



EDUCATION.

To the Editor of the Waterford Chronicle. Sir—Convinced of your taste for, and capability of appreciating, literary improvement, I submit to your inspection, the following letter upon the "Method of Learning."

I have the honour to be, Mr. Editor, Your very humble servant, J. ALBERT MONTCALM.

METHOD OF TEACHING LANGUAGE, &c. The following letter, on the different methods of teaching language, will serve to exemplify principles which have been suggested by the careful study of the observations of some eminent French authors, &c.

Method, whatever may be the object of it, is always ONE! Method consists in observing, comparing, and deducing; such is its essence. A sketch is taken, in the following letter, of the various ways in which method develops itself, and these ways are luminous in proportion as the individual has been philosophic, as it appears in the works of Du Marsais, Radonvilliers, Maugard, Pestalozzi, &c.

The writer has endeavoured to establish a principle of judgment, for ascertaining how much knowledge of any certain subject, art, or science is necessary in the master or teacher; and what are the requisites on the part of the learner or pupil. Also, he shows, that the same fund of information, viz. a power of ascending the first principles, is required for the translating, that is required for the teaching, of any language.

The utility of literal translation, he argues upon the principle of words in the formation of language, having been, in a much stricter sense, signs of ideas, than in translated language—and concludes, by endeavouring to show that the French language from the nature of its prosody, answers more properly than any other living language to the definition of the ancient Greeks, that words are sounds, signs of ideas, &c. the resemblance in sound being greatly obscured, and often altogether lost in other languages.

The great men of our times, who draw their information from the immortal writings of Bacon, Locke, Condillac, Du Marsais, &c., always study language in its affinity to Ideology, being persuaded that if the word be at once the expression and the analysis of the thought, it is to this word or speech, that the art of reasoning is chiefly indebted; there is then a natural union between philosophy and grammar.

The first remark, that I shall take the liberty to make, is the great abuse of the term method. If individuals may perchance find in their practice of teaching a course of lessons which chance or good fortune has caused to succeed, they instantly give to the world a first edition of their method, with some such title as this—"New method; sure method; in six months; three months; and even in twenty-four lessons!"—and to bear some of them, one might think that they are the only persons who have discovered the mystery—they claim all the honour of invention! Analyse some of these great productions, and you will find, that having extracted the ideas borrowed from others, that these inventors have only added a little mechanism, more or less easy, of their own, in proportion as they may have been enlightened; for we must always bear in mind, that there is a certain something to be done, a certain something to be learned; the mode or method, by which that something is to be done, in the best manner and in the shortest time, is to be the subject of our consideration.

As I do not wish to entertain my readers with idle speculation, I will not name any of those fabrications of cheap methods; I will only present to their consideration important and conscientious works which may appear to me to have opened new, or rendered more easy the paths of literary science. I shall not stop with those whose exclusive pretensions impose on the timid, or whose self-sufficiency is their only proof of merit.

Now, from all the attempts, more or less happy, which have been so much multiplied within these few past years, what appears at first sight pretty clear, is this, that the methods of teaching language, followed in some of our colleges, is, at least in part, objectionable, as I shall endeavour to show. Therefore it is that many of these disciples of new methods make use of such exclamations as these—"Eight or ten years spent exclusively in learning a little Latin and Greek!" I must beg leave to doubt the experience of such men as those who make use of such language! Those eight or ten years, which some young men pass at their studies, are not entirely spent in the study of the Latin and Greek; for, in well regulated establishments, they usually learn something of the sciences and arts; the art of writing, the art of reasoning, morality, and the mathematics, &c. &c. There is yet great room for improvement in method, by which the useful matter may be increased. Where improvement is possible, good sense is gaining every day over prejudice and habit, great advances are made in every department of the sciences. In France, the University is always trying some new method in one or other of its Colleges; and the method now central, is in some points opposed to the present system of instruction, which is accused of too often giving words, in place of ideas; resting, in place of understanding; in fine, of reasoning, by what must be the conclusion—therefore, the school books must be rendered more easy; the matter, of which they treat, must be brought to a level with the understanding, and these truths admitted. Definitions are recapitulations; we only recapitulate what we know.—Arguments, convenient at most for those who know, are useless to those who learn. Rules are results from particular facts; general propositions, which have their reason in individual observations. Rules are not, then, intelligible to children; for how can they comprehend what we do not comprehend ourselves, but by virtue of what we know already? There is not any true knowledge, but that which we give to ourselves. To instruct another person, then, cannot be any thing but to put him in a situation of being able

to learn—whence it follows, that the best way to instruct another, is the way or method we have followed in learning. Analysis being the method of discovery or of instruction, ought to be, then, the method of teaching. I may be asked, what is this analysis? I shall reply by and by. Every Methodist has assumed as a truth some one of the above observations, and we may say of them—

"Non diversa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum." But some have said, that practice must necessarily be antecedent to grammar! This, however, is only partly true, for how can we be sure of the signification of any word, if some grammar be not coeval with it? Grammar is propriety of speech—therefore, &c.

I have before me the works of Du Marsais, Radonvilliers, &c. In these works, short and full, the spirit of analysis animates, vivifies all, and leads us on, by a chain of propositions, which arise out of each other, to a true conclusion, with as much certainty as rapidly. Now this appears, inasmuch as it is the summit of perfection, to be a thing very easy to be imitated by those who read, and superficial readers may flatter themselves with being able to imitate without much trouble.—They have learned from Condillac, that method is in the passage from the known to the unknown, which proposition is not strictly true—but in reasoning, where the unknown may be soon in the known, where we find what we did not know, in what we do know, there may be succession, without identity—i. e. one may not be in the other. They have learned, that analysis consists in decomposition; generalities, of which they do not understand the meaning—they run into endless fractions and decompositions. It would appear that some people do not think that there is any art in analysing! They do not appear to suspect that any great discernment is requisite to know which of the many distinguishing attributes ought to be brought forward to the view, and which ought to be left in the shade.—E. G. The study of man embraces the universality of the sciences. In fine, we will consider him as an animal. He gives rise to physiology, zoology, comparative anatomy; if we consider him as an intelligent and free creature, here are metaphysics, logic, morals; if we consider him as a member of society, here are policy, legislation, industry. Let us suppose that we want to teach one of these sciences, is it not evident, that according to the end we may have in view, so must we take our departure from a well chosen point, and follow some particular line of reasoning, for it would be ridiculous to speak of the play of the muscles, in order to arrive at legislation.

Will not the method be the more embarrassed in proportion as we may complicate it with ideas foreign to the object in view? Now, of all the affinities and significations which may present themselves, it is the duty of the understanding to separate, to distinguish and to make choice of the most suitable; of such as will lead to a right conclusion; another may lead to the antepodes, and a third to no conclusion whatever; we shall have decomposed, but without success indeed, because we are not acquainted with the art of analysing.

Analysis is then, in truth, the only instrument adapted to the human understanding; but it is an instrument entirely useless to those who have not learned how to use it; the ignorance of the faculties to which the exercise of it belongs, is the cause of their inability.

If method then be nothing more or less than the good employment of these faculties, how can any person presume to direct properly that which he does not know?—How can we comprehend that a person shall declare himself a methodist, when he has not had time to reflect on the powers of the mind—when he does not know which are those faculties that he must chiefly endeavour to interest, according to the nature of the subject submitted to the thought? It is not quite sufficient to have studied these faculties: we must, besides, have fitted the form of the method to the mind of him we may desire to instruct; here lies one of the greatest difficulties. Although in its essence "method is constant and invariable," since it is founded in nature, still the same, of the human understanding, I do not think that the teacher should always present it under a form always the same, especially when he wishes to impart his own ideas to others; for all those to whom his instructions may be addressed, have not equal understanding, or have not equally exercised their faculties.

We may range in three classes, all those to whom we give instruction. Either they are children and have no habit; or under happy circumstances, they have only contracted good habits, or, in fine, they are filled with errors and inveterate and bad habits. The first are like smooth tablets, which do not bear any impression, but which may be engraved by the skillful hand at pleasure; the second like vellum, on which the rule has imprinted its direction by which the writer disposes his characters—the third, like old parchments, covered with Gothic letters, cannot receive any new ones, unless the old be first erased. Now, to these three sorts of minds, we require, not three different methods, but three different employments of the same method.

This notion method, which appears so very easy at first sight, becomes complicated in proportion as we study it: it is the lever of the understanding, but the power of it depends upon the hand that uses it; and its action must be varied, according to the mind to which it is to be applied. But as the difference of minds, like that of bodies, is almost infinite, how can any sensible person expect a mechanic and uniform application of any method to all minds? It is not quite so easy to bring all understandings to one level by rule, as some men, rather dogmatic than reasonable, would wish to persuade us—For, if we were to believe all that such men may please to say on the subject, we might be almost tempted to try the effect of steam to convey science. Do I need to say that the mind of man is not bounded by mechanic laws? It may be directed, enlightened—but not shackled!

I am very minute, designedly, as touching all these difficulties, in order that every inquirer may find his answer concerning the different methods of teaching. Perhaps I may have been too prolix, considering that this undertaking is intended to be within the compass of a letter; but, if I be encouraged in the task, I purpose to enter into the subject more in detail, and to show how I apply my method to every study.

There is but one truly efficacious means of arriving at a quick and durable result; and he who proposes to himself to transmit to others any certain knowledge, ought to study a long time the faculties of his own mind, and reflect on the manner in which he instructs himself. This done, he must have discovered this method, which nature alone reveals to us. But in order to see it in its full force, and to observe all the resources of it, it is requisite that he read and meditate a long time on all the works which it vivifies. The works of the great philosophers should be his manual. The boldness in the style of Bacon—the slow and circumspicious reasoning of Locke—the neat conciseness of Condillac—in these, method modifies itself according to the qualities of the writer. After long and serious study upon all these, a person may presume to become a professor, and in proportion as he is well grounded in their principles of style and taste, and that his own habits are conformed, and that he is convinced of the necessity of ascending the first ideas, and thence, guided by analogy, to follow consequences.

For the teaching of languages, he must not bind himself down to the mnemonics of one man—to the tables of another—or to the evolutions of a third: he must take of all such things as he may consider useful to himself and pupil; then truly will he pay tribute to those laborious men who have smoothed the path for him. I do not think it useful to detail all the method of Du Marsais, but I will add, that he confined himself to the Latin language, the invention of which presented to him almost insurmountable obstacles—however, he made interlinear translations of it, arranging the words of it according to the genius of the French language.

The memory, that astonishing faculty in youth, collects the facts—the understanding fixes the laws, the result of observation. The method of Du Marsais is, then, conformable to the march of intellect. At first, the attention alone is occupied—soon comparison observes the analogy—reason generalizes—then rules are created, grammatical science begins, or rather, if the first observations have been well made, grammatical science is perfected.

A very learned member of society, appreciating the utility of the method of Du Marsais, has thought it his duty to make it more known to the world—and has composed a little work on the method of learning language. He does not pretend to claim the merit of authorship—he does not say that he invented! Now, here is the difference. Du Marsais spoke of the Latin—M. Radonvilliers speaks of the method of learning all languages. "I am persuaded," says he, "that I can labour usefully on this subject—I can put in its true light the system of Du Marsais—I can give some necessary explanations that may facilitate the practice of it. I go back to the origin of language, in order to inform myself of the composition, and to be enabled to explain more clearly how nature teaches to understand and to speak."

Then I show that "literal translation is the lesson of nature," and in order to develop this method, I have examined in what two languages differ—here is the first line of Tacitus, as an example of its interlinear translation,—"Urbem romanam principio regis habuere." He arranges the words of Tacitus according to French construction, and says for Tacitus—"A principio regis habuere urbem romanam." Then follows his translation—"First, 'an commencement des rois eurent la ville de romme'—third, according to the genius of modern French, he translates the line of Tacitus thus—"an commencement la ville de romme eut des rois"—thus does he in part, reconcile the differences of language. When giving instruction, he is in the habit of progressive analysis.

Monsieur Radonvilliers does not presume to say that his practice is faultless, but what he chiefly wishes to recommend is, to follow nature; at the same time, he desires that the principle may be distinguished from the practice, which he advises, as it may be all imagined, but the principle always certain.

Monsieur Maugard next presents himself to my consideration. He is a very laborious grammarian, who supplies the place of cunning, by good sense—penetration, by patience—depth, by erudition. I mention him, then, with great respect—and though I might be able to criticize, I will only notice a little inherent human vanity, which it is in all those who imagine that they have discovered a new system. As to this his method, I shall only say, it is analytical—i. e. conformable to the march of the human understanding; &c.

Thus, though method may be varied in its applications, admit of endless variety of shade in its object—it, however, is one in its nature. It consists in observing, comparing, and deducing—in one word, in analyzing. He follows step by step Du Marsais, adding to his method a little modification of his own personal practice. Instead of teaching to the pupil the names of sensible objects, he confides to his memory such words as he may meet with in the first author he may happen to read. As to inversion, he differs from Du Marsais, inasmuch as he never changes the order of the Latin, &c.; he explains it as he finds it—and like Du Marsais, after multiplied examples on all the difficulties in the Latin authors, he writes at what is called grammatae rationes.

Germany and Switzerland reap the loss of a Pestalozzi more than two years. The news of his death caused sensations of regret in France, amongst a few friends of humanity. Pestalozzi was anxious to reduce science to its elements. I will not pretend to say whether he succeeded entirely or not; but I wish to say that that mind, eminently just, felt the necessity of ascending to the origin of our knowledge. At length he succeeded in reducing to THREE the fundamental principles of elementary instruction. He had observed the child, when nature alone serves as a guide—when, if a new thing be presented, the child studies the form; if it has parts, he separates and studies the number of them—then only one thing more is wanting in order to the placing of it in the memory, that is, the name given to it. The object thus considered and perceived,

under these three respects, is known. To follow, step by step, these indications of nature—to conform to them with facility—to retain a long time all the powers of the mind on these first acts, in order that it may bound with greater force towards such or such a part—now this is the essence of method, which consists in the study of these three fundamental points—form, number, name.

Monsieur Duffet, about the year ninety-three, in some measure under the necessity of learning a new language, and deprived of the usual assistance of books, grammars, &c. was obliged to be contented with such books as chance put in his way, with the aid of a person capable of reading properly such books, and having a classical education, Greek, Latin, and French, he had the power of observing, comparing, and deducing—thence a power of learning a new language, the English, in a very short space of time, so as to be enabled to pronounce it properly when read, and by frequent and continued reading of the most suitable books, to be enabled to compose simple sentences, to write, to converse, and then to teach with success the French language to the Americans, and at length to the English, on the principles of the necessity of observing and following nature.

Mr. James Hamilton, as he informs us, about the year 98, commenced the study of the German language, under the instruction of a French officer, an Engineer, with the usual previous course of grammar, and that his progress far exceeded his expectations. Mr. Hamilton says that he had studied Latin for several years, knew some Greek, and was well acquainted with the best authors in the French and English languages; and that he felt himself a little puzzled at the idea of being told by a military man how a language ought to be taught! This officer read and translated, nearly word for word, phrasas as he proceeded, so that when he had a word, Mr. Hamilton began and translated, and understood the matter as well as much French or English. On this plan he had received about a dozen lessons, when he found that he could read an easy German book.

This, says Mr. J. Hamilton, is the origin of the Hamiltonian System; but that, at that time, he thought as little of becoming a teacher as he did of flying, nevertheless, that he was anxious enough to be sensible of the obligations he owed to Gen. D'Angeli, and that about the year 1813, in America, he wrote an essay on the usual mode of teaching the languages. He says, "that he taught instead of ordering his pupils to learn," and that he taught his pupils to translate at once in place of giving them the grammar to learn—that he tried to parse also, as well as to translate, as Monsieur D'Angeli had done with him, but that he found that this mode would only do with linguists, as the terms of grammar were to children incomprehensible, and that grammatical explanations were deferred until, in the course of reading, the pupils should have met with most of the inflexions of the verbs, and the changes of the other declinable parts of speech. About this time, he says, that he discovered that in translating, he analysed, and consequently taught the grammar of the language, with every word he taught his pupils, &c.

I shall here request permission to make a short recapitulation—afterwards I shall more distinctly state my own opinions of method, with as little show as possible of the patience of my readers—though I may here say that I begin to feel the difficulty of compressing into twenty small pages even an outline of my undertaking; my present undertaking is, however, only a sort of sketch.

Du Marsais, Radonvilliers, Maugard, all agree in principle of learning language. Mr. Radonvilliers has written an exposé of the method of Du Marsais, and has extended that method to the learning of all languages. It may be seen by the one quotation that I have introduced, that his interlinear translation is so far literal, and that he gradually assimilates the Latin and French languages—but at a very great expense, requiring three printed progressive translations, as the example quoted shows. He appears to be of the opinion of Du Marsais respecting the order of the words. He has changed the order of the Latin, to accommodate it to that of the French language.

Mr. Maugard, in this respect, differs—he never changes the order of any language—he translates it as he finds it. On this subject I shall beg leave to dwell at some length, as it is my chief point.

Mr. Duffet, in his "Nature Displayed," in his translation of a phrase, puts what I may be permitted to designate the key words in italics—his practice is repetition. The teacher must analyze *de vice cois*. His translations are far from being literal.

Mr. J. Hamilton, as he states in his pamphlet, "The history of the principles, practice, &c. of the Hamiltonian system," has contributed very much to facilitate the acquisition of some of the modern languages to the English nation, by publishing, with interlinear and more literal translations, than any that have been before published in the English language, a series of books suitable for beginners. Mr. Hamilton, in one translation, interlinear and in general literal, added by explanations *de vice cois*, arrives at the same point as Mr. Radonvilliers, by his threefold interlinear translation, which narrows gradually the difference of idiom between two languages. Mr. Hamilton sometimes changes the order of the language to be learned, to accommodate it to the English—Mr. Radonvilliers does the same with the Latin in favour of the French; but Mr. Maugard says, that it is not philosophic so to do. Of this argument afterwards.

Will may be assured that the thoughts of all such characters as I have just mentioned, had for their object public good; all their actions were beneficent, though accompanied with a portion of human vanity; for surely they have merited in a higher ratio than the ploughman!—they have all laboured each in proportion as he may have been enlightened, and each has been more or less a methodist.

I may here observe that book making is an art, and that school books require much art; they must, as nearly as possible, be on a level with the powers of the mind of the pupil. Here Mr. Hamilton has done a great deal. I overlook typographical and other little errors in the series of his translations, required easy, and consider his indivi-

dual efforts a substantial benefit. Recueil changed letters italicized, with what is called a translation, the difficult words at the end of each section being italicized. I think were rather calculated to lead astray than assist the pupil. Grammar-making is also an art, there are sold in this country books called grammars in French and Italian, to enumerate the words which would require much time and patience, but perhaps such are juvenile efforts, and the maturity of judgment will correct them. I presume to say, that there are very few school books that fully support the character of the title, and that of all the written grammars, hardly one is perfect; but even one, like its author, has some particular excellence. To be a practical grammarian, requires much more than is contained in any one grammar.

I have before stated the qualifications in the teacher, and the requisites in the pupil, which, when united, little can be expected upon any plan or system. It is expected on Mr. Hamilton's system that the pupil will take away from class perfect knowledge of the following lesson, at least he must bring back to class such perfect knowledge, *sic qua non*. Now, it appears that attention and retention, supported by good judgment, are requisite on the part of the pupil. The teacher explains all, and by art in analogy and analysis, fits the matter to the mind of the pupil, so as to give him as little trouble as possible. The teacher is to be able to perform his share, most decomposed with such art as I have before stated to analyze, deduce where any borrowing has been made of other languages, of any word or mode of expressing an idea, so as to give to each part of the word its proper value and meaning in its simple as well as in its compound form.

Mr. Hamilton says, that when he began to learn language upon the plan of Monsieur D'Angeli, and which plan he afterwards adopted, as above stated, he found great advantage from his classical knowledge, which enabled him to take advantage of such knowledge in others, in order to build up them his own fabric of grammatical science—that in America he tried to parse as well as to translate with his pupils, as Monsieur D'Angeli had done with him, but he found that this plan would only do with linguists. Hence it is that Mr. Hamilton prefers adult pupils, and as may be supposed to be well grounded in the principles of some language—the therefore put for some time, grammatical explanations, and his pupils should have met with all the inflexions of the verbs, the persons of all the tenses, which are learned as they present themselves to the view.

My own personal practice of a few years in this country has been the same as that of Mr. Hamilton, with regard to literal translation, whenever the mode of instruction was not laid down for me by others; also, that I never put into the hands of an adult pupil, who knew well any one language, and more particularly the Latin and Greek, the grammar of the language to be learned, but invariably have commenced by reading and translating literally, showing the difference between the French prosody and that of the Latin or English language, by the founded upon principles, which I may conceive as my second point of discussion.

I have convinced some of my pupils, that one language, properly known, is a passport to more, with attention and retention on the part of the pupil; zeal combined with this, quite a stock of information on the part of the teacher, in the same manner, as the knowledge of one instrument of music facilitates the learning of another instrument that has affinity.

I observe that this mode of instruction gives the pupil a something for his trouble; his little vanity is flattered—he is pleased with himself—his teacher is a favorite—the historic facts before him are virtually committed to the memory by the art of the teacher, in analogy and analysis, without the pupil ever perceiving this labour, like a vocabulary. What mines of information do we not explore in treating analogy and analysis; the work is done away—learning is made a pleasure to the pupil—he learns the pronunciation by repetition after the teacher—and having the requisite above stated, he is enabled to form himself once to the peculiarities of any language, which he will soon observe, compare, deduce, &c. In teacher must study attentively his pupil, or he may lose his labour; he must introduce analogy and analysis upon the first meeting; he must lead his pupil, then he would know how to lead him.

Language consists of words, and these words are, or ought to be, signs of thoughts, names of things. As there are such as figurative of implicit meanings given to words, we must follow custom, not the strict rules of written grammar; for words can be not in opposition to reason, it is superior to what is called dead grammar. Words are signs. The sign of any language, as this sign is, being compared some reason may be seen where at first sight, consisting the multiplied acceptations of words, all speak obscenity. Words are signs, &c. The sounds of human voice, having some affinity to, or bearing resemblance to the idea of the thing signified, that resemblance is called the sound of the word, and the sound. After long and profound meditation on the origin of language, and taking it for granted that words ought still to be signs of ideas in all circumstances, meaning, where etymology, &c. have rendered obscurely borrowing from other languages, and in grafting without art; so that, in fine, words are not, strictly speaking, signs of our ideas. In conversation here of the present day being made of good part of these borrowings, from other languages, it is difficult to arrive at any considerable degree of precision in almost any one given language, that these unlimited borrowings, without having any extensive knowledge of all those from which any of words have been borrowed. It must be pretty easy to all men that what renders any particular language difficult is this unlimited borrowing of words, which cannot be a borrowing of ideas; and this, for very best reason in the world, because the idea is natural. If an idea be borrowed the word may be false, but the idea is natural, and by following such thread, it may be able to retrieve many now obscure facts of history, but the word follows the idea—in every action of the mind, also, the word itself is almost rendered intelligible, and so far unnatural. Now, this is the case with the generality of Englishmen, who borrow French or any foreign language; and to these men, that the action is the most significant, and to these men, the sound of the voice. I even presume to say, that one-fourth part of the names of things, or of ideas, or words made use of in polite society, are perfectly understood by each person of that society in this ratio, then, words cease to be signs of ideas in English language.

(To be continued.)

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RESOLVED—That the following be the names of the members of the Waterford Fire and Life Office for the year ending on the 31st of December 1813.

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