THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE, CONTAINING PRACTICAL RULES FOR ACQUIRING A KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649670437

The Philosophy of Language, Containing Practical Rules for Acquiring a Knowledge of English Grammar by William Cramp

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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WILLIAM CRAMP

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Trieste

AN ILLUSTRATION OF PREPOSITIONS.

1. Down.	7. Above.	13. About.	19. After.	25. Through.	31. Below.	
2. To.	8. Into.	14. Against.	20. Betwixt.	26. Beyond.	32. Over.	
3. From.	9. In.	15. Within.	21. Near.	27. To.	33. Before.	
4. Between.	10. On.	16. Without.	22. Under.	28. From.	34. Amidst.	
5. Upon.	11. Out Of.	17. Beside.	23. Along.	29. At.	35. Among.	
6. Up.	12. Out.	18. Away.	24. Across.	30. Above.	36. Behind.	

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OF

ENGLISH GRAMMAR,

WITH REMARKS ON THE PRINCIPLES OF SYNTAX AND COMPOSITION.

BY WILLIAM CRAMP,
AUTHOR OF "JUNIUS DISCOVERED," &c.

"Though Grammar be usually amongst the first things taught, it is always one of the last understood."—TOOKE.

LONDON:
RELFE AND FLETCHER, 17, CORNHILL.

1838.

PREFACE.

KNOWLEDGE is the birthright of man; but the means and opportunities of acquiring it are available only to a very limited extent by the subordinate classes of society. These privations might be lamented, if the happiness of those who toil depended on a participation of that mental and refined pleasure which scientific pursuits afford. The lowly, however, are often happy in their ignorance, because, in their rude and uncultivated state, their desires are circumscribed, and they feel less acutely the miseries of want and dependence. But there are many whose avocations are less constant and less laborious—many who have raised themselves by industry to comparative ease and affluence, and on the correctness of whose opinions the stability and good order of civilized society chiefly depend. These have sufficient leisure to cultivate their minds; and it is a duty they owe to themselves—to their dependents—and to their country—to claim their right to a share of that stock of knowledge which the industry of past ages has accumulated for the common benefit of posterity.

But there is a preliminary and indispensable acquirement to be secured, before the treasures of science and learning can be opened to their view. WRITTEN LANGUAGE must be understood; and it is not only necessary to become acquainted with those mute signs by which

thought is arrested in its fleeting progress, but every reader should also obtain a competent knowledge of the fundamental principles which regulate and determine the propriety of artificial language.

Hence *Grammar* is a subject of more importance than most persons are willing to admit; and though it has not the attractions which many other studies possess, still it would perhaps be difficult to name a science more extensive in its application, or more generally useful in directing the conduct of the understanding. Even those who appear to pay least attention to the arbitrary rules by which language is often controlled, are nevertheless compelled to observe the fundamental laws of speech; and though they may affect to despise a knowledge of the use of words, they too often betray their solicitude for grammatical accuracy, by their hesitation and confusion—for they feel, though they do not perhaps know, that SPEECH IS THE INDEX OF THE MIND.

It concerns every one, therefore, who is called upon to judge and act for himself, to possess the means by which alleged improprieties of diction may be corrected. This art grammarians profess to teach; but do the works of those writers always afford the means by which the learner may be enabled to decide for himself, on subjects which, perhaps, no individual has a right to determine for another? In answering this important question, we shall, hereafter, have occasion to claim the indulgence of the candid reader.

The primary object of this treatise on language is to render the principles of grammar easy, and the rules of syntax practically useful, to those who have in early life neglected the theory of speech. There are many, we feel convinced, who would willingly devote some portion of their leisure to the study of grammar, if the knowledge to be derived from works on that subject proved commensurate with the attention the science necessrilya demands;

but there are few *grown persons* who will not rather depend on their own judgment, than voluntarily submit to *learn the lessons* of grammarians.

To blend the philosophy of language with the best instructions of the best teachers is perhaps the surest means of attracting the attention of the self-educated reader. Such students do not wish to be taught, they desire only to be informed; and it may be presumed that one who has experienced similar difficulties knows better the kind of information they require than more learned writers on the subject. Whether we have supplied such information must be left to the decision of that class of our readers.

The liberty we have taken with the writings of the learned, will probably subject us to still severer criticism; but we ask no favour for the errors we have committed. The works of writers on language are the fittest for the selection of grammatical inaccuracies, for grammarians at least ought to attend to the rules they inculcate. It was not, however, from any invidious motive, but from a principle of justice, that we in general gave their blunders the preference to those of less reputable writers.

But there is one class of readers whose disapprobation we may expect, and whose commendation would be no proof of the practical utility of this volume.—We mean those persons who learn the principles of a science, as many learn the words of an Italian song, merely that they may be able to repeat a given number of sounds, without caring to understand the meaning of the writer. Such readers are impatient to became learned at an easy rate, and esteem that instruction the best which is soonest committed to memory. They are unwilling to bestow the thought and attention which an abstruse subject demands, and without which *scientific practical knowledge* can never be acquired. It matters not, therefore, what system of grammar such persons adopt; for as they are too indolent,

or too incapable, to think for themselves, they must after all be contented to imitate the phraseology of others.

But if the hitherto superficial reasoner should be inclined to apply himself seriously to the study of this indispensable science, he may still ask, "Must we be constantly thinking of our grammar whenever we speak or write?" It may be answered, certainly not. This mistaken notion has perhaps made more bad speakers and bad writers than a total want of a knowledge of grammar. The subject, and what he intends to say concerning it, ought solely to occupy the attention of the speaker or writer during the time he is employed in forming his sentences. Those who write best are probably those who think least about the choice of words or the structure of sentences *while* they are composing. The mind will in general suggest the preferable words and phrases; and the writer, having previously acquired a competent knowledge of the principles of language, will be prevented from committing gross improprieties. The practice of grammar is chiefly useful in enabling any one *to correct* errors that *have been committed* in speaking or in writing. Those, therefore, who understand the theory of language, have acquired the means of applying the rules by which grammatical accuracy is regulated. But it is not essential that those rules should be "learnt by heart;" the anomalies only require to be committed to memory.

In the arrangement of the Etymological Chapters of this volume, the syntax and construction of each part of speech have been connected with the etymology of the word. Whatever was considered useful to the uninformed student, has also been included; and an illustration or two containing words classed under each particular part of speech have been added, in order that those who wish to acquire the science may have the means at hand of ascertaining the progress they make in the knowledge of words. These lessons (if they must be so called,) are progressive,

and may be repeated as the learner proceeds with the subsequent chapters. The selections are such as will not, it is hoped, displease even our better informed readers.

As regards the *philosophy* of this volume, we cannot reasonably expect a uniformly favourable opinion. Some may think that the remarks contain too much of the theory of language, and that the author has too often indulged in controversial disquisitions; but before his readers form their decided opinion upon these points, they are requested to examine whether the philosophy of the language has not been made subservient to the practical utility of the rules of grammar, and whether the controverted questions do not merit the calm consideration of all who desire to be informed on this subject.

It would have been easy for the writer to have given a greater appearance of originality to this treatise, by adopting as his own the valuable extracts which he has selected from the works of his predecessors, but he feels well assured that such remarks will have more weight in their original language. Whenever it has been possible to trace the author, the benefit of his assistance has been acknowledged. This could not be always attended to in selecting the rules of syntax. These have long been considered the property of every writer on language, therefore whenever they have been clearly expressed, they have frequently been taken verbatim from grammarians.

As the principal design of this work is to instruct the English scholar, it would justly be considered inconsistent to refer for proofs and examples to the learned languages, or to aim at a display of deep research. That the latter might have been accomplished by one with very little pretensions to learning our classical readers will admit, for the author has found some difficulty in avoiding any appearance of this parade of learning. His constant endeavour has been to simplify and render intelligible an abstruse science, and if possible to shew that a knowledge