

THE WORLD OF WORDS

*AN INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE IN
GENERAL AND TO ENGLISH AND AMERICAN
IN PARTICULAR*

BY
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HAMISH HAMILTON
LONDON

TO THE MEMORY OF
OTTO JESPERSEN

MOST HUMAN OF PHILOLOGISTS
MOST ILLUMINATING OF GRAMMARIANS

PREFACE

THIS book is intended both for younger people (of pre-University standard) and for such other persons as desire to have a brief yet tolerably comprehensive view of language in general and the English and American language in particular. The latter group may be extended to include University students.

There have, on words, been several books written for beginners: they are splendid books, I doubt not. But they do not cover the same ground as this of mine covers, nor is their treatment the same as my treatment of the subject: to me, though not perhaps to others, these are adequate reasons. Moreover, I like to think that *The World of Words* is in some ways better suited to serve as an introduction to the study of language in general and of English in particular. I am acquainted with the difficulties of beginners (was I not once a beginner myself?); with those of parents—being one of that despised class; and with those of teachers—having formerly been one of that selfless band, so seldom praised, so rarely even thanked.

My debt—for in such work there is always debt—is, in the main, to those three learned, entertaining, vitally interesting scholars who have always avoided pedantry: Professor Otto Jespersen (especially), Professor Ernest Weekley and Professor G. H. McKnight; a Dane, an Englishman, an American. And in the course of the book, I make other acknowledgements. Wherever I felt that I could not put the matter so well and wherever I wished to alter the argument in no way, I have quoted verbatim; and now and again I have quoted at considerable length. On several occasions I have, within a chapter, followed the admirable ordonnance of a predecessor. I like to acknowledge every debt, but in fairness to myself I must add that I have planned the book most carefully; that I have aimed at a clear picture of general linguistics and at a spacious and many-vista'd panorama of the English (and American) language; that even where I owe most, I have usually simplified a tricky argument or clarified a difficult theory, or enriched the text with more or, so I think, better examples; and that half a hundred times I have been almost original, quite independent rather more than once.

In the third edition I have made such changes as the intervention of the war of 1939-45 and the completion of *A Dictionary of American English* (1936-44) have rendered necessary in a book that appears to fill the gap between the formal text-books and the over-simplified 'books for the general public': the latter have too seldom been written by scholars, the former too often by scholars (and others) that have forgotten they once were either young or beginners.

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THE WORLD OF WORDS

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

FAMILIES OF LANGUAGES

So long ago as 1822, that great German thinker and linguist, Wilhelm von Humboldt, stated, and exactly a century later Otto Jespersen, the famous Danish writer on language, repeated, that languages are so different in form that it is impossible to classify them both accurately and comprehensively, or to divide the languages of the world into groups or families in such a way as to account satisfactorily for absolutely all of them.

That is true. But we can, after all, account satisfactorily for most of them; and this 'most' includes all the important languages. So why despair? No method of grouping, no 'system of classification' (as the learned prefer to call it) is, because no method can, for certain, be perfect or complete: but the fact that we cannot get £1,000 is a poor reason for refusing £900: we must make the best of what is available, in languages as in life.

Originally there may well have been only three or four languages in all; it is barely possible, though extremely improbable, that there may have been one language and one only. But we have no proof that there were ever so few as even three or four languages. It is easy to theorize—to build up all sorts of wild ideas—when there are no facts to contradict us. If, however, we keep to the facts and hold fast to what is known, we see that there are either thirteen or fourteen linguistic groups, thirteen or fourteen families of languages. It is not to be assumed that the various members of any one family do not, as it were, stand on their own feet: do not possess certain perhaps very important qualities and defects that are theirs alone: are not as individual as the persons forming an ordinary family. We do not deny but emphasize the strength and the reality of a human family when we point out how individual is each member of that family. In the same way, we do not lessen the reality and the usefulness of a linguistic family if we admit that there is a great deal of truth in Humboldt's opinion that each separate language and even the lowliest dialect¹ should be looked

¹ A dialect is such a variety of a language as arises from—is caused by—local conditions and peculiarities; a provincial manner of speaking. It is then, a kind of language *within* a language.

upon as a whole with a life of its own; that each language, each dialect, is different from all other languages or dialects; that it expresses the character of the people speaking it; that it is the outward expression of that nation's soul; and that it points to the particular way in which that nation tries to reach its 'ideal of speech'—a speech that, to the nation concerned, seems to be the best it can have. But some (often many) words in a language are thrust upon that language from outside or inherited from a people once related to it or connected with it: and these words form one of the means by which we are enabled to divide languages into groups and discover which are the members of a family.

To relate precisely how these groups have been arrived at, how these families have been gathered together, lies beyond our scope: for the excellent reason that such a relation can be readily understood only by those who have an advanced knowledge of philology (or linguistics), as the science of language—that body of knowledge which concerns the speech of human beings—is generally called. It is best for the younger, as for the less erudite, among us to take for granted the various reasons for the grouping of the world's languages into groups or families: but that there are families of speech is certain. The older we are or the more deeply we think, the more clearly do we see that it is both a convenience and a necessity to assume that, so far as has been discovered, certain things are facts—certain things are true: it is neither bluff to assert nor folly to believe that there are facts: in language generally and in languages particularly.

It is, on the other hand, well to note that variation in speech, differences in language, are a result of the movements of population and the migrations of peoples. There may originally have been one race upon earth; more probably there were several or many races or primitive nations. They, like the later racial divisions and communities, have, 'from point to point through the whole life of man on the earth', not only 'spread and separated' but jostled against or interfered with one another; have 'conquered and exterminated',¹ or conquered and absorbed, or mingled with one another and thus formed new units: and these spreadings and separations, jostlings and interferences, conquests and peaceable minglings have had a tremendous influence upon the various languages of the races affected. So long as evidence of original unity is discoverable, we speak of the languages concerned as being 'related' and combine them into a family. A family of

¹ Here I owe much to Whitney's article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. That some of Whitney's opinions have been proved wrong, I know: that some are right, no one has denied.

languages is simply a group of languages that have descended from 'one original tongue'. Now 'of some families we can follow the history . . . a great way back into the past; their structure is so highly developed as to be traced with confidence everywhere; and their territory is well within our reach. . . . But these are the [comparatively] rare exceptions; in the . . . majority of cases we have only the languages as they now exist.' (See the first diagram: facing page 6.)

Yet, to digress for a moment, a classification of languages is not precisely the same thing as a classification of races or nationalities. Languages are, in many ways, as much institutions as a country's religion or its law is an institution. Languages can be, sometimes are, transferred: circumstances force them to be transferred. 'Individuals of widely differing races are often found in one community: yet they all speak the language of that community. The most conspicuous example . . . is that of the Romanic countries of southern Europe'—Italy, France, Spain, Portugal—all using variations of a language that, '2,500 years ago, was itself the insignificant dialect of a small district in central Italy'; it is only fair to add that the inhabitants of that district, the Romans, were a people so remarkable that they have changed the whole history of Europe. 'Such are the results of the contact and mixture of races and languages. . . . Mixture of race and mixture of speech are . . . connected processes; the latter never takes place without something of the former; but the one is not [an exact] measure of the other, because circumstances may give to the speech of the one element' or part 'of population' a power and a widespread use quite out of proportion with the size of that element of population—as we have seen it do in Italy. There remains in French only a small trace of Celtic, at one time the language of the most populous and important people in Gaul or France; French as we know it is, in the main, a modern form of the language spoken by 'the Latin conquerors of Gaul'; French was adopted by the Normans, who were originally Norsemen; these Normans conquered England, and their language became mixed in with Old English (or Anglo-Saxon as it is still called not very accurately)—but that mixing is another story, told, as it happens, in the next chapter.

To return to the groups of speech, the families of languages. Such a classification is a classification of languages only, although it may, and often does, also throw light on 'movements of community', movements that, in their turn, 'depend more or less upon movements of races'. And it must be remembered that language families as important as some of those set down here

may have disappeared; certainly some families remain in a very incomplete form.

1. By far the most important family is the *Indo-European*¹ or, as it used to be called very inaccurately by over-ambitious German philologists, the Indo-Germanic; some prefer to call it the *Aryan* family. This group includes virtually all the modern European languages, as well as Greek and Latin and Ancient Celtic; and the Asiatic Indian languages (Hindi, Bengali, original Gypsy), themselves related to Persian; Sanskrit (often spelt Sanscrit), the easternmost, and oldest, known member of the Indo-European family; Armenian; Russian and allied languages; Albanian.² To this 'family' belong those nations who have, for many centuries, been the leaders in the history of the world; its literatures, especially in modern times, are among the greatest; the records of its achievements are the fullest; its development has been much the most varied, much the richest. These 'advantages'³ have made Indo-European language the training-ground of comparative philology' (the study of various languages in their relation one with another), 'and its study will [probably] always remain the leading branch of that science'.

2. Undoubtedly second in importance is the *Semitic* group, comprising Hebrew⁴ (the language of the Bible and the Talmud), Syrian and Assyrian, Arabic, Aramaic, Phoenician. This family may originally have been part of the Indo-European family, but this conjecture has not been incontestably proved. The Semites were that 'race of mankind which includes most of the peoples mentioned in Gen[esis], x, as descended from Shem, Son of Noah' (*The Shorter Oxford Dictionary*).

3. The *Hamitic* family, of which easily the most important member is ancient Egyptian; the Berber (or Libyan) languages of northern Africa; the Ethiopic languages of eastern Africa, including Hausa—a language spoken in the Sudan and even more valuable than Swahili (in group 11) as a means of communication in Africa. This family bears certain resemblances to the Semitic: therefore *Hamitic*, *Semitic*, *Indo-European* may all have been, originally, dialects of the one language, or rather some *one* primitive language may have branched off into these three. The name comes from Ham, the second son of Noah.

¹ See the second diagram: facing page 10.

² For a fuller list of the Indo-European languages, see the table of that linguistic family.

³ Whitney.

⁴ Note that Yiddish—the lingua franca of the Jews—consists mainly of German, to which have been added many words from the Balto-Slavonic languages (see diagram II) and from Hebrew; it is written in Hebrew characters.

4. The *Monosyllabic* group or *South-eastern Asiatic* family. The leading member is Chinese, spoken by some 400,000,000 people. The other members of the family are Burmese, Siamese, Tibetan (perhaps the oldest language in the whole group). The family is called monosyllabic from the fact that Chinese consists of one-syllable and unchangeable words: it consists of words like *cat* and *dog*, but it has no forms corresponding to *cat's* and *dog's*, *cats* and *dogs*. Ancient Chinese—Chinese before the records—may have been quite different and of the same family as:

5. The *Ural-Altaic* family, sometimes known as the *Scythian* or the *Turanian*, 'China and Tibet are bordered on the north and west by the eastern branches of another immense family, which stretches through central and northern Asia into Europe, overlapping the European border in Turkey, and reaching across it in Russia and Scandinavia to the very shore of the Atlantic' (Whitney). The chief languages are Manchu, Mongol, Turkish (or Tatar¹), Samoyed ('from the Altai down to the arctic shore of Asia'), and the Finno-Hungarian languages, of which the chief are Finnish and Magyar (or Hungarian); Japanese and Korean probably belong also to this family.

6. The *Dravidian* group—the *South Indian* family, spoken by some 50,000,000 people. This is the language of the descendants of that race which had occupied India before the great invasion from the north-west—an invasion taking place somewhere about 1500 B.C.

7. The *Malay-Polynesian* family. Principally Malayan (in Malay, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Madagascar) and Polynesian (in Polynesia), whence springs the Maori language; and probably Melanesian.

8 is at least two other families, both in the Pacific: *Australian Aborigine* and *Papuan* (or *Negrito*).

9. The *Caucasian* family, including the Circassian and Georgian languages.

10. Remnants of families in Europe: the *Basque* family; the *Etruscan* family. (The Etruscan language has long been extinct.)

11. The *Bantu* (or *South African*) family, which (except for the Hottentot and Bushman territories) occupies the whole of southern Africa from some degrees north of the Equator. To it belongs Swahili, spoken in Zanzibar. This group is remarkable for the fact that, to an extent unparalleled in any other group, it employs prefixes instead of suffixes: the cases in the declension of nouns, like the persons and tenses of verbs, are shown by prefixes: the obscure system of genders is indicated by prefixes; these prefixes

¹ Less correctly, Tartar.

recur, in exact agreement, in the other members of the sentence and thus produce an alliteration somewhat like, but much more monotonous than, that in Old English poetry.

12. The *Central African* group is hardly to be called a family, for it consists of a great mass of what are rather dialects than languages, and the interrelations of these dialects are very obscure. The same remark applies to:

13. The *Amerindian* family; that is, the Red Indian dialects of North America: their number is astonishingly large, their structure astonishingly varied. If there is any connexion between the Amerindian family and any of the Asiatic, African or European families, it has not been proved: but it is not impossible that Mongols should have crossed the narrow sea that separates easternmost Asia from Alaska; there is a certain facial resemblance between the Mongol and the Red Indian.

14. The South American Indian languages and dialects, more probably still the Central American ones, are rather to be related to the North American Indian languages and dialects than to be considered as a separate family.

Note. The best general-reader book dealing with this intricate subject is *The Tongues of Men*, by Professor J. R. Firth.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE¹

PERHAPS the most illuminating method of treating this subject which also forms the inescapable basis of any consideration of the American language, is to give first a brief preliminary sketch, then a shortish account of the elements of the language, then a few general comments (General Features) on the language as a whole and throughout its history, and finally an extremely brief sketch of the American influence on English.

A. A PRELIMINARY SKETCH²

(THE NATURE OF ENGLISH)

A person cannot be characterized in a word or a phrase; no language can be summed up in one word, one phrase, or even in a sentence of normal length: but, in comparison with other languages, English can perhaps be classified, not unfairly, as masculine: 'it is,' says Jespersen, 'the language of a grown-up man and has very little [that is] childish or feminine about it'.

Take the sounds of English. The English consonants are clearly separated, one from another, in sound; and they are clearly pronounced. A consonant is seldom changed by the vowels on either side of it; and the vowels are, for the most part, independent of the consonants flanking them. English has, all in all, become clear-cut in its sounds, though this impression is blurred by those English vowels which are really diphthongs (i.e., combinations of two originally distinct vowel sounds), as for example *ī*, where the vowel is not single but double—Continental *a* (in 'father') and English long *ē* (in 'complete') pronounced in rapid succession, *ah-ee* becoming *ai* (the long English *ī*), as a little practice will show you.

A language with a great number of its words ending in a vowel (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese) or a language with all its words

¹ Except in section *D*, this chapter owes a tremendous amount to Professor Jespersen's *Growth and Structure of the English Language*, 1912; edition used, that of 1935.

² Throughout, 'Old English' is English before ca. 1100; 'Middle English', 1100–1450; then 'Modern'. In general, 'Old English' is preferred to 'Anglo-Saxon'.

ending thus (Hawaian) is more musical but less manly and vigorous than English, which abounds in words ending in two or more consonant *sounds*, as in *wealth, tent, tempt, helped, hence*: these words require an effort, actual muscular work. But there are not so many such words in English as to render the language harsh or ugly. English, considered on the basis of its sounds (or, more learnedly, of its phonetic system), may be said to possess 'male energy, but not brutal force'.

'If briefness, conciseness and terseness are characteristic of the style of men, while women as a rule are not such economizers of speech, English is more masculine than most languages. . . . In grammar it has got rid of a great many superfluities found in earlier English as well as in most cognate' or related 'languages, reducing endings, etc., to the shortest forms possible and often doing away with endings altogether'. With the English *all the wild animals that live there*, where only *animals* and *live* show a change caused by the plural number, compare the German *alle diejenigen wilden Tiere, die dort leben*, where the only word not affected by the number is the adverb *dort* (there), and the French *toutes les bêtes sauvages qui y habitent*, where five words show the change and where, in addition, one word (*toutes*) has to record the feminine gender. One result of this shortening of forms and hence of words has been that many words consisting formerly of two syllables, consist now of one: by this change, English has perhaps lost something in melodic elegance—and certainly gained in force. If it had not been for those very numerous long foreign (especially Latin and Greek) words which have constantly been admitted, English would now be almost as monosyllabic (i.e., composed of words of one syllable) as Chinese. This tendency to monosyllabism appears in such proverbs as *live and learn* and *haste makes waste, and waste makes want* and in such a passage as this from Macaulay, 'Then none were for the party; Then all were for the State; Then the great man help'd the poor, And the poor man loved the great'.

A business-like brevity appears in that convenient omission of the verb (and often its noun or pronoun) which is so common in English: 'To be left until called for'; 'Did they go? Rather! I *made* them.' These shortenings and short-circuitings are in syntax what morphological¹ shortenings are in words; 'I should like to [do it], but I can't [do it]' is in syntax what, in words, *cab* is to

¹ Relating to form. Morphology is the science of the change of form or shape, and the term is used in both philology and medicine. The morphological shortening of a word, therefore, is simply a shortening in the spoken form of that word.

cabriolet, or *bus* to *omnibus*, or *landau* to *Landau carriage*, or *rifle* to *rifle gun*.

This result is inseparable from sobriety in expression. 'As an Englishman,' Jespersen shrewdly remarks, 'does not like to use more words than are strictly necessary, so he does not like to say more than he can stand to. He dislikes strong or hyperbolical expressions of approval or admiration; "that isn't half bad" or "she is rather good-looking" are often the highest praises you can draw out of him . . . German *kolossal* or *pyramidal* can often be correctly rendered in English *great* or *biggish*; and where a Frenchman uses his adverbs *extrêmement* or *infiniment*, an Englishman says only *very* or *rather* or *pretty*'; *pretty good* is highly eulogistic. 'An Englishman does not like to commit himself by being too enthusiastic or too distressed, and his language accordingly grows sober, too sober, perhaps, and even barren when the object is to express emotions': another masculine trait of the language.

This masculinity appears further in the fewness of the diminutives and in the rarity with which even those are employed. Of these diminutives (nouns with endings denoting affection; 'hypocoristic forms' is the term beloved of the philologists, who, however, tend to restrict it to *Pat* for *Patrick*, *Kit* for *Christopher*, *Meg* for *Margaret*, and so on), *-let* is the commonest, save one. This *-let* is seldom seen before the late eighteenth century and its frequent use in the twentieth arises largely from its popularity among scientists (*budlet*, *fruitlet*). The suffixes (or endings) *-kin* and *-ling* are mostly derisive (*princeling*) or jocular (*princekin*), though *-kins* is a true endearment (*babykins*, *hubbykins*). The truest English fondling-suffix is *-ie* or *-y* (*auntie* or *aunt*; *Rabbie*), but even this is more or less confined to use in the nursery or in speaking to children: and is rather more Scotch than English.

'The business-like, virile qualities of the English language also manifest themselves in such things as word-order. Words in English do not play at hide-and-seek, as they often do in Latin . . . or in German, where ideas that by right belong together are widely sundered in obedience to caprice or, more often, to a rigorous grammatical rule. In English an auxiliary verb does not stand far from its main verb', in fact it is very rarely further away than in 'He has almost never done such a thing'; 'and a negative will be found in the immediate neighbourhood of the word it negatives, generally the verb (auxiliary). An adjective nearly always stands [immediately] before its noun', the only notable exception being in such a phrase as 'an interruption too brief and isolated to attract more notice'. In nine sentences out of ten, the subject precedes the verb, and that verb precedes its object or its comple-

ment: this order, in short, is abandoned only for the specific purpose of emphasis, as in '*Him* I don't like; *her* I do'; and even then, inversion is used only for very great emphasis or in oratory. 'Order and consistency,' Jespersen declares, 'signalize the modern stage of the English language'; it has not always been so orderly, nor quite so consistent.

Although no language is wholly consistent, wholly logical, yet it is true to say that, with the exception of cultured Chinese, English is the most logical of the modern languages. 'Look at the tenses,' exclaims the admiringly critical Jespersen; 'the difference between the past *he saw* and the [present] perfect *he has seen*', which is a composite tense, 'is maintained with great consistency as compared with the similarly formed tenses in Danish, not to speak of German. . . . And then the comparatively recent development of the expanded (or "progressive") tenses has furnished the language with the wonderfully precise and logically valuable distinction between "I write" and "I am writing", "I wrote" and "I was writing": even French, long supposed to have been the most logical European language, can show nothing so logical, nothing so convenient, for in the one 'time' (the past) in which there is a similar distinction (*j'écrivis* and *j'écrivais*), the distinction is rapidly breaking down; the distinction exists in Slavic (or Slavonic) languages, but there, instead of the constant *-ing* devices these languages employ an intricately changing system.

In English, the logic of facts often—indeed, generally—overcomes the logic of grammar where the two are at variance. This appears most clearly in number: *Cabinet, clergy, committee, family* and their like are, grammatically, singular in number, but, as a matter of hard fact, they connote more than one person. Now, in most languages these nouns must take a singular verb, but in English they will take either a singular or a plural verb as the particular case demands: thus, they take a singular verb when the idea of unity predominates, as in 'This committee is more capable than that one'; and a plural verb when the idea of plurality is essential, as in 'The committee were not unanimous in their rejection of this plan'. This liberty of choice is a great advantage, for it conduces to clarity. As a counterpart, we have the liberty of expressing as a singular what is, grammatically, a plural, as in 'I do not think I ever spent a more delightful three weeks' (Charles Darwin) or 'Ten minutes is heaps of time' (E. F. Benson).¹

'A great many other phenomena in English show the same freedom from pedantry': for instance, in such uses of the passive

¹ These two examples are from Jespersen, but many of the examples in this chapter are my own.

voice as 'He was well taken care of'; in prepositional combinations and adverbs employed as adjectives, as 'his then residence' or 'his outside-the-pale companions', a tendency carried even further in 'He glanced sharply at me with his don't-bother-me-now look' and 'the pretty diamond-cut-diamond scene between Pallas and Ulysses' (Ruskin). Such liberties, which might easily be multiplied, could not be taken in French, where condemnation is unfailingly applied to everything that breaks a rule laid down by the grammarians. The reason lies partly in the inherent elasticity of the English language itself; partly—and probably more—in the fact that 'the English language would not have been what it is if the English had not been for centuries great respecters of the liberties of each individual and if everybody had not been free to strike out new paths for himself'. The tendency is to be resisted only when it leads to ambiguity.

This tendency appears also in the vocabulary. In Great Britain, in the Dominions, and also in the United States, writers have always been at liberty to choose those words which have seemed best to suit their purpose: in brief, the purpose has determined the choice of words, instead of words circumscribing the display of the purpose. No academy, as in France and Italy, has been allowed to set up a corpus of words and phrases suitable for 'proper' or literary use. The result of this freedom from straitness and conscription is that the English language consists of a vastly greater number of words than is possessed by any other language; or, regarded in another way, the British comity of nations has at its disposal such a multiplicity and such a variety of words as render it easy for a writer to excel in any field whatsoever. (The same freedom holds for American writers.)

In summing up, we cannot do better than to quote Jespersen: 'The English language is a methodical [but not rigidly methodical], energetic, business-like and sober language, that does not care much for finery and elegance [though it can be delightfully elegant when the need arises], but does care for logical consistency [in such large issues as syntax] and is opposed to any attempt to narrow-in life by police regulations and strict rules either of grammar or of lexicon. As the language is, so also is the nation.'

With this summary, compare the following passage quoted in William Camden's *Remains of Britain*:¹

¹ First edition, 1586; the last ed. revised by its author was the 5th, appearing in 1607. The quotation is taken from that reprint of the 7th edition (1674) which was published by Messrs John Russell Smith in 1870. But note that 'The Excellency of the English Tongue' (whence this passage) is a communication to Camden from Richard Carew (1555–1620), the author of the well-known *Survey of Cornwall*.

'The Italian is pleasant, but without sinews, as a still fleeting water. The French, delicate, but even nice as a woman, scarce daring to open her lips for fear of marring her countenance. The Spanish, majestic but fulsome, running too much on the O, and terrible like the Devil in a play. The Dutch,¹ manlike, but withal very harsh, as one ready at every word to pick a quarrel. Now we, in borrowing from them, give the strength of consonants to the Italian, the full sound of words to the French, the variety of terminations to the Spanish, and the mollifying² of more vowels to the Dutch,¹ and so (like Bees) gather the honey of their good properties and leave the dregs to themselves. And thus when substantialness combineth with delightfulness, fulness with fineness, seemliness with portliness, and currantness³ with⁴ stayedness,³ how can the language which consisteth of all these sound other than most full of sweetness.—Again, the long words that we borrow, being intermingled with the short of our own store, make up a perfect harmony; by culling from out which mixture (with judgment) you may frame your speech according to the matter you must work on, majestic, pleasant,⁴ delicate,⁵ or manly, more or less in what sort you please. Add hereunto, that whatsoever grace any other language carrieth in verse or prose, in Tropes⁶ or Metaphors, in Ecchoes⁷ and Agnominations,⁸ they may all be lively and exactly represented in ours.'

With these two laudatory opinions it is amusing to contrast that expressed in the following passage from Samuel Putnam's *Marguerite of Navarre*, 1936, the lady in question having in 1527 married Henry of Navarre and, at the age of some fifty-six years, died in 1549: 'She seems to have held the opinion which Charles V [1500–1558] was to voice, to the effect that Latin was the language of prayer, Italian the language of music, Spanish the language of love [a position that later was accorded to Italian], French the language of courts, German the language in which one addressed one's servants, and English the language in which one spoke to one's horses.'

B. THE ELEMENTS OF THE LANGUAGE

OLD ENGLISH

English came to England within thirty or forty years of the departure of the Roman legionaries in the year A.D. 407 or 410; the earliest texts of which we have records did not exist until

¹ Not what we now call Dutch, but the German language.

² Softening effect.

³ Fluency with sobriety; or possibly, present idiom with linguistic stability. ⁴ Humorous or facetious; amusing or funny. ⁵ Elegant.

⁶ Uses of words or phrases in senses other than those proper to them.

⁷ Echoic words or echo-words: either term is infinitely preferable to 'onomatopoeia'. ⁸ Alliterations.