

**AFFIXES IN THEIR ORIGIN AND
APPLICATION: EXHIBITING THE
ETYMOLOGIC STRUCTURE OF
ENGLISH WORDS**

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by S. S. Haldeman

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BY
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PREFATORY

THE number of English monosyllables is about 3200, and as many of these are not primitives, but have a prefix, a suffix, or both, it is evident that the affixes must be concerned in the formation of the greatest part of the vast vocabulary of English words; and that an accurate knowledge of these is to be acquired through a distinct appreciation of the modes used to vary them in form and meaning, according to the exigencies of thought and speech.

Some languages, as Greek and Welsh, have their etymologic material within themselves, and most of their words may be analysed independently of other languages; but if this is attempted with a composite language like English, the resulting knowledge will be imperfect, as in supposing *aque* to mean *water* in the word *aqueduct*, where *-e* is the genitive case sign of *ĀQVĀ* water, *AQVAE* of water, the *A* having been lost in *aqueduct*. (See § 7.) If therefore we ignore Latin forms in words derived from Latin, our analysis will be unreliable, and the force of the derivatives may be obscured rather than elucidated.

Unless we know, not only the affixes as they appear in English, but their etymology also, it will not be apparent that the *c* of the suffix *-cy* may be due to an *i*, a *t*, an *s*, or an original *c* (*cay*;) and we may mistake one form for another, as *-y* for *-ly* after *-l*, as in *oil-y*, and *idl-y*, or *un-* in *un-loose* for the negative *un-* in *un-fix*. For such reasons it was determined that this volume should be strictly etymologic, and that collateral forms should be cited where they might be useful, as in determining whether the supinal *to* in 'to live' is the ordinary preposition *to*. Languages not akin to English

have been sparingly quoted, but more to exhibit accidental coincidences and occasional borrowed forms, than to claim them as indicating a closer relationship. (See Obs. 2, under **-n** adj., p. 141; and **-n** noun plural, p. 143.)

In the summer of 1861, F. J. Furnival, Esq., the obliging secretary of the Philological Society of London, examined the manuscript of this volume and made several suggestions, among them the addition of **-m** as a diminutive. Various illustrative passages have been added subsequently, a feature which would have been made more prominent and varied, had it not been for the difficulty of consulting genuine editions of standard authors like Shakspeare and Milton, on the western side of the Atlantic. Supposing that an extract illustrating the word *battle* were required from Pope, we find it given as 'battle' in an American edition (book 7, line 292,) whilst in the London edition of 1716 the line stands—

And bear thick Battel on my founding Shield.

In like manner, a spurious edition of Young has the word 'sprightly' towards the end of Night 1, which, in "A NEW EDITION Corrected by the Author." 1776, is thus given in a more etymologic form—

The sprightly *lark's* shrill matin wakes the morn; . . .

Except in the Introduction, illustrative extracts from authors as late as the year 1800, are printed in old style type, to distinguish earlier writers from those of the present century, even when a modern edition like Wright's Chaucer, is quoted. A few extracts have been taken from the dictionary of Richardson, an author who is not always consistent, since he occasionally gives the same passage differently, as in quoting Beattie under **DEDENTITION** and **FERIE**,—"for falling teeth."—"for falling the teeth, &c." Under **ALOES** and **BIAS** he thus quotes Holland's Plinie—

"of the sea onion, but it is bigger, . . . gross and fat, chamfered and channelled"—
"of a sea onion but that it is bigger . . . grosse and fat chamfered and channelled!" . . .

As the etymology of a word is independent of the modes of spelling it, it has not been deemed proper to follow the practice of those who give orthographic rules in treatises on the subject. What is commonly called etymologic spelling would require the rejection of English *w, sh, gh, y, ck,* and in many cases of *th*; it would require *stable* as a noun to be spelt *stabul*, and as an adjective *stabil*; the letter *l* to have a place in writing *as*, to be rejected from *could*, and doubled in *idolatry* and *tranquil*; *n* to be placed in *mill* as it is in *kiln*; the *e* to be retained in *line* but not in *pine*; and *g* removed from *sovereign* to be placed in *noble*.

An etymologic orthography would require an indication of long and short *o* in words from the Greek. *Antiphōny* would have to be given up for *antiphōny*, because the former would mean 'an avenging of (φονή) murder,' and the latter 'a replying,' from φωνή voice. By shortening the *i* of *liturgy* we virtually refer it to *λιουργέω*, 'to speak with malice,' instead of *λειουργέω*, 'to perform public service;' and *Calliōpe* (*Καλλιόπη*) 'she who has a fine voice,' with *o* lengthened would mean 'she who has a fine eye.'

As etymologic orthography is assumed to be the spelling of words as their cognates or cognate parts are spelt in other languages, examples would appear in *hwgellyedr* for *buckler*, *cliyedheamhor* for *claymore*, *czar* (Russian *Царь*) for *tsar*, and in the following lines (Trevelyan Prize Essay, § 14,) of English, with the words as they stand in other languages—

Srdee moy szarcze ach hui deos sadnissa!
Kard man hiort ag euige dix aethlnessus?

The stereotyping of this work was commenced in February 1864, and it was expected to be before the public at latest in September, but in the meantime Webster's Dictionary appeared in the autumn of 1864, rendering, for example, the note on **-ness** (page 13) inapplicable, this suffix being correctly given by Dr. Mahn.

Although Dr. Mahn's etymologies differ from some of those here given, it will probably be found that neither author is right in all cases, and that a number of those here given will bear the test of investigation, as bullock page 196, charlock 182, croup 51, decoy 56, flannel 67, foray (maraud, por-beagle) 254, hanger 147, hoiden 143, Lestris 232. Dr. Mahn refers laudanum to *labdanum*, which we had abandoned as unsatisfactory. Raccoon is not derived from the French *raton*, but from an aboriginal basis, and we regard reamer and its verb as due to German *pfriem* (with the same meaning) rather than to *room*.

These remarks are not intended to detract from the great merit of this distinguished scholar, the etymology of a language being beyond the powers of a single inquirer, and the science one of those where a conclusion apparently well founded, may be disproved by a citation from an obscure or unwritten dialect. The affixes alone present many difficulties, and the present attempt to elucidate them is sent forth with the hope that the subject may receive the attention necessary to explain the points which still remain unsettled.

COLUMBIA, PENNSYLVANIA,
February 18, 1865.

INTRODUCTION

ENGLISH is not a language which teaches itself by mere unreflecting usage. It can only be mastered, in all its wealth, in all its power, by conscious, persistent labor; and, therefore, when all the world is awaking to the value of general philological science, it would ill become us to be slow in recognizing the special importance of our own tongue.—*Geo. P. Marsh*, Lectures on the English Language, 1840.

§ 1 In this work the Affixes, both Prefixes and Suffixes, are given in their etymologic connections. For example, the Latin *coŃ* or *co*, and Greek *σύν* or *sy* are referred to the same original, the former having the *c* and the latter the *s* of *ξύν* (*csŷn*) *with*; hence *con-st-ant* and *sy-st(ematic)* have essentially the same prefix and root. Depriving *sy-stem* of its prefix, it appears as *st e m*, from the idea of standing, a *sy-stem* being a setting or standing *with* each other, of things which have qualities in common.

2 Affixes are here separated from words commonly treated as primitives, as the *p* in *yel-p*, *cro-p*, *ras-p*, which are primarily nouns, formed from the verbs *yell*, *grow*, and *rase*, but used as new verbs as the language instinct disappears.

Some do not consider words like *per-me-ate*, *per-for-ate*, *per-egri-n-ate*, *con-tam-in-ate*, *met-em-psych-osis*, *eli-m-ate*, *de-mur*, *con-fer*, *re-fer*, *in-fer*, *be-gin*, *a-mong*, *gol-d*, and thousands more, as derivative words, presuming that their affixes constitute an essential part of the primitive word, or that the root portion does not constitute a separate word in English. It is stated in the "16th edition revised and improved" of the English Grammar of Robert Sullivan, LL.D., T.C.D., that "A primitive word cannot be reduced or traced to any simpler word in the language; as *man*, *good*, *content*." Hence *content*, *detent*, *retentive*, *tesable*, *con-*, *re-*, *sub-*, *abs-*, *ob-tain*, are each to be considered a primitive, although *ten-* of the Latin *tēnē-o* (I hold) is precisely the English *tain*. Such words