

**THE BOOK OF VERSIONS;  
OR GUIDE TO FRENCH  
TRANSLATION: WITH  
NOTES**

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The Book of Versions; Or Guide to French Translation: With Notes by J. Cherpilloud

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**J. CHERPILLOUD**

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THE  
**BOOK OF VERSIONS;**

OR

**Guide to French Translation;**

WITH NOTES,

TO ASSIST IN THE CONSTRUCTION; AND TO DISPLAY A COMPARISON  
OF THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH IDIOMS.

FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS.

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MILITARY COLLEGE, SANDHURST.

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## PREFACE.

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WHILE numerous reputable publications have appeared, well adapted to aid Students of the French language in translating FRENCH into ENGLISH, there are very few which assist them in the more essential labour of turning ENGLISH into FRENCH. The BOOK OF VERSIONS is an endeavour to supply this deficiency, in common with another, which has often been regretted by teachers, and still more by pupils,—namely, the want of a work holding a middle station between common grammatical exercises and free and unaided translation. The step from the direct practical lesson under a rule, to its general and unlimited application, is one of acknowledged difficulty, and yet it is certainly the most unassisted part of the student's progress. The reason is by no means undiscoverable: it is thought to be the more peculiar field of the master; and, as tending at once to a critical acquirement of the spirit and properties of the language, indisputably is so.—The more direct, incessant, and indispensable his aid, however, the more beneficial a work like the present, both to him and to his pupil; not only by assisting to render the hours valuable when they are apart, but in adding to the spirit and profit of those they pass together. Whatever, indeed, puts a student in a way to save himself incessant reference, facilitates his improvement, because under no mode of superintendance can it be always available. With respect to the master, the relief is obvious, not in regard to his time, but the mode of

employing it: his attendance on every view of the complete and conversable attainment of language is still indispensable; but disengaged, by able and liberal illustration, from much irksome repetition, he has leisure to render his instruction more critical, informing, and correct.

The BOOK OF VERSIONS, therefore, is supposed to take up a pupil in the French language, when he has been rendered a little conversant with the Exercises in his Grammar.\* On this assumption, the text is constructed in English translated from the French, as literally as the two languages will allow to render the English pure. It is also divided into lessons, or portions, *with attention to a gradation in difficulty*; and the notes, which are appropriated to each of them, are constructed upon a correspondent principle. As they proceed, they either present greater difficulties in the construction, or assistance becomes more sparing; but always with a reference to particulars, which an attentive student cannot but have acquired by the portion he has gone through. The notes also furnish the idioms, as well as the prepositions belonging to verbs; and in this respect, it is presumed, they will be essentially serviceable, by forcing a continual comparison between the peculiarities of the two languages, as displayed in their most characteristic phraseology. The arrangement of the words in sentences it has been thought better to leave to the pupil, subject to the revision of the master, to whom it will afford an excellent opportunity to point out the difference of their construction in French and English, which, owing to the facility of inver-

\* For younger Students a very excellent little book has lately appeared, under the title of "*Le Nouveau Trésor*," which will be found to be a very desirable work to precede "*The Book of Versions*."



sion in the one language, and the want of it in the other, is very decided.

Encouraged by the very favourable reception of the Book of Versions, which has been adopted at Harrow School, and in a considerable number of the most respectable private establishments, the author has been led to direct his attention to such amendments as the nature of the work was susceptible. The lessons have been divided into three sections, each containing a distinct gradation in difficulty, and leading through regular steps to the completion of the study of the language. *In the first*, the assistance is full, affording every point essential to a learner acquainted with the principal rules of the grammar. *In the second*, the infinitives of verbs only are given, and the student is expected to supply the proper tense and mood. *The third section* is without notes, being intended to prove the progress of the pupil. A due use of the preceding lessons will have enabled him to translate these unassisted, after which he may be considered as prepared to step at once into general French composition.

As to the manner of using this guide to translation, it is recommended that the pupil should first translate in writing, and, when his labour has been corrected, construe from the book, in order to imprint the amendments on his recollection. It is thought unnecessary to suggest any thing more in a general way, because every master will adapt the use of the book to the powers and opportunities of the pupil. For the same reason all suggestion is spared on the lights the tutor can throw upon the various modes of construing the same sentence; every teacher of languages will decide on these points for himself: the Book of Versions has been

formed to aid the masters of the French tongue, not to instruct them.

It is next proper to speak of the sources from which the contents of the Book of Versions are drawn. These, it will be perceived, with some exceptions, are the best French Classics, extracts from which have been prepared and adapted to the intended purpose. The reason of the preference is obvious: it is necessary to go to French mind for French expression, and an attention to the one cannot but lead to the acquirement of the other. Neither is there a better way to attract a pupil possessed of the seeds of taste and discrimination, than by convincing him of the pleasure which he may derive from the literature of the language he is studying. Lord Chesterfield's opinion of the inducement is evident, by his using it as an argument to his son, whom he advises to learn French, if only to read Buffon in his native tongue. To give the more effect to these selections, a slight sketch is afforded of a certain number of the best French authors, both in prose and verse. By this means the learner will acquire the standard opinion of their respective merits, as well as be guarded against their defects. The contents of the Book of Versions are, of course, pure and unimpeachable; but it would be vain to deny that genius in all countries is frequently misemployed, and to point out the fact when it occurs, is both useful and necessary.

It only remains to be observed, that the Book of Versions is closed with some specimens of French poetry from leading authors, with free translations. When some progress has been made in a language, there is no better way to perfect it than by a comparison of choice passages with good translations.

In this way, the value of expressions may be truly observed, and the extent of their meaning clearly ascertained. The distinguishing beauties of the compared tongues may also be elicited and rendered obvious by an occasional perusal of such selected matter, assisted by the master. A more direct use, too, may be made of these selections: many teachers require their pupils to repeat good poetical passages distinctly, the pronunciation of which they correct with particular care\*. For this purpose, the specimens at the end of this publication are well adapted, and may be used accordingly.

To conclude,—this little book is offered with a reliance on its utility, which is founded on no mean experience and, consequently, with a strong hope that it may be received as a welcome assistant by all who are interested in the acquirement or communication of the FRENCH LANGUAGE.

\* The excellence of the method alluded to is undeniable, provided the pupil be kept to a single passage of moderate length, until he can pronounce it with perfect accuracy. The different sounds in any language are by no means numerous, and, once articulated with precision, much is done towards the acquirement of correct pronunciation.

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\* \* *A French Part, or Key to the Book of Versions, is printed for the same Publisher, with a view to the ease and convenience of Teachers, particularly in Schools where the Pupils are divided into classes. However well versed a person may be in the language to be communicated, he will sometimes be at a loss to render a rhetorical passage, at a given moment, completely. At such pauses, digested assistance is peculiarly welcome, and may be accepted, to the great benefit of the pupil, and without the least discredit to the general ability of the master. As substitutes for knowledge, these counterparts are contemptible; as aids to it, of allowed utility, and consequently to be recommended.*