A Practical and Complete German Grammar

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GERMAN GRAMMAR.

BY

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BOSTON:
PHILLIPS, SAMPSON, AND COMPANY,
13 WINTER STREET.
1858.
The Grammar here offered to the learners of German is intended to serve a double purpose. It is to be a thoroughly practical book, leading the beginner in German, according to the newest and best method of acquiring the practical use of foreign languages, from the very commencement on to the perfect use of German in conversation, translation, and writing, either with or without the aid of a teacher; and it is to be a complete system of German grammar, according to the latest discoveries and views in grammatical science,—complete at least as far as a correct and elegant use of German can be mastered by the aid of a grammar,—with a diligent regard to the German equivalents for English idioms.

There are a considerable number of German Grammars before the public; and among them are several that deserve no slight praise on account of the scholarship and practical utility they exhibit. We feel under obligation especially to mention the following:—

2. *K. F. Becker's* (published by his son, Mr. Bernh. Becker, in Frankfort-on-the-Main and London, 1841, second edition, 1845), a work whose merits no one that is conversant with grammatical matters will doubt for a moment.
3. *Aue's* (Grammar of the German Language, London and Edinburgh, Chambers, 1853), a meritorious work, based entirely upon Becker's system, and more complete with regard to details and to Anglicisms and Germanisms even than Becker's.
4. *Glaubecke's* (Synthetic Grammar of the German Language, New York, Irison and
PHINNEY, 1887), a scientific abridgment of the principles of German grammar, devised to complete Woodbury's series of German textbooks. All these works, and many more of lesser note, follow the synthetic or scientific method of grammar, and are therefore, however great their merits in this respect may be, useful only to such pupils as already understand the elements of German, and those of grammar in general, from their previous acquaintance with and study of other foreign languages.

It is a merit of Woodbury in this country conclusively to have shown that the scientific or theoretical way of teaching a foreign language, when exclusively practised, is too tedious to attract the youthful mind, too slow of progress to reach its aim, and too much at variance with our improved modern system of instruction. The youth must learn foreign languages, more or less, in the same natural way in which he acquires his own mother tongue. He must begin with hearing it spoken in simple, then in more difficult and compound sentences; he must learn to understand them by analyzing and recomposing them into other sentences and periods. The pupil must learn at the same time to understand the foreign language when spoken, and to speak it himself, to read and translate the foreign tongue fluently into his mother tongue, and to write it like his own. This was the aim of Woodbury. But his system is carried too far. There are too many practical lessons, and consequently too long a preparatory period is required for the pupil to learn to translate and read German books, to converse in the language, and to master its grammatical construction. Besides, the examples chosen to illustrate the rules are often tedious and meaningless, and the thinking or analyzing faculty of the human mind is too little called into activity.

Among those who know Mager's merits in relation to the theory of the true method of learning foreign languages, there can be no doubt that there is but one system possible,—the practico-theoretical system, as hinted at by Ollendorf, Ahn, and Woodbury, and as perfected by Mager, and even further simplified in the present work. The beginning is made with an eminently practical course; the pupil hears the foreign language spoken and sees it written in a series of sentences that form a methodical gradation from the simplest and easiest to the more difficult and compounded. It is of importance that this course should not be prolonged beyond twenty-four lessons, at least not with able pupils; and that the latter should find themselves competent, at
the end of this course, to translate a foreign book, and to understand little stories when told in the foreign language, and to repeat them in the same. This point once gained, everything is gained; the pupil feels already his rapid proficiency, and consequently a lively interest in exerting his own powers, and in studying the foreign language for himself. He can help himself along, even without a teacher, and he will progress much more rapidly than common pupils. He is now able to understand a scientific or merely theoretical grammar, and to study it with profit.

For this purpose it is indispensable that the first or practical course should be well elaborated, so as to comprise all the important forms and syntactical rules of the language, and to be in itself a complete Grammar with the omission of all cumbersome details, and that all these forms and rules should be embodied in short sentences, that may be committed to memory together with the correct pronunciation of the teacher. The pupil must be made to read and to translate the sentences of each lesson, beginning with the very first, the teacher confining himself to corrections; after translation comes Analysis, so that the pupil may point out the meaning of each word, as well as the grammatical form and rule embodied in it. When reading, translating, and analyzing has been repeated, if necessary even a second time, the pupil is prepared to compose new sentences from the elements of those given, the teacher confining himself to corrections and a few suggestions, or to furnishing the pupil with a small number of new words, that enable him to frame as many new sentences from the elements of those first given as possible. No new lesson should be commenced before the preceding one is fully mastered. Each following lesson should be calculated to repeat the elements of the previous ones as often as possible. If this method is consistently carried out, and if the teacher is never satisfied with a lesson imperfectly recited, a rule imperfectly understood, a false pronunciation, etc., he may be morally sure that twenty-four lessons will bring his pupil or pupils to a certain facility in translating from the foreign into the mother tongue, and vice versa, in reading all easy books, in understanding all little tales or descriptions in the foreign tongue when spoken, and in being able to repeat them. The second course may then begin.

In this Grammar a first course of twenty-four lessons is devised, whose efficiency for the purpose mentioned the author knows through his own experience as a practical teacher. Nay, his experience has
taught him that even as many as twenty-four lessons are not indispensable, and that the task may be performed with able pupils in sixteen lessons. The first ten sentences of each lesson are those to be translated, read, analyzed, repeated, and finally committed to memory by the pupil; the subsequent grammatical remarks are mere suggestions for the teacher, or for the abler pupil who wishes to learn German for himself without the advantage of the aid of a teacher. They contain the rules on grammatical forms and construction embodied in the sentences. The teacher should not go a step further until the pupil has comprehended the rules. He may be able to give more of them, — he should not give less. There is no real progress in learning foreign languages until the pupil understands the reasons for each form and each combination of forms implied. No language can be perfectly learned without putting in requisition the thinking faculty of the human mind; much less the German, — a language so much more difficult than the English. The more fundamental and thorough is the foundation of a foreign language in the pupil's mind, the more rapid is the systematical progress afterwards.

The German and English sentences following the grammatical remarks of each lesson are to be translated, and care should be taken by the teacher to add a number of English sentences to be translated into German, formed out of the elements of the first ten sentences, perhaps with the addition of a few words if his pupil should not have become sufficiently proficient. This is a comparatively easy task for a teacher of average ability.

The second course, as devised by the author, should be a theoretical one, continuing at the same time the practical exercises on a larger scale. The teacher explains the rules of the Theoretical Part, and exercises his pupils in understanding and applying them by English sentences to be translated into German. On the other hand, he makes them read and translate easy German reading-matter into English, alternately telling them short stories, such as those given in the fourth part of this book, and at a later period short descriptions, which they must forthwith orally translate into English, and immediately after, or one lesson later, repeat in German. All mistakes made by the pupil should be corrected by referring to the rule; and at the end of each lesson, one or two important rules embodied in the reading matter, or sinned against in repeating the story, should be illustrated by reference to the corresponding section in the Grammar, and by a
number of examples to be made on them. The declensions, conjugations, prepositions, adverbs, and conjunctions must be committed to memory, by repeating them three or four times a year, and fixed in the mind by examples. The teacher should be careful not to crowd the memory of his pupils with rules, but to have as many of them as they have learned understood fully and deeply impressed.

The second course should confine itself to Etymology, and not enter on the details of Syntax, which remains for a third course. Toward the end of the second course, translations in writing from choice English reading-matter into German, to be corrected by the teacher with reference to the paragraphs of the Grammar, should be attempted. If no other English book fit for that purpose is at hand, the "Fairy Book" will do. Tales, fables, and descriptions should be preferred to all other literature.

The third course should have for its object Syntax, treated in the same way as Etymology was in the second. The more difficult German authors should be read and explained by the teacher, in part cursorily, in part more fundamentally; in the latter case the pupils have to prepare themselves with Vocabulary and Grammar for the task of the lesson, in the former case they have not. The teacher should insist that all words met with in translating, and unknown to the pupil, be committed to memory, together with the gender of substantives. Oral translations from good English writers into German, always with reference to the sections of the Grammar, are indispensable to give the pupil a correct and fluent use of the foreign tongue. At the same time German conversation must be begun. To carry it on so that common platitudes may be avoided, the teacher should select a topic for conversation, taken from some German or English classic, and by adroit questions oblige the pupils to speak out their own mind and to form opinions. The study of language treated in this way, becomes one of the best means of developing the thinking faculties and propensities, and of correcting the logic of the pupil. From time to time those topics of the Grammar that were omitted in the former studies as conveying too many details, particularly those on the gender of substantives, on the formation of words, on the construction of sentences, the use of the verbals, etc., are introduced, explained, and the pupil exercised by means of examples, until, at the end of the third course, no topic in the Grammar is left untouched.

Such pupils, on the other hand, as are constrained by sheer neces-
ity to learn German without the aid of a teacher, and feel competent to do so, can profit by this Grammar more than by any other. They should by all means have a few pronouncing lessons, and from time to time some of their written exercises corrected, by some able German; otherwise they would not have sufficient conversational practice. Still they will find in this book the first German Grammar at the same time practical and scientifically complete. 

On this head we must say a few words. Much as has of late been done in the science of grammar in general, and in German grammar particularly, there is to-day no complete and reliable German Grammar, either in the German or in any other language. Becker's admirable works, it is true, have reformed the whole system, and disclosed many facts before overlooked; but, written, as they are, for Germans, they do not mention some very important topics,—for instance, with regard to the sex and declension of substantives, the arrangement of words, the vast field of Germanisms, and the rendering of English idioms into German. In this respect the present book is much fuller than any previous one, and, if not perfect, is at least sufficiently complete to enable the attentive pupil to correct conclusions according to given analogies. All the lists of exceptions will, by comparison with other Grammars, be found far richer, and so reliable that the pupil can now, for the first time, know where the rule begins and the exceptions end. There are many important facts, overlooked in all Grammars extant, explained and stated here for the first time. We need not enlarge upon this; the careful reader will find it out for himself.

The author owes a great debt of gratitude to the better German Grammars named above. On the whole, he has, in compiling this book, compared more than twenty existing Grammars. Some things that could not be said in a shorter and more forcible or proper manner, are almost verbatim copied from Becker's English edition, Aue, Heiner, and the German editions of Becker. The author has likewise derived the whole skeleton of the grammatical system from Becker, to whose profound works any English scholar of German who wishes to master it thoroughly must at last apply. He does not expect to incur reproach for having done so. This work bears in itself sufficient evidence of independent studies and views to shield him from the charge of plagiarism. Suffice it to say, that his aim was not origi-nality,—which is least of all desirable in grammatical science,—but usefulness.