

# **HISTOIRE DE LA RÉVOLUTION FRANÇAISE**

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Histoire de la révolution française by François A. M. Mignet

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**FRANÇOIS A. M. MIGNET**

**HISTOIRE DE LA  
RÉVOLUTION  
FRANÇAISE**



OXFORD MODERN FRENCH SERIES

EDITED BY LEON DELBOS, M.A.

HISTOIRE  
DE LA  
RÉVOLUTION FRANÇAISE

BY

FRANÇOIS A. M. MIGNET

EDITED BY

A. DUPUIS, B.A.

SENIOR FRENCH MASTER IN KING'S COLLEGE SCHOOL

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## GENERAL PREFACE

THE position of French and German as a part of school education has latterly become one of so much importance, that it is necessary to discover the best possible way of teaching these languages which will lead to a thorough and scholarly knowledge of them. The teaching of modern languages has generally been approached from a merely practical point of view, but there is no doubt that their literary aspect is by far the more important. The one object in learning a language should be to become acquainted with the greatest thoughts which have been handed down, or are current in it, and for this a merely practical knowledge is quite inadequate. Yet many who use what is called the New Method teach exclusively on these utilitarian lines, which are supposed to give the pupil a knowledge of modern colloquial conversation such as would be useful in travelling abroad. In reality the pupil acquires nothing, and gains no real knowledge of the literary language, no true appreciation of the ideas or of the history of the country. This method of instruction is clearly a reaction from the old system which taught only by exercises in translation and paid little attention to the spoken language. In order to acquire a scholarly

knowledge of any foreign tongue it is not sufficient to spend a few months in the country where it is spoken, and it would be well if we realized, at once, that nothing worth learning can be acquired by desultory study, or 'picked up.' If French and German are to take their places by the side of Latin and Greek in modern education, the excellent literary training which the study of these ancient tongues affords must be obtained in the same measure for students of modern languages.

To make the student acquainted with a language at once in its literary and in its current forms, he should first be provided with selections from the best foreign literature of the nineteenth century. The literature of the last century has been preferred because the thoughts and ideas it deals with, as well as the language, are more in accordance with the thoughts and ideas of our own time, and with the manner of expressing them; nor have such ample selections from this literature been put before English pupils as from the literature of previous centuries. These selections should be read and translated carefully and thoroughly into grammatical and literary English.

Translation should always serve a double purpose, namely, first, to acquaint the pupil with the best forms of expression used in the foreign language, and, secondly, to improve his knowledge of the capabilities of his own tongue by turning the thought of the original into English. It is therefore necessary that translations should not only be accurate and grammatical, but appreciative and intelligent. The individuality of the



author must necessarily suffer in translation, but the loss may partly be atoned for if the student thoroughly grasps the spirit of the original before he begins his translation, and does not allow the effort of rendering the author's expressions into equivalent English to interfere with the atmosphere of the work as a whole. In this lies the difference between a literal and a free translation. Mr. Gilbert Murray has explained his views on the subject, which seem to give the key to the secret of good translation. 'My aim has been,' he says, 'to build up something as like the original as I possibly could, in form and in what one calls "spirit." To do this, the first thing needed was a work of painstaking scholarship, a work in which there should be no neglect of the letter in an attempt to snatch at the spirit, but, on the contrary, close study of the letter and careful tracking of the spirit by means of its subtleties.'

The pupil should be taught to use thoroughly idiomatic English in translation, and to observe the necessary rules of good composition. Guess-work should always be avoided, and the habit should be formed of learning vocabularies and even sentences by heart, in order to become familiar with a large number of words and with the proper construction of sentences; for without these we can never hope to obtain a mastery of a language, be it ancient or modern. The pupil should also be encouraged to discuss in the foreign language the subject-matter of the text which he has been studying, framing his sentences as far as possible on the model of the author. Translation, taught and supple-

mented in this way, becomes one of the most valuable parts of literary training in the school curriculum. So far I have found no better method of teaching a language practically; and my experience has taught me beyond a doubt that those who speak a modern language best invariably possess a good literary knowledge of it.

The important question is, What kind of literature is to be chosen for reading and translation? To this question I have already given my answer; undoubtedly it is desirable to set a high standard from the beginning, and to challenge the powers of the pupil by putting before him well-chosen selections from the best authors, rather than to entice his sympathy with easy and amusing literature. If the teacher tries to amuse his pupils and make the time pass quickly, he will fail to awaken their interest in the subject; but, if he appeals to their intelligence from the first, appreciation will quickly grow.

It is with this object that the present series is being undertaken—a series in which certain modern standard French works, of various kinds, have been chosen, and edited with the smallest possible number of notes, mostly on points of literary and historical interest.

LEON DELBOS.

H.M.S. *Britannia*, DARTMOUTH.  
*August, 1904.*

## INTRODUCTION

MIGNET (François Auguste Marie), a French historian of world-wide reputation, was born at Aix, in Provence, on May 8, 1796. He began his studies at the college of his native town, and finished them at Avignon. In 1815 he returned to Aix and there prosecuted his law studies at the University, in company with Thiers, with whom he struck up a friendship which was to last the whole of their life-time. Both men were called to the Bar at the same time, but, gifted as they were, literature soon proved more attractive than law. Thiers won his first success in the *Académie* of Aix by an essay on Vauvenargues, and his friend, Mignet, was also awarded a prize for an *Éloge de Charles VII.* In 1821 Mignet revealed his talent as an historian by an essay on *La Féodalité et les Institutions de saint Louis*, a subject which had been set by the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.*

In that same year Mignet went to Paris, where he was soon joined by Thiers. The two friends began contributing articles to various papers: Thiers to the *Constitutionnel*, Mignet to the *Courrier français*, in which his articles on foreign politics attracted great notice. He also contributed remarkable articles to the *National*, in which he vehemently attacked the Bourbons.

He became a Professor of History at the *Athénée*, where some of the lectures he delivered gathered round