

HISTORY AND FORMATION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

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(Continued.)

NORMAN-FRENCH ELEMENT.

Before the Norman Conquest in 1066, English had begun to substitute an analytical for a syntactical structure, but the Norman invasion caused this with other changes to take place more rapidly.

Edward the Confessor, who ascended the throne of England in 1041, when he was forty years old, and who had spent twenty seven years in Normandy, introduced into England the fashions and language of Normandy. Lawyers wrote their deeds, and clergymen their sermons in Norman-French. Norman-French, sprung from the Latin brought into Gaul by the Romans, became from this time and more especially after the conquest, the language of the court, of the clergy, and of all who sought advancement in church or state. The words introduced at this period related chiefly to *feudalism, war, law and the chase*. For some time it seemed doubtful whether the English or the Norman-French would become the language of the nation, but English gained the day, incorporating with itself many words of Norman-French origin. In 1302, the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Edward III, it was directed by Act of Parliament that all pleadings in the law courts should be conducted in English, French having become much unknown in the realm. As English is possessed of a literature extending from the end of the eighth century, it is possible with some distinctness to mark the changes, together with the growth and history of the language. We may estimate the English of the first period as extending from A. D. 450 to 1100. The language of this period contained a large proportion of words of one syllable and was an inflected language.

- (1) There were various declensions and five cases.
- (2) The definite article was inflected.
- (3) Pronouns had a dual number.
- (4) Gender was marked by the nominative ending.
- (5) The infinitive ended in *an*, as *drincan*—to drink, but the dative infinitive ended in *anne* (*enne*) and was preceded by *to*.
- (6) The imperfect participle ended in *ene's*.
- (7) The passive participle was preceded by the prefix *ge*.
- (8) *lith* was the ending of the first, second, and third persons plural of the present tense, indicative mode.
- (9) In the present subjunctive, plural number, these persons ended in *on*.
- (10) In the past plural indicative, the endings were *on* (sometimes *an*).
- (11) The second sing. past of *weak verbs* ended in *st*, as *lufode-st*—thou loved-st; the corresponding suffix of *strong verbs* was *e-as*, *aete*—thou aetest or didst eat; *slæp-e*—thou slept-st.
- (12) The future tense was supplied by the present with some word conveying futurity, as, *he comes to-morrow. Shall and will* were principal verbs, and not usually employed as *tense auxiliaries*.

LITERATURE OF THE FIRST PERIOD.

"The History of the Church of the Angles," by Bede.

"The Paraphrase," by Beowulf.

Religious poetry on the creation, by Cedmon.

Translation of the Psalms, Bede's History, and Esop's Fables into Old English, by Alfred.

A Latin Grammar, and eighty sermons in Old English by Ælfric.

FROM 1100 A. D., TO 1250 A. D.

The English of the second period may be estimated as extending from 1100 to 1250 A. D. During this period the process of fusion between the English and the French languages was in active operation. The first and most important change that took place was in the orthography, and this consisted chiefly in a weakening of the word-endings.

(1) The indefinite article *an* (*a*) was formed from the numeral.

(2) Many plurals in *en* (*an*) were changed into *ea*.

(3) New forms of pronouns came into use.

(4) *Shall* and *will* began to be used as auxiliaries of the future tense.

(5) The infinitive began to drop the final *n*, and to prefix *to*.

In Old English adjectives were compared by terminations, but the language now began to adopt from the Norman-French the use of auxiliary words.

The genitive or possessive case in Old English ended in *es*. From the Norman-French the prepositional form was adopted so that in Modern English we have two ways of expressing the same idea, as, the *king's* throne, or the throne *of the king*.

Literature.—(1) Later portions of the Saxon Chronicle.

(2) "Brut," (a translation from the French chronicler, Wace), by Layamon.

(3) The *Ormulum*, a Metrical Paraphrase of Scripture.

FROM 1250 A. D., TO 1400 A. D.

During this period English showed its ascendancy over its rival Norman-French.

About 1500, participles in *ing* began to appear, and about 1400 they dropped the final *e*. The passive participle of strong verbs ended in *en*, or *e*. The termination *e* was an important one and represented various inflections, as *sune*—sun; *smale* birds; *softe*—softly. "Heim thought that his herte wolde breke." (Chaucer). About the end of this period the use of the final *e* became irregular and uncertain.

Literature.—(1) "Rhyming History of England" by Robert of Gloucester.

(2) "Piers Ploughman" by Langlande.

(3) "Canterbury Tales" by Chaucer.

(4) "Travels in the East" by John Mandeville.

(5) "Translation of the Bible" by John Wycliffe.

FROM 1400 A. D. TO THE PRESENT TIME.

This period has been distinguished by the introduction of printing and the wide diffusion of literature. During the Renaissance, or Revival of Literature, in the sixteenth century, much attention was given to the study of the Latin and Greek authors, and many words of a classical origin were introduced into English. Before 1523 it is hard to find a Latin word in the general vocabulary which cannot be traced to Norman-French. After 1523 such words as *scientific, figurative, celebratory, impression, ambitious, visitation, generosity, malicious, portentous*, and others of a classical origin frequently occur.

The great advancement in science and arts has caused the introduction of technical terms which are almost invariably borrowed from Latin and Greek. The following are examples:—

From the Latin.—*Aurist, Oculist, Dentist, Locomotive*, etc.

From the Greek.—*Telegraph, Telephone, Photophone, Geology, Panorama, Aesthetic*, etc.

Modern English is, as has been stated, a composite language, the understructure or basis being Old English. Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Celtic have all contributed, in a greater or less degree, to swell its vocabulary. A number of words from almost every country in the world have been adopted and incorporated into English.

It is estimated that there are in the English language nearly 40,000 words in common use, and that of these about 25,000 are Old English. If we include in our estimate words used in science and art, the number of words in English will amount to upwards of 80,000.

About thirty-two out of every forty words, as used by our best authors, are of English origin, the remaining 8-40ths are chiefly of Latin origin.

Professor Marsh has made out a table giving the following results:—

SAXON WORDS IN EVERY FORTY.

In Robert of Gloucester, there are in pp. 854-864, 88; in New Testament, thirteen chapters, 87; in Chaucer, two Tales, 87; Sir T. More, seven folio pages, 84; Shakespeare, three acts, 86; Milton's

L'Allegro, 86; Milton's Paradise Lost, 82; Popo's Essay on Man, 83; Macaulay's Essay on Bacon, 80; Cobbett's Essay on Indian Corn, chap. xi, 32; Ruskin's Palaces, 29; Ruakin's Elements of Drawing, 33; Tennyson's In Memoriam, 80.

From this table it will be seen that the New Testament, Shakespeare, and Tennyson have a very high proportion of words of English origin, so that those who desire to cultivate an English as opposed to a Latinized style should devote their attention to these. "The Pilgrim's Progress is one of the best specimens of pure English." If we take an English Dictionary and compare the number of words of English origin with those of *adopted ones*, (that is, of foreign origin) we will not find the proportion so large as that which has been given above.

The proportion will be found to be about twenty-five out of every forty. The reason for a greater proportion being found in *sentences* is very evident. Most of the links or connecting words are of English origin, and as these will of necessity occur frequently, a corresponding proportion of words of English origin will be found. A preference for the use of an English style of writing has been growing steadily for many years. Although our language is becoming constantly enlarged by the incorporation of foreign words, yet almost any writer of standing within the last twenty years makes use of fewer words of foreign origin than did writers a hundred years ago.

SCHOOL-ROOM HEADACHES.

Many people who have public-school teachers among their acquaintance, are firmly of the opinion that the school-room has a headache system all its own, and their impression would be strengthened if they were to interview boys and girls. There is nothing strange about the complaint, the only wonder is that it is not continuous, and that anybody escapes it. With systems of heating and ventilation that are almost uniformly defective, and worse yet, under the control of janitors who have no knowledge whatever of these departments of their business, and who are as apt as any other men to neglect or despise whatever they do not understand, many of our school-rooms are boxes almost hermetically sealed, into which hot air is being driven and compressed. The heat is frequently intolerable; the expired breath and other physical emanations of the children pollute the air to a degree extremely dangerous to health; so teachers and children who at nine o'clock entered the room in fair health and spirits, emerge at noon with listless step, aching head, and deranged vital organs. Should a teacher's nature protest against breathing in poison and sweltering in it, up goes a window, and straightway all the children in its immediate vicinity are chilled, and temporarily relieved from one danger only to submit to another. The condition of the air of school-rooms is no secret to boards of education; it has been the subject of some statistics by experts, which forcibly suggest the Black Hole of Calcutta, but what is, or has been done, to remedy it? How many teachers are competent to use such ventilating facilities as their rooms possess? Their own frequent headaches, and those of the helpless children, show that the number is very small; and the same effects indicate that but few janitors need fear to compare their records with that of the late lamented King Herod.—*N. Y. Herald*.

OFFICIAL NOTICE.

New text-books on arithmetic and a new series of copy-books prescribed by the Board of Education: The Elementary Arithmetic published by M. S. Hall, Fredericton, and the series of copy-books published by J. & A. McMillan, St. John, shall, on and after April 1st, 1887, be the books in use in the public schools in all cases where pupils begin the subject of arithmetic or of writing, or require new books on these subjects, instead of Mulholland's Elementary Arithmetic, and Staples', or Payson, Duntion and Scribner's copy-books.

WM. CROCKET,
Chief Supt. of Education.
Education Office, Fredericton,
Nov. 24th, 1886.