

**THE FACTS OF LIFE: (LES
FAITS DE LA VIE) PART I.
HOME LIFE-THE SCHOOL-
TRAVELLING-PLANTS**

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The Facts of Life: (Les Faits de la Vie) Part I. Home Life-The School-Travelling-Plants by
Howard Swan & Victor Bétis

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PSYCHOLOGICAL METHODS OF TEACHING AND STUDYING LANGUAGES

FRENCH SERIES.—No. 1

THE FACTS OF LIFE

(LES FAITS DE LA VIE)

IDIOMATICALLY DESCRIBED AND SYSTEMATICALLY
ARRANGED, FORMING A COMPLETE DICTIONARY
OF THE OBJECTIVE LANGUAGE

PART I.

HOME LIFE—THE SCHOOL—TRAVELLING—PLANTS

BY

VICTOR BÉTIS

Director of the Normal School of Languages, Boston, Mass.

AND

HOWARD SWAN

Director of the Central School of Foreign Tongues, London

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P R E F A C E.

MODERN LANGUAGES are not constructed upon a logical plan; if they were, it would be possible, with a small number of root words and a few rules of grammatical construction, to express ideas clearly and accurately in any language. The study of a foreign language would then be reduced to a simple matter, as the expressions of one language would correspond exactly with the expressions of the other, and could always be translated word for word.

But if we examine, in the first place, the separate words of our own or any other language, we shall find that the composition of words is far from being logical; their present form may be explained by etymology, phonetic evolution, history, and various other influences; but none of these elements can make us certain for any word of its exact meaning—that subtle feeling which we may term “its inner significance.” The vocabulary of a language—its nomenclature—is not systematic, being based rather on primitive perceptions, needs, and emotions, and having been developed by long use in a haphazard way; and it is this want of system that renders it so difficult to fix the exact meaning of any word of any language, especially when this word is not a substantive designating a material object.

Most dictionaries attempt to fix the sense of words by means of a definition and of explanations more or less general, which give but a vague idea of the real use of the word to one who does not already know its meaning. Such a definition is often sufficient, it is true, for the mother tongue, for the reason that the continual use we make of the words of our own tongue has long familiarized us

with the entirety of their meaning. But if we consult a foreign dictionary the case is far from being the same; then, as we are not previously acquainted with what is obscurely termed the "ordinary usage" of the words, we do not form any precise idea of the sense by means of the dictionary definitions; and still less can we obtain knowledge of the proper *use* of the word — that is to say, of those cases in which this word may be employed without violating the spirit of the language and without passing the limits within which this word habitually moves in the language under consideration.

The explanations given in the ordinary dictionaries may often cause us to suppose that the use of a word is far wider than it really is,—the definition, in point of fact, only applying to a certain restricted number of cases: each word has, so to speak, only a definite "elasticity," and this elasticity itself is determined by the use which is habitually made of the word in the ordinary language of life.

The true signification of any word is contained,—not in a definition or explanation,—but in the collection of those instances in which this word is commonly and rightly employed in the *usual language of life*. The whole of these instances ought, therefore, to be found in a dictionary worthy of being used in the study of a language.

If, further, we examine the complete sentences of the *usual language of life*—that part which is the most necessary in all languages—we shall again find that "logical" expressions are rather the exception than the rule. By "logical" expressions are meant those sentences which express an idea or a fact by analysing this idea or fact logically.

The great bulk of the usual language is composed of "idiomatic" expressions—that is, of expressions quite peculiar in their construction, escaping systematic analysis, recalling the fact or the idea rather than expressing or representing it, and impossible of being translated word for word. These idiomatic expressions are far more numerous in every language than is usually imagined,—it might be said, indeed, without much exaggeration, that a language is almost entirely composed of idiomatic expressions.

It is mainly these two considerations, of the true signification

of words and of the nature of sentences, which have led to the construction of this Dictionary of phrases, a dictionary arranged psychologically, designed to include examples of all the circumstances in which any word is usually employed in the ordinary language, and to form at the same time a collection of the idiomatic expressions of this language, classed according to the different Facts of Life which they express. Logical expressions will also be found therein, but in small number.

One of the greatest advantages of the "Dictionary of the Facts of Life," as will be seen in the Introduction, is that it may be used as a Text-Book for the systematic study of a language, if, for the lessons, the methods of teaching which we have named the "Psychological Methods" are employed; and it constitutes, at the same time, an extensive and efficient material for conversation and composition.

Such a Dictionary, when complete, will permit a student to master a language in its entirety. The present book constitutes the first part of the Dictionary; the scenes of ordinary everyday national life have been designedly and naturally taken rather than those of any special class, and the finished work will be made as complete as possible, to include all the Facts of Life which give rise to the idiomatic expressions of the ordinary language.

For the Latin and Greek languages the chapters will faithfully describe primitive scenes of domestic and public life, travelling and warfare, and this arrangement will therefore possess in itself an historical and educational value.

The full mastery of several languages will then be within the reach of all who have even but moderate time and means at their disposal. The requirements of a liberal education and of commerce now demand the thorough and practical knowledge of the three languages, English, French, and German (and often of at least one other language), besides the basis of a careful study of the two great classical languages. If, by an organized arrangement of material, and by the use of methods of teaching based throughout upon psychological needs, the time necessary for learning a language can be greatly reduced, and at the same time a wider and more practical knowledge can be given, the utility of the work of organization here attempted will be evident. A time may perhaps eventually

come for the adoption of a universal language, when mankind will cast aside their old languages to adopt another simpler and more rationally constructed, and therefore more useful for the analysis and communication of ideas; in such a language the purely idiomatic expressions would disappear, to give place to logical expressions, and a revolution as far-reaching as that in the past of the substitution of phonetic writing for hieroglyphics would take place in the domain of linguistics. Until the time of the adoption of a universal tongue, however, there will exist everywhere an increasing need for learning several modern languages; and a work such as this may render much service in the scientific and practical study of languages, even if it does not facilitate the adoption of an international language.

V. B.

H. S.

CENTRAL SCHOOL OF FOREIGN TONGUES,
HOWARD HOUSE, ARUNDEL STREET, STRAND, W.C.

NORMAL SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES,
122 BOYLSTON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.
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INTRODUCTION.

THIS book, as its title indicates, is in reality a dictionary, but it is a dictionary organized on a plan very distinct from those which have hitherto appeared.

1. It is a dictionary of the phrases and sentences of a language; it includes the collection of all the *ordinary* instances in which any word is employed in the habitual language of life: all the phrases — that is to say, “consecrated by usage” — the expressions used for the ordinary actions carried out by living beings, or undergone by inanimate bodies, in the usual situations and surroundings in which they are habitually and normally found in life.

2. These sentences are connected together one with the other, so as to form readable matter.

3. The sentences are classed, not in their alphabetical order, but in an “encyclopedic” order; which is yet, as will be seen, so familiar to every one, that researches are as easily made in it as in the ordinary alphabetical dictionaries.

4. This dictionary is, further, one which can be learnt and assimilated; that is, it can be learnt and studied page by page, provided always that a suitable method of teaching is followed.

It may be well to examine these different points in detail: —

I. It is not necessary to repeat what has been said in the preface with reference to the meanings of words; it is sufficient only to point out and illustrate by an example the difference between idiomatic expressions and the logical expressions and their relative importance. Two phrases in French may express the English phrase, “He is sleepy,” — namely *Il a sommeil*; *Il a envie de dormir*; as well as the corresponding logical expression, *Il éprouve le besoin de dormir*. In ordinary life (and by this is not meant merely the life of common

people, but rather the normal and habitual life of all) the first two expressions are almost exclusively employed by every French person to whatsoever class he may belong; the third, although perfectly correct, would be too heavy, affected, and almost pedantic in the ordinary circumstances of life — authors of books alone would make use of it to express the fact in some exceptional circumstance. The first two phrases are the habitual expressions “consecrated by usage,” which will come quite naturally to the lips of a French person.

There is one fact, not hitherto sufficiently taken into consideration, which itself condemns the system of literal or word for word translation — namely, that in almost all the ordinary habitual circumstances of life not only do we speak but *we think in idiomatic phrases*. This is easily explicable, as it is always the idiomatic expression which has been most frequently (not to say solely) associated with the fact itself during the earliest years of our life. It results from this, that whenever we wish to speak in a foreign language, what first springs to our minds is the idiomatic expression of our mother tongue; and if we seek to translate this literally, we usually bring forth a tortured sentence, either wholly incomprehensible or utterly absurd. This confusion would evidently not occur if mankind usually thought by means of logical sentences; but such is not the case. To each idiomatic phrase in the mother tongue there is generally a corresponding idiomatic phrase in the foreign tongue, used under the same circumstances, but differently expressed, according to the climatic or other surroundings, or the peculiar genius of the people. It is these expressions which are here, after considerable labor and research, collected in the form of a dictionary or encyclopedia of habitual facts; so that for any ordinary fact of life the student may be certain of finding the expression required, not made up by ourselves or drawn from any special authors, but that used by everybody — the ~~normal or~~ habitual expression of a normal and habitual fact.

II. All the phrases belonging to the same subject are grouped and arranged in an easily followed order; the order mostly employed is that of Succession in Time suggested by the linguist Gouin in his theory of the “Series.” This order, however, has not been exclusively employed, as will be seen, for example, on p. 11, *Les différents Costumes*; or p. 56, *L'année scolaire*. Each collection

57.58 *à la fin*