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Heath's Pedagogical Library — 17

METHODS
OF
TEACHING MODERN LANGUAGES

*PAPERS ON THE VALUE AND ON METHODS
OF MODERN LANGUAGE
INSTRUCTION.*

New Edition.

BY

A. MARSHALL ELLIOTT, CALVIN THOMAS, E. S. JOYNES, W. T. HEWETT,
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PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

In all departments of education teachers to-day, more than ever before, are reading the literature of their profession; and it is hoped that modern language instructors may find in the following papers stimulus and suggestion in a branch of education that is now recognized as exceedingly important in any scheme of liberal training.

Teachers of the modern languages have repeatedly inquired for copies of papers or addresses dealing with their profession, and it was suggested to us that it would be very acceptable and helpful if we should publish a collection of some of the best thoughts on the value and methods of Modern Language Teaching. We have therefore compiled this book of addresses and articles that have come to our notice or have been mentioned to us by prominent friends of modern language instruction. By kindly consenting to their publication in this form, the authors have co-operated with us in presenting pedagogical opinions of interest to the thoughtful consideration of scholars and teachers.

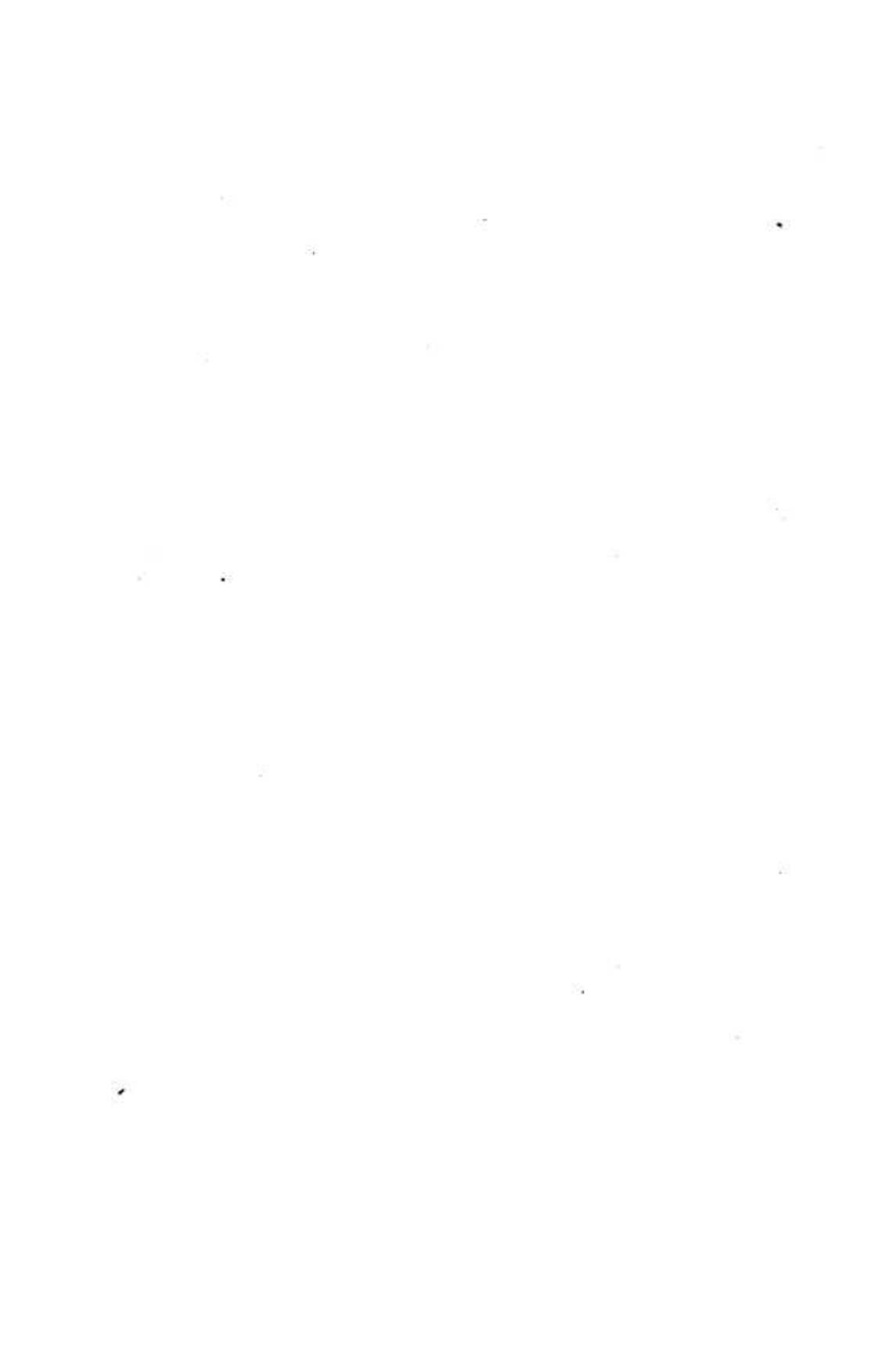
The order of these papers is due partly to their respective dates, and partly to the order in which they were suggested or presented to us.

D. C. HEATH & Co.

MARCH, 1892.

NOTE.—In the edition of 1915, the preliminary Report of the Committee of the National Education Association, made in July, 1914, has been included, and three recent papers substituted for some of those in earlier editions.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
MODERN LANGUAGES AS A COLLEGE DISCIPLINE	1
By PROFESSOR A. MARSHALL ELLIOTT of Johns Hopkins University.	
OBSERVATIONS UPON METHOD IN THE TEACHING OF MODERN LANGUAGES	11
By PROFESSOR CALVIN THOMAS of Columbia University.	
READING IN MODERN LANGUAGE STUDY	29
By PROFESSOR EDWARD S. JOYNES of the University of South Carolina.	
THE NATURAL METHOD	45
By PROFESSOR W. T. HEWETT of Cornell University.	
NOTES ON THE TEACHING OF FRENCH	50
By PROFESSOR F. C. DE SUMICHRIST of Harvard University.	
PRACTICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS OF MODERN LANGUAGE STUDY	90
By PROFESSOR A. LODGMAN of Michigan State Normal School.	
MODERN LANGUAGE STUDY IN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS. WHAT NEXT?	109
By WILLIAM B. SNOW, English High School, Boston.	
AIMS AND METHODS IN MODERN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION .	124
By WILLIAM R. PRICE, New York State Department of Education.	
THE TEACHING OF FRENCH AND GERMAN IN OUR PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS	138
By PROFESSOR C. H. GRANDGENT of Harvard University.	

	PAGE
STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON MODERN LANGUAGES, NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION	144
ON THE USE OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN THE CLASS-ROOM By PROFESSOR H. C. G. VON JAGEMANN of Harvard University.	171
COMMON SENSE IN TEACHING MODERN LANGUAGES By E. H. BABBITT, Instructor in Columbia University.	186
TRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH By E. SPANHOOD, St. Paul's School, Concord, N. H.	207

THE
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METHODS OF TEACHING MODERN LANGUAGES.

MODERN LANGUAGES AS A COLLEGE DISCIPLINE.¹

BY PROFESSOR A. M. ELLIOTT, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY.

There is one aspect of the Greek-Modern Language question on which there has been no special stress laid, so far as I have seen, in the various discussions of it that Mr. Adams's paper has called out; viz., the importance of modern language study as a special disciplinary factor of our higher education. In truth, the few references to the subject outside of the favorable view held in the Phi-Beta-Kappa oration would seem to imply a denial of the existence of such an element altogether in the modern idioms as compared with the classic tongues. The eminent president of Yale College asserts that they "are distinctly recognized as essential conditions of professional and business success, or accomplishments of gentlemanly culture." Professor Josiah P. Cooke of Harvard assures us that, in his opinion, "to compare German literature with the Greek, or, what is worse, French literature with the Latin, as a means of culture, implies a forgetfulness of the true spirit of literary culture." And a leading contemporary journal, after qualifying all controversy of this sort as an "inexcusable display of ignorance," adds with a

¹ Read before the Modern Language Association of America, 1887, and reprinted with the permission of the author.

sort of oracular sanctity, "And for philology, there practically is no foundation except Latin and Greek,—and Greek rather than Latin." Such expressions as these show most clearly the dogmatic spirit in which this whole subject is approached by many advocates of the exclusive classical idea when the question of training comes up. As zealous holders of the only true faith, they would fain exclude the converts to modernism from all the distinctive elevating influences of their creed, and would relegate them to the domain of purely utilitarian interests, or to the changing caprices of society; and this subordinate position is granted them more from the necessities of the age in which we live than from any special feeling of their worth as members of the great corporate body of scholars. For the scholar in truth it is even hinted, in some cases, that their field is useless, and for the educator in particular the subjects that occupy them are regarded as a species of cumbersome, worthless lumber that litters up the mental workshop, and that must be gotten rid of as soon as possible, if the range of the active powers of the mind is to be widened. In other words, it is set down as a tenet of axiomatic wisdom that modern languages have no place whatever among the formative elements which help to develop the mental faculties. This doctrine, however extreme it may seem, when thus plainly stated, is held by a large majority of those who represent, at present, the guiding force in matters of education throughout our country; but I apprehend that it is for the most part the result of traditional beliefs, or of the unhappy failure of methods, or of sheer prejudice in a few cases, rather than of actual experience in such matters. It may be doubted, in fact, whether this important branch of learning has been represented by rigid scientific methods in our educational system sufficient to test even the most elementary worth of its subjects as factors of a living power suited to intellectual growth. Until this shall be done, it is difficult to understand the fairness of any comparison