

HISTORY AND FORMATION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

BY JAMES HUTCHISON, M. A., M. D.

Etymology (from the Greek *etimos*, true, and *logos*, a discourse, or word), is the science which treats of the origin and derivation of words, as related to their signification. English etymology treats of the origin and history of the English language.

English is not the original language of the British Islands. It is not even now the language of the whole of Great Britain and Ireland.

Keltic, the ancient language of these islands, is still spoken in many parts of Ireland, especially in the west, and is commonly called Erse or Old Irish. This is the best preserved language of the Keltic family. Keltic, under the name of Gaelic, is used extensively in the Highlands of Scotland, throughout Wales, under the name of Welsh, and in the Isle of Man, under the name of Manx.

English was not the language of the first inhabitants of England. It was introduced into Britain by various tribes from Germany about the beginning or middle of the fifth century.

These tribes gradually took possession of the most of the country, and it is the language spoken by them which forms the basis of Modern English. Of these tribes the chief were the Saxons and Angles; the Jutes were another tribe.

The language of these people, after settling in Britain, has generally been known by the name of Anglo Saxon.

A preferable term, and the one now generally employed, is Old English, thus identifying the present language with its earliest forms of history. The country was named after one of these tribes, England, the meaning of which is more easily seen in its French name Angleterre, i. e., Angle-land.

Old English was not a composite language, it was an unmixed language, having no admixture of any foreign elements. It was also an inflected language having grammatical gender, declensions, and at least five cases distinguished by different endings. English belongs to the Indo-European or Aryan family of languages. The term Indo European is a most appropriate one, as this family includes almost all the languages of Europe and all those Indian dialects which has sprung from the old Hindoo language (Sanskrit). The term Aryan has of late years almost superseded that of Indo-European from the influence of Prof. Max Muller's popular and suggestive lectures and writings on Philology.

The word Aryan is derived from the root *ar*, to fit, whence the derivative gets the successive meanings of *fitting*, *worthy*, *noble*, *honourable*, as opposed to *barbarian*. This was the name adopted by the Asiatic branch of the family, namely, the ancient Hindus and Persians, to distinguish themselves from the uncivilized or non-Aryans of India whom they had subjugated.

All the Indo-European languages are but dialects of an old and primitive tongue which has ceased to exist. If this statement be kept in mind we will not easily fall into the common error of supposing that Sanskrit is the original and primitive form. This error probably arose from the fact that we have records of Sanskrit speech stretching back to a much earlier period than those of other members of the family, and still more from the peculiar character of Sanskrit—long sentences being expressed by compounds sometimes extending over many lines. There is, indeed, hardly any member of the Indo-European family of languages but occasionally presents us with a form more ancient than the Sanskrit.

There are two great divisions of the Indo-European family, viz., Asiatic and European. Of the existing Indo-European tongues, Sanskrit is the oldest and most primitive.

The English language is a Low-German dialect of the Teutonic branch. The following table will illustrate the descent of English and its connection with the other branches and dialects of the Indo-European family of languages.

ORIGINAL LANGUAGES—INDO EUROPEAN, INDO GERMANIC, OR ANYAN.

Sanskrit and Persian (these include ancient languages and most of the modern dialects of India, Persia, and the surrounding parts)

Slavonic, (spoken through Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, Servia, Illyria and other parts of E. Europe).

Keltic, embracing the two sub divisions, *Kymric* or *Cambrian*, (including Welsh, Cornish, and the Breton of Brittany), and *Gaelic*, (including the Irish Gaelic or Erse, the Scotch Gaelic, and the Manx or Gaelic of the Isle of Man)

Classical, embracing *Hellenic*, (including ancient Greek and Romain or Modern Greek), and *Italian*, (including Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese)

Teutonic, embracing *Scandinavian*, (including Icelandic, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish), and *Gothic*, (including *High-German*, Old High-German, and Modern German, and *Low-German*, Modern Frisian, English, Dutch, Flemish).

(In the relationship of the Indo-European peoples see Prof. Schleicher's *Compendium der Vergleichenden Grammatik*, pp. 6-8, and his excellent diagram showing the degrees of relationship of the main families of the Indo-European speech)

BRITAIN UNDER THE ROMANS FROM 55 B. C. TO 411 A. D.

It has before been stated that Keltic was the original language of Britain. In 55 B. C. the Romans under Julius Caesar invaded Britain, but from the shortness of their stay in the island, they made no impress on the language of the inhabitants.

The island was entirely neglected by the Romans during the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, and Caligula. In 43 A. D. an expedition was undertaken against Britain; and after considerable successes of the Roman army under Plautius, the emperor Claudius entered Britain in person. From this time Roman governors were regularly appointed over Britain as a Roman province, most of whom extended the dominion of the Romans by subjecting additional states. The most illustrious of these governors was Agricola, the father-in-law of Tacitus, who wrote his life, and in this work he describes the exploits of Agricola in Britain.

The victories of Agricola (A. D. 78-84) carried the Roman frontier and Roman civilization as far north as the Firths of Forth and of Clyde. The conquered population was grouped in great cities such as York or Lincoln, which were defended by massive walls and connected by excellently-made roads which extended throughout the island. The despotic rule of the Romans, by destroying all local independence, crushed all local vigor. It was only in the towns that the conquered Britons became wholly Romanized. Latin became the language of the towns, but the tribes inhabiting the rural districts continued to speak their native Keltic tongue. The Picts from the north began to make repeated and extensive raids, penetrating even to the head of the island for purposes of plunder. Against these attacks the Roman legions defended the Britons till dangers at home forced the Empire to recall the legions and leave the province to defend itself.

To defend Italy from the invasion of the Goths the Roman legions in 411 were recalled, and the province being thus left unaided, seems to have fought boldly against its Pictish assailants, and once, at least, to have driven them back to their mountain fastnesses. In Modern English we have some Latin words, chiefly the names of towns where the Romans had either encamped, or had formed a colony, handed down from this Roman conquest and settlement in Britain.

SAXON INVASION OF BRITAIN.

After the Roman legions had been recalled to defend Italy from the Goths, the Britons, who had before this depended mainly on the Roman power for their defence against the incursions of the Picts, found themselves unable to cope with these invaders who had, meantime, strengthened themselves by a league with the Scots (marauders from Ireland who had taken possession of the western shores of Scotland), and with a still more formidable race of

pirates who had long been pillaging along the British Channel. These were the English. The British rulers determined to break up this league by detaching the English from it, promising them land and pay for their assistance against the Picts and Scots. Two brothers, Hengest and Horsa, gladly accepted the terms offered, and having raised a band of men in Jutland in 449, landed at Ebbesfleet, on the shores of the Isle of Thanet. Having conquered the Picts in a great battle by the aid of these mercenary troops, the Britons now saw danger coming from the English themselves. Instead of returning to their own country after subduing the Picts and Scots, the numbers of the English were rapidly increased by additions of their own countrymen, and "this increase of their number increased the difficulty of supplying rations and pay." After disputing long over these questions the English at length threatened war. The Britons fought manfully but were forced to yield. It has been said that no land was so stubbornly fought for or so hardly won. "The conquest of Britain by the English was only partly wrought out after two centuries of bitter warfare." Those of the Britons who would not submit to the yoke of the conquerors sought refuge in Wales and Cornwall, in the former of which their descendants yet flourish and their language continues to be spoken. Those who remained became the slaves of the victorious tribes and thus "at the close of the struggle Britain had become English, a land that is not of Britons but Englishmen." It is from the landing of Hengest and Horsa with their band of Jutes at Ebbesfleet on the Isle of Thanet in 449 that English history begins, and with it the English language, which in this, its earliest stage, was formerly known under the name of Anglo Saxon, after the name of the two most powerful of the invading tribes, the Angles and the Saxons.

The Keltic words adopted by the English consisted chiefly of geographical terms such as the names of towns, rivers, islands, and mountains, as Arran, Bute, Clievot, Carlisle, Kent, Glamorgan, Pevrith, Devon, Dorset, &c.

WORDS OF DANISH ORIGIN.

The Danes, who about the year 787, A. D. landed for pillage on the eastern shores of England, continued with the Norwegians to make incursions into the island for about 250 years. We find that in 1013 the Danes had established a dynasty in England and they have left traces of their language.

The changes made in the English language by the occupation of the country by the Danes were, however but scanty when compared with those produced by the Norman Conquest. The following are traces of the Danish element: (1) *By*, as in *Whitby*, *Derby*, *Tenby*. This termination denotes *town*, the *Norwegian form being wick*, as *Berwick*, and this is softened into *wich*, as in *Harwich*. (2) *Scaw*—wood, as *Scawfell*; (3) *Ey*—island, as *Orkney*; (4) *Hain*—island, or flat on the bank of a river or firth, as *Greenholm*, *Lougholm*; (5) *Ness*, *Naze*, *Noss*—headland, as *Caitness*, *Furness*, *Noesshead*; (6) *Fores*—waterfall, as *Wilberforce*. *Furce* is still used in the north of England as a waterfall.

(To be continued.)

FIRST STEPS IN GEOGRAPHY.

Paper prepared and read by Miss Mary Alexander, before the Gloucester County Teachers' Institute, Nov. 3, 1888.

The first principles of geography are those which are relative to position or place, including both the position of places with respect to each other, and also their position as determined by the points of the compass. Under this head the idea of distance may also be arranged as leading to a necessity of a standard of measurement.

The second principle is that of form, which introduces the consideration of the boundaries of countries.

The third principle is that of physical geography, which affords most interesting materials for instruction, for by the help of models and by observation on the physical features of their own neighbourhood, even very young children may be led to develop the idea of other countries, and also carries out the