

PREFACE

I HAVE long observed that where mistaken methods of language teaching are found to be in use—and they are very widely in use—they are invariably traceable, directly or indirectly, to misconceptions with regard to the nature of language itself. The attitude usually adopted towards the teaching of languages appears to be mainly empirical; this is sufficiently obvious from the discussions which occasionally take place on the subject, which only too frequently degenerate into a wrangle regarding the results alleged to have been produced by this or that method. But the results obtained by any given method must always be a much more debatable matter than the principles on which it is founded. Moreover, the term 'method' in education should mean something more than merely a way of obtaining a desired result; it implies a *right* way of obtaining that result; in the case of language teaching, it should be based on the principles of linguistic science.

When a teacher has once come to an intelligent

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