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Books of Special Interest

Our Mother Tongue

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN AMERICA. By GEORGE PHILIP KRAPP. New York: The Century Company. 1925. \$10.

Reviewed by F. P. MAGOUN, JR.
Harvard University

THE appearance of Professor Krapp's altogether admirable work, "The English Language in America," establishes a landmark in the historical study of language. The broad questions of language—its origin, growth, and change—have engaged the attention of poets and philosophers from remote antiquity, and, whether or no it be designated by the formidable term philology most of us moderns share in this age-long interest in the mystery of human speech and especially our mother tongue. Many of the most fascinating problems related to language study must unfortunately remain the charge of the student trained in linguistic archæology, but do we not all stand on an equal footing in our command, after a fashion at least, of the colloquial and literary speech of modern America? Are we not all aware of our dialects with their rich and interesting variety of pronunciation and use of words? In the familiar field of our mother tongue we used rather to be reminded than taught—though perhaps occasionally taught about our more distant neighbors and our ancestors—and one of the delights in store for the readers of "The English Language in America" will be the meeting of familiar friends dignified by their scientific setting. A careful perusal of Professor Krapp's book will go far towards discovering to the reader, "what worlds and what vast regions" lie at his door ready to be explored.

The work is published in two parts (two volumes), the first devoted to a descriptive account of those words and verbal usages which distinguish American English from British; the second is more technical: a careful analysis of American pronunciation with a brief account of the peculiarities of "our" grammar, the inflectional endings and syntax. The second volume ends with a valuable select bibliography and an index.

In the brilliant and lucid introductory chapter, "The Mother Tongue," the reader is oriented in such matters as the early consciousness of the individuality of American English (pp. 4 ff.), the influences at work (church and school) (pp. 24 ff.), the development of local types of speech (a New England local type, a Southern local type, and a general or Western speech covering the rest of the country) (p. 35 ff.). After an impartial consideration of Professor Krapp's evidence on the last point, one cannot but recognize the less extreme dialect (dialects?) of the Middle West as standard: the characteristics of New England speech can only be regarded as local if not actually provincial (see especially, pp. 45). The introductory chapter closes with a survey of problems needing further investigation (pp. 52 ff.) and the influence of racial mixture on our speech (pp. 60). Here many readers will be surprised and relieved to learn that the influence of foreign speech-centres neither has been, nor is likely to be, appreciable.

The second chapter, "Vocabulary" will prove disappointing to the reader who expects to find there lists of words confirming his notion that British English and American English have gone far in becoming separate languages or even markedly differentiated dialects. "Certainly differentiation has not [as has been claimed] proceeded so far as to result in unintelligibility. Whether it has gone so far as to destroy the sense of sympathy and intimacy between one who uses American English and one who uses British English depends largely upon the degree of sanctity one attaches to *coal-scuttle* as contrasted with *coal-hod*, or *brakesman* as contrasted with *brakeman* (p. 77)." There follows a study of many interesting terms (especially "hole" as in Woodshole (p. 80 ff.), and "run" as in Bull Run (p. 85), also words associated with frontier life (p. 89 ff.), plant and animal names (especially "pumpkin," p. 99, and "katydid," p. 104), and "facetious" language (pp. 114 ff.). The obscure, though characteristically Yankee "darn" is the subject of an important essay (pp. 118-126), while the remainder of the chapter is concerned with the language of transportation, so vital a factor in the development of our material life (pp. 135 ff.), to topographical terms, to words borrowed from the Dutch, the

negroes (insignificant number), and the Indians. The reviewer cannot but wish that all topographical and geographical terms might have been treated together rather than scattered through the chapter. A discussion of "bully" (excellent) and "runt" might also have been included here.

Pages 169-224 are given over to the fascinating branch of linguistic science, "Proper names," both of places and of persons. Here, for example, the Indian has made extensive contributions, but "by far the most common source from which new place names have been derived has always been the recollection of the names of old places at home (p. 190)." Haverhill, Hingham, Dedham, Groton, etc., are "almost unknown to the Britisher, but the very pith and marrow of American life and history (p. 190)." The history of many of our family names, also the practice of giving a "middle" name, will arouse the interest of many readers, while the account of "Yankee" (p. 220), and of "Dixie" (p. 221) will appeal to two important elements in our national community.

Under "Literary Dialects" (pp. 225-273), the difficult problem of the definition of dialect and the rôle of dialects in America is approached, and some of the main dialects which have attained prominence in our literature (New England and Southern) are examined. Professor Krapp discusses American "Style" (pp. 274-327) in a masterly fashion, bracing first the rise of the classic literary school in Connecticut and the transference of the centre of gravity to New York in the time of Irving. The language of folk tradition, oratory, and political literature is analyzed to illustrate the growth and progress of nature, popular style. The two concluding chapters of the first volume are given over to "American spelling" with an interesting account of the activities and influence of Noah Webster, and to "American Dictionaries," including dictionaries of Americanisms.

Pronunciation, wherever given, is indicated in terms of the International Phonetic Alphabet. For this readers are directed to the description of the symbols in volume 2, pp. 11-12. (Specific reference to this should have been given—p. xii of the Preface to Vol. I!)

In the main, the second volume treats of American pronunciation and consequently cannot be conveniently reviewed here in detail; for the study of pronunciation is ultimately the study of a vast mass of details drawn from large variety of sources. For the student, this portion of the work furnishes an admirable supplement to "American Pronunciation," by Professor J. S. Kenyon (1924). For the general reader the arrangement (by sounds) may prove bewildering, but the discussion of the "broad a" (pp. 36 ff.) is recommended to all New Englanders, and for "thoid" for "third," "foist" for "first" see the notes on New York dialect (pp. 185-186).

In his Preface, Professor Krapp raises the question as to whether the time is ripe for the writing of such a history as he has given us here. Language, that wonderful instrument of man, is ever changing; and until the last speaker of English, British or American is dead, no complete picture is possible. Research in public and private records and in our early literature will yield up fresh secrets of the part of our speech, but the reader of Professor Krapp's classic will turn away from it with an understanding knowledge, sympathetic approach, and renewed interest in that branch of the English language which we call ours and in which lies the future vigor and promise of our common mother-tongue—the English language.

M. Léon Daudet, son of the novelist, is primarily a politician and an editor; he is also a prolific writer of fiction and the most picturesque of memorialists. But he has never forgotten that he started life as a physician, and every now and then he reverts to medical studies, especially mental medicine. A few years ago he wrote a study of heredity, "L'Hérédité," now it is a study of dreams, "Le Rêve Eveillé" (Grasset). M. Daudet does not think there is any fundamental difference between night and day dreams. Hence he constantly, and somewhat bafflingly, passes from a refutation of Freud—with him the sexual instinct is replaced by the fear of death—to a study of unconscious or subconscious meditation. The book, rich in psychological data and intuitions, is neither well-arranged nor very well written, and is so poorly edited that an Index has been forgotten.



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Books of Special Interest

Twinkling Jane

JANE TAYLOR, PROSE AND POETRY.
With an introduction by F. V. BARRY.
New York: Oxford University Press.
1926. \$1.25.

Reviewed by A. HUGH FISHER

WHAT English or American child since her day has not unconsciously known of Jane Taylor through "Twinkle, twinkle, little star" and should we not all be grateful to Miss Florence Barry for this volume of well chosen selections and its critically discerning essay on Jane and her work?

Jane belonged to a genuinely pious family and one in which very hard work was necessary to keep its head above water. Her father was an engraver (had been a friend of Bewick's) as well as pastor of an independent religious congregation, and in Jane's thirteenth year she and her younger sister Ann were taught the use of the burin and worked at engraving all day until eight o'clock of the evening. Though the children were exceedingly alive, playful, and imaginative, it was not till after this hour that any time could be found to indulge their passion for verse making, and even then household duties claimed them. But spontaneity was an essential of Jane's early productions and it is not surprising that, as her sister Ann declared, "a flying thought could be caught even in the midst of work, or a fancy 'pinioned' to a piece of waste paper."

Even Jane's earliest verses are by no means all prattle but have modest felicities of expression as well as kind thoughts and the faculty of "making little fishes talk like little fishes."

Nearly a century before "A Child's Garden of Verses" Jane and her younger sister sang of moon and stars, flowers and creatures, and of children's play, and Miss Barry finds in them "the great-aunts-in-literature" of Robert Louis Stevenson. She might have recalled Stevenson's own essays in engraving (though R. L. S. worked upon wood blocks and not metal plates), and the very Taylorian verses in which he records what we hope rarely happened to the more practised hand of little Jane—

*A blemish in the cut appears,
Alas! it cost both blood and tears,
The glancing graver swerved aside,
Fast flowed the artist's vital tide!*

It was in 1804 that the first little book of "Original Poems" took the nurseries by storm and a few years later that a second volume forced capitulation even from such trained maturity as that of Sir Walter Scott. What we know of his love of Pet Marjorie might indeed have led us to expect no less appreciation than he expressed to the anonymous authors when he wrote thanking them "for the pleasure he has received in perusing their beautiful poetry."

Miss Barry declares that Jane suffered the fate of those who rate life higher than literature and was hindered by devoted service to family and friends from ever developing her powers. But whether we consider her writings only in relation to her own time or in the vast literary cathedral of Chaucer-to-Elinor-Wylie, their quality is good enough to deserve attention, and the reader is well rewarded by sprightliness of wit, by pathos, and an unusually keen gift of satirical humour.

In "A Century of Children's Books" (Methuen, 1922) Miss Barry has already written upon Jane and Ann Taylor, and it was doubtless her studies for that volume that persuaded her of Jane's worthiness of a separate monograph. Her enthusiasm is never unbalanced and she recognizes Jane's limitations and her tendency to magnify all her little failings into sins. But she appreciates to the full Jane's wit and humor and the difference between her simple realism and that of a materialistic outlook. To Jane Taylor "the life of the spirit was the greatest reality. A thing was real or unreal, according to its intrinsic worth."

In a family of such strong and active religious convictions Jane's life was passed, if not under an ethical shadow at least in the constant presence of moral exhortation and as Miss Barry writes, "The wonder is less that she could hide her bright wit under a didactic cloak than that it escaped so often to pierce the gloom of her doctrine and reconcile youth to her moralizing."

But Jane's seriousness was less fervid than that of her parents, though even theirs did not altogether forbid humorous playfulness. As Miss Barry has elsewhere written: "Laughter crept into the garden under the eye of Caution and Example and,

for his coaxing ways, was allowed to stay as a probationer."

One of the best passages in this introductory essay is that in which the writer shows that Jane Taylor, unlike Miss Edgeworth, "who had rationalized the symbols of romance and transformed the Flying Horse of the Arabian Tales into a balloon," had not replaced poetry by science but could look at a garden from two points of view and "understood the difference between poetry and botany."

She was no rebel like Emily Dickinson, yet like Emily, Jane could transport herself in imagination to the side of her dear ones. She writes from Ilfracombe in December, 1813, to her sister Ann about her approaching marriage: "I intend to place myself before the view of the house, about the time I imagine you will be walking down the gravel-walk, and I shall stand there while you art at church and till I think you are coming back again."

As with all selections, those acquainted with the originals are sure to miss some favorites, and I confess to disappointment at the exclusion of such a capital piece as "The Squire's Pew" with that imaginative stanza which pictures the old monument of the Knight and his lady with the little effigies of their numerous offspring

*Devoutly kneeling side by side
As though they did intend
For past omissions to atone
By saying endless prayers in stone.*

After the series of children's books and her own novel "Display" (a collection of good character sketches without, however, any gift of sustained narrative), Jane contributed for six years under the pseudonym of "Q. Q." a long series of really entertaining short moral tales to *The Youth's Companion*, and it was one of those, republished in the present selection, which inspired Browning's poem "The Star of My God Rephan." Among these no reader can help enjoying the delicious diary of a toad supposed to have been sent from Egypt by the venerable reptile either as a present to the British Museum "or with the more mercantile view of getting it printed in London, in preference to Alexandria, on condition of receiving one per cent on the profits after the sale of the 500th edition "provided the publisher should by that time be at all remunerated for his risk and trouble!"

It is too long for quotation but the stages of gradual awakening are inimitably told up to the time when the diarist

*Grew pensive;—discovered that life is a load;
Began to be weary of being a toad.
Was fretful at first, and then shed a few tears!—
Here ends the account of the first thousand years.*

Overworked and overworn, Jane very early felt the approach of age and, too ready to accuse herself of laziness, lacked among her friends sufficient insistence on her need of rest and recreation. Her strength gradually ebbed in a long illness bravely borne. Yet with sane judgment her mind continued clear as her heart young and fresh, and her voice of the kind that sweetens homily.

Missions and Houses

THE OLD MISSION CHURCHES AND HISTORIC HOUSES OF CALIFORNIA. Their History, Architecture, Art and Love. By REXFORD NEWCOMB. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1925. \$15.

Reviewed by B. H. LEHMAN
University of California

PROFESSOR NEWCOMB'S book, relating one after the other the histories of the two dozen missions, gives one a very vivid account of the pastoral phase of California, on its economic side. The account of the intellectual and spiritual side, on the other hand, is inadequate. Not, as is sometimes implied in the text, because this side did not exist, but because the author, for all he is an architect and dealing in one of the arts, ignores beauty. And beauty in the missions is the record of the intellectual and the spiritual life. Here it is a record unread. There are indeed references to the beautiful: "glorious," "charm," "a very alluring charm." But in the case these are nothing.

The shortcoming is clear to whoever having seen San Juan Capistrano looks on Professor Newcomb's photographs. The ruin offers enchantments greater than the "Corner of Patio" or the "Broken Arches," fine as are the glimpses here given. We have been promised an illustrative study of the effect of climate and light upon surface, depth of wall, ground plan. Yet of neither Capistrano nor San Juan Bautista, for example, is there a photograph indicating how wonderfully the problem of light and shade has been handled. There is in the missions, properly viewed, an architectural evidence of directness, simplicity, and in a soft climate, of rectitude of mind. In the ruined sanctuary of Capistrano the lines and surfaces are a complete guide to a religious mood that lacked intensity (the ardor of that life was all spent on the practical), but was deeply sustained and highly confident.

When he comes to the historic houses of California, Professor Newcomb's preoccupation with history and his refusal to be analytico-architectural throw him headlong into the pseudo-historical and the sentimental. He gives, for instance, many dull details about the Larkin house at Monterey, with an inadequate flowery description of the two-storeyed balcony as a "delightful shelter from the brilliant sunshine." There is not a word about the door of the

small house now part of the Johnson estate—looking on the street and so near the main house that it is almost in the photograph. Yet that door—not the doorway—has few superiors in Salem, Massachusetts or Florence, Italy. The texture of the old wood confirms the lines in their dignity and simplicity. It is what the door of a little house should be, the invitation to peace and its securer.

The fact is that the author has undertaken to write too many books in one. There is a history of an architectural phase. There is an account of manners and customs (interesting often, banal sometimes, as when the manners are modern: ("While [the passenger to San Juan Capistrano] marvels at the expanse of white walls and red tile roof, the station is announced in that urgent voice that indicates that passengers had best make hurried steps in order to get off the train. The passenger grasps his camera and sketch-pad and by the time he gains the aisle, the decreasing velocity of the train rushes him headlong toward the vestibule). There are fragments of a hiker's travel guide. There is a thesis book, discussed and sometimes approached but not really written, of the influence of this California environment or architecture, with analogues in Mexico, New Mexico, Texas, and old Spain. And there is the unwritten book of beauty, Californian, early, Spanish, lingering in ruins, and revived of late in houses for men and business and schooling.

None the less this large and handsome volume is a beginning. From the thorough summaries of the trials of the mission builders, by earthquake, politics, and incompetence, and from the reconstructions of ground plans arises a picture of busy living that the conventional text can not create. Thence, too, one derives a sense of architectural significance. Sometimes the historical survey gives the architectural details with great neatness, as in the case of the lantern on the church of San Luis Rey. Patio and plaza, thule-thatches, raw-hide joint-bindings, cat-tail stems as building material evoke the vanished phase. Photographs and drawings suggest details of charm or austere beauty that may be used again. And for even the weakest reader, the book will dispel the notion that California architecture is indigenously bungaloyd.

A new book of interest to collectors of current Americana is the large paper edition of Charles Moore's "The Family Life of George Washington," containing much material hitherto unused and now gathered to tell the intimate story of Washington's personal life. The book begins with a discussion of the land of the Washingtons; then it considers Washington's education, his early romances, his marriage with the widow Custis, and family life at Mount Vernon. Mr. Moore, head of the Library of Congress, has found much new material of interest and importance.

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