

PERCIVAL LEIGH

THE COMIC ENGLISH
GRAMMAR: A NEW AND
FACETIOUS
INTRODUCTION TO THE
ENGLISH TONGUE

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Percival Leigh

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PRELIMINARY DISCOURSE

Fashion requires, and like the rest of her sex, requires because she requires, that before a writer begins the business of his book, he should give an account to the world of his reasons for producing it; and therefore, to avoid singularity, we shall proceed with the statement of our own, excepting only a few private ones, which are neither here nor there.

To advance the interests of mankind by promoting the cause of Education; to ameliorate the conversation of the masses; to cultivate Taste, and diffuse Refinement; these are the objects we have in view in submitting a Comic English Grammar to the patronage of a discerning Public.

Few persons there are, whose ears are so extremely obtuse, as not to be frequently annoyed at the violations of Grammar by which they are so often assailed. It is really painful to be forced, in walking along the streets, to hear such phrases as, "That 'ere omnibus."

"Where've you bin?"

"Vot's the odds?" and the like. Very dreadful expressions are also used by cartmen and others in addressing their horses. What can possibly induce a human being to say "Gee woot!"

"Mather way!" or "Woa not to mention the atrocious "Kim aup!" of the barbarous butcher's boy.

It is notorious that the above and greater enormities are perpetrated in spite of the number of Grammars already before the world. This fact sufficiently excuses the present addition to the stock; and as serious English Grammars have hitherto failed to effect the desired reformation, we are induced to attempt it by means of a Comic one.

With regard to the moral tendency of our labors, we may be here permitted to remark, that they will tend, if successful, to the suppression of *evil speaking*; and as the Spartans used to exhibit a tipsy slave to their children with a view to disgust them with drunkenness, so we, by giving a few examples here and there, of incorrect phraseology, shall expose, in their naked deformity, the vices of speech to the ingenious reader.

The comical mind, like the jaundiced eye, views everything through a colored medium. Such a mind is that of the generality of our countrymen. We distinguish even the nearest ties of relationship by facetious names. A father is called "dad," or "poppa;" an uncle, "nunkey and a wife, a "rib," or more pleasantly still, as in the advertisements for situations, "an encumbrance."

We will not allow a man to give an old woman a dose of rhubarb if he have not acquired at least half a dozen sciences; but we permit a quack to sell as much poison as he pleases. When one man runs away with another's wife, and, being on that account challenged to fight a duel, shoots the aggrieved party through the head, the latter is said to receive *satisfaction*.

We never take a glass of wine at dinner without getting somebody else to do the same, as if we wanted encouragement; and then, before we venture to drink, we bow to each other across the table, preserving all the while a most wonderful gravity. This, however, it may be said, is the natural result of endeavoring to keep one another in countenance.

The way in which we imitate foreign manners and customs is very amusing. Savages stick fish-bones through their noses; our fair countrywomen have hoops of metal poked through their ears. The Caribs flatten the forehead; the Chinese compress the foot; and we possess similar contrivances for reducing the figure of a young lady to a resemblance to an hour-glass or a devil-on-two-sticks.

There being no other assignable motive for these and the like proceedings, it is reasonable to suppose that they are adopted, as schoolboys say, "for fun."

We could go on, were it necessary, adducing facts to an almost unlimited extent; but we consider that enough has now been said in proof of the comic character of the national mind. And in conclusion, if any other than an English or American author can be produced, equal in point of wit, humor, and drollery, to Swift, Sterne, Dickens, or Paulding, we hereby engage to eat him; albeit we have no pretensions to the character of a "helluo librorum."

"English Grammar," according to Lindley Murray, "is the art of speaking and writing the English language with propriety."

The English language, written and spoken with propriety, is commonly called the King's English.

A monarch, who, three or four generations back, occupied the English throne, is reported to have said, "If beebles will be boets, they must sdarve." This was a rather curious specimen of "King's English." It is, however, a maxim of English law, that "the King can do no wrong." Whatever bad English, therefore, may proceed from the royal mouth, is not "King's English," but "Minister's English," for which they alone are responsible.

King's English (or perhaps, under existing circumstances it should be called, *Queen's English*) is the current coin of conversation, to mutilate which, and unlawfully to *utter* the same, is called *clipping* the King's English; a high crime and misdemeanor. Clipped English, or bad English, is one variety of Comic English, of which we shall adduce instances hereafter.

Slipslop, or the erroneous substitution of one word for another, as "prodigy" for "protegee," "derangement" for "arrangement," "exasperate" for "aspirate," and the like, is another.

Slang, which consists in cant words and phrases, as "dodge" for "sly trick," "no go" for "failure," and "camey" "to flatter," may be considered a third.

Latinised English, or Fine English, sometimes assumes the character of Comic English, especially when applied to the purposes of common discourse; as "Extinguish the luminary," "Agitate the coramunicator," "Are your corporeal functions in a condition of salubrity?" "A sable visual orb," "A sanguinary nasal protuberance."

American English is Comic English in a "*pretty particular considerable tarnation*" degree.

English Grammar is divided into four parts-Orthography, Etymology, Syntax, and Prosody; and as these are points that a good grammarian always stands upon, he, particularly when a pedant, and consequently somewhat *flat*, may very properly be compared to a table.

PART I. ORTHOGRAPHY

CHAPTER I. OF THE NATURE OF THE LETTERS, AND OF A COMIC ALPHABET

Orthography is like a schoolmaster, or instructor of youth. It teaches us the nature and powers of letters and the right method of spelling words.

Comic Orthography teaches us the oddity and absurdities of *letters*, and the wrong method of spelling words. The following is an example of Comic Orthography: —

islinton foteenth of my Deer jemes february 1844.

wen fust i sawed yu doun the middle and up agin att the bawl i maid Up my Mind to skure you for my oan for i Felt at once that my appiness was at Steak, and a sensashun in my Bussum

I coudent no ways accom For. And i said to mary at missis

Iggines said i theres the Mann for my money o ses Shee i nose a Sweeter Yung Man than that Air Do you sez i Agin then there we Agree To Differ, and we was sittin by the window and we wos very Neer fallin Out. my deer gemes Sins that

Nite i Ha vent slept a Wink and Wot is moor to the Porpus i'Have quit Lost my Happy tight and am gettin wus and wus witch i Think yu ort to pitty Mee. i am Tolled every Day that ime Gettin Thinner and a Jipsy sed that nothin wood

Cure me But a Ring.

i wos a Long time makin my Mind Up to right to You for of

Coarse i Says jemes will think me too forrad but this bein

Leep yere i thout ide Make a Plunge, leastways to aUThem as dont Want to Bee old Mades all their blessed lives, so my

Deer Jemes if yow want a Pardoner for Better or for wus nows

Your Time dont think i Behave despicable for tis my Luv for yu as makes Me take this Stepp. please to Burn this Letter when Red and excuse the scralls and Blotches witch is Caused by my Teers i remain till deth

Yure on Happy Vallentine *jane you No who.*

poscrip nex sunday Is my sunday out And i shall be Att the corner of Wite Street at a quawter pas Sevn.

Wen This U. C. remember Mee j. g.

Now, to proceed with Orthography, we may remark, that a letter is the least part of a word.

Of a *comic letter* an instance has already been given. Dr. Johnson's letter to Lord Chesterfield is a capital letter.

The letters of the Alphabet are the representatives of articulate sounds.

The Alphabet is a Republic of Letters.

There are many things in this world erroneously as well as vulgarly compared to "bricks." In the case of the letters of the Alphabet, however, the comparison is just; they constitute the fabric of a language, and grammar is the mortar. The wonder is that there should be so few of them. The English letters are twenty-six in number. There is nothing like beginning at the beginning; and we shall now therefore enumerate them, with the view also of rendering their insertion subsidiary to mythological instruction, in conformity with the plan on which some account of the Heathen Deities and ancient heroes is prefixed or subjoined to a Dictionary. We present the reader with a form of Alphabet composed in humble imitation of that famous one, which, while appreciable by the dullest

taste, and level to the meanest capacity, is nevertheless that by which the greatest minds have been agreeably inducted into knowledge.

THE ALPHABET

A, was Apollo, the god of the carol,
B, stood for Bacchus, astride on his barrel;
C, for good Ceres, the goddess of grist,
D, was Diana, that wouldn't be kiss'd;
E, was nymph Echo, that pined to a sound,
F, was sweet Flora, with buttercups crown'd;
G, was Jove's pot-boy, young Ganymede hight,
H, was fair Hebe, his barmaid so tight;
I, little Io, turn'd into a cow,
J, jealous Juno, that spiteful old sow;
K, was Kitty, more lovely than goddess or muse;
L, Lacocon – I wouldn't have been in *his* shoes!
M, was blue-eyed Minerva, with stockings to match,
N, was Nestor, with grey beard and silvery thatch;
O, was lofty Olympus, King Jupiter's shop,
P, Parnassus, Apollo hung out on its top;
Q, stood for Quirites, the Romans, to wit;
R, for rantipole Roscius, that made such a hit;
S, for Sappho, so famous for felo-de-se,
T, for Thales the wise, F. R. S. and M. D:
U, was crafty Ulysses, so artful a dodger,
V, was hop-a-kick Vulcan, that limping old codger;
Wenus-Venus I mean-with a W begins,
(Veil, if I ham a Cockney, wot need of your grins?)
X, was Xantippe, the scratch-cat and shrew,
Y, I don't know what Y was, whack me if I do!
Z was Zeno the Stoic, Zenobia the clever,
And Zoilus the critic, whose fame lasts forever.
Letters are divided into Vowels and Consonants.

The vowels are capable of being perfectly uttered by themselves. They are, as it were, independent members of the Alphabet, and like independent members elsewhere, form a small minority. The vowels are *a, e, i, o, u*, and sometimes *w* and *y*.

An I. O. U. is a more pleasant thing to have, than it is to give.

A blow in the stomach is very likely to W up.

W is a consonant when it begins a word, as "Wicked

Will Wiggins whacked his wife with a whip but in every other place it is a vowel, as crawling, drawling, sawney, screwing, Jew. Y follows the same rule.

A consonant is an articulate sound; but, like an old bachelor, if it exists alone, it exists to no purpose.

It cannot be perfectly uttered without the aid of a vowel; and even then the vowel has the greatest share in the production of the sound. Thus a vowel joined to a consonant becomes, so to speak, a "better half: " or at all events very strongly resembles one.

A diphthong is the union of two vowels in one sound, as *ea* in heavy, *eu* in Meux, *ou* in stout.

A triphthong is a similar union of three vowels, as *eau* in the word *beau*; a term applied to dandies, and addressed to geese: probably because they are birds of a feather.

A proper diphthong is that in which the sound is formed by both the vowels: as, *aw* in *awkward*, *ou* in *lout*.

An improper diphthong is that in which the sound is formed by one of the vowels only, as *ea* in *heartless*, *oa* in *hoax*.

According to our notions there are a great many improper diphthongs in common use. By improper diphthongs we mean vowels unwarrantably dilated into diphthongs, and diphthongs mispronounced, in defiance of good English.

For instance, the rustics and dandies say,

"Loor! whaut a foine gaal! Moy oy!"

"Whaut a precious soight of crows!"

"As I was a cornin' whoam through the corn fiddles (fields) I met Willum Jones."

"I sor (saw) him."

"Dror (draw) it out."

"Hold your jor (jaw)."

"I caun't. You shaun't. How's your Maw and Paw? Do you like taut (tart)?"

We have heard young ladies remark, —

"Oh, my! What a naice young man!"

"What a bee – eautiful day!"

"Im so fond of dayncing!"

Again, dandies frequently exclaim, —

"I'm postively tiawed (tired)."

"What a sweet tempaw! (temper)."

"How daughty (dirty) the streets au!"

And they also call, —

Literature, "literetchah."

Perfectly, "pawfacly."

Disgusted, "disgasted."

Sky, "ske – eye."

Blue, "ble – ew."

We might here insert a few remarks on the nature of the human voice, and of the mechanism by means of which articulation is performed; but besides our dislike to prolixity, we are afraid of getting *down in the mouth*, and thereby going the *wrong way* to please our readers. We may nevertheless venture to invite attention to a few comical peculiarities in connection with articulate sounds.

Ahem! at the commencement of a speech, is a sound agreeably droll.

The vocal comicalities of the infant in arms are exceedingly laughable, but we are unfortunately unable to spell them.

The articulation of the Jew is peculiarly ridiculous. The "peoplesh" are badly spoken of, and not well spoken.

Bawling, croaking, hissing, whistling, and grunting, are elegant vocal accomplishments.

Lisping, as, thweet, Dthooliur, thawming, kweechau, is by some considered interesting, by others absurd.

But of all the sounds which proceed from the human mouth, by far the funniest are Ha! ha! ha! – Ho! ho! ho! and He! he! he!

CHAPTER II. OF SYLLABLES

Syllable is a nice word, it sounds so much like syllabub!

A syllable, whether it constitute a word or part of a word, is a sound, either simple or compound, produced by one effort of the voice, as, "O! what, a lark! – Here, we, are!"

Spelling is the art of putting together the letters which compose a syllable, or the syllables which compose a word.

Comic spelling is usually the work of imagination.

The chief rule to be observed in this kind of spelling, is, to spell every word as it is pronounced; though the rule is not universally observed by comic spellers. The following example, for the genuineness of which we can vouch, is one so singularly apposite, that although we have already submitted a similar specimen of orthography to the reader, we are irresistibly tempted to make a second experiment on his indulgence. The epistolary curiosity, then, which we shall now proceed to transcribe, was addressed by a patient to his medical adviser.

"Sir,

"My Granmother was very much trubeld With the Gout and dide with it my father was also and dide with it when i was 14

years of age i was in the habbet of Gettin whet feet Every

Night by pumping water out of a Celler Wich Cas me to have the tipes fever wich Cas my Defness when i was 23 of age i fell in the Water betwen the ice and i have Bin in the habbet of Gettin wet when traviling i have Bin trubheld with

Gout for seven years

"Your most humbel

"Servent

Among the various kinds of spelling may be enumerated spelling for a favor; or giving what is called a broad hint.

Certain rules for the division of words into syllables are laid down in some grammars, and we should be very glad to follow the established usage, but limited as we are by considerations of comicality and space, we cannot afford to give more than two very general directions. If you do not know how to spell a word, look it out in the dictionary, and if you have no dictionary by you, write the word in such a way, that, while it may be guessed at, it shall not be legible.

CHAPTER III. OF WORDS IN GENERAL

There is no one question that we are aware of more puzzling than this, "What is your opinion of *things* in general?" *Words* in general are, fortunately for us, a subject on which the formation of an opinion is somewhat more easy. Words stand for things: they are a sort of counters, checks, bank-notes, and sometimes, indeed, they are *notes* for which people get a great deal of money. Such words, however, are, alas! not generally English words, but Italian. Strange! that so much should be given for a mere song. It is quite clear that the givers, whatever may be their pretensions to a refined or literary taste, must be entirely unacquainted with *Wordsworth*.

Fine words are oily enough, and he who uses them is vulgarly said to "cut it fat;" but for all that it is well known that they will not butter parsnips.

Some say that words are but wind: for this reason, when people are having words, it is often said, that "the wind's up."

Different words please different people. Philosophers are fond of hard words; pedants of tough words, long words, and crackjaw words; bullies, of rough words; boasters, of big words; the rising generation, of slang words; fashionable people, of French words; wits, of sharp words and smart words; and ladies, of nice words, sweet words, soft words, and soothing words; and, indeed, of words in general.

Words (when spoken) are articulate sounds used by common consent as signs of our ideas.

A word of one syllable is called a Monosyllable: as, you, are, a, great, oaf.

A word of two syllables is named a Dissyllable; as, cat-gut, mu-sic.

A word of three syllables is termed a Trisyllable; as, Mag-net-ism, Mum-mer-y.

A word of four or more syllables is entitled a Polysyllable; as, in-ter-mi-na-ble cir-cum-lo-cu-ti-on, ex-as-pe-ra-ted, func-ti-o-na-ry, met-ro-po-li-tan, ro-tun-di-ty.

Words of more syllables than one are sometimes comically contracted into one syllable; as, in s'pose for suppose, b'lieve for believe, and 'scuse for excuse: here, perhaps, 'buss, abbreviated from omnibus, deserves to be mentioned.

In like manner, many long words are elegantly trimmed and shortened; as, ornary for ordinary, 'stornary for extraordinary, and curocity for curiosity; to which mysterus for mysterious may also be added.

Polysyllables are an essential element in the sublime, both in poetry and in prose; but especially in that species of the sublime which borders very closely on the ridiculous; as,

"Aldiborontiphoscophormio,

Where left's thou Chrononhotonthologos?

All words are either primitive or derivative. A primitive word is that which cannot be reduced to any simpler word in the language; as, brass, York, knave. A derivative word, under the head of which compound words are also included, is that which may be reduced to another and a more simple word in the English language; as, brazen, Yorkshire, knavery, mud-lark, lighterman. Broadbrim is a derivative word; but it is one often applied to a very *primitive* kind of person.

PART II. ETYMOLOGY

CHAPTER I. A COMICAL VIEW OF THE PARTS OF SPEECH

Etymology teaches the varieties, modifications, and derivation of words.

The derivation of words means that which they come from *as words*; for what they come from *as sounds*, is another matter. Some words come from the heart, and then they are pathetic; others from the nose, in which case they are ludicrous. The funniest place, however, from which words can come is the stomach. By the way, the Mayor would do well to keep a ventriloquist, from whom, at a moment's notice, he might ascertain the voice of the corporation.

Comic Etymology teaches us the varieties, modifications, and derivation, of words invested with a comic character.

Grammatically speaking, we say that there are, in English, as many sorts of words as a cat is said to have lives, nine; namely, the Article, the Substantive or Noun, the Adjective, the Pronoun, the Verb, the Adverb, the Preposition, the Conjunction, and the Interjection.

Comically speaking, there are a great many sorts of words which we have not room enough to particularise j individually. We can therefore only afford to classify them. For instance; there are words which are spoken in the *Low Countries*, and are *High Dutch* to persons of quality.

Words in use amongst all those who have to do with horses.

Words that pass between rival cab-men.

Words spoken in a state of intoxication.

Words uttered under excitement.

Words of endearment, addressed by parents to children in arms.

Similar words, sometimes called burning, tender, soft, and broken words, addressed to young ladies, and whispered, lisped, sighed, or drawled, according to circumstances.

Words of honor; as, tailors' words and shoemakers' words; which, like the above-mentioned, or lovers' words, are very often broken.

With many other sorts of words, which will be readily suggested by the reader's fancy.

But now let us go on with the parts of speech.

1. An Article is a word prefixed to substantives to point them out, and to show the extent of their meaning; as, *a dandy, an ape, the simpleton*.

One kind of comic article is otherwise denominated an oddity, or queer article.

Another kind of comic article is often to be met with in some of our monthly magazines.

2. A Substantive or Noun is the name of anything that exists, or of which we have any notion; as, *tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, apothecary, ploughboy, thief*.

Now the above definition of a substantive is Lindley Murray's, not ours. We mention this, because we have an objection, though, not, perhaps, a serious one, to urge against it; for, in the first place, we have "no notion" of impudence, and yet impudence is a substantive; and, in the second, we invite attention to the following piece of Logic,

A substantive is something,

But nothing is a substantive;

Therefore, nothing is something.

A substantive may generally be known by its taking an article before it, and by its making sense of itself; as, *a treat, the mulligrubs, an ache*.

3. An Adjective is a word joined to a substantive to denote its quality; as a *ragged* regiment, an *odd* set.

You may distinguish an adjective by its making sense with the word thing: as, a *poor* thing, a *sweet* thing, a *cool* thing; or with any particular substantive, as a *ticklish* position, an *awkward* mistake, a *strange* step.

4. A Pronoun is a word used in lieu of a noun, in order to avoid tautology: as, "The man wants calves; *he* is a lath; *he* is a walking-stick."

5. A Verb is a word which signifies to be, to do, or to suffer: as, I am; I calculate; I am fixed.

A verb may usually be distinguished by its making sense with a personal pronoun, or with the word to before it: as I yell, he grins, they caper; or to drink, to smoke, to chew.

Fashionable accomplishments!

Certain substantives are, with peculiar elegance, and by persons who call themselves *genteel*, converted into verbs: as, "Do you *wine*?" "Will you *liquor*?"

6. An Adverb is a part of speech which, joined to a verb, an adjective, or another adverb, serves to express quality or circumstance concerning it: as, "She swears *dreadfully*; she is *incorrigibly* lazy; and she is *almost continually* in liquor."

7. An Adverb is generally characterised by answering to the question, How?'how much? when? or where? as in the verse, "*Merrily* danced the Quaker's wife," the answer to the question, How did she dance? is, merrily.

8. Prepositions serve to connect words together, and to show the relation between them: as, "Off *with* his head, so much *for* Buckingham!"

9. A Conjunction is used to connect not only words, but sentences also: as, Smith *and* Jones are happy *be- cause* they are single. A miss is *as* good *as* a mile.

10. An Interjection is a short word denoting passion or emotion: as, '*Oh*, Sophonisba! Sophonisba, *oh*!' Pshaw! Pish! Pooh! Bah! Ah! Au! Eughph! Yaw! Hum! Ha! Lauk! La! Lor! Heigho! Well! There! &c.

Among the foregoing interjections there may, perhaps, be some unhonored by the adoption of genius, and unknown in the domains of literature. For the present notice of them some apology may be required, but little will be given; their insertion may excite astonishment, but their omission would have provoked complaint: though unprovided with a Johnsonian title to a place in the English vocabulary, they have long been recognised by the popular voice; and let it be remembered, that as custom supplies the defects of legislation, so that which is not sanctioned by magisterial authority may nevertheless be justified by vernacular usage.

CHAPTER II. OF THE ARTICLES

The Articles in English are two, *a* and *the*; *a* becomes *an* before a vowel, and before an *h* which is not sounded: as, *an* exquisite, *an* hour-glass. But if the *h* be pronounced, the *a* only is used: as, *a* homicide, *a* homoeopathist, *a* hum.

A or *an* is called the indefinite article, because it is used, in a vague sense, to point out some one thing belonging to a certain kind, but in other respects indeterminate; as,

"A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!"

So say grammarians. Eating-house keepers tell a different story. A cheese, in common discourse, means an object of a certain shape, size, weight, and so on, entire and perfect; so that to call half a cheese a cheese, would constitute a flaw in an indictment against a thief who had stolen one. But a waiter will term a fraction, or a modicum of cheese, a cheese; a plate-full of pudding, a pudding; and a stick of celery, *a salary*. Here we are reminded of the famous exclamation of one of these gentry: – "Sir! there's two teas and a brandy-and-water just sloped without paying!" *The* is termed the definite article, inasmuch as it denotes what particular thing or things are meant as,

"*The* miller he stole corn,

The weaver he stole yarn,

And the little tailor he stole broad-cloth

To keep the three rogues warm."

A substantive to which no article is prefixed is taken in a general sense; as, "Applesauce is proper for goose that is, for all geese.

A few additional remarks may advantageously be made with respect to the articles. The mere substitution of the definite for the indefinite article is capable of changing entirely the meaning of a sentence. "That is *a* ticket" is the assertion of a certain fact; but "That is *the* ticket!" means something which is quite different.

The article is not prefixed to a proper name; as, Stubbs, Wiggins, Brown or Hobson, except for the sake of distinguishing a particular family, or description of persons; as, He is *a* Burke; that is, one of the Burkes, or *a* person resembling Burke.

The definite article is frequently used with adverbs in the comparative and superlative degree: as, "*The* longer I live, *the* taller, I grow or, as we have all heard the showman say, "This here, gentlemen and ladies, is the vonderful heagle of the sun; the 'otterer it grows, the higherer he flies!"

CHAPTER III

SECTION I. OF SUBSTANTIVES IN GENERAL

Substantives are either proper or common

Proper names, or substantives, are the names belonging to individuals: as William, Birmingham. These are sometimes converted into nicknames, of improper names: as Bill, Brummagem.

Common names, or substantives, denote kinds containing many sorts, or sorts containing many individual» under them: as brute, beast, bumpkin, cherub, infant, goblin, &c.

Proper names, when an article is prefixed to them, are employed as common names: as, "They thought him a perfect *Chesterfield*; he quite astonished the *Browns*."

Common names, on the other hand, are made to denote individuals, by the addition of articles or pronouns: as,

"There was *a* little man, and he had little gun."

"*That* boy will be the death of me!"

Substantives are considered according to gender, number, and case; they are all of the third person when spoken *of*, and of the second when spoken *to*; as,

Matilda, fairest maid, who art

In countless bumpers toasted,

O let thy pity baste the heart

Thy fatal charms have roasted!

SECTION II. OF GENDER

The distinction between nouns with regard to sex is called Gender. There are three genders: the Masculine, the Feminine, and the Neuter.

The masculine gender belongs to animals of the male kind: as, a fop, a jackass, a boar, a poet, a lion.

The feminine gender is peculiar to animals of the female kind: as, a poetess, a lioness, a goose.

The neuter gender is that of objects which are neither males nor females: as, a toast, a tankard, a pot, a pipe, a pudding, a pie, a sausage, &c. &c. &c.

We might go on to enumerate an infinity of objects of the neuter gender, of all sorts and kinds; but in the selection of the foregoing examples we have been guided by two considerations: —

1. The desire of exciting agreeable emotions in the mind of the reader.

2. The wish to illustrate the following proposition, "That almost everything nice is also neuter."

Except, however, a nice young lady, a nice duck, and one or two other nice things, which we do not at present remember.

Some neuter substantives are by a figure of speech converted into the masculine or feminine gender: thus we say of the sun, that when he shines upon a Socialist, t he shines upon a thief; and of the moon, that she affects the minds of lovers.

There are certain nouns with which notions of strength, vigor, and the like qualities, are more particularly connected; and these are the neuter substantives which are figuratively rendered masculine. On the other hand, beauty, amiability, and so forth, are held to invest words with a feminine character. Thus the sun is said to be masculine, and the moon feminine. But for our own part, and

our view is confirmed by the discoveries of astronomy, we believe that the sun is called masculine from his supporting and sustaining the moon, and finding her the wherewithal to shine away as she does of a night, when all quiet people are in bed; and from his being obliged to keep such a family of stars besides.

The moon, we think, is accounted feminine, because she is thus maintained and kept up in her splendor, like a fine lady, by her husband the sun. Furthermore, the moon is continually changing; on which account alone she might be referred to the feminine gender. The earth is feminine, tricked out, as she is, with gems and flowers. Cities and towns are likewise feminine, because there are as many windings, turnings, and little odd corners in them as there are in the female mind. A ship is feminine, inasmuch as she is blown about by every wind. Virtue is feminine by courtesy. Fortune and misfortune, like mother and daughter, are both feminine. The Church is feminine, because she is married to the state; or married to the state because she is feminine – we do not know which. Time is masculine, because he is so trifled with by the ladies.

The English language distinguishes the sex in three manners; namely,

1. By different words; as,

MALE. FEMALE.

Bachelor Maid.

Brother Sister.

Wizard Father And several other

Witch Mother, &c.

Words we don't mention,

(Pray pardon the crime,)

Worth your attention,

But wanting in rhyme.

2. By a difference of termination; as,

MALE. FEMALÉ.

Poet Poetess.

Lion Lioness, &c.

3. By a noun, pronoun, or adjective being prefixed to the substantive;

as, male. female.

A cock-lobster A hen-lobster.

A jack-ass A jenny-ass (vernacular.)

A man-servant, A maid-servant, or flunkey. or Abigail.

A male flirt (A common animal) A female flirt (A rare animal.)

We have heard it said, that every Jack has his Jill. That may be; but it is by no means true that every cock has his hen; for there is a

Cock-swain, but no Hen-swain.

Cock-eye, but no Hen-eye.

Cock-ade, but no Hen-ade.

Cock-atrice, but no Hen-atrice.

Cock-horse, but no Hen-horse.

Cock-ney, but no Hen-ney.

Then we have a weather-cock, but no weather-hen; a tum-cock, but no turn-hen; and many a jolly cock, but not one jolly hen; unless we except some of those by whom their mates are pecked.

Some words; as, parent, child, cousin, friend, neighbour, servant and several others, are either male or female, according to circumstances.

It is a great pity that our language is so poor in the terminations that denote gender. Were we to say of a woman that she is a rogue, a knave, a scamp, or a vagabond, we feel that we should use, not only strong but improper expressions. Yet we have no corresponding terms to apply, in case of

necessity, to the female. Why is this? Doubtless because we never want them. For the same reason, our forefathers transmitted to us the words, philosopher, astronomer, philologer, and so forth, without any feminine equivalent. Alas! for the wisdom of our ancestors! They never calculated on the March of Intellect.

SECTION III. OF NUMBER

Number is the consideration of an object as one or more; as, one poet, two, three, four, five poets; and so on, ad infinitum.

The singular number expresses one object only; as a towel, a viper.

The plural signifies more objects than one; as, towels, vipers.

Some nouns are used only in the singular number; dirt, pitch, tallow, grease, filth, butter, asparagus, &c.; others only in the plural; as, galligaskins, breeches, &c.

Some words are the same in both numbers; as, sheep, swine, and some others.

The plural number of nouns is usually formed by adding *s* to the singular; as, dove, doves, love, loves, &c.

Julia, dove returns to dove,

Quid pro quo, and love for love;

Happy in our mutual loves,

Let us live like turtle doves!

When, however, the substantive singular ends in *x*, *ch softy sh*, *ss*, or *s*, we add *es* in the plural.

But remember, though box

In the plural makes boxes,

That the plural of ox

Should be *oxen*, not oxes.

SECTION IV. OF CASE

There is nearly as much difference between Latin and English substantives, with respect to the number of cases pertaining to each, as there is between a quack-doctor and a physician; for while in Latin sub-stantives have six cases, in English they have but three. But the analogy should not be strained too far; for the fools in the world (who furnish the quack with his cases) more than double the number of the wise.

The cases of substantives are these: the Nominative, the Possessive or Genitive, and the Objective or Accusative.

The Nominative Case merely expresses the name of a thing, or the subject of the verb: as, "The doctors differ;" – "The patient dies!"

Possession, which is nine points of the law, is what is signified by the Possessive Case. This case is distinguished by an apostrophe, with the letter *s* subjoined to it: as, My soul's idol!" – "A pudding's end."

But when the plural ends in *s*, the apostrophe only is retained, and the other *s* is omitted: as, "The Ministers' Step;" – "The Rogues' March;" – "Crocodiles' tears – "Butchers' mourning."

When the singular terminates in *ss*, the letter *s* is sometimes, in like manner, dispensed with: as, "For goodness' sake!" – "For righteousness' sake!" Nevertheless, we have no objection to "Burgess's" Stout.

The Objective Case follows a verb active, and expresses the object of an action, or of a relation: as "Spring beat Bill;" that is, Bill or "William Neate." Hence, perhaps, the phrase, "I'll lick you elegant." The Objective Case is also used with a preposition: as, "You are in a mess."

English substantives may be declined in the following manner:

SINGULAR

What is the nominative case
Of her who used to wash your face,
Your hair to comb, your boots to lace?
A mother!
What the possessive?
Whose the slap
That taught you not to spill your pap,
Or to avoid a like mishap!
A mother's!
And shall I the objective show?
What do I hear where'er I go?
How is your? – whom they mean I know,
My mother!

PLURAL

Who are the anxious watchers o'er
The slumbers of a little bore,
That screams whene'er it doesn't snore?
Why, mothers! Whose pity wipes its piping eyes,
And stills maturer childhood's cries,
Stopping its mouth with cakes and pies?
Oh! mother's!
And whom, when master, fierce and fell,
Dusts truant varlets' jackets well,
Whom do they, roaring, run and tell?
Their mothers!

CHAPTER IV. OF ADJECTIVES

SECTION I. OF THE NATURE OF ADJECTIVES AND THE DEGREES OF COMPARISON

An English Adjective, whatever may be its gender, number, or case, like a rusty weathercock, never varies. Thus we say, "A certain cabinet; certain rogues." But as a rusty weathercock may vary in being more or less rusty, so an adjective varies in the degrees of comparison.

The degrees of comparison, like the Genders, the Graces, the Fates, the Kings of Cologne, the Weird Sisters, and many other things, are three; the Positive, the Comparative, and the Superlative.

The Positive state simply expresses the quality of an object; as, fat, ugly, foolish.

The Comparative degree increases or lessens the signification of the positive; as fatter, uglier, more foolish, less foolish.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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