

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

be used as a substitute; as, "The rich have many friends"—"Associate with the wise and good"—"The future will resemble the past"—"Such is the opinion of the learned."

### Attributes or Adjectives.

Attributes or Adjectives, in grammar, are words which denote the qualities inherent in, or ascribed to things; as, a bright sun; a splendid equipage; a miserable hut; a magnificent house; an honest man; an amiable woman; liberal charity; false honor; a quiet conscience.

As qualities may exist in different degrees, which may be compared with each other, suitable modes of speech are devised to express these comparative degrees. In English, most attributes admit of three degrees of comparison, and a few admit of four. There are therefore four degrees of comparison.

The first denotes a slight degree of the quality, and is expressed by the termination *ish*; as, *reddish, brownish, yellowish*. This may be denominated the imperfect degree of the attribute.

The second denotes such a degree of the attribute as to constitute an absolute or distinct quality; as, *red, brown, great, small, brave, wise*. This is called the positive degree.

The third denotes a greater or less degree of a quality than exists in another object, with which it is compared; as, *greater, smaller, braver, wisest*. This is called the comparative degree.

The fourth denotes the utmost or least degree of a quality; as, *bravest, wisest, poorest, smallest*. This is called the superlative degree.

The imperfect degree is formed by adding *ish* to an attribute; as, *yellow, yellowish*. If the attribute ends in *e*, this vowel is omitted; as, *white, whitish*.

The comparative degree is formed by adding *r* to adjectives ending with *e*, as, *wise, wiser*; and by adding *er* to words ending with an articulation, as, *cold, colder*; or by prefixing *more* or *less*, as, *more just, less noble*.

The superlative degree is formed by adding *st* to attributes ending with *e*, as, *wise, wisest*; and to those which end with an articulation, as, *cold, coldest*; or by prefixing *most* and *least*, as, *most brave, least charitable*.

Every attribute, susceptible of comparison, may be compared by *more* and *most*, *less* and *least*.

All monosyllables admit of *er* and *est*, and dissyllables when the addition may be easily pronounced; as happy, happier, happiest; lofty, loftier, loftiest. But few words of more syllables than one will admit of *er* and *est*. Hence most attributes of more syllables than one are compared by *more* and *most*, *less* and *least*; as, *more lovable, most upright, less generous, least splendid*.

When attributes end in *y* after a consonant, this letter is dropped, and *i* substituted before *er* and *est*; as, *lofly, loftier, loftiest*.

A few attributes have different words or irregular terminations for expressing the degrees of comparison; as, *good, better, best; bad, evil, worse, worst; fore, former, first, more or less, lesser, less; much, more, most; near, nearer, nearest or next; old, older, oldest or eldest; late, later, latest or last*.

When qualities are incapable of increase or diminution, the words which express them do not admit of comparison. Such are the numerals, *first, second, third*, &c., and attributes of mathematical figures, as square, spherical, rectangular; for it will readily appear, that if a thing is *first* or *square*, it cannot be *more* or *less* so.

The sense of attributes however is not restricted to the modification, expressed by the common signs of comparison, but may be varied in an indefinite number of ways, by other words. Thus the attribute *very*, which is the French *très*, true, formerly written *veray*, is much used intensively to express a great degree of a quality, but not the greatest; as, *very wise or learned*. In like manner are used *much, far, extremely, exceedingly*, and most of the modifiers in *ly*.

Some attributes, from particular appropriate uses, have received names, by which they are distinguished. But the usual classification is by no means correct. The following distribution seems to result from the uses of the words named.

An *a*, or *the*, *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*, *other*, *mother*, *one*, *none*, *some*, may be called *definitives*, from their office, which is to limit or define the extent of the name to which they are prefixed, or to specify particulars.

*My, thy, her, our, your, their, and mine, thine*, his, when used as attributes, with names, are *possessive attributes*, as they denote possession or ownership. *Its* and *whose*, if ranked with attributes, belong to the same class.

*Each* and *every* are *distributives*, but they may be classed with the *definitives*.

*Either* is an *alternative*, as is *or*, which is now considered merely as a connective.

*Own* is an *intensive adjective*. The words to which *self* is affixed, *himself, myself, themselves, yourself, yourselves, ourselves, thyself, itself*, may be denominated *substitutes*, or for brevity, *intensives*. Or they may be called *compound substitutes*.

### Verb.

The verb is a primary part of speech, and next to the name or noun, is of the most importance. The uses of the verb are,

To affirm, assert, or declare; as, *the sun shines; John loves study; God is just*; and negatively, *avarice is not commendable*.

2d. To command, exhort or invite; as, *go, attend, let us observe*.

3d. To pray, request, entreat; as, *O may the spirit of grace dwell in us*.

4th. To inquire, or question; as, *does it rain? Will he come?*

From the various uses and significations of verbs, have originated several divisions or classes. The only one in English which seems to be correct and sufficiently comprehensive, is, into *transitive* and *intransitive*. To these may be added a combination of the verb *be*, with certain auxiliaries and participles, which is called a *passive verb*.\*

1. A *transitive verb* denotes action or energy, which is exerted upon some object, or in producing some effect. In natural construction, the word expressing the object, follows the verb, without the intervention of any other word, though the order may be sometimes varied. Thus, "ridicule provokes anger," is a complete proposition; *ridicule* is the agent or nominative word, which causes the action; *provokes* is the verb, or affirmation of an act; *anger* is the object or effect produced, following the transitive verb *provokes*.

"The wind propels a ship," is the affirmation of an act of the wind exerted on a ship. *Wind* is the agent; *propels*, the verb; and *ship*, the object.

2. An *intransitive verb* denotes simple being or existence in a certain state, as, *to be, to rest*; or it denotes action, which is limited to the subject. Thus, "John sleeps," is an affirmation, in which *John*, the nominative to *sleeps*, is the subject of the affirmation; *sleeps* is a verb intransitive, affirming a particular thing of *John*, which extends to no other object.

3. The *passive verb* in English is formed by adding certain auxiliaries and participles to the verb *be*. It denotes passion or suffering; that is, that the subject of the affirmation or nominative is affected by the action affirmed; as, "John is convinced"; "Laura is loved and admired."

In this form of the verb, the agent and object change places. In the transitive form the agent precedes the verb, and the object follows; as, "John has convinced Moses." In the passive form the order is changed, and the agent follows the verb preceded by a preposition; as, "Moses is convinced by John."

To correspond with their nominatives, verbs are used in both numbers, and with the three persons in each.

As action and being may be mentioned as present, past and future, verbs have modifications to express time, which are called *tenses*. And as action and being may be represented in various ways, verbs have various modifications to answer these purposes, called *modes* or *moods*. Hence to verbs belong person, number, tense and mode.

The persons, which have been already explained, are I, thou or you, he, she, it, in the singular number; in the plural, we, ye or you, they. The numbers have been before explained.

### Tenses.

There are six *tenses* or modifications of the verb to express time. Each of these is divided into two forms, for the purpose of distinguishing the *definite* or *precise* time from the *indefinite*. These may be thus explained and exemplified.

#### Present Tense, indefinite.

This form of the present tense affirms or denies action or being, in present time, without limiting it with exactness to a given point. It expresses also facts which exist generally, at all times, general truths, attributes which are permanent, habits, customary actions, and the like, without reference to a specific time; as, *God is infinitely great and just; man is imperfect and dependent; plants spring from the earth; birds fly; fishes swim*.

#### Present Tense, definite.

This form expresses the present time with exactness; usually denoting action or being which corresponds in time with another action; as, *I am writing, while you are waiting*.

#### Past Tense, indefinite.

This form of the past tense represents action which took place at a given time, however distant and completely past; as, "In six days, God created the heavens and the earth," "Alexander conquered the Persians," "Scipio was as virtuous as brave," "The Earl of Chatham was an eloquent statesman."

#### Past Tense, definite, [imperfect.]

This form represents an action as taking place and unfinished in some specified period of past time; as, "I was standing at the door when the procession passed."

\* The common distribution into *active, neuter* and *passive*, is very objectionable. Many of our neuter verbs imply action in a pre-eminent degree, such as *to run, to walk, to fly*; and the young learner cannot easily conceive why such verbs are not called *active*.