

**ENGLISH LESSONS
FOR
SCHOOLROOM USE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649459438

English Lessons for Schoolroom Use by Kathleen Knox

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Cover @ 2017

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KATHLEEN KNOX

"What will a child learn, sooner than a song?
What, better teach a foreigner the tongue?"—FOY.

LONDON: GEORGE BELL AND SONS

YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN

1882

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Mrs. Algemon Coolidge

PREFACE.

THE object of this little book is threefold. *First*, to convey lessons on the structure of the English language, in a more gradual and perhaps pleasanter manner than can be done by the study of the usual grammars (though these are necessary too), and perhaps in a manner better suited to the restless and volatile intelligences of children; *Secondly*, to draw out and stimulate the reasoning faculties as exercised in the endeavour to follow an elaborate thought, elaborately expressed; and, *Thirdly*, to serve as an introduction to some of those masterpieces of English thought and expression, which alone, in the writer's opinion, can be the true foundation of any *rational* study of the English language.

With regard to the *method* adopted to produce these results. Most of the following lessons have been used in a schoolroom, and prepared by a boy of ten or eleven years of age—four of them by a girl of fourteen. They were made simple to suit average intelligences, and at the same time have perhaps an air of *elaborateness*, caused probably by the manner in which they were intended to be studied. The teacher's method in the case of the younger child was as follows:—The whole piece was first dictated, mistakes noted, and any questions, such as always occur to children of quick intelli-

gence, either answered or a future explanation promised. The pupil then further prepared his lesson by reading it over several times carefully to himself, looking out in a good dictionary the meaning of words he did not understand, sometimes noting their derivations, and in his own imperfect and childish way *thinking* out the meaning of the whole. The book was then brought to the teacher, who caused him to go over the whole again, requiring *vidæ vocæ* answers to the questions asked, by way of ascertaining what amount of care and pains had been bestowed, and a *vidæ vocæ* version of the meaning. The teacher then fully explained the lesson, and it was only after this preliminary instruction that the questions in the text were set, to be answered fully and clearly, in writing. In the case of the older child the preliminary study and explanation from the teacher was omitted, but in these matters everyone will, of course, suit the method of instruction to the abilities and acquirements of the pupil. The biographies have been added to make the work more complete, and to create such an interest in the *makers* of our literature, as must always be produced by an intelligent study of what they have *made*. In no case were *full particulars* aimed at in these brief lives, the only object being to give the poet a "local habitation and a name" in the mind of the pupil, and some slight idea of the value and standing of the special piece of work he is called upon to study.

It will be seen that the questions asked, are often such as to draw out the pupil's idea of the meaning of a passage, to show him that there are difficulties, and to induce him to try and overcome them. The teacher will have much to do in this way, and will often, in solving the difficulty, be able to show the learner that a little knowledge of syntax would have enabled him to solve it for himself. To none who believe that the cultivation of the reasoning and thinking faculties—the learning *how* to learn, in fact—is one of the first objects in education, can anything which tends this way be un-

important. And what better preparation for the severer studies in metaphysics and logic which may come in after years, can there be, than the opportunity for consecutive thought which many of the following exercises must present? Perhaps, with this view of the case, it may not be out of place to remark, from the writer's own experience, that the child who in its small nursery and schoolroom affairs showed least of the reasoning faculty, and power of judgment and comparison, was the one to whom these studies presented most difficulties. Surely, then, it must be a good thing for the child who is thus deficient to be made, at least in *one* study, to feel that it is incumbent on him, if he would succeed, to think, to reason, to judge, and to compare.

In conclusion, the writer hopes that the pieces selected will speak for themselves. They have been chosen with care, either for *narrative, sustained thought, historical or mythological interest, an older form of the language, natural description*, or for the purpose of comparing styles. They are arranged chronologically, but as they are not intended to be taken in order, it may be as well to indicate roughly the mode of progression that might be observed. The lessons in Shakspeare may with advantage come first, then Milton, excluding the Christmas Ode, and the "Garden of Eden." Follow with Addison, Johnson and Pope, and then begin what may be looked upon as the different types of descriptive poetry with Thomson, proceeding with Cowper, Goldsmith, and Milton's "Garden of Eden," ending with Wordsworth. Milton's Christmas Ode and Gray's "Bard," may come next, after which a return may be made to earlier forms with Lord Bacon's prose, proceeding to Spenser and Chaucer. The lesson on Keats as involving some ideas on Beauty and Taste, may retain its position as last in the book and the course. It must however be borne in mind that this is but a *rough* indication of a course of study, which every teacher must modify for himself.

The writer does not wish to allude to any *moral* lesson

of which this study may be made the vehicle—that will be obvious to most, nor need there be any apology made for thus making Poetry the foundation of much school-room teaching. The writer, believing that a perfect store of wisdom, beauty, and the highest mental training, is to be found in poetry, believes also that it cannot be too much or too early made the foundation of all study. If this be once allowed, surely English poetry, for the teaching of English, must be the best, the most fitting, and the most beautiful of lessons.

NOTE.—The method of teaching contained in the following lessons, had been in use as well as most of the exercises, before the writer had chanced to meet with Professor Hales' admirable "Longer English Poems," which has since been of great use in the compilation of the present work, as also that interesting work "The English Poets," edited by Prof. Ward.

It has not been thought necessary to supply a key to the questions—a little study beforehand will enable any teacher of average cultivation to answer them for himself.

K. K.

June 7th, 1882.