PARTS OF SPEECH
and
ACCIDENCE

BY

GEORGE O. CURME

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY (EMERITUS)
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (LECTURER)

D. C. HEATH AND COMPANY

BOSTON NEW YORK CHICAGO
ATLANTA SAN FRANCISCO DALLAS
LONDON

3 G 5

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

This volume of the *Grammar* contains *Parts of Speech* and *Accidence*. The two subjects are closely related and are here treated together. The purpose of the treatise is to describe fully the parts of English speech and their changes of form to express thought. The word 'form' does not mean today what it did in the Old English period. It was then associated with the idea of a change of endings to express thought. Most of the old endings have disappeared. The old syntactical framework remains intact, but the grammatical forms, case and verbal endings, have been greatly reduced. This was effected by employing simpler means of expression. For instance, today we often express a change of thought, not by changing the endings, but by changing the position of the words: '*The hunter* (subject) killed *the bear*' (object), but '*The bear* (subject) killed *the hunter*' (object). Thus position is an important modern English grammatical form. Often, however, we now express our thought without the aid of a grammatical form: I *go*, you *go*, we *go*, they *go*. The verb here does not express person or number. We feel that the context makes our thought clear. Thus context plays a rôle in our modern English. In this volume the author has tried very hard to gather together and put into orderly shape everything known to him about English grammatical form or English lack of it.

Form now plays a much less important part in the language than in Old English, but it is playing a greater rôle than in early Modern English. The simplification of our English, our most precious heritage, was carried a little too far in older English, and it was later found necessary to add more forms, and in the present interesting period of development still more are being created. This will become evident from the study of the Parts of Speech and Accidence presented in this volume. The loss of inflection in the adjective in Middle English made it impossible to make from adjectives distinctive pronominal forms, so that it became necessary to create a new grammatical form, namely, 'one,' to indicate the pronominal relation: '*every* child,' but '*every one* (in older

English simple *every*) of the children.' This construction first appeared in the thirteenth century, but it is in the modern period that it has done most of its growing. Moreover, it is still growing. In this book there is a good deal said of this 'one.' But the most marked feature in the growth of modern English forms is the amazing activity in the field of the verb, which is carefully described in *Accidence*. Not only entirely new structures have been reared but new life has been injected into older creations that were living but feebly. In the modern period the English people has shown its love of activity not only by establishing empires all over the world but also by creating new forms of the verb so that it can talk about the things that it is conceiving and doing. And the marvel of it all is the simplicity of these new forms of expression. In order that the reader might get a clear idea of the importance attached to form in the different periods of English, an outline of the Old English and Middle English inflections of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs has been given, also an insight into the reduced condition of adjectival and pronominal forms in early Modern English and their later gradual increase.

In *Accidence* there has been presented a rather full view of the great fluctuation in the use of our verbal forms earlier in the present period. In a number of cases there is still fluctuation here, and in some words it will be a long while before final results are reached and a uniform usage is attained. The English-speaking peoples have never planned and regulated the development of their language as they do their economic development. They wisely muddle along to greater stability and accuracy of expression. There is in fact here a very fine natural regulation — the survival of the fittest. Aptness of expression has a strong appeal, spreads, and finally becomes fixed in the language. But also caprice plays a rôle here. At a few points the choice of a final form from different competing rivals has fallen out differently in England and America. Moreover, American English sometimes preserves older forms, while British English abandons them for newer ones. In spite, however, of the considerable fluctuation in present usage in the best literature and the many variations in different countries and different social strata, there is much to rejoice over. Looking backward at early Modern English as described in this book, we can plainly see what tremendous gains have been made in the direction of uniformity of usage. There has been much

progress also toward greater accuracy of expression. For a long while the trend has been toward better things.

As an individual grows from childhood to maturity, he has to enlarge his apparel. In the same manner the language of an individual grows with his developing mental power. Similarly, the language of a people unfolds with its developing intellectual strength. Each generation embodies in its speech its own growth and bequeaths the improved means of expression to the next generation for further improvement. Any attempt to check the development of the language and give it a fixed, permanent form is misdirected energy, and, moreover, as foolish as to attempt to arrest physical or mental growth. The great principle of life is growth and development.

Hence, the formulations of usage in *Parts of Speech*, *Accidence*, and *Syntax* are presented, not as fixed rules but as the description of the means employed by English-speaking people to express their thought and feeling. These means are not represented as fixed but as ever changing and developing as the result of the long struggles of the English mind in its unfolding intellectual life to express itself more fully and more simply. Glimpses of important older developments are given here and there throughout the *Grammar* in order that the reader may obtain an insight into the forces that have been at work shaping English. A careful study of these older developments will enable him to understand his heritage better and will give him a clearer idea of his own relation to it. The story of these older struggles for more complete or more simple expression should be of especial interest to those who are now forming their habits of expression, for this struggle has now become theirs, and the further shaping of the language will soon lie in their hands.

The author has, perhaps, stressed too strongly the conception of English as a development reflecting our inner life and struggles. We are not free to replace older formations by newer ones that express our thought and feeling more fully. It is widely felt as sacrilege to tamper with this inheritance. To countless thousands an inexpressive older type of expression is better than an expressive new one. Fortunately, there are always many who yield to the urge to say just what they think and feel, also many who recognize the charm of well-spoken words. Those who are acquainted with the history of our language know that forceful and accurate expres-

sion, though frequently gaining ground only slowly against prejudice and unwise conservatism, often in the course of the centuries wins recognition.

It is hoped that the many glimpses of older English presented in this book will help to divest our inherited speech of its mystic character. These glimpses will reveal our forefathers, not as demigods but as human beings like ourselves, often vacillating, sometimes blundering, even the best of them, but in the main trying to say what they thought and felt, employing the best means at hand, at times in their endeavor to attain to greater accuracy or simplicity daring even to make radical changes in their inherited means of expression, more radical than any we have ever dreamed of.

Everywhere throughout this book the American and the British literary usage of the immediate present have been put into the foreground as the principal objects of study, but the usage of the earlier parts of the Modern English period has been treated with considerable care, as the great masterpieces of these centuries are still read and thus belong to our world. English before the sixteenth century is only occasionally introduced, to throw light upon present usage or to give an insight into the forces that have shaped our language. In older English there were two literary standards — the southern and the northern British standard. Northern British no longer exists as a common literary language, but before disappearing it influenced southern British, which was to become the common British standard. The old northern standard survives also in many respects in current northern British dialects and in a considerable body of dialectic literature of permanent value. Earlier in the present period northern British influenced our American English through immigrants from the northern part of Ireland and Great Britain.

The present language of the common people — here called popular speech — is often treated in this book as presenting interesting features of current English, having on its conservative side relations with our older literary language and in its newer developments influencing our present colloquial and literary English. Considerable attention has been given also to colloquial speech, which in its place is as good English as the literary language is in its place. Our expression should vary according to the occasion, just as our dress varies according to the occasion. Many teachers would replace colloquial speech by the literary standard. If this

should ever take place there would be no distinctive literary form for higher purposes, which would be the greatest calamity that could befall us.

The author's heavy indebtedness to others in the preparation of *Parts of Speech* and *Accidence* is the same as for his work *Syntax*, and is described in the preface to *Syntax*, but, moved by a feeling of profound gratitude, he desires to reacknowledge here his heavy indebtedness to the great *Oxford Dictionary* and the large English Grammars of Jespersen, Poutsma, and Kruisinga. As the present volume rests upon fact it was necessary for its author during the long period of its construction to be constantly drawing upon these great stores of fact. For a long period he has himself been diligently reading in the literature of England and America to get a clear, independent view of present English usage and its historical development, but he could not have written this book without the aid of these great European scholars. Of course, he is indebted also to other scholars, both European and American. The growing interest in American English among American scholars has been a great help in the preparation of this book. Moreover, the author owes much to his associates and friends, especially Professor Leopold and Dr. Goedsche of Northwestern University, with whom he has discussed, over and over again, the difficult problems of this volume.

The author desires here to thank those who have helped him with the various proofs. He feels especially indebted to Professor McCorkle of the University of Southern California, and to Mrs. Georgia Curme of Claremont, California.

GEORGE O. CURME

University of Southern California
Los Angeles

TABLE OF CONTENTS

See analysis of contents at the head of each chapter

PARTS OF SPEECH

ACCIDENCE

CHAPTER I

THE PARTS OF SPEECH

1. There are eight parts of speech: noun, pronoun, adjective, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, interjection.

THE NOUN

2. Definition. A noun, or substantive, is a word used as the name of a living being or lifeless thing: *Mary, John, horse, cow, dog; hat, house, tree; London, Chicago; virtue.*

3. Classification. There are different classes of nouns:

1. *Common Nouns.* A common noun is a name that can be applied to any one of a class of living beings or lifeless things: *teacher, student, mayor, president, king, man, lion, tiger, cow; house, tree, city, country,* etc. Such nouns are called also class nouns. These nouns usually have a plural.

To emphasize nouns, especially common nouns, and impart feeling to the statement, we often, in colloquial speech, place before the noun some intensive adjective, such as *blessĕd, blooming, deuced, confounded, darn* (or *darned*), or in stronger language *damned:* 'Not a *blĕssed ĕgg* was fresh,' or 'Every *blĕssed ĕgg* was rotten.' 'She is a *dĕuced dĕal* cleverer than lots of men.' 'He's a *confóunded blóckhead.*' 'He's a *dámned fóol.*'

2. *Proper Nouns.* A proper noun is the name of a particular living being or lifeless thing: *Mary, John, Longfellow, Shakespeare,*

Carlo (name of a dog); *Chicago, London, England, Pennsylvania, January, Friday, Christmas, Macbeth* (name of a general), 'Macbeth' or *Macbeth* (name of a drama), *Hamlet* (name of a prince), 'Hamlet' or *Hamlet* (name of a drama), etc. '*The Woods* (members of the Wood family) are our best friends.' '*The Cummingses* (the members of the Cummings family) will give a reception this evening.' '*The Greeks* have contributed much to the civilization of the world.' '*The Germans* are industrious.'

In the last four examples the proper nouns are in the plural, but they are not on that account common nouns, as claimed by some grammarians. The use of the definite article is significant. It indicates a distinct group in its entirety. In the general class of man each of these groups is a particular group representing something single in kind, a particular family or a particular nation. The members of a particular group are each single in kind, hence not marked by common characteristics. Also 'the rich' and 'the poor' represent distinct groups, but they are not particular groups, for the members of each group are gathered together on the basis of common characteristics.

As described in **5** below, however, proper nouns are often used as common nouns: *a Packard* (car), *a Shakespeare* (a great dramatist). Such nouns are common nouns, for we regularly, as in the case of common nouns, drop the article before the plural form when we desire to generalize: '*Packards* stand a good deal of rough usage.' '*Shakespeares* are not common in every generation.'

We employ the definite article with proper noun plurals when we desire to generalize: '*The Cummingses* are always on the side of good government.' '*The Negroes* have made a good deal of progress since their emancipation.' 'In earlier centuries *the Christians* were much persecuted.' When, however, the idea of class, i.e. a division upon the basis of common characteristics, enters into these plurals, the article is dropped, as in common nouns: '*Christians* shouldn't do such things.' The definite article with proper noun plurals, often, merely denotes totality: '*The Cummingses* have left town for their summer home.' We express the partitive idea by dropping the definite article: 'You will find *Cummingses* active in the various benevolent activities of our city.' The indefinite article is used for an indefinite reference to one member of a particular group: 'I never knew *a Cummings* to stand in the way of progress.' But in 'He is *a Cummings* through and through' *Cummings* is a common noun, for it represents a person as assigned to a class upon the basis of his having the common characteristics of the class.

Proper noun plurals often represent not particular groups but

particular individuals: *the Carolinas* (North Carolina and South Carolina). 'There were three *Johns* and four *Maries* in our party.'

There are proper noun plurals that have no singular form: *the Alps, the Alleghenies, the Rockies, the Hebrides.* They represent definite groups.

Many proper nouns were originally common nouns: *Baker, Taylor, Smith, Fisher,* etc.

3. *Mass Nouns.* A noun may be not only the name of a thing with a definite form but also the name of a formless mass, a material, here called a mass noun: *tea, wheat, sand, water, iron, gold, paper* (but with a different meaning in 'this morning's *paper*'). In 'a pretty *lamb*' *lamb* is the name of a definite thing, but in 'We had *lamb* for dinner' it is a mass noun. Mass nouns do not usually have a plural, but with changed meaning they often have a plural form. See *Syntax,* **59** 4.

4. *Collective Nouns.* A noun may be the name of a collection of living beings or lifeless things, here called a collective noun: *nation, army, crowd,* 'a *herd* of cattle,' 'a *row* of trees,' 'a *chain* of mountains,' etc. For the use and the meaning of the singular and the plural of this class of nouns see *Syntax,* **59** 1.

A collective noun may by a change in meaning become a common class noun: 'The principal has a very fine *library*' (collective noun), but 'The principal discussed the question with the committee in his *library*' (common noun). On the other hand, a common noun may by a change in meaning become a collective noun: 'A foreign *body* (common noun) in the ear may be very dangerous' (Grattan, *Our Living Language,* p. 111), but 'What a fine *body* (collective noun) of men!' (*ib.*).

5. *Abstract Nouns.* A noun may be the name of a quality, state, action, or general idea, here called an abstract noun: *force, peace; hardness, kindness,* formed from the adjectives *hard, kind* by the addition of the suffix *-ness; warmth* (*warm* + *-th*); *youth* (*young* + *-th* = young state), but a concrete common noun in *a youth* and a collective noun in 'the *youth* of the land'; *friendship* (*friend* + *-ship*), *manhood, bondage, serfdom, slavery, hatred, fraternity* (but a concrete collective noun in 'the members of *this fraternity*'), formed from nouns; *stroke* (from *strike*), *throw, growth, growing, singing, scolding, increase, decrease,* formed from verbs; many names of general ideas: *music, art, chemistry* (but concrete in 'the *chemistry* lying upon the table'), *grammar* (but concrete in 'the *grammar* lying upon the table'). Abstract nouns do not usually have a plural, but with changed meaning they often have a plural form: 'The enemy brought up fresh *forces*' (= *troops*). For fuller treatment see *Syntax,* **59** 5.

4. Common Noun Used as a Proper Noun. A common noun is often employed as a proper noun: 'We live at *the Eagle*' (name of a hotel). 'Ask *Father* whether we may go.' 'He is a *Wrangler*' (member of the society called 'Wranglers'). 'They are both *Wranglers*.' 'He is a *Democrat*' (member of the Democratic party), but 'He is a *democrat*' (an adherent of democracy). A common noun often becomes a proper noun through personification: 'Speak, O *Star*, thy secrets old.'

5. Proper Noun Used as a Common Noun. A proper noun may often be employed as a common noun: 'Virgil was the *Homer* (i.e. great epic poet) of the Romans.' 'He was a *Napoleon* of finance.' 'She was a regular *Xantippe*' (an ill-tempered woman, originally the name of Socrates' wife). 'Lend me your *Webster*' (dictionary). 'He bought a *Packard* (automobile) yesterday.' 'He has just sold two *Packards*.' Compare **3** 2 above.

6. Compound Nouns. In the case of both common and proper nouns a group of two or more nouns often forms a unit, a compound: *toothpick, tablecloth, sidewalk; George Washington, the Black Sea, James Russell Lowell; the White House, the Northshore Hotel*, 'Vanity Fair' or *Vanity Fair* (novel by Thackeray), etc. Notice that we do not always write real compounds as one word.

A long stem vowel in the first component of a compound is shortened in a few words where the first component is a monosyllable: *bŏnfire* (*bōne* + *fire*), *breakfast* (*brĕkfast* = *break* + *fast*), *fŏrehead* (*fōre* + *head*), *shĕpherd* (*sheep* + *herd*), etc. This principle was once more active in our language than now. There are also elsewhere traces of it. Compare *a* below, 2nd par.

The formation of compound nouns is treated at considerable length in *Syntax*, **63** under the head of Group-Words and again in *Word-Formation*.

a. Derivative Nouns. Similar to compound nouns are derivative nouns, i.e. nouns formed by adding to a common or proper noun, an adjective, or a verb, a suffix which in many cases was originally an independent word. These suffixes are: *-ness, -ship, -dom, -th, -er, -ing* (suffix of gerund; see **56** 3 *c*), *-ess* (**28**), etc.; the diminutive endings *-kin, -ling, -ette, -let, -ie, -y*, which are also much used to express endearment: dark*ness*, friend*ship*, wis*dom*, Christen*dom*, warm*th*, find*er*, writ*ing*, heir*ess*; lamb*kin*, gos*ling*, kitchen*ette*, rivu*let*, kitt*y*, Kitt*y*, Kat*ie*, Bird*ie*, etc.

A long vowel in a monosyllabic stem is shortened in a few of these derivatives: *knŏwledge* (*knōw* + *-ledge*), *wĭdth* (*wīde* + *-th*), *wĭsdom* (*wīse* + *-dom*), etc. This principle of shortening a long vowel in the stem syllable when another element is added has been illustrated also in **6** (2nd par.). It is most active in verbs: *keep*,

kĕpt, kĕpt. Compare **59** 2 B *c.* On the other hand, the long vowel of a monosyllabic word may become short under the influence of a derivative with shortened vowel. In the eighteenth century the noun *wind* was still pronounced *wīnd.* A common derivative of this word was *wĭndy* with shortened vowel. Under the influence of *wĭndy* 'wĭnd' has become 'wĭnd.' The old long form survives in the verb *wīnd* ('*wīnd* a horn'). Compare *wind* in **63.**

The formation of derivative nouns is treated at considerable length in *Word-Formation.*

CHAPTER II

THE PRONOUN

7. Definition and Classification. A pronoun is a word used instead of a noun. As a pronoun always has the same syntactical functions as a noun some grammarians say it is not a distinct part of speech. But as it often has a marked distinctiveness of form and usually shows peculiarities of usage it is quite clear that it is a distinct part of speech. Although it is never the name of a person or thing, as is a noun, yet it has to do with nouns in that it is used instead of a noun that is used elsewhere or is suggested by the context. Thus it permits us to avoid the unpleasant repetition of a noun or the unnecessary naming of a person that is already known. It is a formal convenience of great importance.

There are seven classes of pronouns, two of them with subdivisions.

I. PERSONAL PRONOUNS

These pronouns are: *I, me, thou, thee, he, him, she, her, it; we, us, ye, you, they, them.* For politeness' sake the pronoun of the first person stands last when used in connection with other pronouns: '*He, you,* and *I* had better do it.' 'It is important for *you* and *me* to be there.'

The speaker employs *I* or *me* instead of his own name, or, when he includes others, he uses *we* or *us:* '*I* know it.' 'He knows *me.*' '*We* know it.' 'He knows *us.*'

You is used in direct address instead of the name of the person spoken to: '*You* know it.'

He, she, it, they, them, are used instead of nouns that have been previously mentioned: 'I shall talk with *Henry* about the *matter* this evening and shall discuss *it* (referring to the antecedent *matter*) with *him*' (referring to the antecedent *Henry*). '*Henry* found that *he* (referring to the antecedent *Henry*) was mistaken.' '*Henry* and *James* found that *they* (referring to the antecedents *Henry* and *James*) were mistaken.' 'John said *that he didn't do it,* and I believe *it*' (referring to the antecedent *that he didn't do it*). These pronouns always have an antecedent, i.e. a noun, pronoun, clause, or sentence to which they refer. Sometimes *such* is used with the force of *it, they,* or *them.* See **7** VII *c aa.* Sometimes *it* refers to a person: 'Would you like to marry Malcolm? Fancy being owned by that! Fancy seeing *it* every day!' See **33** *b.* Sometimes, like the relative *which* (**7** IV *a bb*), *it* is used to denote a quality, state, rank, dignity: 'She is a queen and looks *it.*' Compare **33** *b.*