FRENCH FOR THE FRONT

A SHORT CUT TO THE FRENCH LANGUAGE.

By

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London:
E. MARLBOROUGH & Co., 51, Old Bailey, E.C.

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PREFACE.

Soldiers home from the front have been so anxious to "get hold" of a little French before returning, that it is proved beyond question that they find some knowledge of the language necessary to their comfort and even to their safety.

As an instance of this, a private of the North Stafford Regiment related to me a pitiful story of how he and seven other soldiers became separated from their regiment, and were fired on by the French,—the sort of incident that has happened more than once! In his case three men were killed and three were wounded because they could not shout "Anglais" (English). In vain they cried "Friends," "English," the French soldiers did not understand them and continued to fire,—and only two of their number escaped unhurt.

On the other hand, curiously enough, some others, on a different occasion, were saved from being fired on by the French sentries by shouting "Du pain!" (some bread), the only two French words they knew, but these proved sufficient to give the French time to discover that the men were friends, and not Germans in British khaki.

Another private told me how he missed his regiment and fought with the French for eight days. He was wounded, and came home determined to learn some of their language before he returned. He joined my French class for Service men, and, chiefly by means of a series of rhymes, learned enough French for his needs. Since then he has written to say,—"The French understand every word I say to them in French!" and, being on guard in a French town, he has often been able to direct the inhabitants in their own language.

He and others who have been in my classes, learned twice as fast when they started French in rhyme. I therefore wrote a series of short French verses for them, and seeing with what ease the men mastered these, and how much simpler they seemed to find the language when given to them in rhyme, I have consented to have them printed, and trust they may prove of real benefit to all Service men.

E. F. HARRIS.

PLYMOUTH. August 1915.
HINTS FOR LEARNERS.

Read through the book (if without a teacher), mark what you need most, and learn that first.

Read the French aloud as often as possible, and be careful to imitate the pronunciation in the second column exactly.

If possible join a French class. If in England and unable to find one, enquire at any church, whether one is held there; classes are also held at many barracks and Y.M.C.A. huts. If in France, get a comrade to hear you say what you have learnt, and refer often to the English pronunciation of the words.

Do not mistake the English pronunciation for the French word—it is merely intended to show how the French sounds to an Englishman.

Copy out a rhyme on a slip of paper, and take it with you on a route march, saying or singing it to the rhythm of the march. Try making short sentences for yourself in French, and write them down if possible. Most lines can be used for this purpose with other lines, or words in the vocabularies, to express what you want to say.

Study the table of sounds carefully; the pronunciation of the French letters is different from that of the English.

Pronounce French words lightly, not in a laboured manner. You say "ah" (short) if annoyed. Here, then, is the sound of the French letter a. It has not the sound of "Ah!" (long) spoken by a man after a cool drink when thirsty.

A final consonant in French (ex.: s, t, &c.) is often joined to the vowel which begins the following word: e.g., Je suis anglais (zher so-ee-ah-luhng), I am English.

The last letter of a word is not usually sounded in French, unless followed by a word beginning with a vowel or y. Ex.: soif (swalef), thirst; chef (shief), chief.

c at the end of a word is never sounded unless accented -c (ch)—except in short words; ex., le, dr, se, ee, me. All single vowels are short.

Roll your R's in French.

To produce correctly the nasal sound of the French letters n and m (written n in the phonetic), say "ng" first, as usual, then say it again without quite finishing the sound. This latter will give you a good nasal (n). No nasal pronunciation occurs before a vowel or double consonant; e.g., une (uhn), paix (pay), pomme (pum), raine (rayn).

The final c in le, dr, me, &c., is obtained in the same way, e.g., le is ler without sounding the r written "ler" in the phonetics. The letter r in italics is not to be sounded; it merely ensures the correct sound of the c.

Nouns are of two genders in French, masculine and feminine.

If you do not know a French word, try the English word, and make it sound as French as possible, and it may be right, many words are spelt similarly in French and English, but are pronounced differently, e.g., Brigade, division, transport, camp, &c.

Est-ce que (ess ker, is that), placed before a statement turns it into a question; e.g., Vous avez mal (voov-azer mal). You have pain; Est-ce que vous avez mal? (ess ker voo zav-ay mal). Have you pain?

When asked at table in a French house to have food, say, "Oui, merci" (oo-ee maehr-see). Yes, thank you, or "S'il vous plaît" (seel voo play). If you please; "Je le voudrais bien" (zher ler voot-rah bee-an). I should like it very much; "Merci," only, in that case, means "No, thank you."

The companion volume to French for the Front is entitled The Soldiers' Language Manual, English-French, price 3s., and will be found very valuable to all soldiers, the two books being intended for use together. It contains carefully selected Vocabularies of:—Parts of the Body; Wants; Food; Dress; Directions (the way about); Greetings, Correspondence, etc.; Military and Red Cross Terms; the Numerals, Money, Weights and Measures, English Money with the French equivalents; Time, Days, Dates; Countries and Nations; Notes on French Grammar, with lists of Verbs, Pronouns, Adjectives, etc.; also On the Road, consisting of necessary sentences—questions and answers—for finding the way about.

The two books are also sold in one volume in a waterproof cover, under the title of The Active Service French Book, price 6d.
### Rhymes for All Times

**Note:** The references are to *The Soldiers' Language Manual*. English-French. (See p. 5.)

#### French

**Greetings** *(Manual, p. 3.)*

1. **GOOD-DAY** *(Bonjour).*
   - Bonjour, Monsieur! bon-zhoor, mers-yer! *(How's it going?)*
   - Comment allez-vous? kom-modoo-tell-kuh vou? *(How are you?)*
   - Je suis anglais. zhier sew-ee-ahng-glay. *(I am English.)*
   - D'où venez-vous? doo ven-chu-voo? *(Where do you come from?)*

2. **Speak Slowly** *(Parlez lentement).*
   - Parlez lentement, par-leh lahnt-mahn. *(Speak slowly.)*
   - S'il vous plaît; see-luv plat. *(If you please.)*
   - Je ne parle zhier neh parle. *(I don't speak.)*
   - Qu'un peu le françois. kun per her frahn-say. *(A little French.)*

3. **Understand, Do You?** *(Comprenez-vous?)*
   - Vous êtes français, voo-zay frahn-say. *(You are French.)*
   - Mais vous parlez, may voo par-leh. *(But you speak.)*
   - anglais? ahng-glay? *(English?)*
   - Vous me comprenez, voo meh kohm-pren. *(You understand me.)*
   - N'est-il pas vrai? neez-ul pah vwe? *(Isn't it true?)*
   - Don't you? *(Don't you?)*

4. **Understand, Do Not; Repeat** *(Je ne vous comprenez pas; répéchez.)*
   - Je ne vous comprenez zher neh kohm-pran pa. *(I do not understand you.)*
   - Voulez-vous la phrase répéter? voo-lezh voo lah frahzh reh-peh-teh? *(Will you repeat the phrase?)*
   - J'ai compris quelques mots, zhay kom-pray kohl kohr ma. *(I understand some words.)*
   - Mais non pas tout le français. ma may neen pa too her frahn-say. *(But not all the French.)*

#### French

**Food and Drink.** *(Manual, p. 4.)*

5. **WATER.** *(De l'eau.)*
   - Donnez-moi, doh-nay mwah. *(Give me some water.)*
   - De l'eau, der lo. *(Some water.)*
   - Il fait, eel fay. *(It is.)*
   - Si chaud, see shool. *(So hot.)*

### French

**Food and Drink continued.**

6. **COFFEE WITH MILK.** *(Café au lait.)*
   - Je veux du café, zhier veu der kaf she. *(I want some coffee.)*
   - S'il vous plaît; see-luv plat. *(If you please.)*
   - Je désire zhier day-zhaer. *(I want.)*
   - Du café au lait, der kaf she oh lai. *(Coffee with milk.)*

7. **Cake and Coffee.** *(Du gâteau et du café.)*
   - Du gâteau, der gah-toh. *(Some cake.)*
   - Du café, der kaf she. *(Some coffee.)*
   - Pour moi, poor mwah. *(For me.)*
   - S'il vous plaît, see-luv plat. *(If you please.)*

8. **Drink Something to; Thirst** *(À boire; soif.)*
   - Donnez moi, doh-nay mwah. *(Give me something to drink.)*
   - Quelque chose à boire, zhay kohm-say ah boyer. *(Something to drink.)*
   - J'ai grand soif, zhay grahn-swahf. *(I am very thirsty.)*
   - Monsieur, ce soir, mers-yer, seh swahr. *(Sir, to-night (this evening).)*

9. **Eat, Something to.** *(À manger.)*
   - Donnez-moi, doh-nay mwah. *(Give me something to eat.)*
   - S'il vous plaît, see-luv plat. *(If you please.)*
   - Quelque chose, kohl shohzh. *(Something to eat.)*
   - A manger, ah mahng-zheh. *(To eat.)*

10. **Food and Wine.** *(Des viandes et du vin.)*
    - De la viande, dlah veed-ahn. *(Some meat.)*
    - Du pain, der paen. *(Some bread.)*
    - Des légumes, daz leh-gum. *(Some vegetables.)*
    - Et du vin, eht du vee. *(And some wine.)*

11. **Food and Drink.** *(À manger et à boire.)*
    - A manger, ah mahng-zheh. *(Food.)*
    - Et à boire, eht ah boyer. *(And drink.)*
    - Pour moi, poor mwah. *(For me.)*
    - Je crois, zhier krayz. *(I think.)*

#### French

**Lodging.** *(Manual, pp. 3, 7, 8.)*

12. **Bed & Food.** *(Lit et à manger.)*
    - Un lit, oon lee. *(A bed.)*
    - Pour la nuit, poor lah neet. *(For the night.)*
    - A manger, ah mahng-zheh. *(Food.)*
    - Je vous prie, zhier voo prec. *(I beg (you).)*
lodging continued.

13. Bed, Food and Drink (Lit. à manger et à boire).

Je voudrais un lit... I want a bed.
Pour la nuit... For the night.
A manger et à boire... Food and drink.
S'il vous plaît, aussi... If you please, also.

14. Feet Wet (Pieds mouillés).

Pieds... Feet.
Moillés... Wet.
Puis-je... May I.
Les sécher... Dry them?

15. Wet through (Trempe).

Je suis trempé... I am wet through.
Puis-je entrer... Can I come in.
Sécher mes habits... And dry my clothes.
S'il vous plaît... (If you) please?

16. Hot Bath (Bain chaud).

J'ai mal... I have pain.
Aux pieds... In my feet.
Bain chaud (froid)... Hot bath (cold).
S'il vous plaît... Please.

17. Coat Mended (Habit recommandé).

Veuillez-vous me recommander... Will you (for me) mend
Mon habit... My coat?
Il a des trous... There are some holes.
Des boutons manquent aussi... Some buttons missing also.

shopping and wants. (Manual, pp. 3, 6, 10, 17, 19.)

18. Tobacco (Du tabac).

Je veux du tabac... I want some tobacco.
C'est pour moi... It is for myself.
Combien sont... How much are
Ces cigarettes là... Those cigarettes there?

19. Chemist (Le pharmacien).

Où est... Where is.
Le magasin... The shop.
On habite... Where lives.
Le pharmacien... The chemist?

20. Epsom Salts (Du sel anglais).

Bonjour, Monsieur! bon-zhoor mers'yer! Good day, Sir!
I voudrais... I want
S'il vous plaît... (If you) please.
Du sel anglais... Some Epsom salts.

21. Shave and Hair Cut (La barbe; une coupe de cheveux).

La barbe... Shave.
Une coupe de cheveux... And hair cut,
Au plus vite... As quickly as possible,
S'il vous plaît... (If you) please,
Monsieur... Sir.

22. Soap (Savon).

Je veux acheter... I want to buy,
S'il vous plaît... (If you) please,
Un morceau de savon... A piece of soap
Pour me laver... To wash myself.


Montréz-moi... Show me
S'il vous plaît... (If you) please,
La boutique... The shop
Le meilleur marché... The cheapest.


Je veux acheter... I want to buy
Un journal anglais... An English paper;
Je ne suis pas... I cannot
Lire le français... Read French.
SHOPPING AND WANTS continued.

25. BREAD AND MEAT (Du pain et de la viande).

Je veux acheter
Quelque chose à
manger ;
Du pain, et de la
viande,
S'il vous plaît.
I want to buy
Something to eat ;
Bread and meat,
(If you) please.

26. HOW MUCH ? (Combien ?)

Je prendrai cela. I will take that.
Combien ? Quoi ? How much ? What ?
Deux francs ? Non, Two francs ? No,
Je ne donnerai pas I shan't give that !
cela !

27. BISCUITS AND SUGAR (Des biscuits et du sucre).

Je veux des biscuits I want some biscuits.
Pour les soldats, For the soldiers,
Combin le kilo How much a kilo (2 lbs.)
De ce sucre aussi ? Is this sugar, too ?

28. VEGETABLES (Des légumes).

Des pommes de terre Potatoes—
Pas trop chères, Not too dear,
Des choux et des Cabbages and turnips
Pour la guerre. For the war.

29. FLOUR (De la farine).

Je veux de la farine I want flour
Pour la cuisine, For the kitchen,
Du thé et du pain For the canteen.

30. GRAPEs (Des raisins).

Combien con-b'yaahn How much
Les raisins ? lai rai-zahn ? Are the grapes ?
Deux francs ? der frahn ? Two francs ?
Hein ! han ! Well, I never !

31. BAKER AND GROCER (Le boulanger et l'épicier).

Où habitez no ab-zeit Where live
Le boulanger ler boohn-zheh The baker
Et l'épicier, ch leh-pse-s'yezh And the grocer,
S'il vous plaît ? seel voo plait ? (If you) please ?

32. OFFICER, FOR THE (Pour l'officier).

Je voudrais acheter, I want to buy,
Pour l'officier. For the officer.

33. PAYING; CHANGE (Payer ; monnaie).

Ceci coute trois francs This costs three francs,
Je vous ai donné I have given you five.
Non ! ce n'est pas No ! that is not all,
Il manque deux Two francs change is

34. FRUITS (Des fruits).

Je veux acheter des I want to buy some
Pour manger cette To eat to-night ;
C'est pour des soldiers For soldiers at the
Ne les faîtes pas Don't make it too
trop cher. dear.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>How it sounds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LA MARSEILLAISE.</strong></td>
<td><strong>LAH MAR-ZEH-YAIZ.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allons enfants de la patrie</td>
<td>Allon-zahn-fahn der lah patres(-er)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le jour de gloire est arrivé ;</td>
<td>Ler-zhoor der gla-wahr a-sy-tar-re-veh ;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contre nous de la tyrannie</td>
<td>Kon-troo no der lah tee-ran-ez(-er)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L'étendard sanglant est levé.</td>
<td>Loh-tahn-dar sahn-glahn-ta-le-veh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L'étendard sanglant est levé,</td>
<td>Loh-tahn-dar sahn-glahn-ta-le-veh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entendez-vous dans les campagnes ?</td>
<td>Ahn-tahn-deh voo dah lah kahn-pahn-zer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mugir ces féroces soldats ?</td>
<td>Meuh-zheer sah feh-roz(-ser) sol-dah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras,</td>
<td>Eel vee-enn zheus-ker dah vo brah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egorgier vos fils,—vos compagnes !</td>
<td>Eh-gorr-zheh vo feess, vo kon-pahn-zer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Refrain.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Refrain.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aux armes ! Citoyens !</td>
<td>O-zazzar(-er) lah sah-tah-yahn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formez vos bataillons.</td>
<td>Forr-mez boh-ba-at-yon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marchons ! Marchons !</td>
<td>Marr-shon ! Marr-shon !</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qu'un sang impur</td>
<td>Kern sahn-gan-peur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abreuve nos sillens.</td>
<td>Ab-rew(-er) no soo-yon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.**—When Singing the Marseillaise,—

Sound the final e of patrie, thus: pa-tree-er.
- " e of tyrannie, thus : tee-ran-ez(-er)
- " e of féroces, thus : feh-roz(-ser)
- " e of armes thus : arr-mer.
- " e of abreuve thus : ab-rew(-er).

**TRANSLATION.**

Forward, sons of our Fatherland,
The day of glory has dawned.
The bloody standard of tyranny
Is raised against us,—
The bloody standard is set up!
Out in the fields hear you
The bellowing of these ferocious soldiers?
They come to butcher your children, your wives,
In your very arms!

**Refrain.**