

**A PRACTICAL
COURSE IN ENGLISH
COMPOSITION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649060399

A Practical Course in English Composition by Alphonso G. Newcomer

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ALPHONSO G. NEWCOMER

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COURSE IN ENGLISH
COMPOSITION**

A PRACTICAL COURSE
IN
ENGLISH COMPOSITION

BY ALPHONSO G. NEWCOMER
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN THE LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY

BOSTON
GINN AND COMPANY
1893

897
N544
Educ.
Dept.

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EDUCATION DEPT.

NO. 1754
ALPHONSO G. NEWCOMER

Ginn & Company
The Athenæum Press
Boston

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PREFACE.

THIS book is intended primarily for use in high schools and academies. But, at the same time, it is issued in the confidence that it will be found suggestive and useful for the lower classes in colleges and universities, so long at least as our preparatory schools shall continue to send to them students practically untrained, or sadly mistrained, in this important branch of English. Grammar is faithfully taught the pupils through text-books, and they come with their heads full of theory, and hundreds of rules at their tongues' end, but they cannot write a single clear, smooth English sentence. Let them, at least once a week, devote a little time to putting these rules and theories into practice. No doubt one reason why this has not been done, is that so few text-books have been available which would relieve the teacher of the burden of finding appropriate themes, and of setting the pupils to work in the right direction. That is what this book aims to do. It is not intended to take the place of a Rhetoric, much less of a Grammar. There is not a formal rule in it, though numerous apposite suggestions are made, and certain fundamental principles are everywhere kept in view. The best results will be obtained by using the book to supplement some more technical grammatical and rhetorical treatise, such as

Mrs. S. E. H. Lockwood's excellent and comprehensive *Lessons in English* published by Messrs. Ginn & Co.

The object is to show the student, first of all, how simple a thing it is to find material; and, secondly, how easy and delightful it is to work that material into good, interesting compositions. Each exercise deals with some particular kind of composition. Specimen subjects and themes are given, followed by observations and suggestions in regard to the manner of treating them. Of course, everything cannot be provided for at once, and the pupil must be left for a while to keep out of error as best he can. Indeed, even if it were possible, it is a question whether it would be best always to warn the student beforehand, for sad experience is admittedly the most effectual of teachers.

Lastly, models are furnished of the various kinds of composition, sometimes taken from writers of recognized merit, often selected or adapted from work actually produced by students. The latter feature of the plan has been ventured upon because experience has shown that it is useless to set as a model before the average pupil a description from Ruskin, for example, or an essay of De Quincey. There is such a thing as aiming too high, as the ludicrously wild flight of many a young writer's eagle-feathered shaft has proved. If the models are within his reach, if he can hope to equal or even excel them, he will obtain from them not only profit but an encouragement that is worth more than any false or over-wrought inspiration. The study of higher models seems desirable only in proportion as the student is able to appreciate them. References therefore are often made to examples of this class, in the