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BY THE

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PREFACE.

It is now nearly nineteen years since the first edition of this book was published, and a second edition ought to have appeared long ere this. The first edition was soon exhausted, and the desirableness of bringing out a second edition was often suggested to me. But as the book was a first attempt in a new field of research and necessarily very imperfect, I could not bring myself to allow a second edition to appear without a thorough revision. It was evident, however, that the preparation of a thoroughly revised edition, with the addition of new matter wherever it seemed to be necessary, would entail upon me more labour than I was likely for a long time to be able to undertake. The duties devolving upon me in India left me very little leisure for extraneous work, and the exhaustion arising from long residence in a tropical climate left me very little surplus strength. For eleven years, in addition to my other duties, I took part in the Revision of the Tamil Bible, and after that great work had come to an end, it fell to my lot to take part for one year more in the Revision of the Tamil Book of Common Prayer. I suffered also for some time from a serious illness of such a nature that it seemed to render it improbable that I should ever be able to do any literary work again. Thus year after year elapsed, and year after year the idea of setting myself to so laborious a task as that of preparing a second edition of a book of this kind grew more and more distasteful to me. I began to hope that it had become no longer necessary to endeavour to rescue a half-forgotten book from oblivion. At this juncture it was considered desirable that I should return for a time to my native land for the benefit of my health; and at the same time I was surprised to receive a new and more urgent request that I should bring out a second edition of this book—for which I was informed that a demand still existed. Accordingly I felt that I had now no option left, and arrived reluctantly at the conclusion that as the first edition was brought out during the period of my first return to this country on furlough, so it had become necessary that the period
of my second furlough should be devoted to the preparation and publication of a second edition.

The first edition—chiefly on account of the novelty of the undertaking—was received with a larger amount of favour than it appeared to me to deserve. I trust that this second edition, revised and enlarged, will be found more really deserving of favour. Though reluctant to commence the work, no sooner had I entered upon it than my old interest in it revived, and I laboured at it con amore. I have endeavoured to be accurate and thorough throughout, and to leave no difficulty unsolved, or at least uninvestigated; and yet, notwithstanding all my endeavours, I am conscious of many deficiencies, and feel sure that I must have fallen into many errors. Of the various expressions of approval the first edition received, the one which gratified me most, because I felt it to be best deserved, was that it was evident I had treated the Dravidian languages "lovingly." I trust it will be apparent that I have given no smaller amount of loving care and labour to the preparation of this second edition. The reader must be prepared, however, to find that many of the particulars on which I have laboured most "lovingly," though exceedingly interesting to persons who have made the Dravidian languages their special study, possess but little interest for persons whose special studies lie in the direction of some other family of languages, or who are interested, not in the study of any one language or family of languages in particular, but only in philological studies in general, or in discussions respecting the origin of language in general.

It is now more than thirty-seven years since I commenced the study of Tamil, and I had not proceeded far in the study before I came to the conclusion that much light might be thrown on Tamil by comparing it with Telugu, Canarese, and the other sister idioms. On proceeding to make the comparison I found that my supposition was verified by the result, and also, as it appeared to me, that Tamil imparted still more light than it received. I have become more and more firmly persuaded, as time has gone on, that it is not a theory, but a fact, that none of these languages can be thoroughly understood and appreciated without some study of the others, and hence that a Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages may claim to be regarded not merely as something that is useful in its way, but as a necessity.

I trust it will be found that I have not left much undone that seemed to be necessary for the elucidation of Tamil; but I hope this branch of work will now be taken up by persons who have made Telugu, Canarese, Malayālam, or Tulu their special study, so that the whole range of the Dravidian languages and dialects may be fully elucidated. One
desideratum at present seems to be a Comparative Vocabulary of the Dravidian Languages, distinguishing the roots found, say, in the four most distinctive languages—Tamil, Telugu, Canarese, and Malayalam—from those found only in three, only in two, or only in one. An excellent illustration of what may be done in this direction has been furnished by Dr Gundert, whose truly scientific "Dictionary of Malayalam" has given a fresh stimulus to Dravidian philology. Another thing which has long appeared to me to be a desideratum is a more thorough examination of all the South Indian alphabets, ancient and modern, with a careful comparison of them, letter by letter, not only with the alphabets of Northern India, ancient and modern, but also, and especially, with the characters found in ancient inscriptions in Ceylon, Java, and other places in the further East. It has been announced that a work on this subject, by Dr Burnell, M.C.S., entitled "South-Indian Palæography," is about to be published in Madras, but I regret that a copy of it has not yet arrived.

It has been my chief object throughout this work to promote a more systematic and scientific study of the Dravidian languages themselves—for their own sake, irrespective of theories respecting their relationship to other languages—by means of a careful inter-comparison of their grammars. Whilst I have never ceased to regard this as my chief object, I have at the same time considered it desirable to notice, as opportunity occurred, such principles, forms, and roots as appeared to bear any affinity to those of any other language or family of languages, in the hope of contributing thereby to the solution of the question of their ultimate relationship. That question has never yet been scientifically solved, though one must hope that it will be solved some day. It has not yet got beyond the region of theories, more or less plausible. My own theory is that the Dravidian languages occupy a position of their own between the languages of the Indo-European family and those of the Turanian or Scythian group—not quite a midway position, but one considerably nearer the latter than the former. The particulars in which they seem to me to accord with the Indo-European languages are numerous and remarkable, and some of them, it will be seen, are of such a nature that it is impossible, I think, to suppose that they have been accidental; but the relationship to which they testify—in so far as they do testify to any real relationship—appears to me to be very indefinite, as well as very remote. On the other hand the particulars in which they seem to me to accord with most of the so-called Scythian languages are not only so numerous, but are so distinctive and of so essential a nature, that they appear to me to amount to what is called a family likeness, and therefore naturally to suggest the idea.
of a common descent. The evidence is cumulative. It seems impossible to suppose that all the various remarkable resemblances that will be pointed out, section after section, in this work can have arisen merely from similarity in mental development—of which there is no proof—or similarity in external circumstances and history—of which also there is no proof—much less without any common cause whatever, but merely from the chapter of accidents. The relationship seems to me to be not merely morphological, but—in some shape or another, and however it may be accounted for—genealogical. The genealogical method of investigation has produced remarkable results in the case of the Indo-European family of languages, and there seems no reason why it should be discarded in relation to any other family or group; but this method is applicable, as it appears to me, not merely to roots and forms, but also to principles, contrivances, and adaptations. I have called attention to the various resemblances I have noticed, whether apparently important or apparently insignificant—not under the supposition that any one of them, or all together, will suffice to settle the difficult question at issue, but as an aid to inquiry, for the purpose of helping to point out the line in which further research seems likely—or not likely—to be rewarded with success. An ulterior and still more difficult question will be found to be occasionally discussed. It is this: Does there not seem to be reason for regarding the Dravidian family languages, not only as a link of connection between the Indo-European and Scythian groups, but—in some particulars, especially in relation to the pronouns—as the best surviving representative of a period in the history of human speech older than the Indo-European stage, older than the Scythian, and older than the separation of the one from the other.

Whilst pointing out extra-Dravidian affinities wherever they appeared to exist, it has always been my endeavour, as far as possible, to explain Dravidian forms by means of the Dravidian languages themselves. In this particular I think it will be found that a fair amount of progress has been made in this edition in comparison with the first—for which I am largely indebted to the help of Dr Gundert's suggestions. A considerable number of forms which were left unexplained in the first edition have now, more or less conclusively, been shown to have had a Dravidian origin, and possibly this process will be found to be capable of being carried further still. The Dravidian languages having been cultivated from so early a period, and carried by successive stages of progress to so high a point of refinement, we should be prepared to expect that in supplying themselves from time to time with inflexional forms they had availed themselves of auxiliary words already in use,
with only such modifications in sound or meaning as were necessary to adapt them to the new purposes to which they were applied. Accordingly it does not seem necessary or desirable to seek for the origin of Dravidian forms out of the range of the Dravidian languages themselves, except in the event of those languages failing to afford us a tolerably satisfactory explanation. Even in that event, it must be considered more probable that the evidence of a native Dravidian origin has been obliterated by lapse of time than that the Dravidians, when learning to inflect their words, borrowed for this purpose the inflexional forms of their neighbours. It is a different question whether some of the Dravidian forms and roots may not have formed a portion of the linguistic inheritance which appears to have descended to the earliest Dravidians from the fathers of the human race. I should be inclined, however, to seek for traces of that inheritance only in the narrow area of the simplest and most necessary, and therefore probably the most primitive, elements of speech.

In preparing the second edition of this book, as in preparing the first, I have endeavoured to give European scholars, whether resident in Europe or in India, such information respecting the Dravidian languages as might be likely to be interesting to them. I have thought more, however, of the requirements of the natives of the country, than of those of foreigners. It has been my earnest and constant desire to stimulate the natives of the districts in which the Dravidian languages are spoken to take an intelligent interest in the comparative study of their own languages; and I trust it will be found that this object has in some measure been helped forward. Educated Tamilians have studied Tamil—educated Telugus have studied Telugu—the educated classes in each language-district have studied the language and literature of that district—with an earnestness and assiduity which are highly creditable to them, and which have never been exceeded in the history of any of the languages of the world—except, perhaps, by the earnestness and assiduity with which Sanskrit has been studied by the Brâhmans. One result of this long-continued devotion to grammatical studies has been the development of much intellectual acuteness; another result has been the progressive refinement of the languages themselves; and these results have acted and reacted one upon another. Hence, it is impossible for any European who has acquired a competent knowledge of any of the Dravidian languages—say Tamil—to regard otherwise than with respect the intellectual capacity of a people amongst whom so wonderful an organ of thought has been developed. On the other hand, in consequence of the almost exclusive devotion of the native literati to grammatical studies they have fallen considerably
behind the educated classes in Europe in grasp and comprehensiveness. What they have gained in acuteness, they have lost in breadth. They have never attempted to compare their own languages with others—not even with other languages of the same family. They have never grasped the idea that such a thing as a family of languages existed. Consequently the interest they took in the study of their languages was not an intelligent, discriminating interest, and proved much less fruitful in results than might fairly have been expected. Their philology, if it can be called by that name, has remained up to our own time as rudimentary and fragmentary as it was ages ago. Not having become comparative, it has not become scientific and progressive. The comparative method of study has done much, in every department of science, for Europe; might it not be expected to do much for India also? If the natives of Southern India began to take an interest in the comparative study of their own languages and in comparative philology in general, they would find it in a variety of ways much more useful to them than the study of the grammar of their own language alone ever has been. They would cease to content themselves with learning by rote versified enigmas and harmonious platitudes. They would begin to discern the real aims and objects of language, and realise the fact that language has a history of its own, throwing light upon all other history, and rendering ethnology and archaeology possible. They would find that philology studied in this manner enlarged the mind instead of cramping it, extended its horizon, and provided it with a plentiful store of matters of wide human interest. And the consequence probably would be that a more critical, scholarly habit of mind, showing itself in a warmer desire for the discovery of truth, would begin to prevail. Another result—not perhaps so immediate, but probably in the end as certain—a result of priceless value—would be the development of a good, readable, respectable, useful, Dravidian literature—a literature written in a style free at once from pedantry and from vulgarisms, and in matter, tone, and tendency, as well as in style, worthy of so intelligent a people as the natives of Southern India undoubtedly are.

I trust the interest taken in their language, literature, and antiquities by foreigners will not be without its effect in kindling amongst the natives of Southern India a little wholesome, friendly rivalry. If a fair proportion of the educated native inhabitants of each district were only to apply themselves to the study of the philology and archaeology of their district with anything like the same amount of zeal with which the philology and archaeology of Europe are studied by educated Europeans, the result would probably be that many questions which