

cal Composition it contains the entire course of Rhetoric as studied in colleges and universities.

2. It is very practical, as will appear from even a cursory glance at the numerous exercises suggested in its pages. In the first part of the work many matters are explained and exercises suggested, which the teacher may utilize for the improvement of even young children in the lowest classes.

3. It contains a copious collection of choice quotations in prose and verse, to serve as models for the imitation of pupils. But it does not contain long lists of faulty sentences, etc., because the author thinks that students, in their daily exercises, supply the professor with a sufficient amount of such matter for criticism.

4. Lastly, the work pretends to do what many textbooks on Rhetoric neglect, and what is really the most important task of all—namely, to educate the heart as well as the head of the student; or, as Southey expresses it, “to throw his affections aright”: to guide the steps of the young through the pleasant paths of literature, without exposing them to the danger of losing what is far more precious than all the literature of the world—the purity of their Faith and the innocence of their hearts.

The treatise on “Versification” which forms part of this work is from the able pen of Rev. Eugene H. Brady, S.J., of St. Xavier College, Cincinnati, O. It is highly appreciated by the author of this volume; and he does not doubt that it will prove most acceptable to those for whose benefit it is now published.

ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY, April 13, 1886.



INTRODUCTORY.

1. The foundation of all literary excellence is **common sense**.

“Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons,”

says Horace. His translator, Francis, applies this rule to Poetry,

“Good sense, the fountain of the Muse’s art”;

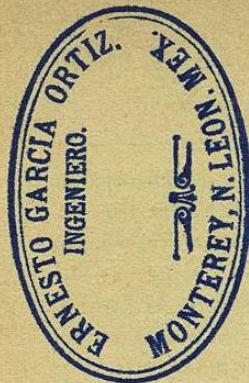
but it holds for all kinds of composition. Now, one of the first dictates of common sense is that an exercise be **not above the power of the writer**. The same critic remarks:

“Examine well, ye writers, weigh with care
What suits your genius, what your strength will bear.
To him who shall his task with judgment choose
Nor words nor method shall their aid refuse.”

School-exercises should therefore be carefully adapted to the capacity of the pupils. A boy may be taught to compose a natural and interesting narration of an excursion, a favorite game, a festive celebration, a distressing accident, etc.; but he is as yet incapable of handling intricate or abstract subjects. He will only write nonsense and acquire a faulty taste and style, if his first theme is the descriptive of an ancient or modern battle, an essay on ‘The spirit of progress,’ or even on ‘The Declaration of Independence.’

2. The first requisite for success in any composition is that the writer have **clear and correct ideas** on the matter

to be treated. Therefore, before speaking of style or the expression of thought, we shall premise a few exercises on the acquisition of thought. Children acquire knowledge readily and naturally by observing what is presented to their senses. We shall follow nature's guidance, and begin with such exercises as will promote or direct this habit of observation, as a preparation for original composition.



BOOK I.

THE ELEMENTS OF COMPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

OBJECT-LESSONS.

3. **Object-Lessons** are exercises on objects that fall under the senses. In these lessons children are trained to notice such objects with care, to observe their parts, their qualities, their actions; the sources whence they come, the means by which they may be obtained, the uses to which they may be applied, and so forth.
4. The **chief advantages** derived from object-lessons are:
1. They cultivate habits of attention;
 2. They lead to greater distinctness of perception;
 3. They store the mind with useful knowledge;
 4. They cultivate a taste for what is real;
 5. They develop the habit of tracing effects to their causes, and following out causes to their effects;
 6. They make the child acquainted with numerous words, not learned at random and vaguely understood, but exactly suited to the clear ideas thus acquired;
 7. The spelling of those same words can easily be learned in connection with the objects studied.