

**COMMON-SCHOOL LITERATURE,
ENGLISH AND AMERICAN: WITH
SEVERAL HUNDRED EXTRACTS TO
BE MEMORIZED**

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Common-School Literature, English and American: With Several Hundred Extracts to be Memorized by J. Willis Westlake

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BY

J. WILLIS WESTLAKE, A. M.,

LATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE STATE NORMAL
SCHOOL, MILLERSVILLE, PA., AND AUTHOR OF "HOW
TO WRITE LETTERS," ETC.

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PREFACE.

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ONE of the demands of the present day is "thin text-books;" and the demand is a reasonable one. Most subjects are too extensive to be mastered in all their details in the time that can be devoted to them in a preparatory course of study. What is required is a thorough knowledge of a few fundamental facts and principles in each branch, as a basis for future attainments. Hence the demand for small books, in which these facts and principles are given in clear and definite statements, unencumbered by unessential details. The present work is intended to conform to this requirement. It aims to give just such and so much literary information as is indispensable to the learner; to show the growth of our literature through its various eras; to present a concise view of the lives and characters of its great representative authors; and to bring forth from the thought-treasures of our language a variety of literary gems for the enrichment of the mind of the student. The plan of the work is entirely new. Most works on literature are suited to impart knowledge only; this is calculated to impart both knowledge and culture—knowledge by its historic facts, culture by its philosophical development and its illustrative

and thought-awakening extracts. It is not necessary to show the importance of memorizing such extracts. This has long been recognized by educators as one of the most efficient means of culture. Every beautiful sentiment implanted in the fertile mind of youth, is a seed-truth that will yield a perennial harvest of good thoughts developed into worthy acts. Hoping that this little work may be the means of giving a new interest to the study of pure literature, and sowing in many a heart the fructifying seeds of truth, the author herewith submits it to an indulgent public.

MILLERSVILLE, PA., SEPT. 1st., 1876.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

It is not intended that all the extracts shall be committed to memory. Let the teacher select those that are best suited to the mind of the pupil. Nor is it necessary that all the authors should be studied. If a very brief course be desirable, attention may be given to the following authors only:—

English: Shakspeare, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Addison, Goldsmith, Burns, Johnson, Byron, Wordsworth, Scott, Tennyson, Macaulay, and Dickens.

American: Franklin, Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Holmes, Irving, Prescott, Bancroft, Hawthorne, Everett, and Emerson.

If the lessons are dictated to pupils, they should afterwards be written out and handed in as an exercise. Such exercises are excellent language lessons. It is also recommended that pupils be required to express in prose the meaning of the poetical extracts they learn. And if the teacher will supplement the extracts by reading aloud some choice selection from the same author he will add greatly to the value of the lessons. An intelligent teacher may in many ways make the work tributary to literary culture.

In regard to the extracts it is proper to say that they were sometimes chosen on account of some peculiar beauty of thought or language, and sometimes to illustrate the author's peculiarities of style. Of course no short extract can give an adequate idea of the character of a work as a whole.

The brief notices in fine print (pp. 11, 16, etc.) are not to be recited. They are intended to give a general view of the field of literature, and to guide the student in his future reading. *Writers on theology, medicine, law, etc., are not mentioned, unless they are also distinguished in general literature.*

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✓ INTRODUCTION.

DEFINITIONS.—Literature is thought expressed in writing.

English Literature is the literature of the English language, wherever produced; but it is sometimes divided, for convenience, into English literature proper—the literature produced in England; and American literature—the literature produced in America.

FORMS.—Literature exists in two forms,—*Poetry* and *Prose*.

POETRY.—Poetry is imaginative composition in metrical form. It is of eight kinds,—*Epic*, *Dramatic*, *Narrative* and *Descriptive*, *Lyric*, *Didactic*, *Pastoral*, *Elegiac*, and *Humorous*.

An *Epic* poem is a long poetic recital of some great event. Examples: Homer's *Iliad*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Dramatic poetry is poetry in the form of dialogue. It is of two kinds,—tragedies and comedies. The finest dramas in the world are those of Shakespeare. Examples: *Hamlet* (tragedy), *Merchant of Venice* (comedy).

A *Narrative* poem is a tale in verse. A *Descriptive* poem is one that describes something. Narration and description are generally combined. Examples: Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Scott's *Lady of the Lake*.

Lyric poetry is poetry suitable for music. It includes Psalms, Hymns, Songs, Odes, and Sonnets. Examples: Shelley's *Skylark*, Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*, Moore's *Last Rose of Summer*, etc.

Didactic poetry is poetry designed chiefly to instruct. Examples: Pope's *Essay on Man*, Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Bryant's *Thanatopsis*.

Pastoral poetry is poetry descriptive of country life. Examples: Whitier's *Snow-Bound*, Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*, Taylor's *Lark*.

Elegiac poetry is poetry commemorative of the dead. Examples: Gray's *Elegy* written in a Country Churchyard, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.

Humorous poetry is poetry of an amusing character. Examples: Cowper's *John Gilpin*, Saxe's *Proud Miss McBride*.

PROSE.—Prose is composition without metre or rhyme. It is of nine kinds,—*History*, *Biography*, *Novels*, *Travels*, *Letters*, *Reviews*, *Essays*, *Treatises*, and *Discourses*.

History is a record of past events. Examples: Hume's History of England, Bancroft's History of the United States.

A *Biography* is an account of the life of an individual. Example: Irving's Life of Washington. To this class belong autobiographies and diaries.

A *Novel* is a fictitious story. Among the best examples are the novels of Scott, Thackeray, and Dickens.

A *Book of Travels* is a record of the experiences and observations of a traveller. Examples: Bayard Taylor's Views Afoot, etc.

A *Letter* is a composition addressed to a particular person. Letters are generally included in biography. Example: Life and Letters of Lord Byron.

A *Review* is a long article founded on some literary work. Among the best reviews are those of Macaulay, Lowell, and Whipple.

An *Essay* is a brief and somewhat informal composition on any subject. Among the best essays are those of Lord Bacon, Addison, and Lamb (Elia).

A *Treatise* is a composition setting forth in a systematic manner the principles of some science or art. Examples: Haven's Mental Science, Brooks's Geometry.

A *Discourse* is a composition intended to be read aloud or spoken by the writer. Discourses are of five kinds,—Orations, Addresses, Sermons, Lectures, and Speeches.

PARTS.—Though English literature embraces all works written in the English language, whether produced in England or America; yet it is practically most convenient to consider the literature of each country separately, and this plan has been adopted in the present work.

Each biographical sketch will be followed by one or more extracts to be memorized; and in order to afford still further opportunity of thought-culture, and to illustrate more fully the variety and richness of our literature, a collection of literary gems will be added as a separate division.

The body of the work will consist, therefore, of three parts:—

PART I. THE LITERATURE OF ENGLAND.

PART II. THE LITERATURE OF AMERICA.

PART III. A CASKET OF THOUGHT-GEMS.