



A History of the German Language

Charles W. Super

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From the Preface.

...It is probable that I have fallen into some errors in tracing the origin and development of words. The path of the linguistic sciences is thickly strewn with defunct and decaying etymologies, and that I have added some to the number is more than probable. Nevertheless, I have adopted none for which I did not have competent—I would fain believe the best—authorities, so that I have reason to believe my mistakes will be found to be comparatively few. It should be remembered, too, that the necessity of being brief, may now and then lead the reader to think that I have been mistaken, where a fuller discussion of the point in question would show that I am probably correct in the conclusion I have accepted. Against premature verdicts of this sort I know of no remedy except a careful examination of the evidence on which I have proceeded. The chain may occasionally seem to be broken merely because some of its links have not been exposed to view.

I would fain believe that under more favorable conditions I could have produced a better book than I have. Most of it was written at long intervals, in brief periods of an hour or two in length. The official demands of a laborious position; daily recurring duties as a teacher; frequent calls for editorial work in another field, made such large drafts on my time that but little was left for any self-assumed task. What could have been done under fairly favorable conditions in a little more than a year, occupied me nearly four years. All this can be no excuse for any errors of fact the volume may contain, but it may be some palliation for minor defects in their arrangement and for infelicities of style of which I fear attentive readers will find only too many. For these the generous indulgence of the reader is asked. My experience is but a counterpart of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of American teachers: whatever they do in the line of systematic study except so far as it serves the immediate purposes of the school and class-room, is generally at the sacrifice of no little personal ease and at the expense of hours of rest and recreation.

If this volume contributes somewhat to the better knowledge of a language, which, in my opinion, embodies a larger number of excellencies than any other of ancient or modern times, except the Greek, I shall feel that my labor has not been in vain.

I am not unaware that we have a number of American scholars whose attainments in Germanic Philology are much superior to mine, and who are in position to produce a better book than this. As they have not, however, thus far undertaken the task, at least so far as the public is informed, I am led to put forth this modest work in the hope that it may, at least, prepare the way for something more excellent.

—CHARLES W. SUPER [AUTHOR]

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