tinues to make every effort to do so. It is precisely by enlarging its fields of activity and by fulfilling more completely the duties towards its members that the Association feels that it is doing a necessary piece of work. The very encouraging and even enthusiastic results of its efforts make it wish to extend its work and serve more of the many thousands of teachers of French in the United States and keep them in closer touch with each other in order that the spirit of co-operation may grow among them and make for a more efficient and more agreeable discharge of their duties. It is as a national organization that it can best carry out its aims, and it is as such that it hopes for continued support.

Edmond A. Maras, Secretary.

FRENCH VERBS IN A NUTSHELL*

ALTHOUGH there is no royal road to learning, yet we must find some short cuts—must straighten some curves—else how can the next generation travel further than we?

The plan here suggested for mastering French verbs has nothing astonishing about it, but it has been tried out for several years and seems to work without much difficulty. It is mechanical, not scientific, but it is convenient for busy people. It is not even entirely exhaustive, for it makes no attempt to deal with obsolete verbs or to include such defectives as are seldom used. These have long been safely listed in the grammars, for reference on the rare occasions when they are needed.

The claims of this plan rest upon two facts: (1) that, by segregating ten very unruly verbs so that their irregular conduct can not intrude itself upon our attention, we can focus upon the great principles that govern French verb forms; and (2) that, by listing a dozen exceptional future stems and half-a-dozen past definites, we can rely on the rest and fearlessly proceed to form all tenses from four principal parts—four only.

The responsibility is squarely left upon each root-verb to stand for its whole family of derivatives. When these deviate from its manner of conjugation, due notice of the unlikeness will be given. For instance, when it is stated that venir and tenir take a d in the future tense, it goes without saying that the same is true of the two dozen verbs compounded from these by means of prefixes (retenir, devenir, etc.).

Fortunately, those verbs presenting the most irregularities are the strong, serviceable auxiliaries and semi-auxiliaries that have to be learned early, before the student realizes how irregular they are. Avoir and être break many "rules"; but we learn, perforce, their conjugation before we are aware of this fact. The present subjunctive of pouvoir and of faire runs smoothly through to the end before we are disturbed by the knowledge that better-behaved verbs would have reverted, in the plural, to the present participle stem. But these four verbs and half-a-dozen others are very troublesome when we begin later to make any general statements in regard to the laws of the French verb. Macaulay objected to dogs because they interrupt conversation. The same charge must be brought against these verbs, which may well be branded as "The Unruly Ten." They naggingly break in upon our observations on verbs in general; they at any moment are apt to impede the flow of classroom eloquence. We may mention as unchanging facts the endings of the present participle and of the future and imperfect indicative, and certain tip-endings such as —nt for "they" —^mes —^tes —rent of the past definite, together with the entire formation of the conditional and of the imperfect subjunctive. But we can make few other universal claims without instant and pert contradiction from one or more of these ten verbs. "There are birds

*All rights reserved.
and English sparrows," says van Dyke. Even so there are verbs and The Unruly Ten. Once silence these, and we can indulge in many an unchallenged "always" and "never."

How, then, may a busy student who has already some scattered knowledge of French verb-forms tackle and conquer the French verb as a whole?

First, review the model verbs of the regular conjugations: donner, finir, (recevoir) rompre.

Second, review the two auxiliaries, avoir and être, and also five of the semi-auxiliaries: faire, pouvoir, vouloir, savoir, aller. Then set these seven apart on account of their extreme irregularity—together with dire, valoir, asseoir, and their cognates (re-dire, surseoir, etc.)—as ten exceptions to be thoroughly learned now or later, but certainly to be ignored in any statements to be made thereafter about verbs in general. Also set aside as negligible all obsolete verbs and seldom-used defectives.

The foregoing eccentric verbs being thus silenced, if not mastered, you may proceed with freedom to claim the following principles as yours-to-count-on for the rest.

I. Principal Parts

The conjugation of every verb hinges on the infinitive, the present participle, the past participle, and the present indicative first person singular. Hence it may be derived in full from these parts by observing the simple principles that follow. FROM LEARNING THESE FOUR PARTS OF AN IRREGULAR VERB THERE IS NO ESCAPE.

II. The Present Indicative

1. The endings of the singular are either —e —es —e or —s —s —t (this t being dropped after c, d, or t).
2. The first and second persons plural revert to the present participle stem.
3. The plural endings are —ons —ez —ent.
4. The third person plural is a compromise between the singular and the plural forms—having any vowel peculiarity¹ that the singular may show, followed by the consonant found in the first and second persons plural. Example:
   - bois — meus — reçois
   - boîte — meut — reçoit
   - buvons — mouveux — recevons
   - buvez — mouvez — recevez
   - boi-v-ent — meu-v-ent — revoi-v-ent

III. The Imperative

Omitting the pronoun subject, take bodily from the present indicative the three corresponding forms: bois, buvons, buvez. Drop the —s of the second person singular in the first conjugation and in any other verb which has for its present indicative endings —e —es —e: donne, ouvre.² A speedy but illogical way to obtain this form at a single stroke is to take the first person singular just as it stands.

IV. The Present Subjunctive

1. Get a start by cutting off the —nt of the present indicative third person plural: boive(nt).
2. The entire set of endings will run thus: —e —es —e —ions —iez —ent.
3. The first and second persons plural revert to the present participle stem. In brief, for the plural forms, take the three plurals of the indicative present, inserting an i before the endings of the first two: buvi-ons, buvi-ez, boi-vent.

V. The Imperfect Indicative

For —ant of the present participle substitute the endings —ais —ais —ait —ions —iez —aient.

VI. The Future

1. To the infinitive add the present tense of avoir, omitting au in the plural forms. Drop the oi from infinitives in —oir and the e from those in —re. Thus we have

1Résolvent is an exception. So is the present of failir: faux, faus, faut, faillons, faill, faillent.
2This s returns whenever the word y or en is appended: donnez-en, ouvrez-y.
these unfailing forms: —rai —ras —ra
—rons —rez —ront.

2. Learn that a dozen future stems are
exceptional:
(a) Six in —rr— (like a tale of Cæsar’s
conquests)
send
enverrai
conquer
conquerrai
(b) Four that introduce a d
venir
tenir
falloir
viendrai
tiendrai
faudra
(c) Two that have e in the place of i
cueillir
saillir (= jut out)
cueilleraï
saillerai

VII. The Conditional
This is always made of the stem of the
future plus the endings of the imperfect;
hence the unfailing forms: —rais —rais
—rait —rions —riez —raient.

VIII. The Past Definite
1. The endings of the first conjugation
are —ai —as —a —ames —âtes —èrent.
2. All other verbs have the endings —s
—s —t —s —tes —trent. Their vowel
is generally i, sometimes u. Disregarding
the odd past participle mort, nothing justifies a
u in the past definite except the presence of
a u in the past participle. And so strong
is this tendency toward i that the entire
regular conjugation in —re and six irregular
verbs have i in the past definite in spite
of a u in the past participle. Those six,
again, start off like Julius Cæsar:
comme
sais
viens
vainquis
vins
vists
(3)

3. Without exception this whole tense
proceeds regularly on the basis of its first
person singular. (The start is all.)
IX. The Imperfect Subjunctive
This may invariably be formed by taking
off the last letter of the first person singular
of the past definite and adding —sse —sses
—sst —ssions —ssiez —ssent. (The odd
third person singular is said to “put on his
hat and go out to —t.”)

X. Compound Tenses
1. These are usually formed of the aux-
iliary avoir plus the past participle.
2. Reflexive verbs are always conjugated
with être instead.
3. Conjugated with être also are about
two dozen intransitive verbs meaning
“come” or “go,” with rester, “to remain.”
(Note that “to be born” and “to die” are
merely the extremes of coming and going.)
4. In this last-named group (3) the past
participle agrees with the subject in gender
and number. In the other groups (1) and
(2) it agrees (if at all) with a preceding
direct object.

The foregoing facts constitute what we
in our classroom designate as French verbs
in a nutshell.

The accompanying verb-blank we keep
permanently outlined in white paint on a sec-
tion of the blackboard, ready to be filled in
at any minute with any verb, as with boire
below. A convenient space on this affords
opportunity to list the ten exceptions which
we need to remember—first, last, and of-
tentimes between—as excluded from the dis-
cussion. This verb-blank, for want of a
better name, the students are wont to call
“The T-table,” since the fundamental part,
which they must write first, somewhat re-
sembles the letter T. (See page 184).

There still remain to be mentioned cer-
tain important facts and a few exceptional
forms if we would approximate the whole
truth about French verbs.

A. The First Conjugation

STRIKING FACTS

I. This is the great conjugation, covering
about ninety per cent of all French verbs,
and it is constantly growing.
forms as je pars, tu sors, il bout by dropping the i and the consonantal sound preceding it) shows four derivatives which revert from that group and follow the regular conjugation (finir). These are asservir, assortir, ressortir, and répartir, “to distribute” (not repartir, “to set out again”).

Lastly, when a past participle has a circumflex accent arbitrarily placed over a u to differentiate it from some other word, this accent is omitted as unnecessary after any prefix other than re—: mâ, but promu; crû and recrû, but décrû. It is also omitted when the participle is feminine or plural: dû and redû, but due, dus, redues.

Elizabeth P. Cleveland

A SIN AGAINST LATIN

Whether we quarrel with the thought or not the strong probability is that Latin will be taught in high school for many years to come. How it is to be taught to the best advantage, how the time allotted to it can be used to get most knowledge of the language and therefore serve best the purpose of training, are questions of real importance. For time is in demand, and any subject that takes a share should be justified by the advantage it brings to the pupil’s general culture and to his acquirement of habits of accurate thought. It is pretty generally conceded that the study of Latin, properly pursued, does add to the pupil’s general culture. It is certain that the study of Latin calls for accuracy. The multiplicity of forms and the clear-cut constructions make this demand. Far better not to study Latin at all than to study it without a constant eye for accuracy. Of course this may be said of all subjects. It is particularly true of the ancient languages and of mathematics.

I make bold to say that the time now spent in Latin in most high schools is time wasted. There is no satisfactory gain to the pupil either for appreciation of literary values or for training in accuracy. There may be a little of good in seeing the roots of English words, but this amount of good could be got more quickly and easily from some of the word-books. I do not claim that the bad teaching is universal, but from various testimonies and observations I believe that it is nearly so. I am speaking of teaching in high schools, and mainly of the teaching in public high schools. I believe that the trouble is largely due to the conditions under which the work is done.

The main trouble seems to me to lie in two facts, first, that the pupils have not a ready and accurate knowledge of the forms, and second, that they look at a piece of Latin as a puzzle and not as something that was once written with a live meaning. Now in a language as full of forms as Latin it is idle to try to deal with it at all without a ready and accurate knowledge of these forms. Without such knowledge all the work is bound to be unsatisfactory, and the pupil is but floundering and guessing. This of course adds to the trouble of the second fact mentioned, namely, that a piece of Latin seems to the pupil just something to puzzle over. But I think the chief cause of this second trouble lies in the kind of reading matter into which the young student is too rapidly pushed.

To my mind the most damaging effects on the teaching of Latin have come from the cut-and-dried reading requirements imposed by the colleges. The purpose was good, but the result has been continually evil. From the time that the law went forth requiring a set amount of three authors the effect has been harmful. The effect has been, on the very face of the law, to set quantity above quality. Furthermore, the effect has been practically to throw out of consideration any other early reading than the four books of Cæsar, the six or seven orations of Cicero, and the six books

Reprinted from School and Society, (Vol. XV, No. 381), April 15, 1922.