

CRITICAL OPINIONS ON
M. OLLENDORFF'S METHOD OF LEARNING
THE FRENCH, GERMAN, AND ITALIAN LANGUAGES.

In an article in the "*Methodist Quarterly Review*," entitled *Modes of Teaching Languages*, after describing the various modes of teaching, it goes on to state:—

"Some ten years ago, it seems, Captain Basil Hall, of famous memory, first found out how to learn German. He had tried it again and again, but always found it impracticable until he stumbled on Herr OLLENDORFF, who was teaching German at the time in Paris, and who led him along not by the nose, but by the mouth, most gently and delectably, into a sufficient knowledge of that noblest of modern tongues. As the captain has always been distinguished for his gratitude, he repaid the skilful teacher a hundredfold, by a puff in 'Schloss Hainfeld,' that made him at once a man of notoriety and fortune.

"After six months of close application, I can venture to pronounce, that by Mr. Ollendorff's method alone, so far as I have been able to understand the subject, can this very difficult, but very charming language be taught without confusion. By it the scholar advances step by step, understands clearly and thoroughly everything he reads, and as he goes on, he becomes sensible that all he learns he retains, and all that he retains is useful and practically applicable. At the same time, he scarcely knows how he got hold of it, so slightly marked are the shades of daily progression; and so gentle is the rise, that he feels no unpleasant fatigue on the journey. Of course, the student is called upon to exert no small degree of patient application, and he must consent to devote a considerable portion of his time to this pursuit; but he will have the encouraging conviction, that every particle of effort is well bestowed."

"Everybody in Paris began to learn German *a la mode d'Ollendorff*, and in all German towns you might find Englishmen and Frenchmen thumbing the 'New Method,' and repeating its thousand phrases with commendable perseverance. In 1838 the system was introduced into England by the publication of the 'New Method of learning to read, write, and speak a Language in Six Months, for the Use of Schools and Private Teachers;' and although the complete work extended to three octavo volumes, and was sold at an enormous price,* it soon acquired a great circulation. We have before us the fourth edition. Nor was the reputation of the work confined to Europe: many copies were imported into this country, and of late the demand has been so great, that an American edition has been brought out in excellent style by the Messrs Appleton's, with the addition of a clear 'Systematic Outline of German Grammar,' prepared by Mr. Adler, of the University of New-York. Nor has this success been by any means undeserved; the book certainly goes further in smoothing the rugged road to German than any other book extant, and that too, not by attempting to dispense with the industry of the pupil, but by making all his industry profitable.

"It takes all that is good in the Hamiltonian method, by giving the words to be used at once to the student, and not sending him to the dictionary to hunt them out; and it involves Jacotot's best principle of fixing the forms of the language by constant repetition, and supplying grammatical principles only as they are required. These are its chief excellences, and they are essential to any good system. The book especially with Mr. Adler's appendix, is infinitely better adapted for use as an introduction to the German language than any other that we know of, and we hope it will obtain a wide circulation."

* "Teaching is generally worse paid than any other kind of labour: but it seems that when any particular teacher becomes the rage, he takes revenge on the public, and 'puts money in his purse.' We see from an advertisement at the end of Herr Ollendorff's second volume, that he teaches German in London at the pleasant price of £12 10s. sterling per quarter!"

New-Orleans Commercial Times.

"Mr. OLLENDORFF'S new method of teaching languages—a method founded upon an analytical system, which simplifies and connects information, and proceeds by gradations from the easy to the difficult—has found more favour among teachers than any previous system. It has been applied with the utmost success, and has elicited the approbation of the best minds in the country. The system is one which it requires the patient study of a German to elaborate, but when once framed, its results are practical, complete, and speedy of attainment. We have no doubt that an intelligent person will master the intricacies of the French tongue, by the assistance of this work in half the time it would require to wade through the interminable exercises of *Wanostrocht and Levisse*."

D. Appleton & Co.'s Educational Publications.

CRITICAL OPINIONS ON OLLENDORFF'S METHOD OF LEARNING FRENCH, &c. continued.

New-York Commercial Advertiser.

"NEW METHOD OF LEARNING THE FRENCH LANGUAGE.—This grammar it is thought, must supersede all others now used for instruction in the French language. Its conception and arrangement are admirable,—the work evidently of a mind familiar with the deficiencies of the systems, the place of which it is designed to supply. In all the works of the kind that have fallen under our notice, there has been so much left unexplained or obscure, and so many things have been omitted—trifles, perhaps, in the estimation of the author, but the cause of great embarrassment to the learner—that they have been comparatively valueless as self-instructors. The student, deceived by their specious pretensions, has not proceeded far before he has felt himself in a condition similar to that of a mariner who should put out to sea without a compass to direct him. He has encountered difficulty after difficulty, to which his grammar afforded no clue; when, disappointed and discouraged, he has either abandoned the study in disgust, or if his means permitted, has resorted to a teacher to accomplish what it was not in his power to effect by the aid of his 'self-instructor.'

"Ollendorff has passed his roller over the whole field of French instruction, and the rugged inequalities formerly to be encountered no longer discourage the learner. What were the difficulties of the language, are here mastered in succession; and the only surprise of the student, as he passes from lesson to lesson, is, that he meets none of these 'lions in the way.'

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From Whig Review.

"Ollendorff's works on the German, French, and Italian, have met with marked approbation from those who are critical judges, and his system is pronounced 'the best, the only one of the kind for all who desire a practical knowledge of the language.'"

Catholic Magazine.

"The elementary works of Ollendorff, have met with the most ample encouragement and success in England and so far as they have been tested, in America also; and in both countries the use of them has become daily more extensive.

"The distinguished feature in Ollendorff's method of imparting a knowledge of the language is, that it follows that of nature herself."

Extract from M. Ollendorff's Preface.

"My system of acquiring a living language is founded on the principle, that each question nearly contains the answer which one ought or which one wishes to make to it. The slight difference between the question and the answer is always explained before the question: so that the learner does not find it in the least difficult, either to answer it, or to make similar questions for himself. Again, the question containing the same words as the answer, as soon as the master pronounces it, it strikes the pupil's ear, and is therefore easily reproduced by his speaking organs. This principle is so evident, that it is impossible to open the book without being struck by it.

"Neither the professor nor the pupils lose an instant of time. When the professor reads the lesson, the pupil answers; when he examines the lesson written by the pupil he speaks again, and the pupil answers; also when he examines the exercise which the pupil has translated, he speaks and the pupil answers: thus both are, as it were, continually kept in exercise.

"The phrases are so arranged that, from the beginning to the end of the method, the pupil's curiosity is excited by the want of a word or an expression: this word or expression is always given in the following lesson, but in such a manner as to create a desire for others that render the phrase still more complete. Hence, from one end of the book to the other, the pupil's attention is continually kept alive, till at last he has acquired a thorough knowledge of the language which he studies.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

"No French Pronouncing Dictionary having as yet appeared in the English field of French Education, the public are now presented with one, the nature and compass of which will give an idea of the numerous and laborious investigations made by the Author, to render the present work useful and acceptable.

"It is now upwards of six years since this work was undertaken, and the resolution of bringing it to light, arose from a diversity of opinion in Pronunciation, which he discovered long ago in the various Dictionaries and Grammars made use of by him in preparing his former course of Lectures on French and English Comparative Philology.

"In the course of his labors, had the Author found but little difference among French writers, probably no criticism would have appeared in the present work; but as he went along, his attention was arrested by so many opposite views in the mode of sounding letters and words, that nothing short of a full investigation could satisfy him. The result of his investigations is embodied in the Dictionary, and hence the origin of the critical remarks with which it abounds: the nature and extent of which, of themselves, would form a volume conveying much solid instruction, as well as offering a sad picture of the uncertainties of French Pronunciation, of which nine-tenths perhaps of the Author's countrymen are not aware. Even upon the mere sounds of *o*, there are many conflicting opinions, and the vacillating pen of Loudais, the last writer upon Parisian pronunciation, by whom *o* is represented sometimes by *oa*, and sometimes by *œ*, has increased the perplexity in no small degree.

"The method employed by the Author for representing the sounds of words, is intended to meet the English eye; and he has been careful to make use of none but genuine French letters, that the reader may not be deceived, nor induced to follow a vicious system of articulation.

"As to the pronunciation of Foreign Historical and Geographical names, it is laid down in the same manner as if a Frenchman at Paris were reading aloud; in this case nothing would be left to him but to Frenchify every proper name, with the exception of a few living Authors.

"In ending this part of the Preface, it is of importance to observe that no syllable in the work is invested with the syllabical accent, because, as yet, excepting two or three Grammarians along with the Author, no writer in France, nor even the Academy itself, has thought proper to enforce this part of delivery, how unfortunately neglected.

"The Phraseology, forming the second essential part of this Dictionary, is based on that of the Academy, the sole and legitimate authority in France; and every effort of the Author has been so directed, as to render it both copious and practical. With this view, an improved method of elucidating new meanings, by employing parentheses, has been introduced, and it is hoped that the utility and benefits resulting from this improvement will not fail to be duly appreciated.

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The favourable reception which Ollendorff's German Grammar has received from the American public, has induced the Publishers and the Editor to comply with the very general demand for a German Reader.

Complaints, more or less loud, have been made both by teacher and learner, against most of the Readers heretofore offered to the public in this country, as well as in England and Germany. Books of this kind now in the market, may be reduced to two classes: 1st. *Selections from the German Classics, or Elegant Extracts*, corresponding somewhat to our English Readers. Of these, two deserve special notice, viz. GEORGE MUEHL'S PROSE ANTHOLOGY, (Carlsruhe and London, 1839.) and in this country, FOLLEN'S GERMAN READER. The objections to the former are, that it contains no poems, and hence lacks an essential element of an introduction to German Literature, and presents too little variety to the learner; it has, moreover, no vocabulary, and the most difficult passages are often left unnoticed in the annotations. The latter is, as it regards the variety and the good taste exhibited in its matter, far superior to any other similar work, and has for many years been almost the only Reader in use among us. To learners not classically educated, however, (and to many that are,) the pieces near the beginning are by far too difficult, and the assistance too scanty. The arrangement is not progressive, so that pieces near the end of the book are much easier than many in the beginning or middle.

2d. The second class of Readers are such as profess to facilitate the business of reading. They are generally based on the *Hamiltonian* method, i. e., the pieces are accompanied with translations, either *interlinear* and *literal*, or *free* and *opposite*. The difficulty with the books of this class is, that they leave the learner where they found him, unable by himself to account for the grammatical construction of a sentence; and when he lays aside the book to take up another, he finds that it is one thing to read by the aid of a translation and quite another to read understandingly. The principal books of this class are *Zimmer's German Teacher*, (Heidelberg and London, 1839.) *Gand's Literary Companion*, (Frankfort, 1841.) better in its selections than the first, and *Bokum's German Reader*, (Philadelphia.)

The plan of this German Reader is as follows, viz.:

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Principal Worcester County High School.

MESSRS. APPLETON :

PENN. COLLEGE, GETTYSBURG, Oct. 29, 1846.

Dear Sirs,—The friends of education are under great obligations to you for the valuable service you have rendered by the recent publication of Arnold's Cornelius Nepos. I have examined the edition with much interest, and it gives me pleasure to say that I highly approve of it. A text-book prepared by a man so distinguished for scholarship, experience, and success in teaching, as Dr. Arnold, cannot fail to secure universal favor. The mechanical execution, and the great accuracy which prevails throughout, are highly creditable to the American editor and the publisher.

I have determined to introduce the edition at once into the Academical Department of Pennsylvania College, and have accordingly directed our book merchants to procure copies.

Respectfully, yours,

M. L. STOERER, A. M.

Prof. of History in Pennsylvania College, and Principal of the Academical Department.

MESSRS. APPLETON & Co. :

OAKLAND HIGH SCHOOL, April 28, 1846.

Gentlemen,—I acknowledge with many thanks the receipt of T. K. Arnold's First and Second Latin Book, and his Introduction to Latin Prose Composition. The style in which the books are got up is not their only recommendation. With thorough instruction, on the part of the teacher using these books as text-books, I am confident a much more ample return for the time and labor bestowed by our youth upon Latin must be secured. The time certainly has come when an advance must be made upon the old methods of instruction. I am glad to have a work that promises so many advantages as Arnold's First and Second Latin Book to begin. I have little doubt of the result of the experiment.
Very respectfully,
A. B. RUSSELL.

Extract from a Report of an Examination of the Male Department of the Parochial School of St. Paul's Church, Rome, N. Y., on Friday, March 26, 1847.

**** "But were we to single out any part of the examination as worthy of special notice, it would be that upon 'Arnold's First Book in Latin.' Many an Academician, who has studied Latin in the ordinary way for two years, could not sustain an examination as did the lads of this class, who have studied Arnold's First Lessons only about six months. Arnold's method is admirable for making thorough scholars and accurate grammarians; but then it needs a thorough and industrious teacher to use it to advantage. Such, evidently, is Mr. Platt. He has not been content to put his pupils upon writing out the exercises, but they have been required to commit thoroughly to memory the vocabulary of words in each lesson, beginning with nouns and verbs; and as soon as they have learned the words they begin to make sentences. Then they learn occasionally a declension, and immediately are made to put it to use by constructing sentences that require the cases of that declension. A similar method was pursued in the English Grammar and in the French."

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