

influence they have acquired in it, have already made the knowledge of their language very desirable to every American, and the time may not be distant when it will be the predominant idiom in a vast portion of the Western part of this continent.

After showing the importance of a knowledge of living foreign languages, I will now try, briefly to answer the question: Which is the best way of acquiring that knowledge? In doing so, I must first, and above all things, warn against a prejudice which is very common, and too frequently prevents those who are desirous of becoming acquainted with foreign idioms, from pursuing their study in an efficient manner. This prejudice consists in the idea, that the power of *conversing* in a foreign language can only be acquired by practice in the country where it is spoken, and that study, although it may teach us to read, and even to write, will never lead to it. Now, the great object of the majority of those who apply themselves to the acquisition of foreign idioms is, justly, to learn to converse in them, and as they generally see themselves unable to do so after a few months of study, they give it up in disgust, and loudly exclaim against such a thankless task, not knowing that they have left the only way to the goal, till they really go to the country where the language they studied is spoken. If they do so, they will generally find, to their great astonishment, that the foreign idiom is not inhaled with the air, that it is a hard task to imitate what they do not understand, and that a knowledge of the grammatical principles of the language, which they neglected to acquire at home, is indispensable. In the foreign country their time and attention are generally taken up by so many new and frequently unexpected things, that they can devote no time to study, and although, if their stay be long enough, they will ultimately learn to express themselves in the foreign idiom, their knowledge of it must always remain a parrot-like imitation, and they will soon lose it, after leaving the country, because it has no foundation, and only the knowledge we acquire by labor and serious study will *endure*. Moreover, as they may be thrown into the company of those, who, from want of education, speak their language imperfectly, and in a vulgar style, they, although they may be well educated persons themselves, are apt to imitate many incorrect and even vulgar expressions, because they are unable, from ignorance of the *principles* of the language to distinguish the good from the bad, and mechanically imitate one as well as the other.

We can never learn to use a foreign idiom with exactly the same facility as the language our mother taught us, but we may learn to speak it with ease and correctness, and it is true, that to do so, a stay of some duration in the country which is its home, or continued intercourse with educated natives of that country, is indispensable; but this should be