

## ADVERTISEMENT.

4. The Syntax of every British Grammar that I have seen, is extremely imperfect. There are many English phrases which are perfectly well established and correct, which are not brought within the rules; and of course they cannot be parsed or resolved by the student.

5. There are several false rules of construction which mislead the learner; rules which are in direct opposition to the practice of the best writers.

6. There are some phrases or modes of expression, frequently used by authors, which are not good English, and which it is the business of the Grammarian to correct, but which are not noticed in any British Grammar. Some of these have been considered in the preceding Introduction.

There is a great difficulty in devising a correct classification of the several sorts of words; and probably no classification that shall be simple and at the same time philosophically correct, can be invented. There are some words that do not strictly fall under the description of any class yet devised. Many attempts have been made and are still making to remedy this evil; but such schemes as I have seen, do not, in my apprehension, correct the defects of the old schemes, nor simplify the subject. On the other hand, all that I have seen, serve only to obscure and embarrass the subject, by substituting new arrangements and new terms, which are as incorrect as the old ones, and less intelligible.

On the subject of the tenses of the verbs, for example, we may attempt philosophical accuracy, and say that there are, and there can be *three* tenses only, to express the natural division of time into *past*, *present*, and *future*. But a language which should have words to express these three divisions only, would be miserably imperfect. We want to express not only the *past*, the *present*, and the *future*, with respect to ourselves or the time of speaking and writing, but the *past* with respect to *other* times or events. When we say, *the mail will have arrived before sun-set*, we express not only a *future* event, at the time of speaking, but an event to be *past* before another event, the setting of the sun. Hence I have given to that form of words, the denomination of the *prior-future*. So of the past time. *He had delivered the letter, before I arrived*, denotes an event not only *past*, as to the time of speaking, but *past before* another event, my arrival. This tense I call the *prior-past*. These denominations, like the terms of the new chemistry, define themselves. The old names of the latter tense, *pluperfect* or *preterpluperfect*, more than finished or past, or beyond more than finished or past, I have discarded. These small alterations of the old system will, I hope, be well received.

If it should be said, that our verbs have not tenses, because they have not variations of termination to express them; I would reply, that this may be considered as a mistake, proceeding from an early bias, impressed upon us by the Greek and Latin forms of the tenses. A *tense* is a term intended to denote a form of verbs used for expressing time or some division of it, and it is just as properly applied to a *combination of words* for that purpose, as to a *modification* of the simple verb. The use of it is entirely arbitrary. *Locutus sum* are not the less a tense, because two words are employed. It is the *time* and not the form of words used to express it, which stamps propriety on the denomination.

If we attempt to dispense with some of the English tenses, by analyzing them, and resolving them into their primary elements, that is, parsing the words composing them, each distinctly, we shall meet with insuperable difficulties. Let a man attempt to make out the sense of this phrase, *he had been writing*, by analysing it. *Had* alone denotes *held*, *possessed*, as in the phrase, "*he had an estate in New York.*" Then in the phrase above, it will signify, *he held or possessed* been writing.

It is alledged that the auxiliary verbs are *not secondary*, but the *most important* verbs in the language. The point of importance must be determined by this fact, that by themselves they do not make complete sense; they leave the sense or affirmation imperfect. *He may, he can, he will, he shall*, are incomplete sentences, without another verb *expressed or understood*. They express nothing definite which is intended to be affirmed. When I ask, whether you can lend me a sum of money, and you reply, *I can*, the verb *lend* is understood. Not so with the verbs considered as *principal*. When I say, *I write, I walk*, the sense or affirmation is complete without the use of another verb. Hence it is with perfect propriety, that such verbs as can be used only in connection with others, should be considered as of a *secondary* character, and being used to aid in forming the tenses, they may very justly be denominated *auxiliars* or *auxiliaries*.

Some of our verbs are used either as principal or as auxiliary, as *have* and *will*; and *will* takes a different and regular form when principal; *I will, thou wilt, he willet, or wills* an estate or a legacy; but when auxiliary, *thou wilt, he will* bequeath his estate.