

**ENGLISH AS SPOKEN AND  
WRITTEN TO-DAY; WITH  
IDIOMATIC NOTES AND  
GRAMMATICAL EXERCISES**

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English as spoken and written to-day; with idiomatic notes and grammatical exercises by M. M. Mason

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**M. M. MASON**

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## PREFACE.



Of writing many books there is no end, and many and crude have been the manuals which have libelled our English language on the Continent. During some years' experience as a teacher of English abroad I have been alternately shocked and amused by the so-called "Aids to English Conversation" which my pupils have brought to me for perusal or which booksellers have vainly suggested as suitable. Their lack of grammar, crudeness of expression, antiquity of style, and above all, utter foreignness, decided me to supply the need which I felt by writing conversations or letters for my pupils each day, taking for my theme any easy subject which presented itself to my mind. The conversations were meant to be learnt by heart, or at any rate copied out, and the new expressions noted. The letters were to be answered in similar style.

Later on, and as my pupils became more advanced, notes were necessary to elucidate idiomatic expressions and so they took the place of conversations, and as I found that the grammar grew irksome after the first six months to pupils who were no longer children, I substituted for it examination papers on the rules most frequently infringed by foreigners.

If I can give to my pupils a desire to study more thoroughly a language for which they have a natural aptitude, and if, in addition to helping them, I may have met the want felt by other teachers, as by myself, of an easy and graduated introduction to the study of English, the purpose of this little book will be accomplished.

M. M. MASON.

Naples, 1910.

PART I.  
**Graduated Conversations.**

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FIRST CONVERSATION.

September 1st, 190—.

Can you speak English?

No, I have not learnt English yet.

Have you begun to study English?

I have had one lesson, only one.

Oh, English is very easy, you know.

Is it?

Yes, it is not difficult at all. Do you speak French?

Yes, Miss Halley, I speak a little, and I understand French quite well, because I have studied it for many years.

And do you speak German?

No, I have never studied German. It is a difficult language, is it not?

Yes, German is a very difficult language, but English is very easy.

I have a great desire to learn English.

That is right. Of course you know both Latin and Greek?

Yes, we study both Latin and Greek at college.

To what college do you go?

To "Humbert the First."

Where is it?

It is at Cariati.

Ah, not far from here.

No, not far.

## SECOND CONVERSATION.

September 4th, 190—.

Well, did you learn your English lesson well?

I hope so. I studied it for more than an hour.

That is right. I see you are going to be a good pupil.

I am going to try my best.

Is it raining?

No, it was not raining when I came, but it will rain soon.

Well, let us write to-day, dictation is an excellent exercise, you know.

Is it, do you think?

Yes, particularly in the English language reading, writing and talking are the three principal means.

And do you not teach the grammar?

Certainly, but I prefer to teach the grammar whilst reading with my pupils.

Is the English grammar difficult?

No, not at all.

Are the verbs difficult?

The irregular verbs are very difficult.

Are there many irregular verbs?

Yes, a good many. But you do not find English a difficult language, do you?

No, the first lesson was very easy indeed.

And the second is also easy.

## THIRD CONVERSATION.

September 8th, 190—.

Did you go to the review yesterday?

No, I did not go.

It was a beautiful day for the review.

Yes, it was beautiful weather. Did you see the King?

No, I have never seen the King; I saw the Queen once when she was the Princess of Naples. Have you ever seen her?

Yes, she is very pretty and very sweet.

I do not think her pretty, but she seems a good wife and an excellent mother. Queen Margaret was very beautiful and more queenly.

Yes, Queen Margaret was very queenlike. I am her namesake, you know.

Really? Did you ever see the poor King who was assassinated?

No, I never saw him, and I have never seen the present King.

Really?

No, not yet. He is very little, is he not?

Yes, very short; but they say that he is very clever.

I believe so.

Have you learnt your grammar well?

I hope so.

You must learn it word for word.

Yes, I will.

That's right.

When do I return for my next lesson?

On the eleventh; on Friday.

And at what hour?

At the same hour, always the same hour.

At half past ten, is it not?

Yes, at half past ten. Be punctual.

Yes, I shall be punctual.

#### FOURTH CONVERSATION.

September 11th, 190—.

So you went to Saint Charles' last night?

Yes, it was delightful.

What did they give?

They gave "Rustic Chivalry."

Is it beautiful?

Oh, it is charming. Have you never seen it?

No, never. I have only been six times to St. Charles, and I did not understand Italian then, so I could not enjoy it so much.

What operas have you seen?

"Carmen" and "Manon," and some others, but I do not remember very well.



Have you good theatres in London, Miss Wilmot?

Yes, we have excellent theatres, but the acting is not of the finest.

Who is your best actor?

Beerbohm Tree is considered our best actor, and Miss Ellen Terry the best actress.

Do they act Shakespeare's plays in London?

Yes, they act Shakespeare at His Majesty's and at the Haymarket.

What is the Lyceum?

It was the classic theatre in London, like the "Théâtre Français" in Paris, but now I believe it is a music-hall.

Do you like Shakespeare's plays, Miss Wilmot?

Yes, so much. He was the greatest dramatist in the world.

And what did he write?

He wrote "The Merchant of Venice," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Romeo and Juliet," "Othello," and so many more that I cannot mention them here.

And was he really English?

Yes, he was an Englishman of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and he was born in one thousand five hundred and sixty-four.

But they say that Sir Francis Bacon wrote the works of Shakespeare, don't they?

Oh, yes, they say many things.

#### FIFTH CONVERSATION.

September 15th, 190—.

Good-afternoon, Captain Burrowes. What a bad cold you have!

Yes, I have a nasty cold, have I not?

How did you catch such a bad cold?

I caught it by going out in the rain.

It has indeed been bad weather lately, has it not?

Yes, very nasty weather indeed, but to-day it is fine. I find it colder in Italy in winter than in England.

Yes, perhaps colder in the houses, because they are not so well-warmed. But the climate is not so damp, is it?

Oh, no, not nearly so damp.

Do you speak Italian, Captain Burrowes?

No, I have never learnt Italian, but I want to study it now.

It is a difficult language to speak well; but it is easy to understand.

And it is very easy to read and to write. Do you read Italian, Mrs. Stock?

Yes, I read, and I simply love Italian, but I have very little time for reading.

Do you read much French?

Also, but not so much just now. I prefer Italian.

How long have you been in Italy?

One year—one year and two months.

#### SIXTH CONVERSATION.

September 18th, 190—.

Have you learnt your irregular verbs better to-day?

Yes, I think so; they are rather difficult.

Yes, the irregular verbs are the most difficult part of the English language. Do you like your English?

Yes, very much.

And I like your language very much indeed.

Do you really?

Yes, but unfortunately I do not know Italian well.

Have you ever studied Italian, Mr. Dyce?

No, never. I have not the time to study it.

Really, are you so busy?

I am always very busy.

Have you many pupils?

I have thirty pupils.

How many! Have you time to teach so many?

Yes, but they are not all private lessons, many are in classes.

Do you like teaching English?

Very much.

And do you like Naples and Italy in general?

I like all Italy, but Naples in particular.

Is it very different from London?

Oh, yes, quite different.  
 Do you know Paris, Mr. Dyce?  
 Yes, I have been to Paris six times.  
 Really?  
 Yes, but on my way to other places.  
 Do you like France?  
 Very much indeed. I lived in France once for fifteen months.

## SEVENTH CONVERSATION.

September 22nd, 190—.

How are you, Major Harrison. Are you better?  
 Yes, thank you, I am much better.  
 What was the matter with you?  
 I had caught a severe chill.  
 What is a chill?  
 A chill is a cold which causes shivering.  
 Ah, yes, I understand; it is very disagreeable.  
 And did you go to bed?  
 Yes, I was in bed on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and part of Thursday.  
 You were wise to stay in bed.  
 Well, I was so very ill. I had a head-ache, and a sore throat and a cough.  
 It is a good thing that you went to bed.  
 Yes, it is the only thing when one has a bad cold. My doctor would not allow me to get up.  
 He was right. Is he English?  
 Yes, he is English, and he comes from my own town in England.  
 Really?  
 He came to Naples when I did; and he has been my doctor ever since.  
 Is he a good doctor?  
 Yes, I think so. He is old, so he has a large experience.  
 Well, experience is a great thing in medicine.  
 I think that it is the principal thing, don't you?  
 Yes, certainly.