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A Short Introduction To English Grammar

Lowth, Robert

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Substantive

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S U B S T A N T I V E .

A SUBSTANTIVE, or NOUN, is the *Name* of a thing; of whatever we conceive in any way to *subsist*, or of which we have any notion.

Substantives are of two sorts; Proper, and Common, Names. Proper Names are the Names appropriated to individuals; as the names of persons and places: such are *George*, *London*. Common Names stand for kinds, containing many sorts; or for sorts, containing many individuals under them; as, *Animal*, *Man*. And these Common Names, whether of kinds or sorts, are applied to express individuals, by the help of Articles added to them, as hath been already shown; and by the help of Definitive Pronouns, as we shall see hereafter.

Proper Names being the Names of individuals, and therefore of things already as determinate as they can be made, admit not of Articles, or of Plurality of number; unless by a Figure, or by Accident; as, when great Conquerors are called *Alexanders*; and some great Conqueror *An Alexander*, or *The Alexander* of his Age: when a

Common Name is understood, as *The Thames*, that is, the *River Thames*; *The George*, that is, the *Sign of St. George*: or when it happens, that there are many persons of the same name; as, *The two Scipios*.

Whatever is spoken of is represented as one, or more, in Number: these two manners of representation in respect of number are called the Singular, and the Plural, Number.

In English, the Substantive Singular is made Plural, for the most part, by adding to it *s*; or *es*, where it is necessary for the pronunciation: as *king, kings*; *fox, foxes*; *leaf, leaves*; in which last, and many others, *f* is also changed into *v*, for the sake of an easier pronunciation, and more agreeable sound.

Some few Plurals end in *en*; as, *oxen, children, brethren*, and *men, women*, by changing the *a* of the Singular into *e* (1). This form we have retained from the Teutonic; as likewise the intro-

(1) And anciently, *eyen, shoen, housen, hosen*: so likewise anciently *sowen, cowen*, now always pronounced and written *swine, kine*.

duction of the *e* in the former syllable of two of the last instances; *weomen*, (for so we pronounce it,) *brethren*, from *woman*, *brother* (1): something like which may be noted in some other forms of Plurals: as *mouse*, *mice*; *louse*, *lice*; *tooth*, *teeth*; *foot*, *feet*; *goose*, *geese* (2).

The words *sheep*, *deer*, are the same in both Numbers.

Some Nouns, from the nature of the things which they express, are used only in the Singular, others only in the Plural, Form: as *wheat*, *pitch*, *gold*, *sloth*, *pride*, &c. and *bellows*, *scissars*, *lungs*, *bowels*, &c.

The English Language, to express different connexions and relations of one thing to another, uses, for the most part, Prepositions. The Greek and Latin among the ancient, and some too among the modern languages, as the German,

(1) In the German, the vowels, *a*, *o*, *u*, of monosyllable Nouns, are generally in the Plural changed into diphthongs with an *e*: as *die hand*, the hand, *die hände*; *der hut*, the hat, *die hüte*; *der knopff*, the button, (or knob,) *die knöpfe*; &c.

(2) These are directly from the Saxon: *mus*, *mys*; *lus*, *lys*; *toth*, *teth*; *fof*, *fet*; *gos*, *ges*.

vary the termination or ending of the Substantive, to answer the same purpose. These different endings are in those languages called Cases. And the English being derived from the same origin as the German, that is, from the Teutonic (1), is not wholly without them. For instance, the relation of Possession, or Belonging, is often expressed by a Case, or a different ending of the Substantive. This Case answers to the Genitive Case in Latin, and may still be so called; though perhaps more properly the Possessive Case. Thus, “*God’s* grace:” which may also be expressed by the Preposition; as, “the grace *of* *God*.” It was formerly written, “*Godis* grace;” we now always shorten it with an Apostrophe; often very improperly, when we are obliged to

(1) “*Lingua Anglorum hodierna avitæ Saxonice formam in plerisque orationis partibus etiamnum retinet. Nam quoad particulas casuales, quorundam casuum terminationes, conjugationes verborum, verbum substantivum, formam passivæ vocis, pronomina, participia, conjunctiones, & præpositiones omnes; denique, quoad idiomata, phrasiumque maximam partem, etiam nunc Saxonice est Anglorum sermo.*” Hickes, *Thesaur. Ling. Septent. Præf.* p. vi. To which may be added the Degrees of Comparison, the form of which is the very same in the English as in the Saxon.

pronounce it fully; as, “*Thomas’s book* :” that is, “*Thomas’s book*,” not “*Thomas his book*,” as it is commonly supposed (1).

When the thing, to which another is said to belong, is expressed by a circumlocution, or by many terms, the sign of the Possessive Case is commonly added to the last term; as, “*The*

(1) “*Christ his sake*,” in our Liturgy, is a mistake, either of the Printers, or of the Compilers. “*Nevertheless, Asa his heart was perfect with the Lord.*” 1 Kings, xv. 14. “*To see whether Mordecai his matters would stand.*” Esther, iii. 4.

“*Where is this mankind now? who lives to age
Fit to be made Methusalem his page?*” Donne.

“*By young Telemachus his blooming years.*”

Pope’s Odyffey.

“*My Paper is the Ulyffes his bow*, in which every man of wit or learning may try his strength.” Addison, Guardian, No. 98. See also Spect. No. 207. This is no slip of Mr. Addison’s pen: he gives us his opinion upon this point very explicitly in another place. “*The same single letter s on many occasions does the office of a whole word; and represents the his and her of our forefathers.*” Addison, Spect. No. 135. The latter instance might have shown him, how groundless this notion is: for it is not easy to conceive, how the letter *s* added to a Feminine Noun should represent the word *her*; any more than it should the word *their*, added to a Plural Noun; as, “*the children’s bread.*” But the direct derivation of this Case from the Saxon Genitive Case is sufficient of itself to decide this matter.

King of Great Britain's Soldiers. " When it is a Noun ending in *s*, the sign of the Possessive Case is sometimes not added; as, " for *righteousness's* sake (1); " nor ever to the Plural Number ending in *s*; as, " on *eagles'* wings (2). " Both the Sign and the Preposition seem sometimes to be used; as, " a foldier *of the king's*;" but here are really two Possessives; for it means, " one *of the foldiers of the king.* "

The English in its Substantives has but two different terminations for Cases; that of the Nominative, which simply expresses the Name of the thing, and that of the Possessive Case.

(1) In Poetry, the Sign of the Possessive Case is frequently omitted after Proper Names ending in *s*, or *x*: as, " The wrath of Peleus' Son. " Pope. This seems not so allowable in Prose: as, " Moses' minister. " Josh. i. 1. " Phinehas' wife. " 1 Sam. iv. 19. " Festus came into Felix' room. " Acts, xxiv. 27.

(4) " It is very probable, that this Convocation was called, to clear some doubt, that King James might have had, about the lawfulness of the Hollanders *their* throwing off the Monarchy of Spain, and *their* withdrawing for good and all their allegiance to that Crown. " Welwood's Memoirs, p. 31. 6th Edit. In this Sentence the Pronominal Adjective *their* is twice improperly added; the Possessive Case being sufficiently expressed without it.

Things are frequently considered with relation to the distinction of Sex or Gender; as being male, or Female, or Neither the one, nor the other. Hence Substantives are of the Masculine, or Feminine, or Neuter, (that is, Neither,) Gender: which latter is only the exclusion of all consideration of Gender.

The English Language, with singular propriety, following nature alone, applies the distinction of Masculine and Feminine only to the names of Animals; all the rest are Neuter: except when, by a Poetical or Rhetorical fiction, things Inanimate and Qualities are exhibited as Persons, and consequently become either Male or Female. And this gives the English an advantage above most other languages in the Poetical and Rhetorical style: for when Nouns naturally Neuter are converted into Masculine and Feminine (5),

(5) " At his command th' uprooted Hills retired
Each to *his* place: they heard his voice, and went
Obsequious: Heaven *his* wonted face renew'd,
And with fresh flowrets Hill and Valley smil'd."

Milton, P. L. B. vi.

" Was I deceiv'd; or did a sable Cloud
Turn forth *her* silver lining on the Night?"

Milton, Comus.

the Personification is more distinctly and forcibly marked.

Some few Substantives are distinguished in their Gender by their terminations : as , *prince* , *princesses* ; *actor* , *actress* ; *lion* , *lionsess* ; *hero* , *heroine* ; &c.

“ Of Law no less can be acknowledged, than that *her* seat is the bosom of God ; *her* voice , the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do *her* homage : the very least , as feeling *her* care ; and the greatest , as not exempted from *her* power. ” Hooker, B. i. 16. “ Go to your Natural Religion : lay before *her* Mahomet and his disciples , arrayed in armour and in blood : — show *her* the cities , which he set in flames ; the countries , which he ravaged : — when *she* has viewed him in this scene , carry *her* into his retirements ; show *her* the Prophet's chamber , his concubines and his wives : — when *she* is tired with this prospect , then show *her* the Blessed Jesus. ” See the whole passage in the conclusion of Bp. Sherlock's 9th Sermon , vol. i.

Of these beautiful passages we may observe , that as , in the English , if you put *it* and *its* instead of *his* , *she* , *her* , you confound and destroy the images , and reduce , what was before highly Poetical and Rhetorical , to mere prose and common discourse ; so if you render them into another language , Greek , Latin , French , Italian , or German ; in which Hill , Heaven , Cloud , Law , Religion , are constantly Masculine , or Feminine , or Neuter , respectively ; you make the images obscure and doubtful , and in proportion diminish their beauty.

This excellent remark is Mr. Harris's , HERMES , p. 38.

The chief use of Gender, in English is in the Pronoun of the Third Person; which must agree in that respect with the Noun for which it stands.

P R O N O U N .

A PRONOUN is a word standing *instead of a Noun*, as its Substitute or Representative.

In the Pronoun are to be considered the Person, Number, Gender, and Case.

There are Three Persons which may be the Subject of any discourse: first, the Person who speaks may speak of himself; secondly, he may speak of the Person to whom he addresses himself; thirdly, he may speak of some other Person.

These are called, respectively, the First, Second, and Third, Persons: and are expressed by the Pronouns, *I, Thou, He*.

As the Speakers, the Persons spoken to, and the other Persons spoken of, may be many; so each of these Persons hath the Plural Number; *We, Ye, They*.

The Persons speaking and spoken to, being at the same time the Subjects of the discourse, are