

**ELEMENTS OF THE ENGLISH
LANGUAGE: AN INTRODUCTION
TO THE STUDY OF GRAMMAR
AND COMPOSITION. FOR
COMMON SCHOOLS**

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Elements of the English Language: An Introduction to the Study of Grammar and Composition.
For Common Schools by Bernard Bigsby

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BERNARD BIGSBY

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE:

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF

GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION.

FOR COMMON SCHOOLS.

BY

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"THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE."



BOSTON:

GINN BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS.

1874.

PREFACE.



NOTWITHSTANDING the number of text-books and the professions of instructors, the science of teaching Composition is yet in its infancy. Authors are too accustomed to burden their productions with rules and illustrations, and to ignore the fact that the attainment of perfection must be sought in practical exercises rather than in elaborated theories and precepts.

Composition, as its name declares, is the art of *putting together*. The child, prattling by its mother's knee, is unconsciously engaged in the first steps of the study. The simple word, the quality and action of the word, the phrase, the sentence, come in a natural course as the results of its powers of observation and imitation. In our teaching, we must follow the golden rules of nature. The very basis of our vocation is to search into the way of the child's taking hold by little and little of what we teach it, so that our efforts may be within its reach.

We should not attempt at too early an age to introduce the Grammar into the school-room. It is better, by means of such a subsidiary as is to be found in Part I. of this text-book, to give children a knowledge of the uses of words and the power to express their ideas, than to trouble their thoughts and clog their memories with grammatical rules, which to them signify nothing but mere notions of general terms. Rules are results, and we should seek to lead the pupil step by step to the attainment of these results by practical ex-

perience ; then, and then only, he will arrive at a knowledge of their character and an appreciation of their usefulness.

But the text-book on Composition should not only be an aid to the acquisition of correct expression, but a means of cultivating habits of thought and observation. With this end in view, the exercises should be on simple and familiar objects, if possible visible at the time of study, — the child's attention being thus more readily awakened, and its interest sustained. The contents of Part II. of this work seem to me to happily meet our requirements in this respect. By a well-prepared arrangement of lessons on common objects, and exercises in comparison, memory, the senses, the results of experiments, the sources of things, their parts, and their uses, the Author has done much to elaborate a useful system of elementary training.

In Part III. another quality is brought to bear on the student, — the necessity of research, and the consequent expansion of knowledge. A methodical system of arrangement teaches the pupil to classify the information thus obtained, to sift its true meaning, and to express in his own words the sentiments of the writer from whom he seeks inspiration.

Parts IV. and V. are devoted to lessons of a higher order, such as the comparing of different historical characters, criticising, paraphrasing, summarizing, and theme-writing, judicious help being given to the student in these important branches.

The most noticeable features of the volume are the self-explanation of the exercises, their total freedom from monotony and vain repetition, and the well-graded progression of their advancement.

DUANE DOTY,
Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools.

DETROIT, July 1, 1874.

AUTHOR'S NOTE.



THE success of a similar work from his pen, issued six years ago by Thomas Murby, the eminent educational publisher of Fleet Street, London, and its universal adoption in the middle-class schools of England, lead the Author to hope for a generous patronage from his fellow-teachers in America. Riper experience and a more extensive field of labor have enabled him to mature the methods developed in this volume, and he trusts that in the result of his efforts will be found a useful aid to the great work of elementary education.

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