

A HELP TO YOUNG WRITERS

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A Help to Young Writers by Anonymous

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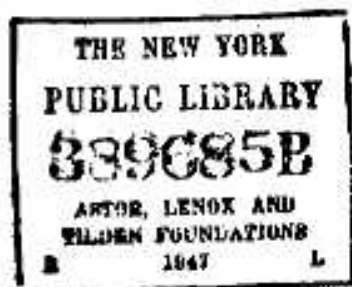
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English Language -
Rhetoric and Composition



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PREFACE.

To be able to compose with ease and accuracy, is an attainment of the highest importance. It was for the purpose of facilitating this object, that the present Catechism was drawn up. How far it may contribute to this end, it is for those who make trial of it to judge; but no pains have been spared to give it all the simplicity and interest that a production so elementary can admit. All the leading facts and principles connected with the subject, have been studiously collected, and presented in as regular and succinct a form, as could well be done within such limits. It is hoped it will prove a useful manual to such persons as have gained a knowledge of English Grammar, but wish still farther to extend their acquaintance with language, and to give effect to their previous attainments by trying their skill in Composition. The work is peculiarly well adapted to the use of academies and common schools, and is one of the series of 'Useful School Books.'



COMPOSITION.

1. COMPOSITION is but little attended to in our common schools. Scholars are seldom required to combine and arrange their ideas; and they rarely put their knowledge of any subject into the form of a written language.

2. This is one of the great defects in the present system of teaching. There are several reasons for this. To compose well is not a necessary qualification in the teacher, under the present system of inspection.

3. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the inspectors never inquire or ascertain whether or not the candidate can think naturally and connectedly on any one subject, and clothe his thoughts with language which is appropriate and grammatical: and the consequence is, that but few teachers compose with ease or correctness.

4. What they perform with difficulty and imperfectly, they will not feel disposed (and if they did, would be unable) to teach others. Hence the art of composing has but very little importance in the estimation of the teacher, and is entirely disregarded by the scholar?

5. Parents are not in the habit of composing, and take no pains to have the art taught their children. They are pleased when it is discovered that their child writes a good letter; but the means of ensuring this excellence they wholly disregard.

6. They seem to forget that the ability of expressing one's thoughts with readiness and perspicuity, is acquired only by long practice and good instruction.

7. They do not see that an apprenticeship in this is as necessary as in any thing else; thus, they do not consider that which would give their children this desirable qualification.

8. "The scholars suppose composition a mystery; something that does not belong to *them*, but to *those* who have great learning and a wonderful genius."

9. They look upon it as a thing impossible that they should learn to write ; and what they regard so far beyond their reach, they never make any efforts to obtain.

10. I know of nothing for which scholars usually have such an abhorrence, and which they make such efforts to shun, as composition. They struggle with the vacant, undisciplined mind till they become exhausted, and then give up in despair.

11. "They feel that their labor has been fruitless and wearisome, and are heartily glad to escape, wishing never to resume the task again.

12. "One cause of the difficulty is an improper choice of their subject. They generally select one which they know nothing of ; one that would puzzle a skilful writer to handle intelligibly ; and one that is abstract and indefinite, and altogether above their comprehension.

13. "By trying to grasp subjects of this kind, the mind perceives nothing distinctly ; the thoughts become vague and uncertain, and