



HEATH'S MODERN LANGUAGE SERIES



PRACTICAL FRENCH COMPOSITION

—
W. W. COMFORT



D. C. HEATH & COMPANY



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PRACTICAL FRENCH COMPOSITION

WITH IDIOMS AND VOCABULARY

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PREFACE

LIKE the author's "Exercises in French Prose Composition," this book presupposes on the part of the student a knowledge of all the forms of the French parts of speech, as well as a ready acquaintance with the general principles of French syntax. The material here presented, however, is intrinsically more difficult than the contents of the preceding manual, and can thus be used not only by students of intermediate grade but also for advanced composition work.

The opinions of many teachers are in agreement with the author's own belief to the effect that, for the grades of French instruction which this book is intended to serve, a subject-matter consisting of the varied aspects of modern French life is suitable as well as attractive. Moving within the framework of a tour in France, the student will add to the sum total of his knowledge about France and the French people and will feel that his work in composition is related to the rest of his classroom studies. Accordingly, as is the case in the earlier book, the material is based upon personal experiences in France, actual situations in which the traveler abroad is likely to find himself, and everyday conditions which he is apt to encounter. In addition, however, some information is given concerning the geography of France, the structure of the French Republic, the school system of the land, and similar practical subjects.

Unlike the author's earlier book, the present one contains both French and English passages. The composition work offered in these pages is not aimed to furnish any grammar review; it is meant to be a drill in useful idiomatic expressions and other stylistic peculiarities. For this reason it was thought best to include a French model in each chapter. These models

lay no claim to literary value. They are intended mainly to serve a twofold purpose: (a) to illustrate peculiarity of construction, and (b) to furnish a basis for constant practice in conversation and *free reproduction*.

With respect to the first point, attention is called to the fact that each chapter contains a list of Idiomatic Expressions. Some of these phrases are exemplified only in the French model in which they occur; the more important of them will be found to be repeated often enough to impress themselves upon the student's mind. At any rate, care has been taken not to introduce into the English passages any difficult words or idioms which have not been utilized in the preceding French text.

As regards the second point, the instructor will find that, from the viewpoint both of language and of general information, the French exercises lend themselves to oral practice. No model questionnaires have been appended, as at this more advanced stage of instruction teachers, as a broad rule, prefer to frame their own questions and conduct the recitation according to their own methods. It is advanced as a personal belief that the student who attains a facility in the colloquial handling of this material will be able to make himself understood among French people.

There are thirty chapters in the book. Each is complete in itself. The instructor may therefore choose any combination he desires and in any sequence desired. However, in planning the work, the author has placed at regular intervals a Review Lesson — reviewing ideas as well as idiomatic phrases — based directly upon the five preceding exercises, and it is therefore suggested that, if it is intended to study the Review Lessons, the students be taken through the contents of the book in units of six connected rather than single unrelated chapters.

Before preparing his version, the student should spend considerable time in mastering the content of the French passage and the list of idiomatic expressions. After this

preliminary study, an hour or an hour and a half should amply suffice for the actual effort of translation.

To the teacher it may be suggested that, though the student should carefully prepare and even hand in his translation, his knowledge should be tested only by his *ex tempore* oral and written treatment of the material in class. Half an hour spent in class upon dictation and sight composition will reënforce what the student has learned for himself in preparing his formal composition, and will indicate what he has actually absorbed.

It remains my pleasant task to acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor Gaston A. Laffargue, of the College of the City of New York, a born teacher of long and successful experience, for the invaluable assistance he lent me in revising the first draft of the manuscript; his varied suggestions have materially contributed to make the text more idiomatic and more suitable for classroom use.

For certain statistical information the author is indebted to the « *Annuaire Général de la France et de l'Étranger* » (Paris, Larousse).

W. W. C.

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Practical French Composition

I

Le départ

A

Supposons que nous sommes à New-York, prêts à partir pour la France. Celui qui fait la traversée sur un paquebot de la Compagnie Générale Transatlantique se trouve en pays étranger dès le quai d'embarquement même. Tout autour de lui s'accorde pour lui donner l'agréable illusion 5 de se croire déjà en France. Partout il y a un tohu-bohu indescriptible qui trouble les voyageurs peu expérimentés. Voilà des gens qui louent des chaises et qui indiquent l'endroit où ils tiennent à les faire placer. Dans le salon on fait queue devant le maître d'hôtel, qui assigne à chaque 10 passager la place qu'il doit occuper au premier ou au second service. Le commissaire distribue le courrier et donne très complaisamment toutes sortes de renseignements utiles. Puis on visite sa cabine pour y disposer ses bagages, on sonne pour appeler le garçon affecté au service 15 des bains, et on choisit une heure commode pour son bain du matin.

Déjà les remorqueurs ont fait demi-tour et la marche du grand paquebot devient plus rapide. Au bout de deux heures, pourtant, on s'arrête encore un moment pour per- 20 mettre au pilote de descendre. Bientôt on ne distingue plus que la mer de tous côtés, à perte de vue. A l'exception

d'une voile que l'on apercevra parfois au loin, on ne verra plus rien pendant des journées entières jusqu'à ce qu'on gagne les côtes de France. Faute de mieux, le voyageur cherche le fumoir, ou se décide à s'asseoir sur le pont, pour
 5 observer ses compagnons de voyage qui défilent sans cesse. Heureusement, on ne tardera pas à annoncer le diner, ce qui procurera à tout le monde une distraction agréable.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

tenir à + <i>inf.</i>	to be anxious to
faire queue	to form in line, be lined up
faire demi-tour	to turn half-way around
de tous côtés	on all sides
à perte de vue	as far as the eye can reach
au loin	in the distance
faute de mieux	for lack of anything better
ne pas tarder à + <i>inf.</i>	not to be slow to <i>or</i> long in, lose no time in
quel bon vent vous amène ?	what luck brings you here ?
avoir sur le dos	to have on my hands
venir de + <i>inf.</i>	to have just + <i>past part.</i>
comme ça	in that way
si le cœur vous en dit	if you are so inclined
quant à	as for
ne pas parler un traître mot	not to speak a blessed word
les deux premiers jours	the <i>first two</i> days
penser à	to think of <i>or</i> about (= put one's mind on)
le voilà qui descend	there he is going down
à tout à l'heure	we'll meet again presently, 'so long'

B

— Hello, old man! What luck brings you here? Where are you going?

— Why, I'm like you. I am going to France. Are you all alone?

— No, I have the whole family on my hands. 5

— *I am all alone. I share my cabin with an old gentleman whom I have just been helping to arrange his baggage.*

— Has the chief steward already assigned you a seat at table?

— No, not yet. They are lined up down there. Instead 10 of waiting, I went to the purser's, where the mail was being handed out.

— We have been assigned seats at the second service, which is much more convenient. Ask for a seat at our table, if you are so inclined. In that way we shall all be 15 together.

— Very gladly. I shall do so with pleasure.

— Doubtless you are an experienced traveler. As for me, I have the feeling of being already in a foreign country. My father doesn't speak a blessed word of French, and it 20 is I who have to ask for every sort of information. What must one do in order to have chairs?

— Follow me. Let's look for some sheltered corner which is* not occupied and the steward will put the chairs there for us. Is it your first crossing? 25

— Yes. I suppose that I shall be sick the first two or three days.

— Don't think about it! The time passes quickly. For lack of anything better, one can always sleep. I like to

* What mood?

make the crossing on a French steamer. [The] traveling companions are always interesting, and one has the feeling of being in France from the very beginning of the voyage.

— Hello, the pilot is preparing to leave us. I had not
5 noticed that the engine had stopped. There he is, going down the ladder.

— Well, when we get up to-morrow, we shall see nothing but the sea on all sides as far as the eye can reach. But there! They are announcing the lunch. Let us hurry. I
10 must see the chief steward. After lunch we will take some coffee in the smoking-room. We'll meet again presently . . .

II

La traversée

A

La table d'hôte est servie par petites tables, ce qui facilite la conversation intime entre voisins. On ne tarde
15 pas à faire connaissance et à juger des personnalités qui se trouvent ainsi associées par hasard dans une vie commune. Quand le temps est beau et la mer calme, le commandant et les autres officiers descendent à la salle à manger et partagent la gaieté des repas. Mais lorsque
20 la mer est mauvaise, ils sont souvent trop occupés ailleurs pour manger à des heures fixes.

Quant aux personnes victimes du mal de mer, elles sont dans une prostration telle qu'elles ne sauraient goûter aux excellents mets que l'on sert, et traînent une existence
25 pénible dans leurs cabines. Mais la plupart de ces mal-

heureux ne tardent pas à se remettre et à reprendre leurs places à table.

Quoiqu'il n'y ait rien de sérieux à faire, le temps passe assez vite, et l'on ne manque de rien. Le matin on se lève quand on veut, on prend son bain d'eau de mer et l'on déjeune légèrement. On sert sans cérémonie, pour les plus affamés, de la soupe à l'oignon, des œufs, et du café. Mais il y a pas mal de gens qui ne prennent qu'une tasse de café au lit et qui ne se lèvent que vers midi pour le second déjeuner. On se laisse gagner par ce régime et on s'abandonne sans effort à cette existence facile d'inactivité et de paresse. Sur mer, l'heure des repas et celle du coucher sont d'une importance capitale. Tout le reste paraît insignifiant.

Cependant on passe des heures entières à causer avec ses compagnons de voyage sur le pont ou dans le fumoir, on assiste aux concerts dans le salon, et on se rend à la bibliothèque pour chercher un roman anglais ou français. Quelquefois on organise des courses de vitesse sur le pont, ou une soirée musicale dans le salon au profit de quelque œuvre de bienfaisance. Chaque jour on peut lire dans l'*Atlantique*, journal quotidien publié à bord des paquebots de la Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, les dernières nouvelles reçues par télégraphie sans fil des stations côtières avec lesquelles on est en communication, et se tenir ainsi au courant de ce qui se passe dans le monde entier.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

servir par petites tables

(il y a) pas mal (de)

au profit de

to serve at small tables

(there are) a good many

for the benefit of

se tenir au courant	to keep oneself informed
ce qui se passe	what is going on
comment ça va ?	how goes it ?
à la bonne heure !	that is good news !
à bord	on board
tout à l'heure	just now
vers quatre heures	about four o'clock
manger comme quatre	to have an enormous appetite
en voyage	while traveling
me faire venir l'eau à la bouche	to make my mouth water
Madame votre mère	your mother (<i>polite form</i>)
merci	thanks, thank you

B

— How goes it ? What have you been doing since lunch ?

— I have been in the saloon reading an English novel that I found in the library. Then I spent half an hour
 5 in looking at the races on the deck gotten up by some of our traveling companions. My mother has not been very well since yesterday, but the sea is smooth now and I think she will take her place at table again this evening.

— That's good news ! They say that we shall be very
 10 gay at the dinner this evening. It will be the last dinner on board, you know. The commander told one of our neighbors with whom he was chatting just now on the deck, that we ought to arrive at Havre to-morrow afternoon about four o'clock. We are already in touch by
 15 wireless with the coast stations of France.

— Well, although there is nothing to do, the time passes

quickly. I have yielded without effort to this lazy existence. I missed my salt water bath this morning, I took my coffee in bed, and only got up about noon.

— I myself find that I have an enormous appetite while traveling, and I like to eat at regular hours. Have 5 you tasted the onion soup that they serve (in) the morning? It makes my mouth water.

— Yes, I tasted some yesterday. There are a good many French people who take it, but very few Americans.

— Here comes the steward with the newspapers. Hello! 10 They announce a musical entertainment for the benefit of some orphan asylum for the children of the war victims. We shall have to be present at it to help these unfortunates who otherwise would drag out a wretched existence during their childhood. 15

— Well, I must go down to my mother's cabin to see if they have brought her everything she needs.

— Here is your newspaper. Perhaps your mother would be glad to look it over.

— Ah, yes. Thank you. I had forgotten it. I'll show 20 it to her. She will be glad to learn that we ought to land to-morrow afternoon.

III

A l'hôtel à Paris

A

La plupart des Américains choisissent à Paris un hôtel sur la rive droite pour être plus près des théâtres et des grands magasins. Quelques-uns pourtant préfèrent un 25 hôtel plus modeste sur la rive gauche, où se trouvent les

grandes écoles, le Luxembourg, le Musée de Cluny, et plusieurs églises très intéressantes. Tous les hôtels de récente construction annoncent une installation moderne: ascenseur, éclairage électrique, bains, chauffage central, 5 garage, et cætera.

Une fois arrivé à son hôtel, on s'adresse au bureau pour savoir si l'on peut avoir une chambre à un lit ou à deux lits; on indique l'étage que l'on préfère et le prix qu'on désire payer. En tout cas on fera bien de demander une 10 chambre tranquille où l'on ne sera pas dérangé par les bruits de la rue ou de la cour intérieure. Un garçon ne tardera pas à monter les bagages et à apporter de l'eau chaude. Si l'on a du linge à faire blanchir, on le donnera à la femme de chambre, qui s'en chargera et qui le re- 15 mettra à la blanchisseuse attachée à l'hôtel.

Il est souvent commode de prendre le petit déjeuner dans sa chambre. Pour cela on n'a qu'à sonner pour appeler le valet ou la femme de chambre, qui apportera tout de suite le café ou le chocolat avec des petits pains. 20 Si l'on désire du beurre, il faut le dire. Quant au second déjeuner, il vaut mieux le prendre dans quelque restaurant du quartier où l'on se trouve. Si l'on n'est pas trop difficile, les établissements Duval feront très bien l'affaire. Ces restaurants sont très fréquentés par une clientèle 25 nombreuse. N'oubliez pas de donner aux femmes de service un pourboire, qui doit être dix pour cent du montant de l'addition.

Quand vous désirez faire une promenade en voiture, prévenez le portier, et il fera appeler un taxi du garage 30 voisin.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

une chambre à un lit	a single room
tout de suite	right away
il vaut mieux + <i>inf.</i>	it is better to
faire l'affaire de quelqu'un	to answer one's purpose
dix pour cent du montant	ten per cent of the total
à l'instant	at once
rien que cela	nothing but that
changer de chambres	to change rooms
ne pas fermer l'œil de la nuit	not to sleep a wink all night
par jour	a day, per day
après-demain	the day after to-morrow
à propos	by the way
mais oui	why yes, of course
tout près (de)	quite near (to)
faire appeler un taxi	to send for a taxi

B

— Monsieur, my mother has been ringing for ten minutes, but no one answers, neither the valet nor the chambermaid. She wishes her breakfast to be brought to her room.

— Pardon, sir, I'll have the waiter come at once. . . . 5
Have madame's breakfast carried up to No. 48. Coffee and rolls . . . Nothing but that, sir?

— Thanks, that's all. But listen! We desire to change rooms. There's too much noise from the inside court. My mother has not slept a wink all night. Can three 10
double rooms be had on * the fourth floor?

* Use à.