

**THE MASTERY SERIES:
MANUAL FOR LEARNING
SPANISH. MANUAL PARA
APRENDER INGLÉS**

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The Mastery Series: Manual for Learning Spanish. Manual Para Aprender Inglés by Thomas Prendergast

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THOMAS PRENDERGAST

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APRENDER INGLÉS**

Alexander Jones

Gutta cavat lapidem non vi sed sæpe cadendo

THE MASTERY SERIES

MANUAL FOR LEARNING SPANISH

MANUAL PARA APRENDER INGLÉS

BY

THOMAS PRENDERGAST, 1806-1888

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P R E F A C E .

1. This is a Method for qualifying learners to speak genuine Spanish with facility and confidence from the beginning. It differs essentially from other methods in that it introduces new principles, both in manipulating the language and in regulating the learner's course of action. Economy of time and labor is secured by the exclusion of all that is superfluous and irrelevant. It enables a beginner to make *bonâ fide* progress in speaking, by supplying him with sentences and their variations, comprising all the constructions and all the inflections of the language.

2. The foreign Variations exhibit the constructions which are lying latent in each of the leading sentences. The English Variations are designed to convey the exact power of each of the foreign Variations, and to show the different senses in which the individual foreign words and their combinations can be employed. The explanations thus afforded include every thing that a *beginner* needs to know in relation to each lesson, and therefore the study of Grammar is prohibited during this initiatory course.

3. This system provides a remedy for that grievous obstruction to progress which arises from ignoring the necessity for assisting the memory at the outset, so that it shall become capable of retaining all that has been learned.

4. The fundamental law of *Mastery* is, that the memory shall never be overcharged. On the principle that short concentrated efforts of that faculty at intervals produce far greater results than protracted application, it provides that short and frequent Exercises shall be taken every day; that all the previous lessons shall be rehearsed on each occasion, and that the beginner shall invariably hear them read aloud before he attempts to rehearse them.

It also requires that he shall not see the spelling of foreign words, lest it should lead to mispronunciation thereof. The treachery of the memory may thus be effectually baffled, and the natural tendency to reproduce unfamiliar sounds with the English intonation, and to mispronounce them according to the laws of English orthography, will be counteracted; at the same time the true intonation and pronunciation will be expeditiously acquired by reiterated imitations of the voice of a foreigner.

5. The adult learner who has not the benefit of a teacher cannot expect to attain the true pronunciation, but he will discover in this course a valuable method of Self-Instruction, applicable to all languages. *Thoroughness* is equally essential at first to those who wish to speak, and those who wish to read foreign tongues. By working in harmony with the process of Nature, a beginner is enabled to obtain free and full possession of those distinctive forms of speech which differ most widely from the constructions of his own language, and to reproduce them with equal facility. But if the memory be once overcharged by the reception of a new lesson, before the preceding ones have been *mastered*, the progress of the learner must inevitably be arrested.

6. The Mastery System may be as easily adapted to the classical as to modern languages, and it may be carried on simultaneously with any other method. It is equally suitable for learners at all stages of progress, and as it requires only half an hour a day, it can easily be put to the proof. This System, however, is chiefly valuable as an *initiation* into the most puzzling languages, because it is impossible for any one to master a few sentences with their Variations, without acquiring a very extensive knowledge of the structure of the language; or, in other words, of the Grammar—minus the technicalities. Moreover, this knowledge is of the most *practical* order, and it is totally different in its nature from that unapplied knowledge of Latin and Greek Grammar, which, after ten years of tuition, leaves the majority of educated men disgracefully ignorant of those two languages.

7. Mastery imparts vivacity even to the lifeless system of *teaching the dead* languages, and boys beginning the Mastery of Latin at the age of fourteen, may be expected in eighteen months to stand on a par in every respect with the majority of their contemporaries who have had six years of grammatical training.

8. This Manual is devised to provide beginners with a stock of useful sentences before they go abroad. It carefully restricts them to a small vocabulary, whilst it enables them to make the most of the sentences which they have mastered. Thoroughness is the very essence of an EXACT METHOD, and this idea ought not to be regarded as visionary and impracticable merely because it is unknown in our schools. If we define thoroughness to be the highest degree of fluency, accuracy, and promptitude, in the use of every individual word committed to memory—Mastery is the realization of thoroughness. The study of Grammar prevents thoroughness, because the learner necessarily learns principles and obtains materials in excess of his power of using them with facility. By mastering involved and inverted forms of speech, the learner places himself in one month in advance of those who have for a long time intelligently and persistently studied the Grammar, but without practising oral composition. The best criterion of progress is the ratio in which genuine foreign sentences preponderate over literally translated English. And for this reason the beginner is restricted to mastering the former, while Exercises in Composition are forbidden.

9. Speech is the utterance of *sentences*, and the most direct course for a beginner is to master circumstantial and comprehensive sentences. Facility of idiomatic speech can never be attained except by the practice of rendering into Spanish a variety of colloquial sentences composed of words with the Spanish equivalents of which we are quite familiar.

10. Reading, as generally conducted, leaves nothing on the memory but a number of unconnected words, more or less limited, according to the earnestness of the reader. But, mere words and rules are useless, because it is impossible for a beginner to speak correctly until he has MASTERED some complete idiomatic sentences.

11. The Epitome of Language, which children instinctively frame for themselves, is identical except as to the nouns in every region of the earth. Within the scope of two or three hundred words, children exhibit the utmost facility in stringing words together in sentences arranged in their genuine idiomatic order, and including the most puzzling constructions. A child imported from a foreign country acquires the same colloquial range of expression in six months (even when left entirely to his own re-