

have laid a good foundation for future German reading and study.

It is speaking within bounds to say that the mastery of German requires double the time and labor that are needed for the French, but no student worthy of the name should shrink from the task though its accomplishment were twice as difficult as it is. The introduction given by the language to the realm of thought, in which some of the mightiest thinkers of the world have their being should be deemed an ample compensation for all the toil necessary to its acquisition.

At the end of my first Semester in the University my ear was sufficiently trained to distinguish between German words, and to catching their meaning as they were uttered to enable me to understand with little difficulty, the lectures to which I listened. And finally so easily were they understood, that I would often forget that I was listening to another language than my own. As the robins come in the spring without our knowing when, only we look out some morning and see them hopping on the green, so one day, being hardly conscious how or when it came about I found, myself speaking and understanding German.

RASSELAS.

"Impressive truth, in splendid fiction drest,
Checks the vain wish, and calms the troubled
breast:

O'er the dark mind a light celestial throws,
And soothes the angry passions to repose;
As oil effus'd illumines and smooths the deep,
When round the bark the swelling surges sweep."

Rasselas, a philosophical tale very popular in the last century, is said to have been written by Dr. Johnson during the evenings of one week, with a view to procuring the funds necessary to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral. Although written in so short a period it is not a hasty and immature production; but gives, in a different form, much of what had appeared from time to time in the *Rambler*. It deals with subjects which Johnson had much and long revolved in his mind—foremost among which is the

Vanity of Human Wishes. The opening sentence conveys a correct idea of its design: "Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow; attend to the history of Rasselas, prince of Abyssinia." To Voltaire's *Candide* it bears so close a resemblance that a knowledge of their almost simultaneous appearance is requisite to dispel suspicion of imitation. This, with other remarkable coincidences of a similar character, demonstrates the possibility of too great haste in making accusations of plagiarism. The plan of the work is very simple. The story is only a thread, of no great value, upon which are strung essays like precious pearls. In the region of the Nile there is a supposed valley, spacious and fertile, and surrounded on every side by impassable mountains. In this valley are all the means of comfort and enjoyment which nature and art afford. Once a year the massive gates are opened, and persons from the outer world enter as candidates for residence. Those who discover ability to contribute anything to the happiness of the place are allowed to remain; and when once they are received there is no release. Rasselas, son of the Emperor, although informed by sages of the miseries of public life, became discontented with his lot. The sole occupation of the place of his confinement was pleasure in its various departments; but art soon ceased to please, and through familiarity the beauties of nature lost their charm. He felt his life to be vacant and was unhappy because it was aimless. His instructor, noticing his distaste for merriment and his inclination to habits of solitude and meditation, endeavored to restore him to his former hilarity by extolling his happy condition, and comparing it with the regions of calamity and discord beyond the mountains. The sage, by telling him that he would know how to value his present happy state if he had seen the miseries of the world, opened the eyes of the young prince and