

A Survey of the Society for Pure English

By

Stan Westhoff

B. A., Benedictine College, 1977

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1983

Approved by:

Robert Grindell
Major Professor

LD
2668
R4
1883
W47
c. 2

AL1202 244627

Very little has been written about the Society for Pure English, the most serious attempt in this century to establish an organization in the nature of an academy for the English language. Because of the scholarly nature of its publications and its impressive roll of founders, contributors and patrons, including men like James A.H. Murray, W.A. Craigie, H.W. Fowler, Otto Jespersen and Robert Bridges, the S.P.E. is a worthy subject for scholarly investigation. A brief history of the Society could prove to be a useful contribution to the limited scholarship available on the organization. This survey will begin with a concise overview of earlier attempts to standardize, refine and fix the language, then proceed to an examination of the Society's establishment and its original prospectus, and finally, concentrate on selected tracts from the Society's four series of publications. Each series contains twenty tracts, except the last series, which has only six tracts. (This grouping of twenty tracts per series was established by the Society to assist in the indexing of the tracts.) The survey will conclude with a brief consideration of the achievement of the S.P.E.

According to Albert Baugh and Thomas Cable in their book, A History of the English Language, the spirit of scientific rationalism that developed in the latter half of the seventeenth century and continued through all of the eighteenth century was characterized by a strong sense of order and regularity. Reason, supported by the authority of classical examples, was used to explain and to justify language

theories that developed at this time. In these theories correctness became the ideal. Rules and principles were therefore formulated so that correctness could be defined and achieved.¹

Sterling Leonard, in his book The Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage 1700-1800, noted that one of these language theories proposed that originally there was a single perfect language that had been divinely instituted. The various languages that now exist developed as a result of the dispersal at the tower of Babel. The duty of grammarians was then to guide languages back to the perfectly logical original. A natural conclusion drawn from this theory of a divinely instituted language was the idea that language was "formed by God or its Genius to a consistent and logical plan " that reflected reality perfectly and coincided with the "precise reasoning processes assumed for the mind of man."²

As the influence of scientific rationalism grew so did efforts to standardize, refine and fix the English language. Before this time many discussions of the language concentrated on the question of whether English was worthy of being used for writings in which Latin, the classical standard, had been traditionally used, or focused on matters of spelling and vocabulary additions. It wasn't until this time that grammar was taken into consideration and the discovery was made that, unlike the classical languages which had been reduced to rules that defined correctness, English had no formal description of its syntax and preferred usages.³ This discovery was quite disturbing to an age that desired certainty and regularity. A search

ensued "for a universal grammar, based on universal reason and settling once for all every question of usage."⁴ Thus began attempts by eighteenth century grammarians to discover a grammar for English that was based on the rules and principles of Latin. For a time no English construction was accepted unless it could match up with a classical prototype.⁵ Eventually, however, the attempt to force a Latin or classical grammar on English was rejected by Wallis, Ward, Priestley and Lowth,⁶ although even today there are "mistaken ideas of the structure of English, based in a preoccupation with classical grammar."⁷

But the desire to regulate the language died much harder. Grammarians of the eighteenth century attempted to direct the course of English in three ways: "(1) to reduce the language to rule and set up a standard of correct usage; (2) to refine it--that is, to remove supposed defects and introduce certain improvements; and (3) to fix it permanently in the desired form."⁸ John Dryden spearheaded early attempts to accomplish this three-fold task by promoting the establishment of an English Academy like those of France and Italy.⁹ He was very disturbed that English did not possess a formal society to oversee the orderly development of the language. He complained that without a grammar and a dictionary he often had had to resort to translating his work into Latin and then translating it back into English to assure himself of the accuracy of his passage.

Eventually the Royal Society, founded in 1662 and mainly interested in scientific studies, adopted a resolution in 1664 to sponsor a committee for improving the English language. The committee was a

rather large one, consisting of twenty-one members. But it held only three or four meetings. It appeared that the Royal Society was not truly interested in linguistic matters and that Dryden was probably the moving spirit behind this gesture by the Royal Society.¹⁰

The movement for an academy did not subside for lack of support though. In 1712 Jonathan Swift proposed the establishment of an academy to the Lord Treasurer of England in a letter entitled, "A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue." In this proposal Swift voiced the main concerns of most of the intellectuals of his day:

My Lord; I do here, in the name of all the learned and polite persons of the nation, complain to your Lordship, as first minister, that our language is extremely imperfect; its daily improvements are by no means in proportion to its daily corruptions; . . . it offended against every part of grammar.¹¹

Swift then proposed several reasons as to why the language was in such a dire state. He supposed the period of greatest improvement in the English language to have begun with the reign of Queen Elizabeth and to have concluded with the Great Rebellion.¹² Swift felt that since that time the language had been in a state of continual corruption. Swift's greatest concern was that eventually the language would change so much that English would lose its literary heritage. Swift felt:

some method should be thought on for ascertaining and fixing our language forever, after such alterations are made in it as shall be thought requisite. For I am of Opinion, that it is better a language should not be perpetually changing; . . . But when I say, that I would have our language, after it is duly correct, always to last; I do not mean that it should never be enlarged; provided, that no word which a society shall give a sanction to, be afterwards antiquated and exploded, they may have liberty to receive whatever new ones they shall find occasion for.¹³

This was Swift's way of protecting England's literary heritage.¹⁴

Swift's proposal was the culmination of the efforts to establish an English Academy. The people of the time were generally in favor of the movement. It had the backing of the most prominent intellectuals of the time.¹⁵ It was generally felt that the proposal failed because of "dissensions among the great men at court; but chiefly by the lamented death of that glorious princess (the Queen)."¹⁶ This was the closest England ever came to having an academy. No serious effort was made to accomplish the purpose again. Apparently it was felt that where Swift had failed it was almost impossible to succeed.¹⁷

Along with those who supported the Academy there were those who were skeptical of its validity. The failure of the French

Academy to fix its language gave rise to doubts that English could be permanently fixed.¹⁸ When Samuel Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language was published many people hailed it as performing the same function as the dictionary of an academy. At first Johnson had envisioned such a role for his dictionary. But upon closer examination he realized the shortcomings of his own work and those of an academy.

Those who have been persuaded to think well of my design, will require that it should fix our language...With this hope, however, academies have been instituted, to guard the avenues of their languages, ... but their vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain; ... to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength.¹⁹

Near the end of his preface he continued: "If an academy should be established for the cultivation of our stile, ... I ... hope the spirit of English liberty will hinder or destroy it."²⁰

Johnson recognized the mutability of the language and regretted that it was not "less apt to decay."²¹ But he felt the greatest threat to English was not its mutability, but rather the translators who, he felt, would incorporate so many foreign expressions into the language that it would cause English to lose its character.²²

Johnson's views apparently had a decidedly dampening effect on the advocacy for an academy.²³ But the spirit of scientific rationalism was not eliminated. Johnson's dictionary satisfied one of the two great needs felt at this time. The other need was that of a grammar that would establish a standard for correct construction.²⁴ Joseph Priestley's The Rudiments of English Grammar was an attempt to fulfill this need. Priestley's grammar was among the most liberal of all the grammars produced in the eighteenth century and the early part of the ensuing century. Unlike Bishop Lowth and Lindley Murray, Priestley felt that usage, not derived rules, was the most important factor in compiling a grammar for the English language.²⁵ Like Johnson, he agreed that an academy was "unsuitable to the genius of a free nation."²⁶ Priestley admitted to "no standard but that of custom (usage)."²⁷ Unlike George Campbell, Priestley remained faithful to his belief that when there was a question as to which of two forms, both of which were in common use, should be chosen that usage would eventually decide the matter, not some derived rule.²⁸ He felt that in time the best forms of speech would establish themselves by virtue of their superior excellence.²⁹

A month after the publication of Priestley's Rudiments, Robert Lowth's A Short Introduction to English Grammar came out. His grammar was much more conservative than Priestley's and more in accordance with the tendencies of the prescriptive grammarians of the time. It soon swept the field, going through at least twenty-two editions.³⁰ It coincided with the three basic aims of the eighteenth

century grammarians:

(1) to codify the principles of the language and reduce it to rule; (2) to settle disputed points and decide cases of divided usage; (3) to point out common errors or what were supposed to be errors, and thus correct and improve the language.³¹

As Lowth stated in the preface to his grammar, "'It is not the language, but the practice that is in fault.'"³² Lowth, like most other eighteenth century grammarians, set himself up as a lawgiver. He was not content with merely recording the grammar of the language; he wanted to pronounce judgment as well. Unlike Priestley, who seemed to have doubted the propriety of ex cathedra utterances, Lowth believed that when there was a choice between two alternatives, one form of expression was right and one had to be wrong.³³

Lindley Murray brought prescriptivism into schools. Murray simplified Lowth's grammar and included material for classroom lessons in his own textbooks. Murray's texts dominated the markets of England and America, going through 120 editions. His books were the foundations for most of the grammar textbooks written in the nineteenth century.³⁴

Like Priestley, George Campbell, in his Philosophy of Rhetoric, professed greater respect for the evidence of usage than the prescriptive rules upheld by the more conservative grammarians. His definition of good use, that it be present, national, and reputable use, is still accepted today.³⁵ Unfortunately, Campbell's doctrine of usage is

undone by his own inconsistency in applying it:

...though nothing in language can be good from which use withholds her approbation, there may be many things to which she gives it, that are not in all respects good, or such as are worthy to be retained and imitated. In some instances custom (usage) may very properly be checked by criticism...³⁶

Clearly Campbell departed from his beliefs and so rendered his doctrine of usage inconsistent with itself.

In spite of this inconsistency, Campbell's work and his point of view were very influential. His book was the forerunner of numerous later books, such as those of Blair, Whateley and other nineteenth century authors. The influence of Campbell and other language purists helped to perpetuate the conservative, prescriptive attitude toward English that carried through much of the nineteenth century and was still influential at the time that the Society for Pure English was establishing itself in 1913.³⁷

The S.P.E. was founded in 1913, but due to the declaration of war in August of 1914 it suspended any planned proceedings until the abatement of that national distraction. After the Armistice in 1918 the members regrouped and agreed to issue the first tract³⁸ in October of 1919. Although conditions at that time were not as favorable as was hoped, the Society felt that the English people were

ready to divert their attentions away from the ravages of war toward matters of literary interest. The first tract was entitled "Preliminary Announcement" and contained an explanation of the title of the Society, proposals for the management of its financial matters, publications, management details and membership, a reprint of the original prospectus as issued in October of 1913, and a list of members.

The Society's explanation of its choice of title concentrated on the word pure:

In calling itself the Society for Pure English it was not overlooked that the word Pure might carry a wrong suggestion. It should be explained that it does not denote, as it is sometimes used to denote, the idea that words of foreign origin are impurities in English; it rather assumes that they are not; and the Committee, whether wisely or unwisely, thought a short title of general import was preferable to a definition which would misrepresent their purpose by its necessary limitations.³⁹

The S.P.E. was a non-profit organization. Its founders were confident that, although the price of publishing had gone up since the war, the Society would be able to carry on its work without asking for any subscriptions from its members. The original Committee felt

that if the tracts were of sufficient merit, the profits from sales would cover the costs of publication and the expenses of the unsalaried staff. Instead of a subscription the secretary encouraged donations to help defray the costs of publishing the tracts. Because of the "sympathetic response"⁴⁰ given to the original prospectus in 1913, the Society expected to receive numerous donations. It was also hoped that contributing authors would "allow all the profits to go into the funds of the Society."⁴¹ Finally, since the Society had a finite aim, it promised to donate any extra funds it might accumulate to the Pension Fund of the Society of Authors, when it considered its influence to be at an end.

In terms of the publication of its tracts, the Society proposed to publish a series of tracts on subjects which it was founded to deal with. The intention of the Society was to publish quarterly. Besides the essays contained within it, each tract would also include a report of proceedings up to date. Although this intention was not always accomplished, the S.P.E. did publish regularly from October of 1919 till December of 1946, sixty-six tracts in all. The tracts were issued by the Oxford University Press.

Management of the proceedings of the Society was handled by the original Committee and it was their plan that the members of the Society would ultimately decide its constitution. Until that time, though, they guaranteed the soundness of the books and publications advertised on the covers of the tracts, but under no circumstances did they allow the Society to be held responsible for all the

opinions of its contributors. The Society did encourage a full discussion of all questions raised by the articles within the tracts. This discussion took the form of selected correspondence from readers which was published at the end of various tracts.

As far as membership was concerned, the original Committee invited all who were interested in the objectives of the Society and were willing to assist in its work, to join. The original Committee comprised the founders of the S.P.E.: Henry Bradley, F.B.A., Ph.D., Joint Editor, Oxford English Dictionary; Robert Bridges, F.R.C.P., LL.D., Poet Laureate of England and treasurer of the Society; Sir Walter Raleigh, Professor of English Literature, Oxford, and noted literary critic; and Logan Pearsall Smith, the Honorary Secretary of the S.P.E. Among its more prominent members, originally and in later years, were: W.A. Craigie, LL.D., Joint Editor, Oxford English Dictionary; Sir James A.H. Murray, D.C.L., Editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, knighted in honor of his work done on the O.E.D.; H.W. Fowler, noted grammarian and lexicographer; and Otto Jespersen, author of The Philosophy of Grammar, and innovator in the field of grammar during the early 1900s.

In addition to the explanations of title, financial matters, and management details, the initial tract concluded with a reprint of the original prospectus. It began with a complaint that literary education in England did not inspire writers with a sense of responsibility toward their native tongue. The prospectus pointed out that most European countries trained journalists and men of letters

to observe changes in their languages and to guide these changes according to acknowledged principles of tradition and taste. The prospectus then enlarged upon this complaint by observing that since the use of English was spreading over the entire globe more corruptions were seeping into the language. Therefore, some forms of guidance were needed to assist in preserving the true character of the language, but there were none. It lamented the fact that up to that time, when it came to matters of choice and use of special words or the standards of style, most decisions had been made by irresponsible persons who had no knowledge of the history of the language or the right conception of what good language must be.

After registering these grievances the prospectus offered a proposal which would justify the creation and existence of the S.P.E.:

It is therefore proposed that a few men of letters, supported by the scientific alliance of the best linguistic authorities, should form a group or free association, and agree upon a modest and practical scheme for informing popular taste on sound principles, for guiding educational authorities, and for introducing into practice certain slight modifications and advantageous changes.

The promoters of this association (which calls itself the 'Society for Pure English')

are of course well aware of the danger of affectation, which constitutes the chief objection to any conscious reform of language. They are fully on their guard against this; and they think that the scheme of activity which they propose must prevent their being suspected of foolish interference with living developments.⁴²

In an attempt to further clarify its position, the Society proposed to be both conservative and democratic. It said that it would aim at preserving the richness of differentiation in the English vocabulary, its proven grammatical usages, its traditional idioms, and the music of the language's pronunciation. It would oppose whatever was slipshod and careless as well as eradicate the blurring of hard-won distinctions between the meanings of words. But it also said that it would oppose the "tyranny of schoolmasters and grammarians, both in their pedantic conservatism, and in their ignorant enforcing of newfangled 'rules', based not on principle, but merely on what has come to be considered 'correct' usage."⁴³

Continuing to expand its position, the Society stated:

The ideal of the Society is that our language in its future development should be controlled by the forces and processes which have formed it in the past; that it should keep its English character, and that the new elements added to it

should be in harmony with the old; for by this means our growing knowledge would be more widely spread, and the whole nation brought into closer touch with the national medium of expression.

The Society, therefore, will place itself in opposition to certain tendencies of modern taste; which tastes it hopes gradually to modify and improve. Its object will be best exhibited by stating a few definite proposals which may be regarded as typical.⁴⁴

There were six distinct proposals made in the original prospectus. The first proposal dealt with literary taste in regard to foreign words borrowed into the language. The Society felt that the practice at that time was incorrect. Instead of assimilating these borrowings into conformity with the main structure of the language, writers were maintaining the foreign appearance of words borrowed. Even more distressing to the Society was the fact that some writers were taking words already incorporated into the fabric of the language and returning them to foreign appearance by using the original spellings instead of the accepted Anglicized spellings and then putting these words in italics to emphasize their foreign origin, e.g., from the Anglicized 'naivety' to 'naïveté,' or 'depot' to 'dépôt.' The Society felt that this affectation tended to impair the national character of the language. In the past the terms had been spelled

and pronounced as English. By not following the traditional habit of naturalizing foreign words and phrases, some modern writers were engaged in the degeneration of the language. The Society proposed to discredit this tendency. It vowed that it would restore to English its old reactive energy and the practice of giving an English pronunciation and spelling to useful foreign words. It also proposed to restore to the old English forms the words that had been changed. Other foreign words and phrases which were claiming naturalization would be encouraged. The Society decided that it would be useful for writers to be acquainted with such matters; therefore a list of all such words with their English history would be an example of the type of service a tract might supply.

A second proposal, in conjunction with the first, was made concerning the weakening of the ancient word-making ability of English on account of the large importation of foreign words into the language. The S.P.E. objected to the fact that terms from Latin (e.g., plebian) Greek (catharsis), and other foreign languages (coup d'etat, amore) were readily accepted into English, no matter how awkward, but that most newly coined English words (patrioteer, debunk) needed to be used for some time before they were accepted. It was proposed that, barring all ill-sounding compounds and fantastic or awkward inventions, new English words, especially compounds, should be used in place of borrowings. The Society promised to discourage unimaginative and artificial formations and to prefer terms of English material because they would be more easily understood and spoken by English

speakers.

A third proposal acted upon by the Society encouraged men of letters who possessed the word-making faculty to exercise their ability. The Society was discouraged because most experimenting with the coining of new words was being done by scientific writers while the men who should have been actively engaged in such activity were standing idly by, aloof. The Society proposed that through the Society's tracts its members help men of science in their search for new and appropriate terms.

In the fourth proposal the Society stated that it believed that language was and should be democratic both in character and origin. The Society believed that the best word-makers were the uneducated because they contrived more vivid and popularly accepted terms than the educated classes. It then stated that although men of letters might occasionally make contributions to the formations of new words, their main job was that of selecting which new words were to be accepted and promoted. Therefore, the Society proposed to promote selected terms created by the working class in order to help preserve the living and popular characteristics of English.

Proposal five objected to the obliterating of dialects and local forms by the enforcement of a uniform standard of speech throughout the English school systems. The S.P.E. regretted this tendency because it felt some knowledge of dialects was necessary for a true understanding of the character and history of the language. The Society also felt that "Standard English" had derived much enrichment and

regeneration from local vernaculars. It proposed, therefore, to encourage the educated people, especially teachers, to be more aware of and sympathetic toward the forms and usages of local speech. Finally, the Society believed that a knowledge of provincial pronunciations and a familiarity with the full range of available English vowel sounds might serve to counteract the slurred and indistinct way of speaking which was regarded as "correct English" at that time.

The sixth and final proposal dealt with "idiomatic pronunciation involving speech rhythm"⁴⁵; for example, the growing loss of enclitics. The Society felt that the result of such a loss would have a great damaging effect on the rhythmic beauty of older literature, that it would actually teach people to misread the prose of the Bible, and that it would be an interference with the natural evolution of English sentences. The Society proposed to protect the old harmonious cadence of traditional speech by informing the public through its tracts.

As far as the question of orthography was concerned, the S.P.E. felt that English orthography was often absurd and illogical, but the Society did not plan to engage in a discussion of the problem because it felt that other, more profound modifications of the language were of greater importance and deserved special attention. The Society stated that it was aware that proposals for violent change were often self-defeating and made all reform impossible. Therefore, it decided that it would not insist on any doubtful or disputable detail as a rule of correctness. It intended, instead, to cause the

leaders of language fashion to consider the problems of English, contemplate the Society's suggestions, and then make their own decisions. The S.P.E. was confident that by this means an ideal of self-harmonized speech would gradually win acceptance, thereby promoting a better standard of national taste and most successfully influencing future developments in the language.

The Society circulated the original prospectus privately from hand to hand. In this way it hoped to gain sympathizers, especially teachers and writers, who, being in a position to influence public opinion directly and daily, would promote its proposed aims by their examples.

The second tract, "On English Homophones," was written by Robert Bridges, a member of the original Committee. This essay was divided into seven parts that commented on the present state of the homophone in the language and the general direction the language would take in regard to this subject as English spread over the entire globe. Of particular note in this paper was the summary. Besides a recapitulation of the major parts dealt with in the essay, Bridges brought up five points in the summary concerning the purpose of that paper and the work of the Society in general. These points were important because they further clarified the aims of the Society as proposed in the original prospectus.

The first point Bridges made was that when he consented to write the inaugural paper for the S.P.E. he decided that his first duty was to have this paper set an example as to the attitude

the Society had proposed to take and hoped to maintain. Bridges then pointed out that the Society had been called into existence as a result of a widespread interest in linguistic matters and that the S.P.E. intended to supply the organized means for focusing opinions on these matters which had been lacking up to that time. The Society believed that the general public was altogether unaware of such matters and that if facts and principles were clearly stated and handled by experts in the tracts it would be possible to "organize a consensus of sound opinion which might influence and determine the practice of our best writers and speakers."⁴⁶

In his third point Bridges made it very clear that the Society did not intend to act like an Academy. Rather, it intended to rely on facts and the free expression of educated opinion to assure its readers and itself that any conclusions arrived at in the tracts would be the verdicts of common sense. As a fourth point Bridges urged a full discussion of any linguistic question in the hope that when any principle or detail was definitely recognized as desirable, then the consensus of good writers and speakers would adopt it. Finally, Bridges, as he spoke for the Society, believed that since the Press could be considered trained experts, out of pride and self respect they would readily follow in preserving the best traditions of the language. The cooperation of the press, Bridges believed, should be expected and assumed.

The essay "A Few Practical Suggestions," found in Tract III, was written to answer some questions that had arisen about the

application of the principles that were stated in the preliminary tract. This essay offered a few suggestions about special points concerning the six proposals made in the original prospectus. Before these suggestions were given, though, a couple of introductory paragraphs reiterated some of the general guiding principles under which the S.P.E. operated.

In the first paragraph the essay repeated the dictum that the Society did not dictate to its members; rather it attempted to persuade opinion by putting forth suggestions worthy of serious consideration because they had received the approval of the best scientific judgements. The second paragraph reminded its members that the Society did not expect nor desire to make any sudden and revolutionary changes in the language because English could not be transformed at will, only by general consent. Since the language was always changing, the purpose of the Society was to guide choice when there was hesitation between current usages. After this introductory material the essay went on to make some practical suggestions on the subjects proposed to be dealt with in the original prospectus.

Later in the third tract an essay appeared entitled "Cooperation of Members." This essay restated the method by which the Society proposed to do its work. This method, as stated earlier, was to collect expert opinions on linguistic matters wherein present use was indeterminate or unsatisfactory, and thus to arrive at a consensus of opinion which might be relied on to influence practice. To accomplish this goal required the active cooperation of the members

of the S.P.E. The remainder of the essay was nothing more than a number of elaborations made by the original Committee along the same lines as those suggestions made by Logan Pearsall Smith in "A Few Practical Suggestions," which preceded this essay.

Tract IV closed the first year of publication for the S.P.E. At that time the Society was still governed by the small committee of its original founders. The suggestions and program the original Committee put forward met with favorable criticism from the public and the press. Encouraged by this show of good will the society endeavored to make its activities more widely known to other parts of the English speaking world. By this time the Society's membership had grown to 188 members including many well-known men of letters. From the sale of the tracts and because of generous donations of more than 10s. by some of its members, the Society was able to meet all of its expenses. The first year of publication spanned the calendar years of 1919 and 1920, and the Society began 1921 firmly established.

A conscious effort was made by the S.P.E. to publish papers, essays and articles that closely coincided with the subject matter proposed in the original prospectus. Tract V's essay, "French Words in the English Language," was a direct response to the first proposal of the original prospectus concerning the importation of foreign words into English and how these words should be incorporated into the fabric of the language. In fact, the last paragraph of the first part of Tract V's essay was a capsulization of that first proposal. The third part of the essay elaborated on the manner in which French

words should be adopted into English in terms of pronunciation, spelling, accent and the formation of plurals. The essay "On the Dialectal Words in Edmund Blunden's Poems," also found in Tract V, concentrated on the proposal in the prospectus of Tract I, and repeated in Tract III, p. 9, concerning the enrichment and regeneration of the language from the picturesque vocabularies of local vernaculars.

The article, "English Influence on the French Vocabulary," constituted the whole of Tract VII and was the opposite view to "French Words in the English Language" in Tract V. The Society included this tract in its publications because it believed that studying and discovering what happened to English words as they were incorporated into the French would assist English speakers with the problems of Anglicizing foreign importations. This study was continued and completed in Tract XIII.

Tract VIII summarized the earlier chapters of M. Remy de Gourmont's book, Esthetique de la Langue Francaise. The purpose of this summary was to illustrate that the problems the French were encountering with their language were similar to those of the English. The Society hoped that by demonstrating the similarities between the languages' problems, the objectives of the S.P.E. could be more fully appreciated. According to the Society, the cause Gourmont advocated was identical to that of the S.P.E.

In the introduction to the essay, "The Language of Anatomy," found in Tract IX, Robert Bridges called attention to the third

proposal of the original prospectus in order to justify the inclusion of the article in the tracts of the Society. This article urged the use of simple English anatomical terms such as head, neck, chest, etc. over the Latin technical terms in all contexts except the most technical.

Tract X dealt with a very interesting chapter in the history of the S.P.E.: The American Invitation. It should be recalled that in Tract IV the Society stated that it intended to make its work more widely known to the other English-speaking peoples of the world. The Society felt that if any great measure of success was to be hoped for in its endeavors the active cooperation of the Americans would have to be secured. With this in mind it was with great pleasure that the Society received an unexpected letter from a number of American professors in March of 1922 urging that a concerted effort be made throughout the English-speaking world to "maintain the traditions and foster the development of our common tongue."⁴⁷ This letter suggested the "organization of a permanent international body of scholars and men of letters representing the principal English-speaking peoples."⁴⁸ The Americans asked that the Society take the lead in organizing this project. The letter concluded by advising the Society to address any and all correspondence to Professor Fred Newton Scott of the University of Michigan. The signers of the letter included Scott, James Wilson Bright, Albert S. Cook, Chas. Hall Grandgent, Robert Underwood Johnson, John Livingstone Lowes, John Matthews Manly and Charles Grosvenor Osgood.

The Society's formal response to this invitation by the Americans was delayed for a while because of the illness of the secretary, Smith, and his long absences from England. But Robert Bridges, acting secretary, was in communication with Scott while he was in England at that time. Of major concern to the Society, though, was the task of devising the machinery for transatlantic collaboration. At the time of publication the Society was unsure as to how this would affect its operation, but for the present it intended to carry on business as usual with the hope of arriving at a solution by the next publication. The Society also encouraged the other branches of English-speaking peoples to follow the lead of the Americans and to "come forward to occupy their due places in the general polity by sending us corresponding overtures from their leading representatives."⁴⁹

Also contained in this Tract was a report on the current status of the Society's membership. The original scheme of membership, as it was proposed in Tract I, was not changed. This scheme had been to establish the Society by enrolling the names of all who would publicly support its aims, and those who supported the S.P.E. were considered members. This method served its purpose but as the number of members grew it became unmanageable. It was therefore decided that registration as a member of the S.P.E. would be restricted to those who would subscribe for the tracts. Persons who paid an annual subscription of ten shillings, in advance, were listed as members and received the tracts through the mail. For the year 1922 there were 150 members, but this number did not represent the sale of the tracts.

Also noted in the report of Tract X was an obituary of members. Among those who died were Sir Walter Raleigh, a member of the original Committee; John Sargeaunt, author of the paper "The Pronunciation of English Words Derived from the Latin," found in Tract IV; and Sir James A.H. Murray, famous for his work on the O.E.D.

Tract XI published the formal reply to the American Invitation. The letter, dispatched in October of 1922 and addressed to Fred Newton Scott, assured the Americans of the British interest and sympathy toward the American proposal and thanked them for the suggestion that the Society should take the lead in furthering the project. As to the best machinery for collaborating between the two parties, it was suggested that the Americans appoint a small committee to draw up a table of suggestions to be submitted for debate. The S.P.E. would appoint five persons to perform a similar task. Both lists could then be compared and some agreement be made. The Society cautioned the Americans that there were two dangers that were to be especially avoided: "one is the establishment of an authoritative academy, tending inevitably to divorce the literary from the spoken language; the other is the creation of a body so large as to be unmanageable."⁵⁰ Another foreseeable problem would be the difficulty of coordinating the activities of all the other branches of English-speaking people who might demonstrate an interest.

The British committee, consisting of Henry Bradley, Robert Bridges, A.T.Q. Couch, Henry Newbolt and J. Dover Wilson, met on

November first at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. The discussion was confined to practical questions of organization. Sir Henry Newbolt undertook to draft a letter in which the sense of the Committee could be conveyed to the Americans.

There were two notes of interest in Tract XIV. The first was the report of the death of Henry Bradley on May 23rd of 1923. Bradley was in his seventy-eighth year. He was one of the founders of the S.P.E., a member of the controlling Committee until his death, and a member of the committee involved with the American Invitation. His association with the S.P.E. was a "universal and complete assurance of the sanity and scientific soundness of our scheme; the more so because he was notoriously diffident of merely well-intentioned projects, and very reluctant to commit himself to any action without an almost overwhelming conviction."⁵¹ Aside from a few short notes that occasionally appeared in some of the tracts, the article "Briton, British, Britisher," written in conjunction with Robert Bridges, was the only substantial piece of writing Bradley contributed to the Society's publications. Bradley worked mainly as an editor of the tracts.

The other note of interest concerned the American Invitation. As of the publication of Tract XIV no practical steps toward partnership with the Americans had yet been made. A letter had been sent to Fred Scott offering some suggestions, among which was the suggestion that the American section definitely recognize the S.P.E. as representing the international movement in England for the present until some

other agency should be created.

Also reported in Tract XIV was a change in the membership of the Committee that presided over the workings of the S.P.E. New members to the Committee were William Paton Ker, Kenneth Sisam and W.H. Stevenson. Robert Bridges, again acting as the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, was the only remaining original member of the founding Committee.

Ironically, Tract XV reported the death of the newly installed Committee member William Paton Ker, whose sudden death occurred in the Alps while Tract XIV was being issued. Ker had been Professor of English Literature and History in Cardiff from 1883 to 1889. He held the Quain Chair of English Literature at University College, London, from 1889 to 1922, when he resigned. He was Professor of Poetry in Oxford from 1920 until his death. Professor George Gordon, who succeeded the late Sir Walter Raleigh in the Merton Chair of English Literature in Oxford, was added to the Committee.

Contained in Tract XVI was a report on the progress of action concerning the American Invitation. The report began with a review of the steps taken in the previous tracts. The suggestion that the S.P.E. be recognized as the international movement in England until some other agency was created was accepted by the American Committee. Professor Lowes of Harvard consented to handle any contributors of American writers to the tracts.

On November 15th of 1923 the English committee of Bridges, Gordon, Sisam and Stevenson held a meeting in Corpus Christi College,

Oxford. Sir Henry Newbolt was again invited to attend. Newbolt, actively negotiating for the creation of an English Committee, stated that he had been assured by the British Academy and the Royal Society of Literature of their cooperation in the formation of such a committee.

It was also reported in Tract XVI that the Society was gaining recognition and influence in affecting literary practice. The Society measured this recognition and influence by the acceptance of the proposals concerning words to be naturalized from Tract XIII by The Times and the London Mercury.

A final note* as of December, 1923, the total number of subscribing members was over 300, and the sale of tracts was enough to defray all the costs of publishing as well as allow for the remuneration of contributors and employ a salaried secretary.

Tracts XVII and XVIII dealt with a variety of subjects including subjunctives, poetry in schools, and discursive etymologies of the words "romantic," "originality," "creative," and "genius." In the report at the end of Tract XVIII the American Invitation was taken up again. According to the report, on March 3, 1924, another meeting was held to appoint members to the English Committee. Those men appointed were Lord Balfour, President of the British Academy; Robert Bridges, Poet Laureate, and a member of the S.P.E. and R.S.L.; Sir Robert Donald, journalist and member of the S.P.E.; George Gordon, Professor of English Literature, Oxford and member of S.P.E.; Sir Fredrick Kenyon, Ex-President of the British Academy and principal librarian of the British Museum; John Sampson, librarian of Liverpool

University and member of the S.P.E.; Kenneth Sisam, Clarendon Press, Oxford and member of the S.P.E.; Logan Pearsall Smith, author and member of the S.P.E.; and W.H. Stevenson, librarian of St. John's College, Oxford.

As a delegate of the English Committee Robert Bridges traveled to the U.S. to visit with the individual members of the newly formed American Consultative Committee. These men were Henry Canby, Charles Gayley, John Lowes, John Manly and Fred Scott. While in the U.S. Bridges found the American Committee impeded by the difficulties of long distances and local engagements. Upon his return from America Bridges called a meeting of the English Committee and related his actions and findings in that country. In the meeting it was agreed that the S.P.E. should take steps to strengthen and extend its influence in England.

The report of proceedings that concluded Tract XIX informed the members of the S.P.E. of the death of W.H. Stevenson, a member of the Committee. Stevenson's place was taken by Dr. W.A. Craigie. Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith rejoined the Committee after a short absence. Sir Robert Donald joined to become a sixth member of the Committee.

A short note on the American Invitation stated that, in spite of the good intentions, after some fruitless discussions, the English Committee was dissolved and it was agreed that the negotiations invited by the American Committee be left in the hands of the separate individuals who had been originally contacted by the Americans. This ended the active involvement of the S.P.E. in the American Invitation.

At the completion of this first series of tracts, of which Tract XX was an index of the Society's work up to that time, the Society was able to report that it found itself in a favorable financial state so that it could afford to pay contributors of serious articles a guinea a page. Along these lines, though, the Society reported that it was still experiencing difficulties in providing tracts to its subscribers on a quarterly basis. This problem was attributed to the lack of promises being kept by possible contributors. The Society saw this as a lamentable consequence of World War I.

Tracts XXI to XL comprised the second series of publications for the S.P.E. Tract XXI began the series and initiated the practice of continuous pagination to assist in the future indexing of the tracts. The Society devoted Tract XXI to what it felt were its most urgent needs:

1. A full and definite statement of our motives and aims.
2. An explanation of the means by which we hope to attain success, and
3. Practical suggestions concerning the sort of work which our widely scattered members can do to aid the movement.⁵²

In order to attract the attention of the various branches of literature, philologists, grammarians, authors and journalists, whose cooperation would be necessary to accomplish its goals, the Society

disseminated this tract outside its membership.

In terms of its motives and aims, two primary considerations had called the Society into being. The first was the fact that the English language was spreading all over the world. The Society feared that as a result of this phenomenon English had become inferior to some of its rivals as a convenient carrier of thought. In the process of spreading all over the world English had been subjected to many violent changes of environment which allowed a variety of corruptions and imperfections to creep into the language. But the Society believed that a significant number of these corruptions and imperfections were still corrigible and that these problems could be rectified by the type of intelligent criticism and guidance the S.P.E. offered in its tracts. Therefore, the Society considered it its responsibility to make English as good a means as possible for the communication of ideas. To attend to this responsibility became one of the aims of the Society.

The second primary consideration that called the S.P.E. into being was the danger of English losing its literary heritage through the natural development of the language and the degeneration of the language as a result of its widespread and haphazard distribution throughout the world. Because the language was being learned and spoken by many non-English speakers, a large number of corruptions and imperfections were finding their way into the language. It therefore became a motive of the S.P.E. not to allow this sort of degeneration to destroy the integrity of the language and so, ultimately, to

obliterate the literary heritage of English.⁵³

After stating these motives the Society was forced to confront the question: Was reform feasible? Skeptics asserted that the Society would not be able to bridle living speech and guide it in any particular direction successfully. The Society believed that this assertion might have been true a hundred years before but in the last century conditions had changes so that it was no longer true. The S.P.E. felt that through science, journalism, compulsory education, telephone and broadcasting, it possessed the means necessary to influence the developments of the language.

In terms of practical suggestions as to how the Society should work, the first and most important tenet was that the Society should have a popular and not an academic constitution. The Society suggested that its members proceed by inquiry and discussion rather than by authority concerning linguistic matters. The Society pointed out that success could not be hoped for without the good will of the public. The way to win this good will was through reasonable persuasion. This approach was advocated so as not to alienate the public by appearing to pontificate from a position of superior knowledge in linguistic matters.

A second suggestion was that the Society maintain the format of an open court in its tracts where new and doubtful matters could be argued. The Society promised to supply scientific facts, whenever possible or desired, to aid its readers in judging the pros and cons of any disputed question. Through this method the Society was con-

vinced that "the better diffusion of right knowledge would dispel prejudice and assure favor for the best solutions."⁵⁴

A third suggestion as to how the Society should work reminded the members that changes in the language were slow and gradual. The Society encouraged its members to work under this premise. It also encouraged its members in outlying areas like Australia, South Africa and India to contribute more correspondence to the tracts so that they could maintain the character of an open forum and address the problems of special interest to the members of the Society who lived in these outlying areas.

Besides the three-fold discussion of the Society's objectives, the feasibility of reform, and the suggestions as to how the Society should operate in order to accomplish its objectives, there were four other very short divisions in Tract XXI. Following the above discussion there was a brief review of the first twenty tracts. Then there was a short section advising the members of the proper method of promoting the Society's objectives. A section encouraging members of the S.P.E. from English speaking nations other than Great Britain and America to form local branches of the Society was followed by a very short note on correspondence the Society had received concerning textbooks in the schools. This concluded the introductory tract to the second series of publications of the S.P.E.

Tracts XXII to XXXIX, inclusive, dealt with a wide variety of subjects. The major essay of Tract XXII, "The Nature and Origin of Human Speech," written by Sir Richard Paget, was a summary of Paget's

research and represented the latest state of knowledge concerning the acoustics of speech. Dr. W.A. Aiken's essay, "English Vowel Sounds," from Tract XXVI was directly related to Paget's essay and was concerned with articulation of sounds and the fixed elements of English speech which make it distinctive.

Tract XXIII was a rather lengthy tract on English handwriting. It was designed to instruct and assist teachers by providing them with sound principles and good models for imitation. The subject could not be handled in its entirety in this tract and so was concluded in Tract XXVIII.

In this second series of publications by the S.P.E. a number of essays appeared that were concerned with the subject of grammar. Otto Jespersen wrote three of these essays: "On Relative Clauses" found in Tract XXIV; "The Expanded Tenses" from Tract XXVI; and "On Some Disputed Points in English Grammar" which was the only article in Tract XXV. These essays discussed various aspects of Jespersen's new theories of grammar. H.W. Fowler's essay on "ing" from Tract XXVI was a critical reply to Jespersen's paper in Tract XXV.

Another subject dealt with in this second series was American English. Three essays addressed this topic. Fred N. Scott's essay, "American Slang," which appeared in Tract XXIV, briefly introduced the matter to this series. Scott's article was designed to assist British readers with slang terms that appeared in American literature by defining a number of these terms. W.A. Craigie's essay, "The

Study of American English," to which Tract XXVII was devoted, studied the manner in which English evolved in America from the time of the colonists. The major essay of Tract XXX, "American Pronunciation" by H. Kurath, dealt with the dialectal pronunciation of English by Americans in three major geographic locations or divisions: the West, East, and South.

A very general heading under which a few essays and tracts could be loosely grouped would be that of language. Tract XXIX by George Gordon was concerned with the language of Shakespeare. His essay dealt with various characteristics of the language and its development during Elizabethan times. Tract XXXI dealt with the need for new words in the language to more clearly express old ideas in a new light, to name new inventions and to talk of new concepts in the arts and sciences. Tract XXXIV contained three essays on the subject of "created" universal languages. And finally, an essay from Tract XXXVI by L. Abercrombie dealt with colloquial language found in literature.

The topic of "standard" English was dealt with in Tracts XXXVII and XXXIX. In Tract XXXVII R.W. Chapman defended "standard" English and the "oxford accent" against the prejudices and misconceptions of the public, especially Americans. H.C. Wyld in Tract XXXIX made a claim for the superiority of a received "standard" English. According to Wyld's definition, "standard" English "is a kind of English which is neither provincial nor vulgar, a type which most people would willingly speak if they could, and desire to speak

if they do not."⁵⁵

Tracts XXXII and XXXIII could be grouped together for their diversity of subject matter. Tract XXXII was a reprint of a booklet used by the B.B.C. in which recommendations were made for announcers in regard to how certain words of doubtful pronunciation should be spoken. The first essay of Tract XXXIII was written by G.N. Clark in objection to the previous tract on the grounds that such recommendations would destroy the dialectal flavor of the announcers. Otto Jespersen's essay "Veiled Language" offered explanations for words which were used to disguise direct references of a derogatory nature. H.W.B. Joseph's essay was a discursive etymology of the word "person." And Tract XXXIII concluded with an essay by Kenneth Sisam on the principles of word-division.⁵⁶

The thirty-fifth tract of the S.P.E. publications was a commemorative issue honoring the late Robert Bridges, who died April 21, 1930. This tract was composed of two parts. The first part was a brief account of Logan Pearsall Smith's recollections of the origin and history of the Society and Mr. Bridges' role in it. The second part of the tract was a summary by Elizabeth Daryush, Bridges' daughter, of his views on the chief problems presented by the English language and literature and his contributions toward their solutions.

Tract XL concluded the second series of S.P.E. publications in the same manner as the previous series and the following series, with an index guide to the subject matter dealt with in the tracts of that series. After the index appeared a list of contributors and a

list of members. As of December 31, 1933, there were over 300 members subscribing to the tracts of the S.P.E. Members of the guiding Committee were L. Abercrombie, Mrs. Robert Bridges, Kenneth Clark, Sir W.A. Craigie, George Gordon, Kenneth Sisam and Logan Pearsall Smith.

Under the guidance of the revised Committee the third series of S.P.E. publications commenced in 1934. The absence of Robert Bridges' influence could be recognized in the tracts by a change in their format. This change did not detract from the excellent quality of the essays, articles and papers submitted to the Society, but gone from the tracts were the informal notes that Bridges included in almost every tract. These notes had covered a variety of topics ranging from information about the internal workings of the Society to correspondence from members about their reactions to various articles printed in the tracts and/or Bridges' own introductions to different tracts justifying their inclusion in the Society's publications.

Tracts XLI to LX comprised the third series of S.P.E. publications. Like the second series, the third dealt with a variety of subjects including foreign influences on the English language, grammar, poetry, proper names, and American English. Some of these subjects were carry-overs of topics discussed in the previous series. The topic of foreign influence on the English language and its vocabulary was an example of this type of carry-over. Tract XXXVIII, "Arabic Words in English," by Walt Taylor, introduced this subject to the tracts in the second series. In the third series Tracts XLI, XLII and

XLIV pursued this topic in more detail by exploring the influence the Persian, Indian, German and Dutch languages had had on the English language. "Doughty's English," which comprised the whole of Tract LI returned to the discussion of the influence that the Arabic language had had on English. While the aforementioned tracts were concerned with the influence of foreign language on English, W.A. Craigie's article, "Northern Words in Modern English," concentrated on the influence that old Northumberland dialect words had on modern English.

Another topic introduced in the second series and returned to in the third was American English. Three essays, "American Variations" and "The Growth of American English I" and "II," constituted Tracts XLV, LVI and LVII, respectively. "American Variations," by H.W. Horwill, cited many striking differences between British and American English and offered plausible explanations as to how these differences developed. The two-part discussion of American English written by W.A. Craigie, analyzed the historic growth of American English as a language with its own identity. Using the Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles as a reference source, Craigie concentrated his analysis on words shared by British and American speakers that had developed a new sense in America and words that were unique to American English.

Grammar, as a topic of discussion, quietly reappeared in the third series in two tracts. In a very short essay entitled "Irregularities of English" (Tract XLVIII), W.A. Craigie pointed

out that if English had been allowed to develop along the characteristic lines of its forefather, Anglo-Saxon English, without the influence of foreign languages, there would be quite a few more irregularities in the language than appear now. Otto Jespersen's essay, "The 'Split Infinitive' and a System of Clauses," which constituted all of Tract LIV, explained why the term "split infinitive" should be considered a misnomer and offered a system by which clauses could be categorized.

R.W. Chapman contributed two essays to the tracts that could be grouped together as cousin articles. The first, "Names, Designations and Appellations" (Tract XLVII), was an "attempt to describe the modern use of personal names and designations, spoken or written, in the second or third person."⁵⁷ The second essay, "Adjectives from Proper Nouns" (Tract LII), also was concerned with the use of names, but dealt with the practice of turning classical names into adjectives in modern English and how this practice spread to English proper names, e.g., from the classical: Euclid - Euclidean; from the modern: Keats - Keatsian.

Bernard Groom's two essays, which comprised Tracts XLIX and LIII, could be grouped under the heading of poetry. The first essay, "The Formation and Use of Compound Epithets in English Poetry from 1579," won Mr. Groom a prize of fifty pounds which the Society offered in March of 1936 for the best essay on the subject. Groom followed this essay with another on the poetic language of Tennyson, Browning and Arnold. In this three-part essay Groom discussed the

diction these men used in their works.

The remainder of the tracts did not share a common identity or similar topics of discussion among themselves or with the other tracts of the third series. Tract XLIII was dedicated to the memory of H.W. Fowler. This tract, written by George G. Coulton, was mainly personal and depicted Fowler as a man with a steely conscience and a soft heart. "Fine Writing" (Tract XLVI), by L.P. Smith, defended enthusiastic writers who were striving to perfect their style against critics who termed style as "fine writing" and defined it as "any undue preoccupation with the technique of prose composition."⁵⁸ Tract XLVIII contained three essays. The first essay, "Linguistic Self-Criticism," by Otto Jespersen, dealt with speakers' asides in drama while the second essay, by C.G. Darwin, spoke of the terminology used in physics and the need for some standardization of the nomenclature in this area. The third essay, "The Irregularities of English," has already been discussed under the subject of grammar above. An interesting essay on the subject of slang was the subject matter of Tract LV. Written by Eric Partridge, the essay discussed the origin and uses of the word slang, attitudes toward slang, its characteristics and relations to English and some classes of slang. In addition it explored various other applications of slang and closed with a note on American slang.

W.A. Craigie, in Tract LVIII, delivered an article entitled, "Completing the Record of English," in which he commented on the ensuing completion of the O.E.D., what might be contained in its

supplements and the need for more specialized dictionaries that would deal with subjects like Middle English and American English. Tract LIX, also written by Craigie, stepped beyond the realm of subject matter the S.P.E. proposed to deal with in its original prospectus and other tracts which clarified the intended directions of the Society's work. The Society had stated that it would not address the subject of spelling in its tracts, but Craigie violated this edict, though in such a way as to make this tract acceptable for inclusion in the Society's publications. Entitled "Some Anomalies of Spelling," this essay offered an explanation as to how spelling, especially apparent anomalies, became fixed in English as a result of the widespread use of the printing press.

Tract LX, compiled by E.M. Ruhm, provided the expected index which concluded the third series of S.P.E. publications. Besides the index of Tracts XLI - LIX there was a list of current members, as of December 31, 1942. The roll call of subscribing members had fallen from approximately 315 members in 1933 to approximately 172 members as of 1942. The Committee was comprised of Mrs. Bridges, Kenneth Clark, W.A. Craigie, Kenneth Sisam and Logan Pearsall Smith. Those members of the Committee lost since 1933 included George Gordon and L. Abercrombie.

The fourth series of S.P.E. publications was also the Society's last. Whereas the first three series contained twenty tracts apiece, the fourth series was only six tracts long. The Society felt that it had accomplished what it had intended and so terminated its pub-

lications with Tract LXVI, which came out in 1948.

Tracts LXI to LXV were not closely related to one another in subject matter. Tract LXI contained two essays by C.T. Onions, the youngest of the four editors of the O.E.D. Both essays, "The Fate of French -E' in English" and "The Plural of Nouns Ending in -TH," adhered closely in content to the proposed topics for discussion as put forth in the original prospectus. An essay entitled, "Basic" (Tract LXII), by G.M. Young, returned to the subject of artificial languages which had been explored earlier in Tract XXXIV. Mr. Young was skeptical of the success of Basic, a mixture of artificial and natural languages, and felt that English speakers should not be introduced to it until their own habits of speech were completely formed.

The last three tracts were written in their entireties by W.A. Craigie. Tract LXIII returned to the outlawed subject of spelling which had been introduced in Tract XLIX of the third series. In Tract LXIII Craigie explained some of the reasons why spelling reform was desired and some of the difficulties involved in trying to reform English orthography. Rather than a scheme that involved extensive changes, Craigie promoted gradual changes in the spelling of certain words which would be introduced and promoted by writers and printers. The main essay of Tract LXIV, "Pure English of the Soil," examined the English of agriculture and related occupations. Craigie felt that the language of the people employed in these occupations was the closest to the pure English of the land

because of its inventiveness and its practice of quickly Anglicizing foreign importations. "Inflected English" was the other essay in Tract LXIV. It was very short and emphasized the lack of inflectional endings in English. It stated that this lack helped keep English grammar simple. Tract LXV presented what Craigie termed "The Critique of Pure English." This tract was a compilation of excerpts and essays of scholars from Caxton (1490) to Smollett (1767) on the subject of English as a language and its purity in form to itself.

Tract LXVI, published in 1948, was the final tract issued by the Society for Pure English. It contained a short summary, written by R.W. Chapman, that briefly reviewed the history of the Society and also acted as a short annotated bibliography to the sixty-five tracts. Following this retrospective summary appeared a list of active members as of December, 1946. There were 114 subscribing members listed. Preceding an index to Tracts LXI - LXV were a complete list of the titles and authors of all sixty-five tracts and an alphabetical list of the contributors to Tracts I - LXV.

In bringing to a close this survey of the S.P.E. a brief consideration of the achievement of the Society is appropriate. While the Society was in operation it never received the recognition it deserved. But it performed a lasting service for the language by bringing together some of the most brilliant minds of its generation to contemplate and discuss current grammatical and linguistic theories. These men, through the pages of the tracts, helped to guide the development of English by influencing those people most important

in determining grammatical and linguistic practices. Because the Society did not promote radical changes, but rather relied on subtle persuasion and education, it was successful in its endeavors to influence these experts in assisting the evolution of English along the lines of the proposals the Society promoted in the original prospectus of Tract I. Through knowledge, judgement and integrity the S.P.E. was able to establish itself as a reputable, trustworthy authority in linguistic matters. Even now the tracts are still too little known, but their power is apparent to anyone who has taken the time to examine even a single tract.

Notes

¹ Albert Baugh and Thomas Cable, A History of the English Language, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), pp. 253-254.

² Sterling Leonard, The Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage 1700-1800 (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1962), p. 19.

³ Baugh, p. 254.

⁴ Leonard, p. 47.

⁵ Leonard, p. 50.

⁶ Leonard, pp. 52-53.

⁷ Leonard, p. 53.

⁸ Baugh, p. 255.

⁹ Baugh, pp. 262-263.

¹⁰ Baugh, pp. 273-274.

¹¹ Jonathan Swift, A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue (Menston, England: The Scholar Press Limited, 1969), p. 8.

¹² Swift, p. 17.

¹³ Swift, pp. 31, 34.

¹⁴ This is explained by Swift in the conclusion to the sentence

that was quoted above: "Because then the old books will yet be always valuable, according to their intrinsic worth, and not thrown aside on account of unintelligible words and phrases, which appear harsh and uncouth, only because they are out of fashion." Swift, p. 34.

¹⁵ Baugh, p. 266.

¹⁶ Quoted by Baugh, p. 267.

¹⁷ Baugh, p. 267.

¹⁸ Baugh, pp. 267-269.

¹⁹ Bertrand H. Bronson, Samuel Johnson (Chicago: Holt, Rinehard and Winston, 1963), pp. 233-234.

²⁰ Bronson, p. 236.

²¹ Bronson, p. 216.

²² Bronson, p. 236.

²³ Baugh, p. 268.

²⁴ Baugh, p. 260.

²⁵ This information was gathered from Baugh, pp. 268, 283, and Leonard pp. 142-145, 165.

²⁶ Joseph Priestley, The Rudiments of English Grammar (Menston, England: The Scholar Press Limited, 1969), p. vii.

²⁷ Priestley, p. vi.

²⁸ Baugh, p. 283.

- ²⁹ Priestley, p. vii.
- ³⁰ Baugh, p. 273.
- ³¹ Baugh, p. 275.
- ³² Baugh, p. 276.
- ³³ Baugh, p. 276.
- ³⁴ Diane D. Bornstein, Readings in the Theory of Grammar (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1976), p. 24.
- ³⁵ Leonard, pp. 148-149.
- ³⁶ Quoted by Leonard, pp. 155-156.
- ³⁷ Baugh, p. 274.
- ³⁸ Tract is the name used by the Society for its publications.
- ³⁹ "Preliminary Announcement and List of Members," S.P.E., Tract No. 1 (Oct., 1919), A-2. Subsequent references to the tracts of the S.P.E. will be noted by the tract number and page from which the quote is taken. (I discuss the matter of the Society's stance concerning language "purity" further in pages fourteen to twenty of my essay.)
- ⁴⁰ Tract No. 1, p. 4.
- ⁴¹ Tract No. 1, p. 4.
- ⁴² Tract No. 1, p. 6.
- ⁴³ Tract No. 1, p. 6.
- ⁴⁴ Tract No. 1, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁵ Tract No. 1, p. 10.

⁴⁶ Tract No. 2, p. 46.

⁴⁷ Tract No. 10, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Tract No. 10, p. 7.

⁴⁹ Tract No. 10, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Tract No. 11, p. 22.

⁵¹ Tract No. 14, p. 23.

⁵² Tract No. 21, p. 3.

⁵³ Both of the above motives were put forth in the first tract on pages five, six and seven.

⁵⁴ Tract No. 21, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Tract No. 39, p. 605.

⁵⁶ Due to the nature of the subject matter of Tract XXXVIII, it will be more appropriately grouped with some of the essays found in the third series of S.P.E. publications.

⁵⁷ Tract No. 47, p. 231.

⁵⁸ Tract No. 46, p. 203.

Bibliography

- Baugh, Albert C. and Thomas Cable. A History of the English Language, 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978.
- Bornstein, Diane D. Readings in the Theory of Grammar. Cambridge Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1976.
- Bronson, Bertrand H. Samuel Johnson. Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963.
- Leonard, Sterling. The Doctrine of Correctness in English Usage 1700-1800. New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962.
- Mencken, H.L. The American Language. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937.
- Murray, J.M. Pencillings. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1925.
- Priestley, Joseph. The Rudiments of English Grammar. Menston, England: The Scholar Press Limited, 1969.
- Sebeok, Thomas A. Portraits of Linguists (1746-1963), Volumes I-II. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966.
- Smith, George, ed. by H.W.C. Davis and J.R.H. Weaver. The Dictionary of National Biography 1912-1921. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1927.
- Smith, George, ed. by J.R.H. Weaver. The Dictionary of National Biography 1922-1930. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1937.
- Smith, George, ed. by L.G. Wickham Legg. The Dictionary of National

Biography 1931-1940. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949.

Smith, George, ed. by L.G. Wickham Legg and E.T. Williams. The Dictionary of National Biography 1941-1950. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959.

S.P.E. Tracts 1-66. Oct. 1919 to Dec. 1946. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1919 to 1946.

Swift, Jonathan. A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue. Menston, England: The Scholar Press Limited, 1969.

"The S.P.E." The Living Age, 318, No. 4125 (1923), 188-189.

Times Literary Supplement, No. 1,111, May 3, 1923, pp. 293-94.

No. 1226, July 16, 1925, p. 482.

No. 1283, Sept. 2, 1926, p. 577.

No. 1435, Aug. 1, 1929, p. 605.

No. 1437, Aug. 15, 1929, p. 637.

No. 1569, Feb. 25, 1932, p. 137.

No. 1664, Dec. 21, 1933, p. 911.

No. 1681, April 19, 1934, p. 285.

A Survey of the Society for Pure English

by

Stan Westhoff

B. A., Benedictine College, 1977

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Manhattan, Kansas

1983

This report begins with a concise overview of early attempts to standardize, refine, and fix the English language. It then gives a brief history of the Society for Pure English, the most serious attempt in this century to establish an organization in the nature of an academy for the English language. The brief history of the S.P.E. begins with an examination of the Society's establishment in 1913. The initial tract is then studied in detail. In the first tract the Society's choice of title, its proposals for the management of its financial matters, publications, management details and membership, along with the original prospectus, are discussed. In the original prospectus the Society proposed that it should promote:

- (1) the adaptation to English spelling and printing conventions of borrowed words;
- (2) the creation of new English words in preference to the borrowing of foreign words;
- (3) the encouragement of men of letters to become actively engaged in coining new English words where needed;
- (4) the ready acceptance of words created by the working class in order to preserve the living and popular characteristics of English;
- (5) the acceptance of dialects in English; and
- (6) the protection of the old harmonious cadence of traditional speech.

These six objectives guided the Society's work during its thirty-three year history. The workings, modifications of the Society's aims and motives, and various movements such as the "American Invitation" are traced as the report examines selected tracts from the Society's four series of publications. The report concludes that the S.P.E. performed a lasting service for the language by bringing together some of the most brilliant minds of its times to contemplate, discuss,

and provide informed guidance regarding current practices and trends in English language use.