THE PLACE OF THE ADJECTIVE ATTRIBUTE IN ENGLISH PROSE, FROM THE OLDEST TIMES UP TO OUR DAYS, A SYNTACTIC-HISTORICAL STUDY

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A SYNTACTIC-HISTORICAL STUDY

BY

BIRGER PALM
LIC. PHIL.

BY DUE PERMISSION OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL FACULTY OF LUND TO BE PUBLICLY DISCUSSED IN ENGLISH IN LECTURE HALL VI MARCH 22, 1911, AT 10 O'CLOCK A. M. FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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PREFACE.

A short time after this little treatise appeared in its first rather incomplete form, my attention was called to a work entitled «Die Stellung des Attributiven Adjektivs im Englischen von den ersten Anfängen der englischen Sprache bis zur Früh-Neuenglischen Sprach-Periode», by A. Müllner, and published in 1906 [1]. I began to fear that much of my labour might have been in vain, but soon found that Müllner was not a very formidable rival. This may sound arrogant, but the fact is that Müllner's work contains hardly anything beyond a very limited collection of quotations in the shortest form possible, one half of them being taken from poetry. — The prose texts examined by my esteemed colleague are: Alfred, *Othere and Wulfstan* (Kluge, Angels. Leseb.); Alfred, *Vorrede zur Cura Pastoralis* (Kluge, Leseb.); Alfred, *Cura Pastoralis* (E. E. T. S. Bd. 45); Ælfric, *Homilien* (Kluge, Leseb.); *Saxon Chronicle* (Kluge, Leseb.); Morris, *Specimens of Early English*, Part I; Dan Michel, *Ayenb. of Inw.* (pp. 70—76); R. R. de Hampole (Mätzner, *Altengl. Sprachproben*); Trevisa, *Polychronicon* (Vol. I, Ch. XXIII—XXV); Maundeville, *Voiage and Travaile* (Mätzner; pp. 155—182); Chaucer, *Tale of Melibeus;* Malory, *King Arthur* (pp. 1—50). Voilà tout!

It is true that Müllner gives a brief résumé after each period, but he restricts himself to stating that the word-

[1] The copy I possess was printed in New York, 1909.

order is such and such in such and such authors. Besides, his book presents not a few peculiarities among which may be mentioned: postposition of a word governing the genitive case (e. g. 'fela' and numerals) is looked upon as an instance of inversion of the adjective attribute (cf. pp. 18, 24); 'foresæd' is counted a participle (cf. p. 27); 'self' and 'ana' are said to be quantitative adjectives (p. 23); such words as 'ælmihtig' and 'hunigswettre' are classed among attributes with an adverbial modifier (p. 27).

It will not be difficult to see that Müllner's dissertation cannot have been of much use either to me or to anybody else wanting to know anything about the rules for English word-order.

Be it far from me to have pronounced this severe sentence in order to exalt my own little book! I know there are many weak points in it and many assertions open to discussion. But at least I have, to the best of my power, tried not only to point out the actual state of things, but also to account for the reason why things are so, and not so.

Many will perhaps blame me for not having sufficiently heeded the fact that English is not a pure Germanic language. Maybe they are right. But I cannot help looking upon the assuming of French influence here and there and everywhere as often a convenient means of escaping difficulties. Where such an assumption can be avoided it should be, it seems to me.

My examples I have arranged chronologically, so far as that has been possible. As to the spelling of M. E. words it ought to be noted that in several texts *th* and *þ* occur alternately. I have thought best in such texts always to write *th* where this is most frequent, and *þ* where this type is the usual one.

Before finishing this Preface, I will not omit to express my sincere thanks to my teacher, Professor E. Ekwall, who

has always shown the greatest indulgence and has much encouraged me during the preparation of the present syntactical study, besides giving me many valuable pieces of advice. — Mr. Bert Hood of this town has kindly gone through my manuscript and has also helped me with the reading of the proof-sheets.

Malmö, Febr. 1911.

Birger Palm.

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