

# BOOK I.

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## CHAPTER I.

### OUR MOTHER-TONGUE.

#### INTRODUCTION.

Words are mighty, words are living—  
Serpents with their venomous stings,  
Or bright angels crowding round us  
With heaven's light upon their wings.

Every word has its own spirit,  
True or false, that never dies:  
Every word man's lips have uttered  
Echoes in God's holy skies."

*A. A. Procter.*

"There is impiety in saying that it was scarcely in the power of the Almighty to confer on man a more glorious gift than *Language*, by the medium of which He Himself has been revealed to us, and which affords at once the strongest bond of union and the best instrument of communication."

*F. Schlegel.*

Languages are divided into classes or families. The English language is a member of the great **INDO-EUROPEAN** family\* of languages. The chief branches of the Indo-European family, which includes all the leading languages from the Himalaya mountains in

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\* This family has been called the *Japhetic*, because the nations included in it are supposed to have been descended from *Japhet*, one of the sons of *Noah*. It is also termed the *Ar'yan*, which signifies *high, noble, illustrious*.

Asia, westward to the Atlantic shores of Europe, are as follows:

(1) THE SANS'KRIT,\* and all the Asiatic tongues derived from it.

(2) THE ZEND,† and its derivatives.

(3) THE CELTIC.‡

(4) THE GREEK.§

(5) THE LATIN, and its modern derivatives—the Italian, French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

(6) THE TEUTONIC, and its modern derivatives—the languages of Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Our English, through its parent, the *Anglo-Saxon*, is an offshoot of the Teutonic.

(7) THE SCLAVONIC, under which name may be included the languages of Russia, Poland, Bohemia, and Bulgaria. ||

There is a close connection between language and literature. Some knowledge of the eventful history of our tongue is needed to arrive at a clear understanding of English literature. The study of English is a precious study. The labor spent in its mastery

\* Sanskrit is the ancient language of India. It ceased to be spoken about 300 B.C. Its modern derivatives are the present languages of India.

† The Zend is the ancient language of Persia. The chief living tongues derived from it are the Persian and the Armenian.

‡ Now chiefly represented by the *Irish*, the *Welsh*, and the *Gaelic* of the Scottish Highlands.

§ Now represented by the modern Greek, commonly called *Romaic*.

|| The word *mother*, as written in the languages of the Indo-European family, gives us a glimpse at the relationship and curious resemblance that still exist among the many members of that vast family:

SANSKRIT: *matri*.  
 ZEND: *mader*.  
 CELTIC: *mathair*.  
 GREEK: *meter*.  
 LATIN: *mater*.  
 ITALIAN: *madre*.  
 FRENCH: *mère*.

SPANISH: *madre*.  
 GERMAN: *mutter*.  
 SWEDISH: *moder*.  
 DANISH: *moder*.  
 SAXON: *moder*.  
 ENGLISH: *mother*.  
 RUSSIAN: *mat*.

will be amply rewarded. And every young person should resolve to acquire simple and beautiful language, as after early life it can never be attained.

Our mother-tongue is one of the noblest languages with which the earth has ever sounded. It is spoken to-day in every quarter of the globe. It is surely destined to wield a preponderating influence in the future of the world's history and literature.\* It is the key to a great literature enriched with the productions of immortal genius. It is worthy of study, and love, and veneration, for through it we have learned to know God and the truths of our holy religion.

"I consider the care of the national language," says Frederick Schlegel, "as at all times a sacred trust. Every man of education should make it the object of his unceasing concern to preserve his language pure and entire, to speak it, so far as is in his power, in all its beauty and perfection."

## LESSON I.

### THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE BRIEFLY TOLD.

#### 1. What nations speak the English language?

English is spoken by the people of the *United States*, *Great Britain*, *Ireland*, *Canada*, *Australia*, and other English colonies.

\* English is, doubtless, the great language of the future. It has now a firm foothold in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australia; and every year its outposts are extending, and the number of lips that speak it is increasing. Fifty years hence there will, very probably, be one hundred and fifty millions of people in the United States alone using English as their mother-tongue!

2. English is the mother-tongue, then, of a great number of people?

Yes; about one hundred and thirty million, three hundred thousand people speak English.\*

3. Was English at all times the language of England?

No; in its *present form* it has been the language of England for about *six hundred years*.†

4. Then, it is not the *first* language that was spoken in England?

Certainly not; other languages have been current in England at different periods in history.

5. What language was used by the earliest known inhabitants of England?

The *Celtic language*.

6. Who were the *Celts*?‡

The *Celts* were an ancient and powerful people who first inhabited Western and Southern Europe, Great Britain, and Ireland.

7. Who gives us the earliest historical account of the British *Celts*?

*Julius Caesar*, the celebrated Roman general and writer, who invaded England in the year 55 B.C.

8. When the Romans took possession of England, did they attempt to force the Latin tongue§ on the inhabitants?

No; the Romans simply held England as a province of the Roman Empire, but without driving out

\* The number of people speaking the four chief languages of Europe and America has been thus set down by a recent writer:

English.....	spoken by	130,300,000
Spanish.....	" "	40,500,000
German.....	" "	84,200,000
French.....	" "	52,100,000

† After the *middle of the thirteenth century* the language assumed the general shape and physiognomy of the English which we now write and speak. It may be called *English rough-hewn*.—*Craik*.

‡ Sometimes written *Kelts*.

§ Latin was the Roman language.

the native *Celts*, or forcing them to change their speech.

9. Is the *Celtic language* now spoken in any country?

Yes; that ancient and venerable language is yet spoken in various parts of *Ireland*, in *Wales*, the *Scottish Highlands*, and *Brittany* in France.

10. How long did the Romans retain possession of England?

Nearly four hundred years.

11. At what date did the Roman power cease in England?

A.D. 410, after which the British *Celts* were left to govern themselves until conquered by the *Angles*, *Saxons*, and *Jutes*.

## LESSON II.

THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, CONTINUED.

12. At what time did the *Celtic language* cease to be the national speech of England?

About the *middle of the fifth century*.

13. What language then took the place of the *Celtic*?

The *Anglo-Saxon*, or tongue of the Saxon invaders. It was the parent of our present English.\*

14. What caused this change of language in England?

The conquest of England by the *Angles*, *Saxons*, and other German tribes.

15. Give the date of that event.

A.D. 450.

\* The term *Anglo-Saxon*, whether as applied to the language or to the people by whom it was spoken, must be understood to mean properly *Saxon of England* as distinguished from *Saxon of the Continent*; just as *Anglo-Norman* means *Norman of England*, as distinguished from *Norman of the Continent*. It is a compound formed on the principle of assuming *Saxon* as the name of the people and of the language, and *England* as that of the country.—*Craik*.

16. How did the Angles and Saxons so rapidly introduce their own language?

Unlike the Romans, they drove out the British Celts with fire and sword, settled down, and took possession of the country for themselves.

17. Did the Angles and Saxons become masters of all England?

No, not the whole of it. They occupied all Eastern, Central, and Southern England, leaving Wales, Cornwall, and the western coast in the hands of the ancient Britons.

18. Whence came those tribes known as Angles and Saxons? Chiefly from the present districts of *Sleswick* and *Holstein*, south of what we now call Denmark.\*

19. During what time did Anglo-Saxon continue to be the language of the English people and their rulers?

Down to the time of the *Norman Conquest*—a period of over six hundred years.

20. During what famous king's reign did the Anglo-Saxon attain its pre-eminence as a literary language?

During the reign of *Alfred the Great*, which came to a close at the beginning of the tenth century.

21. What effect had the invasion of the Danes on the language of England?

It produced little or no change in the national language.

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\* The *Angles*, who seem to have been the most numerous portion, established themselves in the east and north of Britain, but left the Scottish Highlands to their Gaelic population. The *Saxons* occupied the south and west, but left Wales and Cornwall to their Cymric population. A third fraction, of far inferior numbers, the *Jutes*, had possession of Kent in the southeast of England. There is reason to believe that there was a difference of dialect among these settlers; and, particularly, that the idiom of the Angles varied in some degree from that of the Saxons; but it cannot well be doubted that *they all spoke substantially the same language.*—*Hadley*.

22. How can that be explained?

(1) England was ruled but a short time by the Danes. (2) In both race and speech the Danes and Anglo-Saxons were kindred nations.

### LESSON III.

#### THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, CONTINUED.

23. What language did William the Conqueror introduce into England?

*Norman-French*, the dialect spoken in the north of France.

24. Give the date of the Norman Conquest.

A.D. 1066.

25. Whence came William and his followers?

From *Normandy*,\* in France.

26. What did William do on taking possession of the English throne?

He placed his *Norman followers* in all offices of trust and power. The court, the nobility, the higher clergy, and the army were composed of Normans.

27. In regard to language, what singular spectacle was exhibited in England at that period?

With no line of separation but that of rank, two languages were spoken in the same country at the same time—*Norman-French* by the *ruling classes*, *Anglo-Saxon* by the *common people*.

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\* The Normans (or Northmen) were a body of Scandinavian adventurers who, while their countrymen, the Danes, were making conquests in England, succeeded in establishing themselves on the opposite coast of France. In 912 King Charles the Simple ceded to Duke Rollo and his Norman followers the province which took from them its name of *Normandy*. Here they soon ceased to speak their own language, adopting that which was spoken by the native population.—*Hadley*.

28. From two races and two languages thus living side by side what finally resulted?

The final result was the *blending of the two races and the two languages*.

29. What did the blending of the Anglo-Saxon and the Norman-French produce?

The blending of these two languages *formed a compound* which constitutes the *foundation and framework* of our *present English*.

30. Was this blending process rapid?

It was far from rapid. The *growth and development* of our present English speech was the *slow and gradual result of over five hundred years of almost continual change*.

31. During what space of time did the Norman-French and the Anglo-Saxon continue without intermixing?

From the Norman Conquest till about the year 1150, or nearly a century.

32. What is commonly called the *Semi-Saxon* period of English speech?

From A.D. 1150 to 1250—a period during which the process of blending was very rapid.

#### LESSON IV.

##### THE STORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, CONTINUED.

33. What period begins with the middle of the thirteenth century?

The earliest dawn of our English speech in its present form. From A.D. 1250 to 1350 is known as *the period of Early English*.

34. What may be termed *the period of Middle English*?

From A.D. 1350 to 1500.

35. What especially marked the growth of our language during the period of Middle English?

During this period the English vocabulary was swelled by an *immense accession of new words from the French*.

36. What name is usually given to such English as has been written since the year 1500?

It is called *Modern English*.\*

37. Can you point out the principal changes by which Anglo-Saxon was transformed into modern English?

The principal changes were: (1) The loss of the Anglo-Saxon inflexions; † (2) Shortening the mode of spelling; and (3) The introduction of thousands of new words from the French, Latin, Greek, Celtic, and other languages.

38. What great genius by his works first stamped, so to speak, the seal of fixity on our language?

*Shakspeare*.

39. Is the English language no longer subject to change?

It is still subject to changes. As with all things human, no living language ceases to change.

40. Explain one form of this ever-changing condition of our language.

*New words* are invented, and gradually come into use; while some *old ones* are dropped and forgotten.

\* Confining ourselves to the history of the English language since the Norman Conquest, we may call the *first century* after that date its *Infancy*; the *second* its *Childhood*; the *third* its *Boyhood*; the *fourth* and *fifth* its *Youth*; and the time that has since elapsed its *Manhood*. Its *Infancy* and *Childhood* will thus correspond with what is usually designated the period of *Semi-Saxon*; its *Boyhood* with that of *Early English*; its *Youth* with that of *Middle English*; and its *Manhood* with that of *Modern English*.—*Craik*.

† For example, nouns in Anglo-Saxon had *four* cases, commonly distinguished by different case-endings. There were about *twenty* varieties of declension. Modern English has only *one* case-ending, the possessive—*'s*; and the declensions are few, and are easily mastered.

41. Mention one of the greatest difficulties the student encounters in perusing works written in Early and Middle English.

A *barbarous orthography* which is often so different from the present mode of spelling as almost entirely to disguise a word.\*

42. Who had the honor of first giving our language a good dictionary?

Dr. Samuel Johnson, in 1755.

43. What good did Johnson's Dictionary effect?

It introduced greater *uniformity in spelling*, and was of inestimable value in *fixing the exact meaning of words*.

## LESSON V.

### THE COMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

44. How many words are there in the English language?

About 143,000, according to the last edition † of Webster's *Unabridged Dictionary*.

45. What is the distinctive character of English?

The distinctive character of English is that it is a COMPOSITE LANGUAGE.

46. Explain what you mean by saying that English is a composite language.

I mean that it is COMPOSED OR COMPOUNDED OF words from *many other languages*. English was formed by the gradual blending of a greater number

\* Here are a few examples of spelling in Early and Middle English: *Englenelände* (England), *Ennglissch* (English), *Goddesselles* (Gospel), *sette* (set), *lippes* (lips), *thatte* (that). Clothed in their old dress, these well-known words look like strangers to a reader of the present day.

† Edition of 1880.

of languages, perhaps, than has ever entered into the formation of any other speech.

47. Which are the chief languages of which our present English is composed?

THE FOUNDATION and FRAMEWORK of the language are ANGLIO-SAXON; but it has borrowed largely from the LATIN, FRENCH, GREEK, CELTIC, DANISH, HEBREW, and many other tongues.\*

48. How may we generally distinguish the *Anglo-Saxon* words from the other words in our language?

The ANGLIO-SAXON words are generally *short, simple, homely*, and *well fitted* to express *common feelings, common wants, and every-day events*.

49. Which of the *articles* are Anglo-Saxon?

All the articles—*a, an, and the*—are *Anglo-Saxon*.

50. Which of the *pronouns* are Anglo-Saxon?

All the pronouns are derived from the Anglo-Saxon.

51. What *verbs* are derived from the Anglo-Saxon?

All the AUXILIARY and DEFECTIVE VERBS.

52. What other two parts of speech derive nearly all their words from the Anglo-Saxon?

THE PREPOSITIONS and CONJUNCTIONS.

53. What *nouns* are Anglo-Saxon?

Nearly all the NAMES OF COMMON THINGS, as *heat, cold, night, day, sun, moon; the names of the days of the week; the names of the various PARTS OF THE BODY; and of all that CLUSTERS AROUND HOME, making*

\* There is perhaps no language so full of words evidently derived from the most distant sources as English. Every country of the globe seems to have brought some of its verbal manufactures to the intellectual market of England. Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Celtic, Saxon, Danish, French, Spanish, Italian, German—even Hindustani, Malay, and Chinese words—lie mixed together in the English dictionary.—*Max Müller*.

it dear to the heart, as *father, mother, sister, brother, friend, child*, etc.

54. Whence come nearly all the *irregularities* of our grammar?

From the ANGLO-SAXON. ALL NOUNS forming their plural by a change of vowel, as *man, men*, and ADJECTIVES which compare irregularly, as *bad, good*, can be traced back to the language once spoken by the Venerable Bede and Alfred the Great.

55. What may be said of the simple and direct language of childhood?

IT IS ALMOST WHOLLY SAXON.

### LESSON VI.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, CONTINUED.

56. Next to Anglo-Saxon, what element enters most largely into the composition of the English language?

The *Latin*, which has thoroughly penetrated the whole structure of our language.

57. How came so many Latin words to find their way into our speech?

(1) Through the medium of Norman-French, which was mainly an offshoot from the Latin. (2) Directly from the Latin itself by the study of theology, philosophy, and the ancient classics. It must be remembered that Latin is the official language of the Catholic Church, which for nearly a thousand years was the religion of England.

58. How may words derived from the Latin generally be distinguished from the Anglo-Saxon ones?

By their *greater length*, the Latin words being on

an average more than *twice as long* as the Saxon ones.\*

59. Which departments of our vocabulary have been especially enriched by Latin terms?

The greater portion of our words relating to *mind, morals*, and *philosophy* are from the Latin.

60. Mention certain divisions of time the names of which are derived from the Latin.

*All the months of the year.*

61. Does the Latin element enter into our active business-life?

It does.

62. Mention some commercial terms which we have drawn from the Latin.

*Account, balance, bank, capital, currency, discount, finance*, and many others.

63. Mention some expressive terms which Latin has added to the language of practical life.

*Ink, oil, pen, sir, wine, yoke*, and many others.

64. From what source has our language derived much of its dignity and stateliness?

From the Latin, which was once *the imperial tongue of the world.*

### LESSON VII.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, CONTINUED.

65. Is our language much indebted to the French?

It is; nearly all our terms of *war, law*, and *religion* are borrowed from the *French*.

\* Among the thousands of English words derived from the Latin and the French—which is a daughter of the Latin—are all nouns ending in *tion, sion, ity*, and most of those in *ment*; and all adjectives ending in *able, ible, ary*, and *ory*.

66. Mention some terms of *war* that come from the French.  
*Arms, banner, march, soldier, captain, chivalry.*
67. Mention some *legal* terms derived from the same source.  
*Fee, court, judge, jury, damages, attorney.*
68. Give an instance of some *religious terms* derived from the French.  
*Altar, Bible, ceremony, devotion, penance, prayer.*
69. In what general way has the French language influenced ours?  
Much of the *refined grace and delicacy of English* is owing to its *French element*.
70. What proportion of our borrowed words comes from the Latin and the French languages?  
About *four-fifths*.\*
71. Are there many words of Celtic origin in our language?  
There are perhaps 4000 words. Nearly all the names of places in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and many of those in England, are derived from the Celtic. *London, Liverpool, Dee, Kent, Thames, and Yarmouth* are Celtic words.
72. Mention some common words derived from the Celtic.  
*Bard, clan, cradle, druid, glen, shamrock.*
73. What can you say of the Greek as an element of English?  
About *nine-tenths* of all our terms in *science, art, and literature* are borrowed from the Greek; as *astronomy, geology, rhetoric, barometer, telescope, telegraph, telephone.*
74. Mention some proper names derived from the Danish.  
*Whitby, Rugby,* and other names of places ending

\* In many instances it is difficult to determine whether a word of Latin origin has come to us *through the French*, or has been taken *directly from the Latin*.—*Hadley.*

in *by*.\* The termination *son* in the names of English people, as Nelson, Hobson, etc., is said to be Danish.

75. Can you name some common words derived from the Danish?

*Blunt, booty, cross, mumble, odd, ugly.*

### LESSON VIII.

#### THE COMPOSITION OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, CONTINUED.

76. Mention some words for which our language is indebted to the Hebrew.  
*Amen, abbot, seraph, jubilee.*
77. Give examples of words derived from the Arabic.  
*Alcohol, almanac, assassin, bazaar, lemon, sofa, zero.*
78. Mention some words derived from the Persian.  
*Chess, orange, shawl, turban.*
79. Mention some words derived from the Hindoo.  
*Calico, muslin, punch, rice, sugar.*
80. Mention some words derived from the Chinese.  
*Tea, satin, mandarin.*
81. From what source do we derive our terms in *music* and *painting*?  
From the *Italian*.
82. Mention some words derived from the *Italian*.  
*Bust, studio, solo, tenor, soprano.*
83. Mention some words derived from the *Spanish*.  
*Alligator, cargo, cigar, mosquito, negro, tornado.*
84. From the Portuguese?  
*Commodore, porcelain,* and a few others.

\* *By* signifies a *village* or *town*; hence *by-law*, a town-law, to distinguish it from the general law of the nation.



85. From the Dutch?

*Block, boom, schooner, sloop, yacht.*

86. From the German?

*Loafer, nickel, waltz, zinc.*

87. From the American Indian?

*Canoe, potato, tomahawk, tobacco, wigwam,* and most of the beautiful names of our States, lakes, and rivers; as, *Ohio, Ontario, Mississippi.\**

#### SUMMARY OF CHAPTER I.

1. Language is the gift of God to man.
2. The English language is a member of the great Indo-European family of languages. It is spoken by about one hundred and thirty million, three hundred thousand people.
3. In its present form it has been the language of England for over six centuries.
4. English is not the first language that was spoken in England.
5. Language, like individuals and nations, has its periods of childhood, youth, and maturity.
6. The growth and development of the English language were the slow and gradual result of over 500 years of almost continual change.
7. From A.D. 1250 to 1350 is termed the period of *Early English*.
8. From 1350 to 1500 is termed the period of *Middle English*.
9. From 1500 to the present time is termed the period of *Modern English*.

\* Some further remarks on our language will be found scattered here and there, in the various Historical Introductions.

10. Shakspeare moulded all the elements of the English language for the first time into one consistent whole.

11. Dr. Johnson gave the English language its first great dictionary.

12. At present, our language contains about 143,000 words.

13. A greater number of languages enters into the formation of English than into that of any other speech.

14. Anglo-Saxon constitutes the foundation and framework of the English language; but our speech has borrowed largely from the Latin, French, Greek, Celtic, Danish, and many other tongues.

15. Anglo-Saxon words are generally short, simple, and homely.

16. All the articles, pronouns, auxiliary and defective verbs, prepositions, and conjunctions are Anglo-Saxon.

17. Nearly all the names of common things are Anglo-Saxon.

18. About four fifths of all the borrowed words in the English language are from the Latin and French. From these sources our speech has received much of its polish, grace, and dignity.

19. About nine-tenths of all our terms in art, science, and literature are from the Greek.\*

\* Here it may be proper to note that the *Scottish dialect* (or Lowland Scotch) is an Anglo-Danish speech. It contains very few Celtic words. "The Scottish dialect," says a recent writer, "is rapidly hastening to decay; before the end of the present century it will probably be confined to the humble and uneducated classes."

For a fuller account of the history of the English language, see Craik's *Outlines of the History of the English Language* and Shepherd's *History of the English Language*.