

**THE METHOD OF  
TEACHING  
MODERN LANGUAGES IN  
GERMANY**

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The Method of Teaching Modern Languages in Germany by Mary Brebner

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**MARY BREBNER**

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BEING

The REPORT presented to the Trustees of the  
GILCHRIST EDUCATIONAL TRUST on a  
visit to GERMANY in 1897, as  
Gilchrist Travelling Scholar,

BY

MARY BREBNER, M.A.

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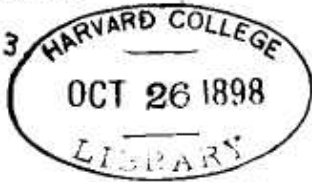
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## PREFACE.

THERE is every reason to believe that this is a time of transition and reform in English Secondary Education generally, and more especially in the teaching of Modern Languages. It is true that complaints of the poor results obtained, after long years spent on French and German at school, are not of recent date only. New methods, too, and royal roads have at all times been largely advertised. Yet it is certainly a hopeful sign that educationists have begun to put their finger on the weak points of our system, and to look abroad for the solution of some of the most difficult problems. Germany has, by common consent, been singled out as the most likely to suggest the lines along which the reform should take place. This is doubtless partly due to the fact that the Germans possess a clearly defined system of Secondary Education. But there is a special reason why we should look to Germany for a solution of the Modern Language problem. Not only are the Germans excellent linguists, by the most impartial accounts, but they have recently passed triumphantly through their period of transition. The system of Modern Language teaching which they have worked out, within the last twenty years, has been fully tested, and produces results that are positively brilliant. I was to some extent aware of the significance of the movement, to which my attention



had been directed at a very early stage. It was therefore a source of deep gratification to me when the Council of the Cambridge Training College appointed me as Travelling Gilchrist Scholar to study German methods. I gladly avail myself of this occasion of expressing to the Trustees my sense of obligation for the opportunity thus afforded me of carrying out a long cherished wish, under exceptionally favourable circumstances. As Gilchrist Scholar, and furnished with letters from the Foreign Office, I had free access to schools and educational authorities, and was everywhere treated with kindness and courtesy. The German governments afforded me every facility, except that Prussia courteously but definitely refused to depart from its rule of not admitting women to the boys' schools. I owe the warmer thanks to those educationalists who made good the loss to me by their information and advice. Many Head Masters in Prussia would have willingly admitted me to their schools, had they been allowed to do so by the government. In other parts of Germany, I not only had free access to the boys' schools, but was treated with a delicate considerateness which was most welcome in the somewhat novel position in which I found myself, of being often the first woman who had set foot in the class-rooms. The teachers also of the girls' schools were very obliging. There are many to whom I feel deeply indebted for kindness shown. I should like to express my gratitude to each personally, but the list would be too long for the pages of a Report like the present. The kindness I experienced far surpassed my expectations, and made my travels as pleasant as they were profitable.

A term spent at the Cambridge Training College immediately before I started proved excellent preparation for the work entrusted to me, especially as Miss E. P. Hughes kindly put me in charge of the French teaching. Mr Sadler, Dr Breul, Dr Scholle, Dr Herford and others gave me valuable advice

and many useful introductions. I also received most helpful suggestions from some of the foremost professors and teachers of Modern Languages in Germany, including Professor Vietor, Direktor Franz Dörr, Direktor Max Walter, Professor Dr Kühn, Direktor Professor Dr E. Hausknecht and Dr H. Klinghardt.

I spent in Germany over six months in all. I visited schools in the following towns:—Bremen, Hamburg, Berlin, Leipzig, Halle, Eisenach, Giessen, Frankfort on the Main, Darmstadt, Heidelberg, Karlsruhe and Freiburg im Breisgau. I also spent a month at Marburg, and three weeks at Jena, attending the holiday courses held in these towns. In Prussia my attention was necessarily directed chiefly to girls' schools and women's training colleges, although I was enabled, indirectly, to gain considerable insight into the teaching in boys' schools even there. Through the kindness of the Professors, I heard several lectures at Berlin University and was invited by Professor A. Brandl to visit the English *Seminar*. Elsewhere in Germany I had the opportunity of visiting *Realschulen*, *Oberrealschulen*, *Realgymnasien* and *Gymnasien* as well as *höhere Mädchenschulen* and *Lehrerinnenseminare*. I visited in all forty-one educational institutions, and heard about two hundred and sixty lessons<sup>1</sup>.

Many teachers and heads of schools were kind enough to grant me special interviews, in which they freely discussed their methods and the leading educational questions of the day. Although my attention was chiefly directed to French and English, I also heard a few good German lessons, two or three interesting Italian ones and two excellent Classical ones.

In my Report I have aimed chiefly at giving a correct general view of the methods adopted. I have abstained from discussing points that seemed to me irrelevant or of minor

<sup>1</sup> For complete statement of schools visited and lessons heard, see Appendix A.

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importance. In my choice of lessons, I have been dominated not only by their absolute merit, but also by their representative nature. Hence, while some of those given are among the best I heard, I have nevertheless been obliged to pass over in silence a very large number of exceedingly good lessons by first-rate teachers<sup>1</sup>. I shall not have reason to regret this self-imposed restraint, if it has enabled me to give a fairly complete and well-balanced account of the Teaching of Modern Languages in Germany at the present day.

I owe special thanks to Dr K. Breul for kindly revising the Report, and making many useful suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> For the description of a few of these, see the article on the *Teaching of Modern Languages in Germany* in the forthcoming volume of Mr Sadler's "*Special Reports*" (London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898).

M. B.

May, 1898.