

PREFACE TO EIGHTH EDITION

IN the present edition I have put this book into what I hope is its final shape. In this I have received much help from various students and teachers, among whom I must specially mention the names of F. E. Bumby, H. Littledale, and R. L. Dunbabin. Many of their suggestions I have not been able to carry out: they would have swelled the book to double its present bulk.

In conclusion, I may be allowed to repeat that this is not a book for beginners. They should prepare themselves by going through my *First Steps in Anglo-Saxon* and *Anglo-Saxon Primer*, and by reading the section on 'Phonetics' in my *Primer of Historical English Grammar* or one of my other English grammars.

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PREFACE TO SEVENTH EDITION

THE first edition of this book appeared in 1876 — at a time when interest in Old-English studies was beginning to revive, and when the two books most in use then — Thorpe's *Analecfa Anglo-Saxonica* and Vernon's *Anglo-Saxon Guide* — were beginning to become antiquated. As it thus supplied a pressing want, it met, from the first, with a favourable reception from the gradually increasing body of Old-English students, not only in this country and America, but also on the Continent. After the appearance of Professor Earle's *Book for the Beginner in Anglo-Saxon* I then brought out an *Anglo-Saxon Primer*, to serve as an introduction to the Reader, which in consequence underwent certain modifications in subsequent editions, besides the many improvements suggested by ripened experience, the advice of others, and the progress of philology. I have also learnt much from the other books of a similar character that have appeared of late years — sometimes from their good points, sometimes by endeavouring to avoid what seemed to me their defects. The most prominent of these are the

German Kluge's *Angelsächsisches Lesebuch* (1888), and the American Bright's *Anglo-Saxon Reader*, which has been republished in this country by the enterprising firm of Swan Sonnenschein and Co. (1892). The latter bears a striking resemblance to the earlier editions of my *Reader*; but the grammatical introduction is omitted. This defect is, however, from another point of view, an advantage, inasmuch as it has made the book a few shillings cheaper than its namesake. It is a pity that the author has not adhered more closely to what appears to have been his original plan; he might also have consulted the convenience of myself and those who use my Reader by following the same system of numbering and reference as in the later editions of my book.

In the first few editions of this work I was, as I have remarked in the preface to my *Anglo-Saxon Primer*, obliged to make it a somewhat unsatisfactory compromise between an elementary primer and a manual for [more] advanced students. In the present edition I have carried out, even more consistently than before, those alterations which seemed called for by its being a continuation of the Primer. But although it covers a wider field, and appeals to more advanced students, it is still an elementary book: it does not attempt to anticipate the learner's future studies in English philology, literature, history, or institutions, or in comparative philology, but claims only to lay a firm and broad foundation for such studies.

In its present form, therefore, the object of this book is to put before the student who has already mastered the Primer, a series of texts which will give a general knowledge of the language in its chief periods and dialects, without neglecting the interests of literary and antiquarian study, with such additional helps in the way of grammar, metre, notes, and glossary as seemed necessary.

In every Old-English Reader the preference must necessarily be given to West-Saxon texts; but the exclusion of the other dialects — as in the previous editions of this book and in Bright's — is a mistake in any but a very elementary book. Dialectal texts are absolutely necessary for linguistic students; for modern English is of dialectal origin; and the Anglian dialect in particular is of great importance for the critical study of the poetry (see Grammar, § 3). Hence I have given specimens of Northumbrian and late and early Kentish together with a long piece of early Mercian from the well-known Vespasian Psalter; but as the hymns in that MS. give a more varied vocabulary than the psalms themselves, I have given the hymns in full, although they are also in my *Second Anglo-Saxon Reader*,

where, however, they are accompanied by the Latin original, which I have omitted here, so as to induce the learner to master the forms more thoroughly; I have also marked the quantities in the present work.

Otherwise I have excluded glosses and glossaries, for which I must refer to the Second Reader.

To make room for this additional matter, I have cut out *Ælfric on the Old Testament* on account of its disproportionate length and want of interest.

This saving of space has further enabled me to add the finest of the Old-English lyrics, *The Seafarer* (No. 29). I may also add that most of the dialectal pieces are of great value from a literary and antiquarian point of view, the Old-Kentish charters, in particular, affording many a glimpse into the daily life of our ancestors.

But while giving due prominence to what the Germans conveniently term *realien*, I have been careful not to forget that this is still an elementary book. Hence I have excluded all texts — however interesting and important in themselves — whose technical nature would require a disproportionate amount of comment — often, too, with a considerable residue of hopeless obscurities. Many of them, too, are preserved only in late and corrupt recensions. So also linguistic considerations have often obliged me to give the preference to translations over original works.

That I have been successful in making a representative and interesting selection of texts is generally admitted by critics — even those who are otherwise unfavourable. Certain pieces are, of course, common property, such as the account of the poet Cædmon, portions of the Chronicle, and poems such as the Battle of Maldon. But even allowing for this, it will be found that my successors follow me very closely. Thus Kluge shows his approval of the way in which I have accomplished the difficult task of making a selection from the Laws by reprinting my extracts bodily. My selection of the life of Oswald from the mass of material in (the then unpublished) — *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints* seems to meet with especial favour, for this text is reprinted not only by Kluge, but also by Korner in his *Einleitung in das Studium des Angelsächsischen*. It is, of course, included in Bright's Reader.

The principles which have guided me in selecting the texts have also made me refrain as much as possible from antiquarian and historical comment. There can be no question that the first object of all who occupy themselves with Old-English literature, whether with a view to the literature itself, to historical investigations, or to a better understanding of the development of the English language generally, must be to acquire a sound elementary knowledge of the language. Everything else will then follow naturally.

In the first editions of this work the spelling of the texts was to some extent normalized and regulated. But when I had brought out the Primer in a rigorously normalized spelling, I removed from the Reader the few deviations from the manuscript spellings, so that the student had only to remove the diacritics, &c., to restore the MS. text, although, of course, I have not attempted to reproduce purely palaeographical features. The MS. accents are faithfully kept, either in the texts or at the foot of the page, in their original form (´), theoretical longs being marked ("). The great advantage of this method is that it enables the careful student to remember whether or not any given word is accented in the MSS. I also supplement final-consonant doubling by adding the omitted letter in italics (man»).

Divergent MS. readings are given but sparingly, and only when really instructive, not with a view to giving an *apparatus criticus*, which would be quite out of place in such a book as this.

The grammar in the present edition is more strictly subordinated to that in the Primer than before. The omissions thus entailed have enabled me to give a full account of the varieties of period and dialect, especially as regards phonology. Some of these details may seem too minute; but even when they

are perhaps too minute from a practical point of view, they have the advantage of training the student to habits of linguistic observation and of fixing the actual forms more firmly in the mind.

Anyhow, a grammatical sketch like the one given here, which is based on a limited selection of texts, must be easier to master than one which draws upon the whole literature; and I hope that it will be found useful also as an introduction to such books as Sievers' *Anglo-Saxon Grammar* — a work which is not quite suited to the ordinary English beginner. In one important respect my grammar has the advantage over Sievers', namely, that it includes derivation and syntax, together with sentence-stress and metre.

In the section on metre I have tried to give a clear abstract of Sievers' views (see his *Allgermanische Metrik*, Halle, 1893, and his article in Paul's *Grhundriss der germanischen philologie*), which I feel obliged to accept, in spite of the adverse criticisms of Lawrence (*Chapters on Alliterative Verse*, London, 1893), Heath (*The Old-English Alliterative Line*, Philological Society Trans. 1891-3), and others. These critics seem to forget that Sievers' classification of the Old-English metrical forms into types is not a theory, but a statement of facts, and that the complexity and irregularity to which they object is a fact, not a theory. The truth is that we know very little of the details of the versification of most languages; and it is possible that if our modern English metres, for instance, were analyzed in the same thorough way in which Sievers has analyzed the Old-English metres, we should have a difficulty in realizing that a modern poet could carry such a complicated scheme in his head.

Considerations of space have obliged me to refrain from adding much to the Notes, in spite of complaints of their scantiness. It appears that certain examinees have been disappointed at not being able to get through by cramming up the notes instead of reading the texts! But they forget that Old- is not Middle-English, and that methods which work well with Piers Ploughman do not necessarily apply to Beowulf.

The glossary gives very full references, but without any elaborate classification of forms and spellings. It is difficult to see what practical use there can be in registering *slan*, ace. sg. *slan* 20/165, nom. pi. *slanas*, &c., when the single letter *m*. gives all the information required. The large number of dialectal forms introduced into the present edition has, however, caused me some embarrassment. But the use of suitable diacritics in the head-words has enabled me to dispense in most cases with repeating the word in its dialectal form. Again, when a dialectal form falls under a general law, I have not thought it necessary to note it specially in the glossary. But when it is exceptional, or likely to cause any difficulty in recognizing the word, it is given, in a cross reference, if necessary. The student is, in short, expected to learn the dialectal forms by reading the texts, not by looking the words up in the glossary.

The most important practical use of a glossary is, evidently, to explain the meanings of words, then to state such grammatical constructions, inflections, and other details as are likely to cause difficulty to the learner who is advanced enough to use the book with profit. Ease of reference depends greatly on compactness and conciseness, in which I hope this new edition will be found to be an advance on its predecessors. Of course, if a beginner attempts to cram up Old-English from this Reader without having mastered the Primer, the dialectal forms will cause him great irritation and waste of time; but that is no reason why I should double the bulk of the glossary by giving such regular variations as *heran*, *hieran*, *hyran*, *anda*, *onda* separate headings and cross-references.

The order in the glossary is strictly alphabetic on an Early West-Saxon basis. In the first editions I separated the long from the short vowels; but when I found this was a real difficulty to learners, I restored the purely alphabetic order. Another improvement was referring to the number of each piece instead of to the page, so that the student might learn to recognize each piece by its number.