

**A HAND-BOOK OF  
ANGLO-SAXON ROOT-  
WORDS. IN THREE PARTS**

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A Hand-Book of Anglo-Saxon Root-Words. In Three Parts by Various

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**VARIOUS**

**A HAND-BOOK OF  
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WORDS. IN THREE PARTS**



AMERICAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

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A

HAND-BOOK

OR

ANGLO-SAXON ROOT-WORDS.

IN THREE PARTS.

FIRST PART  
INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT ANGLO-SAXON ROOT-WORDS.

SECOND PART.  
STUDIES IN ANGLO-SAXON ROOT-WORDS.

THIRD PART.  
THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ROOT-WORDS

"The terms which first fall upon the ear of childhood"—*Edin. Rev.*

BY  
A Literary Association.

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## A LETTER.

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### DR. WISDOM TO THE LITERARY ASSOCIATION.

GENTLEMEN:—This letter you owe to the request of one of your number. Some time ago Dr. —— called upon me, and in a very agreeable conference with him, I learned much about your plans. Among other things, he informed me that, you were about to bring out a Hand-Book of the Anglo-Saxon Root words of our language. I suggested this to your Committee some time ago. It is part of your work.

You act prudently in confining the proposed Hand-Book *solely to the Anglo-Saxon root-words*. These words address the senses. They are easily understood, because the things which they represent are found in the walks of childhood. They appear as *distinct words* in our language, and retain much of their original form and meaning. Most of the *root-words of French and Classic origin* do not appear as *distinct words* in our language. Many of them have lost so much of their native form as to make it a difficult thing to trace them in the English language—too difficult, at least, for childhood. They cannot be presented at an early age with advantage; and when presented, I am of opinion, it should be in connection with their *derivatives*.

Your present work is *needed*. I have long felt this. The two Hand-Books already published, I am happy to learn, find an open and hopeful field. But it is too wide for them. The *farm*, gentlemen, you have cultivated, the *garden* you have just entered, wants your care also. The Hand-Book on the Anglo-Saxon Root-Words will meet the wants of children about eight years old—the wants of an important class of pupils.

The *division* of your course on Orthography may not so readily gain the approval of parents and teachers. It will gain it, however. It is based on some interesting facts in the constitution and life of children. They learn by *excursions*. This is the character of the mind in early life: it is *excursive*. The bud, the blossom, and the fruitage of thought are seldom gathered at the same time—never in childhood.

The excursions of the young mind are short. The journey whose end is not apprehended at the beginning fails to excite healthy emotions. The large text-book may fill the eye, but rest assured it will soon oppress the heart. Besides, there is a charm in the *little* for young minds, and the end of a book forms an agreeable break in study. It is a desirable resting-place in the journey, and such resting-places should not by any means be too far apart.

You will, I suppose, *omit the original word*. Excuse my seeming obtrusion upon your deliberations. To give it can answer no end. The child will not be able to understand it, or receive any advantage from it. In many cases he would not be able to pronounce it. The more advanced student would not expect to find it in an elementary work. What use is there, for instance, in saying that *deck* is from *deckan*, and *tove* from *tuftan*? Gentlemen, give the results of your learning, but not the details and show of it.

I would advise you to give at least, in the most of cases, the original *meaning* of the words. It will have a charm for the young mind. The child, I think, would be pleased to learn, for instance, that *queen* originally meant woman, *boorn* countryman, *husband* the house-band, and *wife* the one who weaves, because women did the weaving in olden times.

You will also give the use of the words. This cannot be wisely overlooked. Words are instruments of thought, and are of value to us only when we can use them. I would give their use in familiar questions and answers, the teacher using the word in a simple question, and the child answering with the same word. For instance: Teacher. Is *home* a dear place? Child. *Home* is a dear place. The principle of *imitation* is brought into use here, and by it, the child will be able to acquire a correct pronunciation and a ready use of words.

You will also retain the two chief features of your other Hand-Books—I mean the *arrangement* of words in the three classes of *nouns*, *adjectives*, and *verbs*—an arrangement that accords with the law of mind—and their *disposition* in groups under the things to which they relate. Such an arrangement and disposition amount to a discovery in education. They accord with the *growth* of mind. The word becomes a pleasing object of study, and the child, in going forth into the domain of language, finds himself still in company with the form and spirit of nature. Conducted in this way, education becomes a thing of pleasure as well as of duty. The word ceases to be an arbitrary sign; the word becomes a thing instinct with thought.

With much consideration,

I remain, gentlemen, yours truly,

LIONEL WISDOM.



## AN INTERVIEW

BETWEEN

### A TEACHER AND A MEMBER OF THE LITERARY ASSOCIATION.

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THE following interview has something more than a local interest.

Saturday afternoon, January 14th, 1853. Mr. B——, a practical teacher, called upon me to make some inquiries about "The American System of Education."

"Sir," said he, "allow me to ask you some questions about the Hand-Books."

*Member.*—With pleasure. We are happy to talk about that which interests us.

*Teacher.*—True, Sir. I have seen your Hand Book of Anglo-Saxon Orthography, and am much pleased with it. You have another Hand Book?

*Member.*—Two, Sir. The Literary Association has three Hand-Books on English Orthography. In these books, the child is led over the whole domain of the English language. He follows its *historic growth* from the half-formed words, pa and ma, to the awful names of God and eternal things.

*Teacher.*—The growth of language! Sir, has language a growth?

*Member.*—An instructive and beautiful one. It is the body of thought, and, like our own bodies, grows into an organic whole. Every word is a member, and increases with the increase of every part. Besides this, it has a noble *historic growth*.

*Teacher.*—Explain it, if you please.

*Member.*—The English language, as we speak it, is not native to America nor England. It is a mixed language, having at least *five lingual elements*. All its parts were imported from the continent. Its native home is the far-famed Indus—the first seat of civilization.

*Teacher.*—Sir, this is new and somewhat surprising. I knew that our language contained Latin and Greek words. Proceed, Sir.

*Member.*—An illustration will explain what I have said. The English language is like an engrafted tree. The Anglo-Saxon is the *stock*; and the Gothic, Celtic, French, Latin and Greek are *engraftures*. History records their inoculation and growth.

*Teacher.*—This is what I have long wished to see. The Anglo-Saxon is the stock—the basis of the English language.

*Member.*—Yes. When it was introduced into England by the Angles and Saxons in 450 A.D., the Celtic was the language of the British islands. A few Latin words were mixed with it, the memorials of the Roman conquest. But the Celtic wasted away before the Saxon, as the Indian dialects in this country, have wasted away before the English; and the Saxon became the speech of those islands.

*Teacher.*—Very satisfactory. But how did the other elements come in?

*Member.*—In various ways. The Church, commerce, war, and learned men, introduced them. The old Saxon tongue was poor in some things, and borrowed *kindred words* from the Gothic; names of *places* from the Celtic; words belonging to *law, chivalry, and taste*, from the French; and *scientific and theological terms* from the Latin and Greek languages. In this way, it has become great—in this way, we propose to study it.

*Teacher.*—How, Sir? You excite my curiosity.

*Member.*—In its historic growth. We begin with the Anglo-Saxon, which is the stock. It is more than this. Let me take a new illustration. As the German, Celt, French, Italian, and Greek, become *Americanized* by coming among us, so their languages have been *Anglicized* by engrafture upon the Saxon.

*Teacher.*—I understand now. Allow me, Sir, to return to the Hand-Books. What do you propose to do in your first one?

*Member.*—To teach the Anglo-Saxon root-words. We begin with the *childhood* of the language. It becomes the young mind. What do we want with derivative words till we have learned their roots?

*Teacher.*—Just so. How do you present those words?

*Member.*—As nature teaches us. The child picks up whole words as he picks up whole flowers. He picks them up in connection with things. He goes forth, and *names* whatever he sees and feels. Then, he learns their *qualities*, and names them; and lastly, their *actions*, and names them also. Thus, father; dear father; dear father comes.

*Teacher.*—Your plan is simple. The child, too, studies things while he is studying words.

*Member.*—This is not all. The Anglo-Saxon words are nearly all *spelled* as they are *written*. So the ear and eye agree in studying them.

*Teacher.*—What do you propose in your second Hand-Book?

*Member.*—The *growth* of the Anglo-Saxon root-words—their derivatives. They are needed to meet the wants of the unfolding mind. By the use of *nine terminations, twenty-five suffixes, and eighteen prefixes*, we form some *five thousand* derivative words from the *one thousand* root-words. Language is a necessity of our nature, and is to be furnished as we need it.

*Teacher.*—I see your plan clearly, and admire it.

*Member.*—Every child should build up his own language as necessity requires it. Then, words would be ready weapons of the mind.

*Teacher.*—So they would. You said that the Association had a third Hand-Book. What do you propose in it?

*Member.*—To teach the engrafted parts of our language. This is done according to the plan laid down in the first and second *Hand-Books*.

*Teacher.*—Nothing can be more simple. The idea of learning our language in its historic growth is beautiful. How could it have been overlooked so long?

*Member.*—I know not. But these views only point out the framework of the system. *Instructions* introduce the child to the whole building.

*Teacher.*—In what, may I ask?

*Member.*—Instructions in the different parts of the English language; instructions also in the *growth of words* by terminations, suffixes, and prefixes.

*Teacher.*—These instructions are much needed.

*Member.*—I have not said all yet. The English language has a growth according to the laws of *mixt*. This is pointed out in the arrangement of words as *nouns, adjectives, and verbs*. It has a *social growth*. This is seen in the engrafted elements. It has a growth according to *season*. The mind of man begins at home to unfold itself. From thence, it stretches forth to God. This is presented in the arrangement of words under the various things lying between home and heaven.

*Teacher.*—The subject grows in interest. I have been blind to its importance.

*Member.*—One thing more. The English language has an *etymology*; and this is the root of its orthography. Words are traced to their native languages. They are traced also to their natural sources in the organs of the body. The body is the wonderful instrument from which the soul evokes speech under the influence of the world.

*Teacher.*—Enough, enough, Sir! You have convinced me that I know little or nothing of my own language. The Hand-Books I shall study.

*Member.*—Sir, we have a noble language. Let us understand and teach it to the people.