

LATIN SUFFIXES

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Latin Suffixes by John T. White

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PREFACE.

FOR the full understanding of a language three things are essentially necessary : — a knowledge of its inflections, a knowledge of its construction, a knowledge of its words. These may be respectively termed inflection-knowledge, construction-knowledge, word-knowledge ; and it is in proportion as these are attained that a language is more or less understood. Inflection-knowledge and construction-knowledge present neither numerous nor grave difficulties. The whole of the inflections of a language are reducible to one or other of a not large number of given forms ; and all that is needful for the understanding of its general construction is comprised within comparatively few rules. But the case is different with regard to word-knowledge. Each word of the whole language has to be separately stored in the memory, without any aid from classification, as in the case of inflection and of construction. So that as words are very numerous, there is least assistance where there is most difficulty.

To facilitate the acquirement of an intimate and philosophical *word-knowledge* of the Latin language is the object of the present work. I have written it for the use neither of beginners and quite young persons on the one hand, nor merely of more or less advanced students on the other ; but of all who, possessing a moderate acquaintance with Latin, are prepared to bring reflecting minds to

the investigation of its statements. The principles enunciated in it—borne out by Bopp and Pott—even if known to scholars, have certainly never yet appeared either collectively, or in the present form. Indeed, there is much about them which is, I believe, altogether new. But though this is the case, they are not advanced as mere theory. They have been subjected to a test severe in its nature, and continued in its duration, having been employed by me in writing the Latin-English Dictionary, on which I have been engaged for several years, and which is now drawing towards completion. By this means I have arrived in my own mind at a conviction of their truth; and if they be founded on truth, it will be conceded, I think, that they are most important. Without, however, entering into any detail of the general plan upon which the Dictionary is being written, I would state, that while by their aid I have been enabled to throw much etymological light on numerous words either unexplained, or wrongly explained, by lexicographers in general, every fresh day's experience adds to the proof of their soundness; and that, while I have occasionally found, and may still find, cause for a further development of them, I have never yet, in any instance, had occasion either to retract or to modify them.

The way in which I have endeavoured to carry out my object of facilitating the acquirement of a word-knowledge of the Latin language, has been by reducing its words to certain classes, within one or other of which nearly all that have come down to us find a place. Some few exceptions occur. But it is not difficult to assign the reason. The Latin language, as we have it, is not a whole. It is but a fragment. We have, if a large portion, still, only a portion of it. And, there-

fore, we do not find in the works of the Latin authors that have reached us all the words employed by those who spoke the Latin tongue. Neither are all its Roots certainly known at present. Hence there occasionally occurs a gap in the process of the formation of words; — and conjecture, though usually based on good and sufficient grounds, has sometimes to take the place of absolute certainty. But the occasions are rare when this is the case. Almost every Latin word can be assigned a place in a particular class. And it is by this classification that a word-knowledge of Latin may be attained in a comparatively short time, and with comparatively little difficulty.

But to enter more into detail. Words consist of two parts; — a Base and a Suffix.* These are either attached immediately to each other, or are united by a Connecting Vowel.* In the Base is found the Root*, which shews whence any given word springs, and what is the notion at the foundation of it. The Suffix determines what is the power of the word in relation to its Root, and in relation also to all those other words which spring either directly from that Root, or from other words connected with it by a second, third, or even fourth formation.* Roots shew how words primarily differ in notion among themselves: Suffixes shew in what respect, and to what extent, they harmonise. In other words, Roots impart the distinctive, or separate, meaning; Suffixes the common, or class-, meaning. By the combination of the respective powers of the Root (as included in the Base), and of the Suffix, the true Etymological meaning of a word is obtained. This Etymological meaning in nouns describes, for the most part, some quality, or power, or characteristic,

* See Definitions, p. 5.

which holds good of a given word ; and which is, further, a general idea, of which the common acceptation of the word is usually a restricted, or especial, one. To illustrate what has been stated. The words *mergus* and *procus* are respectively composed of the Roots (which are, here, the entire Base) *merg.* and *proc.*, and of the Suffix *us*. *Merg.* contains in itself the notion of "plunge into water;" *proc.* of "ask:"—while, in each instance, *us* has a force akin to a present participle active. Hence the foregoing words differ as regards the respective Roots *merg.* and *proc.*: they agree as regards the common Suffix *us*. From these Roots they obtain their distinctive meaning: from their Suffix their common, or class-, meaning. Combine the respective powers of these Roots and of their common Suffix, and their true Etymological meanings are obtained; viz.: "the one plunging into water"—"the one asking." These meanings describe, here, a *characteristic* of that thing and person, of which, and whom, they hold *generally* good: the characteristic of the former being, habitually, "plunging into water;" of the other, "asking." Their restricted, or *especial* meanings, are, "a diver," or "seagull;"—"a wooer" or "suitor." And hence it may be added that on the principle of Suffixes the language becomes self-interpreting.

Again, as the meaning of every Suffix is settled and defined, and as it is applicable to every member of its class, the first intention, or, to speak technically, "the proper meaning," of a word is at once discernible. Hence it can be immediately seen when "the proper meaning" of a word has, and when it has not, reached us in those works of Latin authors which we possess. Thus the Suffix *tio* contains the notion of "doing" that, which its Root, as comprised in its Base, denotes;—and from the two, com-

bined, are obtained abstract substantives; as, *audī-tio*, "a hearing;" *lec-tio*, a "reading;" and hence it would be expected that *cænā-tio* would signify "a supping," etc.; but it has come down to us only in the force of "a supper-room," etc.

From what has thus been just stated it follows that, as it is by the aid of Suffixes "the proper meaning" of a word is obtained, its derived—that is its "metonymical," or "figurative"—meanings, if any attach to it, are readily discovered. Thus *auditio* sometimes means "a thing heard," "a lesson," etc.; *lectio*, sometimes, "a thing read;" and *cænatio*, always, "a supper-room," etc.; all of which are metonymical meanings. Again; as *jugum* denotes "a yoke" made of some substance; so, when it signifies "the yoke" either of slavery, or of matrimony,—which is not a substance,—it has a figurative meaning.

Another valuable result obtained from the knowledge of Suffixes is the proof that some words, of which, apart from this system of study, it can only be affirmed that they consist of the same letters arranged in the same order, possess a community of Etymological idea, though they represent objects in themselves entirely unconnected. Take for instance *luma*, which means, 1. "a thorn;" —2. "a cloak." What these have in common is not readily apparent. They have, however, a common Root, *lu*, "to rend" or "cut;" and a common Suffix, *ma*, which imparts a participial force, either active or passive. Hence, is obtained, 1. "The rending" or "cutting thing;" "a thorn." 2. "The rent" or "cut thing;" i. e. "a square" piece of cloth rent or cut off from a larger piece and used as a "cloak," "*luma, sagum quadrum*;" Gloss. Isid.

Again, there are other words, apparently identical in