

**A SIMPLIFIED GRAMMAR
OF THE
FRENCH LANGUAGE. IN
THREE PARTS**

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A Simplified Grammar of the French Language. In Three Parts by George Hughes

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PREFACE.

HAVING had occasion to examine and compare several of the most popular French Grammars in general use, I have been forcibly impressed with the great defects which attach more or less to all of them, as INSTRUMENTS OF EDUCATION; and I am of opinion that a great service would be rendered both to teachers and pupils, by the introduction of a Manual of the French Language on a simplified plan, divested of superfluity and technicality—expressed with clearness—and arranged with judgment.

And if the traditional mode of handling the matter may be advantageously superseded by a simpler system, there is no time more appropriate for the change than the present.

The French language is now entering more extensively than ever into the *curriculum* of liberal study, both of males and females; and it may be presumed that the latter especially, having never gone through the preliminary drill of the *Latin* grammar, will appreciate the attempt to abridge their labours in this department of study.

The following pages will be found to contain no directions for the *pronunciation* of the French language.

Such directions are common to almost every Grammar published; and one popular work goes so far as to illustrate by woodcuts the position of the tongue, teeth, lips, and palate, as affected by the pronunciation of the various letters.

But in truth all such directions are quite inadequate, and as often mislead as instruct. The nice distinctions of sound are too subtle to be represented either *phonetically*

or by diagrams; and in this particular it is vain to rely on any other guidance than that of a well-qualified teacher.

In the 'parts of speech' it will be seen that the *interjection* has no place.

An *interjection* is the mere emission of sound, prompted by some emotion of the mind. "The neighing of a horse, the lowing of a cow, the barking of a dog, the purring of a cat, sneezing, coughing, groaning, shrieking, and every other involuntary convulsion with oral sound, have almost as good title to be called parts of speech as *interjections* have. Where *speech* can be employed they are totally useless; and, indeed, where will you look for the *interjection*? Will you find it among laws, or in books of civil institutions, in history, or in any treatise of useful arts or sciences? No; you must seek for it in rhetoric and poetry, in novels, plays, and romances."—*J. Horne Tooke*.

The genders of French nouns are best learned by committing them to memory, with the article *le, la, or un, une* prefixed, according to the gender.

The *terminations* of nouns are, to a certain extent, a guide to their gender: but the dictum of M. de Levisac that "the termination in *e* mute is to be called a *feminine* termination, and that any other is a *masculine* termination," is at once set aside by the fact that, of one thousand words ending in *e* mute, one-half are masculine, and one-half feminine; and that there are eleven hundred words ending in *-sion* (-tion) which are *feminine*.

The vocabularies of nouns in this Grammar are arranged in accordance with the rules which have the *fewest exceptions*; the exceptions are given, and every noun has its appropriate article prefixed.

The number of conjugations is limited to two. The first conjugation contains about *four thousand* verbs; the second has one hundred and fifty. The remaining verbs, capable of being classed, are distributed into four small groups, A, B, C, D, containing altogether about one hundred verbs; and a further list of irregular or defective verbs (about seventy in number) admits of no classification.

Simple rules for the formation of the tenses are given under each division.

The use of the word *pronoun* in this Grammar is limited to the *personal pronouns*,—*je, tu, il*, etc.; because these are the only words which are, strictly speaking, used *instead of a noun*: *demonstratives, possessives, relatives, and indefinites* come under the head of *adjectives*; because they are employed in *conjunction with a noun*, and not as a *substitute* for it.

It will be seen in what cases some of these latter may be called *pronominal adjectives*.

The Grammar is divided into three Parts.

Part I. contains an explanation of the terms employed in Grammar, (which advanced pupils may pass over), and treats of the parts of speech *individually*, in an *elementary* way, and for the most part irrespective of their *Syntax*.

Part II. treats of the parts of speech in *combination* with other parts of speech, and contains the rules of *Syntax* applicable to the same, exemplified by appropriate instances.

Part III. contains vocabularies of nouns arranged *terminationally* according to their gender,—and of adjectives, participles, and verbs, classed in reference to their *régimes*; to which is added a collection of idiomatic phrases.

It is recommended that every lesson should be read over *by the pupil to the teacher* before it is learned, in order that any vicious pronunciation may be corrected before it becomes established, and any difficulty be explained and removed. Each repetition should be followed by a minute and rigorous examination, in order to ascertain that the pupil is thoroughly master of the subject.

The points to which especial attention has been given are the following:

Presuming that the pupil is approaching Grammar for the first time, I have, in a short Introduction, defined and explained the *technical terms* of Grammar.

I have studied to follow an orderly method of arrangement, and to give the Rules in simple, brief, and clear language; illustrating them by sufficient and appropriate examples.

Attention has been paid throughout to the difference of *idiom* existing in the two languages.

As the difficulties of the language reside very much in the *small* words, such as the article, the pronouns, and prepositions, I have exemplified the use of these more largely than is usual in the popular Grammars.

The *emphatic* words, to which attention is particularly directed, are printed in *Italics*.

If anyone should insist that a good Grammar of the French language can come only from the pen of a Frenchman, I am willing to concede the point, if the book is designed for *French* pupils. But a person who undertakes to instruct *English* pupils in the *French* language should possess a competent knowledge of *both* languages; and it is quite as necessary that he should be a good English scholar as a good French one. There are certain difficulties which are *best appreciated*, and which can therefore be *best elucidated* by an Englishman; and the *idiomatic* part of the language, which is, in fact, its very pith and marrow, will fail to be made sufficiently prominent unless the author is competent to institute a comparison between the peculiarities of the *two* languages.

How far I have been successful in this respect, others must judge.

UPPER DEAL,

February, 1869.

