

## Esperanto.

**I**N former times, when peoples and nations were isolated and had either a limited or no communication with the outside world, it mattered little what language they spoke. But the genius of modern civilization which has annihilated distance and space, demands a language, which, if not universal, will at least meet the commercial requirements of the different peoples of the habitable world.

The two most notable attempts to satisfy this modern necessity were made during the last century. The first Volapuk, invented by a German priest and propagated by a geographer, has long been consigned to the realms of "innocuous desuetude," so needs no further notice here. The second, Esperanto, the invention of a Russian chemist named Zamenhof, is a growing language with a very extensive literature which is daily adding to its list of advocates, ardent and enthusiastic students in every country of Europe, America and Asia, and for that reason is considered worthy some extended consideration. At a recent international convention of Esperantists held in Washington, D. C., U. S. A., every civilized government of the world was represented by delegates, and some of these were men of the highest standing in the literary, scientific and political world.

Before entering into a detailed explanation of the structure of this language and its grammar, I shall discuss from an academic viewpoint some questions which a perusal of the preceding paragraph will arouse in the minds of thoughtful, inquiring students. First, Why not use Latin as a second language for persons having relations with peoples whose native tongues we do not understand? Second, Is it not strange that both Volapuk and Esperanto were invented and propagated by

men who were not professed students of the science of language but had gained reputations in other sciences, the first in geography, the second as a chemist?

In regard to the first question it may be stated that Esperantists seek to replace Latin because it is very difficult to learn and is, therefore, the language of scholarship alone, whereas, they claim any person without the aid of a teacher may, by a few weeks' study, qualify himself for conversation and correspondence with all other Esperantists of the world, whatever their nationality, and their number is increasing by hundreds of thousands yearly. There are now over one hundred magazines published in this tongue and in the United States and Canada over a hundred clubs or societies engaged in its study.

To the second objection noted in my last paragraph, viz : that Esperanto is not the invention of an expert in the science of language, its advocates to my knowledge have advanced no defence. Certainly the proposal to establish an international language that shall meet the needs of all nations for all future times in their business and social intercourse, in their enjoyment of literature and in their scientific work is a fateful step for the progress of the world and well worthy the best efforts of an expert in this line. The other objections urged against Esperanto are directed principally against its grammatical structure, its sound and its flexibility. From a perusal of the remainder of this article the student will be sufficiently enlightened to form an intelligent judgment concerning the correctness of the last named objections.

The alphabet of Esperanto consists of twenty-eight letters, each representing one sound only, and resembles more the English shorthand alphabet than the ordinary longhand alphabet. Its grammar consists of seven parts of speech, sixteen rules and forty-five correlative words.

There is no indefinite article and the definite article "la" is used with all genders, cases and numbers.

The noun (*La Substantivo*) ends in the letter "o," as "hundo," dog ; "plumo," pen ; "korpo," body ; and the plural is formed by adding "j," as : hundoj, plumoj, korpoj ; "j" pronounced as "y." There are but two cases indicated by endings, viz, the nominative and accusative, which latter is developed from the nominative by adding "n," thus ; "La knabo" (boy) batis (beat) hundon" or "hundojn." The genitive is expressed by "de," the dative by "al," and the ablative by "per" and other prepositions. The feminine gender is denoted by adding "in" to the nominative form of the masculine noun as "fratro" brother, "fratrina" sister.

The adjective ends in "a" with cases and numbers like the noun and the comparative and superlative are formed by adding "pli" to the positive to produce the former and "plej" to produce the latter ex "La granda knabo—the large boy ; La pli granda knabo—he larger boy ; La plej granda—the largest. The conjunction "ol" than is used with comparatives in such sentences as : Milk is more nourishing than wine—*Lakto estas pli nutra, ol vino.*

The personal pronouns are *mi, li, vi, si, gi, ni ili, oni.* The possessives are formed by the addition of the adjective ending (a) and are declined like the nouns.

The verb is not changed in person or number. The present tense takes the ending "as"; the past tense "is," the future tense "os"; the conditional mode "us," the imperative mood "u"; the infinitive "i." Active present participles end with "ant"; active past participles end with "int," and active future participles with "ont." The passive present participle is "at"; the passive past future "it." All forms of the passive are helped by corresponding forms of the verb "esti," and a passive participle of the required verb ; the preposition with the passive is "de."

The following sentences will illustrate the use of active and passive voices and moods. *Mi amas—I love, I am loving ; Mi estas amata—I am loved. Vi amis—*



You loved or were loving. Vi estis amata—You were loved, were being loved. Se Si amas—If she should love (conditional mood). Prenu pomon—Take an apple (imperative mood). Ami, to love; esti amante, to be loving; esti amiti, to have been loved, are infinitives.

The participle is illustrated in the sentence: "Vidante muson, si forkuris"—"Seeing a mouse she ran away." The adverb ends in "e" and is compared like an adjective. The accent is always on the penultimate syllable. This is practically the entire grammar of Esperanto.

While all admit that we need a language which will pass current in any part of the world and which would be spoken and understood by all, yet the difficulties in the way of the practical realization of this seem almost insurmountable. Were the governments of the world to combine and force their citizens to learn an universal tongue, the problem would be solved in the course of a few generations. At any rate it seems to me that it is easier to learn to read, write and speak the Esperanto language than to learn correctly to conjugate one French verb.

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