

COMPENDIOUS SYRIAC GRAMMAR

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WITH A TABLE OF CHARACTERS

BY

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TRANSLATED

(WITH THE SANCTION OF THE AUTHOR)

FROM THE SECOND AND IMPROVED GERMAN EDITION

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFATORY NOTE.

It appears desirable that the leading modern grammars of the four best-known Semitic languages, in their classical forms, should be readily accessible to English-speaking students. And in this connection, probably few competent judges will dispute the claims of the following treatises to be regarded as authoritative and leading, viz:—Wright's Arabic Grammar (as revised by Robertson Smith and De Goeje); Kautzsch's Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar; Nöldeke's Syriac Grammar; and Dillmann's Ethiopic Grammar. Of these the first two already exist in English, Wright's work having been in that form from the outset, at least under his own name, and Kautzsch's Gesenius' having been presented in a similar form a few years ago, in Collins and Cowley's excellent translation. The grammars of Nöldeke and Dillmann, however, have not hitherto appeared in English, although their pre-eminent position in their respective departments of Semitic philology is perhaps even less open to challenge, than that of the other two. It is to supply this want in the educational apparatus available for English students, so far at least as Nöldeke's Grammar is concerned, that the present translation has been attempted.

Of course it may be said, that students of Syriac will in all likelihood be sufficiently well acquainted with German, to be able to consult the original for themselves. I trust that such is the case; but those students and scholars amongst us, who are most familiar with German, will probably be the first to welcome a translation of such a work, if only it has been executed with reasonable fidelity and care. There are obvious advantages in an English version for an English eye, however accomplished

a linguist its owner may be. At all events it is in that belief, and with no other desire than to do something for this branch of study, that I have ventured upon the present edition.

No attempt has been made to alter in any way either the substance or the arrangement of the Grammar. Citations, it is true, have been again verified, and slight errors here and there have been tacitly corrected. To facilitate reference, not only has the very full Table of Contents been set in its usual place, but its items have also been applied throughout the book, in the form of rubrics to the several sections. With a similar design an Index of Passages, wanting in the original, has been drawn up and placed at the end of the volume.

Among other friends who have been helpful towards the preparation of this version, I have specially to thank Professor Robertson of Glasgow University, for much kindly encouragement and wise counsel. Above all I must express my deep indebtedness to the distinguished author himself, Professor Nöldeke, for the unfailing courtesy and unwearied patience with which he lent his invaluable guidance and assistance, as the proof-sheets passed through his hands. Thanks are also due to Herr W. Drugulin and his staff, for again encountering, with a very considerable measure of success, the typographical difficulties, which a work of this nature must present.

JAMES A. CRICHTON.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.⁽¹⁾

This book does not claim to be in any respect a *complete* Syriac Grammar. It is true that with the material at my disposal I might have added very considerably to not a few sections; but any treatment of grammatical phenomena which aimed at completeness in every detail required quite other manuscript studies, than were at all open to me. Practical considerations too imposed a severe limitation. I trust however, that even within restricted limits, I have succeeded in producing something which may be of use.

I have taken my material from the best sources within reach, entirely disregarding Amira and the other Maronites. Besides the Jacobite and Nestorian grammarians and lexicographers now in print, I have made use of Severus of St. Matthaeus (usually, but incorrectly, styled "of Tekrit") as he appears in the Göttingen manuscript. The Directorate of the Göttingen Library, with their accustomed liberality, farther sent me, at my request, from their manuscript treasures, the large grammar of Barhebraeus together with his Scholia; and, with no less readiness, the Library-Directorate of Gotha sent me the Vocabulary of Elias of Nisibis. These manuscripts yielded produce of many kinds. It would have been an invaluable assistance to me, if I had had before me the *Masoretic* tradition of the Syrians, with some degree of completeness. Of this, however, I had at command at first—in addition to the epitomes which are found in printed works—only a few extracts, which

(¹) Somewhat shortened at the close.—The first edition (1880) was dedicated to J. P. N. Land (Died 30. Ap. 1897).

I had myself noted down in earlier years, from the well-known Nestorian Masora of the year 899 (Wright's Catalogue 101 *sqq.*) and from the London "Qarqafic" manuscripts (Rosen-Forshall 62 *sqq.*; Wright 108 *sqq.*). The deficiency was made up, at least to some extent, by the amiability of Wright, Zotenberg and Guidi, who—in answer to a host of questions about the mode of writing this or that word in the Masoretic manuscripts in London, Paris and Rome—furnished me with information which in many cases had been gained only after prolonged search. A careful collation of the entire Masoretic material, allowing for the chance mistakes of individual scribes, especially if it were accompanied by an attentive observation of good, vocalised manuscripts of the Bible, would let us know pretty accurately and fully how the Jacobites on the one hand, and the Nestorians on the other, were wont to pronounce Syriac in the Church use. Any point in which these two traditions are found to be in agreement must have been in use prior to the separation of the two Churches, that is, at the latest, in the 5th century. Although in the recitative of the Church Service there was doubtless a good deal of artificiality, yet we have in it a reflex at least of the living speech. The Grammar of Jacob of Edessa (*circa* 700) is unfortunately lost, all but a few fragments. What the later systematisers give, has, generally speaking, no more authority than can be traced to the Church tradition. Even the observant Barhebraeus, towering as he truly does by a head and shoulders over the rest of his countrymen, has not always surveyed this tradition completely, while sometimes he explains it incorrectly. Now and then too, following mere analogy, he presents forms which can with difficulty be authenticated in the genuine speech. Accordingly if here and there I do not notice Barhebraeus' data, I trust it will not be attributed to a want of acquaintance with them on my part. Still less could editions like Bernstein's "Johannes", or Joseph David's "Psalter" (Mosul 1877)—which unfortunately gives an "improved" text of the Peshitā—constitute an absolute authority for me, although I am greatly indebted to them. I need hardly mention that in the matter of vocalisation I have made large use of the well-known complete editions of the Old Testament and the New Testament, and of both the Nestorian