GERMAN COMPOSITION

WITH NOTES AND VOCABULARIES

BY

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PREFACE

The English speaking pupil who is trying to learn a highly inflected language like German often believes that as soon as he has mastered the difficulties of grammar his task will be an easy one, since he can find all the words in the dictionary. But the dictionary contains many pitfalls for the unwary. It gives for instance tropfen and vollständlich as the German equivalents of "drop" and "popular," but strangely enough the teacher objects to the renderings: Sie tröpfte ihren Handschuh and Dieser Herr war mit den Frauen sehr vollständlich, even though the pupil maintains stoutly enough: "But I found it in the dictionary!" Such experiences often lead to a conflict of authorities with the teacher on one side and the dictionary, as the pupil believes, on the other. Consequently confusion reigns in the mind of the pupil. As a result of similar experience in the classroom, the authors were convinced that the pupil should be trained from the beginning in the careful choice of words as well as in the proper use of endings. This Composition Book, planned and begun in the fall of 1913, represents the authors’ attempt to combine a systematic review of the essentials of grammar with a careful treatment of the commonest of those groups of words which offer difficulty in translation.

The authors do not claim to have discovered a new principle nor to have invented a new method. They feel sure that hundreds of teachers have called the attention of their
pupils to many of the points that are here presented, but they believe that these very teachers will welcome a set of exercises that furnish material for systematic grammar drill and at the same time demand from the pupil care and thought in the use of the new vocabulary.

The text on which the exercises of Part I are founded is taken from the German and consists of anecdotes which are first to be worked through carefully in question and answer orally, then to be memorized and retold in the language of the various characters concerned. The English exercises are based not only on the vocabulary of the new story but also on many of the words and phrases of the earlier lessons, thus insuring a continual review in the hope that the material will become a permanent part of the pupil's vocabulary. The Word Studies, which form a part of each lesson, are naturally somewhat simpler than those of the exercises in Part II.

The German text of Part II is in letter form and relates the experiences of an American family in Bremen. This method of imparting information about the daily life of the people whose language we are studying is by no means new, but in selecting the subject matter, the authors have tried to avoid the themes that have been treated in other Composition Books. Some of the exercises recommended in the first part have been omitted here in order to make room for more elaborate Word Studies.

Thirty-six lessons can hardly be expected to make of a beginner in German an authority on synonyms, nor an expert translator; it is hoped, however, that they will strengthen in him the desire to express himself accurately and show him how good English may by careful thought be turned into good German.
The original plan of the book included, in addition to the material here presented, a third and a fourth section. The third gave the pupil some information in the form of anecdotes about the childhood of Goethe, Schiller and Lessing, together with more difficult exercises. The fourth section aimed to prepare the pupil for the treatment of independent themes. It consisted of outlines for compositions on simple subjects with which every pupil is familiar and furnished him with the greater part of the necessary vocabulary. It is hoped to issue this more advanced material at some future time.

In the present work marks of parentheses are introduced in the English exercises to include explanatory matter and words that may be used in one language and omitted in the other. In most cases it is clear from the context in which language the word is required, but where it seemed best to indicate translation into German, brackets have been used.

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