

# A GRAMMAR OF LATE MODERN ENGLISH

FOR THE USE OF  
CONTINENTAL, ESPECIALLY DUTCH, STUDENTS,

BY

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## PART II THE PARTS OF SPEECH.

### SECTION II, THE VERB AND THE PARTICLES.

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## PREFACE.

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Although the compiling of this Grammar has throughout been a labour of love, I have no hesitation in saying that I feel greatly relieved now that it has been completed, and the strain of many a long year of strenuous work has been removed. Whoever attempts to bring a knotty and controverted problem of idiom or grammar to clearness, i. e. into a state in which it can be submitted to competent opinion in all or most of its bearings, will find that he has engaged in an undertaking of unlooked-for difficulty, tasking his energies in no common degree and engrossing the best part of his leisure time. Many results giving satisfaction for the moment will prove to require re-consideration on conflicting evidence turning up, often from undreamt-of sources. This not seldom means that the whole ingeniously constructed fabric has to be pulled down and to be rebuilt, in which, indeed, the collected materials can mostly be turned to excellent account, but have to undergo a thorough re-arrangement. Such at least has been my own experience. I have been fain to submit many portions of this grammar to repeated rehandlings, and not a few, even in their present shape, give me but moderate satisfaction. Imperfect as I know my work to be, I take comfort from the thought that I may have stimulated the younger generation of students to an assiduous effort at illumining some of the innumerable problems of the language and investigating its bewildering usages. I flatter myself that I have, at least, given them some hints as to the way in which grammatical subjects may be handled.

It has been my constant endeavour to arrive at facts from the materials at my disposal. I have, indeed, made occasional attempts to account for these facts on psychological, logical or historical grounds, but in the majority of cases I have contented myself with ascertaining the actual forms of speech, and marshalling them in an orderly and methodical way. There is, in my opinion, little use in enquiring into the 'why' until the 'how' has been firmly established.

The English I have especially drawn within the sphere of my investigations is, as the title of my book indicates, that of the last 150 or 200 years, during which the language has undergone but few striking changes. I have, indeed, repeatedly traced the growth of an idiom to the days of Shakespeare, and occasionally to earlier times, but my excursions into the domain of Middle or Old English have been few and far between. The reason is that my official duties have never allowed me to penetrate deeply into these fields of the language. What references there are to the older forms of speech are mostly based on the results obtained by other scholars.

All along I have striven to give adequate details as to the place of the quotations used, but, unfortunately through neglect or haste, I have in some few cases been unable to do so. This applies especially to those which I collected in the early part of my career, when I had no thought of committing my observations to the press. The works quoted from are not, one and all, original editions. Some, especially those of the earlier periods, give, I regret to say, the text in modernized spelling. Thus also my numerous quotations from the Scriptures are not drawn from the Authorized Version of the year 1611, but from the Oxford Bible for Teachers. I am aware that quoting from modernized texts detracts from the value of my book, which makes some pretensions to rest on a scientific basis; but lack of means and leisure have sometimes made it impossible for me to procure costly editions or to consult them in libraries. Not a few of the quotations have been taken from newspapers, chiefly the weekly editions of the Times, the Westminster Gazette, and the Manchester Guardian, which seem to me, although as a foreigner I am not, perhaps, qualified to give an opinion, to contain many specimens of what may be regarded as Standard English of the present day.

Some people may complain of my book having assumed inordinate dimensions. But I can honestly say that I have not seen my way to make it shorter without defeating its object, i. e. to give a detailed and adequately documented description of the innumerable niceties of speech that will press themselves upon the attention of any serious student, and ask for set discussion. Nor should it be forgotten that the great bulk of the work is in large measure due to the numerous quotations with which I have thought it necessary to support my views. It is these quotations which, after all, may prove to be of some permanent value, even when the statements they are meant to

support have been found to be fallacious. I may mention here the curious fact that I have sometimes been questioned why I had not treated a given subject at greater length, and in fuller detail than I have done. I might have considerably reduced the size of my book if I had strictly confined myself to grammar proper, and rigidly discarded everything that may be reckoned to belong to the department of lexicography. But, apart from the fact that it is exceedingly difficult to delimit the two departments, this would have materially diminished the usefulness of my book, which, before everything, aims at giving practical instruction.

I have, I think, successfully withstood the temptation of drawing other languages of which I have any knowledge within the sphere of my observations. When I have occasionally done so, it was because the nature of the subject made this practically unavoidable. Although an ardent advocate of spelling reform in my country, I have used the orthodox spelling of Dutch in my book, simply because, when I began writing it, the movement towards modernizing Dutch spelling was still in its infancy, and had not yet found the numerous advocates in intellectual circles which it has to-day.

Not a few of the subjects discussed in the present volume have also been dealt with in earlier volumes of this grammar. In the text I have been careful to make due reference to the places where additional illustration or supplementary information may be found. I am aware that in discussing certain subjects more than once, I have laid myself open to the charge of unduly repeating myself, but it should not be forgotten that many subjects lend themselves to discussion from different points of view and, consequently, require treatment more than once. Some parts contained in the present volume may be regarded as rather extensive abstracts of separate treatises which I have committed to the press in the last few years. It is hardly necessary to say that in the framework of the whole work they could not very well be omitted. The numbering of the sections is practically the same, so that students will have little difficulty in turning up the pages where they may find fuller detail and ampler illustration.

In the full description of the works quoted from, which is appended to the Grammar, I have not thought it necessary to mention the date of publication. Apart from the fact that it would in many cases involve an inordinate expense of leisure to ascertain the exact time

at which the work in question first saw the light, the student for whom my book is intended receives sufficient information as to the period of the publication from the name of the book and its writer. I have also abstained, in most cases, from naming the place of issue, it being understood that the publishing house is established in London, unless otherwise indicated, in which case the letter T stands for the well-known firm of Tauchnitz in Leipzig.

As to the grammars and grammatical treatises which I have consulted with more or less attention, I have felt obliged to confine myself to enumerating only such as have appeared separately. The numberless articles bearing on my subject, contained in the files of *Anglia*, *Englische Studien*, *Herrig's Archiv*, *English Studies*, *Neophilologus*, *De Drie Talen*, *Taalstudie*, and a few other periodicals, have, accordingly, been excluded from my "Bibliography." Important as I have found some of them to be, I have not seen my way to spare room for the almost endless list. As in the course of my expositions I have constantly made a point of referring to other works dealing with the subjects discussed, this omission will not, it is hoped, be regarded as a serious neglect of duty. It is almost needless for me to acknowledge the great obligations I owe to that wonderful monument of English scholarship, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, without which any detailed grammatical work that claims to be scientific can hardly be satisfactorily written. Also A. Schmidt's invaluable *Shakespeare Lexicon*, I need hardly say, has been useful in many ways. Some debt I owe, too, to the *Bible Word-Book*, written by W. A. Wright and published by Macmillan & Co. in 1884.

As to the copious descriptive index which is appended to this volume, I have only to say that I am rather sanguine that it will satisfy all reasonable demands. The courteous reader will surely not take it amiss that in many descriptions accuracy has had to give way to brevity.

As the present volume was passing through the press I have had the inestimable privilege of having it commented on by my friend, the eminent grammarian, Dr. E. KRUISINGA. With untiring patience and unflagging interest he has furnished the proof-sheets with numerous marginal notes calling my attention to what seemed to him inadequate, inaccurate or wrong. At the same time he has been at great pains to refer me to those sections in his own grammar, which had just left the press in a fourth edition, where I could find a fuller exposition

of his views. I regret to say that only a few (far too few) of his observations could be turned to account in the printing stage of my book. Most of them, indeed, I have to regard as meant for my private instruction. I have great pleasure in stating that I have largely profited by his singular acumen, wide reading and profound knowledge of the older stages of the language. He may rest assured that I shall hold his disinterested help in thankful remembrance as long as memory lasts.

I have had no assistance in correcting the scribal errors and printing mistakes which in a work like the present with its large variety of types, which had to be set up by a compositor 'not to the manner born', are apt to 'come not single spies, but in battalions'. I have, therefore, to address an urgent appeal to the 'gentle reader' to use some of his inborn forbearance, if he should be annoyed by any considerable number. If blame he must, let him lay the blame at the door of the writer, not at that of the compositor, who through all the weary pages of this bulky volume has taken laudable pains to turn my trying manuscript into print to the best of his ability.

Last, but not least, my sincere thanks are due to the firm of P. NOORDHOFF for their generous readiness to bring out my voluminous work, which is no small venture in these days of universal distress, and cannot be expected to yield any worldly profit to the publisher.

In conclusion I wish to say that any criticisms tending to ameliorate a future edition, should any ever be called for, will be gratefully accepted.

H. POUTSMA.

AMSTERDAM, January 1926.

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# THE VERB.

H. POUTSMA, III 1.



## CHAPTER XLV.

### INTRODUCTORY SURVEY

#### ORDER OF DISCUSSION.

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1. A verb is a word by means of which an action, state or quality is predicated of a person or thing, or a number of persons or things. As a general term for the action, state or quality predicated the term *predication* may be used. The word(s) expressing the predication may be called the *predicate*.
2. Many predicates are capable of a variety of applications consisting in the fact that the participants in the predication they indicate may be represented to be concerned in it in different ways, as appears from their being mentioned in different elements of the sentence. The result is that these predicates may be furnished with subjects, objects or other adjuncts standing for heterogeneous notions. Thus we say not only *This undertaking succeeded (with him)*, but also *He succeeded in this undertaking*; not only *Our tea ran short (with us)*, but also *We ran short of tea*; not only *The nurse is in charge of the child*, but also *The child is in charge of the nurse*; not only *He heaped a profusion of boiled beef upon my plate*, but also *He heaped my plate with a profusion of boiled beef*. For detailed discussion see Ch. LIII.
3. The predicating is effected either by the verb itself, as in *The boy speaks*, or by a verb together with a nominal or nominal equivalent, as in *The boy is asleep*, *The boy is an office-clerk*, *The boy is to blame*, *The boy is at home*. We may, accordingly, distinguish verbal and nominal predicates.
4. a) Verbs which are joined with a nominal or nominal equivalent to effect a predicating are called *copulas*. Copulas are of three kinds, i. e. they indicate that a person or thing
  - 1) is in a certain state or has a certain quality, e. g.: *He is idle*, *He is lazy*;
  - 2) continues to be in a certain state or continues to have a certain quality, e. g.: *He remains hungry*, *He continues poor*;
  - 3) gets into a certain state or assumes a certain quality, e. g.: *He gets sleepy*, *He gets lazy*.

The verb *to be*, when used as a copula, does not express any activity; may, indeed, be said to be devoid of all meaning, when connected with an adjective or noun; thus in *John is happy*, *John is a soldier*. When followed by an adverbial adjunct, it implies some faint notion of activity approaching to that which is more explicitly expressed by some such

verb as *to lie, to stand, to sit, to rest*, etc. Thus in *My bed is (stands) close to the wall, The book is (lies) on the table*.

Also in connexion with an infinitive in such sentences as *He is to blame, It was not to be endured*, some faint meaning clings to the verb *to be*, corresponding, as the case may be, to that of a weak *ought* (or *must*) or *can*.

The notion of an obligation or compulsion incumbent on the subject is quite distinct in other combinations of *to be* with an infinitive, such as are found in *You are to give this to John, The life that is to come, She is to be married next week*, etc., discussed in Ch. I, 29—31. In these the verb *to be* can, therefore, hardly be apprehended as a mere copula, although it must be admitted that no strict line of demarcation can be drawn between the two functions of *to be* here referred to. For further details see Ch. LV, 71.

All the other copulas express dimmed forms of activity, approaching more or less closely to those which are indicated by these verbs in their original applications. For detailed discussion and illustration of the verbs which may do duty as copulas see Ch. I, 2—12. Compare also SWEET, N. E. Gr. § 263, where the term link-word is, however, used in a wider application.

b) Also the verbs *to seem* and *to appear* are mostly included among the copulas. These verbs, however, although no doubt effecting the connexion between the subject and the nominal, express a purely adverbial notion, indicating as they do certain attitudes of uncertainty on the part of the speaker with regard to the predication. The fact is that in such a sentence as *He seems (or appears) happy* the meaningless *to be* may be assumed to be understood: it is, indeed, oftener than not added to the verb, the above sentence becoming *He seems (or appears) to be happy*.

This twofold form may, it is true, also be observed in sentences with *to get, to grow* and some other verbs which do duty as copulas (Ch. I, 10), but it should be remembered that these verbs, in their function of copulas, are employed in a highly faded meaning, while *to seem* and *to appear* lose none of their semantic significance when, with or without *to be*, they are connected with a nominal.

Again, while such a sentence as *He seems (or appears) to be happy* admits of being expanded into *It seems (or appears) that he is happy*, which distinctly brings out the full meaning of the verbs in question (Ch. II, 33), no such expansion is possible with sentences containing *to get, to grow*, or any of the other quasi-copulas referred to above (Ch. I, 33). Compare also 12, d, 2.

In passing it may be observed that the expanded and the contracted construction are not always identical in meaning, as they are in the above pair of examples. Thus there is an appreciable difference in meaning between *It seemed that she had little cause for anxiety* (MAC., Fred., 665b) and the corresponding contracted form *She seemed to*

*have little cause for anxiety.* The latter implies that the phenomena giving rise to the statement have been observed in the person referred to, the former that they have been perceived in facts lying outside this person. The former denies the existence of alarming symptoms, the latter does not; the former is objective, the latter subjective.

c) Even less justifiable is the practice followed in some Latin Grammars of reckoning such passives as *videri*, *appellari*, *vocari*, etc. among the copulas, these verbs owing their connexion with a nominal in the nominative merely to the fact that the double accusative with which they are construed when used actively, has been turned into a double nominative when used passively. Compare 13, b.

5. a) The person or thing from which the predication is considered to originate is called its subject. In some cases this person or thing is not denoted by the word(-group) which determines the form of the predicate; in other words the logical subject, i.e. the subject of the predication, does not always correspond to the grammatical subject, i.e. the word(-group) which determines the form of the predicate. A predicate whose subject does not correspond to the subject of the predication may be called illogical.

Illogical predicates mostly stand in what is called the passive voice of the verb, as in *He was killed in action*. For detailed discussion see Ch. XLVII. But also a verb in the active voice may constitute an illogical predicate; thus in *The book sells well*. SWEET, N. E. Gr., § 249. Further details in Ch. XLVI, 32 ff. Another kind of illogical predicate may be seen in sentences in which an intransitive or a transitive verb is used in a causative meaning, as in:

He walked me into the parlour. DICK., *Co p.*, Ch. IV, 23b.

He led the clerks a dire life in the city THACK., *Van. Fair*, II, Ch. VII, 73. (The O. E. D., s.v. *lead*, 7, has another explanation.)

Further details in Ch. XLV, 37 ff.

By the side of the grammatical and logical subject we have to distinguish the psychological subject, i.e. the notion which is foremost in the speaker's thoughts, and which is, accordingly, the real theme of his communication or question. Thus in the following quotations the italicized words denote the psychological subject:

*The tongue* can no man tame; it is an unruly evil. Bible, James, III, 8.

Unto *the pure* all things are pure. Id., Titus, I, 15.

In no country that is called Roman Catholic has the Roman Catholic Church, during several generations, possessed so little authority as in *France*. MAC., *Hor. Walp.*, I, Ch. I, 48

When not preceded by any qualifying adjective, *subject* is understood to stand for *grammatical subject* in the following discussions.

For the sake of brevity the unqualified word is occasionally used also for the thing indicated by it.

b) Sometimes a predication is mentioned without any originator being thought of. The predicate expressing it is then mostly furnished with a meaningless word by way of grammatical subject. The word which is used for this purpose in English is the indefinite pronoun *it*; the predicate of which it is the subject is said to be impersonal. The use of the meaningless subject serves at least this useful purpose that in principal sentences it helps to show, by its position, whether we have to deal with a statement or a question. Compare *It rained*, *It was very hot that day*, *It was ten o'clock* with *Did it rain?* *Was it hot that day?* *Was it ten o'clock?* In subordinate clauses it is without this power, its place being uniformly before the predicate. Compare *I told him that it rained* with *I asked him whether it rained*.

Impersonal predicates are capable of showing the distinctions of tense and mood. Naturally they can undergo no modification for person, number or voice (6). For further discussion of impersonal predicates see Ch. II, 2—9, where the meaningless subject is called *sham object*, as a rendering of the Dutch *loos onderwerp*. Compare also Ch. XL, 63.

Impersonal predicates should be distinguished from such as have for their subject the anticipating *it*, as in *It is necessary that he should exert himself*, *It took him a long time to write that letter*. Standing as it does for a well-defined notion, this *it* is not, accordingly, an indefinite, but a personal pronoun. In many connexions, however, the notion indicated by this *it* is far from distinct, so that it is not clearly distinguished from the indefinite *it*; thus in *It is ten hours since I had anything to eat*, *It is ten minutes' walk from here to the station*. The J. E. D., acknowledging the vagueness of *it* in such and some other connexions, describes it as *quasi-impersonal*. For details about the use of anticipating *it* see Ch. II, 10 ff. Constructions with the indefinite or quasi-impersonal *it* have been largely replaced by personal constructions, especially in the later stages of the language. For detailed discussion see Ch. LIII, 5 ff.

c) The imperative of a verb being used only in address, it is but natural that it mostly stands without a subject. For the discussion of the cases in which it is furnished with a subject see Ch. XLIX, 58.

d) The non-finite forms of the verb, i. e. the infinitive, the gerund and the participles, stand without any indication of the originator of the predication they express, when the latter is not thought of in connexion with any particular person(s) or thing(s). See also Ch. XVIII, 1; Ch. XIX, 1; Ch. XX, 1.

- i. It is more blessed to *give* than to *receive*.
- ii. *Playing* with fire is dangerous.
- iii. Humanly *speaking*, the patient is out of danger.
- iv. We will keep moving south, and *given* luck, we may fall in with Bassetti's relief column before many days. ETH. M. DELL, *The Way of the Eagle*, I, Ch. V, 51.

6. Owing to the varied nature of the subject the verbal predicate or the copula of a nominal predicate may assume different forms, some of which are called its person and number. Thus in *I walk* the form of the verb differs from that in *thou walkest* and *he walks*, because in the first the subject denotes the speaker, in the second the person spoken to, and the third a person other than either the speaker or the person spoken to. Again the difference in the form of the verb in *he walks* and *they walk* is due to the fact that in the first the subject denotes one person, in the second a plurality of persons.

Some languages, such as Latin and Greek, show a greater variety of forms depending on the nature of the subject than English. Owing to the levelling process, which from early times has affected the whole of its accidence, it has even lost some distinctions of person and number which it possessed in its earliest stages. The distinctions of person and number require no further discussion in this place. For comments on concord as to number and person see Ch. XXVI.

7. The predicate is also, to a certain extent, capable of showing by a particular form, called its tense, the time-sphere to which the predication belongs. Thus in *I hear a noise* and *I heard a noise* the forms *hear* and *heard* represent the action of hearing as belonging, respectively, to the present and past time-sphere.

Like other Germanic languages, English has no special forms to represent a predication as belonging to a time-sphere subsequent to the moment of speaking or writing, or to a time-sphere subsequent to a moment in the past. certain verbs, especially *shall* and *will*, being employed to make up the deficiency. Nor does it possess separate forms to express the notion of an action or state having reached the stage of completion. This is done by the verbs *to have* and *to be*, the latter having fallen into disuse for this purpose in the latest English. The formation of the tenses and the conditions determining their use will be amply discussed in Ch. L.

8. a) Another source of variation in the form of the predicate is its capability of expressing the speaker's mental attitude regarding the fulfilment of the predication. The forms of the predicate which correspond to this attitude are called moods. In this grammar four moods are distinguished, viz.: the Indicative, the Subjunctive, the Conditional and the Imperative, severally