

**ENGLISH INTO FRENCH,  
FIVE THOUSAND ENGLISH  
LOCUTIONS RENDERED  
INTO IDIOMATIC FRENCH**

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English into French, five thousand English locutions rendered into idiomatic French by D. N. Samson

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# ENGLISH INTO FRENCH

*FIVE THOUSAND ENGLISH LOCUTIONS  
RENDERED INTO IDIOMATIC FRENCH*

BY

D. N. SAMSON

'He that travaileth into a country, before he hath some entrance into the language, goeth to Schoole, and not to Travaile.'—BACON.

'Je voudrois premierement bien sçavoir ma langue, et celle de mes voisins où j'ay plus ordinaire commerce.'—MONTAIGNE.

162931.

8.6.21.

HUMPHREY MILFORD

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## INTRODUCTION

IT would be interesting to know, if it were possible to discover, how many of the 'uncensused' thousands of English-speaking men and women throughout the world who can read French with pleasure and with ease, can speak and write idiomatic French with fluency and correctness.

The reasonable presumption is that the number is relatively small. It would be extraordinary if it were otherwise. For it is given to very few of us to live long enough in France to make of French a second language as every educated foreigner makes of France a second country, or to be able to devote to the study of French sufficient time to master the difficulties, the intricacies, and the genius of the language, with the aid of the imperfect instruments available for the purpose.

Bearing in mind the fundamental fact that English-speaking people *think* in English, and confining attention solely to the speaking and writing by them of idiomatic French, it must be said that existing English-French dictionaries, i. e. dictionaries in which English is the first language, as opposed to French-English dictionaries, in which French comes first, are of little use.

In saying this, there is not the slightest intention to derogate from the merits of those works, whatever their merits may be. All that is meant is, that if judged by their size, they are inadequate; if judged by their economy, they stand condemned.

It is needless to say that this condemnation does not and cannot apply to the disposition of *single* words in the nomenclature. They are arranged in strictly alphabetical order, like the single words in any other dictionaries, whether bilingual or unilingual. The remark applies therefore to *locutions* and to locutions alone, the word 'locution' being used in the sense of *a chain of words having the force of a single word*, or, by extension, *expressing a complete idea*.

And here lies all the trouble. Open an English-French dictionary in search of the French equivalent of an English locution, you are at once faced with the problem of deciding under which word to look for the desired locution. You seek what you regard as the principal word in it,

fortunate when there is only one so-called principal word ; but when there are more than one, the difficulties are enormously increased and generally lead to much loss of time and great vexation of spirit.

Admitting, however, that you have found the principal word, your troubles are far from ended. You have to start on a voyage of discovery to see if the locution is given under that word, while in the case of words that enter frequently into locutions, the search is necessarily much longer and only too frequently fruitless.

It therefore follows that from the point of view of the place of a locution in the nomenclature—and that is the point of chief interest—the *only* principal word is the first word of that locution.

*Examples :*

‘ From one thing to another.’

‘ From pillar to post.’

‘ From whom one has nothing to fear.’

These are prepositional locutions, and it is clear that their proper place in a dictionary or in any other work serving, within its limits, the purpose of a dictionary, is under the first word : ‘ From,’ the other words following like links in a chain.

In no other way than that of strict alphabetical arrangement in the manner indicated can ease, rapidity, and certainty of reference be attained. That is the arrangement which has been adopted in this volume and rigorously adhered to throughout.

### PROMPTUARY

This word was part of a discarded title of the book, and still survives in the page-headings. It had been chosen in preference to *Treasury*, *Repertory*, *Store-house*, *Hand-book*, and the like, and is used in the same sense.

### PRONUNCIATION

As it is impossible to speak with respect, or even in becoming language, of the attempt made by distinguished professors and others to transliterate French sounds by means of English sounds, it is necessary not to say anything on that point further than to declare the attempt to be as hopeless as it is ridiculous and as ridiculous as it is hopeless.



In so far as it has been deemed necessary to figure French pronunciation in this book, it has been done with the aid of French sounds.

No other intelligent method is conceivable.

But, it may be asked: how is one to know the French sounds?

There is only one way possible, and that is to *hear* them.

No typographical signs, no diacritical marks, in a word, no orthoepical notation, no phonetics of any kind, are of the slightest use unless one has learnt the sounds by ear to begin with.

Each one must do this for himself as best he can. From this primal necessity there is no escape.

Apart from the sounds, which, as has been said above, must be learnt by ear, the rules of French orthoepy are simple enough and can be easily formulated.

1. All the syllables of a word are unaccented, save and except the syllable containing the last open vowel, on which there is a slight stress or emphasis, not sufficiently strong, however—*pace* the grammarians—to constitute a tonic accent such as exists in English.

*Example:* 'Indépendance.' The 'a' in 'dan' is the last open vowel. It is impossible to indicate in language or by signs the extent to which it should be stressed.

2. Each syllable begins with a consonant wherever possible, regardless of etymology, as in words made up of the prefix 'in' and a radical beginning with a vowel.

*Example:* 'Inabordable' (pronounced *i-na-bor-da ble*).

3. Double consonants (double 'm', double 'p', double 't', &c., &c.), excepting 'll' when its sound is liquid, as in the word 'travailler', are pronounced as one, as a general rule.

All exceptions to this rule that occur in this volume are indicated by transliteration.

#### ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

In order to include as many locutions as possible, the illustrative examples have been kept within sober though not meagre limits, and are given with such clearness and precision—some may think, with meticulous precision—as to constitute in themselves an interesting feature.

## CROSS-REFERENCES

In the choice between cross-references and occasional repetition, there has been no hesitation. Occasional repetition has been preferred. Each entry is therefore complete in itself and independent of every other entry in the book.

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It goes without saying that this volume is only a beginning. It contains no verbal locutions, i. e. locutions the first word of which is a verb in the infinitive mood. There was no room for them.

For the same reason two-word locutions have been excluded. It is confined to locutions of three words and of more than three words. Should it meet with a favourable reception, it may be followed by other volumes of a like kind.

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That which divides the French and English peoples from each other, more than differences of temperament, modes of thought, manners, customs, and traditions, is the barrier of language, and no real entente can exist until that barrier is removed.

We have been surfeited with prophecies of an unalterable friendship with France cemented by comradeship in arms during the war just ended.

Alas, the generation of men who fought in that war will die out; to the generation that witnessed the war but took no part in it, it will be a memory; and to the generation after that, a matter of history. Are we then to be thrown back on community of interests alone to secure for our relations with France the lasting tenure which we all desire?

That is a transient, not a sure foundation of friendship.

What then remains to be done to achieve the long-desired union of these two peoples, so dissimilar and yet so fitted to complement each other?

The answer is, mutual esteem and affectionate good will. To that end one thing is needed: comprehension, and the way to comprehension is familiarity with each other's language. Nothing else will do.

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This book has been extracted from the unfinished manuscript of a new and original English-French dictionary which has been in preparation by

one man, for nearly twenty years, amid trials and troubles of all kinds, without a word of encouragement, a smile of favour, or an act of assistance. Should the manuscript fall into English hands after his death, it is hoped that it may be found possible to continue the work on the lines on which it has been planned, and to carry it to a successful conclusion, including the French-English division, which should be what no second half of a bilingual dictionary has yet been, viz. the inverted counterpart of the first.

It ought to be an object of pride for latter-day Englishmen to follow in the footsteps of Cotgrave and to do for modern French, from Malherbe down to their own time, what he did for sixteenth-century French. So mote it be.

D. N. SAMSON.

LONDON,

*1st January 1920.*