

ACROSS THE DEEP.

Ascending the Bebel's Tower.
From our Special Correspondent.

BERLIN, June 1, 1894.

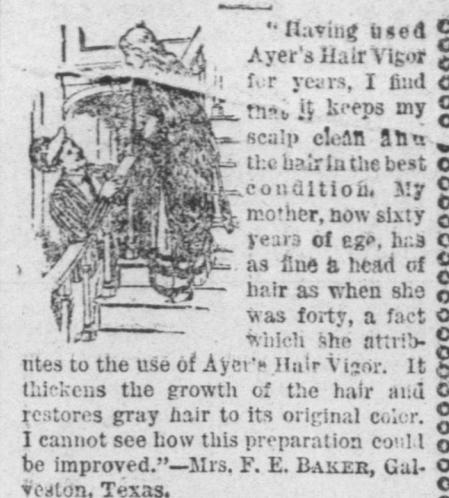
The learning of a language with the learning of a language with the least waste of time and energy is one of the long sought for attainments which is scarcely ever attained. The wise persons of this department of teaching naturally divide themselves into two classes: First, those who believe that a language is to be mastered by the committing of declensions and rules of grammar; second, those who believe that language is natural and must be learned in the "natural method," by conversations, reading easy texts with sufficient reference to grammar as to familiarize the student with the constructions which are most used. Since my experience with the German and French language I decidedly want to be classed with the second school. Milton, I believe, was in a measure correct when he said that all the necessary grammar for the learning of Latin could be placed on twelve pages. This was the testimony of a man who learned the Latin to use, and who came very near locking up that great epic, "Paradise Lost," in the intricacies of that tongue. I believe the way language is taught in America, as a rule, is pedagogic murder. I taught Latin while in the High School by the usual old, iron-clad rule, by use of declensions that should never have been learned, and by making hair-breadth distinctions in the Ablative, Datiol and Subjunctive, which have no place in the first stages of the learning of any language. I did this under protest at the time, but since it was a requirement for entrance to the various Universities I felt the responsibility to rest on other shoulders. But if I am ever called upon for my opinion in language teaching I will advise reading—starting with the easiest texts and reading for quantity, and when proficiency and familiarity are attained by the pupil, the attention to construction can be more closely watched. Another great mistake we make is by translating from the original into English. This is the method employed in teaching German and French in our Universities as a rule. I believe that a language should be commenced early and it will so conscientiously grow on the child that it will later overcome if he attempt it then.

It is surprising how many Germans know something of the English. Especially is this true of the young ladies because they attend the ladies' high school more than did their mothers. We will certainly begin the teaching of French and German in our high schools before long. I have no patience with those who desire to preserve the German in America in preference to the English, but that is no reason why the beauties of the German and French literature should be excluded from the culture of our young men and women.

When I landed in Germany I could scarcely buy a railway ticket, so helpless was I with the language. I had taken the prescribed treatment according to the surgical methods then in vogue. I had long felt that someone had taken my time for about the only thing I remembered was the difficulties of the grammatical rules where the exceptions to the rule were more by far than the cases which applied. I determined I should try the "natural method." I improved every opportunity to talk the language and was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of some young men who were kind and patient to the degree of Job. I will always have a kindly feeling for them for the temporary martyrdom

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