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This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by CrossWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in New England Classical Journal by an authorized editor of CrossWorks.
This is a timely and well-conceived book. In his Preface, Bruce McMenomy says that it is an outgrowth of a need he has perceived for a number of years as a teacher of Latin and Greek. Books of this type would not have been as necessary and valuable in the 1960s and 1970s as they are now. This is not really a new approach as the title suggests but a look back at the elements of English, Latin, and Greek that high schools and colleges could expect their students to know. McMenomy has produced a crisp and well-written book in twelve chapters that is easy to follow and use as well as a pleasure to read. He does not belabor the points but makes them easy to grasp and apply.

Chapter 1, introducing the reader to the eight parts of speech, sets the tone for the remaining eleven chapters,— all eleven of them with functional definitions and useful suggestions concerning which eight you should pick for any occasion.

Chapter 2 delves into the parts of a sentence, illustrating how it is all a lot simpler than it seems, and why the technical vocabulary really describes how it works. It uses both Latin, Greek, and English examples to show the ‘two kinds of being.’

Chapter 3 covers adverbial clauses—a survey of adverbial clauses and how they form clusters of meaning. Most helpful here are two charts showing how to compose Greek and Latin conditions. These are followed with good examples from Latin and Greek authors.

Chapter 4 explains adjectival clauses of which, the author says, there is only one kind—the normal relative clause. McMenomy disentangles restrictive versus nonrestrictive relatives and furnishes examples of both Greek and Latin clauses that act like conditions. He also gives some examples of connecting relatives.

Chapter 5 covers noun clauses—form and substance—which the author considers the clunkiest of subordinate clauses. He begins with substantive clauses, follows up with indirect discourse of all sorts, and gives a plethora of examples of this in English, along with indirect questions and commands, and several examples of these in Latin and Greek with a useful chart of Greek forms of indirect statement.
Chapter 6 provides the reader with a breather, an interlude so to speak, of some historical linguistics—where the languages come from. It begins with a chart of the Indo-European family of languages of the “Satem” and “Centum” groups. This is a very satisfactory discussion at this point of the book.

Chapter 7 surveys verbs—the engine itself which alludes to the ‘syntactical mechanics’ of the book’s title. It looks at what a verb is marked for, namely its characteristics, the five distinct grammatical categories of person, number, tense, mood, and voice. There is a useful chart of tense and aspect in Proto-Indo-European, Greek, and Latin. This is followed up with many good examples from Greek and Latin authors.

Chapter 8 looks at nouns—substantives and adjectives, the English cases, the cases in Greek, Latin, and Proto-Indo-European (with a chart). It also covers the instrumental and associative cases of Proto-Indo-European, provides a grid showing cases and movement, and cites examples from Homer, Cicero, Caesar, Vergil, Xenophon, and Thucydides. There is also a full-page chart of Latin prepositions with the accusative, ablative, and genitive, plus a similar chart for Greek prepositions with the genitive, dative, and accusative. Some other noun constructions are provided, for example, the absolute.

Chapter 9 focuses on verbal nouns and adjectives—words that come from verbs and can slide into other roles (nouns, infinitives, gerunds, participles). Dangling participles are given space and examples are provided to show why they are sometimes funny. Also found are the limited Latin participle, the unlimited Greek participle, attributive participles, circumstantial participles, supplementary participles, and participles in indirect discourse—all with examples.

Chapter 10 is about pronouns—a word for all seasons. First presented are the types of pronouns with a chart. Next come demonstrative and possessive pronouns, reflexive personal pronouns, reflexive possessive adjectives, reciprocal pronouns, intensive pronouns, interrogative pronouns and adjectives, indefinite pronouns, relative pronouns, and correlative pronouns.

Chapter 11 covers other little words—the little bits and pieces that grease the wheels such as articles, particles, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections.

Chapter 12 offers concluding remarks—cautions, provisos, and reservations alerting readers that there are other possibilities beyond this book which may show up from time to time. The open-minded reader can more than benefit from this chapter.

An annotated bibliography with significant English, Latin, and Greek grammars, along with Indo-European and comparative studies is found at the end of this
McMenomy has produced a valuable, legible, and easy-to-use book that scholars, professors, teachers, and students of the Classics will want to keep within reach of their Latin and Greek texts, as well as near their computers, when a question about syntax arises. This well-priced book is scholarly without being pedantic. This reviewer found it full of useful wisdom about how the Latin and Greek authors set the standards for further study of language development in the Greco-Roman world.

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