

FIRST GERMAN COMPOSITION

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First German Composition by Philip Schuyler Allen

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PHILIP SCHUYLER ALLEN

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BY

PHILIP SCHUYLER ALLEN

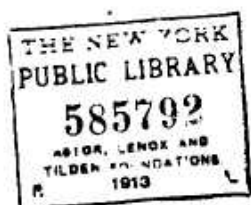
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PREFACE

THE story of *First German Composition* can be told in a few words. I could not find for the teaching of elementary German composition a book that contained enough very simple material. So I made one.

One reason, I think, that composition has not been taught earlier, for a longer period, and better in our high schools is, that teachers have realized the book for their purpose did not exist. I would not have these words construed to mean that there are not a number of excellent composition-manuals in the field — I say merely that in my opinion they do not offer a goodly amount of extremely simple, natural, and concrete material.

I shall not be content unless *First German Composition* is found to be a most practical book for use during the second year of German in secondary schools, even in those which have only a two years' course. It is not "graded" in the sense that it begins with easy words and phrases and ends with long puzzle-sentences which illustrate hanging participial constructions, the pluperfect subjunctive, and the gerundive. *First German Composition* is easy at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. It aims to give the student constant opportunity to write, and write, and write the sort of simple idiomatic German that he must know before he can work out long puzzles in philosophical diction. It is "practice that makes perfect" and to practise a thing means to do it over and over again — and then yet again.

Teachers will miss from *First German Composition* "epistolary German," "commercial German," and long prose-models

for "free reproduction." These matters are all vastly important, but they have no place in a primary composition-book. The average American is reasonably sure to blunder badly in letter-writing even after a ten years' residence abroad; commercial terminology must and should be learned separately by Americans who wish to be clerks and book-keepers in German mercantile houses; and nobody can reproduce freely and adequately the words of a foreign writer until he has advanced far beyond the stage marked by *First German Composition*. Therefore I do not treat of these things, in order not to cloud the issue; which is to furnish a great deal of the sort of sentences which an American boy or girl can translate with more or less fluency. The first part of *First German Composition* contains only separate sentences, the second part only connected discourse — short stories.

I hesitated long before deciding to use in this book stories taken from my two readers *Herein* and *Daheim*. I was afraid that while some teachers might be glad to have their students begin composition-work with German models they were already acquainted with, other teachers might sigh for brand-new material. But while I was debating the question I discovered that *Herein* and *Daheim* were finding wide use not only as readers, but as the basis of formal courses in composition. And thus the matter of re-using their materials really settled itself. It did not seem sensible to run the risk of preparing new stories which might prove less fit for composition-work than those already at hand.

No one, I imagine, will be sorry to have copious Exercises in Conversation throughout *First German Composition* as an integral part of each lesson. Simple composition-manuals which do not offer good opportunity for spoken German must be prepared by people like the mother whose boy had

never learned to talk because he had only been taught to read and write.

The Memory Exercises and the Grammar Review will be found necessary to any class, if the experience of my colleagues and myself in teaching the writing of German at the University of Chicago may be considered a safe guide. *First German Composition*, like other composition-manuals, is intended only for students who have learned at some time the prime essentials of simple German. But I do not take it for granted that a student has retained fresh in his mind all these essentials, just because he has learned them once upon a time. He should learn them twice upon a time, at least, and have them well in mind while practising his first formal course in the writing of easy German.

I believe teachers generally will wish to use the lists of idiomatic phrases which illustrate the uses of certain prepositions, adverbs, and conjunctions. Exercises for translation, based upon these lists, have been furnished with the idea of making them more valuable to the individual student. It is not only a necessity for the young student to learn as many of these phrases as he can; it is a most pleasant and encouraging thing for him to have them ready in the time of conversational need.

My friends have been good to me. Dr. Jacob H. Heinzelman and Dr. Paul H. Phillipson have given me invaluable aid, when I was preparing the book. A large part of the English vocabulary is the work of Miss Frieda L. Martini. Prof. Starr W. Cutting and Prof. Chester N. Gould read the MS before it was sent to the printers. My sole conscious indebtedness to books is to Prof. Calvin Thomas' sterling *A Practical German Grammar* — a work which has made the editing of a dozen books a pleasure to me; to Prof. H. C. G. von Jagemann's *Elements of German Syntax* — a book which

has helped me from my first day of teaching until now; and to Miss Schrakamp's *German Grammatical Drill* which — strangely enough — I came to know only when the last touches were being given to *First German Composition*. I shall not avail myself of time-worn phrases in making public my gratitude to these co-laborers in my chosen field of work. I shall only say that *First German Composition* would be much the poorer except for their kindly helpfulness.

PHILIP SCHUYLER ALLEN

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
July 15, 1912

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTORY

	PAGE
Division into Syllables	xi
Use of Capitals	xi
Punctuation	xii
Suggestions Regarding the Use of Tenses	xiii
Normal Word-Order. The Main Sentence	xiv
Inverted Word-Order. The Main Sentence	xvi
Word-Order in Dependent Clauses	xvii
Words Recommended for Careful Study	xviii
Determination of German Gender	xxiv
Pronouns of Direct Address	xxiv
Homely Idioms	xxv

Erster Teil

Immer Fidell

Die Ferien sind zu Ende	2
Hans geht zur Schule	6
Auf dem Wege zur Schule	10
Aller Anfang ist schwer	14
Eine Frage	18
Jugend hat keine Tugend	22
In der Speisekammer	26
Aber nicht die Teppiche!	30
Für fünfzig Pfennige Sirup	34
Dankel August	38
Vaters Geburtstag	42
Der zweite September	46
Was ich sah und hörte	50
Eine leise Andeutung	54
Das Weihnachtsfest	58
Diese Geschichte hat keine Moral	62