

A HISTORY OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649750962

A History of the German Language by Charles W. Super

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CHARLES W. SUPER

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GERMAN
LANGUAGE**

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A HISTORY
OF THE
GERMAN LANGUAGE

BY
CHARLES W. SUPER, A. M., PH. D.,
President of the Ohio University; Translator of Weil's Order of Words, Etc.

"Glib is the tongue of man, and many words are therein
of every kind, and wide is the range of his speech hither and
thither."

— *Iliad* xi: 248-9.

COLUMBUS, OHIO:
HANN & ADAIR,
1893.

41405
18/4/98

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*“Von allen Organismen gehen die sprachlichen u
nerstes Wesen am nächsten an; macht doch die Sprac
den Menschen.”—SCHLEICHER.*

*“In dem Menschen liegt ein Etwas, eine qualitas occulta,
wenn man so will, das ihn von allen Thieren ausnahmslos
sondert. Dieses Etwas nennen wir Vernunft, wenn wir es
als innere Wirksamkeit denken, wir nennen es Sprache,
sobald wir es als Äusseres, als Erscheinung gewahren und
auffassen. Keine Vernunft ohne Sprache, keine Sprache
ohne Vernunft. Die Sprache ist der Rubicon, welcher das
Thier vom Menschen scheidet, welchen kein Thier jemals
überschreiten wird.”—MAX MÜLLER.*

*“Alle Geschichte beruht bei uns auf dem Gegensatz des
religiösen und politischen Lebens, auf der Anerkennung
beider als selbständig neben einander; nie hat der Glaube
uns die irdischen Aufgaben vergessen lassen, die dem Men-
schen doch auch obliegen und die ihn beschäftigen, so lange
er im Schweisz seines Angesichts sein Brot essen musz.
Diese irdischen Aufgaben verlangen vor allem eine wirt-
schaftliche Ordnung, in der sie allein gelöst werden können,
ein Recht, wodurch das äussere Leben gepflegt und ge-
schult wird, und einen Staat, der den zeitlichen Bedürf-
nissen entspricht und das Recht im innern wie auch nach
auszen zur Erfüllung bringt.”—ARNOLD.*

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PREFACE.

I WAS led to prepare this volume under the conviction that there are persons enough in this country interested in the historical development of the German language to justify the undertaking. My object has been to produce a book that would be read with interest, and could be read with profit, by people whose knowledge of German does not extend much beyond the rudiments and who know next to nothing of comparative philology. While not primarily intended as a manual for the classroom, it is believed that it can be used with advantage in connection with any German grammar. It has been my constant aim to make duly prominent the common origin of the English and German languages, and to use the facts of the one to elucidate, as far as possible, the facts of the other. It is only by the study of what *has been* that we are able to understand what *is*. I have now and then called attention to those general phenomena which all languages exhibit in common, and have thus, in a slight measure, invaded the domain of the comparative philologist. It has also been my special object to show the relation of dialects to the language of literature, so that I would fain hope this volume may contribute somewhat to dissipate the erroneous notions so widely prevalent on this subject. The importance and persistence of the dialects of the German make it particularly well fitted for exhibiting the relation of the two modes of speech to each other.

My original plan was to prepare a translation of Behaghel's *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*. But I soon became convinced that the author's point of view

ought not to be that of one who has before his mind's eye an English-speaking public. One who writes for Germans can count on a more thorough and more general knowledge of phonetics, and on a larger measure of popular interest in the exposition of its laws. Professor Behaghel accordingly confined himself more closely to, and expressed himself more briefly on, this part of his subject than seemed to me advisable in an English work. Besides, I am inclined to believe that most of my readers will share with me the belief that a word or a sentence is of more general interest as the visible expression of a thought than as an exemplification of a phonetic law. Though the statement may seem to involve a contradiction, the literary and pedagogical sides of my subject have been made more prominent than the scientific and technical. It seemed to me better, in the long run, to arouse an interest in the subject that would stimulate further inquiry than to furnish indisputable facts, even supposing such a thing to be possible. When we recall that Comparative Philology has been several times rewritten, both in general and particular, during the last two or three decades, and that many of its problems are still unsolved, such a course must be regarded as decidedly advisable.

The result has been that while my book is based on that of Professor Behaghel, it contains a good deal of matter that he might not approve, and for which it would be unjust to hold him responsible. I desire, however, to express my great obligations to his excellent volume and to the clear manner with which he treats his theme. I know no German writer on this subject who combines in an equal degree both learning and lucidity. I have also made some use of Kluge's *Etymologisches Woerterbuch der deutschen Sprache*; Socin, *Schriftsprache und Dialekte im Deutschen*; Welker's *Dialektgedichte*, Skeat's *Principles of English Etymology*, first and second series; Paul's *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*; and Balg's