

**INTRODUCTION TO THE
GRAMMAR OF THE
ROMANCE LANGUAGES**

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Introduction to the Grammar of the Romance Languages by Friedrich Diez

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FRIEDRICH DIEZ

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TO THE
GRAMMAR OF THE ROMANCE LANGUAGES,

BY
FRIEDRICH ^{Christians} DIEZ.

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BY
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ABBREVIATIONS.

Alb. = Albanian.	Mil. = Milanese.
A. S. = Anglo Saxon.	M. Lat. = Middle [low] Latin.
Bret. = Breton.	Neap. = Neapolitan.
Bulg. = Bulgarian.	N. Fr. = New [modern] French.
Burg. = Burgundian.	N. G. = New German.
Cat. = Catalanian.	N. Gr. = New Greek.
Comasch. = Comaschian.	N. H. G. = New High German.
Dnt. = Dutch.	N. Pr. = New [mod.] Provençal.
Eng. = English.	Norm. = Norman.
Flem. = Flemish.	Nors. = Norse.
Fr. = French.	Occ. = Occitanian.
Goth. = Gothic.	O. H. G. = Old High German.
Gr. = Greek.	O. S. = Old Saxon.
Gris. = Grison (Churwälsch &c.).	Pic. = Picardian.
Hain. = Hainault.	Piedm. = Piedmontese.
H. G. = High German.	Pg. = Portuguese.
Hung. = Hungarian.	Pr. = Provençal.
Ir. = Irish.	Sard. = Sardinian.
It. = Italian.	Sic. = Sicilian.
Lat. = Latin.	Sp. = Spanish.
L. G. = Low German.	Ven. = Venetian.
Lomb. = Lombardian.	Wal. = Walachian.
M. Gr. = Middle Greek.	Wald. = Waldensian.
M. H. G. = Middle High German.	

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ELEMENTS AND JURISDICTIONS OF THE ROMANCE LANGUAGES.

I. Latin Elements.

Our attention is claimed by six Romance languages on account of either their grammatical peculiarities, or their literary importance; two towards the east, the Italian and the Walachian; two towards the southwest, the Spanish and the Portuguese; and two towards the northwest, the Provençal and the French. The principal and most conspicuous source of all these languages is Latin. They were derived however, as it has already been often and legitimately maintained, not from the classical Latin of literature, but from a popular Roman language which had been used by the side of the classical. Some care has been taken to prove, from the testimonies of the ancients themselves, that a popular language of this kind was actually in existence; but the fact is so far from needing demonstration, that we should much rather have been entitled to demand evidences for a contrary hypothesis, which alone would have involved an exception to general laws. We must only be cautious not to take this form of speech for anything else than it is usually conceived to have been, that is to say, for a vulgar usage of the common language, recognisable by a comparatively slovenly pronunciation of words, by a tendency to the elimination of grammatical forms, by the use of numerous expressions which are avoided in literature, and by sundry peculiar idioms and constructions. Such conclusions, and no others, are we justified in drawing from the evidences and testimonies which we find

in the writings of the ancients; or at the very utmost it may be conceded, that the antagonism between the popular and the literary language had reached an unusually high pitch at that period when the latter sank into a lethargic condition a little before the overthrow of the Empire of the West. Furthermore, as the existence of a popular language, or vulgar form of speech, is substantiated by universal principles, so the derivation of the Romance dialects from that language is a fact no less certain, inasmuch as the written Latin language, which took its stand upon the Past, and was only cultivated by authors and in the higher classes of society, could never, consistently with its nature, have entered into a new period of fertility; while, on the other hand, the far more flexible popular dialect was endowed with all the germs and capabilities of a developement such as the *æra* demanded. At a later epoch, when the great event of the Germanic irruption had brought about the overthrow of the upper classes of society, as well as of the antique culture, the pure Latin language grew extinct of itself, while the popular dialect pursued its own course all the more precipitately, so that it ended by growing in the highest degree unlike the source from which it had been derived.*

There have been attempts to collect the vestiges of the vulgar form of speech as evidences respecting the origin of the Romance form; and with this view the pages of Roman writers have been carefully turned over. This labor, so far as the right point of view has not been missed, is one that deserves our thanks, for it cannot be indifferent to us to

*The origin of the Romance languages was as early as last century made the subject of many investigations, in some cases learned and able, but in many others tedious and unfruitful. To enter again on this subject would not here be opportune. Even in more recent times, since Raynouard, who made an epoch in the science, the performances of Ampère, Fauriel, Du Ménil and Chevallet in France, of Blanc, Fuchs and Delius in Germany, of Lewis in England, of Perticari and Galvani in Italy, and of Vidal in Spain, together with much that is acute and instructive in the works of various other philologists in this department, must inevitably be left unnoticed by me in the present work, of which letters, forms and constructions properly constitute the subject.

know, whether Romance forms, words, and applications of words, are first traceable after the great ethnical migrations, or in a preceding period — in other words, whether we ought to regard them as products of an extrinsic pressure of events, or of a natural process of developement. Some scattered popular expressions are contained even in the earlier writers, such as Ennius and Plautus, and among those of the golden age, especially in Vitruvius; but it was only the last centuries of the duration of the Western Empire, when the severe patrician spirit of the classical school had perished, that witnessed the invasion of the literary language by numerous novel idioms, which from that time forth began to receive a notable developement, especially in prose diction. Extensive results in this kind followed the institution of political equality among the subjects of Rome, who now ceased to recognise, even in literature, the sovereignty of Latium, and began to exhibit without bashfulness their provincial usages.* On this point we find a striking observation in Isidorus, *Orig.* 1, 31: "Unaquæque gens facta Romanorum cum suis opibus vitia quoque et verborum et morum Roman transmisit". While modern writers were thus flinging their doors open to the popular usage, the same became a topic of discussion to the grammarians, whose practical views were for the most part directed to the purification of the language. Gellius, for instance, has preserved for us in the last chapter of his *Noctes Atticæ* the title of a book by T. Lavinus *De verbis sordidis*, the loss of which, inasmuch as the term *sordidus* here signifies *common* or *popular* (*Noct. Att.* 9. 13), is on many accounts to be regretted. However, a very rich collection of obscure, antiquated, and popular words has reached our times in the well known book of Festus *De significatione verborum* founded on Valerius Flaccus, a work which, though it is in the main only accessible to us in the excerpts of Paulus Diaconus, a

* Further particulars respecting the decline of Latinity in the Roman literary histories, especially from Bernhardt, p. 296 et seq., p. 295 et seq., 2^d ed. "Umriss zu einer Geschichte der römischen Volkssprache" are quoted by Aug. Fuchs in his elaborate work, *Die roman. Sprachen in ihrem Verhältnisse zur latin.*, p. 35—50.