

**FIRST FRENCH CLASS-BOOK, OR A  
PRACTICAL AND EASY METHOD OF  
LEARNING THE FRENCH LANGUAGE,  
CONSISTING OF A SERIES OF FRENCH AND  
ENGLISH EXERCISES, PROGRESSIVELY AND  
GRAMMATICALLY ARRANGED**

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First French Class-Book, or a Practical and Easy Method of Learning the French Language,  
Consisting of a Series of French and English Exercises, Progressively and Grammatically  
Arranged by Jules Caron

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**JULES CARON**

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THE FRENCH LANGUAGE,

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*French and English Exercises,*

PROGRESSIVELY AND GRAMMATICALLY ARRANGED

BY JULES CARON,

Author of "The Principles of French Grammar," and late Teacher of the  
French Language and Literature in the Edinburgh Philosophical  
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## INTRODUCTION.

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A PROMINENT characteristic of the French language, as compared with the English, is the variableness of those parts of speech which relate to the noun,\* and their constant agreement with it in gender as well as number. In the English language, on the contrary, these same parts of speech are generally invariable.

This great difference between the two languages must be traced to the principles from which they start. The English language has three genders, and a natural classification of them for persons and things; the French has only two genders,† and consequently an arbitrary classification of them for inanimate objects.

Thus, whilst the gender of English nouns is always known, and needs no artificial method to point it out, it is necessary in French to indicate in some way the conventional gender of things; and hence various forms of the article are used to show the arbitrary gender assigned to inanimate objects.

Uniformity in practice requires that this manner of showing the gender of nouns should apply to all cases indiscriminately, and that all words standing in the same subordinate position to the noun should, like the article, express the gender of nouns by their form and inflections. Hence the general rule, that all parts of speech which refer to the noun agree with it in gender as well as in number.‡

The noun is then in French the chief word, as the Germans properly call it, both as conveying the principal idea and imparting a particular form, corresponding to its own gender and number, to the words which refer to or represent it.

It follows from this general agreement of the variable parts of speech with the noun,—

1st, That one cannot use any noun in French, or represent it by a pronoun, without attending to its natural or knowing its artificial gender, as this must be expressed, as well as its number, in the words by which it is to be attended or represented, according to the general rule.

\* That is, the article (*definite and indefinite*), the (*possessive, demonstrative, interrogative, indefinite, and all qualitative*) adjectives, the past participle, taken adjectively, and the pronouns.

† Masculine and feminine.

‡ All parts of speech which refer to a pronoun agree with it, as they would do with the noun for which it stands.

2d, That the gender of nouns, which in English is suggested to *the mind* by the object itself, and seldom expressed, is in French constantly presented to *the eye* and *ear* by the form or inflections of the words, by which the noun is accompanied or represented.

3d, That this very principle of expressing the gender and number of nouns in the words which relate to or represent them, is at the same time the means of ascertaining and learning the conventional gender of things.

4th, That to ascertain and learn from this circumstance the conventional gender of things, it is necessary first to know how the forms and inflections of those words which agree with the noun, express its gender; and finally—

5th, That to be able to use again the nouns, the gender of which has been ascertained in this manner, or even those of persons, the gender of which presents no difficulty, one must be thoroughly master of the various forms of the parts of speech which are constantly used with or for the noun, in order to make them agree with it, according to the ruling principle of the French language.

It must have now been understood that arbitrariness being the only principle according to which things are in French either masculine or feminine, it is impossible to give complete and satisfactory rules to learn mechanically the gender of inanimate objects,\* and that the general rule agreeably to which the gender of such nouns is pointed out in the words by which they are accompanied, is evidently intended to make up for this deficiency; and it will undoubtedly prove, if due attention is paid to its various applications, the only unexceptionable rule for learning the gender of inanimate objects.

The elided form of the article for the singular (see Lesson III.), the plural of it, and some forms of its substitutes, used before nouns, either masculine or feminine, form only an occasional exception to this mode of ascertaining the gender of nouns. They could only form a real one for him who would merely look once at every noun, and go no farther to learn their genders. But he who means to know French will certainly look more than once at every word, and he will infallibly find, in the course of his study, the gender

\*Attempting to give such rules is indeed preposterous. French nouns are not declined as Greek or Latin nouns, and their terminations, consequently, do not express any particular gender. Nouns of Latin origin naturally deviate from this rule, owing to our having adopted such words with their own genders, which they continue to point out in most cases by certain terminations—a circumstance which can so far assist the learner, as all nouns, either masculine or neuter in Latin, are generally masculine in French, whilst the others are feminine.

of every noun pointed out by some of the words agreeing with it, or representing it, though observation may occasionally be suspended by the accidental position of the noun by itself after these forms of the article, or some of its substitutes.\*

An early habit of considering the article, which points out the gender of nouns, and the noun itself, as only one thing, † so as to accustom the ear to their combined sounds, will be found the more natural method of learning that part of the language.

This will be still more evident if we consider that every man acquires at first his own language by the ear independently of rules, and that, although he may be greatly assisted by them in the study of another modern language, he will never acquire it practically except by the ear. Indeed, the words of a spoken language form by themselves, as well as in their grammatical arrangement, various combinations of sounds which are addressed to, and can only be remembered by, the ear, the teacher rather than the pupil of the mind. If, then, properly trained, it must by degrees take the place of rules, and will continue to be our guide when these have been entirely forgotten.

The present work is intended to assist the pupil in taking the first step towards a practical knowledge of French, according to the method pointed out by its very character. He will find here all the variable parts of speech successively and methodically illustrated in a series of French and English exercises; he will become acquainted with the various forms or inflections by which those parts of speech express the gender and number of nouns, and acquire considerable practice in using these same forms again with nouns of different genders and numbers, whilst the various illustrations are brought out in such a way as to enable him by degrees to express himself in French with the new materials he is gathering up on his way to a complete mastery of that language.

A glance at the Explanatory Table will however convey a more complete idea of the arrangement and matter treated in the work, as the object of this Introduction has been merely to mention a leading peculiarity of the French language which shows at once its general character, and points out at the same time the most natural and effective method of mastering it from the very outset.

\* In this book the genders have been marked in all cases.

† The pupil should bear in mind that the true equivalent in French to any English noun is, in all cases, a noun with an article showing its gender, prefixed to it, although that article is not always used with it.