ELUCIDATIONS OF THE STUDENT'S GREEK GRAMMAR

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BY

PROF. CURTIUS.

FROM THE GERMAN, WITH THE AUTHOR'S SANCTION,

BY

EVELYN ABBOTT, M.A.,

FELLOW AND TUTOR OF BALLIOL COLLEGE.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

THE following pages are a translation of the '*Erläuterungen zu meiner Griechischen Schulgrammatik*,' published in 1863 by Professor Curtius together with the sixth edition of the Grammar. Being merely 'elucidations,' they must be read in connexion with the Grammar in order to be fully intelligible. Here and there, it is true, quotations and notes have been added in order to make the reading more continuous, but it was impossible to render the book an independent one. Nor indeed was it necessary, as the Grammar of Professor Curtius is within the reach of English readers. ("The Student's Greek Grammar," London 1862.)

The present volume then is a companion to the Grammar. The whole work may be considered a manual of the Greek language embodying in brief the latest results of Comparative Grammar, so far as these illustrate the Greek language. In many respects it will be found to differ widely from the grammars and philological works used in England; but the most distinctive characteristic is the *scientific* method, which Professor Curtius pursues in dealing with language. Throughout, he recognizes language as an organism,

dependent indeed upon man, and therefore parasitic, but still an organism with definite laws of growth and decay. As such therefore it must be studied. We must not approach it with *à priori* ideas derived from metaphysics, but with the watchful and observant eye of the student of nature. What we see, we know; what we deduce from our observations is probable; what we imagine is the baseless fabric of a vision.

On this conception of language two observations may be made.

I.—It may become of great practical value. At the present time there is a widely spread desire for scientific method in education. It is often said, and not without reason, that the classics are studied in our schools to the exclusion of physical science, of our advances in which we are justly proud. Without doubt the desire would be more readily met, were not classics and science felt to be widely separated. The study of one is regarded as incompatible with the study of the other; and as it is impossible to study *both* in the time usually set apart for education, the classics maintain their prescriptive position. And yet this separation of the two subjects is detrimental to both. The scholar accuses the man of science of a 'want of taste'; the man of science regards the scholar as one who neglects the present for the past. But when we regard language as an organism, and the science of language as a physical science, this unfortunate separation is bridged over. A common point is found where the advocates of both systems can meet. Scientific method can be introduced into our schools without drawing boys away from

classics, or increasing in the least the material amount of instruction.

Again. Many boys leave school with little or no knowledge of Greek and Latin. Now it is not altogether easy to answer satisfactorily those who ask what is the value of this minimum of knowledge. The practical value is nothing; the educational value is little more, if the tasks have been learned merely by rote. To be able to decline *musa* is not a great accomplishment if we merely know how to decline it, and remain in ignorance of the meaning of declension. Yet the distinction between *musa* and *musam* conveys in the simplest manner the distinction between subject and object—a distinction which it is impossible to illustrate in an equally simple and regular manner from our own language, because in form the nominative and accusative—except in the personal pronouns—are identical, and the difference is expressed by position merely. This is indeed the great value of the study of inflected language. It presents to the eye differences which in uninflected language must be grasped by the mind. Now by teaching language scientifically all these distinctions and the reasons for them are impressed upon the pupil; and thus even a knowledge of the declensions becomes of value. For though the boy leaves school knowing little or nothing of Latin and Greek, he knows something of language. And of all knowledge this is the most valuable. For language is in a nearer relation to the mind than anything else. It stands between us and the outward world; we may almost say between us and our own thoughts. Unless

we know something of its true nature it is almost impossible for us to emancipate ourselves from its dominion, and become thinking, not merely speaking, beings.

II.—The organic nature of language is seen in the fact that the changes take place in obedience to some internal force, and are beyond the power of man to hasten or retard. No one could introduce a new sound or a new rule of syntax into language. Even the attempt to do so argues a certain imbecility of mind. Yet the constant use of books and writing tends to give us too material a view of language. We are apt to regard it as existing apart from the mind. As easily could the plant exist apart from the parent soil. Written language stands to spoken language much in the same relation as the plants in a herbarium to those in a garden —as dead structures to living. And yet, though we speak of the science of language as a natural science, and of the mind as the soil in which language, the plant, grows, we must not be misled by the metaphor. There is this important difference. The plant is wholly an organic structure; but language is not so. It is organic only so far as it is unconscious. Thus inflexions changes of sound etc. are organic; not so the order of words in a sentence or the mode of connecting one sentence with another. Here rhetoric and logic have invaded the natural domain of language. Or we may say that there is in language a physiological and an intellectual element, and that it is in virtue of the former rather than the latter that language is brought within the sphere of natural science.

It may not be altogether superfluous to point out that a distinction must be drawn between *Roots Stems* and *Words*. A root is a 'sound of meaning'; it is that part of a word which conveys the meaning divested of any addition or modification. It is a sound, not a word. Thus *θε* is the root in *τί-θε-ται*, *ἔ-θε-το*, *θέ-σι-ς*. But when a root has become modified in any manner, by the addition of syllables, or by internal change, it becomes a stem: thus *τιθε* is a stem formed to express the present tense; *θεσι* a stem formed to express an action. As compared with roots, stems are changeable. But *τιθε* and *θεσι* are not words: to complete the structure a termination is needed, *θέσις*, *τίθεται*. As inflexion is accomplished by terminations, it follows that stems are uninflected; and that, though changeable as compared with roots, they are the unchangeable elements in words. The three terms therefore express three distinct stages of analysis, and in this respect are of the greatest value both in grammar and etymology. Whether they also represent three stages in the historical growth of language is a matter which in no way concerns the grammarian, however interesting in itself. They are not arbitrary distinctions. In language, it is true, the sentence is the unit; and all divisions of it are fractional. Thus even words are fractions, and yet the distinction of words is useful in practice and defensible in science; it is based on definite principles, and not an open question to be decided at the caprice of the individual. The same may be said of the division of words into Roots or Stems and Terminations. The parts are fractions no doubt; they