



Old English Grammar

Joseph Wright, Elizabeth Mary Wright

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The rapidity with which the first edition of this Grammar has been exhausted, seems to indicate that there is a real need for a Series of historical and comparative Grammars specially designed to meet the requirements of students. In our opinion the writers of grammars of modest dimensions are often more anxious to provide material useful to their colleagues than handbooks suitable to the needs of their students.

For reasons stated in the preface to the first edition we have rigidly preserved the original plan and scope of the grammar, and although the old numbering of the paragraphs has remained the same, a careful examination of the grammar and index will show that the whole has been thoroughly revised. There can hardly be any doubt that all practical teachers of the subject will agree that it is far better and easier for the student to take early West Saxon as the standard for Old English, and to group around it the chief deviations of the other dialects, than to start with a grammar which treats all the dialects as being of equal importance. For us to have treated the subject in the latter manner would have defeated the very object with which the grammar was written.

We are painfully conscious of the non-fulfilment of the two promises made in the preface to the first edition, viz. that the Middle English Grammar and the volume on historical English syntax would follow within a comparatively short space of time, but unfortunately there is even now no reason to suppose that a single line of either of these books has ever been written. The same remarks also apply to the long promised Old French Grammar, Historical French Grammar, Historical German Syntax, and the volume on Comparative Greek Syntax. The simple fact is that most people in this country who are competent to undertake such work either cannot or will not face the drudgery which it entails.

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