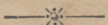


The University Tutorial Series.



THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE:
ITS HISTORY AND STRUCTURE.

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ITS HISTORY AND STRUCTURE.

BY

W. H. LOW, M.A. LOND.,

AUTHOR OF "THE INTERMEDIATE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE."

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PREFACE.

THE paragraphs of this book printed in the larger type cover the more elementary parts of the subject, and are meant to form a first course; together with the paragraphs in smaller type to which no asterisk is prefixed they should be found sufficient to cover the requirements of the London University Matriculation Examination. The passages marked with an asterisk are somewhat more advanced than the rest of the book, and may be omitted on a first reading.

The writer desires here to acknowledge his indebtedness to Professor Skeat's *Principles of Etymology*, from which and from Koch a very large number of the examples are taken; he has also made much use in certain parts of the book of Whitney's *German Grammar*, of Dr. Wright's *Gothic Primer* (for Grimm's Law), of Brachet's *French Grammar*, and of Miss Soames' *Introduction to the Study of Phonetics*. Professor Skeat's Dictionary has been constantly employed. It is to the author a matter of regret that Dr. Sweet's luminous *New English Grammar* did not appear till after the whole of this book was in type; he has, however, made here and there a few alterations suggested by a perusal of it. Many other books have of course been consulted, but he believes there is none besides those named to which he is under any considerable obligations.

ABBREVIATIONS.

Most of these, such as *adj.* for adjective, *vb.* for verb, etc., are not given here, as they cannot but be understood; others are—

A.F. for Anglo-French.

M.E. for Middle English.

Ger. „ German.

O.F. „ Old French.

I.E. „ Indo-European.

Pop. „ Popular.

L.L. „ Late or Low Latin.

R. „ Romance.

O.E. „ Old English.

Teut. „ Teutonic.

SYMBOLS.

> [“greater than”] is used for “becomes,” “passes into,” “gives as a derivative,” etc.

< [“less than”] is used for “comes from,” “is derived from,” etc.

+ is used for “in combination with,” “together with.”

For the letters *p*, *ø*, *z*, see § 28.

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THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE:
ITS HISTORY AND STRUCTURE.

CHAPTER I.

THE RELATION OF ENGLISH TO OTHER LANGUAGES BY
ITS ORIGIN.

§ 1. *Englisc*.—About the middle of the fifth century invaders from the shores of the North Sea began to seek Britain and settle it by colonisation and conquest. The settlers were men of various closely-connected Low German tribes, prominent among whom were the “Engle” or Angles. From their name, the language spoken by the Germanic conquerors of Britain became known as “Englisc,” or (as we now pronounce it) English. That language is the foundation or backbone of the English of to-day.

(a) The immigrants appear to have been mainly Angles (*i.e.*, inhabitants of Angel—now Angeln—in Schleswig), Saxons (whose name is retained in German Saxony and in English Sussex, Essex, Middlesex, *i.e.*, South Saxons, East Saxons, etc.), and Jutes, (who came from a district somewhat to the north of the Angles now known as Jutland, *i.e.*, Juteland). In the oldest English the existence of different dialects has been inferred by scholars, though there are no written specimens for some three centuries after the invasion; the chief of these dialects are the Northumbrian, Mercian (Midland), and West Saxon (in the West and South); Northumbrian and Mercian are the *Anglian* dialects; *Saxon* is represented in literature by the West Saxon. The Kentish dialect was (perhaps) Jutic.

(4) Literature first flourished in the North, and therefore among Angles, whence the name "Englisc" or English became used as a general term for the speech of Angles, Saxons, etc., in contradistinction to Latin, Celtic, Norse; after the Scandinavian invasions stamped out the Northern culture, and the South became the home of letters (especially under Alfred and his successors), the name English was still used for the language, though the literary dialect was now West Saxon.

§ 2. The Nearest Relatives of English.—There were other Low German peoples left behind on the mainland, and their languages were closely akin to that of the invaders of Britain; Dutch and Frisian are the chief survivors of these, and they constitute with English the so-called "Low German" group. But various other tribes or nations also spoke Germanic tongues of common origin with these, though they differed from them more widely than these differed from one another; thus we have the Scandinavian group (Norse, Danish, Icelandic, Swedish), High German (the language of modern Germany), and Gothic. All these tongues, together with some dialects of minor importance, constitute the Germanic or "Teutonic" [see *a* below] group of languages; a tabular view of their relationships is given below [§ 4].

(a) As the word "German" is generally used in common speech to signify modern High German, it is preferable to use Teutonic in the wider sense. N.B.—By German (or Ger.) henceforth throughout this book is signified modern High German unless the contrary is explicitly stated. Teutonic (or Teut.) refers to any or all of the languages classed above as Teutonic or Germanic, or to the parent language.

* (b) The word Teutonic is derived from a Latinised form (adj., *Teutonicus*, from *Teutones*, "Teutons") of a Teutonic word meaning "people"; this is in Gothic *þiuda*, in O.E. *þeod*. The Mid. High Ger. form of this word, with an adjective suffix, is *diut-ish*, whence Ger. *deutsch* (= "German") and Engl. *Dutch*. The derivation of "German" (which the Germans do not use, except in the wider sense of Teuton) is doubtful; we have it from a late Latin "*Germanus*," which is perhaps from a Celtic word.

§ 3. Other Relatives of English.—Just as English, German, Dutch, Norse, and other languages have been grouped together as close connections by birth, so have various other tongues been similarly grouped, and in several of these we shall find we are interested. Thus, for instance, there are the Celtic, the Italic, the Slavonic groups or families. Further, just as the various languages which make up a given group may be regarded as dialects of a single original common tongue, so, too, may the various common tongues, each representing one of these groups, be regarded again as dialects of one common tongue. We know, for instance, that in comparatively modern times, French, Italian, and Spanish have been developed out of spoken Latin, widely as they may, at first sight, appear to differ from it in many ways. We have reason to believe that in somewhat similar ways all the languages grouped as Teutonic were developed out of one primitive Teutonic tongue; and that likewise Irish, Scotch, and the language of the Britons proceed from a primitive Celtic tongue, and so on. Further, the investigations of philologists teach us that the primitive Italic, Celtic, Teutonic, and many others were evolved in the remote past from a common type of speech; to this the convenient descriptive name Indo-European is generally given.

(a) One of the chief distinctions which mark off the Teutonic languages from the other Indo-European ones lies in the way in which the former shifted the mutes. Another is the formation and use of a verbal conjugation having a preterite and past participle with dental suffixes—the weak conjugation.

* (b) One of the chief distinctions which mark off High German from the other Teutonic languages lies in the fact that the mutes in the former have generally progressed a stage further than in the latter [Ch. v.].

§ 4. A general view of the relationships between the chief members of the Indo-European family of languages is easily obtained from a table such as the following:—

TABLE OF THE INDO-EUROPEAN FAMILY OF LANGUAGES.

INDO-EUROPEAN (or Aryan).	<i>Asiatic</i>	Indian group, including Sanskrit (dead), and several spoken languages of India. Iranian group, including Persian, Armenian.
	<i>European</i>	Hellenic, i.e. all varieties of Greek. Albanian. Italic group, including Classic Latin, and popular spoken Latin, with its offspring, the Romance Languages, viz. :—French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Roumanian, etc. Celtic group, including British and Cornish (dead), Cymric (Welsh), Breton, Erse (Irish), Gaelic (Scotch), Manx. Slavonic and Baltic group, including Russian, Polish, Czech (Bohemian); Old Prussian (dead), Lithuanian, etc. Teutonic group, including English, German, Norse, etc., given in detail below.

TABLE OF THE TEUTONIC GROUP OF LANGUAGES.

TEUTONIC (or Germanic).	<i>East Teutonic Division.</i>	Gothic (dead). Scandinavian, including Norse, Icelandic, Swedish, Danish.
	<i>Western Teutonic Division.</i>	Low German, including English, Dutch, Frisian, etc. High German, of which the only existing representative is always known as "German."

CHAPTER II.

SURVEY OF THE CHIEF CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH.

§ 5. Decay of the Flexional System. Although, as has been said, the language spoken by the Anglo-Saxons is the basis of modern English, yet the latter at first sight seems to have very little in common with it. The main causes that have brought this about are two: the vocabulary has been ever growing bigger and more heterogeneous owing mainly to the influence of other nations upon us [Ch. iii.]; the flexional system has been ever decaying and becoming simpler, until it has well-nigh disappeared. It is with this latter cause that we are mainly occupied in this chapter, and the statement concerning it in the preceding sentence is of such importance that it may be well to state it again somewhat more fully and call particular attention to it:—

A tendency to simplify its inflexional system has been exhibited by English during the whole period of its existence: and this natural tendency, aided by certain external influences (§ 10), has converted it from a tongue which employed many distinctive flexions into one which has extremely few.

(a) A language which expresses grammatical relationships mainly by flexion is called *synthetic* (συν-, “with,” “together”; τιθεμι, “put”). A language which uses auxiliary independent words in place of flexion is sometimes called *analytic* (ἀνα-, “back,” “un-”; λύω, “loose”). Thus for instance in Latin, which is synthetic, if we say

am-o puer-i bon-i patr-em,

we inflect each word, the -o telling us that a verbal form in the first

person singular present indicative is being used, the *-em* showing us that *patrem* is employed as a direct object and so forth; but in the English equivalent

I love the good boy's father

there is only one inflected word, and even that would be avoided in speech if the speaker did not suppose his hearer to know in advance whether one boy or more [i.e. *boy's* or *boys'*] were meant; but there is no distinction in form between *love*, 1st pers. sing. present indic., as used here, and *love*, 1st or 2nd or 3rd pers. plur. present indic., imperative, infinitive, and substantive: similarly the form in no way indicates to us that *father* is (here) direct object, or that *good* refers to *boy*. Hence besides using auxiliary words to make up for want of flexions (cf. *am-abo* and *I will love*), a non-synthetic language admits of less elasticity in the positions that words may occupy: *John loves Susan* is by no means the same as *Susan loves John*, while *Susan John loves* is inadmissible in prose and ambiguous in verse [but in Latin we may say *Balbus amat Iuliam*, *Balbus Iuliam amat*, *Amat Balbus Iuliam*, *Amat Iuliam Balbus*, *Iuliam Balbus amat*, *Iuliam amat Balbus*].

(b) In O.E., however, *I love the father of the good boy* shows the synthetic forms:—*ic lufig-e þo-ne faeder þae-s gōd-an onap-an*; cp. Ger.: *ich liebe den Vater des guten Knaben*.

§ 6. Three well-marked stages are to be distinguished in this progress from the inflected or synthetic structure to the analytic (§ 5a).

OLD ENGLISH (O.E.) is the era of *full* inflexions: *-as*, *-an*, *-um*, *-ode*, *-a*, *-u*, *-e*, etc.

MIDDLE ENGLISH (M.E.) is the era of *levelled* or *weakened* inflexions, in which the old flexional vowels were reduced to *-e*.

MODERN ENGLISH is the era of *vanished* inflexions, in which the Middle English *-e* disappears wherever possible from pronunciation, while consonantal flexions disappear except in a few cases.

§ 7. The passage from O.E. to M.E., and again from M.E. to Modern English, was of course not effected suddenly or deliberately; the termination *-as*, for instance, in the

nom. plural of nouns did not at once pass into the *-es* of Middle English, nor did this immediately pass into the *-s* of to-day. There was a period in which the two forms *-as* and *-es* existed side by side, until the latter finally prevailed, and so similarly there was a period where *-es* struggled with *-s* before giving way. To these periods the convenient name of "Transition" is given, and if we assign to each of them a range of about a century, we may draw out the following table to illustrate the changes which we have been considering: the dates assigned, however, are necessarily only rough approximations to the truth, for there is no such thing as sudden change in the structure of a language, but only growth; moreover in different areas the development was not of equal rapidity. These dates apply (roughly) to East Midland English, the parent of our modern literary dialect.

§ 8.

Name of Period.	Limits.	Flexions.	Remarks.
OLD ENGLISH.	to 1100	Full . . .	to about the end of generation alive at the N. Conquest.
1st Transition	1100 to 1200	Full and a Weakened	a century onward.
MIDDLE ENGLISH . . .	1200 to 1400	Levelled . . .	Chaucer died 1400.
2nd Transition	1400 to 1500	Levelled and a Vanishing	a century onward.
MODERN ENGLISH . . .	from about 1500	Nearly vanished	introduction of printing, 1476.

§ 9. If we desire typical examples of the three stages we might take—

O.E.	leorn-i-an (<i>inf.</i>)	sun-u	hund-as.
M.E.	lern-en	son-e	hund-es.
Modern.	learn	son	hound-s.

§ 10. **Foreign Influences.**—We have treated the decay of the flexional system and its replacement by the analytic as mainly due to a tendency inherent in the language, and we are justified in so doing both by the history of Old English before it was appreciably affected by foreign influences, and by the history of cognate Teutonic tongues, which exhibit the effects of the same tendency without those external causes which have affected English. The progress of the movement, however, was undoubtedly facilitated by the Scandinavian invasions of the ninth and following two centuries which did much to unsettle the English flexional system, especially in East Anglia and Northumbria, and by the Norman Conquest, which was the cause of English being spoken in the generations following it with a large admixture of Romance words and an increasing disregard for the nice distinctions of Teutonic grammar. We proceed to deal more fully with these foreign influences in describing the sources of the vocabulary of modern English in the next chapter. But it may be well to point out here that, whatever influence foreign tongues may have exerted in assisting the tendency of the inflexions to become levelled, in no case have they been the cause of giving us any new inflexion or method of inflexion; *all the inflexions used in English are native English*, and therefore of course Teutonic.

Possibly the employment of *-s*, *-es* for the plural of (nearly) all nouns was somewhat assisted by the French usage which also employed the same suffix (though of quite different history); the *-s* plural noun flexion is of course English (O.E. *-as*), but it was only one among many varieties formerly employed.

CHAPTER III.

THE INFLUENCE OF OTHER LANGUAGES UPON ENGLISH— SOURCES OF OUR VOCABULARY.

§ 11. BEARING in mind what has been said as to the gradual process from the flexional to the analytic stage, we may now study the evolution of modern English chiefly with regard to its vocabulary. Here we have mainly to follow the course of the nation's history.

§ 12. Earliest Foreign Elements. Until the invasion of Britain we suppose the language of Angles and Saxons to have been purely Teutonic in vocabulary, with the trifling exception of a very few Latin words used by them and other German tribes on the Continent. The Anglo-Saxons harried, displaced and absorbed the Celtic inhabitants of a great part of Britain, and from them adopted a few Celtic words, as well as a little of the Latin known to the Britons, who had long been under Roman sway. Christianity was preached to the English by Roman missionaries (Augustine's mission, 597 A.D.), and this was the beginning of the first considerable influx of Latin words, the words so introduced being in the first place those connected with ecclesiastical usages, several of them being therefore ultimately of Greek origin; from the ninth century and onwards there was also a considerable amount of translation from Latin originals, by which means some more Latin words were introduced. The words thus brought into Old English are known as "Latin of the second period," those learned on the Continent or from the Britons being "Latin of the first period."

(a) The number of first and second period Latin words together—often not to be accurately distinguished—is probably not a couple of hundred, and of these a considerable number has perished and since been re-introduced in forms which show us that we have not got them direct from Old English.

§ 13. *Scandinavian*.—The Scandinavian invasions of the ninth and following centuries culminating in the ascendancy of a Norse dynasty over all England half a century before the Norman Conquest caused the introduction of a number of Scandinavian words, especially in East Anglia and Northumbria; some of these are easily distinguished and are given in the list below, but in other cases it is extremely doubtful whether a word is of Norse or native English origin, the two languages being closely akin by birth (§ 2) and strikingly alike in their Teutonic vocabulary at this period. A more important effect of the Norse invasions on the language was the influence it had on the inflexional system of which we have already spoken (§ 10).

§ 14. *The Normans (Anglo-French)*.—Some other words of Latin origin may have reached us before the Conquest through the medium of the Normans, with whom the later Saxon kings (notably Edward the Confessor) had intimate relations. These Normans or Northmen had raided upon France and settled there, much as their kin had done in England: brought in contact, however, with a Romance-speaking nation, they had practically abandoned their own tongue, and spoke French, the dialect of it used by them being known as Norman-French. The Conquest of England by the Normans, which we date from the battle of Hastings, established Norman-French as the language of the ruling classes—court, king, nobility, priesthood—and of literature; English, of course, never ceased to be spoken, but it was now the language of a subject people, and was no longer cultivated as a literary medium, so that its vocabulary was reduced to the small modicum necessary for ordinary purposes in the lower walks of life. Yet it was the tongue of the conquered that was destined to survive enriched with vast borrowings from the conquerors' language, which itself finally disappeared before the end of the fourteenth century.

The beginning of the great influx of Norman-French (or, more correctly, Anglo-French) words into English makes itself first noticeable in the scanty remains of the English writings of the twelfth century; and from this time onwards to the time when Anglo-French was itself dying out (some-what before 1400), the borrowing from Anglo-French went on to a vast extent, so that by the time when business in the law-courts was first allowed to be conducted in English (1362), and when children were first taught in school through the medium of English (1385) instead of Anglo-French, English had become a thoroughly composite language, having grafted upon the Teutonic stock a large number of words of Romance origin, which it inflected and used precisely as if they were native, and to which it imparted an appearance and form that seem at first sight thoroughly English, so that only to the trained eye or ear of the philologist do they appear at all foreign.

(a) A descendant of Norman-French survives on British soil in the Channel Islands.

§ 15. Continental French in Middle English.—Besides the influx of Anglo-French, there was another source whence French words were introduced into Middle English. This is continental French, which was spoken by the early Plantagenet kings and their courts, and was the medium of a literature which powerfully influenced our writers, especially during the fourteenth century and after. Hence French words were adopted into English; later borrowings, even when coined directly from Latin, have usually been formed on the models of these.

§ 16. Revival of Learning.—The borrowing and coinage of words of Latin origin was greatly increased by the revival of the study of the classics and the Renaissance of Literature in the sixteenth century, and by the increased interest displayed in theology, arts, and science which accompanied it; nor has the coinage ever ceased—it was particularly active in the seventeenth century—and it is not likely to do so entirely while new words are required for new ideas and can easily be formed from the dead languages