

**FRENCH AND ENGLISH IDIOMS  
AND PROVERBS WITH CRITICAL  
AND HISTORICAL NOTES; IN  
THREE VOLUMES: VOL. I**

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French and English Idioms and Proverbs with Critical and Historical Notes; In Three Volumes:  
Vol. I by Alphonse Mariette

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**ALPHONSE MARIETTE**

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FRENCH AND ENGLISH  
IDIOMS AND PROVERBS

WITH  
CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES

BY

ALPHONSE MARIETTE

FELLOW AND EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF FRENCH LITERATURE AT KING'S  
COLLEGE, LONDON; FORMERLY FRENCH EXAMINER TO THE UNIVERSITY  
OF OXFORD (LOCAL BOARD), TO ETON COLLEGE, QUEEN'S COLLEGE  
LONDON, THE CHARTERHOUSE, CHELTENHAM COLLEGE,  
ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL, ETC. ETC.; EXAMINER TO  
THE SOCIETY OF ARTS

Late French Tutor to Their Royal Highnesses  
The Duke and Duchess of York

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I

LIBRAIRIE HACHETTE ET C<sup>IE</sup>  
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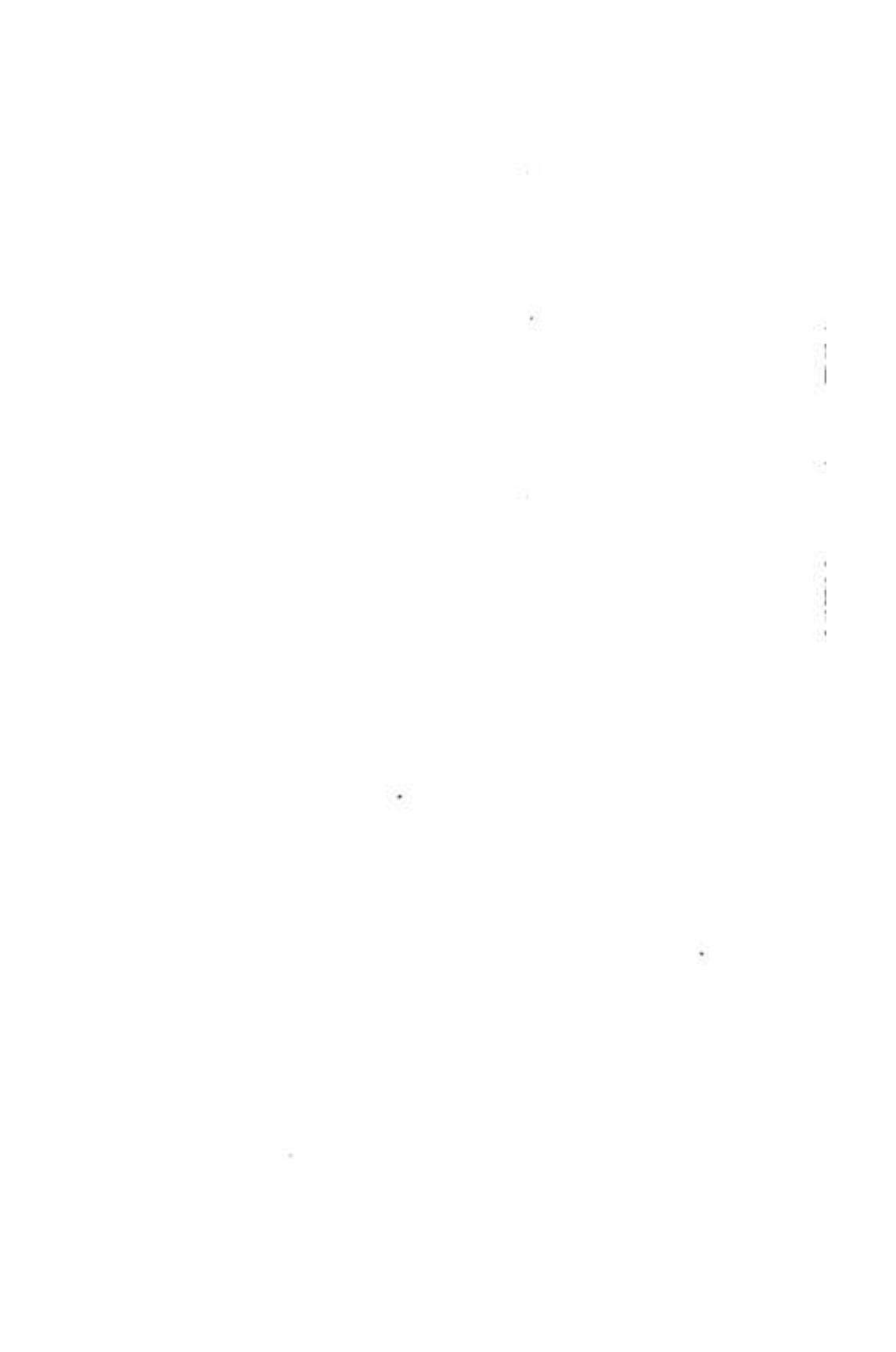
TO

THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES

THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF YORK

*In grateful remembrance of much condescension  
and kindness received, and as a humble token  
of the gratitude and profound respect of  
their most loyal servant*

ALPH. MARIETTE.





## PREFACE

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AN Italian proverb declares that a man has lived to no purpose unless he has either built a house, begotten a son, or written a book. I have not fulfilled the first of these requisites, and hope never to do so, although I have unfortunately done, several times over, the next most foolish thing, buying a house for other people to live in. As to the second qualification that constitutes a useful life, I am thankful to say I have done my fair share of parental duty; nor am I a novice in book-making. Here I am again, however, anxious to fulfil once more the third requisite of the Italian axiom, once more trying to make myself useful in my generation within my very humble means.

Having for many years acted as examiner in several of the highest and largest schools and colleges in England, and having been privileged to conduct for no less than forty years without interruption the French examinations of that most excellent institution, the Society of Arts, whose educational work, to say nothing of its other high pursuits, supplies one of the noblest specimens of English self-government, I have naturally had ample opportunities of noticing the utter ignorance of the English student in the matter of French idioms and proverbs—an ignorance which is more than equalled, I grieve to say, by that of nearly the whole of the French community as to the niceties—I had almost said the most simple features—of the English language.

I have therefore thought it right to do my best in the way of helping to fill up such a gap, and to create an interest in that practical direction. And I may add that these little volumes are emphatically a work of love, prompted by a genuine desire to contribute their small share to the more complete understanding between the two countries for which they are intended. Whatever friction, under the baneful impulse of that unamiable lady, *Madame la Politique*, may now and then arise on trifling matters, which can hardly be altogether avoided between two countries that have so many points of contact, it is my fervent prayer that there may never again occur any serious outbreak of hostility between the land of my birth and deep affection on the one hand, and, on the other, the home of most of my kindest friends, that glorious land of liberty, where I have had many opportunities, during a very long residence, of admiring a matchless sense of virility, and the steadfast pursuit of all that makes life honourable, and social intercourse genial and healthy.

I am satisfied that to bring about a closer feeling of mutual respect between these two great nations, now that their destinies happily rest with themselves, and are no longer in the hands of arbitrary rulers, there is no agency so potent or so direct as a thorough knowledge of each other's language, and of that national idiosyncrasy which is chiefly manifested in the popular dialect. I therefore consider the supply of any contribution to such knowledge as worthy of one's best efforts. And here I would remark that I have frequently noticed on either side of the Channel that an acquaintance, however imperfect, with the language of the people "over the way" was uniformly accompanied by a tendency to judge fairly and kindly of that people.

Many of the barriers that formerly divided the

nations of this world have long ago been partly, when not altogether, removed, so as to facilitate an intercourse profitable to all. But the ignorance of one another's language still remains a most serious obstacle to a full and free intercourse. It therefore behoves all friends of peace and progress to do their best to diminish such ignorance—every man according to his means. It is time, indeed, considering the material improvements accomplished on all sides, that the pernicious effects of the Tower of Babel were less keenly felt. This little work of mine is, so to speak, a stone which I venture to throw with my feeble hands at that historical monument of too long standing.

That the idiomatic knowledge of a living language is of paramount importance no one will deny. Indeed, it is so self-evident that there is no need for me to dwell at length on the subject. But it must be admitted, at the same time, that this idiomatic phraseology is fraught with difficulties, and that its perfect mastery can only be the reward of a long and laborious study. As long as the same thoughts are clothed in the same forms in both English and French, it is an easy matter to pass from the one to the other, by simply exchanging the corresponding terms supplied by the dictionary; but the difficulty begins the moment the plain, straight highroad common to both is left, and the two part company to deviate into different by-paths of their own, along which they are driven by their national genius farther and farther away from each other. Then it is that the difficulties begin, and that the perplexed learner requires guidance. As a matter of fact, the two languages tend more and more to assume special forms of their own—in other words, to be *idiomatic*. Certain it is that in the last century—to go no farther back—they ran in much more parallel lines, and resembled one another in their general construction much more than has been the case throughout