

Some Short-Comings In Teaching English

The emphasis in the modern schools is placed upon English rather than upon the classic languages. Yet it seems that the result is distressingly unsatisfactory. I conceive that it is a rather difficult matter to learn English without a knowledge of Latin and Greek. Nevertheless, it seems that present-day students leave college without knowledge of fundamental principles or facts that are independent of the Latin and Greek contributions to the language.

An Astonishing Question

I recall the astonishing question of a teacher of high school English a few years ago. The chairman of his school board had suggested to him that all teachers of English should have studied Anglo-Saxon.

The young man, teaching English in one of the city high schools, was wise enough to keep his ignorance a secret from the school board member, but soon got a chance to ask me what Anglo-Saxon is! The wonder is how a youth of ordinary intelligence could go through high school and college without learning what the Anglo-Saxon language is, and how he could be recommended by any competent authority for teacher of English. But there is the fact. And I believe that many others are ignorant of facts as essential to a knowledge of English.

Perhaps students are being taught the graver principles of English too early and utterly forget them by the time they come out of college. It is that, or they are not taught at all. The place and significance of the English language in the Aryan group of languages are apparently strangers to some college graduates. Buehler's Grammar, long taught in the state, discussed that matter, but that was before the grammar school days of recent college graduates. But it would be interesting to find some of the students of the schools in the day of Buehler's grammar and discover whether that discussion of the subject made any impression upon them, or whether their minds, without further study of the subject, are utterly blank regarding the Aryan group of languages. If so, it would be suggestive that the attempt to teach that point was made too early, and that perhaps much of the teaching of English to lads and lasses is of no value for the same reason. However, I am disposed to think that too much of the time devoted to English in the schools is spent in the, perhaps critical, study of the classics, and that too little time is given to creating a curiosity about the language itself.

Schools Attempt to Do What Their Work Is Really Preparatory For

I have formerly suggested the folly of an English class spending a period or two studying "Thanatopsis," the work of a 19-year old boy, instead of studying the things that made it possible for the 19-year old Bryant to write such a poem. In short, the schools seem to be undertaking, not only in English but also in other subjects, to do the work that the school is supposed to prepare the students to do afterwards. Reading "Thanatopsis" and other English classics should be a matter of pleasure to the youth founded in the principles of the language, and he should need little assistance in interpreting the works of the largely unschooled Bard of Avon or the creation of the youth Bryant. If assistance is necessary, it is certainly evidence of a low "I. Q." on the part of the average member of the class that bodes little good to the quick-witted member who must be fed from the same baby spoon used for the bunch that can never hope to grow into full stature of intellect and be able alone to graze with pleasure and profit upon the classic swards. The bright student should resent having his mental pabulum pre-chewed or predigested as he would resent his mother's chewing for him his share of the dinner and passing over to him for swallowing, as was the wont of mothers with their infants in the days before the scientific preparation of baby food, a method which seems to have been adopted in a mental way by modern schools with persistent application beyond the infant stage.

Such a method necessarily produces weaklings—a matter that is of little importance so far as the inherently impotent is concerned, but of grievous

moment with respect to the exceptional student, who comes out of school unversed in the fundamentals of language in general and the genesis and phases of development of the English in particular.

Loss Through Lack of Source Knowledge

I am disposed to agree with the gentleman referred to in the outset of this article, that all teachers of English should have studied Anglo-Saxon, if only briefly—long enough at least to discover that the English language is derived from a language that had all the cases of Latin or Greek and verbal endings galore, which are represented in the modern English by only a few relics of the mother language, which can be accounted for only by a reference to the Anglo-Saxon. It seems to me that the very the in the expression "the more the better," which can be explained only by a reference to Anglo-Saxon grammar, should awaken the curiosity of any student desirous of actually knowing the genesis and structure of his native language. Yet it is doubtful if one English teacher in ten can successfully account for or parse those two the's.

Also, when a student of the language finds that big group of "ceives," like perceive, conceive, etc. he should be curious to discover their origin. And when he finds that they are essentially the Latin cipere, he should be curious to know how and why the change in the form occurred, and whence their arrival in the language. And right there he would find Grimm's Law in operation—the v being essentially the p of the Latin—and that vowel changes have been made in the course of time, in this case by the raising of the vowel sound to secure the present pronunciation of the original vowel sound.

And when he finds the prefix con, pro, re, etc. so often occurring, if he has the real interest that is necessary to make him an English scholar he would proceed to learn the significance of each, even if he should not have the privilege of acquaint-

ing himself with them in their native habitat—the Latin. And then he should discover that these prefixes attached in turn to a given root word make up a large part of the English vocabulary. And when he learns that each one of the root words is a definite Latin word with its own several nuances, he will begin to see that the study of the Latin is, after all, the short-cut to a knowledge of the English vocabulary. And shouldn't he wonder how many Greek words he is unconsciously using when he may be told that every English word with ph in it is of Greek origin. And when he looks at an unabridged dictionary and is told that considerably more than half of the words in it are of Latin and Greek origin and the most of the others of Anglo-Saxon origin, shouldn't he begin to deplore that false conception of the impractical which has so largely deprived the modern youth of an opportunity to study the source materials of his mother tongue and to secure the keys to the spelling and defining of thousands of ordinary English words?

How Grimm's Law Illuminates

To the novice in the study of words it should soon be very apparent how the application of Grimm's Law illuminates such words as aggregate—Latin ad and gregare, to group or lump together—or the very word illuminate itself—Latin in and luminare to throw light upon, and a thousand others whose identity is in a measure obscured without a knowledge of the equivalence of the members of the several groups of initial sounds and syllables. In those terms are strangers to any high school or college man, that strangeness is itself illustrative—illustrative of the very omission of really important things that I have observed as wanting in the knowledge of those who apparently should have had the opportunity to know them.

Bladen And Its Transformed Capital

Sometime ago, in writing of the effects of the railroad from Hope Mills to St. Paul and thence to both Lumberton and Elizabethtown, I said that the railroad had been the maker of St. Paul and Elizabethtown, "if Elizabethtown has yet been made." It had been thirty years since I had visited the capital of old Bladen and I could not then visualize it as anything but the same straggling village of a third of a century ago. But imagine my surprise and gratification a few weeks later to find it a modern town and with a progressive citizenry which promises much for the future.

Elizabethtown has been recreated, and I suspect I must attribute as much of the transformation to the bridge across the Cape Fear as to the coming of the railroad a quarter of a century ago.

Isolated as it was by the railroads in the earlier period the old village was further immensely handicapped by the lack of a bridge and by the necessity of all visitors from the eastern half of the county having to cross the Cape Fear on a ferry flat and for a price at that. Then, also, the broad expanse of country between Elizabethtown and the county line near Garland was practically unpopulated. Today the development of White Lake has largely counterbalanced the poverty of the area as an agricultural section and has not only added many a dollar to Elizabethtown's business but also has furnished it with a near-by resort of much recreational value to the citizens of the old town. The beautiful lake so long lost in the wastes of eastern Bladen has been discovered and much to the advantage of Elizabethtown.

When Bladen Was An Empire In Area

Time was when Bladen was an empire in area. I was fortunate in finding the historically minded H. L. Williamson, attorney and former member of the legislature, who had the information as to early boundaries of the county upon immediate tap. Turning to the proper page in the Colonial Records, he read the boundaries about as follows: Beginning at the mouth of Livingston Creek on Black River, up the Black and its westernmost branch to its head; beginning at the mouth of Livingston

Creek the southern boundary extended westward to the boundary of the government, as did the northern boundary from the head waters of South River. The Mississippi River was the western boundary.

Was the Site of Dunn in Bladen?

When I first heard the reading of the boundary, I immediately jumped to the conclusion that Dunn was not encompassed in the boundaries of Bladen, as the "westernmost branch of the Black" is South River, known in Harnett as the Black, which flows between Dunn and Erwin. But a few days ago as I crossed the Harnett-Sampson line along the channel of Mingo swamp, I began to consider if the former strip of Cumberland, which only a few years ago was annexed to Harnett, and which extended on the north side of Mingo, was not indicative of the acceptance of Mingo as the principal extension of that "westernmost branch of Black River" instead of what we now know as the Black between Dunn and Erwin. Otherwise, it is hard to account for Cumberland, which was cut out of Bladen territory, possessing the territory to the north and west of Mingo Creek, which so lately furnished "the spectacle of a two-mile strip of Cumberland lying between Sampson and Harnett for several miles. See an old map of the counties of the state.

Records of Lands in Tennessee

Mr. Williamson further informed me that there were old land records in the archives of Bladen of land deeds or grants in the province of Tennessee, in the county of Bladen. Think of it, a large part of the present state of Tennessee a province of Bladen county!

For Whom Named.

In reply to the question as to whether Elizabethtown was named for the Virgin Queen or one of the later Elizabeths, Mr. Williamson surprised me by saying that the town seems to have been named for no queen but for the sweetheart of the man who sold the land for the town site. Only oral tradition supports this view, however. Yet there seems to be no documentary support of the queenly origin of the name. In that case, the oral tradition is

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