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Edited by S. A. Richards

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S. A. RICHARDS, M.A. (Lond.)

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PREFACE

THE French, who excel in the teaching of their mother tongue, regard *lecture expliquée* as a most valuable exercise for this purpose. It is equally useful in the case of foreign languages, though here it must, of course, be restricted to fairly advanced pupils, for it is a difficult art in itself and demands a certain facility of expression. Within these limits it is high time that it found a regular place in our modern language teaching.

The adoption of this method of instruction involves the use of a collection of *morceaux choisis* such as is to be found in every French school. There has arisen of late, in England, a feeling against what are termed “snippets,” and this opposition is just. There is, however, all the difference in the world between “snippets” and well chosen passages, each complete in itself and taken from a standard author. Variety of style and vocabulary, alternative prose and verse are necessary elements in the successful employment of this exercise, which has for its object not only linguistic instruction, but, more especially, the formation of literary taste and of the power of literary appreciation. The continuous text does not fulfil these conditions, while to cut up such a text into portions, each followed by a series of questions, commentaries and exercises, is to rob it of its interest and to destroy the *impression d'ensemble* which can only be gained by uninterrupted reading.

There is another strong argument in favour of *morceaux choisis*. In attempting to teach his pupils to read, write

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and speak a foreign language, every teacher must feel that he has undertaken at least as much as can be carried to a fairly successful issue. There remains the literature of the language, but all that can be done in this direction is to enable the most advanced pupils to nibble at its fringe. The use of *morceaux choisis*, while providing material for *lecture expliquée*, will at the same time familiarize these pupils with the names and style of some of the greatest writers. The addition of short biographies or notices, in this volume, will still further facilitate the historical study of literature. Such study, when begun at school, is calculated to arouse an interest which will find its fuller satisfaction later on.

Though each teacher will probably adopt a method of using this book in accordance with his individual taste and experience, it may not be out of place to mention a plan of procedure which has been successfully worked. The teacher first reads the passage through, the pupils following in their books. Each pupil then reads a few lines in turn and the teacher questions him on such points as suggest themselves and explains whatever calls for explanation. Materials for this stage are given under the heading *Notes et Questions*. When the piece has been thus worked through, there remains the appreciation of it as a whole, the consideration of the style, subject-matter, underlying ideas, etc., and here help is given in the form of *Examen de fond*, *Analyse de style*, or *Questions d'examen*. Finally the passage will suggest subjects for composition; two such will be found after each piece, in many cases accompanied by a *canavas*.

S. A. RICHARDS.

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