

**A NEW GRAMMAR OF THE  
ENGLISH TONGUE. WITH  
CHAPTERS ON COMPOSITION,  
VERSIFICATION, PARAPHRASING  
AND PUNCTUATION**

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A New Grammar of the English Tongue. With Chapters on Composition, Versification, Paraphrasing and Punctuation by J. M. D. Meiklejohn

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**J. M. D. MEIKLEJOHN**

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OF  
29053  
THE ENGLISH TONGUE

WITH CHAPTERS ON  
COMPOSITION, VERSIFICATION, PARAPHRASING,  
AND PUNCTUATION

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PART I.

THE GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE





## INTRODUCTION.

**1. What a Language is.**—A Language is a number of connected sounds which convey a meaning. These sounds, carried to other persons, enable them to know how the speaker is feeling, and what he is thinking. More than ninety per cent of all language used is spoken language; that which is written forms an extremely small proportion. But, as people grow more and more intelligent, the need of written language becomes more and more felt; and hence all civilised nations have, in course of time, slowly and with great difficulty made for themselves a set of signs, by the aid of which the sounds are, as it were, indicated upon paper. But it is the sounds that are the language, and not the signs. The signs are a more or less artificial, and more or less accurate, mode of representing the language to the eye. Hence the names language, tongue, and speech are of themselves sufficient to show that it is the spoken, and not the written, language that is the language,—that is the more important of the two, and that indeed gives life and vigour to the other.

**2. The Spoken and the Written Language.**—Every civilised language had existed for centuries before it was written or printed. Before it was written, then, it existed merely as a spoken language. Our own tongue existed as a spoken language for many centuries before any of it was committed to writing. Many languages—such as those in the south of Africa—are born, live, and die out without having ever been written down at all. The parts of a spoken language are called sounds; the smallest parts of a written language are

called **letters**. The science of spoken sounds is called **Phonetics**; the science of written signs is called **Alphabets**.

**3. The English Language.**—The English language is the language of the English people. The English are a Teutonic people who came to this island from the north-west of Europe in the fifth century, and brought with them the English tongue—but only in its spoken form. The English spoken in the fifth century was a harsh guttural speech, consisting of a few thousand words, and spoken by a few thousand settlers in the east of England. It is now a speech spoken by more than a hundred millions of people—spread all over the world; and it probably consists of a hundred thousand words. It was once poor; it is now one of the richest languages in the world: it was once confined to a few corners of land in the east of England; it has now spread over Great Britain and Ireland, the whole of North America, the whole of Australia, and parts of South America and Africa.

**4. The Grammar of English.**—Every language **grows**. It changes as a tree changes. Its fibre becomes harder as it grows older; it loses old words and takes on new—as a tree loses old leaves, and clothes itself in new leaves at the coming of every new spring. But we are not at present going to trace the growth of the English Language; we are going, just now, to look at it *as it is*. We shall, of course, be obliged to look back now and again, and to compare the past state of the language with its present state; but this will be necessary only when we cannot otherwise understand the present forms of our tongue. A description or account of the nature, build, constitution, or make of a language is called its **Grammar**.

**5. The Parts of Grammar.**—Grammar considers and examines language from its smallest parts up to its most complex organisation. The smallest part of a written language is a **letter**; the next smallest is a **word**; and with words we make **sentences**. There is, then, a Grammar of Letters; a Grammar of Words; and a Grammar of Sentences. The Grammar of Letters is called **Orthography**; the Grammar of Words is called **Etymology**; and the Grammar of Sentences is called **Syntax**.