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**THE HISTORY OF GRAMMATICAL STUDY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

Курсовая работа

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**Introduction**

"Grammatica quid est? ars recte scribendi recteque loquendi; poetarum enarrationem continens; omnium Scientiarum fons uberrimus. \* \* \* Nostra atas parum perita rerum veterum, nimis brevi gyro grammaticum sepsit; at apud antiques olim tantum auctoritatis hic ordo habuit, ut censores essent et judices scriptorum omnium soli grammatici; quos ob id etiam Criticos vocabant."--DESPAUTER. \_Praf. ad Synt\_, fol. 1.

Such is the peculiar power of language, that there is scarcely any subject so trifling, that it may not thereby be plausibly magnified into something great; nor are there many things which cannot be ingeniously disparaged till they shall seem contemptible. Cicero goes further: "Nihil est tam incredibile quod non dicendo fiat probabile;"--"There is nothing so incredible that it may not by the power of language be made probable." The study of grammar has been often overrated, and still oftener injuriously decried. I shall neither join with those who would lessen in the public esteem that general system of doctrines, which from time immemorial has been taught as grammar; nor attempt, either by magnifying its practical results, or by decking it out with my own imaginings, to invest it with any artificial or extraneous importance.

I shall not follow the footsteps of *Neef,* who avers that, "Grammar and incongruity are identical things," and who, under pretence of reaching the same end by better means, scornfully rejects as nonsense every thing that others have taught under that name; because I am convinced, that, of all methods of teaching, none goes farther than his, to prove the reproachful assertion true. Nor shall I imitate the declamation of \_Cardell\_; who, at the commencement of his Essay, recommends the general study of language on earth, from the consideration that, "The faculty of speech is the medium of social bliss for superior intelligences in an eternal world;" [51] and who, when he has exhausted censure in condemning the practical instruction of others, thus lavishes praise, in both his grammars, upon that formless, void, and incomprehensible theory of his own: "This application of words," says he, "in their endless use, by one plain rule, to all things which nouns can name, instead of being the fit subject of blind cavil, \_is the most sublime theme presented to the intellect on earth. It is the practical intercourse of the soul at once with its God, and with all parts of his works!\_"--\_Cardell's Gram.\_, 12mo, p. 87; \_Gram.\_, 18mo, p. 49.

Here, indeed, a wide prospect opens before us; but he who traces science, and teaches what is practically useful, must check imagination, and be content with sober truth.

"For apt the mind or fancy is to rove Uncheck'd, and of her roving is no end."--MILTON.

Restricted within its proper limits, and viewed in its true light, the practical science of grammar has an intrinsic dignity and merit sufficient to throw back upon any man who dares openly assail it, the lasting stigma of folly and self-conceit. It is true, the judgements of men are fallible, and many opinions are liable to be reversed by better knowledge: but what has been long established by the unanimous concurrence of the learned, it can hardly be the part of a wise instructor now to dispute. The literary reformer who, with the last named gentleman, imagines "that the persons to whom the civilized world have looked up to for instruction in language were all wrong alike in the main points," [52] intends no middle course of reformation, and must needs be a man either of great merit, or of little modesty.

**1. English language**

The English language may now be regarded as the common inheritance of about fifty millions of people; who are at least as highly distinguished for virtue, intelligence, and enterprise, as any other equal portion of the earth's population. All these are more or less interested in the purity, permanency, and right use of that language; inasmuch as it is to be, not only the medium of mental intercourse with others for them and their children, but the vehicle of all they value, in the reversion of ancestral honour, or in the transmission of their own. It is even impertinent, to tell a man of any respectability, that the study of this his native language is an object of great importance and interest: if he does not, from these most obvious considerations, feel it to be so, the suggestion will be less likely to convince him, than to give offence, as conveying an implicit censure.

Every person who has any ambition to appear respectable among people of education, whether in conversation, in correspondence, in public speaking, or in print, must be aware of the absolute necessity of a competent knowledge of the language in which he attempts to express his thoughts. Many a ludicrous anecdote is told, of persons venturing to use words of which they did not know the proper application; many a ridiculous blunder has been published to the lasting disgrace of the writer; and so intimately does every man's reputation for sense depend upon his skill in the use of language, that it is scarcely possible to acquire the one without the other. Who can tell how much of his own good or ill success, how much of the favour or disregard with which he himself has been treated, may have depended upon that skill or deficiency in grammar, of which, as often as he has either spoken or written, he must have afforded a certain and constant evidence.[53]

I have before said, that to excel in grammar, is but to know better than others wherein grammatical excellence consists; and, as this excellence, whether in the thing itself, or in him that attains to it, is merely comparative, there seems to be no fixed point of perfection beyond which such learning may not be carried. In speaking or writing to different persons, and on different subjects, it is necessary to vary one's style with great nicety of address; and in nothing does true genius more conspicuously appear, than in the facility with which it adopts the most appropriate expressions, leaving the critic no fault to expose, no word to amend. Such facility of course supposes an intimate knowledge of all words in common use, and also of the principles on which they are to be combined.

With a language which we are daily in the practice of hearing, speaking, reading, and writing, we may certainly acquire no inconsiderable acquaintance, without the formal study of its rules. All the true principles of grammar were presumed to be known to the learned, before they were written for the aid of learners; nor have they acquired any independent authority, by being recorded in a book, and denominated grammar. The teaching of them, however, has tended in no small degree to settle and establish the construction of the language, to improve the style of our English writers, and to enable us to ascertain with more clearness the true standard of grammatical purity. He who learns only by rote, may speak the words or phrases which he has thus acquired; and he who has the genius to discern intuitively what is regular and proper, may have further aid from the analogies which he thus discovers; but he who would add to such acquisitions the satisfaction of knowing what is right, must make the principles of language his study.

To produce an able and elegant writer, may require something more than a knowledge of grammar rules; yet it is argument enough in favour of those rules, that without a knowledge of them no elegant and able writer is produced. Who that considers the infinite number of phrases which words in their various combinations may form, and the utter impossibility that they should ever be recognized individually for the purposes of instruction and criticism, but must see the absolute necessity of dividing words into classes, and of showing, by general rules of formation and construction, the laws to which custom commonly subjects them, or from which she allows them in particular instances to deviate? Grammar, or the art of writing and speaking, must continue to be learned by some persons; because it is of indispensable use to society. And the only question is, whether children and youth shall acquire it by a regular process of study and method of instruction, or be left to glean it solely from their own occasional observation of the manner in which other people speak and write.

The practical solution of this question belongs chiefly to parents and guardians. The opinions of teachers, to whose discretion the decision will sometimes be left, must have a certain degree of influence upon the public mind; and the popular notions of the age, in respect to the relative value of different studies, will doubtless bias many to the adoption or the rejection of this. A consideration of the point seems to be appropriate here, and I cannot forbear to commend the study to the favour of my readers; leaving every one, of course, to choose how much he will be influenced by my advice, example, or arguments. If past experience and the history of education be taken for guides, the study of English grammar will not be neglected; and the method of its inculcation will become an object of particular inquiry and solicitude. The English language ought to be learned at school or in colleges, as other languages usually are; by the study of its grammar, accompanied with regular exercises of parsing, correcting, pointing, and scanning; and by the perusal of some of its mostaccurate writers, accompanied with stated exercises in composition and elocution. In books of criticism, our language is already more abundant than any other. Some of the best of these the student should peruse, assoon as he can understand and relish them. Such a course, pursued with regularity and diligence, will be foundthe most direct way of acquiring an English style at once pure, correct, and elegant.

If any intelligent man will represent English grammar otherwise than as one of the most useful branches of study, he may well be suspected of having formed his conceptions of the science, not from what it really is in itself, but from some of those miserable treatises which only caricature the subject, and of which it is rather an advantage to be ignorant. But who is so destitute of good sense as to deny, that a graceful and easy conversation in the private circle, a fluent and agreeable delivery in public speaking, a ready and natural utterance in reading, a pure and elegant style in composition, are accomplishments of a very high order? And yet of all these, the proper study of English grammar is the true foundation. This would never be denied or doubted, if young people did not find, under some other name, better models and more efficient instruction, than what was practised on them for grammar in the school-room. No disciple of an able grammarian can ever speak ill of grammar, unless he belong to that class of knaves who vilify what they despair to reach.

By taking proper advantage of the ductility of childhood, intelligent parents and judicious teachers may exercise over the studies, opinions, and habits of youth a strong and salutary control; and it will seldom be found in experience, that those who have been early taught to consider grammatical learning as worthy and manly, will change their opinion in after life. But the study of grammar is not so enticing that it may be disparaged in the hearing of the young, without injury. What would be the natural effect of the following sentence, which I quote from a late well-written religious homily? "The pedagogue and his dunce may exercise their wits correctly enough, in the way of grammatical analysis, on some splendid argument, or burst of eloquence, or thrilling descant, or poetic rapture, to the strain and soul of which not a fibre in their nature would yield a vibration."--\_New-York Observer\_, Vol. ix, p. 73.

Would not the bright boy who heard this from the lips of his reverend minister, be apt the next day to grow weary of the parsing lesson required by his schoolmaster? And yet what truth is there in the passage? One can no more judge of the fitness of language, without regard to the meaning conveyed by it, than of the fitness of a suit of clothes, without knowing for whom they were intended. The grand clew to the proper application of all syntactical rules, is \_the sense\_; and as any composition is faulty which does not rightly deliver the author's meaning, so every solution of a word or sentence is necessarily erroneous, in which that meaning is not carefully noticed and literally preserved. To parse rightly and fully, is nothing else than to understand rightly and explain fully; and whatsoever is well expressed, it is a shame either to misunderstand or to misinterpret.

This study, when properly conducted and liberally pursued, has an obvious tendency to dignify the whole character. How can he be a man of refined literary taste, who cannot speak and write his native language grammatically? And who will deny that every degree of improvement in literary taste tends to brighten and embellish the whole intellectual nature? The several powers of the mind are not so many distinct and separable agents, which are usually brought into exercise one by one; and even if they were, there might be found, in a judicious prosecution of this study, a healthful employment for them all. The *imagination,* indeed, has nothing to do with the elements of grammar; but in the exercise of composition, young fancy may spread her wings as soon as they are fledged; and for this exercise the previous course of discipline will have furnished both language and taste, as well as sentiment.

**2. History of grammatical study**

The regular grammatical study of our language is a thing of recent origin. Fifty or sixty years ago, such an exercise was scarcely attempted in any of the schools, either in this country or in England.[54] Of this fact we have abundant evidence both from books, and from the testimony of our venerable fathers yet living. How often have these presented this as an apology for their own deficiencies, and endeavoured to excite us to greater diligence, by contrasting our opportunities with theirs! Is there not truth, is there not power, in the appeal? And are we not bound to avail ourselves of the privileges which they have provided, to build upon the foundations which their wisdom has laid, and to carry forward the work of improvement? Institutions can do nothing for us, unless the love of learning preside over and prevail in them. The discipline of our schools can never approach perfection, till those who conduct, and those who frequent them, are strongly actuated by that disposition of mind, which generously aspires to all attainable excellence.

To rouse this laudable spirit in the minds of our youth, and to satisfy its demands whenever it appears, ought to be the leading objects with those to whom is committed the important business of instruction. A dull teacher, wasting time in a school-room with a parcel of stupid or indolent boys, knows nothing of the satisfaction either of doing his own duty, or of exciting others to the performance of theirs. He settles down in a regular routine of humdrum exercises, dreading as an inconvenience even such change as proficiency in his pupils must bring on; and is well content to do little good for little money, in a profession which he honours with his services merely to escape starvation. He has, however, one merit: he pleases his patrons, and is perhaps the only man that can; for they must needs be of that class to whom moral restraint is tyranny, disobedience to teachers, as often right as wrong; and who, dreading the expense, even of a school-book, always judge those things to be cheapest, which cost the least and last the longest. What such a man, or such a neighbourhood, may think of English grammar, I shall not stop to ask.

To the following opinion from a writer of great merit, I am inclined to afford room here, because it deserves refutation, and, I am persuaded, is not so well founded as the generality of the doctrines with which it is presented to the public. "Since human knowledge is so much more extensive than the opportunity of individuals for acquiring it, it becomes of the greatest importance so to economize the opportunity as to make it subservient to the acquisition of as large and as valuable a portion as we can. It is not enough to show that a given branch of education is useful: you must show that it is the most useful that can be selected. Remembering this, I think it would be expedient to dispense with the formal study of English grammar,-- a proposition which I doubt not many a teacher will hear with wonder and disapprobation. We learn the grammar in order that we may learn English; and we learn English whether we study grammars or not. Especially we *shall* acquire a competent knowledge of our own language, if other departments of our education were improved."

"A boy learns more English grammar by joining in an hour's conversation with educated people, than in poring for an hour over Murray or Horne Tooke. If he is accustomed to such society and to the perusal of well-written books, he will learn English grammar, though he never sees a word about syntax; and if he is not accustomed to such society and such reading, the 'grammar books' at a boarding-school will not teach it. Men learn their own language by habit, and not by rules: and this is just what we might expect; for the grammar of a language is itself formed from the prevalent habits of speech and writing. A compiler of grammar first observes these habits, and then makes his rules: but if a person is himself familiar with the habits, why study the rules? I say nothing of grammar as a general science; because, although the philosophy of language be a valuable branch of human knowledge, it were idle to expect that school-boys should understand it. The objection is, to the system of attempting to teach children formally that which they will learn practically without teaching."--JONATHAN DYMOND: *Essays on Morality,* p. 195.

This opinion, proceeding from a man who has written upon human affairs with so much ability and practical good sense, is perhaps entitled to as much respect as any that has ever been urged against the study in question. And so far as the objection bears upon those defective methods of instruction which experience has shown to be inefficient, or of little use, I am in no wise concerned to remove it. The reader of this treatise will find their faults not only admitted, but to a great extent purposely exposed; while an attempt is here made, as well as in my earlier grammars, to introduce a method which it is hoped will better reach the end proposed. But it may easily be perceived that this author's proposition to dispense with the formal study of English grammar is founded upon an untenable assumption. Whatever may be the advantages of those purer habits of speech, which the young naturally acquire from conversation with educated people, it is not true, that, without instruction directed to this end, they will of themselves become so well educated as to speak and write grammatically. Their language may indeed be comparatively accurate and genteel, because it is learned of those who have paid some attention to the study; but, as they cannot always be preserved from hearing vulgar and improper phraseology, or from seeing it in books, they cannot otherwise be guarded from improprieties of diction, than by a knowledge of the rules of grammar. One might easily back this position by the citation of some scores of faulty sentences from the pen of this very able writer himself.

I imagine there can be no mistake in the opinion, that in exact proportion as the rules of grammar are unknown or neglected in any country, will corruptions and improprieties of language be there multiplied. The "general science" of grammar, or "the philosophy of language," the author seems to exempt, and in some sort to commend; and at the same time his proposition of exclusion is applied not merely to the school-grammars, but *a fortiori* to this science, under the notion that it is unintelligible to school-boys. But why should any principle of grammar be the less intelligible on account of the extent of its application? Will a boy pretend that he cannot understand a rule of English grammar, because he is told that it holds good in all languages? Ancient etymologies, and other facts in literary history, must be taken by the young upon the credit of him who states them; but the doctrines of general grammar are to the learner the easiest and the most important principles of the science. And I know of nothing in the true philosophy of language, which, by proper definitions and examples, may not be made as intelligible to a boy, as are the principles of most other sciences. The difficulty of instructing youth in any thing that pertains to language, lies not so much in the fact that its philosophy is above their comprehension, as in our own ignorance of certain parts of so vast an inquiry;--in the great multiplicity of verbal signs; the frequent contrariety of practice; the inadequacy of memory; the inveteracy of ill habits; and the little interest that is felt when we speak merely of words.

The grammatical study of our language was early and strongly recommended by Locke,[55] and other writers on education, whose character gave additional weight to an opinion which they enforced by the clearest arguments. But either for want of a good grammar, or for lack of teachers skilled in the subject and sensible of its importance, the general neglect so long complained of as a grievous imperfection in our methods of education, has been but recently and partially obviated. "The attainment of a correct and elegant style," says Dr. Blair, "is an object which demands application and labour. If any imagine they can catch it merely by the ear, or acquire it by the slight perusal of some of our good authors, they will find themselves much disappointed. The many errors, even in point of grammar, the many offences against purity of language, which are committed by writers who are far from being contemptible, demonstrate, that a *careful study* of the language is previously requisite, in all who aim at writing it properly."--\_Blair's Rhetoric\_, Lect. ix, p. 91.

"To think justly, to write well, to speak agreeably, are the three great ends of academic instruction. The Universities will excuse me, if I observe, that both are, in one respect or other, defective in these three capital points of education. While in Cambridge the general application is turned altogether on speculative knowledge, with little regard to polite letters, taste, or style; in Oxford the whole attention is directed towards classical correctness, without any sound foundation laid in severe reasoning and philosophy. In Cambridge and in Oxford, the art of speaking agreeably is so far from being taught, that it is hardly talked or thought of. *These defects* naturally produce dry unaffecting compositions in the one; superficial taste and puerile elegance in the other; ungracious or affected speech in both."--DR. BROWN, 1757: *Estimate,* Vol. ii, p. 44.

"A grammatical study of our own language makes no part of the ordinary method of instruction, which we pass through in our childhood; and it is very seldom we apply ourselves to it afterward. Yet the want of it will not be effectually supplied by any other advantages whatsoever. Much practice in the polite world, and a general acquaintance with the best authors, are good helps; but alone [they] will hardly be sufficient: We have writers, who have enjoyed these advantages in their full extent, and yet cannot be recommended as models of an accurate style. Much less then will, what is commonly called learning, serve the purpose; that is, a critical knowledge of ancient languages, and much reading of ancient authors: The greatest critic and most able grammarian of the last age, when he came to apply his learning and criticism to an English author, was frequently at a loss in matters of ordinary use and common construction in his own vernacular idiom."--DR. LOWTH, 1763: \_Pref. to Gram.\_, p. vi.

"To the pupils of our public schools the acquisition of their own language, whenever it is undertaken, is an easy task. For he who is acquainted with several grammars already, finds no difficulty in adding one more to the number. And this, no doubt, is one of the reasons why English engages so small a proportion of their time and attention. It is not frequently read, and is still less frequently written. Its supposed facility, however, or some other cause, seems to have drawn upon it such a degree of neglect as certainly cannot be praised. The students in those schools are often distinguished by their compositions in the learned languages, before they can speak or write their own with correctness, elegance, or fluency. A classical scholar too often has his English style to form, when he should communicate his acquisitions to the world. In some instances it is never formed with success; and the defects of his expression either deter him from appearing before the public at all, or at least counteract in a great degree the influence of his work, and bring ridicule upon the author. Surely these evils might easily be prevented or diminished."--DR. BARROW: *Essays on Education,* London, 1804; Philad., 1825, p. 87.

"It is also said that those who know Latin and Greek generally express themselves with more clearness than those who do not receive a liberal education. It is indeed natural that those who cultivate their mental powers, write with more clearness than the uncultivated individual. The mental cultivation, however, may take place in the mother tongue as well as in Latin or Greek. Yet the spirit of the ancient languages, further is declared to be superior to that of the modern. I allow this to be the case; but I do not find that the English style is improved by learning Greek. It is known that literal translations are miserably bad, and yet young scholars are taught to translate, word for word, faithful to their dictionaries. Hence those who do not make a peculiar study of their own language, will not improve in it by learning, in this manner, Greek and Latin. Is it not a pity to hear, what I have been told by the managers of one of the first institutions of Ireland, that it was easier to find ten teachers for Latin and Greek, than one for the English language, though they proposed double the salary to the latter? Who can assure us that the Greek orators acquired their superiority by their acquaintance with foreign languages; or, is it not obvious, on the other hand, that they learned ideas and expressed them in their mother tongue?"--DR. SPURZHEIM: *Treatise on Education,* 1832, p. 107.

"Dictionaries were compiled, which comprised all the words, together with their several definitions, or the sense each one expresses and conveys to the mind. These words were analyzed and classed according to their essence, attributes, and functions. Grammar was made a rudiment leading to the principles of all thoughts, and teaching by simple examples, the general classification of words and their subdivisions in expressing the various conceptions of the mind. Grammar is then the key to the perfect understanding of languages; without which we are left to wander all our lives in an intricate labyrinth, without being able to trace back again any part of our way."--\_Chazotte's Essay on the Teaching of Languages\_, p. 45. Again: "Had it not been for his dictionary and his grammar, which taught him the essence of all languages, and the natural subdivision of their component parts, he might have spent a life as long as Methuselah's, in learning words, without being able to attain to a degree of perfection in any of the languages."--\_Ib.\_, p. 50. "Indeed, it is not easy to say, to what degree, and in how many different ways, both memory and judgement may be improved by an intimate acquaintance with grammar; which is therefore, with good reason, made the first and fundamental part of literary education. The greatest orators, the most elegant scholars, and the most accomplished men of business, that have appeared in the world, of whom I need only mention Casar and Cicero, were not only studious of grammar, but most learned grammarians."--DR. BEATTIE: *Moral Science,* Vol. i, p. 107.

Here, as in many other parts of my work, I have chosen to be liberal of quotations; not to show my reading, or to save the labour of composition, but to give the reader the satisfaction of some other authority than my own. In commending the study of English grammar, I do not mean to discountenance that degree of attention which in this country is paid to other languages; but merely to use my feeble influence to carry forward a work of improvement, which, in my opinion, has been wisely begun, but not sufficiently sustained. In consequence of this improvement, the study of grammar, which was once prosecuted chiefly through the medium of the dead languages, and was regarded as the proper business of those only who were to be instructed in Latin and Greek, is now thought to be an appropriate exercise for children in elementary schools. And the sentiment is now generally admitted, that even those who are afterwards to learn other languages, may best acquire a knowledge of the common principles of speech from the grammar of their vernacular tongue. This opinion appears to be confirmed by that experience which is at once the most satisfactory proof of what is feasible, and the only proper test of what is useful.

It must, however, be confessed, that an acquaintance with ancient and foreign literature is absolutely necessary for him who would become a thorough philologist or an accomplished scholar; and that the Latin language, the source of several of the modern tongues of Europe, being remarkably regular in its inflections and systematic in its construction, is in itself the most complete exemplar of the structure of speech, and the best foundation for the study of grammar in general. But, as the general principles of grammar are common to all languages, and as the only successful method of learning them, is, to commit to memory the definitions and rules which embrace them, it is reasonable to suppose that the language most intelligible to the learner, is the most suitable for the commencement of his grammatical studies. A competent knowledge of English grammar is also in itself a valuable attainment, which is within the easy reach of many young persons whose situation in life debars them from the pursuit of general literature.

The attention which has lately been given to the culture of the English language, by some who, in the character of critics or lexicographers, have laboured purposely to improve it, and by many others who, in various branches of knowledge, have tastefully adorned it with the works of their genius, has in a great measure redeemed it from that contempt in which it was formerly held in the halls of learning. But, as I have before suggested, it does not yet appear to be sufficiently attended to in the course of what is called a *liberal education.* Compared with, other languages, the English exhibits both excellences and defects; but its flexibility, or power of accommodation to the tastes of different writers, is great; and when it is used with that mastership which belongs to learning and genius, it must be acknowledged there are few, if any, to which it ought on the whole to be considered inferior. But above all, it is \_our own\_; and, whatever we may know or think of other tongues, it can never be either patriotic or wise, for the learned men of the United States or of England to pride themselves chiefly upon them.

**Conclusion**

Our language is worthy to be assiduously studied by all who reside where it is spoken, and who have the means and the opportunity to become critically acquainted with it. To every such student it is vastly more important to be able to speak and write well in English, than to be distinguished for proficiency in the learned languages and yet ignorant of his own. It is certain that many from whom better things might be expected, are found miserably deficient in this respect. And their neglect of so desirable an accomplishment is the more remarkable and the more censurable on account of the facility with which those who are acquainted with the ancient languages may attain to excellence in their English style. "Whatever the advantages or defects of the English language be, as it is our own language, it deserves a high degree of our study and attention. \* \* \* Whatever knowledge may be acquired by the study of other languages, it can never be communicated with advantage, unless by such as can write and speak their own language well."--DR. BLAIR: *Rhetoric,* Lect. ix,p. 91.

I am not of opinion that it is expedient to press this study to much extent, if at all, on those whom poverty or incapacity may have destined to situations in which they will never hear or think of it afterwards. The course of nature cannot be controlled; and fortune does not permit us to prescribe the same course of discipline for all. To speak the language which they have learned without study, and to read and write for the most common purposes of life, may be education enough for those who can be raised no higher. But it must be the desire of every benevolent and intelligent man, to see the advantages of literary, as well as of moral culture, extended as far as possible among the people. And it is manifest, that in proportion as the precepts of the divine Redeemer are obeyed by the nations that profess his name, will all distinctions arising merely from the inequality of fortune be lessened or done away, and better opportunities be offered for the children of indigence to adorn themselves with the treasures of knowledge.

We may not be able to effect all that is desirable; but, favoured as our country is, with great facilities for carrying forward the work of improvement, in every thing which can contribute to national glory and prosperity, I would, in conclusion of this topic, submit--that a critical knowledge of our common language is a subject worthy of the particular attention of all who have the genius and the opportunity to attain it;--that on the purity and propriety with which American authors write this language, the reputation of our national literature greatly depends;--that in the preservation of it from all changes which ignorance may admit or affectation invent, we ought to unite as having one common interest;--that a fixed and settled orthography is of great importance, as a means of preserving the etymology, history, and identity of words;--that a grammar freed from errors and defects, and embracing a complete code of definitions and illustrations, rules and exercises, is of primary importance to every student and a great aid to teachers;--that as the vices of speech as well as of manners are contagious, it becomes those who have the care of youth, to be masters of the language in its purity and elegance, and to avoid as much as possible every thing that is reprehensible either in thought or expression.

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