

**THE YERSIN PHONO-RHYTHMIC
METHOD OF FRENCH
PRONUNCIATION, ACCENT, AND
DICTION; FRENCH AND ENGLISH**

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The Yersin Phono-Rhythmic Method of French Pronunciation, Accent, and Diction; French and English by M. Yersin & J. Yersin

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M. YERSIN & J. YERSIN

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OF
FRENCH PRONUNCIATION, ACCENT,
AND DICTION

FRENCH AND ENGLISH

BY
M. AND J. YERSIN

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PART I.
TO FOREIGNERS.

FOR many years past our pupils have asked us to publish our system, or, at least, to write a book for the purpose of aiding those foreigners to whom French diction is the great stumbling-block in their career; and this we have at length decided on doing.

Of the French tongue foreigners know absolutely nothing,—that is to say, they cannot form the slightest conception of the study that is necessary to speak it correctly. Singers, for example,—not to speak of others,—come to Paris, study the art of singing most conscientiously, and then, to their great mortification, they find that an appearance either at the Opéra or at the Opéra-Comique is denied them. And why? Solely on account of their diction, which is defective. And what is the result? All their hopes are blasted, notwithstanding the fact that they possess beautiful voices. Thousands of cases could be cited. A few, more fortunate than the rest,—but their number is very, very limited,—succeed in obtaining a hearing; but they retain their horrible accent, which not only shocks the public ear, but lessens their talent much more than they can imagine.

With regard to diction, foreigners may, with but a few exceptions, be divided into two classes. The first

includes those who, having studied diction for some years without having lost their accent,—without even having learned to pronounce correctly,—become convinced that it is impossible to do better. They sincerely believe and declare that it is impossible to sing in French, and that a foreigner cannot rid himself of his accent.

To the second class belong those (fortunately limited in number) who declare with grotesque simplicity and assurance that their diction is perfect; and while listening to them the French are tortured by hearing their beautiful and musical language mutilated and mangled so unsparingly.

To all we say this:

A PERFECT DICTION, ABSOLUTELY PERFECT,—THAT IS TO SAY, EQUAL TO THAT OF PARISIAN ARTISTS,—IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE, BUT GUARANTEED, TO EVERY PERSON, OF WHATEVER NATIONALITY HE MAY BE, PROVIDED THAT HE IS NOT AFFLICTED WITH DEAFNESS. And when we say Parisian artists we do not mean those singers who, although French, pronounce their language imperfectly, or who sing so indistinctly that their words cannot be understood; we speak of those whose diction is so pure that not only is no syllable of their song lost, but that while listening to them one does not know which to admire the most, their musical talent or their impeccable diction. Fortunately, we possess a few artists of this type at both our operas.

Were it possible to enable foreigners, with the help of a book, to acquire that perfection which we give in our lessons, we should be but too pleased to do so; but, unfortunately, that is impossible. In the

first place, the French language is composed of very fine, delicate vowel sounds, which can be communicated to the ear of the pupil only by oral instruction. It is not possible to represent to a foreigner by writing a sound which does not exist in his own language. He can, however, be helped to understand it, and to produce it pretty correctly. And that is what we here undertake to do.

Besides, there are many, many details and shades that we have made a profound study of for years; for we have, in a multiplicity of ways, gone into the difficulties encountered by foreigners of every nationality. Again, for all this *finesse* oral instruction is indispensable.

But the aim of this work is to accomplish the possible,—namely :

1. To point out to foreigners why they do not pronounce well.
2. Having drawn their attention to the evil, to point out its remedy.
3. To give the most important and minute explanations on everything appertaining to French diction, *minutia* hitherto absolutely unknown to foreigners.

We shall now proceed to carry out this threefold object. All that it is possible to communicate by writing we shall willingly do. Those foreigners, then, who are prevented by distance from studying a few weeks with us, will find in this work everything to aid them in their studies; and for those who have studied our system under our direction it will serve not only as the complement of our *cours* , but also as a *vade-mecum* to keep ever by them for reference.