

A Veteran's Story



Mr. Joseph Hemmerich, an old soldier, 629 E. 149th St., N. Y. City, writes us voluntarily. In 1862, at the battle of Fair Oaks, he was struck with typhoid fever, and after a long struggle in hospitals, lasting several years, was discharged as incurable with Consumption.

Doctors said both lungs were affected and he could not live long, but a comrade urged him to try Hood's Sarsaparilla. Before he had finished one bottle his cough began to get loose, the choking sensation left, and night sweats grew less and less. He is now in good health and cordially recommends

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How to Learn French

What is Nature's Method of Teaching Languages?

Well do I remember my first efforts to grasp a foreign tongue. They were of short duration, and the end thereof was stormy. I was childhood days then, so I began very hopefully and cheerfully on the first page of an inflexible old grammar, a fat green book, I recollect, with a great brigade of verbs, regular and irregular. I knew I had only to hurry up and learn all it contained, and then I would be a French scholar, and quite able, when I grew up, to travel through Europe and answer offers of marriage from the French nobility in elegant phrases, such as, "No, I thank you, sir, I shall marry in my own country." Vain hopes! Before the end of the first half term I loathed French, and scowled as regularly as I was asked every evening at dinner to "give the French bread" by relatives with an inquiring air of mind. They thought it encouraged me. But I was past all that. The examination day drew near. It was a written one. I gave a number of snow-white pages, their beauty being marred by but one word, "pain." Thanks to my family, I had been able to remember the French for "bread." I might have remembered sundry other phrases, I dare say, had I racked my brain, but I had no wish to do so. Such my wise "analytical and practical French grammar." I saw a loophole of escape. Let a pupil in a highly respectable young ladies' seminary should only gain one mark out of a hundred on a simple paper attracted the attention of the principal, who made a fuss about it; and then my guardians made a fuss about it. The upshot of it was that I was allowed to take lessons in drawing instead, my study of the languages being postponed yet awhile. I have no doubt indeed I know of people with great memory and capacity for application, who have gained a thorough knowledge of French and other languages through the grammar book translation method, after a number of years of hard labor. But what I wish to point out is that for ordinary, say-going persons like myself, with no great memory, there is a royal road to languages. I refer to the "Natural Method" of learning a foreign tongue, and to the "Berlitz method" in particular, because it is of this latter that I have had the most experience. I have not words to describe the pleasure and interest of this delightful system which is gaining such widespread influence in Europe and America. It was a happy chance which led me to the discovery of an instructor of this method which was just then being started in Toronto for the first time. A friend of mine met me one day and said, "Don't you want to take lessons in German? I've found a splendid teacher." "Why?" I replied in astonishment, "you took first-class honors in German and French at the Varsity this year, why do you need to study further?" "Oh, yes," she replied, "too far as reading and translation go, I'm all right; but you know we were taught to speak up to Varsity to any practical extent, and so when college closed I thought I'd take a term or two from this 'Berlitz' teacher, and do you know I found little girls there who had only been taking nine or ten months, far my superiors in gibberish and power to understand what little French I'm saying." My friend in the end inspired me that I was induced to take up my long neglected studies once more by the Berlitz method, and I've never regretted it. I am here reminded of a remark of the great genius, Delaune: "We are always trying to do so much; nature would be happy if we would only allow her. We are always trying to assist ourselves." Now, Mother Nature never intended that her children, big or little, should try to learn any language by drudgery and toil, rules, and memorizing lists of verbs; she has a better way than that. It is necessary to state, O, gentle reader, that this "way" is the "Berlitz method." Ah, dear, delightful Berlitz! What a refreshing change you are from a pathless jungle of rules, vocabularies and exceptions. While the hapless student of analytical and practical French grammars is still struggling in his efforts to translate "Have you the paper, pens and ink?" we are accompanying "Messieurs" A. and B. on a delightful trip to Paris, full of romantic adventure, or attending "Madame" when she visits her dressmaker. But though we never conjugate, decline or memorize grammatical rules, I hope no one has run away with the idea that we are not taught to speak correctly. The pupil is thoroughly drilled in such instruction and form before he passes to new ones. This is done by "presenting the subject in the form of practical and entertaining illustrations, closely connected with object teaching. The student, though

in reality studying grammar, does not perceive that he is being familiarized with the rules of that dreaded and wearisome science, but enjoys the exercises as an attractive conversation."

But I have not yet said a word in praise of the most shining feature of the method, and that is the "professors" employed by the school of Berlitz. To quote the words of Agatha, "Give me a Berlitz professor for cold gall and beautiful nerve." Agatha, by the way, is the young person fresh from the far west, whom chance decided should be the other member of my French class. This should be taken as a high compliment from Agatha, for what she means to imply is that the average Berlitz professor is usually a person of great aplomb and decisive action. I suppose it is the fact of their being Parisians which is the original cause of such un-Canadian self-possession and dexterity in handling a class of awkward strangers. But Agatha has never been in Paris, and she regards them all as the handwork of Mr. Berlitz down in New York city. I was somewhat dazzled myself for the first few lessons by the amount of vivacity, shining white linen and acrobatic limberness shown forth by our particular "professor," and the two I've had since have been just the same. Such little skips and runs and graceful wavings of the hands during the effort to inculcate a new idea into the heavy English mind—a teacher of our race is so careful of his personal dignity, so stiff, constrained and incapable of abandonment to graceful fancies!

I here declare, and so does Agatha, that a Berlitz teacher, for the paltry sum of 50 cents an hour, will afford one more amusement and dainty entertainment than a whole baker's dozen of the swallow-tailed, white-knuckled Canadian youth one meets out at an average evening party. To quote Agatha again, "It is like a high-class variety show, only more genteel." A Parisian never looks bored, even if he is only earning his bread and butter. Were some one to place a Frenchman in the unkind position of having to hurt your vanity or box your ears, I am certain he would choose the latter alternative. To be lacking in tact would make him sick! The brutality of other nations is not possible to him. The stupidest, idlest, most aggravating pupil is treated with tender consideration, with perhaps just a soupçon of delicate satire as a stimulant. Always gay, smiling, serene, the Berlitz professor rises superior to circumstances. He would give you a lesson on the corner of King and Yonge streets with all the sang froid with which he would eat a beefsteak, because he doesn't care what anyone thinks of him, being perfectly sure that he will do the right thing at the right time. You can't upset or ruffle a Berlitz professor's temper. I have once or twice seen a slightly pained expression cross his face when Agatha and I, indulging in a slight wrangle as to the proprietorship of a certain book, have drifted into a series of accusations and recriminations, which, though they may have sounded somewhat heated, meant nothing to what we might have done had we been really angry, and did not seriously interrupt our friendship. But I know that professor secretly thought us dreadful. He would stand by and watch us, a strange subdued rumbling as of distant going on somewhere in his throat all the while. But on the cessation of hostilities his face would clear up, like the sky with the passing of an April shower. Agatha says, "What just the same," Agatha said, "in his secret heart he despises us for young savages; don't tell me!" Do not come at the study of French in an obstinate frame of mind. Leave your prejudices at home, for in working of the pencil you are told that "this is red." Of course I know that this is an injury to all our higher natures, to be compelled to address a miserable little stick of wood as "red." But they don't know any better, and we must humor their little weakness and accustom ourselves as soon as possible to talk of chairs as "Shes." It is only fair to state that Berlitz's method will not accomplish everything, and that for a student preparing for university examinations this course of study would be lost time, of course, as we don't work on university lines at all, nor do we want to. We are too devotedly thankful to escape such tedium, all writing and rules and translations, and a grave scholastic gentleman writing on a blackboard in the far end of a great hall, in place of a buoyant Berlitz gambolling about the room like a fifth-month lamb, in endeavor to illustrate his words. It is very nice to be able to write French correctly, and I dare say you could manage to get along at a French dinner-table by means of a pencil and a bit of paper always handy, on which to write what you want to say; but I'm afraid you won't be what is called "a social success" exactly. At least, that is, I don't think so. Learn to speak a language first and write later on that if you haven't time to do both. Talk whenever you get a chance, and don't be bashful. Of course you'll make ridiculous errors, but however much secret entertainment you may afford them, try the French never to hurt your vanity by laughing at you, at once knew an unkind girl do when the young Frenchman would call the canary the "canary," and "I will go slowly by gentles" for "I will go slowly by degrees." No more! As I would like to make it known, I must forbear to state that as luck will have it, a well-known teacher of the Berlitz method has started coming to London twice a week to give lessons in French. It would be, I am sure, after all the foregoing eulogies on Berlitz, which sprang entirely out of an appreciative and grateful heart, if I should bring upon myself the odium of the man who writes those glib French sentences terminating in a flourish of trumpets for Jewack's Spring Pills! Let I be mistaken for one of these pirates, I must be firm and keep the name of Prof. E. Masson, of the Conservatory of Music, Toronto, all to myself, and no one shall wrest my secret from me. So keep on, ye tollers among vorbis regular and irregular, and exceptions to rules, till some happy chance shall release you. But as for me and mine, it shall always be, Vive la method Berlitz!

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