

THE FORMATIVE GREEK GRAMMAR

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The Formative Greek Grammar by George Knox Gillespie

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GEORGE KNOX GILLESPIE

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GREEK GRAMMAR**

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P R E F A C E.

THE following work is designed to facilitate the acquisition of the Greek language by the application of the principle, that GRAMMAR WILL BE MORE EFFECTUALLY LEARNED BY OBSERVING RULES FOR FORMATION THAN BY COMMITTING TABLES OF EXAMPLES TO MEMORY.

This principle, true in respect to all languages, is eminently illustrated by the Greek. The singular intricacy of Greek accidence renders an intimate knowledge of its variations unattainable by mere memory, exposing the learner who relies on tables to inextricable error in applying the given examples to the inflection of other words.

The Formative Grammar presents the novel appearance of a Greek accidence without a single table of declensions or conjugations. For such tables are substituted rules of formation, co-extensive with the inflections. Some of the rules for forming the tenses have been drawn from the common sources; the remainder, with nearly all the rules relating to the formation of the cases, the moods and the persons, have been expressly constructed with the view of applying to the Greek **THE FORMATIVE METHOD OF LEARNING THE ACCIDENCE OF GRAMMAR.**

This grammar has exclusive reference to the declinable parts of speech. Substantives, adjectives, pronouns and participles, being, with few exceptions, inflected in a similar manner, are considered together under the generic appellation of nouns. Every part of each rule is illustrated by an example. The exceptions appear twice: once under the respective rules from which they deviate, in order that the pupil using the rule may be put on his guard against the exceptions; and a second time in a synoptical view, presenting together all the irregularities of particular words. The method of using these rules consists in taking a noun or a verb from the lexicon, and producing successively all its inflections according to the rules; repeating this exercise until all the varieties of declension and conjugation can be formed with accuracy and despatch.

The careful attention of the student should be directed to the analysis of the alphabet contained in the introductory part of the grammar. On his perfect mastery of the properties of the mutes and double letters, his progress will essentially depend. The laws determining the formation of the genitive case of the third declension are also of primary importance.

In the adjectives the learner ought to decline each gender separately, referring it to its proper declension as if it were a substantive; instead of mixing up masculine, feminine, and neuter in an heterogeneous compound, according to the usual practice of reciting adjectives in Greek and Latin; — a mode of learning them which would appear to have been ingeniously devised for the purpose of rendering rugged and unintelligible that which, to a child who has learned the substantives, is naturally plain and easy.

In catalogues of the irregular verbs, the neglect of a

fundamental distinction commonly magnifies the inherent difficulty of the subject; namely, the distinction between verbs which have their parts anomalously formed, and those which borrow them from other verbs. The real irregularities are much fewer than is often imagined by persons who inspect the formidable and confused lists of verbs indiscriminately styled irregular. Most of the verbs composing such tables form their tenses with perfect regularity, but from obsolete roots, either cognate or unrelated. If the obsolete root (or, in a few cases, roots) be known, a key to the apparent irregularities will be found. To know the whole of such a verb it is only necessary to keep in mind the obsolete form from which all the tenses except the present and imperfect are generally derived. Even in the anomalous verbs, properly so called, the irregularity seldom extends beyond a single tense; as those tenses cannot with justice be called anomalous which, although flowing from irregular tenses, yet are derived from them by the ordinary laws of formation. If this single irregular tense be kept in mind by the student all difficulty will disappear. In the Formative Grammar this distinction has been acted on by placing in separate tables verbs which borrow their tenses from obsolete roots, and those in which genuine anomalies exist. These lists exhibit a less crowded appearance than usual, all words having been retrenched from them except those which form the keys to the irregularities.

The subject of the Greek accents has been fully treated, and the learner is recommended to pay attention to those marks from the beginning of his studies. They will frequently enable him to detect subtle distinctions between words apparently identical. His care should be directed principally to observe what

may be termed *the accidance of the accents*, that is, the effects produced on the accent of the original word by the several inflections which it undergoes. It is proper, however, to remark that a regard to the accents is not indispensable; and that some modern editors have even abandoned the use of them altogether. The author has ventured on the innovation of rejecting the *grave* as a distinct accent, considering it, as it appears every where to be, only a second form of the acute. Grammarians speak of the *grave* accent in contradictory significations. First, they gave the name of *grave* to *the absence of the acute*, when they state that, in contraction of two syllables into one, the circumflex is used when the first syllable forming the contraction has the acute accent and the second the *grave*; and when they define as *gravitons* or *barytons* those words which have *no* accent on the last syllable. Secondly, they speak of the character (`) as the *grave* accent, and at the same time inconsistently characterize as *acutitons* or *oxytons* *all the words on which it is placed*.

Grammatical definitions being generally the same in all languages, this grammar has not been incumbered with many of them. The learner about to begin Greek is, in all probability, acquainted with general grammar: otherwise he ought not to commence the study of Greek until he has acquired the principles of that science, which will be learned better in connexion with his own language than with any other. None of the dialects except the Attic has been introduced; and even that would have been omitted but for two considerations:—the first, that the Attic dialect may be regarded as an inseparable part of the ordinary Greek language, that which is called the *common dialect* being used by no author in unmixed purity. Secondly, it

has been desired that this grammar should be deficient in no information necessary for understanding the Greek Testament, in which many Atticisms occur. The Formative Grammar will be found to embrace sufficient fairly to introduce the learner to a knowledge of the subject. In an elementary treatise, it would have been injudicious to accumulate additional intricacy by wandering into the illimitable field of dialectic varieties.

The proposed method of learning grammar by Formation exclusively requires, as an indispensable instrument for its application, a Body of PRACTICAL SYSTEM OF PRINCIPLES AND RULES uniting comprehensiveness and accuracy in a superior degree. The author tested the existence of those qualities in his work by *examining every inflected word in the New Testament, with the view of accounting by this grammar for its inflection and accentuation*. This verification of the rules repaid the labour which it exacted, by suggesting several minute but important modifications, and by bringing to light some exceptions which otherwise would have escaped notice.

THE FORMATIVE METHOD founds its claim to adoption on its substitution of an exercise of the understanding for a slavish effort of the memory. By its means, instead of learning by rote the tables of inflections, the pupil will be taught to produce them for himself by the ratiocinative process of revolving in his mind the laws which govern their formation. He will not, indeed, attain to the unhesitating rapidity of utterance with which a well-drilled school-boy, under the existing plan, runs unreflectingly through his paradigms,—often without the ability of applying them to other words; but in exchange for this superficial though specious volubility, he will occupy the commanding