

A History of Modern Colloquial English by Henry Cecil Wyld

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The Modern Language Review, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Jan., 1921), pp. 87-90

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3714585>

Accessed: 28/06/2014 11:44

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similarities, though all three books appeared in 1919. At the same time, the book raises innumerable points of controversy. A scholar who propounds a theory is almost bound to over-emphasise certain aspects of his material. It is doubtful, for instance, whether the professor's estimate of Lear, Macbeth, Ophelia or Claudius will be accepted as final, while on the subject of Hamlet no two people can be expected to agree. He leaves many difficulties unsolved, such as the real significance of the jesters and of characters like Pandarus and Enobarbus. Above all, his low estimate of the theatre-going public will not meet with universal acceptance. However, the full discussion of any one of these questions would have taken up most of the allotted space, and the first duty of a reviewer is to give a fair hearing to his author. This is all the more desirable as mathematical certainty is unobtainable in literary matters, and the chief merit of a work of criticism or research is to make its readers think. As such, *Die Charakterprobleme bei Shakespeare* is indispensable to any scholar and it is good to hear that an English version will shortly be forthcoming.

H. V. ROUTH.

LONDON.

A History of Modern Colloquial English. By HENRY CECIL WYLD.
London: T. Fisher Unwin. 1920. 8vo. viii + 398 pp. 21s. net.

England, the birth-place of many great grammarians, has never yet taken any deep interest in her own linguistic studies. With the exception of Etymology, brought by Skeat, Bradley, Murray, and Craigie within the range of the general reader, the scientific study of our own tongue has hitherto been widely regarded as the harmless amusement of foreigners, whose learned monographs do not call for serious attention on the part of good patriots.

But what Skeat and his colleagues did for Etymology, has at last been done for Historical Grammar, which can now make its appeal to all circles of the learned, and to wider circles still.

Professor Wyld stands among the great authorities on his subject. His researches carry weight among specialists, and incidentally he is the author of the first English text-book to deal as adequately with Modern as with Medieval English.

With his *History of Modern Colloquial English* he now points out to the philologist the rightful position of the living language, and to the historian of literature the close connexion between the history of grammar and the history of thought and of manners.

The book before us is no mere text-book. It does not claim to set forth all that the student requires to know for the purpose of any examination, nor does it aim at being an encyclopaedia of its subject. On the other hand, it is a good deal more than chips from an English workshop: yet chips there are, as well as finished craftsmanship, enough to set many

a humble brother working hopefully under the inspiration of the crafts-master. Underlying the apparent looseness of the plan may be discerned a two-fold definite purpose. The author will teach in the first place that grammar is human as well as humane and humanistic, and in the second place that it is worth studying for oneself in the sources and apart from teachers and text-books.

Professor Wyld has solved the problem of presenting a difficult subject in a pleasant form. He demands only one hard task from his reader, the acquisition of a knowledge of certain elementary phonetic principles; but as he sets these forth in the space of two pages and a quarter, and in a form comprehensible to every schoolboy, it may be assumed that they will not be entirely beyond the grasp of the cultured.

To come now to some details:

Chap. 1 maps out the field. The significance of the interaction of 'received' and 'modified standard' and regional and class dialect is now made clear by Professor Wyld, and his view of class dialect and the influence of social changes upon it, must find general acceptance. This chapter contains most valuable hints to investigators of dialect.

Chap. 2, expository of the Middle English dialect types, is mainly for professed students of language. From the three or four hundred lines of well selected and carefully annotated extracts here given, the student will learn more about this period of the language than from four hundred pages of M.E. Readers. It may be hoped that p. 55 will be read by all compilers of text-books on literature, and that the invention of Modern English will cease to be credited to Chaucer.

Chap. 3 deals with fifteenth century English, and 'the passing of regional dialect in written English.' One remarks that the author, while in agreement to a great extent with Zachrisson and Dibelius, lays special stress on the evidence for class dialect. Very interesting is the cumulative evidence of 'bad spellings' set forth in the survey of literary English and London English. The author's estimate of Caxton also demands attention.

Chap. 4 shews us Standard English reaching maturity in the Tudor period, with the gradual disappearance of regional dialect from the language of persons who came under the influence of Court speech. Professor Wyld points out how the latitude of the standard speech of the Court, 'the highest type of colloquial English,' was reflected in the literary language of the day, which was far more closely related to the spoken language than it is at present. He draws attention to the intimate connexion between Court circles and the highest forms of literary activity, and he notes the birth of the idea of 'correct' pronunciation. A thirty-page survey of the linguistic forms found in the writings of typical Tudor personages, among them Lord Berners, Ascham, Lyly, the London citizen Machyn, and Queen Elizabeth, enables the reader to follow the author's reasoning step by step.

By the bye, the Queen's *i* for M.E. long tense *e* is complicated by her spelling *plisd* for *pleased*. But if her long *i* was already a diphthong (slack *i* or tense *e* + tense *i*), the confusion might be explained. I have

noted *indyde* in Anne Boleyn's letters, and *Shine* (Sheen), *Quines*, and *kipping* in the correspondence of John Fowler.

Since the publication of Van Dam and Stoffel's *Chapters on English Printing*, scholars have fought somewhat shy of the evidence of printed literature; but Professor Wyld's accurate weighing of the matter establishes his opinion 'that we are justified in regarding the outstanding linguistic features in printed literature of this period as really reflecting the individualities of the authors, and not of the printers.'

Chap. 5, from Spenser to Swift, besides developing the preceding line of argument, is a valuable contribution to the history of prose style. Proofs are adduced from private documents, which now first reveal their linguistic secrets. Very interesting is the ascription to the middle classes of the reaction against slipshod style and pronunciation.

Professor Wyld is perhaps a little severe on the grammarian Butler. The latter surely means: where all decent folk use the new sound, reform the spelling; where some decent folk pronounce according to the traditional spelling, let the rest do the same. It is no concern of Butler's whether the reformed pronunciations are 'natural developments' or 'spelling-pronunciations.' Professor Wyld's own view of two seventeenth century types from M.E. long slack *e* would seem to justify Butler's reformed pronunciation of *ear*; and Horn's theory of a two-fold development of M.E. long tense *e* before *r* justifies Butler's *hear* and *dear*.

Chap. 6 is a masterly discussion of the stressed vowels in New English. The chronology of changes is now known to be less simple than the pioneers Ellis and Sweet supposed. Professor Wyld, while warning us of the uncertainty of definite dates, by his relative chronology has thrown strong light on a dark corner; and his notes on shortenings are lamps to guide the philologist. Clear exposition and sound reasoning are everywhere united with open-mindedness. A little thing like the note on *Foynes* exemplifies the breadth of his knowledge.

In the next edition may we hope to have further information on short *u*, the two long *o*'s before *r*, and the development of M.E. *-aught* and *-ought*? In support of the diphthongal nature of O.F. *u* on English soil one would like to refer to the frequency of M.E. rhymes such as *aventure*—*bour* etc. Can there not have been a centuries-old interaction of Continental and Anglo-French pronunciation? In defence of Bellot, I have noted *up(p)en* fairly frequently through M.E., from the *Twelfth Century Homilies* down to the *Norfolk Guilds*, and would venture the suggestion that the stress was still variable in his day.

Chap. 7, on unstressed vowels, and Chap. 8 on consonant changes, are pioneer work. Professor Wyld has gleaned material from the careless spellings of the 'best' people. He shews how social changes brought about the ultimate triumph of the pedagogue over the aristocrat. I am not yet convinced that *morning*, with admittedly lost *r*, has a vowel-sound identical with that in *dawning*.

Chap. 9 presents inflexions, not as dull paradigms, but in the form of six centuries of living speech. The author never loses sight of his main theme, the development of *modern* English.

Chap. 10, on Colloquial Idiom, indicates new lines of research, and at the same time will prove of special interest to the student of literature.

It is not unfair to sum up the *History of Modern Colloquial English* with the word 'epoch-making.'

J. H. G. GRATTAN.

LONDON.

ÉDOUARD BONNAFFÉ. *L'Anglicisme et l'anglo-américanisme dans la langue française. Dictionnaire étymologique et historique des anglicismes.* Paris, Delagrave. 1920. 8vo. xxiii + 193 pp. 13 fr.

M. Bonnaffé's book contains (i) a short preface by Professor Brunot, pp. v-vi, (ii) an introduction in which M. Bonnaffé attempts an historical account and a succinct appreciation of anglicism in French, pp. vii-xxiii, then immediately after (iii) the dictionary pp. 1-186, (iv) a valuable bibliographical index, pp. 187-193, which includes, in addition to numerous works of all kinds, a list of as many as 155 journals and periodicals.

The Dictionary is a record of English loan-words in modern French by a scholar who is clearly well-acquainted with both French and English and who has been, as we are told by Professor Brunot, gathering together materials for this work for the last thirty years. It contains some 1100 words and their derivatives, say 1400 words in all. The articles are admirably drawn up: the grammatical nature and meaning of each word is briefly indicated; a note is added on the English etymology, and, where possible, the earliest English date is given (e.g. *punch*, 1632). M. Bonnaffé has added very much to the value of his book by giving, for each word, a set of well-chosen examples of their French use, comprising the oldest example known to him, and then others at intervals taken from illustrious authors or from technical works. When the word appears in French at an earlier period but in a different form, he has inserted a historical paragraph containing dated instances of the use of such earlier forms.

M. Bonnaffé says that he has found it a difficult and delicate task to trace the proper limits within which it is possible to admit that a particular English word is a loan-word in French. He has, in any case, rejected all words the English origin of which he considers doubtful: he quotes as examples *choc* (opérateur), *flibustier*, *pneumatique* (bandage), *sensationnel* and *vaseline*. He has also rejected such anglicisms as appear to him obsolete and he gives as instances: *carrick* (light carriage), *chair* (in railway terminology), *ram* (ship), *rouque*, *stage-coach*, *storm-glass*, *usquebec*, *watchman*, *wiski* (light carriage). For various reasons, I regret the omission of the latter group, but in any case it should be understood that M. Bonnaffé's dictionary is an attempt to catalogue the anglicisms most in use in French of the present day. Before admitting a word into his list, he insists on three conditions being fulfilled: it must be used not only in speech, but in writing; it must be used by well-known writers or at least in works of real authority on the subject to which it refers; it must be used continuously if only by a certain set of persons, technical