

**MACMILLAN'S PROGRESSIVE
FRENCH READER, WITH A
SERIES OF IMITATIVE
EXERCISES, II- SECOND YEAR**

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Macmillan's progressive French reader, with a series of imitative exercises, II- second year by
G. Eugène-Fasnacht

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PROGRESSIVE FRENCH READER

SECOND YEAR



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MACMILLAN'S
PROGRESSIVE FRENCH READER

II.—SECOND YEAR

CONTAINING

FICTION IN PROSE AND VERSE
HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE EXTRACTS
ESSAYS, LETTERS, DIALOGUES, ETC.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

IN order to understand the etymologies given in the Notes, it is indispensable to have some acquaintance with the laws by which Latin has passed into French, and with this view the following brief summary of the chief of those laws has been compiled.

I. When in the course of our readings we meet with such words as *rançon*, p. 53, l. 35; *entier*, p. 60, l. 24; *naïf*, p. 62, l. 2; *frêle*, p. 95, l. 27; *hôtel*, p. 120, l. 32; *foison*, p. 152, l. 11, etc., and turn to our vocabulary for their origin, we shall find that—

<i>rançon</i>	is derived from the Latin	<i>redemptionem</i> ¹
<i>entier</i>	“	“ <i>int. grum</i>
<i>naïf</i>	“	“ <i>nativus</i>
<i>frêle</i>	“	“ <i>fragilis</i>
<i>hôtel</i>	“	“ <i>hospitale</i>
<i>foison</i>	“	“ <i>fusionem</i> , etc.

But, acquainted as we also are with the French words *rédemption*, *intègre*, *natif*, *fragile*, *hôpital*, *fusion*, the Latin origin of which is unmistakable, the question naturally arises how we are to account for the fact that the Latin

¹ For the reason why the Accusative is given and why the Nominative form *redemptio* could not possibly have given us *rançon*, see III.

words *redemptionem*, *integrum*, *nativus*, etc., are represented in French in *two* forms, and these two so strikingly differing from each other? As the answer to this question embodies a fact of paramount importance, we will go into it as fully as the brief space at our disposal will allow.

The principal element of the French language is Latin; but Latin words, be it at once understood, have entered into the composition of French at different periods and by different processes.

I. In the first place we have a stock of Latin words amounting to about four thousand, and forming the substratum of the whole language, which the different Celtic nations and the Franks who subsequently settled and ruled in Gaul, under the pressure of the superior power and civilisation of the Romans, gradually adopted instead of their own native language.

Now this newly-adopted speech they, as a matter of course, had to shape as best they could, that is to say, as approximately as their deeply-rooted habit of speaking the tongue they had learned from their mothers would allow.* Nor is this the only reason why the new speech, which first went by the name of *Romance*, offers such a marked contrast with the Classic Latin which we learn in school; for it must be borne in mind that the great bulk of the people had to borrow their new terms from those with whom they were brought into contact, viz. the soldiers and colonists. Now

* Those who have heard foreigners of different nationalities grapple more or less successfully with the difficulties of English pronunciation and clothing the idioms of their mother tongue in English words, will easily understand our meaning.

these settlers on the soil of Gaul did not speak the language of Cicero, no more than in our days the labourers of Dorsetshire or Cumberland speak the Queen's English. They had a dialect of their own which their fathers and forefathers had spoken long before the conquest of Gaul, and known under the name of *castrense verbum*, or *sermo plebeius*.

And if we bear in mind that in this popular speech we meet with the forms *digitus* for *digitus*; *vincere* for *vincere*; *saeculum* for *saeculum*, etc; if we further remember that instead of the classic *pugna*, *equus*, *hebdomas*, they used the popular terms *batualia*, *caballus*, *septimana*, it will no longer be a matter of surprise that in modern French we have the shortened forms *doigt*, *vaincre*, *siècle*, and that the meaning of *pugna*, *equus*, *hebdomas* is expressed by *bataille*, *cheval*, *semaine*.

But a time came when the people had absorbed in their speech about as many words as they required for their daily wants; the husbandman had a name for everything relating to ploughing and planting, the artisan a name for every tool and trick of his handicraft, the huntsman a name for every kind of fur and feather¹; so the process of absorption little by little came to a standstill, and, it need hardly be added, with the practice also the power of spontaneous word framing was lost.

¹ The warrior and hunter, however, being a born Frank, was loath to give up the old homespun words he had inherited from his forefathers from beyond the Rhine; hence the numerous war terms of Teutonic origin still extant in French:—*guerre* (*werra*); *massacrer* (*matiken*, Mod. Germ., *metzen*); *heaume* (*helm*); *maréchal* (*maraschah*); *steron* (*sporo*), etc.