

**A READING FRENCH
GRAMMAR: A SHORT METHOD
OF LEARNING TO READ
THE FRENCH LANGUAGE**

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A Reading French Grammar: A Short Method of Learning to Read the French Language by
Edward H. Magill

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LEARNING TO READ

THE

FRENCH LANGUAGE.

BY

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"A FRENCH GRAMMAR," "FRENCH READER,"
"FRENCH PROSE AND POETRY," ETC.

"Qui apprend avec méthode, retient avec certitude."

LEIBNITZ.

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1897

PREFACE.

THIS is called a READING FRENCH GRAMMAR because its leading object is to introduce the student to a good reading knowledge of the language in the shortest possible time. The object aimed at by most English-speaking people in studying the French language is believed to be the mental training which such study supplies and the ability to read readily the valuable scientific works in that language, together with an early introduction to the treasures of its literature. To combine these ends no mere fragmentary treatment, on the one hand, nor exhaustive philological treatise, on the other, would seem to be demanded. Avoiding both extremes, the author proposes to take the language as it is, and make the student, as rapidly as possible, familiar with the forms as at present used, without here referring to their historical origin. There are excellent grammars already before the public, both in our own country and abroad, which will satisfy the demands of the profound student and the philologist. With these, so widely different in their aim, this simple, practical Reading French Grammar does not presume to compete.

As the verb is the most important of the parts of speech—so much so that it has been truly said, "*Le verbe, c'est la langue*"—it has been thought best to begin at once with this, presenting the three conjugations together for comparison, and giving the various parts not according to the moods and tenses, as is usually done, but as most good teachers practically present it in the class-room—in the regular order of formation from the principal parts. It is thus much more rapidly acquired and more surely retained in the memory.

The simple forms of the verbs are first given, and then the

essential rules for the article, noun, adjective, and pronoun. After this study, which can be mastered by an ordinary class in a few weeks, simple reading exercises may be taken, and constant practice in the grammatical forms acquired should accompany each lesson in the reader. Many things usually taught in grammars, only to be forgotten by the student, are here omitted, and the instructor is expected to teach these practically by careful observation in reading.

No exercises in writing French are given in this grammar, for the simple reason that it seems to the author best that a student should, by reading, first learn how *others* write French before attempting to do it for himself. The time often spent in turning good English into poor French is believed to be worse than wasted, and prevents the rapid acquisition of a reading knowledge of the language. Written exercises in French are of great value and really indispensable, but they properly come later, after acquiring a considerable familiarity with the printed page. And these exercises need not be printed in a separate volume, but may be best taken from the French readers used, the student being trained in turning back into French what he has first translated into English. He thus writes with a correct model of construction constantly before him. This is of far more value than the laborious construction of doubtful sentences by the aid of grammar and dictionary.

All reference to pronunciation is omitted in this volume, simply because instruction upon this subject, to be of any practical value, must come from the lips of the living teacher, who should be either a native of France or one who has had much personal intercourse with educated French people. This knowledge cannot be imparted satisfactorily by any printed page.

This little work, after many years of experience in teaching French, has been thoroughly tested by the practical work of the class-room, and it is earnestly commended to my fellow-teachers, in the hope that they may find it a practical and easy key to the delightful treasures of French literature.

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE, March 1, 1892.

NOTE TO THE TEACHER.

LET the first lesson be a *talk* on pronunciation, stating some of the *general principles*, and have the class *repeat in concert* at first, and frequently, the letters of the French alphabet. Explain with care the sounds of the different vowels and the nasal sounds, and pronounce distinctly in advance every French word or phrase in a lesson assigned, in the earlier stages of the course, and have the class follow, repeating the words sometimes individually, sometimes in concert. Mention the leading principles of pronunciation so often that they will become familiar to the class, without requiring them to *commit to memory* any rules upon the subject.

Practice upon pronunciation, and the acquisition of a vocabulary, may be as readily applied to *verbs* as to any other of the parts of speech, and it is believed that valuable time will be gained, and that reading may be begun earlier by entering at once upon the *regular forms* of the verbs of the three conjugations. In accordance with the modern practice, there are but *three* conjugations recognized, the few verbs ending in *-avoir* being now classed with the irregular verbs.

N. B. In all lessons in the grammar constant practice should be given in *writing the forms*, turning the English translations of the paradigms and illustrative examples into the corresponding French. This is quite as important as the *viva voce* recitation, and no thoroughness can be secured without it.

PREFACES are generally omitted. Please read the Preface with care.

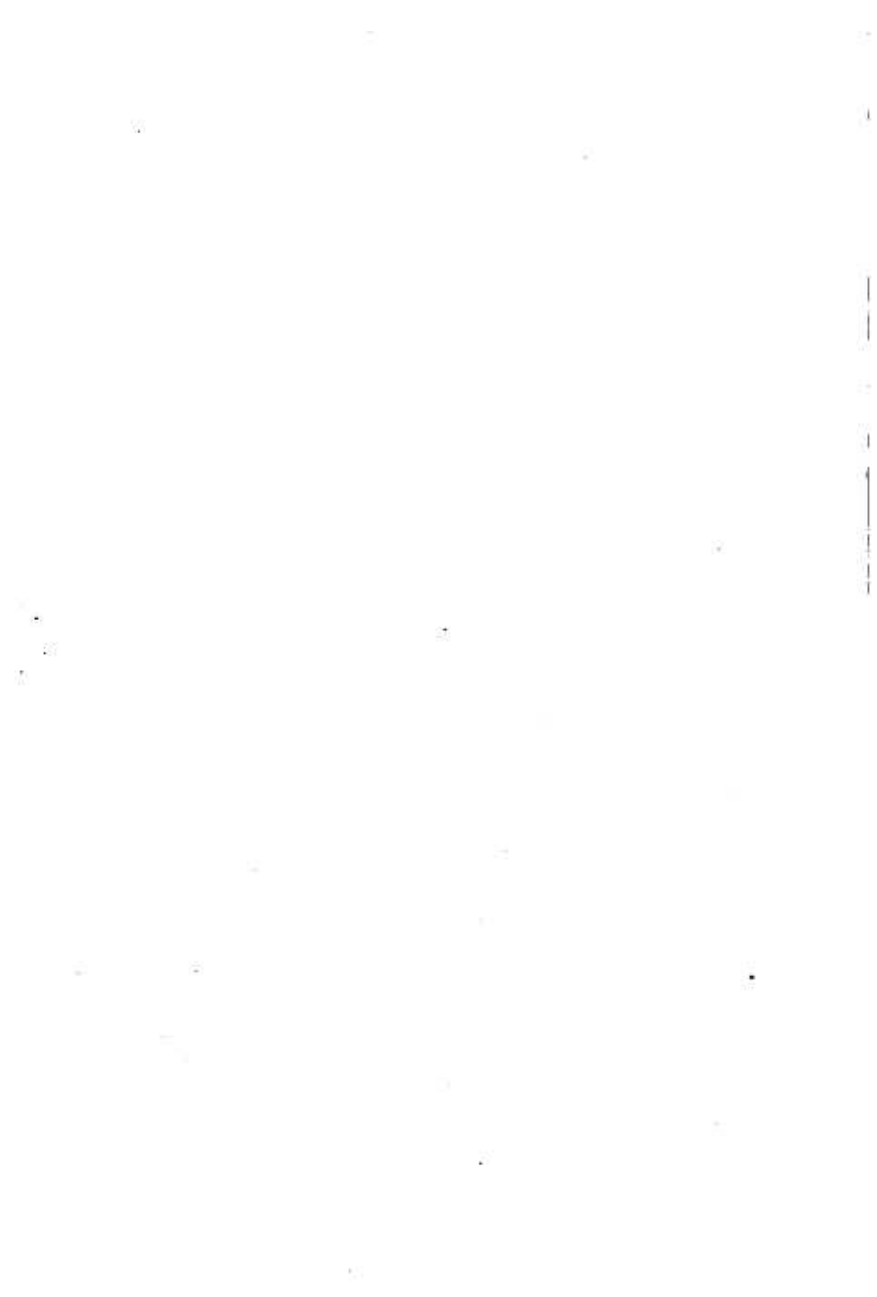


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