

**THE PRECIS BOOK: OR, LESSONS IN  
ACCURACY OF STATEMENT AND  
PRECISENESS OF EXPRESSION: FOR  
CIVIL SERVICE STUDENTS, SELF-  
EDUCATION, AND USE IN SCHOOLS**

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The precis book: or, lessons in accuracy of statement and preciseness of expression: for civil service students, self-education, and use in schools by W. Cosmo Monkhouse

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*C. S. Morris, '92.*

*THE CIVIL SERVICE SERIES.*

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OR

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AND

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*FOR CIVIL SERVICE STUDENTS, SELF-EDUCATION,  
AND USE IN SCHOOLS*

BY

W. COSMO MONKHOUSE

(BOARD OF TRADE).

*SECOND EDITION, REVISED.*



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KEY  
TO THE EXERCISES IN  
**THE PRÉCIS BOOK.**

By W. COSMO MONKHOUSE

*(Dowd of Trade).*

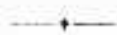
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PREFACE.

1878



MAIN

THE FIRST AND THIRD PARTS of this book are the first attempts which, as far as the Author is aware, have been made to extend the principles and uses of Précis-writing beyond 'the Office.'

The primary intention of this book is to provide thoroughly clear, trustworthy, and exhaustive instructions in writing Précis, for the use of those who are preparing for examinations for the Civil Service, and it is hoped that this intention will be found fulfilled in Part II. But the Author's experience has taught him that many persons of full age to be candidates for such employment are, by want of natural aptitude or defective education, incapable of making a short and accurate abstract of even a simple correspondence, though they may be fairly 'educated' in the ordinary sense of the word. It was and is, the Author fears, still a defect in the general system of education in England that boys are not taught to thoroughly understand what they read, or to express what they understand. There are still many boys able to construe any passage in the first book of the *Aeneid*, and yet unable to write in short, simple English a narrative of the events it contains; many more who have 'done' a certain number of lines of Cicero every week for months, if not years, who are incapable of producing accurately one of his arguments in their own language. In many cases the cause of deficiency is not so much want of knowledge as want of power to use it, not so much that the boys do not think as that they have never been taught to express their thoughts.

For those old enough to be candidates it was evidently

useless to endeavour to supply this defect, but it occurred to the Author that it would be a valuable addition to this book if some simple exercises could be devised by which the minds of boys and girls could be trained to habits of order and accuracy in stating the facts of what they know or read, mainly with the view that those who have no natural aptitude for précis-writing may be better able to meet its difficulties when called upon to do so. Hence the origin of Part I., which is designed, as the phrase has it, 'for the use of schools.'

It also occurred to the Author that it might be still more valuable to add some exercises which should extend the use of précis to general reading, and be available to all, without distinction of sex or age, who, from one cause or another, have not acquired the habit of 'marking, learning, and inwardly digesting' what they read.

On page 182 will be found the commencement of a passage from Locke, which, though not in the mind of the Author before he commenced this part of his work, might well have stimulated him to undertake it. 'Those who have read of everything,' he writes, 'are thought to understand everything too; but it is not always so. Reading furnishes the mind only with materials of knowledge; it is thinking makes what we read ours. We are of the ruminating kind, and it is not enough to cram ourselves with a great load of collections; unless we chew them over again, they will not give us strength and nourishment.' Précis-writing, though not identical with 'chewing over again,' not only requires that that process should be gone through, but furnishes the test that it has been gone through, a test quite necessary to those who, not having acquired the habit of thinking, grow soon tired of it, and easily convince themselves that they have extracted the essence when they are still only grazing the outside. Hence the origin of Part III.



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