

Para VII
- continues.

shirt, and the little black silk cap, all embroidered, that he never wore except on inspection and prize days. Besides, the whole school seemed so strange and solemn. But the thing that surprised me most was to see, on the back benches that were always empty, the village people sitting quietly like ourselves; old Hauser, with his three-cornered hat, the former mayor, the former postmaster, and several others besides. Everybody looked sad; and Hauser had brought an old primer, thumbed at the edges, and he held it open on his knees with his great spectacles lying across the pages.



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most surprising for him was

old Hauser
former mayor
& former postmaster

also attended the class.

Old Hauser brought an old primer (damaged one) sitting in an odd manner.

Thunderclap
a crash of thunder (refers something unexpected)

While I was wondering about it all, M. Hamel mounted his chair, and, in the same grave and gentle tone which he had used to me, said, "My children, this is the last lesson I shall give you. The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of (Alsace) and (Lorraine). The new master comes tomorrow. This is your last French lesson. I want you to be very attentive."

Para VIII
last French class (German will be taught in schools from next day)

Wretches
unfortunate/unhappy persons

What a thunderclap these words were to me! Oh, the wretches; that was what they had put up at the town-hall! My last French lesson! Why, I hardly knew how to write! I should never learn any more! I must stop there, then! Oh, how sorry I was for not learning my lessons, for seeking birds' eggs, or going sliding on the Saar! My books, that had seemed such a nuisance a while ago, so heavy to carry, my grammar, and my history of the saints, were old friends now that I couldn't give up. And M. Hamel, too; the idea that he was going away, that I should never see him again, made me forget all about his ruler and how cranky he was.

Para IX & X

Poor man! It was in honour of this last lesson that he had put on his fine Sunday clothes, and now I understood

→ Franz regrets as he did not study well. 4/Flamingo
→ He spent his time (not attending class)

→ Also feels sad that he would not meet M. Hamel again, though he did not like him before.

by
Seeking bird's eggs
sliding on river Saar

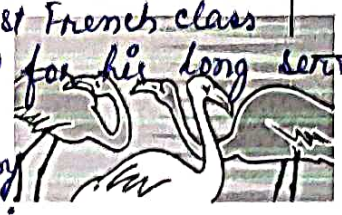
Now he understood why the villagers are sitting there.

→ Now suddenly he feels as if the books and subjects were his old friends. (not willing to depart from)

Para XI

People were sitting in class to
(but it was too late)

they were sorry as they didn't learn on time.
attend the last French class
Thank M. Hamel for his long service.
show respect to their country and language!



Para XII & XIII

→ Franz couldn't recite the rules of participles
→ M. Hamel did not scold him
→ He said that the whole Alsace was regretting that day.
(the fault was not of Franz only)
|
they kept on postponing things till tomorrow (but tomorrow never comes)

why the old men of the village were sitting there in the back of the room. It was because they were sorry, too, that they had not gone to school more. It was their way of thanking our master for his forty years of faithful service and of showing their respect for the country that was theirs no more.

While I was thinking of all this, I heard my name called. It was my turn to recite. What would I not have given to be able to say that dreadful rule for the participle all through, very loud and clear, and without one mistake? But I got mixed up on the first words and stood there, holding on to my desk, my heart beating, and not daring to look up.

I heard M. Hamel say to me, "I won't scold you, little Franz; you must feel bad enough. See how it is! Every day we have said to ourselves, 'Bah! I've plenty of time. I'll learn it tomorrow.' And now you see where we've come out. Ah, that's the great trouble with Alsace; she puts off learning till tomorrow. Now those fellows out there will have the right to say to you, 'How is it; you pretend to be Frenchmen, and yet you can neither speak nor write your own language?' But you are not the worst, poor little Franz. We've all a great deal to reproach ourselves with."

"Your parents were not anxious enough to have you learn. They preferred to put you to work on a farm or at the mills, so as to have a little more money. And I? I've been to blame also. Have I not often sent you to water my flowers instead of learning your lessons? And when I wanted to go fishing, did I not just give you a holiday?"

Then, from one thing to another, M. Hamel went on to talk of the French language, saying that it was the most beautiful



The Last Lesson/5

Para XIV

discusses the drawbacks of everyone.

who are responsible for today's loss

Para XV

says that French is the most beautiful language in the world.

- (i) All the people of Alsace (for not learning on time)
- (ii) Their mindset of postponing (including students)
- (iii) Parents (not being anxious enough to have their children learn) — sending them to work
- (iv) Even M. Hamel (as he tells students to water flowers & took holiday when he wanted to go fishing)

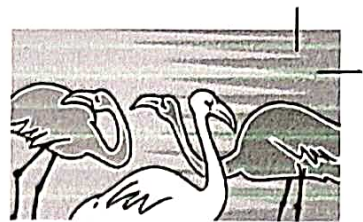
Para XV continues...

French language

the most beautiful language

cleanest

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 cleanest, 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 hand.

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