

**ELEMENTARY
COMPOSITION
AND RHETORIC**

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Elementary Composition and Rhetoric by William Edward Mead

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WILLIAM EDWARD MEAD

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BY

WILLIAM EDWARD MEAD, Ph.D. (Lelystc).

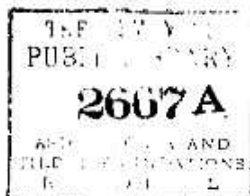
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PROFESSOR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY.



LEACH, SHEWELL, & SANBORN,
BOSTON, NEW YORK, CHICAGO.

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PREFACE.

THIS book is an outgrowth of several years of experience in teaching English composition in secondary schools and in college, and it contains nothing that has not stood the test of actual trial. It does not profess to be a guide to English criticism, but aims rather to give brief practical suggestions to young writers.¹

What should be most emphasized in a text-book on English composition is a question of much difficulty. My chief concern has been to discover what could be omitted rather than what could be included. The aim of the teacher of composition should be to bring his students into such an attitude of mind that a subject may be to them a genuine question to be answered, and not a mere occasion for combining words into sentences without regard to the thought. I have, therefore, laid especial emphasis on the choice and treatment of themes. If a writer can form the habit of choosing one sharply defined topic and of telling exactly what he thinks, the imperfect details of his composition can be corrected by reading and practice. I need scarcely remark that no book of instructions will make a finished writer. Only constant practice and merciless criticism by the writer himself can yield the desired result. My purpose is, therefore, rather to develop a few general principles than to prescribe definite rules.

As far as possible the study of composition should be combined with the study of literature. Familiarity with the best models

¹ In using the book some teachers may prefer to begin at once with the chapters on the Theme and the Plan, and then to take up the chapters on Words, Sentences, Paragraphs.

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of English prose will supply what even the best text-books must fail to give — a standard by which to test one's own writing. I have, therefore, added numerous topics for investigation and composition, based upon representative English and American classics. Some of the suggested topics are obviously too difficult for any except advanced students, but care has been taken in each case to include one or more topics suited to any one who is able to read the books with intelligence.

In conclusion, it is a pleasure to thank my colleagues, Professor C. T. Winchester and Mr. F. W. Nicolson, who read most of the proof and made several valuable suggestions.

As for more general obligations, I am unable to decide to whom I am most indebted. For the special form, however, which the book has taken, as well as for most of the sentences quoted without specific references, I owe most to my classes in rhetoric and composition.

W. E. M.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,
MIDDLETOWN, CT., MARCH, 1894.

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PART I.
THEORY.