplinary and mind-stimulating studies.

A general acknowledgment must be made to the following works, which have been more or less consulted:—"The Encyclopædic Dictionary," Mason's "English Grammar," Bain's "Higher English," West's "English Grammar," Adam's "English Language," and Abbott's "Shakespearian Grammar."

J. F.

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THE NOUN.

CLASSES.

1. There are three classes of Nouns—Proper, Common (both of which are *Concrete*), and *Abstract*; but each of these classes may be used for the other:—

- (a) Proper used as Common, as, "Some village *Hampden*."
- (b) Common used as Proper, as, "The *Duke*."
- (c) Abstract used as Concrete, as, "The *youth* of the country."

2. *Abstract nouns classified*:—

- (a) Names of *states* or *conditions*, as, *boyhood*, *strength*.
- (b) Names of *degrees of conditions*, as, *abundance*.
- (c) Names of *arts* and *sciences*, as, *physics*, *drawing*.
- (d) Names of *qualities*, as, *bravery*, *rectitude*.
- (e) Names of *actions*, as, *driving*.

1. The last class of abstract nouns may be considered *verbal nouns*, because they express *substantively* what their kindred verbs express *assertively*.

Every verb in the English language—except *may*, *can*, *shall*, *must*, and *will* (used as an auxiliary)—may have two verbal nouns, the one the radical form with *to* prefixed called the infinitive, the other with *-ing* affixed called the gerund; for example—"To play is pleasant," "Forgetting is easier than forgetting."

2. Distinguish between *concrete noun* ending in *-ing*, *verbal noun*, and *verbal adjective*:—

"This *writing* is blotted." (Concrete noun.)

"*Writing* is a fatiguing employment." (Verbal noun = Gerund.)

"The boy *writing* home told all." (Verbal adjective = Participle.)