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John William Donaldson

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108062145

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2013

This edition first published 1839
This digitally printed version 2013

ISBN 978-1-108-06214-5 Paperback

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THE
NEW CRATYLUS,
OR
CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS
A MORE ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE
OF THE
GREEK LANGUAGE.

BY
JOHN WILLIAM DONALDSON, M.A.

FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
AND MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY, &c.

CAMBRIDGE:
J. AND J. J. DEIGHTON.
LONDON: JOHN W. PARKER.

M.DCCC.XXXIX.

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TO

GEORGE LONG, ESQ.

FORMERLY

PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON,

AS A SLIGHT MEMORIAL OF REGARD AND ESTEEM

FROM HIS SOMETIME PUPIL,

THE AUTHOR.

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P R E F A C E.

IN writing this book it has been my object to combine an investigation of general principles with an exposition of particular results; I have endeavoured, on the one hand, to establish a consistent and intelligible theory of inflected language, considered in its most perfect state, that is, as it appears in the oldest languages of the Indo-Germanic family; and, on the other hand, I have attempted to place the Greek scholarship of this country on a somewhat higher footing, by rendering the resources of a more comprehensive philology available for the improvement of the grammar and lexicography of the Greek language, and for the criticism and interpretation of the authors who have written in it. If it is thought strange that I have not confined myself to one or other of these two sufficiently difficult tasks, I may answer, that in the present state of philology it would be impossible to make any real contribution to Greek scholarship without some sound theory of the philosophy of language, and a certain acquaintance with the leading members of the family to which the Greek language belongs; and, conversely, it would not be easy to write an instructive treatise on the internal mechanism and organization of inflected language, with-

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out taking some inflected language, by way, at least, of exemplification. Now of all the languages with monosyllabic roots the Greek is the most fitted for this purpose. It is, in the first place, a dead language, and therefore fixed and unchangeable; it is the most copious and expressive of all languages; it stands mid-way between the oldest form of the Indo-Germanic idioms and the corrupted modern dialects of that family, in other words, it has attained to a wonderfully clear and copious syntax without sacrificing altogether, or indeed to any considerable extent, its inflexions and power of composition; it has been more studied and is better known than any other dead language, that is, the facts and phenomena are more completely collected and more systematically arranged than is the case with any other, so that allusions to it are more generally intelligible, and deductions, or new combinations of laws, derived from it, are safer and more convincing; above all, the value of the literature and the actual demand for a knowledge of the language, should induce us to turn upon the Greek, rather than upon the Gothic, the Latin, or the Sanscrit, any new light which the doctrine of words may have gained from investigations in the philosophy of language or in comparative grammar.

Every didactic work is or ought to be adapted to the wants of some particular class of readers, and should presume, in them, a certain amount of preparatory knowledge and no more. I have written, then, first, for Englishmen, who are not supposed to be intimately or

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extensively acquainted with the philological literature of the continent: and secondly, I have written for persons who possess at least some slight knowledge of the Greek language, and would rather increase it by investigating the principles of the language and endeavouring to discover the causes of its grammatical peculiarities, than by overloading the memory with a mass of crude, incoherent facts, which can neither be digested nor retained. I have also wished to give those, who come to the study of Greek with no higher aim than to make it the means of obtaining University distinctions, an opportunity of learning from it the dignity of human speech, of perceiving how little of the casual and capricious there is in language, and of convincing themselves that in this, as in other things, there are laws to combine, regulate, and vivify the seemingly disjointed, scattered, and lifeless phenomena. It is possible that the novelty of some of my speculations may induce maturer scholars to take up this book. If so, they will understand from this statement, why I have here and there entered upon long explanations of peculiarities, which can occasion no difficulty to the philologist or have been already discussed by German or French writers, and, on the other hand, why I have despatched with a hint or a reference some really difficult questions, in which the young student could take no interest, while the scholar would comprehend my meaning from a single word.

Many people entertain strong prejudices against every thing in the shape of etymology, prejudices which would be

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not only just but inevitable, if etymology or the doctrine of words were such a thing as they suppose it to be. They consider it as amounting to nothing more than the derivation of words from one another, and as this process is generally confined to a perception of some *prima facie* resemblance of two words, it seldom rises beyond the dignity of an ingenious pun, and, though amusing enough at times, is certainly neither an instructive nor an elevated employment for a rational being. The only real etymology is that which attempts a resolution of the words of a language into their ultimate elements by a comparison of the greatest possible number of languages of the same family. Derivation is, strictly speaking, inapplicable, farther than as pointing out the manner in which certain constant syllables, belonging to the pronominal or formative element of inflected languages, may be prefixed or subjoined to a given form for the expression of some secondary or dependent relation. In order to arrive at the primary origin of a word or a form, we must get beyond the narrow limits of a single idiom. Indeed, in many cases the source can only be traced by a conjectural reproduction based on the most extended comparison of all the cognate languages, for when we take some given variety of human speech, we find in it systems and series of words running almost parallel to one another, but presenting such resemblances in form and signification as convince us that, though apparently asymptotes, they must have converged in the form which we know would potentially contain them all. This reproduction of the common

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mother of our family of languages, by a comparison of the features of all her children, is the great general object to which the efforts of the philologist should be directed, and this, and not a mere derivation of words in the same language from one another, constitutes the etymology that is alone worthy of the name.

As far as this work is a contribution to the better knowledge of Greek in particular, I wish it to be understood, that I have by no means confined myself to etymological researches, but have endeavoured to avail myself of every resource of scholarship, as well old-fashioned as new. The words, which I have attempted to explain, are those which have either occasioned peculiar difficulty to the young student, or the meaning of which has been considered doubtful by scholars. Where I have thought proper to make a digression for the purpose of interpreting or emending a particular passage, I have always had in view that class of students with whom my experience in teaching has brought me most immediately in contact, and with whose wants and difficulties I am best acquainted. It will be seen, too, that in the selection of passages for this purpose, I have generally confined myself to those authors who are most read in the great schools and Universities of this country. In this part of the work, I have been guided mainly by considerations of practical utility, namely, by a wish to assist those whose business it is to construe Greek authors, and to write Greek exercises. It is for this reason that I have preserved, as far as possible, the old

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grammatical nomenclature: the young student regards with a sort of mysterious reverence the uncouth terms of his grammar; they are little household gods to him; and, though, like the Lar familiaris of old, they are unseemly to look upon and unavailing to help, there appears to be no good reason why one should take them down from the niches, which they have so long and so harmlessly occupied.

It is painful and humiliating to reflect, how much, after all one's thought and labour, the execution of a task like this must fall short, not merely of the exactions of a rigorous criticism, but even of one's own imperfect conceptions. It may be, indeed, that what I have attempted in this book is not yet to be effected by one man and at one effort, and perhaps, in reference to its wider scope, all that I can hope to do, is to awaken the dormant energies of some young student, who may be qualified at a future period to solve completely and finally the great problem of inflected language;—*ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπιχειροῦντί τοι τοῖς καλοῖς καλὸν καὶ πάσχειν ὅ τι ἄν τῷ ξυμβῇ παθεῖν.*

J. W. D.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
4th February, 1839.

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