

**AN ELEMENARY ENGLISH
GRAMMAR FOR THE
USE OF SCHOOLS**

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An Elementary English Grammar for the Use of Schools by R. G. Latham

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ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

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FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS.

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PREFACE.

BETWEEN the end of the third and the middle of the sixth century a language different from both the original British and the Latin of the Roman period was introduced into England. It was the mother tongue of the present English. We know the direction in which it spread; because in Wales and Scotland the original Celtic still keeps its ground. And we know that about A.D. 600 it was firmly established in the Eastern half of South Britain as the *English*. Two names of two divisions of the German family, *Angle* and *Saxon*, are also known to us. But the date of its first introduction, the rate at which it encroached upon the earlier forms of speech, along with the exact way in which it has extended itself, are points about which we know very little.

This is, doubtless, a matter of regret. On the other hand, however, if we look upon the study of the English Language purely and simply as grammarians, we can dispense with the study of its external history; or, at least, the two branches of investigation can be kept separate. As to the essentially foreign and German character of the English, the language speaks for itself. We know it familiarly as it is spoken at the present moment. We have specimens of it as old as the eighth century, and we have a rich intermediate literature. Moreover we have the present German,

and allied languages of Holland, of Denmark, of Norway, of Sweden, and of Iceland, with which we can compare it. Hence, even when loaded with additions from the Latin, the French, the Greek, and other languages, its genuine German character is undoubted.

I am not prepared to say that with this we may not be satisfied. In this case we may begin at once with the details of our language and its affinities to the German dialects of the Continent. The presumptions deduced from the little that we know of its external history may coincide with its known structure; or they may differ from it. They may lead us to suppose that our language should be as free from British or Latin elements as it actually is. Or they may lead us to expect more remains of the languages which it displaced than we find. But upon these questions we may abstain from speculation. In other words we may take our language with its German character as we find it, and pronounce it to be what it is, either with the presumptions in favour of its being so, or in spite of them.

Much may be said in favour of this mode of treatment. It is usual, however, to say something about its introduction; about the parts of Germany from which it came; about the import of the terms Angle and Saxon; about the relations of the dialects of Germany Proper and Scandinavia; and, above all, about the extent to which the blood and the language of the English nation coincide.

All this—as has just been stated—may be avoided by limiting our consideration to the language itself. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: viz., that if the question of its introduction is to be gone into, it must be gone into thoroughly. If we write about it at all, we must write fully.

In a work like the present this is impossible. But the present is only the forerunner to a larger one; in which the subject is treated more comprehensively. Still there are special pieces of evidence with which the reader cannot make himself familiar too soon, and on this principle the chief notices in the way of evidence are laid before him. Even when taken altogether they are neither numerous nor long. The selected texts in the present small volume may be counted on our fingers. They fall, however, into two classes—the first containing the incidental allusions of the *cotemporary* Latin and Greek writers; the second the account of the Venerable Beda in the eighth century. Each class has its merits, and each its weak points. But if we give one, we must give the other also: for it is certain that they do not coincide. Of this the reader should be aware; though it is not necessary that on the very threshold of his studies he should either fix upon the class he prefers, or trouble himself to reconcile the two. But—as said before—he should know from the very first the nature of the scanty materials he has to deal with.

The Saxons came from Southern, the Angles from Northern, Germany; the former introducing the dialect in which the chief works of the times anterior to the Norman Conquest are composed. The latter brought with them the dialects of the parts between the Humber and the Forth; and these culminated in the literary languages of Scotland under the first five Stuarts. The former is represented by the present dialects of Dorsetshire, Devonshire, and the West of England, and is called Westsaxon; the latter by the Lowland Scotch and the English between the Tweed and the Humber. This is called Northumbrian. Out of the intermediate dialects arose the present literary English. These, though all three *dialects* of the German

of England, have as fair a claim to be called different *languages* as the Danish and Swedish, or the Spanish and Portuguese; and each has its several stages.

But besides this there are stages of the English language in general; and it is necessary to separate the two histories.

In Part II., which treats of *Orthoëpy* and *Orthography*, there is little which is not found in the earlier editions.

And the same may be said of Part V., which treats of *Prosody*.

In the Third and Fourth Parts, which give us *Etymology* and *Syntax*, the general principle which distinguishes them from one another is clear and precise. Where we have words like *father* and *fathers—write* and *wrote—call* and *called—we* have, in each pair, *one* word and no more. This is *Etymology*. The second word is a slightly altered form of the first. Still it is a *single* word.

In combinations like—*of a father—I have written—I am calling*, and the like, we have *more words than one*. This is *Syntax*; *i. e.* two, three, or (it may be more) words in combination. Sometimes one of these governs the other. Sometimes they are in concord or agreement. But, in all cases, they are two words in combination. Hence the name *Syntax*.

On the first view nothing is clearer, or more distinctive, than this. There are, doubtless, cases where the place of a word is equivocal; *e. g.* in compounds. Terms like *oak-tree*, *Thursday*, and hundreds of others are of this class; and it cannot be denied that they may belong to *either Syntax or Etymology*. They belong to *Syntax* so far as they are *two* words. But they are combined together and treated as one: and, so far, may be referred to *Etymology*. Still the class of compounds is not the one that need

detain us longer. It raises a slight objection to the principle here laid down; but not one of much practical importance. When we say *all black birds are not blackbirds*, it is easy to see that in the first pair, we have two *separate* words; in the second, two words compounded into one.

The class which has a tendency to perplex us is represented by such combinations as *the hand of a man* when compared with *a man's hand*, *the skin of the lion*, &c. &c. Here the words *man's* and *lion's* are, according to every test, Genitive Cases, and, as such, single words belonging to Etymology; whereas *hand of a man* and *skin of the lion* are combinations of words, and, as such, belong to Syntax. In sense, however, they are so nearly identical that we are tempted to treat them as such. At any rate, we say that *of* is the sign of Genitive case. Yet *lion* is not a Genitive case at all. The true fact is somewhat different; and the accurate expression is—not that *lion* is a Genitive Case of which *of* is sign—but that there is a combination of a wholly different character with a meaning equivalent to a Genitive Case.

In the Verb the tendency to confusion is greater, and the influence of the Latin Grammar has much to do with it—that of the Greek a little. But the Latin is sufficient for our illustration. Where the Latin gives us *scribam* = *I shall write*; *scribebam* = *I was writing*; *scripsi* = *I have written*, and the like, it gives us a true Future, a true Imperfect, and a true Past Tense; and, as such, a form in Etymology. The English equivalents in sense, which are all combinations of different words, in every sense, belong to Syntax.

In the Passives we get a still more decisive influence. *Amor* = *I am loved*, *amabar* = *I was loved*, *amabor* = *I shall be loved*; all of which are Etymological Tenses. But