

The Oral Method

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The Oral Method was the name given to the Direct Method of teaching Latin after rules had been formulated for that method so that the uninitiated (mainly those who had not been taught in that way) could use it successfully. The new name was invented by Arthur Munday after he and I had worked together with Dr Loehry at the Priory School, Shrewsbury to formulate those rules. It follows that, if I am to describe the Oral Method, I must first explain the Direct Method, since the two have many practices in common.

As far as I know the Direct Method of teaching French was invented by M. Chouville and M. de Glehn when they were teaching at the Perse School, Cambridge in the early 1900s. The Headmaster, Dr W. H. D. Rouse, found their work so successful that he decided to adapt their method to the teaching of Latin. This adaptation was equally successful, and in 1911 the ARLT was founded to support the work of Dr Rouse, and the word Reform was deliberately included in the title to show that the main aim of the Association was to serve this purpose.

The basic principle of the Direct Method is that a pupil can best learn a foreign language in the same way as he learned his own, i.e. by imitating the words spoken by his parents and others around him, and by using them frequently and speaking them long before he could write them.

So it was that in my first year at the Perse, and in my first lesson with M. Chouville, I found myself imitating his actions and speaking a little French. He sat in a desk among us, got up from it and, while pointing at himself said slowly and clearly: '*Je me lève.*' Then he walked to the platform under the wall blackboard and, still pointing at himself said; '*Je vais à l'estrade.*' He came back to his seat, pointed at himself and said; '*Je retourne.*' Then he sat down, and still pointing at himself said: '*Je m'assieds.*' He went through this drill three times.

Then he sat beside me, got up and said; '*Je me lève.*', and motioned to me to do the same. He put his hand up to his ear to indicate that he wanted to hear me say something. But I got up and said nothing. So he repeated what he had

