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ENGLISH COMPOSITION,

PREPARED FOR

STUDENTS OF ALL GRADES;

EMBRACING

SPECIMENS AND EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL AND COLLEGE EXERCISES
AND MOST OF THE HIGHER DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH
COMPOSITION, BOTH IN PROSE AND VERSE.

By RICHARD GREEN PARKER, A. M.

"Dimidium facti qui cepit, habet."

TWENTIETH EDITION.



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PREFACE.

It would be presumptuous in any author to attempt to give rules, or to lay down laws, to which all the departments of English Composition should be subjected. Genius cannot be fettered, and an original and thinking mind, replete with its own exuberance, will often burst out in spontaneous gushings, and open to itself new channels, through which the treasures of thought will flow in rich and rapid currents. Rules and suggestions, however, are not wholly useless. They encourage the diffident, and give confidence to those whose want of conversance with approved models renders it necessary for them to rely on foreign aid. In the volume to which this book is designed as a sequel, the author has attempted to render assistance in the removal of the two obstacles which beset the youthful writer in his first attempts at composition; to wit, the difficulty of obtaining ideas, or learning to think, and that of expressing them properly when obtained. There are those who profess to have been benefited by the assistance therein afforded. In this volume he has endeavored to embrace a wider range in the extensive field before him. He candidly confesses that he is not satisfied with his own labors. He would have been better contented to see the task completed by abler hands. But as his labors have been found useful, he has been encouraged to extend them, in the hope that they will prove beneficial, especially to those who have neither the leisure nor the inclination to seek in the wide fields of literature for other and deeper sources of information. If the water in the bucket drawn from the well has not the coolness and raciness of the fountain, or the spring, it will quench the thirst and cool the brow of the toiler, in his laborious ascent of the hill of science.

With regard to the manner in which this volume is to be used, the author has only to say that he has not aimed at giving a regular and systematic course of instruction. Few teachers would probably follow any path that might be pointed out. It has not been his aim to present in this volume a *progressive* course. Leaving to the judgment of those who may use the book the task of selecting such exercises as may in their opinion best promote the intellectual advancement of those whose minds they are training, he respectfully submits the volume, in the hope that it may prove a useful auxiliary in the difficult but highly useful task of Composition.

Orange Street, Boston, January 1st, 1844.

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INTRODUCTION.

COMPOSITION is the art of forming ideas, and expressing them in language. Its most obvious divisions, with respect to the nature of its subjects, are the Narrative, the Descriptive, the Didactic, the Persuasive, the Pathetic, and the Argumentative. With regard to its form or style, it may be considered as concise or diffuse, as nervous or feeble, as dry, plain, neat, elegant or flowery, as simple, or affected, as cold or vehement, as barren or luxuriant; and its essential requisites are clearness, unity, strength and harmony. As it is strictly a mental effort, its foundation must be laid in a disciplined and cultivated mind, in the exercise of vigorous thought, on reading and observation, and an attentive study of the meaning and the force of language. The proper preparation for its successful performance should be laid in a diligent attention to the rules of grammar, a thorough knowledge of the principles of rhetoric, and a successful application of the maxims of logic; for logic must direct us in the selection of ideas, rhetoric must clothe them in a suitable dress, and grammar must adapt the dress to the peculiar form of the idea. In the following pages an attempt is made gradually to introduce the student to the several departments of English composition by examples and exercises, with such observations and illustrations as may appear to be necessary for an intelligent comprehension of its rules and principles. The early lessons are simple and easily performed, but, in the course of the work, suggestions will be found, which, it is thought, will be useful to those by whom composition is not regarded as a task.

Of the importance of attention to the subject of composition thus much may be said; that there are few individuals, in any station of life, to whom ease and fluency in writing are not valuable acquisitions. All who are engaged in professional or commercial pursuits, and even the hardier sons of labor, whose "bread is procured by the sweat of their brow," must have correspondence to manage, or written statements to furnish, requiring at once accuracy and despatch; and therefore the facility which practice alone can impart, in the arrangement of their thoughts, and a ready and correct expression of them, is an attainment exceedingly desirable. In the language of a late transatlantic writer then, it may boldly be asserted, that "No acquirement can equal that of composition in giving a power over the material of thought, and an apt-

INTRODUCTION.

ness in all matters of arrangement, of inquest, and of argumentation." "Writing," says Lord Bacon, "makes a correct man;" and the author of the Essay on Criticism asserts, that

"True grace in writing comes from art, not chance,
As they move easiest who have learnt to dance."

"He that begins with the calf," says Mr. Locke, "may carry the ox, but he, that will go at first to take the ox, may so disable himself as not to be able to take the calf after that." On the same principle, it is recommended that an attention to the subject of composition should be commenced early in life. Exercises of a simple character prepare the mind for higher exertion; and readiness and facility in the lower departments of writing enable the student to apply himself without reluctance to those mightier efforts by which the progress of intellectual culture is most rapidly advanced.

The words of Horace may here be recommended to particular attention:

"Sumite materiam qui scribitis æquam
"Viribus."

Or, in the translation of Mr. Francis:

"Examine well, ye writers, weigh with care,
What suits your genius, what your strength will bear."

AIDS

TO

ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

I.

OBJECTS AND THEIR PARTS.

The first step to be taken in writing composition is to obtain ideas. The second is the proper expression of the idea when obtained. To acquire ideas, it is necessary to cultivate habits of observation; to use the eyes not only in noticing entire objects, but also their different parts; to consider their qualities, uses, operations, and effects; together with their relation to other things. The mind employed in such processes acquires materials for its own operations, and thoughts and ideas arise as it were spontaneously.

For the first exercise in composition, therefore, it is proposed that the student be required to enumerate the parts of some visible object, according to the following

Example.

A HOUSE.

Its parts are

The inside,	The wainscot,	The parlors or
The outside,	The stairs,	drawing rooms.
The doors,	The fire places,	The wash room,
The entry,	The mantel,	The bathing room,
The rooms,	The chimney,	The inner doors,
The ceiling,	The closets,	The wood shed,
The walls,	The kitchen,	The out buildings.