

# *The Study of French at the O.A.C.*

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**I**S the study of French in any way profitable to the student of the O. A. C.? If a general census of opinion were taken among students and ex-students the answer would be an emphatic negative. There is no doubt that most students look upon French as an unpleasant necessity, that they learn just enough to pass the examinations, and afterwards forget all about it as quickly as they can. This hostility to a foreign language is not in the least unnatural, nor is it confined to the O. A. C. I well remember the shameful uproar of the French classes at school, and the futile efforts of a polite but bewildered Monsieur to keep order. It is an admitted characteristic of Anglo-Saxons to affect a lofty contempt for anything they do not understand; and it would be quite safe to say of English-speaking students generally, that except among specialists, foreign languages are looked upon with mistrust and learned with reluctance.

The object of this article, however, is particular and local. It is not to champion the study of French in general, but to consider the question as applied to this college that I venture to write on such a subject. It may seem strange that a member of the staff should discuss in a college magazine the value (or non-value) of a subject which he himself is teaching; but I believe such questions should be frankly treated. Moreover, this par-

ticular question is a perennial one and discussion of it is always in season. The Editor having asked me for an article on some seasonable topic, I have decided to lay before those who are interested, the reasons for and against the study of French at this college.

## A Arguments Against the Study of French

### 1. Lack of Preliminary Training.

Since there is no entrance examination at this college we must work on the assumption that our pupils are ignorant of French. Thus when a student has climbed to the dignity of the Third Year; he has to begin the study of elementary French, a subject belonging to the schoolroom. Elementary work in languages is most uninteresting to adults, chiefly because the



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sentences have to be made so simple as to become positively inane. Speculations as to the probable whereabouts of "my aunt's pen," or the number of pieces of chalk possessed by an imaginary Mary, cannot be made absorbing to the mature mind.

A comparatively large proportion of Third Year men have their matriculation or have studied French elsewhere. These men could proceed to a more advanced and profitable course, were it not for the presence of others who have never learned French. Thus we have two-thirds of a class marking time while the remaining third crawls