

**A GUIDE TO THE ANGLO-SAXON
TONGUE: A GRAMMAR AFTER
ERASMUS RASK; EXTRACTS IN PROSE
AND VERSE, WITH NOTES, ETC. FOR THE
USE OF LEARNERS. WITH AN APPENDIX**

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EDWARD JOHNSTON VERNON

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FOR THE USE OF LEARNERS.

With an Appendix.

BY

EDWARD JOHNSTON VERNON, B.A.

MADDALENE HALL

Antiquam exquirite Matrem.



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MDCCLXXII.

TO
JOHN DAVID MACBRIDE ESQ. D.C.J.
Principal of *Magdalene Hall,*
ETC. ETC.
IN TOKEN OF
RESPECT AND ESTEEM

P R E F A C E.

ANGLO-SAXON was spoken by our forefathers in England for more than five hundred years; from it have sprung the greater part of our local and family names, very many of our old, and almost all our provincial words and sayings, and fifteen twentieths of what we daily think, and speak, and write. No Englishman therefore altogether ignorant of Anglo-Saxon can have a thorough knowledge of his own mother-tongue, while the language itself, to say nothing of the many valuable and interesting works preserved in it, may in copiousness of words, strength of expression, and grammatical precision, vie with modern German.*

The present object is to furnish the learner, if it may be, with a cheaper, easier, more comprehensive, and not less trustworthy guide to this tongue than may hitherto have been within his reach.

The first six chapters are mainly abridged from the Grammar of the late Professor Rask of Copenhagen, as edited by Mr. Thorpe, whom the compiler has to thank for leave to make use of his praiseworthy labours, and for obliging answers to queries.

* See Thorpe's Advertisement to Rask's Grammar

Some alterations and additions seemed called for by the progress of the study since the publication of that work, whence its improved cultivation in this country must be dated. Illustrations from the kindred new Teutonic dialects German and Dutch, with some from Greek and Latin, old and provincial English &c. have taken the place of the Scandinavian* references as fitter for the English learner. A view, however narrow and imperfect, of languages more or less nearly akin, can hardly fail, it is hoped, to awaken in the understanding student, a wish to know something more of comparative philology, hitherto so unworthily slighted among ourselves, and so laboriously and skilfully worked out by the Germans.

The hyphen is used throughout to divide the parts of compound words from each other, as also prefixes, and when needful, case-endings and other terminations, from roots; in this as in other tongues, the beginner must accustom himself to parse not only every word in a phrase, but every syllable in a word.

Some rules for gender have been attempted, and a list of exceptions to the general rule of its agreement with the German, together with comparative tables of the cardinal numbers, and of the chief tenses, are added.

The accent, sometimes misplaced or left out by Rask, and too often altogether neglected by others, has been carefully attended to.

* Some acquaintance with Icelandic and the other old northern tongues, above all Gothic, which shows the originals of the A. S. inflections, quantity &c., is of course needful for a perfect knowledge of Anglo-Saxon.

The Syntax is in great part new; the examples mostly gathered from the compiler's own reading.

The Extracts in prose and verse are fitted by explanatory notes for use without a dictionary; an analysis of the narrative verse, partly shortened from Rask, and a literal version of the poetry, are also given. The purpose here being to teach pure Anglo-Saxon only, the selections are all from writers of a good age; one well grounded in the language in its perfect state, will not find it hard to bring down his knowledge of his native tongue, through Semi-Saxon, and old and middle English, to our own time.

The Appendix contains lists of words likely to be confounded by learners, together with a number of additional notes. For the length to which the latter have run some apology may be needed, but it seemed best not to lose the opportunity of bringing in, however irregularly, some matter which may be useful.

To Mr. J. M. Kemble, Editor of *Beowulf &c.*, who shares with Mr. Thorpe the honour of making his countrymen independent of foreigners for a right knowledge of their old national language and literature, sincere thanks are due for much very kind, and most valuable help and advice touching the accent, gender, and other hard and weighty points, on which opinions from such an authority cannot be too highly prized. Obliging hints, and the loan of scarce books from other quarters, must also be thankfully acknowledged.

The compiler, feeling what scanty justice has been done to these various and welcome aids, must add that

for those faults both of doing, and of leaving undone, which he cannot hope to have avoided, he alone has to answer. Should this imperfect attempt however, by making the speech of the Anglo-Saxons somewhat easier and more attractive than heretofore to their children, give any of these a better knowledge of the real structure, and true spirit, and a greater love for the power and worth of that tongue, which bids fair one day to overspread the whole earth, some time and labour will not have been spent in vain.

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