

A GRAMMAR
OF THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

PREFACE

The purpose of this volume is to present a systematic and rather full outline of English syntax based upon actual usage. The book contains the fruits of many years of earnest investigation. From the beginning of these studies the great *Oxford Dictionary* has been an unfailing source of inspiration and concrete help. The author owes much also to the large works of the foreign students of our language, the grammars of Jespersen, Poutsma, Kruisinga, Gustav Krüger, and Wendt, the first three written in English, the last two in German. Moreover, there is a considerable foreign literature in the form of monographs and articles in technical language journals. The author has learned much from the keen observations of these foreign scholars, who have sharp eyes for the peculiarities of our language. He has also made extensive use of the quotations gathered by them and the many other foreign workers in this field. In the same way he has availed himself of the materials gathered by English-speaking scholars. This book could not have been made without the aid of these great stores of fact. But to get a clear, independent view of present usage and its historical development the author found it necessary to read widely for himself, in older English and in the present period, in British literature and, especially, in American literature, which has not been studied so generally as it deserves. Almost the entire important literature of the early part of the Modern English period has been read, in critical editions where such have appeared. Everywhere attention has been called to the loose structure of the English sentence at that time and to the subsequent development of our simple, terse, differentiated forms of expression — an eloquent testimony to the growing intellectual life of the English-speaking people. In the best literature of his own time the author has read so extensively that he feels that his findings have independent value. With his eyes constantly upon present usage, he has read a large number of recent novels, dramas, lectures, orations, speeches, letters, essays, histories, scientific treatises, poems, etc., from all parts of the English-speaking

territory. It might seem at first glance that the novelists and dramatists are more fully represented than writers on the events of the day, politics, literature, history, science, etc., but in fact this, the calm, composed form of English speech, representing the higher unity of the language, has been very carefully studied and illustrative examples are given everywhere throughout the book, but usually without mention of the source since they represent common normal usage. In the novel and the drama, however, we find the irregular beat of changeful life, varying widely in different provinces and social strata, and, moreover, often disturbed by the exciting influences of pressing events, changing moods, and passionate feeling. An attempt has been made to give at least a faint idea of this complex life so far as it has found an expression in our language.

On the other hand, the more dignified forms of expression have been carefully treated. Good English varies according to the occasion, just as our dress varies according to the occasion. Evening dress would be out of place in playing a football game. Loose colloquial English, as often described in this book, is frequently as appropriate as a loose-fitting garment in moments of relaxation. The lesser grammarians, who so generally present only one form of English, not only show their bad taste, but do a great deal of harm in that they impart erroneous ideas of language. In this book also the language of the common people is treated. It is here called 'popular speech' since the common grammatical term 'vulgar' has a disparaging meaning which arouses false conceptions. Popular English is an interesting study. On the one hand, it has retained characteristics of our greatest masters of English, which the literary language has discarded. On the other hand, quite forgetful of its old conservatism, it boldly faces the present with its new needs and hesitates not to give an expression to them, often, like our western pioneers, opening up paths to new and better things, going forward with faith in the present and the future. Those who always think of popular speech as ungrammatical should recall that our present literary grammar was originally the grammar of the common people of England. Who today would return to our older literary English? The common people will also in the future make contributions to our language. The author, however, does not desire to emphasize too much the importance of the common people. The expressive power of our

language has for the most part come from the intellectual class. Left entirely to the common people the English language would soon deteriorate. On the other hand, intellectual struggles bring to language an undesirable abstractness and intricacy of expression, while the common people bring to it a refreshing concreteness and simplicity, which appeals also to people of culture and will influence them. Our American popular speech, in general, has not proved to be very productive. It has preserved in large measure the original British forms of expression. As, however, the various British dialects have been brought together on American soil, they have not been preserved intact, but have been curiously mingled. In sections where mountains, low swampy lands, and islands have isolated tracts of country the language is often peculiarly archaic. The Negroes as a result of social isolation have preserved many old forms of expression acquired in earlier days from the whites, who themselves often spoke archaic British dialect.

Diligent use has been made of every possible means to secure an accurate, reliable insight into existing conditions in all the different grades of English speech, both as to the actual fixed usage of today and as to present tendencies. Of course, the grades of our literary language have been put in the foreground. An earnest effort has been made to treat clearly the most difficult and most perplexing questions of literary English in order that those might receive practical help who are often in doubt as to how they should express themselves.

This book is not rich in details. It treats of the general principles of English expression. The attention is directed, not to words, but to the grammatical categories — the case forms, the nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, the prepositional phrase, the indicative, the subjunctive, the active, the passive, the word-order, the clause formations, clauses with finite verb, and the newer, terser participial, gerundival, and infinitival clauses, etc. These categories are the means by which we present our thought in orderly fashion and with precision, and are intimately associated with the expression of our inner feeling. The story of the development of these categories constitutes the oldest and most reliable chapters in the history of the inner life of the English people. Serious efforts have been made everywhere throughout this book to penetrate into the original concrete meaning of these categories,

in order to throw light upon the interesting early struggles of our people for a fuller expression of their inner life and to gain suggestions for their present struggles in this direction. In these excursions into older English the author in his quotations from the original sources always preserves the older form, usually in the original spelling, but in the case of writings still widely read, as the Bible and Shakespeare, the spelling has been modernized in conformity to present usage.

The author has not for a moment forgotten that English is a language without a central territory that regulates its use. It is spoken in many centers, which are becoming more and more real centers and are developing under peculiar circumstances. Hence, usage cannot be fixed in accordance with the standards of any particular center. In the erstwhile colonial centers, America, Ireland, etc., English, no longer in direct touch with the language of England, has not at all points developed in the same way. The development has proceeded unevenly in the different territories. There is no English colony or former colony that follows the British standard in every respect, so that English is characterized in every country by peculiarities of development; but as the differences are not in essential things, English is still an entity, a well-defined language with peculiar differences in the various countries. Except where something is said to the contrary, all descriptions of language in this book refer to the body of usage common to England and America. Where British and American English go different ways, each is described.

In early American English the prevailing type of expression was southern British, the language of the southern half of England and at the same time the literary language of the United Kingdom, so that at first the literary language of England and that of America had the same general character. In the eighteenth century came Scotch-Irish immigrants in large numbers, also many from the north of England. The speech of these newcomers was, of course, northern British, a conservative form of English preserving older sounds and expressions. The new settlers naturally went to the newer parts of the country west of the old colonies. Their presence there in large numbers influenced American English in certain respects. While the younger, southern British form of English remained intact for the most part on the Atlantic seaboard and in large measure also in the south generally, the modified form

of it, characterized by older, northern British features, became established everywhere in the north except along the Atlantic seaboard.

On the other hand, the new things and the new needs of the New World called forth a large number of new words and new expressions. Moreover, the abounding, freer life of the New World created a new slang. Even conservative Scotch Irish had something new to offer — *will* in the first person of the future tense instead of literary *shall*. These differences in vocabulary and idiom will always distinguish the English-speaking peoples, but will not separate them. They have already stood a severe test. Between 1620 and 1800 important changes took place in the grammatical structure of English, both in Great Britain and America, but instead of drifting apart in this period of marked changes these two branches of English, at all important points, developed harmoniously together. This was the result of the universal tendency in colonial days among Americans of culture to follow in speech the usage of the mother country. The colonies had little literature of their own and were largely dependent in matters of culture upon the Old World. If it had not been for this general tendency of American culture, the language of the New World might have drifted away from that of England, for, as can be seen by American popular speech, there is a very strong tendency for English on American soil to cling to the older forms of the language. About 1800 the structure of literary English had virtually attained its present form in both territories and was in both essentially the same. That since that date no syntactical changes of consequence have taken place in either branch indicates a remarkable solidarity of structure. The English-speaking people are held together by their priceless common heritage — the English language in its higher forms in science and literature. Constant contact with these forces will keep the different peoples in touch with one another. The same English life pulsates everywhere, insuring in spite of the different conditions a similarity, if not a oneness, of evolution.

Definite unifying forces are now at work. We all feel that that is the best English which is most *expressive*, or most *simple*. These are the only principles that will be universally recognized. The drift towards simplicity is still strong and will continue strong. As many forms and concrete pictures have in the past disappeared,

yielding to simpler modes of expression, so also will they continue to disappear in the future. We shall thus continue to lose and gain, lose in concreteness and gain in directness. Present tendencies point to the possible ultimate loss of several valuable forms, as *I, he, she, we, they* in certain categories, since these forms are exposed to the leveling influences of a powerful drift, as explained in 7 C a; but there is now, on the other hand, in careful language a strong tendency to express ourselves clearly, which prompts us to use these expressive old forms. Indeed, at the present time this tendency is, at this point, stronger than it has been for centuries. The desire to speak clearly and accurately is even leading us to create new forms for this purpose, as will be shown in this book. The territory is wide, but thinking people everywhere, even though not in actual contact with one another, will instinctively be guided by the same general principle, will choose that which is most expressive. Hence the author defends in this book the recommendations of conservative grammarians wherever they contend against the tendencies of the masses to disregard fine distinctions in the literary language already hallowed by long usage. On the other hand, the author often takes a stand against these conservative grammarians wherever they cling to the old simply because it is old and thus fail to recognize that English grammar is the stirring story of the English people's long and constant struggle to create a fuller and more accurate expression of their inner life.

This book has a good deal to say of these struggles, even the latest much censured ones, which find so little favor with conservative grammarians because they are new and violate rules that are sacred to them. In all ages, the things of long ago have found zealous and fanatical defenders, who are at the same time foes of the new and unhallowed. These new things of today, however, need no organized defense, for they are born of universal needs and will be supported by the resistless forces of life that created them. To the conservative grammarian all change is decay. Although he knows well that an old house often has to be torn down in part or as a whole in order that it may be rebuilt to suit modern conditions, he never sees the constructive forces at work in the destruction of old grammatical forms. He is fond of mourning over the loss of the subjunctive and the present slovenly use of the indicative. He hasn't the slightest insight into the fine

constructive work of the last centuries in rebuilding the subjunctive. The present nicely differentiated use of the indicative and the newly created subjunctive, as presented in this book, is recommended for careful study to those who talk about the decay of our language. The English-speaking people will chase after fads and eagerly employ the latest slang as long as it lives, for play is as necessary as work, but as long as it remains a great people it will strive unceasingly to find more convenient and more perfect forms of expression. It will do that as naturally as it breathes, and will continue to do it, so that grammarians shall occasionally have to *revise* the school grammars. The fads will pass away, but the constructive work will remain and go on. The author has spent his life in studying the growth and development of Germanic expression and has been very happy in his work. It is his ardent hope that he has presented in this book the subject of English expression in such a way that the reader may realize that English grammar is not a body of set, unchangeable rules, but a description of English expression, bequeathed to us by our forefathers, not to be piously preserved, but to be constantly used and adapted to our needs as they adapted it to their needs.

Square brackets have been uniformly used throughout this book to inclose within quotations the omitted parts of an elliptical statement. Hence they were not available for use to inclose within quotations parenthetical remarks by the author of the *Grammar*. All parenthetical remarks made by the author of the *Grammar* within quotations are inclosed in parentheses as elsewhere.

In the few instances in *Syntax* where the pronunciation of words is indicated, use has been made of the well-known Websterian key, so that the means of indicating pronunciation here are quite different from those employed in Volume I, where English sounds are treated scientifically. The author of *Syntax* hesitated to assume on the part of his readers the knowledge of a scientific alphabet.

The author desires to express here his feeling of obligation to his colleague, Professor James Taft Hatfield, for much aid received from him from time to time. His wide knowledge of modern English literature and his notes containing quotations from modern writers illustrating characteristic forms of current English expression have been at the author's disposal, and, what is of great importance, his fine feeling for the English of our day has

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

1. Syntax treats of the relations of words or groups of words to one another in sentences.

Sentences are divided into three classes — simple, compound, and complex.

THE SIMPLE SENTENCE

DEFINITION, FORMS, FUNCTIONS, ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

2. A sentence is an expression of a thought or feeling by means of a word or words used in such form and manner as to convey the meaning intended.

The form of the sentence may be: (1) exclamatory, uttering an outcry, or giving expression to a command, wish, or desire, often closing with an exclamation point — perhaps the oldest form of the sentence; (2) declarative, stating a fact, closing with a period; (3) interrogative, asking a question, closing with an interrogation point.

The sentence has two functions: (1) It is emotive, i.e., it is an expression of will, or is an expression of emotions, attitudes, intentions, and moods present in the speaker or to be evoked in the listener. (2) It makes a statement, or, in the case of a question, calls for a statement. The question belongs not only here but also to (1) since it contains an expression of will. Compare 43 I A (last par.).

It is usually considered that there are two essential elements in every sentence — the subject and the predicate: *Lead sinks*. The subject is that which is spoken of. The predicate is that which is said of the subject. In a normal sentence both subject and predicate are present, but sometimes the one or the other or both may be absent and yet the sentence may be a complete expression of thought. See *a* below.

a. SENTENCES LACKING THE ONE OR THE OTHER OR BOTH OF THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS. In accurate thinking we often need a large vocabulary and intricate grammatical form; but language also adapts itself readily to the simpler needs of practical life, where action, tone, and the situation are often more expressive than words and grammatical form.

Still, as in primitive speech, a single word in connection with the proper tone or the situation conveys our meaning and thus constitutes a complete sentence: *O! Ouch! Yes! No. 'Glass. Handle with care.' Beautiful! Hurry!* If we call out '*Fred!*' to indicate that he should come, we pronounce in loud prolonged tones *Fred* as a dissyllable. If we scold him we pronounce *Fred* as a monosyllable and raise the tone of the voice. Short terse expression was not only characteristic of primitive speech when language was undeveloped, but it is still widely used. In all such cases the expression of the thought is perfect. The sentences, though brief, are complete. In the setting in which they appear, not a word, not a syllable is lacking. A learned grammarian with mistaken enthusiasm might desire to expand these brief utterances into full sentences, but in spite of his grammatical skill the language would be bad, for it would violate good usage. We do not here usually employ full sentences, and for a good reason. Fuller expression would be incomplete expression, for it would mar the thought, take something vital away from it. Thus such brief sentences are as complete as those of exact scientific language, where, however, the speaker, removed from everyday life, must express himself fully if he would describe accurately the hidden forces he is studying.

In older languages there was often no verb and survivals of this older type of sentence are still common: *Nobody here? Everybody gone?* Compare 6 B a. In older speech there was sometimes no subject, expressed or understood. See 4 II B.

The oldest form of the sentence contained only one word, which, however, was a complete sentence, not a word in its modern sense, for a word is a later development in language growth than a sentence. This oldest type of sentence still survives in case of exclamations, as *Ouch!* and the simple imperative forms, as *Go!* In course of time successive sentences often stood in such close relation to each other that the different sentences developed into words: *See! Fire! Yonder!* becoming *See the fire yonder!*

CHAPTER II

THE SUBJECT

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3. Case and Position of the Subject. In Old English, the subject and its article and modifying adjectives were in the nominative case. Today only certain pronouns, *he, she*, etc., have a distinctive nominative: '*He* inspires.' Noun, article, and adjectives now have here the common form: '*A fine big mind* inspires.' In Old English, the noun had a fuller inflection than now and its article and modifying adjectives had still more distinctive case forms, since in this early period they were needed to make clear the grammatical relations, for then the grammatical relations were not indicated as now by the word-order. In the course of the Old English period the tendency to indicate the grammatical relations by the word-order grew stronger and stronger. The subject was put into the first place, the verb was placed next or near the subject, then came the object and adverbial elements.

Later, after this new word-order had become established in the subject and object relations, noun, article, and modifying adjectives gradually lost their distinctive case forms, for in the new order of things *form* was slighted as not being a vital factor in expressing the thought. In the literary language the personal, relative, and interrogative pronouns have retained their old distinctive case forms better than nouns and adjectives, but also in these pronouns the tendency to level away the distinctive nominative and accusative forms to a common form for both these relations has become strong in our colloquial and popular speech, as described in 7 C *a* and 11 2 *e*.

a. SURVIVALS OF OLDER WORD-ORDER. The new word-order with the subject in the first place did not come into use at any particular date, but has been gradually gaining ground throughout the centuries. Even in our own day, however, it has not entirely supplanted the old Germanic principle of placing the emphatic or important word in the first place without

regard to its grammatical function. Hence, we still often find an emphatic or important word in the first place in a sentence or proposition: '*Hand me that book!*' '*Nowhere in the world* is there such a place for an idle man as London.' 'He quickened his pace and *só* did I.' 'These *mén!* how I detest them!' For fuller treatment see 35 1 and 2.

Also in a question, where a noun subject does not in normal usage introduce the sentence, the noun subject is in lively language often nevertheless put into the uncommon first place. Under the pressure of thought or feeling the subject here springs forth first as the most important thing before the usual grammatical structure occurs to the mind, and is later repeated in the usual position of the subject in the form of a personal pronoun: 'Your *fríends*, what will *théy* say?' (F. C. Philips, *One Never Knows*, I, 52). Similarly, in declarative sentences the subject thus often springs forth suddenly before it is felt as a subject and is then repeated in the form of a personal pronoun, especially earlier in the period, when the literary language was not so subject to logical and formal requirements as today, and still very commonly in popular and colloquial speech: 'The *Lórd your Gód*, which goes before you, *hé* shall fight for you' (*Deut.*, I, 30). 'Now, they ain't many women that would just let a man stand up like that and give her daughter away under her nose, but *mý wife*, *shé's* been well trained' (William Allen White, *A Certain Rich Man*, Ch. VIII). If such a subject is a clause of any kind, it must be repeated in the form of the neuter pronoun *it*: '*Getting to truth — it's* like warming cold hands at a fire; isn't it?' (Robert Hichens, *Mrs. Marden*, Ch. VI). Often the whole predicate thus suddenly springs forth with only a light pronominal subject, later followed by the logical subject: '*It* leaves a nasty taste in the mouth, *this scheme*' (F. C. Philips, *One Never Knows*, II, 221).

On the other hand, in case of intransitives and passives the subject is often withheld for a time, sometimes even until the end of the sentence, in order to create the feeling of suspense and thus direct attention more forcibly to it: 'Many years ago when I was a mere lad there lived in this house a *lonely old man*, of whom I desire to tell you an interesting story.' 'In the center of the room, under the chandelier, as became a host, stood the *head of the family*, old Jolyon' (Galsworthy, *The Man of Property*, Ch. I). 'Behind him had come in a *tall woman*, of full figure and fine presence, with *hair still brown* — Lady Valleys herself' (*id.*, *The Patrician*, Ch. I). 'From mere cuttings have been grown *some of the finest rosebushes I have*.' Similarly, sometimes in the subordinate clause: 'No sooner was the last lodge of the Western drive left behind than there came into sudden view *the most pagan bit of landscape in all England*' (Galsworthy, *The Patrician*, Ch. VII). 'But more exactly and more boldly the real reaction of the press was indicated by *Punch's* cartoon of a phoenix, bearing the grim and forceful face of Lincoln, rising from the ashes *where lay the embers of all that of old time had gone to make up the liberties of America*' (Ephraim Douglass Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War*, II, p. 239).

As in these examples, the emphatic subject that stands at the end of a proposition or clause should be lengthy and heavy enough to form a proper balance to what precedes. In accordance with this principle a