

because the languages are so much more difficult? Certainly not so much more difficult that the mature mind cannot master in four years what a child's mind can master in two! If the Greeks learned Greek as we do, none but the aged genius could ever have carried on a conversation. But they did speak it; old and young alike, and perhaps did not violate the rules of their grammar more than we do the rules of ours.

The fact is, our method of learning a language is unnatural. We did not learn our own language by close application to a Lindley and Murray grammar, and to a volume of Milton, or of Shakespeare. We did not construe every verb in *Robinson Crusoe*. We were not bothered with conjugations and declensions in "Jack the Giant Killer." In fact, most of us spoke passable English before we could read, just as the musician can sing long before he can read notes, and can read notes long before he can explain the principles of harmony. He would be called a strange music teacher that would take a pupil that had never heard a tune in his life, into the principles of thorough-bass. What then of the teacher that requires a student to decline nouns and conjugate verbs that he has never used in his life? Our freshmen read the grandest epic in the Latin language and not one of them can say off-hand a common, every-day sentence three words long!

Moreover, we did not learn English word by word. We learned it by sentences, or at least by groups of words. When we wanted a piece of bread and butter, we did not stop to think of the individual words "bread" and "butter," but the two were memorized together. Nothing of this is done in learning any other language. All through his course the student spends his time in looking up words, memorizing words, never using them nor combining them for himself. He is, in fact, learning not the language, but its words. He is learning, not to speak it, but to read its literature.

It is urged that the ability to read the literature of a language is of far greater importance than the ability to converse in a

language. This may be true, but that is not learning a language. If he is not to be able to converse in the language in the end, the student had far better read a translation than waste four or five years in this kind of work. This would avoid the waste of time involved in hunting up words in the dictionary. This would save the time wasted in memorizing useless rules of grammar, and thus the student would get all the thought out of the original and have plenty of time for the study of English. Of two students, give one the original of Homer's *Iliad* to translate, and give the other the translations, and at the end of a month the second will have read the *Iliad* through, and perhaps the *Odysse*, and will have clear-cut ideas of the life of the Greeks at that time, while the other, maybe, will have struggled through the first book of the *Iliad*, and has no definite thoughts about even that.

If it is Greek you are studying, study Greek, speak Greek, write Greek, think Greek, but don't study Greek literature and imagine you are learning Greek. There is no use in studying Greek unless to talk it; write it and think it. "It will give a clear idea of the English words that are derived from Greek. True enough. But is it worth while to memorize ten thousand Greek words for the sake of a hundred or two derived words? Why not study those words alone? The astronomer does not turn his glass upon a hundred stars to get a definite view of one? Is it not easier to remember that "azimuth" comes from the Arabian language, than to memorize a thousand useless Arabic words? What possible good does it do a student of English to know that "kai" is the Greek word for "and?"

The point of the whole matter is this: Learn a language by ear; correct it by its grammar, and refine by reading its literature.

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It is reported that within the last six years over three hundred and fifty students of German universities have committed suicide because of failure in examination.