

**THE GERMAN STUDENT'S FIRST  
BOOK: OR, A GENERAL  
INTRODUCTION TO ALL GERMAN  
GRAMMARS AND ELEMENTARY  
WORKS**

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The German Student's First Book: Or, A General Introduction to All German Grammars and Elementary Works by F. L. O. Roehrig

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**F. L. O. ROEHRIG**

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**FIRST BOOK**

OR,

A GENERAL INTRODUCTION  
**TO ALL GERMAN GRAMMARS**  
**AND ELEMENTARY WORKS.**

BY

**F. L. O. Røhrig.**

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## PRELIMINARY.

Our object in these pages is not to make a learned, but a *useful and essentially practical* book, which may prove profitable in the hands of *every one*, even the illiterate and, so to speak, uneducated person. Care has, therefore, been taken in this little work to leave out all scientific expressions and grammatical digressions which do more harm than good, in elementary treatises of the kind.\*)

We have throughout this little book, employed such plain and simple language that the least cultivated mind will be able to use with advantage the instructions preparatory to the study of the German language, which it was our desire here to impart. But even the students in Academies and Seminaries, who wish to give some attention to German, may find this sort of practical instructions, not entirely beneath their capacities. For, if the method of study which is adopted in these few pages, is not a learned one, it is at least founded on a scientific basis. It proceeds from the fact that the German is nearly related to the English, so much so, that it might almost be said, that the whole English language (at least in its purely Germanic or Anglo-saxon part,) is contained in the German; resembling somewhat the waters of a large stream which although swollen to a considerable size by various tributary rivers, may be said to be contained in its fountain.—The greater, if not the greatest, part of the German words may, therefore, still be found in the English language. But they may frequently have become, in the run of time, so changed and modified,

\*) Those of our readers who are conversant with the usual mode of instruction in languages, and the logical order which prevails in Grammars generally, will perhaps think it strange, at first sight, to find that order entirely neglected, and things brought together, which seem not to have any connection with each other. To this we only say that our main desire is, here to lay down some *general rules*, from which many others will easily be derived as *necessary consequences from principles*, for instance, as if in a similar work for the English language, we would say [to give here only one example out of many others] that the letter "y" is a final letter, and that, with but a few exceptions, whenever a word at the end of which it stands, takes an increase of one or more syllables, the "y" has to be written as an "i". And on that occasion we would mention all the various cases of grammatical changes where that general rule is applied, not taking into consideration their belonging to the nouns [such as copy, copier, &c.] or the adjectives [as beauty, beautiful], and also pretty, prettier, prettiest], or the numerals [as for instance: twenty, twentieth], or the verbs [as I cry, he cries] and so forth.

that they appear often as if disguised and not at all discernible to the common observer. Our intention, therefore, is to give to the beginners of the German language, before they enter into the details and minutiae of the Grammar, a small but sufficient number of rules; by the judicious application of which, they will soon become able to make of every German word a corresponding English word.\*)

The transformation of German words into corresponding English words, is done by comparing all the parts of which a German word is composed with those of an English word that appears related to it. Thus, syllables are to be compared in such words one by one, and in these syllables all the letters; letters, (vowels and consonants) being the most elementary parts of which all words consist, and, therefore, the most important in a thorough and minute comparison.

With these few preliminary remarks, we now recommend the following pages to the careful perusal of the student who wishes to acquire a sound and respectable knowledge of German in the shortest possible time. And, if the simplicity of the style, the plainness of the exposition, the newness and evidence of the facts presented, the time-saving and labor-saving method, the smallness of the book and its low price, cause this little work to be considered and used, as a *General Introduction and preparatory Study TO ALL GERMAN GRAMMARS*, and thus be introduced as the learner's first text-book in the Schools of this Country; and if it should become, in every respect, a popular and practically useful book, in the hands of the masses of our American people who wish to mingle with the daily increasing German population, then we shall think that we have not labored in vain.

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\*) These rules have their last reason in the Science of Language and comparative Philology, a new science which originated in Germany and has hitherto, been cultivated almost exclusively by German Scholars. The English and French begin daily more and more to appreciate the valuable results of that intensely interesting study, and some of the celebrated standard works of such men as *Wm. Humboldt* (the deceased brother of Alexander), *Hopp*, *Pott*, &c. have already been translated by the neighboring nations of Germany into their respective native tongues. This Science of Language is by no means an imaginary, or as some self-made Etymologists may suppose, an arbitrary, uncertain and merely conjectural science; but, in its last analysis, it rests on the respectable foundation of the Physiology of the human voice and the laws of Acoustics. Even in this Country an effort is already perceptible of bestowing some attention on this new science; and distinguished classical Scholars on this Continent begin to hold it in a very high estimation, as is evident from numerous passages in their works.

Many persons seem to consider the types which they find in German books and which are different from the English letters as one of the most discouraging difficulties that meets them at the very outset. But we are happy to tell them all, that they know these letters already, since they are the very same Gothic characters which we so frequently see at the head of Newspapers, on Book-titles, Music pieces, on Shop signs, &c. They have only been reduced to a smaller scale and adapted to the convenience of the printer. Another, rather encouraging fact it may be worth while to mention here: a considerable deal of the literary productions of the Germans, several Newspapers of Germany, editions of the German classics, scientific works and others, are printed in Roman types, that is, in the same letters as the English. We, therefore, make use in the following pages of the English letters only, as they are so frequently employed in German print. In this way we avoid the appearance of accumulating difficulties, and the little practice which the beginner needs in the above-mentioned Gothic types, will be very suitably deferred until he continues his studies in the Exercise-books and Grammars. Thus, all that refers to the German letters, their forms in print and writing, their names and their pronunciation, it is not our object here to consider. The latter may be found in every German Grammar; and, as we suppose that such (especially those very practical and progressive elementary books of **Woodbury**) are in the hands of all who, as beginners, make use of our little book, we proceed immediately to the rules relating to the *transformation of German words into corresponding English words.*

**RULE 1<sup>st</sup>.—VOWELS** (a, e, i, o, u, y) are the most easily changed in words of kindred languages, so much so, that the *difference of a vowel* in a German and its corresponding English word, need never prevent us from recognizing their identity.—Not *what* vowel, but *where* the vowel stands; in other words the *place* of the vowel, alone is of importance for this purpose. Hence, we have in German, for instance, the word "**aus**" (with "u") and in English the same word "**ass**" (with "a"); other examples of the same kind are the German "**aus**" (with "a"), which has for its corresponding word in English "**ass**" (with "a"), then also



the German "*lang*" and the English "*long*"; the German "*blaus*" (with the vowels *a*, *u*), English, "*blaze*" (with *u*, *e*); the German "*Freund*" (with the vowels *e*, *u*), English, "*friend*" (with the vowels *i*, *e*); &c. &c.

When a German word is given and we wish to find the word corresponding to it in English, we have, first of all, to look out for a word of the same or at least a similar meaning; then we try to keep the vowels as similar as possible before we endeavor to change them. We thus, for instance, begin with trying to keep in the English words the *same* vowels as in the German. But if we do not arrive in this manner, at any corresponding English word, then we substitute *similarly sounding* vowels, and only, at last, put vowels *altogether different*.

Often *one* vowel stands in German, while *two* or more have to be put in English; for instance: in German "*faund*" (only with *one* vowel, "*a*"); the same word in English: "*found*" (with the *two* vowels: "*o*, *u*") &c. Also the opposite takes place, thus: in German "*reich*" (with the *two* vowels "*e*, *i*"), the same word in English "*rich*" (only with *one* vowel, "*i*"), &c.

Often also we have to add in the English word a mute "*e*" at the end, where the German has no such addition. For instance: in German, "*wein*." (With the *same* vowels "*e*, *i*" we cannot form any English word of a like or similar meaning; we, therefore next proceed to the substituting of *similarly sounding* vowels, which end we attain here by the one vowel "*i*." But this would lead us to the word "*win*" or "*to win*", where the "*i*" has not a similar sound to the German "*ei*." To arrive at this result, we have to lengthen the English "*i*," which is done by the addition of a mute "*e*" to the word, thus: "*wine*.")

**RULE 2<sup>nd</sup>.**—As to the **CONSONANTS** of corresponding words in German and English, they may be sometimes *alike*, and, in other instances *different*. But by this we mean to say that they are changed only according to *certain laws*; they are still *similar* and *related*. The *great law* according to which consonants, in kindred languages, interchange, is: that *those which are pronounced by the same organs of the human voice, are most frequently interchanged*. Thus are the lip-letters (labials) which are: *w*, *v*, *b*, *p*, *f*, *m*. Examples of such interchanges are: the word "*father*" which in Latin begins with *p* (a lip letter), in English with *f* (another lip letter), in German with *v* (again another lip letter), &c.

In the same way the throat-letters (gutturals) *h*, *g*, *gh*, *c*, *k*, and the German *ch*, &c., and their attenuated and modified forms (palatics): consonantic *y*, German *j*, &c., are all easily interchangeable

with each other. Examples are: the German word "*licht*" (with *c*), which is in English "*light*" (with *g*); the German "*garn*" (with *g*) is the English "*yarn*" (with *y*), &c. &c.

Then also the *d*-sounds (linguals): *d*, its harder form *t*, its aspirated and lisped form *th* interchange with each other. Also the *s*-sounds (sibilants) are interchangeable in kindred tongues, viz: *s*, *z*, *sh*, *j*, the German *sch*, &c. At the same time, a frequent exchange or permutation exists between the *t*- and *s*-sounds. Examples of both cases are: the German word "*hart*" (with *t*) is in English "*hard*" (with *d*); the German "*besser*" (with *ss*) is in English "*better*" (with *tt*), &c.

When we consider a German word, in order to find its corresponding word in English, we have to compare especially the CONSONANTS in the words which, in kindred tongues like German and English, we suppose to be related. We have to treat the consonants as the most important part of the words, and compare them with regard to the organ by which they are uttered. Thus, two letters will be related to each other, when, for instance both are lip-letters, or when both are throat-letters, or both belong to the *t*- or *s*-sounds, &c. &c. For, the sameness of origin, or in other words, the sameness of the organ of voice with which they are uttered, is the very thing which determined their interchange and makes us recognize their primitive identity, and hence the identity of the *words* in which they stand.

We enter now upon some further particulars connected with these transformations of German words into English, and present some practical hints bearing on the application of our rules.

German verbs may be changed into English verbs, especially in their most simple and indeterminate form, the infinitive mood, when we keep in mind the following few and easy rules: viz.

The original termination of the English infinitive was "*en*," as we still see by some traces left in the English of the present day, such as the verbs: to fasten, to hasten, to lighten, to frighten, to listen, to hearken, to liken, to blacken, &c.—Now, in German the infinitive mood of verbs ends either in "*en*" or simply "*n*." As this termination does not generally exist in the English infinitives, which have no other characteristic sign by which they are known, than the little syllable "*to*" placed before the word, we simply change when transforming German verbs into English verbs, the termination "*en*" or "*n*" into that little prefixed syllable "*to*." For instance:

{ in German: binden	Germ. finden	Germ. singen	Germ. bringen
{ in English: to bind	Engl. to find	Engl. to sing	Engl. to bring
{ Germ. senden	Germ. spenden	Germ. winden	} and many others.
{ Engl. to send	Engl. to spend	Engl. to wind	

As a DOUBLE consonant in German has no other meaning than to render the preceding syllable short, we have when we meet such cases in the transformation of German words into English, to reduce the double consonant to a simple one.

Thus, for instance: 

In German: <i>kommen</i>	} k and c being almost identical letters, belonging both to one and the same organ of voice.
In English: <i>to come</i>	

We also observe that the letter "h" in the middle of German words, serves in most cases, only to lengthen the preceding vowel. We have in English something analogous to this silent "h," in the proper name "Joh~~h~~n" for instance. But as it does, not otherwise, exist in English, we have, of course, to take it out, when we want to transform such German words into English. Thus, for instance: in German the verb: "*sehen*" becomes "*to see*" after dropping the "h," and changing the termination "n" into the prefixed syllable "to".

Other examples of such transformations of German into English verbs, but with the interchange of consonants, are the following:

In German: <i>brechen</i>	Germ. <i>helfen</i>	Germ. <i>hoffen</i>	Germ. <i>trinken</i>
In English: <i>to break</i>	Engl. <i>to help</i>	Engl. <i>to hope</i>	Engl. <i>to drink</i>
In German: <i>geben</i>	Germ. <i>leben</i>	Germ. <i>haben</i>	Germ. <i>denken</i>
In English: <i>to give</i>	Engl. <i>to live</i>	Engl. <i>to have</i>	Engl. <i>to think</i>
In German: <i>reichen</i>	Germ. <i>bleichen</i>	Germ. <i>treiben</i>	Germ. <i>suchen</i>
In English: <i>to reach</i>	Engl. <i>to bleach</i>	Engl. <i>to drive</i>	Engl. <i>to seek</i>
In German: <i>reiben</i>	Germ. <i>sagen</i>	Germ. <i>hören</i>	Germ. <i>stehen</i>
In English: <i>to rub</i>	Engl. <i>to say</i>	Engl. <i>to hear</i>	Engl. <i>to stay</i>

In German: *leuchten* | But the German "*leuchten*" is "*to lighten*"; Germ. *hören* is in English "*hear*", &c. &c.

Now we would mention the transformation of the PAST PARTICIPLE of German verbs into its corresponding English form. The past participle in these two languages is of great importance from its frequent occurrence, as the compound past-tenses of the active voice, as well as the whole passive voice of the German and English verbs are formed of it. Its termination in German is very similar to that in English, viz: "t" and "et" (the English *ed*); also "n"; just as we have in English *spent*, *brought*, *loved* (with *d* for *t*), *written*, &c.—But in German it has, moreover, a syllable at the beginning, namely "ge." As this does not exist in English, we have to drop it when transforming German words of this kind into corresponding English words. We here give some examples: The German "*gesehen*" is in English "*seen*"; the German "*gestohlen*" is "*stolen*"; "*gebrochen*" is "*broken*"; "*gelernt*" is "*learned*"; "*gebracht*" is "*brought*"; "*getrieben*" is "*driven*"; &c. &c.

We proceed to some other rules.

1s.—Where the German language begins words with "st", the