

**FRENCH LESSONS FOR MIDDLE  
FORMS; CONTAINING AN  
ELEMENTARY ACCIDENCE AND  
SYNTAX, WITH COPIOUS EXERCISES,  
CONVERSATIONS AND READINGS**

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French lessons for middle forms; containing an elementary accidence and syntax, with copious exercises, conversations and readings by G. Eugène Fasnacht

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**G. EUGÈNE FASNACHT**

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FRENCH LESSONS FOR MIDDLE FORMS

## PREFACE

As its title imports, this Course of French Lessons is intended to serve as a class-book for *Middle Forms*. It is especially designed for schools in which a liberal allowance of time is reserved for the study of modern languages.

Although it is assumed that, before using these Lessons, the pupil will have gone through some preliminary stage of French (such as, for instance, the First Year of Macmillan's French Course), it is not by any means taken for granted that he has *ipso facto* thoroughly mastered even the elements of the language. Mindful of this, I have devoted the first twenty lessons to a systematic recapitulation of the *regular accidence*, so as to give the young student an opportunity of systematising and supplementing the unavoidably more or less scrappy knowledge previously acquired.<sup>1</sup>

For this purpose the Conjugation of Verbs,—Auxiliary and Regular,—is taken up from the beginning, but this time, grouped in parallel lines, so as to enable the pupil to compare—tense after tense, and mood after mood—the regular inflectional system of the four conjugations. At the same time the intelligent use of these tenses and moods is from the outset illustrated by carefully contrasted examples. With the most salient features of the language staring him in the face in striking contrast to English usage, the pupil cannot fail to be gradually coaxed into an intelligent appreciation of the essential

<sup>1</sup> "You must learn systematically; it is the easiest way, and the only way that takes hold of the memory."—*The Poet of the Breakfast-table*.

difference between the several tenses and moods.<sup>1</sup> I need hardly say that, besides serving the purpose of easy reference, this recapitulation of the first stage work ensures something like completeness for the second stage.

It is on this solid foundation that the superstructure contained in these Lessons is built up. Clearness of arrangement, lucidity of exposition, and careful gradation of difficulties will, I trust, smooth the pupil's path and assist him to a clear insight into the structural system of the language.<sup>2</sup> Yet these Lessons do not profess to be "French made easy"; they do not presume to save the pupil the trouble of thinking; they are not intended for that class of students "qui voudraient tout savoir sans rien apprendre." So far from that, I claim it as a special merit of my method that it makes serious demands on the students' thoughtful attention.

If the learning of modern languages is to hold in the curriculum of our Modern Schools the place it deserves, the teachers must set themselves a higher aim than to impart a mere smattering of cut-and-dried phrases. They must treat it as an instrument of mental discipline and culture as efficient for that purpose as the study of ancient languages.<sup>3</sup>

The Exercises are for the most part of a conversational character—which, in the case of a modern language, needs no word of justification. If a few of them may be found rather trivial, it must be borne in mind that every-day talk is apt to be trivial, and that in so far these trifles are more typical representatives of the spoken language than trite maxims borrowed from copy-slips.

<sup>1</sup> "The first stage helps the learner to master the Accidence, the second the Syntax. These are obviously rough divisions, though convenient; and, as I said, *I would deliberately mix them for teaching purposes*, so as always to foreshadow the land that lies before us, beyond the point at which we are."

—A. SIDGWICK, *Teaching of Composition*.

<sup>2</sup> "L'esprit semble plus éclairé quand les yeux sont satisfaits."—VOLTAIRE.

<sup>3</sup> I venture to think that to turn "How do you do?" into idiomatic French may be quite as useful for purposes of training the mind as the

In order to relieve the inevitable drudgery of accidenced-grinding, I have made it an essential point to press into my service numerous extracts of an interesting character. Carefully selected with a view to illustrate the subject treated in the lessons to which they are added, they have the incidental advantage of affording suitable material for early attempts at easy composition. For this purpose I have inserted in the Appendix a series of Imitative Exercises which, I trust, will not overtax the young pupil's power of reproduction.<sup>1</sup>

Many teachers will no doubt think that these Extracts might profitably have been increased—even to the total exclusion of detached sentences. But these now-a-days much abused detached sentences have their uses; if judiciously selected they may be turned to excellent account for embodying in a nutshell important abstract rules—

“Un âne qui *portait* des reliques *s'imagina* qu'on l'*adorait*,” suggests in a single line the characteristic difference between the Imperfect and the Preterite;

“*Le temps, c'est de l'argent*,” conveys in every word a lesson on the use of the article and the functions of emphatic *ce*;

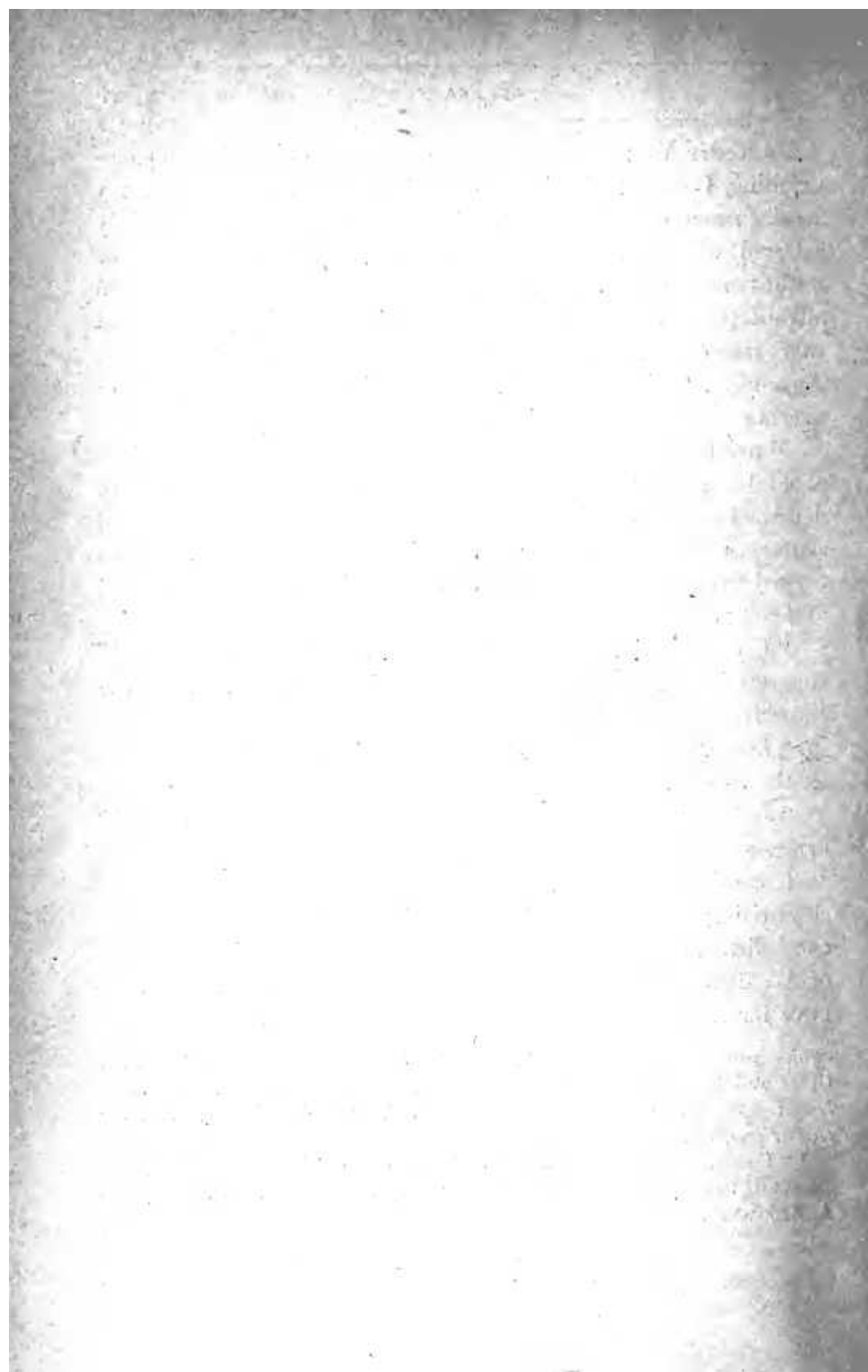
“*Je ne crois pas que personne puisse dire que je l'aie trompé*” brings out in strong relief an important feature of the use of moods.

I cannot conclude without a word of regret that exigencies arising from our ill-digested system of Examinations have compelled me to give admission to many exceptional details of Accidence of comparatively little educational value. These I have for the most part relegated to the Appendix.

choice samples culled by Mr. A. Sidgwick (*Teaching of Composition*) from Greek and Latin class-books—*I weep the wretched plight of the heavy-armed troops. Thou wast teaching the beautiful art. The irrational fear of the barbarians, etc.*

<sup>1</sup> “I should advise that the practice of composition should be begun almost at the beginning; *pari passu* as nearly as possible with *reading*.”—A. SIDGWICK.





## CONTENTS

LESSON	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS . . . . .	1
1. <i>The Noun used with Definite Article</i> . . . . .	2-3
2. <i>The Noun used with Partitive Article, Adverb of quantity and Indefinite Article</i> . . . . .	4-5
3. <i>Plural of Nouns and Adjectives</i> —C. Le Miroir . . . . .	6-7
4. <i>Feminine of Adjectives</i> . . . . .	8-9
5. <i>Demonstrative Adjectives and Pronouns</i> . . . . .	10-11
6. <i>Possessive Adjectives</i> . . . . .	12-13
7. <i>Auxiliary Verb avoir</i> . . . . .	14-15
8. <i>Auxiliary Verb être</i> . . . . .	16-17
9. <i>Idiomatic uses of avoir</i> —C. Les Animaux domestiques . . . . .	18-19
10. <i>Idiomatic uses of être</i> —C. Division du temps. D. Le Bonheur . . . . .	21

### REGULAR CONJUGATION

11. <i>Present Indicative and Imperative</i> . . . . .	22-23
12. <i>Past Imperfect</i> —C. Le Printemps. D. Les anciens Égyptiens . . . . .	24-25
13. <i>Past Preterite</i> —C. Alexandre et Bucéphale . . . . .	26-27
14. <i>Present Perfect</i> —C. La lettre de recommandation . . . . .	28-29
15. <i>Past Perfect</i> —C. Médina Sidonia. D. Richard Cœur de Lion . . . . .	30-31
16. <i>Future Present and Perfect</i> —C. Ésope et le Voyageur. D. L'heure de dîner . . . . .	32-33
17. <i>Conditional Present and Perfect</i> —C. La tête de l'Évêque. D. Alexandre et Diogène . . . . .	34-35
18. <i>Infinitive: Chief uses</i> —C. L'Arabe et les Perles . . . . .	36-37
19. <i>Subjunctive Present: Chief uses</i> . . . . .	38-39
20. <i>Subjunctive Imperfect</i> —C. Joseph II. et ses Courtisans . . . . .	40-41
21. <i>Participle Present</i> —C. Le Renard et les Raisins. D. Charles Quint. E. Le Laboureur et ses Enfants . . . . .	42-43
22. <i>Compound Tenses conjugated with être</i> —C. L'Inondation . . . . .	44-45
23. <i>Passive Voice</i> —C. La Machine à vapeur . . . . .	46-47
24. <i>Reflexive Verbs: Simple Tenses.</i> —D. La Fourmi et la Colombe. E. L'Aigle et la Corneille . . . . .	48-49

LESSON	PAGE
25. <i>Reflexive Verbs</i> : Compound Tenses—C. Les Coqs et le Dindon. D. Le Feu Follet . . . . .	50-51
26. <i>Reciprocal Verbs</i> —C. Le Lion et les Taureaux. D. Les deux Coqs. E. L'Âne et son ombre . . . . .	52-53
27. <i>Impersonal Verbs</i> . . . . .	54-55
28. <i>Peculiarities of Regular Verbs</i> —D. Le Vieillard et la Mort. E. Le Lapin blanc . . . . .	56-59

## IRREGULAR VERBS

29. I. aller ; s'en aller—C. L'école buissonnière. . . . .	60-61
30. II. dormir, mentir, se repentir, sentir, servir, partir, sortir, bouillir, faillir, vêtir, fuir—C. Saint Martin. D. Vanité. E. L'Âne et le Renard . . . . .	65
31. cueillir, saillir, ouvrir, couvrir, offrir, souffrir . . . . .	66-67
32. acquérir, tenir . . . . .	68-69
33. venir—C. Le Gland et la Citrouille. D. Saint Martin . . . . .	70-71
34. mourir, courir—D. L'Espagnol en Russie. E. Le menteur puni. F. L'ingratitude des peuples . . . . .	72-73
35. III. recevoir, devoir—C. L'aveugle clairvoyant . . . . .	74-75
36. savoir, pleuvoir, mouvoir—C. Fénelon et son élève . . . . .	76-77
37. pouvoir—C. Le Sang des Suisses. D. Le Compte des années . . . . .	78-79
38. vouloir—C. Le Pot de terre et le Pot de fer. D. Le Français et l'Anglais. E. Le Gentilhomme attrapé . . . . .	80-81
39. falloir—C. Randonnée . . . . .	82-83
40. falloir—C. Louis XIV. aux abois. D. Randonnée ( <i>cont.</i> ) . . . . .	84-85
41. valoir . . . . .	86
42. déchoir, echoir, voir . . . . .	87
s'asseoir, surseoir, seoir—C. Le roi Jean . . . . .	88-89
43. <i>Recapitulation</i> —A. B. C. L'Ambassadeur d'Espagne en Angleterre . . . . .	90-91
44. shall, should, will, would, rendered into French . . . . .	92-93
45. may, might, can, could—B. Randonnée ( <i>cont.</i> ) . . . . .	93-94
46. to wish, to want . . . . .	95
47. IV. plaindre, ceindre, joindre, craindre—C. La Patience. D. Précaution . . . . .	96-98
48. conduire, construire, cuire, nuire, luire, écrire—C. Xerxès. D. Le verbe cuire . . . . .	99-101
49. traire, vaincre, suivre, rire . . . . .	102-103
50. suffire, dire, maudire—C. Le diseur de bons mots . . . . .	104-105
51. faire—C. Pierre et Jean. D. Locutions vieilles. E. Por- trait vivant . . . . .	106-107
52. faire—Ésope et l'Âne . . . . .	108-109
53. prendre—C. Le Cheval et le Cerf. D. Le Cheval et l'Âne. E. Bonsoir, madame la Lune . . . . .	110-111