

ESSENTIALS OF GERMAN

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649577378

Essentials of German by B. J. Vos

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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NEW YORK
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

1903

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PREFACE

As its name implies, the present work aims to present and instil those facts of the German language which are essential for the reading of connected texts. At a time when so many of the latter have been edited with a special view to the needs of beginners, the use of an introductory lesson-book would seem to possess distinct advantages over that of an extended grammar. The writer makes no apology for the lack of completeness of grammatical statement, his conviction being that a thorough mastery of the leading facts and principles is of far greater value to the beginner than a passing acquaintance with a mass of details. The chief emphasis has accordingly fallen on the practical side of the subject; in the theoretic part clearness rather than fulness of statement has been the end in view.

An effort has been made throughout to set a task that should be within the reach of the average pupil. Especial pains have been taken to limit the vocabulary to words of common occurrence. That the pupil should develop a feeling for German construction and word arrangement is far more essential than that he should at the outset have an extensive vocabulary at his command. The ability of the average pupil to assimilate a large number of new words with each successive lesson has frequently been overrated.

Questions to be answered in German have been introduced from the fifth lesson, and connected reading-matter from the sixth onward. This latter, while organically connected with the sections of the grammar treated, is of such

a nature that it will, it is hoped, serve as a relief from the other tasks, and confer that sense of growing power over the language which is the greatest possible stimulus.

The introductory chapter on pronunciation may at first seem somewhat out of proportion in a book of this size. However, if a presentation of this difficult subject is to be of any practical assistance whatsoever to pupil or teacher, it must of necessity be detailed and explicit. In substance this chapter is based on Professor Hempl's *German Orthography and Phonology*, a treatise that should be in the hands of every teacher of German. In the body of the work as well, care has been taken to make the pronunciation of individual words clear as regards both quantity as accent.

In connection with the series of Fragen to be found in many of the lessons, it may be worth while to call attention to the fact that the answering in unison, or rather the repeating in unison by the class, or a part of the class, of the answer given by a single pupil, effects a great saving of time and constitutes a valuable aid in the acquisition of a proper enunciation. The teacher should at any rate be on his guard not to designate the pupil who is to answer a question until after the question has been stated.

Whenever it seemed that exercises could for certain classes of students be advantageously divided, this has been indicated by means of the letters a and b (A, B). Of the stories, two or three have been taken from the author's *Materials for German Conversation*.

It may cause some surprise to find so little attention paid to cognates. In the opinion of the writer the treatment of this subject ordinarily found in beginners' books has been pernicious. When the learner is asked to associate Baum with *beam*, doch with *though*, krank with *crank*, naß with *nasty*, Tisch with *disc*, it is conceivable that as an artificial mnemonic device the scheme possesses some virtue, but

from the point of view of pedagogical method in the teaching of language such mediating through a third member, which usually greatly differs in meaning, is wholly unsound.

The general plan and the first draft of this volume were nearly three years ago worked out in conjunction with Professor A. B. Faust of Wesleyan University. Subsequently, owing in large part to the distance separating us, further collaboration was found to be impracticable. Professor Faust has, however, at all times retained his interest in the undertaking, and a special feature of the book, that of the Review Lessons, is directly due to one of his later suggestions.

It remains to acknowledge my indebtedness to my colleague Dr. W. Kurrelmeyer, who has given valuable assistance in the reading of proofs.

B. J. V.

