

**A SHORT TREATISE ON THE
GREEK PARTICLES AND
THEIR COMBINATIONS**

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A SHORT TREATISE
ON
THE GREEK PARTICLES
AND THEIR COMBINATIONS.

ACCORDING TO ATTIC USAGE.

BY

F. A. PALEY, M.A.,

EDITOR OF THE GREEK TRAGIC POETS,
LATE EXAMINER IN CLASSICS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.



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TO THE READER.

THE object of this compendious work is to collect Facts, and from them briefly and yet clearly to explain Principles. It does not attempt too refined distinctions or too minute classification, but it points out and illustrates the meaning of the Particles, both singly and in combination, leaving to the observation and intelligence of the student to mark occasional minor deviations from the established usages. It is designed for the use of Schools, and is therefore made as simple and easy as possible.

These 'Particles,' it is well known, constitute an important and a characteristic feature of the Greek Language, especially of the Attic writings of the best period. They so greatly affect the tone, connexion, or irony of a passage, that a correct knowledge of their uses is quite a necessary condition of accurate Greek scholarship. Especially is it important to the right interpretation of the Greek Plays and to the idiomatic composition of Greek Iambics—too

often a mere *nexus verborum*, without any feeling for or knowledge of the real spirit of Tragedy. And it is with a view to these points that so many of the examples are taken from Tragedy. In fact, poetry is stronger, so to say, in the use of particles than prose, and a distinction occasionally has to be made of combinations which are, perhaps, exclusively poetical. No special account has been taken of epic or lyric usages, as it seemed desirable to exclude these, though in many respects they are not materially different from the Attic.

It may be doubted if any Manual exists which explains at once clearly and correctly, and in a conveniently concise form, the Doctrine of the Greek Particles. Longer works, as Hoogeven's,¹ and expositions of the principal uses given in the larger Greek Grammars, are not generally accessible to young scholars, or at least, they are consulted with some reluctance. Perhaps, indeed, it is not too much to say, that in consequence of this some of the combinations are rather imperfectly understood, and are explained, if at all, by no means correctly. Many a student has learnt to think a $\gamma\epsilon$ or a $\delta\eta$ a mere makeshift to the metre, when it really has a most certain and definite sense. How many, we may

¹ I am not writing in ignorance that there are others, but it was not my purpose to borrow from any.

fairly ask, could give a true account¹ of $\gamma\epsilon$ in Aesch. *Theb.* 71, and Soph. *Oed. Col.* 1409, or of $\delta\eta$ in *Oed. B.* 66 and *Oed. Col.* 1215?

The present short Treatise is entirely original, and is under no obligation whatever to any work existing on the subject. It may be objected, with some truth, that it is difficult to define what should be admitted under the strict definition of the term "Particles." If, for instance, the uses of the conditional $\alpha\nu$ and of the negatives $\omicron\nu$ and $\mu\eta$ are included under this head,—and it does not seem reasonable to exclude them—it is not easy to write briefly on subjects involving so much variety in idiomatic usage. The best course is, perhaps, to lay down clearly the general principles only; for when these are well understood, then the details can be well filled up, like a picture completed from a good cartoon.

Indeed, the greatest difficulty in a work of this kind is, perhaps, to write at once clearly and briefly. For examples accumulate to so large an extent that a limited selection becomes absolutely necessary. As Hermann has written a long treatise on $\alpha\nu$, so a volume of no small size would be required to treat

¹ Some will smile at this remark, and say, Truly, a worthy subject to engage the thoughts of clever men! But if the educational use of learning Greek is just in proportion to the accuracy of the knowledge and the closeness of the observation, we cannot afford to despise such small details of language.

exhaustively of *οὐ* and *μη* and their combinations. Still, I think both these subjects may be well explained at moderate length.

It has been my lot to know, from very long experiences both as a Lecturer and an Examiner in Classics, how common is a confused and misty conception of the logical grounds of certain idiomatic expressions, and how little even the primary distinction of *objective* and *subjective* propositions is realised by younger students. Thus, whether to use *οὐ* or *μη* in Greek or (what is not very different) the indicative or the subjunctive in Latin, becomes a frequent cause of perplexity in composition, and it is only by understanding the reasons of things that the difficulties can be mastered.¹ A use which was intuitive in a Greek and a Roman is often very hard to acquire by rule and example.

But much may be done by an intelligent survey of such special phenomena as are presented by the Particles. The fixed uniformity of their use in the best period of the language, with an import far beyond that of mere expletives, gives them a high place in the scientific analysis of the language.

To my mind, then, so far from being a dry unimportant subject, the combinations of the Greek Particles are full of the highest interest, as being,

¹ Prof. Campbell (on *Soph. Trach.* 90) even says that 'The whole question of the Greek negatives is still indeterminate.'

so to say, an elaborately finished part of a most complex and beautiful machinery. That a few uninflected monosyllables should determine so completely the tone and meaning of a sentence, is in itself a curious phenomenon of language. Believing that from long and careful observation, I understand them myself, I have tried to make others do the same; and I only hope they will have the same pleasure in reading which I have had in writing this small work.

A few more words remain to be said on the predominance given to quotations from the dramatic writers over those from the prose compositions of the best age. The reason is simple; the idioms and usages of the Particles are the same, but they are, so to say, intensified,—they are much more frequently and pointedly used by the Attic poets. Hence it seems more useful to give illustrations (say) from Sophocles than from Thucydides; for the more subtle meanings in many passages of the Greek Plays are too often either wholly overlooked, or quite wrongly understood. Plato is one who makes a great use of particles, but always coincidently with the Tragic use; and that use can be learnt as well from the one source as from the other.

To fill pages with examples of *ἀρα*, *δή*, *γε* or *τε* from epic poetry, or to mix up with the Attic the Ionic usages of Herodotus, would have added much to the bulk and perhaps nothing to the utility of this little