

vous to establish practical limits to our efforts in connection with any modern language. say French or German. Shall we try to cover the whole field occupied by this or that language where it is vernacular, or shall we try to cultivate a small corner of it, consoling ourselves with the thought that the work is well done? Shall we present to the view of our pupils a shadow of the language, or shall we endeavour to make them acquainted with the original complete, as it lives in the mouths of the living race and in the literature of the nation? If we are teaching our pupil French, for example, are we to aim at making him know it as a Frenchman does? Now, what does an educated Frenchman know of his own language? He understands it when he reads it, he can express his thoughts in writing, he can speak it or read it aloud, and he can understand it when spoken or read aloud. An educated Englishman knows as much with regard to his own language. Nobody, so far as is known, has attempted to train up a youth, gifted with the power of speech and hearing, in a knowledge of the printed page, and with a capacity for expressing thought in writing, and ignoring at the same time the spoken language. The supposition is so absurd as to be almost unthinkable, except in the case of the unfortunates who are born deaf-mute. On the other hand, we recognize universally that an individual who understands only the spoken language, *i.e.*, who neither writes nor reads, labours under an enormous disadvantage. These things are so self-evident, when our own language is concerned, that it is surprising to find among them a bone of contention when we come to speak of teaching a foreign language to our English-speaking youth. The ear has been much ignored in the past, and I have suggested above an explanation of the

fact, but there are still many teachers of modern languages who hold that the cultivation of the ear in language-study is of itself undesirable, that, so long as the language is taught in strict conformity with the methods commonly applied to the classics, the study is worthy of the name of mental discipline, otherwise not. On the advocates of this doctrine must rest the burden of proof. They themselves cannot deny that the eye knowledge is partial, nay, fragmentary, when the language is considered as a whole, nor can they deny that ear knowledge is desirable in itself for many reasons. Their position obliges them to prove that the cultivation of the ear lessens the amount of mental discipline to be gained in learning a language, or, failing in this, they ought to be able to show that the ear knowledge hinders the acquisition of that fragment of the language, the inculcation of which they have undertaken as their task. The above assumptions, although practically held to by many, still remain unproved. On the other hand, evidence is accumulating to show that, so far from lessening the amount of mental discipline to be gained in learning a language, the attempt to perceive its sounds exactly by the ear, and to reproduce them by the voice, is in itself an important discipline. Not only so, but this training of ear and voice together have made possible the attempt to instil a knowledge which will be permanent. Strange as it may appear, the knowledge acquired through the eye is not the more permanent, or rather, taken alone, it is not the more permanent. What student of language has not surveyed with dismay the rapidly vanishing traces of a language learned by the eye alone, while the language learned by the ear in conjunction with the eye still remained a permanent possession?