

Norman laws and customs. None but Normans were appointed to any important office either in Church or state. Above all a strenuous effort was made to spread the Norman language throughout the island. No other language was spoken in court, or in camp, in parliament, or in the baronial hall. In this language the laws were written and the judicial proceedings conducted. The first step for every Saxon serf who wished to rise from his state of inferiority and servitude was to forget his native language and learn that of his Norman master. But the laws of nature are stronger than those of man. It is impossible for two nations to maintain for any length of time a separate existence when placed in constant juxtaposition as were the Saxons and the Normans. A mingling of races is the uniform and inevitable result. When two races become thus merged into one people it is impossible for them long to continue to speak different languages. In this case the Anglo-Saxon, being the language of the many, displaced the Norman French which was the language of the few, notwithstanding all the weight and authority that had been exercised in favour of the latter. It would be a great mistake, however, to think that the language underwent no change during the fiery ordeal. As there was a mingling of races so there was to a certain extent a mingling of language.

If we take a survey of the language as written a few centuries after the Conquest we will find neither pure Anglo-Saxon nor pure Norman French but a mixed tongue predominantly Saxon but with a large foreign ingredient. This mixed language is our modern English. The first effect of the Norman Conquest was to destroy

the old grammatical inflections and thus break down the wall that divided it from the Norman French. It also created a tendency to the adoption of foreign words. Hence its influence is not to be estimated by the number of words it actually introduced. In fact almost all the foreign words in our language owe their presence there to this influence. That the language has deteriorated much from its pristine purity by this wholesale introduction of foreign words cannot be denied.

However the evil that has been the cause of this is not without its compensating advantages. One of these is that the facility with which foreign words have been introduced into the language has made it the most replete in synonyms of any in the world. Moreover it frequently happens that of two words of different origin used to express the same general idea the one has acquired by usage a slight shade of meaning different from the other so delicate as scarcely to be defined and yet perceptible to a cultivated taste and beautiful in proportion to its delicacy. Indeed it is to an accurate knowledge of this that many authors may refer the success they have attained.

Considering everything therefore, there is no doubt that the influence of the Norman Conquest was from a literary point of view almost incalculably beneficial to the Anglo-Saxons. Without this, or some like impetus, the sluggish Anglo-Saxon nature would never have roused itself from its apathy and consequently English literature would never have attained that high state of perfection that it has at the present day attained.

DENIS MURPHY,
2nd Form.

Rev. J. J. Fillatre, O.M.I., D.D., Director of the College was the recipient of congratulatory addresses on his paternal feast, March 19th. D. A. Campbell read the English and J. Landry the French address, to each of which the Rev. Director made suitable replies, thanking them for their good wishes and re-affirming his desire to continue to devote himself to their interests.

An innovation that tends to increase the love of investigation in higher physics has been introduced into the science classes of '88 and '89. This consists in the reading of an original essay with illustrative experiments by a member of the class. J. P. Donovan lately presented an essay on "Polarized Light" which had the effect of enlightening all the obscure parts of this most difficult question.