

4. Words of Miscellaneous origin.—The extensive intercourse maintained during the last three hundred years with all parts of the world naturally led to the introduction of words from most languages of importance, relating to natural productions, works of art, or social institutions, with which this intercourse first made us acquainted.

Thus it has come about that the two chief constituents of **modern English** are **Anglo-Saxon** and **Latin**, mixed with a small proportion of words of miscellaneous origin.

As a general rule (admitting, of course, of numerous exceptions) it will be found that words relating to common natural objects, to home life, to agriculture, and to common trades and processes, are usually of Teutonic origin. Words relating to the higher functions of social life—religion, law, government, and war, to the less obvious processes of the mind, and to matters connected with art, science, and philosophy, are commonly of classical and mostly of Latin origin. Most words of three or more syllables, and a large number of those of two, are of classical origin. The Teutonic element prevails (though very far from exclusively) in words of one or two syllables, and is by far the most forcible and expressive. Hence it predominates in all our finest poetry. It is impossible to write a single sentence without Teutonic elements, but sentence after sentence may be found in Shakspeare and the English Bible, which is pure English, in the strictest sense of that term.

One great advantage which English has derived from the mingling of the Teutonic and Romance elements is the great richness of its vocabulary, and its power of expressing delicate shades of difference in the signification of words by the use of pairs of words, of which one is Teutonic and the other French.*

The changes by which Anglo-Saxon (or the oldest English) became modern English were gradual, and no exact date can be given for the introduction of this or that particular alteration. Still the process was influenced or accelerated at certain points by political events. The Norman Conquest, and the political relations between the conquering and the conquered race, naturally made Norman-French the language of the court and the nobles, of the courts of justice, of the episcopal sees, and of garrisoned places. But the loss of Normandy in 1206, the enactments of Henry III. and Louis IX., that the subjects of the one crown should not hold lands in the territory of the other, and the political movements under John and Henry III., stopped the further influx of the Norman element. At the same time the absolutist tendencies of the kings drove the nobles into closer union with the Anglo-Saxon elements of the nation; and the French wars of Edward III. roused an anti-French feeling among all classes, which extended itself even to the language, inasmuch that we learn from Chaucer that in his time French was spoken in England but rarely, and in a corrupted form. In 1362 appeared the edict of Edward III. that legal proceedings in the royal courts should be conducted in English.

* Compare, for example, *feeling* and *sentiment*, *work* and *labour*, *bloom* and *flower*. The number of pairs of exactly synonymous words is small.