

THE MASTERY SERIES: GERMAN

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The Mastery Series: German by Thomas Prendergast

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THOMAS PRENDERGAST

**THE MASTERY
SERIES: GERMAN**

Gutta cavat lapidem non vi sed sæpe cadendo.

THE MASTERY SERIES.

GERMAN.

BY

THOMAS PRENDERGAST,

AUTHOR OF 'THE MASTERY OF LANGUAGES; OR, THE ART OF SPEAKING
FOREIGN TONGUES IDIOMATICALLY'; AND 'HANDBOOK
TO THE MASTERY SERIES.'

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1906

P R E F A C E .

THE MASTERY SYSTEM is based upon the principles of the natural process pursued by children in learning foreign languages, when they associate with foreigners, after they have learned to speak their own language. They are impelled by instinct to imitate and repeat the chance sentences which they hear spoken around them; and, afterwards, to interchange and transpose the words so as to form new combinations. In the process of nature there is no teaching. But children learn to speak foreign tongues idiomatically without instruction of any kind—without even the aid of an interpreter.

In the Manuals this process is systematized.

As to the Language.—Long sentences are selected upon a new principle, and shorter sentences, or Variations, are evolved from them by rearranging those words and excluding all others. These Variations are all complete idiomatic sentences. The primary sentences are divided into sections, each of which, with some of its Variations, forms a short lesson.

The Sentences comprise those specialities of the mechanism of the language which it is most important that the beginner should Master before he attempts to converse.

The Variations are so devised that by mastering 100 words, the beginner obtains the free and habitual command of 100 complete sentences, with many more latent* Variations in reserve.

As to the Grammar.—The study is to be deferred until

* See Handbook to the Mastery Series.

this brief initiatory course of Mastery has been completed, and then it will be found that a large stock of grammatical knowledge of the language has been already attained without the use of a single technical term, of any rules, or of any instructions whatsoever. In this Manual the sentences are designed on a scholastic plan, in order to show with what facility this system can be applied to Greek and Latin.

As to the Learner.—His course of proceeding is regulated upon a new principle which ensures the accurate retention, by the memory, of all the sentences learned from day to day. As all other forms of speech are excluded, and as he is not allowed to have access to a Grammar, nor to compose any Variations for himself, he learns nothing but idiomatic diction, and as he learns it thoroughly, he cannot fail to speak idiomatically and grammatically also.

The two great objects of a learner's ambition ought to be, to speak a foreign language idiomatically and to pronounce it correctly. And these are the objects which are most carefully provided for in this System.

The chief peculiarities of the process, at the outset, are the frequency and shortness of the daily exercises, and the provision that, at the beginning of each sitting, the learner shall refresh his memory by hearing or reading the whole of the lessons previously received. Thus he is enabled to recall and reproduce the foreign sentences in their idiomatic order of arrangement with perfect accuracy and fluency.

The Sentences and their Variations have been prepared by Herr Hermann Ludwig Theodore Sack, Teacher of German at the Clapham Grammar School.

THE EAST INDIA UNITED SERVICE CLUB:
London, December, 1867.

I.—TO THE ADULT LEARNER.

1. The term **MASTERY** is employed in this work to denote the power of using the idiomatic forms of a foreign language as fluently and promptly as those of the mother-tongue.

2. The Mastery scheme requires that long idiomatic sentences shall be divided into very short sections, and shall be accompanied by their Variations in both languages. The beginner is not to compose any sentences for himself, but to receive them all ready-made and to commit them and their Variations very thoroughly to memory.

3. The English versions of these Variations being placed separately before him, he must acquire by practice the habit of giving the foreign equivalent for each of them with the utmost fluency. They should always be translated in irregular succession.

4. The foreign Variations exhibit the constructions which are lying latent in each sentence. The English Variations are designed to convey the exact power of each of the foreign Variations, and to show the different senses in which the individual foreign words and combinations can be employed. The explanations thus afforded include everything that a beginner ought to know in relation to each lesson, and therefore the study of grammar is prohibited, during this initiatory course.

5. This system sets no value upon the rapid acquisition of a lesson; but it provides for the perfect practical retention by the memory, and for the fluent reproduction of every sentence and of every Variation which have been learned.

6. In learning a language colloquially, the greatest difficulty is in the first stage, and the only danger arises from going on too fast, and thus overloading and confusing the memory.

7. The beginner should carefully abstain from seeing or hearing any new words in excess of those included in the lesson of the day.

8. If the beginner can bestow half-an-hour a day, the best distribution of his time and labour would be to make six efforts of five minutes each at equal intervals throughout the day. It would be more generally convenient, however, to take three sittings a day of ten minutes each, with intervals of about six hours' duration between them. Or if he be very zealous, and can afford the time, he may take, during the first few days, six sittings of ten minutes each, or even twelve of five minutes each, because this latter course affords the nearest approximation to the natural process.

9. If the beginner has previously acquired the pronunciation, he will have no occasion for a teacher, and he will commence by reading the first lesson and its Variations, and reciting them at intervals. If he has not already acquired the pronunciation, he must employ a teacher. Any foreigner, who has a correct pronunciation, may be engaged for this purpose. If he be employed for one hour a day, the time should be divided into three sittings of ten minutes each, the intervals being devoted to pursuits of a wholly different character. But as the reception of three lessons in rapid succession does not sufficiently accord with the principle of frequency, each of the first lessons may be expected to occupy several sittings.

10. *The Variations of each lesson are to be mastered before a new one is commenced.* The slightest hesitation in the use of a word in any one of the Variations, absolutely disqualifies the learner from advancing to a new lesson. In this respect he is not to judge himself indulgently but rigorously.

11. He must commence every sitting by reading over all the previous lessons before he attempts to recite them.

12. It is essential that he should always carry about with him in a compact form a copy of the English versions of those foreign Variations which he has already learned, in order that he may frequently practise translating them. He should also intersperse among them some equivalent English forms of expression conveying the same ideas in different words. But the latter should be submitted to a competent person for examination before he adopts them, and the various meanings of the individual foreign words should be incorporated in them under his orders. The German Variations should be carried about also on a separate paper, to be looked at before every such exercise begins.

13. *In learning anything by heart, repetitions are indispensa-*

ble, and the more they are distributed throughout the day, the smaller will be the number required to impress the foreign phrases on the memory. Very short sittings are recommended, because the work is not an intellectual one, and no ingenuity can make it so, except by the addition of what is extraneous. Moreover, the memory accomplishes its work much more effectually by highly concentrated efforts at intervals than by prolonged application.

14. The importation of the study of grammar and the learning of words having no significant coherence are prohibited, because they confuse the memory and impede the colloquial attainment. On the other hand, the study of Grammar will be ultimately facilitated to a great degree by a course of Mastery first received.

15. After going through the Manual, the learner may use the Paradigm in the Appendix, in order to familiarise himself with those inflections which have not been included in the sentences. For this purpose, he should select some of the English Variations, and alter them by changing the tenses and persons of the verbs, and then translating them by means of the paradigm. When facility is attained in thus applying the omitted inflections in rapid succession, with the eye fixed upon the paradigm, and with frequent recapitulations, the learner may proceed to converse with foreigners and to read as many Grammars and other books as he may think fit.

16. Those who have studied a language without practising it colloquially ought to follow the course here prescribed for beginners, and not to proceed more rapidly until they have mastered the first sentence and all its Variations.

N. B.—The first lesson may be divided into two, or if the beginner will condescend so far, into three parts, forming three days' work. In those instances in which there is an imaginary disability for the learning of languages, this will obviate the disagreeable necessity for devoting two or three whole days to one and the same lesson. There is no waste of time in learning very short lessons; for by mastering each lesson in its turn, the learner converts what is generally considered a repulsive drudgery into an interesting and attractive recreation.