

THE ENGLISH GERUND ONCE MORE.

In the riter's acticl "The Gerund in Old English and German", Anglia vol. 26, pp. 491—498, evidence was produced to show that the gerund was in common use in Old English, only in a littl different form, namely the object preceded the verbal noun insted of folloing it as in modern English. Mr. Einenkel in the same number pp. 499—504 brings forward against this explanation certain objections which the riter desires to anser.

In the oldest English groups that hav come down to us, namely old groupwords, as "*héafodhær*" a *hàir of the héd*, "*scipfyrþrung*" *fíttíng out shíps*, "*flétsittend*" *síttíng in the háll*, etc., the grammatically dependent element is strest and invariably precedes the governing word. Some such simpl law of wordorder was absolutely necessary to make clear the grammatical relations, for the dependent word was uninflected. After the introduction of inflection this wordorder and stres wer at first retained, as in *Déna lánd* (Beowulf, l. 1904) *lánd of the Dánes*. Later as seen by the modern English translation, the grammatically dependent element was removed to a place after the governing word. This change of position had already begun in the time of "Beowulf", as can be seen in *lánd Déna* (l. 242). In this line — *þe on lánd Déna laðra nænig* — *land* alliterates with *laðra*, but it must not be inferd from this fact that *land* is more hevily strest than *Dena*, for poetry has never

in any Germanic language hesitated to consider the second stress within a group as strong enough to be considered an accented syllable. We know that "Dena" is here stressed more heavily than "land" because in modern English and German the stress is upon this word. Words have in general throughout the different periods of English retained the stress they originally had. They have changed position, but they usually keep their stress. The change of position probably resulted from a new conception of groupstress. In the oldest period the groupstress rested upon the first member, i. e. upon the preceding dependent word. Later when stressed verbs and adverbs began to be placed *after* the governing verb and when prepositional phrases with the stress upon the last element began to multiply a new groupstress upon the last member began to become common. Little by little this new groupstress spread to all groups with the accent upon the first member. Gradually the old stress upon the first member disappeared entirely from all groups that were felt as groups, i. e. *Déna lánd* became *lánd Déna* and then *lánd of the Dánes*.

Now Mr. Einkenkel maintains on p. 501 that if the riter's theory is correct the full-fledged modern gerund with the stressed dependent member *after* the governing word must have come about in Old English instead of Middle English on account of the heavy stress upon the dependent word in Old English. The answer is simple. In the early part of the Old English period in case of old groupwords with a noun, adjective, or participle as governing word the dependent member *always* preceded and was stressed. This was in general true also of groups with inflection in the dependent member. Gradually, however, the groups with inflection in the first member came under the influence of the new groups which had the stressed member in the last place. Thus *Déna lánd* became *lánd Déna* and finally *lánd of the Dánes*. This development was slow because it takes centuries to break up an old long established order of things. In German poetry the old order is still common: O Kolchis! o du meiner *Väter Lánd!* (Grillparzer's *Medea*, I). In Old English the old groupwords with non-inflection of the dependent member in

general resisted this development as they had a greater firmness of form and a greater oneness of meaning, things which in German they have never lost. In Middle English, however, they were gradually dissolved into the form of the new group with the stressed member in the last place: "fótswýle" becoming *swèlling of the fót*; "lándhæbbende" becoming *hàving lánd*; "eágwund" becoming *wound in the éye*; "blódsþiwung" becoming *spitting blóod*. All the old groups so far as they had not become compounds or set expressions were thus dissolved into modern groups. In case it was necessary, prepositions were inserted in the new groups to make clear the grammatical relations. In case of participial and gerundial groups the dependent member was simply transferred to a place after the governing word without further change as they were felt as objects and needed nothing further than their position to indicate the grammatical relations.

This simple explanation of the origin of the English gerund will bring conviction to any one who will take a large Old English dictionary into his hands and carefully collect the gerundial groupwords. Not *one* of these old groups is left in the language. What has become of them? They have been dissolved into modern groups. If Mr. Einkenkel doesn't accept this explanation he has the difficult task of telling what has become of them and the still more difficult task of explaining why they were differently treated from the other old groups found in Old English.

Mr. Einkenkel asks why then this did not take place in German. The answer is simple. German did not dissolve its old groups into modern groups. A German says *Haarlöcke*, *Hérzklöpfen*, *Tücherschwénken*, while an Englishman says *lock of hair*, *beating of the heart*, *waving handkerchiefs*. Hence the old gerundial groups have survived in German: *Köpfzählung*, *Hérzverfétung*, etc. Thus these old gerundial groups, altho differentiated somewhat in meaning, have been well preserved in German, while it is no longer common in English to talk of bloodspitting when we mean *spitting blood*. When an Englishspeaking person sees Old English *blódsþiwung* he feels that it is directly related to its modern

representativ *spitting blóod*, i. e. he feels that only the word-order has been changed, for there are some expressions where the old form lingers on alongside of the new, as in *blóod-shèdding* instead of *shèdding blóod*. To the writer the existence of the gerund in Old English is a simple fact of his experience. It needs no learned proof. He simply feels these forms as gerunds.

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Schlußbemerkung zu vorstehendem.

Da Herr Curme im vorstehenden die in seinen früheren Aufsätzen niedergelegten Beweismittel nur weiter ausführt, wesentlich neues aber nicht zufügt, so ziehe ich vor, auf eine Erwiderung zu verzichten, da eine solche doch nur auf eine Wiederholung meiner früheren Ausführungen hinauskommen würde.

Ich meine, daß es überhaupt an der Zeit ist, unsere Diskussion über das englische Gerundium zunächst zu schließen. In Herrn Curmes und meinen Aufsätzen liegen dem Fachmann jetzt alle Argumente vor, welche aus dem zur Zeit verfügbaren Materiale sich schlechterdings herleiten lassen. Er ist somit nun in der Lage zu entscheiden, ob er unser beider Ansichten seine Zustimmung versagen muß, oder — wenn nicht — welche der beiden Ansichten ihm als die richtigere erscheint.

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