

COLLEGE OUTLINE SERIES

ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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PREFACE

This treatise on English grammar gives a rather full description of present usage and glimpses of the older usage found in our older masterpieces still widely read and studied. In this book English grammar is represented, not as a body of fixed rules, but as a part of the evolutionary process, as the stirring story of the struggles of the English-speaking people for a fuller expression of their unfolding intellectual life.

Although concise in statement, this outline will be found to be characterized by richness of detail, especially in difficult matters, so that the student can locate what he needs. It is more comprehensive than most college textbooks, treating various distinctive and important features of the English language that are commonly overlooked by school grammarians. Among the more significant of these might be mentioned *aspect* (§§ 39, 120-121), the *predicate appositive* (§ 53.C), and *infinite predication* (§ 125).

As all materials are methodically arranged, indexed, and supplied with cross references, *English Grammar* is suited either for reference use or for systematic study. As a textbook it is suited for fairly intensive courses in grammar.

The very fine Index is the work of Dr. Roger R. Walterhouse of the staff of Barnes & Noble, Inc. It will prove an unfailing source of help to all who use *English Grammar*.

GEORGE O. CURME

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INTRODUCTION

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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PRESS

INTRODUCTION

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1. Origin and Spread. English, though mixed in its vocabulary, containing a large number of words from different languages, is in its grammatical structure essentially a Germanic language. The Germanic tongues, German, English, Dutch, Danish-Norwegian, Icelandic, Swedish, belong to the Indo-European family of languages, comprising Indo-Iranic (Persian, Sanskrit with its different modern forms now spoken in British India), Baltic (Lithuanian, Lettish), Slavic (Russian, Polish, Czech, Serbian, Bulgarian), Celtic, Greek, and Latin, from the last of which have come modern Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

English is a branch of Low German, the speech of the lowlands of north Germany. About A.D. 450 different Low German tribes, Saxons, Angles, and Jutes — later collectively called English — began to invade England and to settle there. They gradually pushed back the Celts, who had possession when they came. Though Celtic is still represented in Great Britain by modern Welsh and Highland Scotch, the prevailing literary language has long been English, a literary speech that has gradually developed out of the earlier Low German dialects. The present literary language is in its essential features an outgrowth of the speech of the Midland.

English is now not only spoken in Great Britain, but has been carried by English colonists to Ireland and to many foreign lands and established there. Just as a transplanted tree is for a time stopped in its growth, transplanted English was for a time arrested in its development. This accounts for the retention of older sounds and forms of speech in the colonial forms of English, hence, of course, in our own American English, while in the mother country newer developments have taken their place. On the other hand, the new things and the

new needs of the new world have called forth new words and expressions, so that the vocabulary in the colonial lands is somewhat different from that of the mother speech. In spite of these differences the different English peoples are held together by the priceless heritage of their common literature.

2. Periods. The history of English is divided into the following three periods:

A. OLD ENGLISH. This period extends from 450 to 1150. It is characterized by full vowels in the endings and the use of more endings than were employed in the later periods: (plural of *stan* *stones*) nominative *stanas*, accusative *stanas*, dative *stanum*, genitive *stana*; now *stones*, *stones*, *to the stones*, *of the stones*.

The vocabulary of English in this period was for the most part Low German. The Celtic influence was very slight and brought few words into the language, aside from many names of places, such as Avon (the Celtic name for river), Aberdeen (= mouth of river), etc. Between 800 and 1050 the Danes (i.e. Danes, Norwegians, Swedes) made frequent inroads into England, and from 1017 to 1042 Danish kings ruled there. They brought many words into our language and have influenced the grammatical structure somewhat; but the Danes were themselves a Germanic people, closely related to the English, so that these changes did not affect the general character of the language.

B. MIDDLE ENGLISH. This period extends from 1150 to 1500. It is characterized in part by the reduction of the older full vowels in the endings to one uniform unaccented *e*: Old English *stanas* (= stones), Middle English *stones* (with a pronounced but unstressed *e*). In part, it is characterized by the loss of many endings. These changes were the results of forces that had long been at work in the language. For instance, in oldest English, case endings were necessary to indicate the grammatical relations; but later, after these relations were largely expressed by the word-order, they for the most part gradually disappeared as useless forms. From here on, the development of the language was often along different

lines from those usually followed in older English. For instance, since the dative no longer had a distinctive form, it often became necessary to place the preposition *to* or *for* before it to mark it as a dative:

A man of greet (great) honour,
To whom that he was alwey (always) confessour.

— Chaucer.

In 1066 an event — the Norman Conquest — occurred which led to great changes in our language. These Normans were originally Danes who during their occupation of Normandy (in northern France) had acquired the French dialect of this part of France. After their conquest of England they introduced French into all the seats of power and influence, so that French came into wide use. Alongside of French another foreign language was much used — Latin — in the learned professions, law, medicine, and divinity. For over two hundred years English was replaced in the higher literary language by French and Latin. But alongside of these two languages English continued to be used by the common people and was everywhere employed in popular literature. English feeling was not dead and in course of time grew strong, and gradually brought English back into literary use again. In the fourteenth century, the national feeling — greatly strengthened by the war with France — had become so strong and the use of English so widespread that Chaucer, the greatest of all the writers of this period, wrote in English, and from then on English gradually supplanted French and later also Latin.

The return to the use of English as the literary language brought many difficult problems. English had been long used merely for practical purposes and had thus lost the expressions for the higher things of literature, science, and religion, so that words had to be borrowed from French and Latin. Words were taken not only from Norman French, but after 1300 in much greater degree from Central (i.e. Parisian) French. Borrowings from the Latin and Central French continued in the following period described in C below. Thus, it has come about that we largely employ English words in our usual intercourse with one another but borrowed words in scientific

or formal language. Even in the plainest conversation, however, we often cannot make ourselves understood without the aid of some borrowed words. Though borrowed words are usually everywhere necessary, it still remains true that English words — *father, mother, brother, sister, home, love, hate, life, death, God*, etc. — contain in large measure the power that moves the soul. Many carry the use of borrowed words too far and thus speak without power. Many who have little thought use big borrowed words to hide its thinness, often perhaps fooling themselves, thinking that they are expressing themselves effectively. Borrowed words are often useful in varying our expression and in making it accurate, but they can easily weaken our expression when used instead of our simple but powerful English words.

C. MODERN ENGLISH. This period extends from 1500 to the present time. It is in part characterized by the suppression of the weakly stressed *e* in the endings of words: *stones*, still as in Middle English written with *e*, which, however, is now silent.

Furthermore, this period has been increasingly characterized, on the one hand, by a simpler and compacter sentence structure and, on the other hand, by a finer differentiation of the forms of the language, which naturally resulted from the unfolding intellectual life of the English people and its growing need for fuller and more accurate expression. These developments will be described later in detail.

PART ONE
THE PARTS OF SPEECH

THE NOUN

3. Definition
4. Classification
 - A. Common Nouns
 - B. Proper Nouns
5. Common Noun Used as a Proper Noun
6. Proper Noun Used as a Common Noun
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 - A. Compound Nouns
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THE PRONOUN

8. Definition
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 - B. Reflexive Pronouns
 - C. Reciprocal Pronouns
 - D. Relative Pronouns
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 2. Indefinite and General Relative Pronouns
 - E. Indefinite Pronouns
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 - G. Limiting Adjectives Used as Pronouns
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THE ADJECTIVE

10. Definition
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