A NEW

ENGLISH GRAMMAR

LOGICAL AND HISTORICAL

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PREFACE

THE first part of this grammar appeared in 1892. The delay in bringing out the second part is due to a variety of causes. For some years the whole of my time was given to my *Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon*, and in the interval I have, among other work, made a thorough revision of my *Anglo-Saxon Reader*. And after giving so much time to promoting the study of English in this country, I felt that I could, with a good conscience, return to those wider studies in comparative philology to which I feel more and more drawn.

On the other hand, there have been so many enquiries after the Syntax that I did not like to delay it any longer. I have therefore limited its scope by confining myself to formal syntax (§ 582) and excluding what can be found in the dictionary, such as the use of prepositions, and so have been able to give all the more prominence to syntax proper, especially those branches which have hitherto been neglected, such as word-order.

It will be found by comparison with other grammars that my syntax is fairly complete from this point of view. It must be noted that there is a good deal of syntax in the

introduction to the first part, where, for instance, the analysis of sentences is fully dealt with.

Note the use of **nominal** as a common term for nouns and adjectives.

The mark † is used to indicate literary as opposed to colloquial. For the use of (;) as a stress-mark see § 1881

HENRY SWEET.

OXFORD,
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SYNTAX

WORD-ORDER.

Form.

1759. As regards the relative order of two words, we distinguish between **pre-position** and **post-position**. Thus pre-adjunct or pre-adjective position means that the adjunct-word precedes its head-word, or that the adjective precedes its noun. We may call such an adjective a 'pre-adjective,' or, more definitely, a 'noun-preceding adjective'; so also we can define the noun as an 'adjective-following noun.'

In groups or sentences composed of more than two words we distinguish **front-**, **mid-**, and **end-** position, the last two being included under **non-initial** position. Thus a verb at the end of a sentence is said to have end-position: such a verb may be called an 'end-verb.' If such a verb were put at the beginning of the sentence, it would be called a 'front-shifted' verb.

Position may be to some extent accidental. Thus the end-verb order in such a sentence as *it rains* is merely the result of the shortness of the sentence, so that it is a case only of what may be called 'negative' end-verb position.

We also have to distinguish between **joined** and **broken** (**1860**), and between **parallel** and **cross** (**1865**) order. For tag-order see § **1774**.

1760. We have lastly to distinguish between **fixed** and **free** order. Some languages are freer in their order than others. Very free order is possible only in inflected languages. Conversely, absolutely fixed order occurs only in languages devoid of inflection. Even in one and the same language some kinds of words may have freer order than others: this is the case with the English adverbs. Hence in most languages there is a distinction between **normal** (regular) and **exceptional** order. This distinction is, of course, most marked in highly inflectional languages.

Even in languages whose order is comparatively fixed there are many devices for evading the restrictions of the normal order.

General Principles.

1761. The divergencies between the word-orders of different languages, and the inconsistencies in the word-order of one and the same language, are the result of the conflict of various general principles.

1762. From a strictly logical point of view we should expect connective words always to come between the words they connect—we should expect prepositions always to precede the word they govern, relative words as conjunctions always to have the front position in the sentences they introduce, and so on. We should further expect subject + predicate order. In a less degree, we should expect post-adjunct order to prevail—we should expect assumptive adjectives to follow their nouns. But, as a matter of fact, none of these general principles are carried out universally in language.

1763. The most frequent deviation from purely logical principles is the pre-adjunct order adjective + noun. This order was probably originally emphatic (**1765**). From a practical point of view the main distinction between the pre-adjunct order *big black dogs* and the post-adjunct order

**dogs big black* is that the former is suspensive—it makes us expect something to complete the sentence—and hence is more connective than the post-adjunct order, and binds adjunct and head-word more closely together. The looser post-adjunct order is, on the other hand, naturally used in apposition, even by languages which otherwise prefer pre-adjunct order.

1764. As negation generally reverses the meaning of its head-word, it is most convenient practically to let it precede its head-word, so that the hearer's mind may be fully prepared for the reversal of meaning. Hence languages which otherwise have the order verb + adverb may have the order negation-word + verb, as in the Old-English *ne cume ġē* (1807).

Emphasis.

1765. The most general way of making a word prominent is by putting it before the others—if possible, at the beginning of the sentence. Thus in Latin the normal order in such sentences as 'Caesar conquered the Gauls' is to put the verb at the end (*Caesar Gallōs dēvīcit*), but if the sentence were meant to imply that Caesar conquered the Gauls and not some other people, the word expressing the logically prominent idea 'Gauls' would have front-position (*Gallōs Caesar dēvīcit*).

1766. But there is another more general principle of position-emphasis—that of making a word conspicuous by putting it in *any* abnormal—that is, unexpected—position. Thus a word whose normal position is front or mid may be made emphatic by end-position, as in the Latin sentence *aliud iter habēmus nūllum* 'we have no other road,' where 'none' has emphatic end-position. Emphatic end-position is suspensive (1763).

Convenience.

1767. It is evident that emphatic order often leads to inconvenience, as in the last example, where we have the

double inconvenience of the separation of *nūllum* from its head-word—broken order—and of suspensiveness, the meaning of the three first words being completely reversed by *nūllum*.

1768. But a purely logical order may also lead to inconvenience. Thus, as we have seen (**1763**), pre-adjunct order has certain advantages over the more logical post-adjunct order, especially in negation (**1764**), while in other cases post-adjunct order may be more convenient. Indeed, the best results are often obtained by a concurrent use of both, as we see in the English order subject-adjunct + subject + verb + verb-adjunct, which is the result of the striving to avoid the suspensive end-verb order.

1769. In the Latin sentence last quoted broken order and suspensiveness work together. But in some cases broken order is a means of avoiding suspensiveness, as in *good men and true*, where the inconsistent use of pre- and post- adjunct order in the same word-group diminishes the suspensiveness of the consistently pre-adjunct order in *good and true men*.

Grammatical Order.

1770. We see, then, that in languages which have both a normal and an exceptional order, the latter is due to a variety of causes, the most important of which is emphasis. In such languages the normal order is **grammatical** (syntactic), serving to show the grammatical relation between words. The fewer the inflections, the more important this function becomes, but even highly inflected languages observe general principles of syntactic order, however freely they may disregard them in special cases.

1771. An order which is exceptional in one period may become normal in another period. Thus the pre-adjunct order of Old and Modern English was probably originally emphatic (**1765**). In Old and Modern English as well as in most other languages interrogative words generally have

front-order, as in *where is he?* compared with *he is there*; this order, again, was probably at first only emphatic. The front-shifting of the verb in interrogative sentences (*will he?* compared with *he will*) was also probably at first simply the result of emphasizing the predicate, as also the front-shifting of the verb in imperative sentences (*come ye!*).

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ENGLISH ORDER AND ITS CHANGES.

1772. What appears to be the original Arian word-order is preserved in the early Sanskrit prose.

1773. In a normal Arian declarative sentence the subject is followed by its modifier the verb, but otherwise pre-adjunct order prevails; thus genitives and adjectives precede their nouns, and adverbs, accusatives etc. precede their verbs, the result being that the verb comes at the end of the sentence, as it continued to do in Latin (**1765**).

The same pre-adjunct order prevails in Arian compounds (**1546**), which shows that this order must be very old in Arian.

1774. In careless speech it often happens that a speaker finishes a sentence grammatically, and then adds one or more words as an after-thought, to complete the meaning or define it more clearly. Such **tag**-sentences are frequent in Arian, so that a verb which would otherwise have end-position loses it, just as in English we may say *he came, John* instead of *he, John, came* = *John came.*

1775. As these tagged sentences were generally longer than the normal end-verb sentences, and as it was found inconvenient to put the verb at the end of long sentences generally, whether tagged or not, a tendency might easily develop to give up end-verb order altogether except in short, familiar sentences. Accordingly, we can observe in the separate Arian languages a gradual retraction of the verb-position towards the subject-word; thus, already in Old Greek the verb is generally put immediately after its subject-

word, the verb being thus followed, instead of preceded, by its own modifiers, just as in Modern English—*Caesar conquered the Gauls.*

1776. Verb-position in Old-English tends to follow the same general principles as in Modern German. In independent declarative sentences, such as the one just given, the order is the same as in Modern English; but in dependent sentences the verb has end-position: **when Caesar the Gauls conquered had.* In other words, the original Arian word-order was preserved in dependent sentences because they are generally shorter and more compact than independent ones, till at last end-verb order came to be the grammatical mark of dependence.

1777. But, as we see from the last example, this end-verb order may often lead to illogical and clumsy collocations. And when a more convenient order had already established itself in independent sentences, it was natural to extend the order of these to the dependent sentences as well, the result being the Modern English order *when Caesar had conquered the Gauls* parallel to *Caesar had conquered the Gauls.*

1778. Old-English, having a considerable number of inflections, was able to preserve a good deal of the freedom of Arian word-order, being in this respect intermediate between Latin and Modern German.

1779. In Middle and Modern English we observe the same gradual restriction of the older freedom as in German and the other Modern Germanic languages. But while in Modern German the Parent Germanic order was, so to say, fossilized, English agrees with Swedish and Danish in developing a more natural and logical order, characterized especially by the prevalence of mid-verb position.

In the following details of English word-order, principles which are common to Old and Modern English are, as

a general rule, treated only from the Modern English point of view.

Adjectives.

1780. Assumptive adjective-words precede their head-words: *young man, running water, settled weather, many men, three men, my house, the earth.*

1781. But post-order is frequent in Old-English with quantitative adjectives: *Sumorsǣte ealle* 'all the people of Somerset' | *his suna twēġen* 'his two sons' | *hīe būtū* 'both of them' (the two armies) | *wæter ġenōg*, where Modern English has both orders—*enough (of) water, water enough*, the latter being less emphatic. In Old-English also the postposition of these adjectives seems to be the result of their want of emphasis. But in the Modern English †*soldiers three* the numeral has full stress.

1782. In Modern English postposition is regular in the case of cardinal numerals used as ordinals: *chapter ten* [but *the tenth chapter*], *page three, number three, latitude* 39°, *in the year* 1000. This usage seems to be due to French influence.

1783. Also with participles used as adjectives: *the day following* [*the following day*], *the time being, the money required* [*the required money*]. This order is, of course, the result of these words being still felt to be half verbs.

1784. In Old-English postposition is frequent in exclamations, as in *Hrōþgār lēofa!* 'dear Hroþgar!' *brōþor mīn!* †'brother mine!'

1785. *God ælmihtiġ* 'God almighty' seems to be an imitation of the Latin order (*Deus omnipotens*).

So also the Modern English, *the body politic, the States-General, heirs male* seem due to French influence.

1786. *the* + adjectives follows proper names in such groups as *Edward the First, William the Silent*, parallel to *William the Conqueror* (**1801**). We find the same

construction in Old-English—*Ælfstān se blēria* 'Ælfstān the bald.'

1787. In such collocations as *novels proper and novels improper* the postposition is emphatic. In the colloquial *whisky hot* the adjective is tagged on because it has the complex meaning 'made hot by the addition of boiling water.'

1788. Postposition is often necessary in the case of assumptive groups: *in a manner the most picturesque* | *a man wise in his own conceit* | *names well known in literature.* But groups precede when pre-order involves no awkwardness of construction, especially when the group is felt to be equivalent to a single word, as in *he plays a not very conspicuous part in the story*, or when the group may be regarded as a compound, as in *the now declining day, his already wearied horse.*

More than one Adjective.

1789. When a noun has more than one modifier, the general principle is that the one most closely connected with it in meaning comes next to it, as in *the three wise men*, where *wise men* is equivalent to the single word *sages*. Qualifiers come before such groups, the one that is the most special in meaning (*three*) coming next to it. Hence there is a gradation of increasing specialization from the beginning to the end of such a group (*the, three, wise*). In this example only one of the modifiers is attributive. In a series of attributive modifiers the same principle is generally observed, as in *a tall black man* = *a tall negro.* In *bright blue sky* = *brightly blue sky* the position of the first adjective is partly due to its being logically a modifier of the second one.

1790. But very frequent collocations such as *old man, young man* (= *youth*) have become so fixed that no other adjective, even if more special in meaning, is allowed to

come between the two words: *a conceited young man.* Hence we cannot make *old sage* into **old wise man.*

1791. When the modifiers are about equally balanced, the order may vary, as in *the two first weeks, the first two weeks*, and the Old-English *on þām ōþrum þrim dagum* compared with the Modern English *in the course of the three following days.*

1792. We have seen that when the articles are associated with another noun-modifier they normally precede the latter: but in some constructions they come immediately before the noun. The definite article does so when associated with certain general adjectives of quality: *all the books, all the corn, half the day, treble the quantity, both the armies.* Old English sometimes has the same construction (*ealne þone dæġ*), although it generally prefers postposition (*þæt folc eall, þā bēċ ealle, þā hęrġas bēġen* (**1781**). Old-English also has the construction adjective + genitive, as in *manige* (or *fela*) *þāra manna* 'many of the men.' In Modern English we feel *all the day* to be equivalent to *the whole of the day.*

1793. The indefinite article has the same position in combination with *half—half an hour* [but *a half loaf*]—and in other combinations: *many a man, many a one, not a moment to lose,* †*the knight did bear no less a pack.* Also in combination with intensitive adjective-pronouns: *what a pity! | I never knew such a man!* These words naturally precede the *a* + noun through being emphatic. In such constructions as *so long a time, as good a man as any, too good a man* the order is the result of avoiding the awkward collocations **a so long time*, etc.

1794. The construction with possessive pronouns is analogous: *my old friend*, but *all my time, half their time, both his eyes.*

1795. We also have mid-possessive order in †*good my liege!*