AN ANGLO-SAXON PRIMER: WITH GRAMMAR, NOTES, AND GLOSSARY; PP. 2-116

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WITH

GRAMMAR, NOTES, AND GLOSSARY

BY

HENRY SWEET, M.A.

Formerly President of the Philological Society
Editor of 'Alfred's Version of the Cura Pastoralis'
Author of 'An Anglo-Saxon Reader'
'A History of English Sounds,' and 'A Handbook of Phonetics'

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PREFACE.

The want of an introduction to the study of Old-English has long been felt. Vernon's *Anglo-Saxon Guide* was an admirable book for its time, but has long been completely antiquated. I was therefore obliged to make my *Anglo-Saxon Reader* a somewhat unsatisfactory compromise between an elementary primer and a manual for advanced students, but I always looked forward to producing a strictly elementary book like the present one, which would enable me to give the larger one a more scientific character, and would at the same time serve as an introduction to it. Meanwhile, however, Professor Earle has brought out his *Book for the beginner in Anglo-Saxon*. But this work is quite unsuited to serve as an introduction to my Reader, and will be found to differ so totally in plan and execution from the present one as to preclude all idea of rivalry on my part. We work on lines which instead of clashing can only diverge more and more.

My main principle has been to make the book the easiest possible introduction to the study of Old-English.

Poetry has been excluded, and a selection made from the easiest prose pieces I could find. Old-English original

prose is unfortunately limited in extent, and the most suit-
able pieces (such as the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan)
are already given in the Reader; these I could not give
over again. But I hope the short extracts from the Chronicle
and the Martyrdom of King Edmund will be found not
wanting in interest. For the rest of the selections I have had
to fall back on scriptural extracts, which have the great
advantages of simplicity and familiarity of subject. The
Gospel extracts have been transferred here from the Reader,
where they will be omitted in the next edition. The sen-
tences which head the selections have been gathered mainly
from the Gospels, Ælfric's Homilies, and the Chronicle.
They are all of the simplest possible character, only those
having been taken which would bear isolation from their
context. They are intended to serve both as an intro-
duction and as a supplement to the longer pieces. They are
grouped roughly into paragraphs, according to the gram-
matical forms they illustrate. Thus the first paragraph con-
sists mainly of examples of the nominative singular of
nouns and adjectives, the second of accusative singulars,
and so on.

The spelling has been made rigorously uniform throughout
on an early West-Saxon basis. Injurious as normalizing is
to the advanced student, it is an absolute necessity for the
beginner, who wants to have the definite results of scholar-
ship laid before him, not the confused and fluctuating spel-
lings which he cannot yet interpret intelligently. Even for
purely scientific purposes we require a standard of com-
parison and classification, as in the arrangement of words in
a dictionary, where we have to decide, for instance, whether

to put the original of *hear* under *é, íe, í* or *ý.* The spelling
I here adopt is, in fact, the one I should recommend for
dictionary purposes. From early West-Saxon it is an easy
step both to late W.S. and to the Mercian forms from
which Modern English is derived. I am glad to find that
Professor Sievers in his admirable *Angelsächsische Grammatik*
has also adopted *íe* instead of the later *y* in *hierde, hieran,*
&c. That I give Ælfric in a spelling slightly earlier than his
date is no more unreasonable than it is for a classical scholar
to print Ausonius (who doubtless spoke Latin with an almost
Italian pronunciation) in the same spelling as Virgil.

It is impossible to go into details, but in doubtful or
optional cases I have preferred those forms which seemed
most instructive to the student. Thus I have preferred
keeping up the distinction between the indic. *bundon* and the
subj. *bunden,* although the latter is often levelled under the
former even in early MS. In the accentuation I have for the
present retained the conventional quantities, which are really
' prehistoric ' quantities, as I have shown elsewhere (Phil.
Soc. Proc. 1880, 1881). It is no use trying to disguise
the fact that Old English philology (owing mainly to its
neglect in its native land) is still in. an unsettled state.

In the grammar I have cut down the phonology to the
narrowest limits, giving only what is necessary to enable the
beginner to trace the connection of forms within the language
itself. Derivation and syntax have been treated with the
same fulness as the inflections. In my opinion, to give
inflections without explaining their use is as absurd as it
would be to teach the names of the different parts of a
machine without explaining their use, and derivation is as