

**TEXT-BOOK OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR; A
TREATISE ON THE ETYMOLOGY AND
SYNTAX OF THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE: INCLUDING EXERCISES IN
PARSING, PUNCTUATION, AND THE
CORRECTION OF IMPROPER DICTION**

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Text-Book of English Grammar; A Treatise on the Etymology and Syntax of the English Language: Including Exercises in Parsing, Punctuation, and the Correction of Improper Diction
by John Hunter

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JOHN HUNTER

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A TREATISE
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OF
The English Language :

INCLUDING
EXERCISES IN PARSING, PUNCTUATION, AND THE CORRECTION OF
IMPROPER DICTION;
AN ETYMOLOGICAL VOCABULARY OF GRAMMATICAL TERMS;
AND A COPIOUS LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL WORKS ON ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

For the use of Students in Training Colleges, and the Upper Classes
in National and other Elementary Schools.

BY THE
REV. JOHN HUNTER,
VICE-PRINCIPAL OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY'S TRAINING COLLEGE,
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TO
THE REVEREND
THOMAS JACKSON, M.A.

PRINCIPAL OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY'S TRAINING
COLLEGE, BATTERSEA,

AS
A TRIBUTE OF ESTEEM
FOR
HIS ZEALOUS EXERTIONS IN THE CAUSE OF
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION,
AND IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MANY
PERSONAL FAVOURS,

THIS
TEXT-BOOK
IS, WITH PERMISSION, DEDICATED,
BY
HIS OBLIGED AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

It is generally admitted, that a knowledge and observance of the grammatical propriety of our language must contribute materially to our advantage; and that, in particular, there exists in the forms and relations of words an excellent means of cultivating the general power of intellect. As the elementary principles of Mathematics are considered not merely preliminaries to what is really useful, but depositories of mental profit, so the grammatical rudiments of literature are viewed as something else than a dead basis for the superstructure of living discourse, being themselves found productive of immediate benefit to the understanding.

It is as a gymnasium of the mind that Grammar possesses its prime utility: every faculty of our intellectual constitution may there find beneficial exercise; and even our moral nature may be seen to derive improvement, effectually though indirectly, from the tendency of grammatical investigation to strengthen that mental sight, to which Revelation presents the objects of man's everlasting interest. Our language has attained such perfection, through those innumerable delicacies of expression which have been prompted by the strict inquiries of science, that, in the proper study of Grammar, we see human conceptions reflected with the nicest precision,—the most secret workings of profound reason and rich fancy made visible in a verbal counterpart of exquisite fidelity. And must not the habit of investigating the structure, import, and arrangement of such signs, prove a discipline highly favourable not only to the acquirement of skill in composition, but also to the indulgence of a love for truth, and generally to the increase of human dignity and usefulness?

"Words," says Locke, "interpose themselves so much between our understanding and the truth which it would contemplate and apprehend, that, like the medium through which visible things pass, their obscurity and disorder do not seldom cast a mist before our eyes, and impose on

our understanding."* Similarly, John Stuart Mill says, "Language is evidently, and by the admission of all philosophers, one of the principal instruments or helps of thought, and any imperfection in the instrument, or in the mode of employing it, is confessedly liable, still more than in any other art, to confuse and impede the process, and destroy all ground of confidence in the result."† A clear conception, therefore, of the precise meanings of words and phrases is necessarily connected with the right prosecution of grammatical study. And though Grammar, according to the modern acceptance of that name, has only a partial control over the signification of words,—though it presupposes the conventional understanding of particular notions by particular symbols, and then, dealing with the sign according to the sense, regulates only those variations of meaning which are dependent on the modifications of accidence and the arrangements of syntax, that is, regulates only the manner of signification,—yet within the department of literature thus limited there is wide scope for the exertion and improvement of intellect; and especially will the practice of syntactical parsing be found servicable in cultivating the power of exact thought, and of definite and orderly expression.

When we speak of Grammar as controlling or regulating words, we do not mean to ascribe to it an original and independent authority. The maxim of Horace, respecting the dictatorship of Custom in the province of phraseology, is well-founded; only, as Dr. Campbell justly insists, the usage to which Grammar owes obedience, is national, reputable, and present usage. And it should be further observed, that as Grammar is commissioned to reduce to systematic form the established principles and modes of language, and to prohibit their alteration, it has also a right to give occasional counsel to its dictator, by arguments drawn from analogy, and thus to contribute to the formation of reputable custom: its chief business is, to promote the permanence of that which is well established, while, at the same time, it may assist in settling what is disputed, and in furthering the improvement of that which admits reform. And let it not be thought that, in assigning the grammatical structure of language to the authorship of custom, we invalidate its claim to be regarded as a philosophical study, fitted to expand and invigorate the mind. Language is the offspring of intellectual custom: it is a reflexion of the human mind: it indicates that thought has operated in the formation of its analogies and usages; and that the *logos* of the Greek vocabulary very

* *Essay on the Understanding*, Bk. iii. Ch. 9.

† *System of Logic*, Bk. i. Ch. 1.

naturally and warrantably came to signify *reason*, in addition to its prior signification of *discourse*, the chief evidence and instrument of reason.

There is, however, another species of dictatorship which some English Grammarians have acknowledged too obsequiously, establishing a feigned and forced analogy between our own language and others to which its natural structure is far from being conformable. To translate a system of Latin Grammar, as a model for the grammatical exhibition of the English, has been repeatedly protested against by authors whose reputation as Latin philologists has secured a strong sanction for their censure. And, undoubtedly, there can be little utility in systems which endeavour to make English Grammar a stepping-stone to the Latin, by consulting only the genius and analogies of the foreign tongue. These systems cannot be said to exhibit the principles of our language, or to develop its structure by a natural and rational analysis; they cannot, for example, without having recourse to an uninstructional dogmatism, select certain complex expressions as cases, or as tenses, while they reject others which have precisely the same character and claim, but which only have not their inflexional counterparts in Latin. Such systems, if taught rationally, would presuppose Latin to be taught first; but, surely, when the acquisition of both languages is contemplated, the study of comparative grammar would be better promoted, by making a knowledge of the true elements of English the initiatory acquirement. There is, doubtless, a superiority enstamped upon the Latin language by its inflexions, as compared with the prepositive substitutes of modern tongues,—a superiority which must be gravely admitted, although its vindication by the tongue of pedantry or of prejudice may sometimes appear to overrate it.* But the comparative merits of the two languages have nothing to do with determining the propriety of assimilating one to the other in declensions and conjugations. At the same time, it should not be forgotten, that the great attention which has been bestowed on the classical languages of antiquity, has proved eminently serviceable to our own language; for, as an eminent German critic has remarked, “Every foreign language, even a living one, must of necessity be acquired in a more exact manner than our vernacular tongue. Thus the mind becomes

* Sir W. Scott, in “The Heart of Midlothian,” makes Reuben Butler the Schoolmaster say to Mr. Saddletree, “The nominative case is that by which a person or thing is nominated or designed, and which may be called the primary case; all others being formed from it by alterations of the termination in the learned languages, and by prepositions in our modern Babylonian jargons.” Chap. 5.