THE FIRST BOOK OF OBSERVATION, THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION, OR, SEEING, THINKING, KNOWING, TALKING AND WRITING

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Trieste

HAZEN'S LANGUAGE SERIES

THE FIRST BOOK

OF

OBSERVATION, THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION

OR

SEEING, THINKING, KNOWING, TALKING AND WRITING

BY

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INTRODUCTORY.

OUTLINE AND SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS.

Outline.—"We are bound by habits as with links of steel," and those habits that are acquired in childhood bind us the most closely in later life.

The habits of observation, of careful attention, of right thinking, and of correct expression, must be formed very early in life, and with the aid of the teacher, or, in most cases, they will never be formed at all.

The High School and the College can never do this work successfully. Its foundations should be well and firmly laid during the first years of a child's school life.

That this work has not been well done generally can be too easily shown from the letters, the conversation, and the more formal attempts at expression of the ordinary graduates of our best schools.

Not every man can be a Shakespeare, a Milton, or an Addison, but every school child can be so taught as to have both the power and the habit of correct expression.

But the power of correct expression without the ideas to be expressed is as useless as an engine without water at a fire. Too often we try to have the child "make bricks without straw."

While the result of proper language-training may be "correct expression," this is far from being its entire purpose. Ideas must precede expression, and, to gain ideas, the great sources of knowledge must be sought and used in their natural order.

At the beginning of the school course, the oral instruction in language should follow the plan laid down in this Series of Language Lessons. As soon as the pupils can "read for ideas," this **First Book** should be used, and they should learn how to study it.

The lessons are simple and well graded. They interest the pupil, show him how to learn, and give him a mental strength not otherwise gained. They cultivate the powers of observation, stimulate thought, and lead to the correct, formal expression of ideas. They are so arranged as to use in order the several steps of simple composition, while the interest is sustained by a variety of exercises, and by having no set form to be always followed.

They are based upon ideas gathered by the pupil from observation and reading, or from oral instruction. These ideas are made definite by reflection and reason under the skillful care of the teacher. They are retained by memory and are given form by correct expression. This is intellectual discipline, which, when combined with moral training that considers the value and the correctness of the ideas gained, will give the best possible results.

Suggestions to Teachers.—While each teacher must be a law unto herself in the use of books, the author ventures to make a few suggestions in regard to the best method of instruction in language.

Oral Instruction.—Oral instruction is of the greatest value when it covers systematically any field of study, or when it supplements properly the work of the textbook. It is worse than useless when it takes the place of brain exercise in study, and attempts to feed the mind with predigested intellectual food. Lead the child to study, to observe, and to think; guide him in methods and in subjects; criticise, amend, and approve his work, but never do the work for him when he can gain additional brain power by doing it for himself.

The oral supplementary work consists in (1) a thorough discussion of the lesson; (2) additional practice work on the forms taught; (3) constant reviews of work previously done; and (4) the development of observation, thought, and expression, covering: (*a*) objects named in the lesson; (*b*) objects naturally connected with the thought of the lesson; and (*c*) material taken from books.

The things seen in and near every schoolroom (see Lesson I) lead to their sources. The wood, the chalk, the glass, the clothes, the animal and the vegetable kingdoms, are never-failing sources of interest, amusement, and instruction. Objects should be brought before the class for study, and the pupils should be encouraged to find out interesting things about them, while the teacher should direct in methods of thought and should obtain correct expression of the knowledge gained.

The woods, the parks, the shops, are all open for original observation, and pupils should be taught how to observe, and the best way to obtain definite knowledge.

But in all this work, delightful though it may be, the end and aim of these lessons must not be lost. The child's mental powers must be cultivated by observation and thought, and the habit of correct expression must be formed.

Observation.—We all see with our eyes the things around us, but few see with their brains. Accurate, definite observation will lead generally to accurate description, even if the form of expression be incorrect. Lead the pupils to observe definitely the ordinary things that they have simply seen. Seeing, thinking, knowing, telling, is the proper order of work.

Models.—But observation goes beyond nature. It extends into the realm of books, and the habit of correct expression will be well cultivated by the study of simple, exact forms of thought.

Try to fix in the pupil's mind the correct forms taught in the lessons, until the use of these forms becomes a habit so strong that pupils will not use them by an effort in the presence of the teacher, and relapse into incorrect forms the moment the tension is released, on the playground, in the street, and at home. Lead the child to appreciate good models by the study of selections from well-known authors. It is useless to fill a text-book of this class with such extracts. They should be selected by the teacher from books used in the school, or from those to which pupils have access. Some extracts should be learned and recited, while others should be studied for ideas.

Formal Statement.—The reaction from the analytic method of teaching language has often led to a loose, unscientific system of oral instruction which leaves no permanent habit of thought and expression.

To do good work, one must have a system, which must be followed step by step, carefully, persistently, enthusiastically. Each idea should be brought out inductively, impressed on the child's mind by repeated examples, and later, when he has been led to discover, to know, and to state the principle on which it rests, it should be made to assume its most accurate and simple form, to be learned and retained for future use. These formal statements not only aid the child in remembering and applying the knowledge gained, but also form a good foundation for the study of the science of language, later in the course.

Through constant practice in concrete forms we gain the art, and from the art we draw the statement of the best usage, which is the science of language.

Incorrect Forms.—Never bring incorrect forms of expression to the attention of the pupils. When any such form is used by them, correct the expression, have the right form repeated until it is thoroughly mastered, and then leave it written on the board.

Composition.— Desultory work has been the general rule in composition. Few teachers have any connected outline to be followed, and the results have therefore been unsatisfactory. There are as regular, systematic, graded steps in composition as in arithmetic, and the author has so arranged them as to make composition-writing a well-defined study and a pleasant exercise. A few of these steps are taught in the **First Book,** but the teacher should master the complete course, and, with some classes, may go beyond the present lessons.

Special Notes.— *Lesson I.* This lesson begins with the observation of simple things, previously seen. The term *name-word*, or *noun*, is developed, practice is given in distinguishing nouns from other words, the pupil is led to think about objects, and to give form to his thoughts.

The teacher's work in this lesson is to show the child how to observe and study, to see that his exercises are given correctly in form, pronunciation, etc., to develop the powers of observation, thought, and expression by questions that lead the child to observe carefully, as well as to think and to speak correctly. Thus when a table is mentioned, it may be compared with some other object. "What is a table? Of what is it made? Who makes tables? In what respects is a table like a chair? In what is it different from a chair? For what is a table used? For what is a chair used?" etc. Similar exercises should be given on the objects called for in the numbered sentences, before the pupil attempts to "tell something about each object." This method should be pursued in all the lessons.

Lessons III, IV, V. These lessons furnish a foundation for pleasant games, in which the plan of the lesson must not be lost sight of. The idea is to lead the child to observe the animal kingdom, its similarities and differences, etc. The oral work is practically unlimited,