

**SCHOOL COMPOSITION:
BEING ADVANCED
LANGUAGE-LESSONS
FOR GRAMMAR SCHOOLS**

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School Composition: Being Advanced Language-Lessons for Grammar Schools by William Swinton

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WILLIAM SWINTON

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HARPER'S LANGUAGE SERIES.

SCHOOL COMPOSITION:

BEING

ADVANCED LANGUAGE-LESSONS FOR
GRAMMAR SCHOOLS.

BY

WILLIAM SWINTON, A. M.,
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PREFACE.

THIS little book is not an addition to the already large number of Rhetorics and other works on the theory and mysteries of style. It is strictly a manual for school-work, and has been made with special reference to the rational remodeling recently accomplished, or now in the way of being accomplished, in the Courses of Study in our public schools, — a remodeling in which Language-training for the first time receives the attention that is its due. The writer trusts that inquiring teachers will find it in harmony with their views and aims.

In the plan here adopted, composition is begun with the very commencement of the study, and is carried on *pari passu* with the development of rules and principles. It is a matter of common experience that children's power of producing, in an empirical way, is much in advance of their knowledge of the rationale of writing; hence, in the present work, pupils are not kept back from the improving exercise of actual composition until they have mastered the complicated details of rhetorical theory. It should be added, however, that the demands made on the scholar will not be found beyond his powers. He is provided with the material to work on, and his attention is limited to the process of building this material into shape, — the author's conviction being that training in the ART OF EXPRESSION is as much as can wisely be aimed at in school composition. Pupils must first be taught *how to write at all*, before they can be shown how to write *well*, — a maxim that has never been out of mind in the making of this book.

With this view the present manual has been divided into Five Parts:—

In Part I. the scholar is initiated into the construction and combination of sentences,—under which head a great variety of practical exercises will be found.

In Part II. it is sought to extend his resources of expression by accustoming him to vary both the structure and the phraseology of sentences.

Part III. is an application of the principles already learned to easy composition exercises from *OUTLINES*.

In Part IV. what can advantageously be taught to boys and girls respecting *STYLE* is presented in a form which the author hopes will be found both fresh and fruitful.

Part V. deals with the composition of Themes and Essays, on models adapted to a fair estimate of the pupil's capacity.

It has seemed to the writer that there is room for a school manual of prose composition of medium size, arranged on a simple and natural plan, and designed, not to teach the theory of style and criticism, but to give school children between the ages of twelve and fifteen a fair mastery of the art of writing good English, for the ordinary uses of life. Such he has endeavored to make the present book.

WILLIAM SWINTON.

The acknowledgments of the author are especially due to the following works:—

English Prose Composition, by JAMES CURRIE. Edinburgh.

Cornwall's Young Composer. London.

Dalgleish's English Composition. Edinburgh. [The chapter on the Analysis of Style is, in the main, an adaptation from this work.]

Armstrong's English Composition. [The abstracts of Themes in Part V. are, in the main, an adaptation from this work.]

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SCHOOL COMPOSITION.

INTRODUCTION.

1. We are now to begin the most useful and most beautiful of all studies, — the art of expressing our thoughts on paper, the art of writing good English.

2. This art is called COMPOSITION. It treats of the construction of sentences, and of the arrangement of sentences into a series called a Theme.

3. A thought may be expressed in different ways. So the sentence may be, —

1. *Affirmative*; as, Life is short.
2. *Negative*; as, Man shall not live by bread alone.
3. *Imperative*; as, Sound the loud timbrel.
4. *Interrogative*; as, Who saw the sun to-day?
5. *Exclamatory*; as, What a piece of work is man!

4. A sentence consists of two essential parts, — SUBJECT and PREDICATE.

5. The SUBJECT is that part of a sentence which names the thing spoken of; the PREDICATE, that which asserts something of the subject; as, *Little drops of water* (sub.) *make the mighty ocean* (pred.).

6. No collection of words is a sentence unless it contains both a subject and a predicate, and expresses a complete thought.

7. A collection of words in a sentence containing a subject and a predicate, but not expressing a complete thought, is called a CLAUSE; as, *When spring returned*, the campaign was begun.

8. A combination of words forming an element of a sentence, but not containing subject or predicate, is a PHRASE.