

**THE IDIOMS, OR
EXERCISES ON THE
DIFFICULTIES OF
THE FRENCH LANGUAGE**

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The Idioms, or Exercises on the Difficulties of the French Language by L. Malaher

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BY L. MALAHER, B.A.,
(OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS.)

Les idiotismes sont ces tours particuliers qui sont la physionomie nationale d'une langue, et lui donnent l'originalité comme l'analogie lui donne la justesse — *Dict. de l'Acad.*

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON:
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1859.

303. c. 97.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS *Third* Edition of the "THE IDIOMS" has been carefully revised and corrected under my superintendence. I have long used it in my School, and know its value in teaching the French language. The examples are well chosen, and judiciously constructed.

The Author was an able and experienced Teacher, of whose conscientious and zealous labours I entertain a grateful remembrance; and the work is now reprinted, for the benefit of his Widow and family.

C. H. GODBY, D.C.L.

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Henley-on-Thames.



PREFACE.

Notwithstanding the numerous and excellent books already published for the purpose of aiding the Student in prosecuting the study of the French Language, it has been frequently remarked, that there is not one which furnishes him with a good selection of useful and practical Idioms. *Idioms* being the physiognomy, and in some way, the soul of any language, it is by no means a light undertaking to attempt to supply this deficiency.

If, too, it be a true remark, that during a whole lifetime we do but learn our own mother tongue, how thoroughly conversant with it ought he to be who would attempt to teach it to others in all its minute and delicate details. But besides the difficulties which thus *naturally* belong to the subject of Idioms, others have been *created* by those who have written upon it, not having made such a selection as would meet the wants of the generality of learners; some, for instance, have introduced a large number of proverbs, many of them vulgar, and appear to have made it an especial point to give a round-about translation, French, without doubt, but unnecessary, there being another equally correct and more simple. Collecting altogether all the extraordinary and affected phrases they could meet with, they lead the enquirer to imagine that he must strive to imitate and master the witticisms and eccentricities of the French Language, which after all are but its mis-growths; others, again, have placed their Idiomatical phrases indiscriminately, without classification, and giving the preference to such as are of more common utility, as though Pupils generally had ten or twelve years to devote solely to an acquisition of the language, in all its varied forms; or had all such an equal amount of capacity, as to render it immaterial whether or no the matter presented to them were strictly *necessary*. Nearly all seem to have forgotten, that a work on the Idioms, to be useful, should not be so much an *exposé* of the *peculiarities* of the *French*, (which usually are very well understood by the reader of French literature), as a *comparison* of the *phraseology* of the *two* languages. On such comparison, it will be found that the difficulty lies generally in the peculiarity of the English expression; which peculiarity, if unnoticed, will always prove a difficulty to any one attempting to speak.

We hear much about trying to think in French; it is attempting an impossibility, until a considerable degree of familiarity and fluency have been acquired; nay, until the Student has nearly mastered the language, his ideas will present themselves in English. Thus he will always look, if not for a translation of, yet that which corresponds to, his own phrase and words; and then, if that can be given in his own way, it will help to strike his mind forcibly and impress upon his memory the French expression.

It is with a view to procure these advantages, and, at the same time, avoid the above-mentioned faults, that these Exercises have been written. The Author has endeavoured to introduce all locutions of common and practical use in the spoken language, and has furnished in a Vocabulary and notes the means for making a correct and elegant translation of them. All vulgarisms and affected expressions have been carefully excluded; the opinions of the best authors have been consulted; and the highest authority in the French tongue, the Dictionary of the Academy, has been in constant request. An alphabetical order has been observed to assist the Teacher or Pupil, in case he should prefer committing the translation of the Exercises to memory, which is, perhaps, advisable. The idiomatical expression has also been printed in *italic*, to call the attention of the Pupil, and enable him to use the book as one of reference. Care has been taken to embody the Idioms in a clear sentence, so as to illustrate thoroughly the meaning of the expression, and at the same time give the Pupil the opportunity of practising what he knows of the language in a conversational phrase. In short no pains have been spared to make the book, if not a complete treatise on Idioms, at least a useful book for the generality of English students.

Half of the author's life has been spent in a close study of his native tongue; and his residence of nearly twenty years in England as a French Teacher, has given him the opportunity of becoming conversant with the Idioms of the English. Whether, with these advantages, he has succeeded in the following pages in making himself useful, the public are invited to decide; and should he have the good fortune to merit the approbation of that public and his Pupils, he will think himself amply rewarded for the pains which he has bestowed in compiling them.

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French Language.

N.B.—The learner will observe, that in every sentence one idiomatic expression has been printed in *italics*, and by looking in the vocabulary, at the end of the book, for the *leading* word in it, he will find the corresponding French expression. Should any other idiom occur in the same sentence, the translation of it also will be given in the notes, or along with that of the idiom printed in italics. Occasionally, when any particular difficulty is presented, the whole sentence will be found thus translated.

Having *first* consulted the vocabulary, the solution of any difficulties must be sought for in the notes printed at the end of each exercise; while for the very few words not to be found either in the vocabulary or the notes, the common dictionary may be used.

The Third Edition of this work, (thus *amended* and *improved*), is strongly commended to the attention of all who are desirous of attaining proficiency in the French language, as it supplies *every requisite assistance* even to such as have at present only a very superficial acquaintance with that language.

Remarks.—In the 1st sentence, look for the word "*abide*" in the vocabulary, and also in the notes.

In the 2nd, observe the second rendering for the same word "*abide*."

In the 3rd, 4th, and 5th, notice the three different expressions for "*abilities*."

In the next sentence, look for the word "*abode*," and in the following one for the word "*about*."

And so on through the work.

By observing this *alphabetical* classification of the words in the text, with their *corresponding position* in the vocabulary, much time and trouble will be saved to the pupil.

Abide.—You may depend upon it, we *shall abide* by your decision. I *abide* by what you said. He is not wanting in *abilities*, although he looks so awkward.

His sister has the *best ability* for music. His uncle was a man of *uncommon abilities*. We have no *settled place of abode*. Now you have time, *set about it in earnest*. We *were about* to start when it came on to rain. I never carry much money *about me*. She is much beloved by *all about her*. They walked four *abreast*. He *has been abroad* a great deal. He has spent most of his time *abroad*. He *abused* me shamefully. You have no idea of the *abuse he heaped* upon me. I like that tradesman, he is so *accommodating*. That house has the best *accommodation*. We must *accommodate* ourselves to circumstances. Music and drawing are two very necessary *accomplishments*. She is an *accomplished* woman. He did it of his *own accord*. They all consented with *one accord*. He is such a one for *turning* every thing to *account*. I asked him to *give me an account* of the transaction. I do not know how to *account for* his conduct. You will be *called to account for* what you have done. *Upon better acquaintance* you will like him. He *improves on acquaintance*. He is a man of *extensive acquaintance*.

You may depend upon it, *vous pouvez-y compter*. We shall abide by, *nous nous soumettrons à*. I abide by, *je m'en tiens à*. What you said, *ce que vous avez dit*. He is not wanting in, *il ne manque pas de*. Although he looks, *quoi qu'il ait l'air*. Awkward, *gauche*. Now, *à présent que*. When it came on to, *quand il se mit à*. Rain, *pleuvoir*. Much beloved, *aimée*. A great deal, *beaucoup*. He has spent, *il a passé*. Most of his time, *la plus grande partie de son temps*. Abused me shamefully, *me dit un torrent d'injures*. Of the abuse he heaped upon me, *du torrent d'injures dont il m'accabla*. Tradesman, *marchand*. We must accommodate ourselves, *il faut s'accommoder*, (or) *nous devons nous accommoder*. She is, *c'est (not, elle est)*. He is such a one for, *c'est lui qui s'entend à*. Turning everything to account, *tirer parti de tout*. Give me an account, *me donner les détails*. To account for his conduct, *me rendre compte de*, (or) *expliquer sa conduite*. (In the three next sentences look for the word *acquaintance* in the vocabulary.)

Address—I had heard that he was *paying his addresses* to your sister. He has a *pleasant address*. What an *ado* you have made about nothing. You should see what an *ado* there is in the house when uncle B. comes to visit them. Most French wines are *adulterated*; not more so, however, than Port or Sherry. That poor man looks quite *broken down with age*. He is *under age*. He is *of age* to-morrow. I think he will not live to see an *old age*. This weather does not *agree* with me. They *will agree* very well together. *I agree to it*. Well, *agreed*, then. My arms *ache*, that child is so heavy. I had the *tooth-ache* all night. She has always some *ache or other*. I see, sir, what you are *aiming at*. I always take a *good aim*, and seldom miss. He *aims at* great things. Leave the door *ajar*. Set the *alarum* at four o'clock. He kept us quite *alive* the whole evening with his jokes. She is equally *alive* to pain or pleasure. You should *make allowance* for the difference of age. He *allowed* him ten shillings a month for *pocket-money*. I will make every possible *allowance*, but I cannot overlook it. That legacy will *make some amends* for his loss in trade. *Do*, try to *make amends* for the time you have lost. I am quite *angry with myself* for having done it. I never knew any one so *easily provoked to anger*. I am sure you will make him very *angry* if you do so. She lives on a small *annuity*.

I had heard, *j'avais entendu dire*. (Look for the leading word *address*.) About nothing, *pour rien*. You should see, *il faut voir*. Most, *la plupart des*. Not more so, however, *pas plus cependant*. Port, *vin d'Oporto*. Sherry, *vins d'Andalousie*. Looks quite, *paraît tout-à-fait*. Broken down with age, see *age* in vocabulary, (and also for the next sentences). My arm *aches*, *le bras me fait mal*. Heavy, *lourd*. I see, Sir, what you are aiming at, *Je vous vois venir, Monsieur*. I always take a good aim, *Je vise toujours bien*. Miss, *manque*. Set, *mettez*. The whole evening, *toute la soirée*. Jokes, *plaisanteries*. He allowed him, *il lui donnait*. A month, *par mois*. For pocket-money, *pour ses menus plaisirs*. I will make every possible allowance, *j'aurai toute l'indulgence possible*. Overlook it, *le laisser passer tout-à-fait*.