

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN Pope wrote "The proper study of mankind is man," he gave to the world a most palpable truism. It seems to us of this age of science, that the much-quoted assertion was hardly worth the penning. Every science now leads up to and down to man. In him chemistry has its highest exponent; zoology, its acme; astronomy, the final object of its search among the planets as well as the final object of solar and planetary influences. If we search the stratified rocks of geology, we find his imprint and those of his animal "ancestors" in Evolution. Geographical exploration finds him, or the remnants of him, wellnigh everywhere. Archæology excavates and deciphers hieroglyphics, and lo! the buried city and the long-locked mausoleum give up the dead rulers and chieftains of prehistoric ages.

For centuries learned men studied the various languages and dialects of the earth. They brought the dead languages of ancient civilizations into schools and colleges. More recently they studied the rude and uncouth languages and dialects of barbarous and savage tribes. They sagely guessed at the origin of modern words, and many of their guesses were printed in books and studied as philology. Naturally, the fountain-head from which flowed the stream of their investigations was the Syro-Chaldaic, the supposed original language of the Semitic people, spoken in the cradle of the human race. On this basic line the dead languages, and many of the languages of modern Europe, were studied, their roots were unearthed and deciphered, and the older French, German and other Continental savants piled up a philological literature of enormous proportions, hopelessly locked against the nonprofessional, and for the most part utterly worthless, in the light of modern philological research.

The philological savants of England and America were content to follow the German and French scholars in this line of investigation. The old and misleading line of philological research was not seriously taken up to any extent, in even the highest English and American institutions of learning. No original investigations were attempted. The French and German scholars had pre-empted the field, and the occasional echo heard at Oxford or Harvard was from some imported Orientalist who had studied and travelled among cuneiform inscriptions and had finished his studies at Paris or Berlin.

The exception to this, in this country, is of course the great "Webster's Unabridged Dictionary," so long valued for its depth and for its patient and painstaking selection of the results of French and German philological research up to the date of its publication. But the investigations, the systematized canons of derivation, and the classification of root-forms to be found in that great work of a laborious lifetime, will live in history as the magnificent ruin of a noble structure which but for a few short years outlived its builder. In modern editions of the "Unabridged," the bulk of the philological canons and systems, which

cost their author so much to get together, must be omitted; though, despite all this, there is but one "Webster's Unabridged."

Modern English etymology divides all languages into Aryan and non-Aryan. Our language is one of the former; Hebrew and Arabic belong to the latter classification. It is easy to conclude, therefore, that no English word is derived from a Hebrew or an Arabian root; and that no word of either Hebrew or Arabian extraction could come into the English unless the word was actually borrowed and made a part of the latter through custom and constant usage. If the English-speaking people could not come in contact with the people of Arabia or Palestine, we would have no Hebrew or Arabian words in our language. In the early ages of civilization, peaceable inter-visitations between even neighboring peoples were few and infrequent; and between distant peoples, absolute non-intercourse was the rule with very slight exception. Two very important facts must be noted, as the natural and inevitable result of this.

First, the two original divisions of languages found at the dawn of written history—the Aryan and the non-Aryan—had a tendency to diverge more and more widely from each other as time advanced. Each grew and developed and changed along different basic lines, and in obedience to different climatic, social, moral and even physiological influences. Under primitive conditions the divergence of the two languages had a tendency to more and more estrange the nations and peoples speaking them, to build up widely differing systems of government, religion, and the other concomitants of civilization. At this day, therefore, we should not expect to find words in the English—one of the Aryan family of languages—whose roots are traceable to a non-Aryan language, such as the Hebrew.

We must note, secondly, that two peoples of the Aryan race, and whose remote ancestors originally spoke the same language, might, in the course of ages, become so widely separated as to develop finally into very different and differently-speaking communities. The original word—spoken exactly alike before their separation—would become modified so that it would be different in sound. The fact, therefore, that an English word sounds very much like a word we may find in some other language does not prove, or even tend to prove, that the two words are related. On the contrary, if the two words in question had been originally the same word, they would now be very different—would look but very little, if any, alike! In the study of linguistic roots we must be cautious, go slow, and not be led astray by mere appearances.

The comparative study of languages, which is now absolutely essential to the proper study of English etymology, has a most important aid in the comparative study of peoples—their manners, customs, religious beliefs and superstitions, their folk-lore and their legendary literature. And, conversely, since the new era of comparative philology has dawned upon the world of

learning, much valuable information has been obtained concerning ancient and mediæval peoples and their relations to each other at certain periods when history itself leaves many important questions in doubt. In the study of borrowed words, particularly, is this the case. Words introduced into English from the Old High German and other languages of the Continent are admirably handled by Skeat and his co-laborers, so as to throw much needed light upon even so recent a period as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In order to follow the changes and modifications of root-forms from the parent stem to the present English word, it will be necessary at the outset to have carefully studied Grimm's Law, a condensed summary of which will be found elsewhere. This Law may be justly regarded as the key to modern English etymology, as well as its foundation and vital principle.

The history of the English language most familiar to all persons of fair education is that it was at first Anglo-Saxon; that, after the Norman Conquest, in 1066, many new words were introduced from the French of that time; and that, down to our own day, new words have been constantly added, formed largely from the Latin and Greek. From the earliest Saxon times down to the present, this history has been divided into periods and epochs, each marking the rise, progress and decay of some distinctive variety of literature. We have, for example, the epochs of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, the Restoration, Queen Anne, the Georgian, and, in our own day, the modern epoch of the English language, with a well-defined and somewhat varying development in the United States and in Great Britain.

These epochs have been studied with reference to the development of English literature rather than the English language. This study has given glory and renown to the illustrious masters with whose names the English language shall be forever associated; but it tells us nothing of the birth, parentage and growth of the words which have been the masters' servants—at times their slaves and playthings.

And yet these little words in their root-forms were serving the human race long, long before the Saxon set foot on Britain; and they will continue to delight, and give comfort, and preserve for unborn generations the beautiful, the sublime, the good and the true thoughts and mind-pictures of the masters, long after the large majority of present and past *littérateurs* have ceased to be named, in literary circles!

These words have a venerable history, back in those early days when man—and lovely woman—first learned they had two tongues, one in each head! When words—these very root-forms unearthed by the learned Skeat and his co-laborers—first came into fashion the race was indeed in its infancy, non-progressive and unenterprising. At that early day, we stand truly at the dawn of a new era. Man begins to speak in words, and his fellow-man understands him. Then comes a separation, and different tribes, races and nations set up, each one for itself.

Is not the history of words, from their parent-forms to their present fair and harmonious proportions, a history worth writing and studying? In so doing we shall not be studying or glorifying the ideas of great individuals, the greatest of whom must reach total or partial oblivion with the lapse of ages; but we shall be studying and marking the progress of the human species itself, from its primitive or primeval helplessness to its reign of universal empire, acquired by the "communication of thought by means of words." We shall find men of a race all but extinct leaving perhaps

some strange inscription on a buried temple or burial vault, by which inscription the learned will discover their descendants and trace a connection between the living words of to-day and the words first uttered by the human voice. We shall see the human race in its dispersion to the various habitable portions of the globe carrying with it to its new-found homes the precious gift of articulate language, developing into forms as various as the scattered habitations themselves, but still maintaining intact the germ, the root, common to the different members of the original linguistic family.

Ages pass, and men begin to visit the homes of races that were not of the same family. A conquering stranger race brings new and strange words to its conquered foe, along with its chains and its oppressions, but the language of the enslaved and captive race does not wholly perish. After long ages words of the captive race are found in the language of the conqueror. Sometimes they are kept because they have the same sounds; but they are not of the same parent stock—one was Aryan, the other non-Aryan.

Again, two long-separated tribes, members of the same linguistic family, are brought into contact. Their words do not sound alike. Words with the same meaning have invariably a different sound, and neither tribe adopts any of the words of the other. Thus their words, descended from the same parent-form, continue to grow more and more divergent, at the same time preserving a certain *uniformity of variation*.

It is the triumph of modern etymology that it gives the rule to determine what this uniformity is and in what words it is found.

Coming down to the Fall of the Roman Empire, we find two polished, highly-finished languages in Europe, the Greek and the Latin. The northern races that completed the overthrow and shared the spoils of the Empire of the West found their richest treasure, without appreciating it, in the smooth, precise and musical language of Virgil, Horace and Cicero.

The Anglo-Saxon, or Old English, found a Celtic tongue on the island of Britain in 449. The familiar modifications of the Latin, now known to us as French, Spanish and Italian, began their development at this time. It is highly probable that the Old English, or Anglo-Saxon, had received additions from the Latin which ante-date the additions and modifications which affected it after the Norman Conquest. The same is probably true of the Teutonic dialect spoken by the German Franks before Clovis crossed into Gaul; and also of the Celtic dialects spoken in Gaul and Britain, respectively, before the Anglo-Saxon and Frankish conquests of those countries. On this view of the case, the "English" which resulted from the amalgamation of the Celtic-Latin-Germanic Norman-French with the Celtic-Saxon of England must have been a very complex and heterogeneous compound.

But time works many wonders. The Church Latin of the Ages of Faith no doubt added its contributions to the Old English vocabulary. It aided in toning down the harshness of the early French to the Romance dialects which succeeded. When the Conqueror won at Hastings, he brought a less uncouth language to enrich the vocabulary of England than that which was used by his pirate ancestors.

The study of Latin in the monasteries and universities of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and the use of that language by the scholars and churchmen of England, gave to many of the productions of English authors of that time a decidedly Johnsonese tone and pretentiousness.

During all this time simple, short words were quietly resting in the bosom of Old English. Some were related to the Swedish, Old High German, Scandinavian and Gothic. Some were Celtic in disguise, carried captive by the Frank and Roman, in Gaul, and by the Saxon, in Britain! These little words did not die. And they were related—many of them—to the smoothly-flowing Latin of Cicero, and the roaring, rolling, resonant Greek of Demosthenes and Homer. These little words came to us from the tribal settlements of primeval man. They are Aryan or Indo-European, and they do not come to us from the Semitic Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic, and cannot, at present, be traced to the cradle of the human race. They are the imperishable little words that Swift loved and could use so effectually to strike his hardest blows. They are also the "toughest" riddles that modern English etymology gives us to solve—they are so old, so often hunted down and so little.

We must now briefly review the different languages which have contributed to the present structure and form of English words—either by adaptation or by natural descent. There is a class of words of Old Low German descent. The term includes a limited class of words, whose precise origin is enveloped in obscurity. "If not precisely English, they come very near it," says Skeat. The chief difficulty about them is that the time of their introduction into English is uncertain. Either they belong to Old Friesian and were introduced by the Friesians who came over to England with the Saxons, or to some form of Old Dutch or Old Saxon, and may have been introduced from Holland, possibly even in the fourteenth century, when it was not uncommon for Flemings to visit England, for commercial and other purposes, and end by taking up their residence there.

The introduction of Dutch words into English received little attention until Skeat took up the subject. History shows that England's relations with Holland were often very close. We read of Flemish mercenary soldiers being employed by the Normans, and of Flemish settlements in Wales, "where," says old Fabyan, "they remained a long whyle, but after, they sprad all Englande over."

History tells us of the alliance between Edward III. and the free towns of Flanders; and of the importation of Flemish weavers by the same monarch. The wool used by the cloth-workers of Flanders grew on the backs of English sheep; closer relations between the two countries grew out of the brewing trade and the invention of printing, and were secured by the new bond of the Protestant faith. Caxton spent thirty years in Flanders (where the first English book was printed) and translated the Low German version of "Reynard the Fox." Tyndale settled at Antwerp to print his New Testament. After Antwerp had been captured by the Duke of Parma "a third of the merchants and manufacturers of the ruined city," says Mr. Green, "are said to have found a refuge on the banks of the Thames." All this must have affected the English language at that time; and it is tolerably certain that during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, particularly the last, several Dutch words were introduced into England.

Scandinavian or old Danish words were introduced into England by the Danes and Northmen who settled in the country at various times before the Conquest. Their language is best represented by Icelandic, owing to the curious fact that, ever since the first colonization of Iceland by the Northmen, about 874, the language of the settlers has been preserved with but

slight changes. Hence, instead of its being strange that English words should be borrowed from Icelandic, it must be remembered that this name represents, for philological purposes, the language of those Northmen who, settling in England, became ancestors of some of the leading families in the country; and, as they settled chiefly in Northumbria and East Anglia, parts of England not strictly represented by Anglo-Saxon, "Icelandic" has come to be English of the English. Skeat, in some cases, derives "Scandinavian" words from Swedish, Danish or Norwegian; but, he explains, this means that the Swedish, Danish or Norwegian words are the best representative of the Icelandic that can be found. The number of words adopted into modern English from the Swedish and Danish is very small.

The German language is properly called High German, to distinguish it from the other Teutonic dialects, which belong to Low German. This, of all Teutonic languages, is the furthest removed from English, and the one from which fewest words are directly borrowed, though there is a very general popular notion (due, says Skeat, to the utter want of philological training among English-speaking people) that the contrary is the case. A knowledge of German is often the sole idea by which an Englishman or an American regulates his "derivations" of Teutonic words; and he is better pleased if he can find the German equivalent of an English word than by any true account of the same word, however clearly expressed. Yet it is well-established, by Grimm's Law of sound-shiftings, that the German and the English consonantal systems are very different. Owing to the replacement of the Old High German *p* by the Modern German *b*, and other changes, English and German now approach each other more nearly than Grimm's Law suggests; but we may still observe the following very striking difference in the dental consonants:

English: *d t th day, tooth, thorn, foot.*

German: *t z (ss) d tag, zahn, dorn, fuss.*

The number of words in English that are borrowed directly from the German is quite insignificant, and they are all of late introduction. It is more to the purpose to remember that there are, nevertheless, a considerable number of German words that were borrowed indirectly, viz., through the French. Examples of such words are, *brawn, dance, gay, guard, halbert*, etc., many of which would hardly be at once suspected. It is precisely in accounting for these Frankish words that German is so useful to the English etymologist. The fact that we are highly indebted to German writers for their excellent philological work is very true and one to be thankfully acknowledged; but that is quite another matter altogether.

The influence of French upon English is too well known to require comment. But the method of the derivation of French words from Latin or German is often very difficult, and requires the greatest care. There are numerous French words in quite common use; such as *aise, ease, trancher*, to cut, which have never yet been clearly solved; and the solution of many others is highly doubtful. Latin words often undergo the most curious transformations, as may be seen by consulting Brachet's Historical Grammar. What are called "learned" words, such as *mobile*, which is merely a Latin word with a French ending, present no difficulty; but the "popular" words in use since the first formation of the language are distinguished by three peculiarities: (1) the continuance of the tonic accent, (2) the suppression of the short vowel, (3) the loss of medial consonant. The last two peculiarities tend to

disguise the origin, and require much attention. Thus, in the Latin *bonitatem*, the short vowel *i*, near the middle of the word, is suppressed; whence F. *bonté*, E. *bounty*. And again, in the Latin *ligare*, to bind, the medial consonant *g*, standing between two vowels, is lost, producing the F. *lier*, whence E. *liable*.

The result is a great tendency to compression, of which an extraordinary but well-known example is the Low Latin *ætaticum*, reduced to *edage* by the suppression of the short vowel *i*, and again to *eage* by the loss of the medial consonant *d*; hence F. *Age*, E. *age*.

One other peculiarity is too important to be passed over. With rare exceptions, the substantives (as in all the Romance languages) are formed from the *accusative* case of the Latin, so that it is commonly a mere absurdity to cite the Latin nominative, when the form of the accusative is absolutely necessary to show how the French word arose.

French may be considered as being a wholly unoriginal language, founded on debased Latin; but it must at the same time be remembered that, as history teaches us, a certain part of the language is necessarily of Celtic origin, and another part is necessarily Frankish, that is, Old High German. It has also clearly borrowed words freely from Old Low German dialects, from Scandinavian (due to the Normans), and, in later times, from Italian, Spanish, etc., and even from English and many entirely foreign languages.

The other Romance languages, *i. e.*, languages of Latin origin, are Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Provençal, Romansch and Wallachian. English contains words borrowed from the first four of these, but there is not much in them that needs special remark. The Italian and Spanish forms are often useful for comparison with, and consequent restoration of, the crushed and abbreviated Old French forms. Italian is remarkable for assimilation, as in *ammirare* (for *admirare*) to admire, *ditto* (for *dicto*), a saying, whence E. *ditto*. Spanish, on the other hand, dislikes assimilation, and

carefully avoids double consonants; the only consonants that can be doubled are *c*, *n*, *r*, besides *ll*, which is sounded as E. *l* followed by *y* consonant, and is not considered as a double letter. The Spanish *ñ* is sounded by *y* consonant, and occurs in *dueña*, Englished as *duenna*. Spanish is also remarkable as containing many Arabic (Moorish) words, some of which have found their way into English. The Italian infinitives commonly end in *-are*, *-ere*, *-ire*, with corresponding past participles in *-ato*, *-uto*, *-ito*. Spanish infinitives commonly end in *-ar*, *-er*, *-ir*, with corresponding past participles in *-ado*, *-ido*, *-ido*. In all the Romance languages, substantives are most commonly formed, as in French, from the Latin accusative.

Words of Celtic origin form a particularly slippery subject to deal with, for want of definite information on their older forms in a conveniently accessible arrangement. That English has borrowed several words from Celtic cannot be doubted, but we must take care not to multiply the number of these unduly. Again, "Celtic" is merely a general term, and in itself means nothing definite, just as "Teutonic" and "Romance" are general terms. To prove that a word is Celtic, we must first show that the word is borrowed from one of the Celtic languages, as Irish, Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish or Breton, or that it is of a form which, by the help of these languages, can be fairly presumed to have existed in the Celtic of an early period. The chief difficulty lies in the fact that Welsh, Irish, Cornish and Gaelic have all borrowed English words at various periods, and Gaelic has certainly also borrowed some words from Scandinavian, as history tells us must have been the case. We gain, however, some assistance by comparing all the languages of this class together, and again, by comparing them with Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, etc., since the Celtic consonants often agree with these, and, at the same time, differ from Teutonic. Thus the word *boast* is probably Celtic, since it appears in Welsh, Cornish and Gaelic.