

ORAL ENGLISH, BOOK 1

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Oral English, Book 1 by Clara Beverley

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CLARA BEVERLEY

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BOOK 1**

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Oral English

BOOK I

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PREFACE

Many teachers who would be glad to develop oral composition with their classes are at a loss for simple and effective methods. They do not know "how to begin."

The methods described in this little book are the outcome of school room practice. They call for co-operation, making every member of the class an active participant in the work in hand, whether it be reading, story reproduction, original composition, or sentence analysis. It is hoped that teachers may here find what they need.

The book contains suggestions for teachers of both primary and grammar grades. It serves also as a guide to the most effective use of the "Class Exercises," a book for grammar grade pupils.

For valuable suggestions in connection with preparation for the press, the author is indebted to Dr. Charles E. Chadsey, Superintendent of the Detroit Public Schools.

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BOOK I

INTRODUCTION

Men and women of genius have been thinking and writing on educational subjects for centuries. If all the truths which they have given to the world were embodied in practice the making of books might very well cease for a while.

But theory runs far ahead of practice. Teachers are continually on the lookout for practical suggestion. It is only as they actually deal with the minds of children that they realize the truth of generalizations: in fact, each must arrive at general truths for himself before they become vital and a real guide to practice.

"No psychology," says Herbart, "can take the place of observation of the child." The school is the laboratory in which discoveries are made and *remade*. A general truth does not always suggest a method; but a method, or incentive, with its practical result, may vitalize a general truth.

It is not the aim of this little book to propound general truths, but to suggest some simple expedients based on school room practice. There can be no complete guide to method, but a single suggestion is sometimes wonderfully fruitful and enlightening.

Two ideas, more than any others, have inspired such suggestions as are here offered. The first is that Language appeals primarily to the ear, and the second, that children can do and ought to do much for themselves which teachers are in the habit of doing for them.

Madame Montessori ascribes her success in teaching very young children to read and write largely to the fact that she appeals strongly to the sense of touch in the earlier stages of the learning process. There are many avenues of approach to the brain and a wise use of other senses than sight not only relieves the strain upon the eye and so upon the brain with which the eye is intimately connected, but affords a solid foundation for more rapid mental development than can otherwise be secured.

There can be no doubt that the eye has been overstrained in the work of education. The number of children wearing glasses is a reproach to our system. Not that the schools are responsible for all cases. National and local health commissions are distributing material concerning the proper care of the eyes of newborn children, and there is an effort everywhere to guard this most delicate and wonderful organ and to avoid the injuries which carelessness and ignorance have inflicted upon it.

Right methods of teaching should result in better physical conditions for children. There should be

more appeal to the ear and less to the eye in elementary school work. We are apt to forget that the first authors were literally singers and narrators; they did not write, they sang and recited. The art of *listening* has been neglected among us, and prose and poetry are now so associated with the appearance of the printed page that even high school pupils can scarcely detect, through the ear alone, the difference between harmonious prose and blank verse.

The second idea, that of leading children to help themselves, has more to do with the other than at first appears. Language implies social intercourse. It implies a speaker and a listener. By training a class to act as an *audience* of discriminating listeners, the teacher is securing conditions which stimulate individual pupils as nothing else can.

It is the teacher's business to find the right incentives. To *tell* and to *teach* are not synonymous terms. The powers of the child must be called into play. Professor Sidis of Harvard demands the abolition of the school teacher because, it is claimed, teachers actually retard instead of quickening the mental development of their pupils. It is not likely that the demand will become general, but the very articulation of it is significant.

The child is not made for the school; the school is made for the child. His instincts and impulses lie at