

# VOLAPÜK IN THE SCHOOLS

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The future of Volapük is a question of no small importance to the world; and if it is to have a practical future, it must reach the coming generation largely through the schools. Not that it has failed thus far of important recognition, for some day people will awake to the knowledge that Volapük is a spoken language in actual use, and a written language, extensively employed for a variety of purposes.

Comparatively few appear yet to know that we have not only a thoroughly systematic grammar, but a complete yet expansible vocabulary. Few are aware that we have in Volapük poems like "*In Flolatim*," dramas like "*Wilhelm Tell*," political literature like "*Glulonadoküm de Pebaltatz*," sacred literature like "*Pükeds de Salomon*," scientific articles in considerable variety, humorous and comic publications like "*Cogabled*." There is one single work, an examination of which should convince any intelligent person that this new tongue has come to stay. I refer to the handsome volume of oriental travel by the lamented Crown Prince Rudolph of Austro-Hungary, translated into Volapük by Dr. Siegfried Lederer, under the title of "*Lefüdünatäv*."

Let me ask, What shall be taught in our schools? The answer will depend upon our view of the aim and purpose of a school. It will be generally agreed, per-

haps, that a school exists in order to give to the youth (1) *training or culture*,—moral, æsthetic, mental, physical, and we may add ocular, auricular, and manual; (2) as a result of this training, (a) *right habits* and (b) *skill*; (3) partly as a result and partly as a means of such training, *knowledge* (a) of things practically useful, (b) of things entertaining, (c) of things edifying and stimulating. The work of imparting information, too commonly regarded as the prime object of the teacher, is, in the view of the latter, if he understands his business, rather a means of cultivating the mental powers of the pupil.

In the case of certain subjects, however, the practical value of the knowledge rises above the disciplinary value of the study. Such are reading, writing, arithmetic, and the proper use of the mother tongue. To these may be added, in some instances, one or more languages of which the student expects to make actual use,—say French or German, or Spanish or Greek. Of the several departments of study we must accord a foremost place to language, by which is here meant the whole matter of verbal expression, oral and written. It is largely by one's language that he is judged. A man who writes or speaks well is esteemed an able man, though possibly much inferior in ability to another who has no gift of speech. The former is sure to make his mark. On the other hand, the bungler in speaking and writing is at a disadvantage, however brilliant his talents in other directions. But it is surely needless here to urge the claims of language study, so long, at least, as one confines himself to our native English. It will be admitted by all that the mother tongue is chief among the subjects of study.

I argue for the study of Volapük in school,<sup>s</sup>—

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FIRST, *As a means of learning English more perfectly.*  
 In order to know precisely what a thing is, we must know what it is not. To get at the exact significance of a word, we must perceive what it excludes as well as what it includes. It is not sufficient to learn the definition of a geometrical term. You will not have a clear conception of its meaning till you have considered not only what does, but also what does not, come within its scope. Comparison is an almost indispensable means of gaining a true knowledge of anything. This holds true of a language. One cannot fully know one's mother tongue until he becomes acquainted with at least one other tongue, with which he may compare its structure and methods. Any one who understands French or German or Latin well, can testify that he knows English the better for it; and herein lies one of the reasons for teaching these languages in the schools. Latin and Greek are of very little benefit to the majority of those who study them, so far as the knowledge of the Latin and Greek themselves is concerned. The value is found chiefly in the special forms of mental exercise and culture afforded by their study, and the aid they give to the study of our native speech.

But the time and energy consumed in acquiring an adequate knowledge of Latin or Greek is in these days generally considered disproportionate to the benefits derived. This is largely due to the great difficulty of the grammatical and syntactical construction of these languages. Now substitute for Latin a speech that can be acquired in a few months of study with comparative ease, and the gain is manifest. There is not only a great saving of time and mental energy, but the process of learning, instead of being an irksome drudgery, becomes a source of pleasure. Volapük will be found to meet the requirements in an

eminent degree. From the wonderful simplicity and regularity of its system of inflections, the grammar may be mastered in an exceedingly short time ; and the vocabulary is learned far more easily than that of the Latin or Greek or German.

But few boys and girls, comparatively, study these languages ; still fewer attain facility in reading and writing, to say nothing of speaking them. There is but little time in school for any one subject, such is the multiplicity of branches taught. Many pupils leave school before they have had time to go beyond the rudiments of a natural language. From these and other causes, there is seldom any great enthusiasm in the study.

Substitute Volapük as the language to be learned next after the mother tongue, and very soon all this will be changed. It will become known how easy and pleasant the study is, and in time the majority of the pupils will desire to take up this branch. They will begin early, and obtain a thorough knowledge of the language before leaving school. Having in view merely the general benefits of knowing a language other than one's own, a strong case can be made out in favor of introducing the international speech. Moreover, Volapük has one of the advantages possessed by the much more difficult Latin and Greek as compared with French or even German as a study,—it is more strictly inflectional, affording a marked contrast to our English, in which prepositions and auxiliary words are so much more largely employed. Canon Farrar in his work on *Families of Speech*, speaking of Greek as compared with other languages of the Aryan stock, says : " It has preserved with extraordinary fidelity . . . the most delicate refinements of verbal inflection ; and while maintaining a perfect mastery over

the power of compounding words, it has kept this synthesis from degenerating, as it does in Sanskrit, into immeasurable polysyllables." These words, with slight modifications, may, in my judgment, be truly applied to Volapük.

My *second* point is that the acquisition of a systematically constructed language, which Volapük is, ~~is~~ an excellent preparation for the study of any of the historically and accidentally developed languages of the nations. Some persons will say that if they are to study or to teach a language, they prefer to select one that will be of some service in reading foreign literature, or in foreign travel, or in correspondence with foreign countries, rather than this new one, which is nowhere, so far as they know, in actual use. But even granting that Volapük was not a living tongue, which is not true, it is possible that to learn it before any other language may effect a saving of time. Each language learned is a great aid to the acquirement of others. If six months devoted to Volapük will save but a part of the years to be devoted to German or Latin, there will be in it no small economy, seeing that two languages will be learned instead of one. Each will be known more perfectly on account of the comparisons and contrasts made, whether consciously or unconsciously, and the study of languages will probably be rendered more agreeable to the student. / affe

To discuss the practical uses of our international language, I may well leave to others. Some of these are so obvious as to require no argument. All that may be said on this point will weigh, of course, in placing Volapük upon the curriculum of the public schools. Somewhat has already been done in this direction, as, for example, in some of the schools of France, if I am correctly

informed, and in the evening high school of the city of Boston. The work is sure to progress if wisely promoted.

It is a truism to say that one of the best features of Volapük is its *world-wideness*, its broadness, its versatility, its catholicity. Originating in Germany, it has its central authority in Paris. Devised by a Roman Catholic, Protestants are among its most enthusiastic supporters. Engaged in its promotion, Frenchmen and Germans forget Sedan. It knows no Rome and no Geneva, no monarchy and no democracy. The American citizen and the "Heathen Chinese," the *orthodowski* Russian, and the *harem-scare'em* Turk, the *Monroe-doctrine* Yankee, and the "Imperial Federation" *Kanuck*, are all bound together by the bonds of a common interest in the universal speech.