

**A GRAMMAR OF THE DIALECT OF  
LORTON (CUMBERLAND) HISTORICAL  
AND DESCRIPTIVE; WITH AN APPENDIX  
ON THE SCANDINAVIAN ELEMENT,  
DIALECT SPECIMENS AND A GLOSSARY**

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A grammar of the dialect of Lorton (Cumberland) historical and descriptive; with an appendix on the Scandinavian element, dialect specimens and a glossary by B?rje Brilioth

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**B?RJE BRILIOTH**

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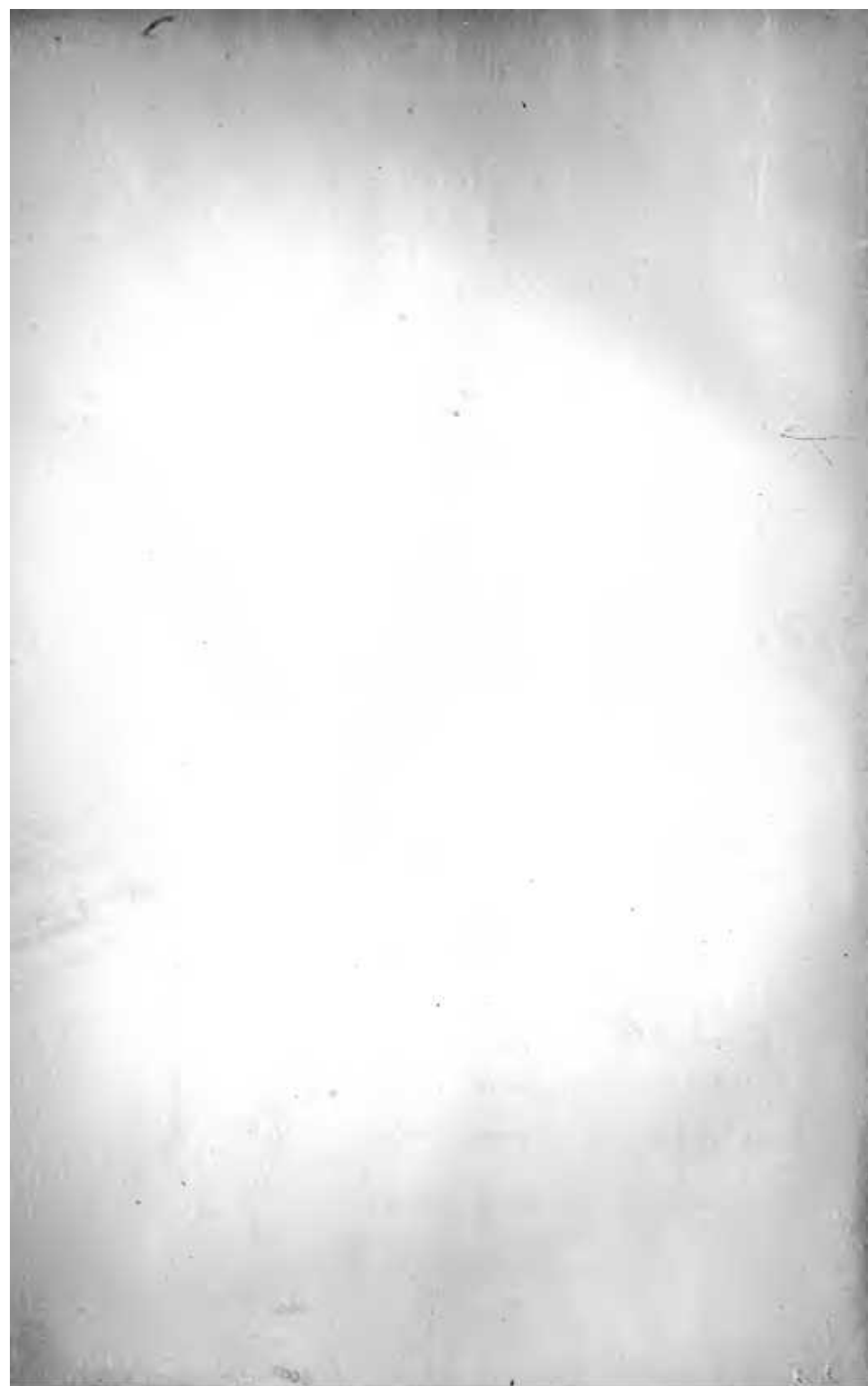


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## PREFACE

THE aim of the following treatise is to outline, as accurately as possible, the phonology and grammar of the dialect spoken in and around the village of Lorton in West Cumberland, and also, as far as the phonology is concerned, to illustrate the development of the Old English sounds in the dialect. In choosing the Cumberland dialect as my object of investigation I acted on the advice of Professor Joseph Wright, of the University of Oxford, to whom I am also indebted for many valuable hints during the course of my work. Professor Wright expressed the opinion that in Cumberland, if anywhere, I might hope to find a distinct and well-preserved dialect idiom, and the experience gained during my stay in West Cumberland fully corroborated his statement. I found that the dialect spoken by the true natives of the Lorton district had preserved a striking originality of forms, and that it had been impaired only to a very slight extent by the destructive force of outside influence. The situation of Lorton, in the deep valley of Lorton which is bounded on both sides by high mountain ranges, mostly inhabited by natives of the district, and having very little intercourse with the outside world, has served also to preserve the dialect of the place pure and intact. The nearest town is Cockermouth (about four miles distant), but here also the Cumbrian element seems to be distinctly predominant.

It is a well-known fact to every one who has been engaged in dialect studies of any kind that the task of bringing together a *genuine* and *perfectly reliable* dialect material is a most difficult and troublesome one. In order to achieve this task in a satisfactory way, the following points have to be taken into consideration :

(a) Where to find a suitable base of operations, that is to say, a place where the general conditions of life, the situation, and also, if possible, the geographical configuration of the district, have exercised a preserving influence on the dialect and reduced



outside influence to a minimum. In this respect the village of Lorton is, as I have pointed out above, thoroughly well adapted for the purposes of the dialectologist.

(b) The question of finding good and trustworthy helpers, i. e. persons born in the district, who have been accustomed to hearing and speaking the dialect from their childhood, and who still regularly use the local idiom in their daily conversation with friends, neighbours, and members of their own family. In this respect I was very fortunate. On my arrival at Lorton, I fell in with a person who was in every respect thoroughly well adapted for my purposes, and whose kind and untiring assistance has enabled me to get well acquainted with the dialect and to collect in a comparatively short time what I believe to be a fairly rich and reliable dialect material. This person, who became my chief helper throughout my stay in Cumberland, was Mr. George Oglethorpe, the schoolmaster of Lorton. Mr. Oglethorpe is a true Cumbrian, of an old Cumberland family; he was born in 1866 at Dearham, in West Cumberland (the dialect of Dearham hardly differs at all from that of Lorton), has lived in Lorton for twenty-three years, and speaks the local dialect perfectly. George Oglethorpe has during all his life been in constant intercourse with the natives of West Cumberland, and has thus acquired a thorough and intimate knowledge of the dialect. My material was in the first instance supplied by Mr. Oglethorpe, and afterwards carefully controlled and revised during frequent interviews with numerous other helpers, all natives of the district, who began to show a great interest in my work as soon as I had been able to gain their confidence and to explain what I wanted to know, and why I was interested in their dialect. Thanks to Mr. Oglethorpe's great popularity, I had almost daily opportunities of meeting and conversing with 'fellsiders', shepherds and farmers living in and around the village, many of whom had hardly ever been out of their native valley, except perhaps for occasional but rare visits to the nearest towns, Cockermouth and Keswick.

Another difficult but important point always to be kept in view by the dialectologist is the following one:

(c) How to make your helpers talk pure dialect without con-

sciously or unconsciously mixing their conversation up with forms and words derived from standard English.

This difficulty was in my case reduced to a minimum on account of the originality and the clearly defined lines of the Cumbrian idiom: the whole character of the dialect serves to constitute it as a language of its own, quite distinct from standard English, both as regards phonology and vocabulary, and the natives are, in a way, distinctly bilingual, that is to say, if a true Cumbrian speaks his own dialect, he prides himself on talking it quite pure and unmixed, 'i tōks rīəl kumərīan', but, on the other hand, if he 'tōks pruud', i. e. standard English, you will frequently catch him using words derived from his native idiom instead of those belonging to polite English.

The above-mentioned methodological points will perhaps prove of some interest to the reader, and at the same time serve as a guarantee for the general accuracy of my collections. I may also mention that the results of my investigations have been submitted to Mr. S. Dickson-Brown, Hon. Secretary of the Philological Society, who is a Cumbrian by birth, and an expert on the dialect. After having read my manuscript, Mr. Dickson-Brown kindly pronounced the opinion that my analysis of the Lorton dialect seemed to be in every respect accurate and reliable.

Before proceeding to show the results of my researches, I beg to take this opportunity of expressing my sincere thanks to all those who have assisted me during the course of my work in Cumberland. In the first place to Mr. George Oglethorpe for his kind and untiring helpfulness, and to the members of his family for the great kindness shown to me throughout my stay in Lorton.

It also gives me great pleasure to express, in this place, my deep-felt gratitude to the following persons: to Mr. K. F. Sundén, Docent in the University of Upsala, for kindly helping me in revising the historical part of my work; to Professor Joseph Wright, of the University of Oxford; Dr. W. A. Craigie, President of the Philological Society; Dr. E. W. Prevost; Mr. S. Dickson-Brown; and Professor Erik Björkman, of the Upsala University, for much valuable assistance accorded me during the course of my work.

BÖRJE BRILIOTH.

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