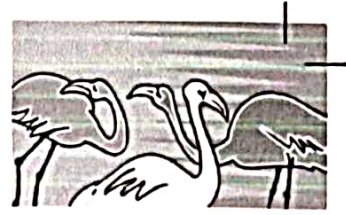


French language

the most beautiful language  
clearest most logical



→ M. Hamel urges them to guard the language because

"as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison".



language in the world — the clearest, the most logical; that we must guard it among us and never forget it, because when a people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison. Then he opened a grammar and read us our lesson. I was amazed to see how well I understood it. All he said seemed so easy, so easy! I think, too, that

→ Franz found everything so easy that day. (as he listened carefully)

I had never listened so carefully, and that he had never explained everything with so much patience. It seemed almost as if the poor man wanted to give us all he knew before going away, and to put it all into our heads at one stroke.

After the grammar, we had a lesson in writing. That day M. Hamel had new copies for us, written in a beautiful round hand — France, Alsace, France, Alsace. They looked like little flags floating everywhere in the school-room, hung from the rod at the top of our desks. You ought to have seen how every one set to work, and how quiet it was! The only sound was the scratching of the pens over the paper. Once some beetles flew in; but nobody paid any attention to them, not even the littlest ones, who worked right on tracing their fish-hooks, as if that was French, too. On the roof the pigeons cooed very low, and I thought to myself, "Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?"

Whenever I looked up from my writing I saw M. Hamel sitting motionless in his chair and gazing first at one thing, then at another, as if he wanted to fix in his mind just how everything looked in that little school-room. Fancy! For forty years he had been there in the same place, with his garden outside the window and his class in front of him,

Think as you read

1. What was Franz expected to be prepared with for school that day?
2. What did Franz notice that was unusual about the school that day?
3. What had been put up on the bulletin-board?

1st : Grammar

2nd : Writing

(France, Alsace, France, Alsace)

Para XVI

→ All are quiet, busy in writing.

→ only sound was the scratching of the pens over the paper.

→ an emotional situation.

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Assistant Professor  
Dept. of English  
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Para XVII

M. Hamel feels nostalgic

Recollecting his 40 years of service

(i) Same place, with his garden outside the window | (in front of the class.

(ii) Changing things : benches & desks worn smooth.



- (iii) Walnut-trees became taller
  - (iv) hopvine he planted twined about the windows to the roof.
- (must be feeling sad)

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just like that. Only the desks and benches had been worn smooth; the walnut-trees in the garden were taller, and the hopvine that he had planted himself twined about the windows to the roof. How it must have broken his heart to leave it all, poor man; to hear his sister moving about in the room above, packing their trunks! For they must leave the country next day.

But he had the courage to hear every lesson to the very last. After the writing, we had a lesson in history, and then the babies chanted their *ba, be bi, bo, bu*. Down there at the back of the room old Hauser had put on his spectacles and, holding his primer in both hands, spelled the letters with them. You could see that he, too, was crying; his voice trembled with emotion, and it was so funny to hear him that we all wanted to laugh and cry. Ah, how well I remember it, that last lesson!

All at once the church-clock struck twelve. Then the Angelus. At the same moment the trumpets of the Prussians, returning from drill, sounded under our windows. M. Hamel stood up, very pale, in his chair. I never saw him look so tall.

"My friends," said he, "I—I—" But something choked him. He could not go on.

Then he turned to the blackboard, took a piece of chalk, and, bearing on with all his might, he wrote as large as he could—

"Vive La France!"

Then he stopped and leaned his head against the wall, and, without a word, he made a gesture to us with his hand—

"School is dismissed — you may go."

Lessons

(i) Grammar

(ii) Writing

(iii) History

Para xviii

- history lesson
- alphabet by small babies.
- Hauser also repeated with them.

crying trembling voice with emotion

→ an emotional situation (mixture of different emotions)

Para XIX till end

- It was 12 noon.
- church bell rang
- M. Hamel wanted to say something (but couldn't complete)
- Then wrote "Vive La France!"

→ then leaned against the wall,

→ then made a gesture that the school is dismissed.

Think as you read

1. What changes did the order from Berlin cause in school that day?
2. How did Franz's feelings about M. Hamel and school change?