

the last, and not the first step in the acquisition of a foreign tongue, and it will be found of little avail, if the ground be not previously laid by study. Let me assure you that six months in the country after three years of study, will be found infinitely more useful than three years in the country after six months of study. And how should this study be pursued? Let us remember, above all things, that we do not speak here of acquiring a mere smattering of a foreign idiom, but of *mastering* it, and that this is by no means a trifling task. It is often supposed that the acquisition of modern languages is mere child's play compared with that of ancient languages, but this is a very erroneous idea. Ancient languages are studied chiefly for the purpose of learning to understand the works written in them, as from their nature very little or no active use can be made of them at the present day, and it cannot be denied, that, on account of their very complicated *forms*, it is a far more time-absorbing and laborious task to learn to *understand* Latin and Greek than any of the living idioms most in use. But, besides learning to *understand* them, we study modern languages for the purpose of translating from our own native idiom into them, both in speech and writing; and to learn to do this with ease and elegance is as serious an undertaking as the study of ancient languages, and requires quite as much time and labour.

The different purpose for which they are studied must, of course, suggest a different *method* for the acquisition of modern idioms from that usually followed in the study of ancient languages. In teaching living idioms the greatest care should be taken from the very beginning to accustom the learner to translate his native tongue into them, and to use them actively, which is of much less consequence in ancient languages; but in *one* point the methods should be entirely the same—and this is the thorough mastering of the *grammar*. Whilst this is usually well enough attended to in ancient languages, it is too often neglected in the study of modern idioms, especially at the present time. Their grammars are considered very simple and easy, because their *forms* are less intricate than those of Greek and Latin, and nothing contributes more to make the knowledge of living languages so defective, as we usually find it, than this very erroneous conclusion. Does it follow, that, because the declensions and conjugations of French and German are simpler than those of Latin and Greek, their syntax is so too? By no means. The syntax of a highly cultivated and refined modern idiom presents quite as complicated and elaborate a system as that of any ancient language, its study requires quite as much serious application, and is, moreover, fully as well calculated to develope and enlarge the intellect of the student.

The grammar is the foundation of the whole structure of a language, and, as in the construction of every edifice, the foundation is laid first,