

**THE AMERICAN SYSTEM OF  
EDUCATION; A HAND-BOOK  
OF ANGLO-SAXON  
ORTHOGRAPHY: IN TWO PARTS**

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The American System of Education; A Hand-book of Anglo-Saxon Orthography: In Two Parts  
by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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ORTHOGRAPHY: IN TWO PARTS**



THE AMERICAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

*Elaboration on Webster's L. and Scott's Course*

A

## HAND-BOOK

OR

# ANGLO-SAXON ORTHOGRAPHY.

IN TWO PARTS.

*First Part.*

ANGLO-SAXON ORTHOGRAPHY AND ITS MATERIALS.

*Second Part.*

STUDIES IN ANGLO-SAXON ORTHOGRAPHY.

\* The terms, which occur most frequently in discourse, or which recall the most vivid conceptions, are Anglo-Saxon.—Edin. Rev.

\*\* Great, verily, was the glory of the English tongue before the Norman conquest.—Cowden.

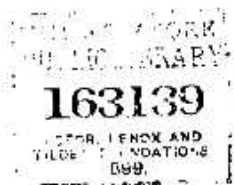
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## DR. WISDOM

ON THE

### SAXON PART OF OUR LANGUAGE.

THE address of Dr. Wisdom on English Grammar was soon followed by one of equal interest on the Saxon part of our language. Professor Cadmus, in a late communication to the Association, has kindly furnished an outline of it. Dr. Wisdom, he says, was induced to prepare and deliver the address by two facts, observed in his investigations in English Grammar: FIRST, that the *structure* and *idions* of our language are Anglo-Saxon; SECOND, that its *few inflections* are derived from the same source. These facts led him to enforce the importance of paying greater attention to this part of our native tongue.

#### DR. WISDOM ON THE SAXON PART OF OUR LANGUAGE.

Gentlemen, said Dr. Wisdom, it is a proud thing to have the English language for our native speech. Its structure is simple and massive, and its basis strong in all the elements of enduring power. Its history, to which I lately directed your attention, has taught you these things.

Recall its outlines, gentlemen. From the present, look back on the past. The English language now reigns over a vast territory—*United States, British Isles, Canada, Guiana, Jamaica, Guernsey, Jersey, Gibraltar, Liberia, Cape of Good Hope, Malta, India, and Australia.* Once, it was known only on the isle of *Thanet*. Its home was *Hanover and Westphalia*, on the Continent. Its wanderings were by the stormy Baltic, Caucasus, and distant India.

It covers this territory, gentlemen, as a mixed language. It is found on the Continent, and in those wanderings, as the Saxon tongue, a branch of the great Teutonic family. As such, it was introduced into England in A. D. 450. Six successive settlements established it on the island. It became a national language in A. D. 838. The Celtic speech, the original language of the British Isles, existed only in a few districts. New changes awaited our mother-tongue.

The Dane and Norwegian came in A. D. 827, altered its form, and brought in the Gothic element. The Norman-French conquered the Saxons in A. D. 1066, and engrafted the French element upon the native stock. Other changes followed. Latin and Greek words were freely introduced by the learned. Modern English arose in the time of Elizabeth—arose with the Anglo-Saxon element as the basis. To this element of our native speech, allow me to direct your attention.

Gentlemen, said Dr. Wisdom, the love of our mother-tongue should be strong as death. It is the speech of home and the heart, and contains treasures of sacred memory. Who can forget, or neglect it, and not wound the dearest interests of his nature?

The Anglo-Saxon is our mother-tongue. The French portion of our language is associated with wrong and oppression. A few memories of taste relieve this picture of it. The Latin part belongs to arts, sciences and abstractions. The other elements, which enter into its composition, are pomy exotica. It is otherwise with the ANGLO-SAXON. It forms the root, life, and beauty of the English language.

Gentlemen, continued the Doctor, I wish you would weigh this matter, and render a just verdict for our mother-tongue. The verdict, which I ask, is a PREFERENCE to the Latin and French portions of the English language in the education of our children. The grounds on which I ask this verdict are weighty and just.

1. THE EARLY WORDS OF HOME ARE ANGLO-SAXON. It furnishes us with the names of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter and child, brother and sister, friends and kindred, and home itself.

2. THE WORDS OF THE HEART ARE ANGLO-SAXON. Such are love, hope, sorrow, fear, tear, smile, blush, laughter, weeping, and sighing.

3. THE WORDS OF EARLY LIFE ARE ANGLO-SAXON. And who can overrate their power! The foundations of the mind are laid amidst the objects for which they stand, and their associations.

4. THE WORDS WHICH STAND FOR SENSIBLE THINGS ARE MAINLY ANGLO-SAXON: such, for instance, as the sun, moon, stars, water, earth, spring, summer, winter, day, night, heat, cold; and nearly all our bodily actions. These are the words adapted to childhood.

5. THE WORDS OF PRACTICAL LIFE ARE ANGLO-SAXON. The farmer, the merchant, the laborer and salesman use this part of our language. The names of their instruments are mainly Anglo-Saxon.

6. THE WORDS THAT MARK SPECIAL VARIETIES OF OBJECTS, QUALITIES, AND ACTIONS, ARE ANGLO-SAXON, and give peculiar weight and point to our language.

7. THE GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IS ANGLO-SAXON. Its *structure, idiom, and inflections* are derived from this source.



On these grounds I rest my claim for a preference of our mother-tongue as the basis of education in the English language. It is admirably adapted to childhood, and capable of producing results, affecting happily the mind, heart, and life of our children.

Dr. Wisdom continued: Counting on a verdict agreeable to these views, allow me now to make some suggestions on the study of orthography.

The *speaking* and *spelling* of our language are widely different. This is apparent to every reflecting mind. Indeed, the difference is so great that it is almost useless to give any rules. What is to be done! Shall we write as we spell! Shall we lop off every letter that does not enter into the pronunciation of the word! By no means. I would not tear away old associations, and efface the early records of the history of English mind, as seen in the form of our words. I would learn the *spoken language* by the *ear*, and the *written language* by the *eye*. This is a simple remedy for the evil, and the only certain way of acquiring oral and written speech.

I would teach the *elements* of our language also, said Dr. Wisdom. The common practice is otherwise. Analysis is preferred to synthesis. I would reverse this order. I would begin with the *radical word*, show the process of *derivation* and *composition*, and point out the *exchanges* of one part of speech for another. In this way, the child would be introduced to the formation of his language. Indeed, he would form the language himself; and it would be to him as a living thing, because it would be the expression of his own mind. To make this mode of studying our language complete, I would always *link the words with the things* for which they stand, and reduce them to practice at once, by giving *instances*. I would also arrange them in families, or groups, under the leading *notions* of thought, and thus link them for ever to the objects to which they relate.

It remains, added Dr. Wisdom, to define the *place* of the study of English orthography. There is danger of introducing it too early into the course of education. It should receive attention from the beginning; but its study, as such, should be commenced after the elements of English grammar have been mastered. And why! The study of orthography should embrace definition and the use of words in sentences. Instances should complete every exercise. Now, these things cannot be attended to without some knowledge of grammar. *The noun must be defined by the noun, and the verb by the verb.*

Such, gentlemen, is our mother-tongue in outline. We are proud of it. If other languages are like the scimeter of Saladin, bright and keen, the Anglo-Saxon is like the mace of Richard, a thing of power. It is well used only by one man on this continent.

But, gentlemen, the Anglo-Saxon is not all the English language. The Gothic, Celtic, French, Latin, and Greek elements are invested with much

interest, and must be called up to your attention at no distant day. I am ambitious. I wish to hasten the dawn of a new era in education. The time is at hand, when the professor of the English language shall sit side by side with the doctors of Latin and Greek; but he shall do so on the condition of placing the old Anglo-Saxon above the classics, and making Alfred and Caedmon and Bede more honorable than Virgil and Homer. Gentlemen, our old mother-tongue has endured two captivities: one under the Norman-French, the other under the Latin and Greek. From the former, it was delivered under the reign of a king: from the latter, it is about to return under a president.

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