

**PERFECT FRENCH POSSIBLE:
SOME ESSENTIAL AND
ADEQUATE HELPS TO FRENCH
PRONUNCIATION AND RHYTHM**

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Perfect French Possible: Some Essential and Adequate Helps to French Pronunciation and Rhythm by Mary H. Knowles & Berthe Des Combes Favard

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MARY H. KNOWLES & BERTHE DES COMBES FAVARD

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Perfect French Possible

Some Essential and Adequate Helps
to French Pronunciation
and Rhythm

BY

MARY H. KNOWLES

MEMBRE ACTIF DE L'ASSOCIATION PHONÉTIQUE INTERNATIONALE.
PRESIDENT FOR TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS OF THE CLUB FRANÇAIS DE CHICAGO.
NOMMÉ OFFICIER D'ACADÉMIE LE SEIZ OCTOBRE 1902.

AND

BERTHE DES COMBES FAVARD

TEACHER OF FRENCH IN THE HYDE PARK HIGH SCHOOL, CHICAGO.

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PREFACE.

When one reflects that language is made up of sounds, it seems too obvious for mention that the acquisition of a new language should begin by a mastering of its sounds. Notice the word "*mastering*". There are thousands of persons who know perfectly well that French *i* equals English *ee*, and who nevertheless go through life pronouncing the past participle "finished", finny, instead of *fee-nee*, which, had it been firmly fixed in the mind at the outset, would be quite as easy as 'finny', since all the sounds in this word *fini* are English sounds (fee-knee).

We all know what "playing by ear" means to a trained musician. Would it not be pedagogically as absurd for a teacher of language to expect his pupil to speak before he can pronounce, as it would be for a music teacher to expect his pupil to play an air upon the violin, before he has taught him to tune his instrument or to sound each note upon the strings?

This little manual of pronunciation is not a technical work on phonetics. It contains simply those elements of phonetics which are necessary to the correct pronunciation of French, and, by our use of English equivalents and rules for the formation of those sounds which have no English equivalents, we have been able to perfect a system of applied phonetics, without having had recourse to the symbols of the phoneticians, who compel one to learn what appears to the eye to be one foreign language simply as a preparation for the study of another. It differs from other works on pronunciation, because

it leaves out everything but the essentials, and is the only work in which rules for rhythm, as such, are given in a form that will secure correct and musical inflection. It is unique in that it gives infallible rules for the production of those sounds that cannot be approximated in English.

To an objector, who might say that all this takes too much time, we could reply by actual proof with large classes in the school-room, as well as with private pupils, that, on the contrary, by the use of this method a great saving of time is effected; for, when once the learner has mastered the thirty-six sounds of the French language, and the rules for rhythm, he can pronounce any word at sight unerringly. Thousands of words of Latin derivation are the same in the two languages, but the vowel sounds of the two offer so many differences that no beginner would recognize the French word «*éducation*», for instance, when pronounced by a French person, although to the eye it is exactly the same as the English word. A pupil, however, who has been trained in our method, recognizes all these words instantly, no matter how rapidly they may be uttered by a French person, even before he has begun the study of the language as such. Our method has given him at once the key to this large and varied vocabulary.

While we have made an exhaustive study of Nyrop, Littré, L'Abbé Rousselot, Léon Ricquier, Yersin, Ahn, Legouvé, and Paul Passy, and make nowhere any statement which is not backed by one or more of these authorities, we have, in the majority of cases, done away with pages of rules by deducing from them general laws which experience has proved to be true; notably in the treatment of the nasal sounds, in that of the liquid *l*, which has been reduced to three rules of one line each, and, most important of all, in that of the mute *e*, which is disposed of in two rules. These two rules with remarks, foot-notes, etc., concerning them, have been condensed into three

pages, and, together with those for the formation of French sounds having no English equivalents (*o, u, eu, eu²* and uvular *r*) as formulated here, are absolutely original, and can be found in no other work.

We feel safe in asserting, that this tabulated system of applied phonetics is the briefest, simplest, and most complete work on pronunciation ever published; its briefness and its simplicity being the most valuable result of our wide experience and long years of study.

It is not a mere theory that we are trying to advance, but the result of long years of practical application in the class-room, where these principles have been slowly evolved, daily practiced, and found to produce the desired results.

We have never believed in the "French Without a Master" systems, for we think that a teacher is an absolute necessity, but, if ever there were a system in which a pupil, determined to learn, and unable to procure a master, could teach himself to pronounce as French people do, this is the one.

Disputed points and exceptions have been purposely omitted, so that the essential principles of pronunciation may become deeply rooted and have unobstructed growth in the mind of the learner, who, in order to keep first impressions clear and fresh, must at first remain in ignorance of ever-recurring discussions on minor points.

We take pleasure in expressing our sincerest thanks to professors of the University of Chicago, and others, for the valuable help their counsel and kindly criticism have been to us. The rapid sale of our first four editions, unadvertised as they were, and the adoption for use of this book in the Public Schools of Chicago, and schools and colleges elsewhere, have encouraged us to have this enlarged and revised edition published on a larger scale. Great care has been taken in the eighth edition to correct errors that had crept into the previous ones.

and we shall be grateful for any suggestions that will enable us further to perfect our work in succeeding editions.

For particulars in regard to a normal course and other courses in the Knowles-Favard system; address New School of Conversational French, Fine Arts Building, Chicago, Ill.

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