

**THE ELEMENTS OF
COMPOSITION, BELLES-
LETTRES, AND ORATORY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649536757

The Elements of Composition, Belles-Lettres, and Oratory by Augustus Layres

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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AUGUSTUS LAYRES

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AND
ORATORY.



BY AUGUSTUS LAYRES,
PROFESSOR OF VARIOUS LANGUAGES, RHETORIC AND SCIENCES.

SAN FRANCISCO:
A. ROMAN & CO.,
Nos. 417 AND 419 MONTGOMERY STREET.
1867.

68620

First Book, "THE ELEMENTS OF COMPOSITION," entered according
to Act of Congress, in the year 1867,

By AUGUSTUS LAYRES,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
District of California.

Printed by DEWEY & CO.,
MINING AND SCIENTIFIC PRESS BOOK AND JOB OFFICE,
No. 505 Clay Street, San Francisco.

THE ELEMENTS OF COMPOSITION,
BELLES-LETTRES, AND ORATORY,

COMPRISED IN THREE BOOKS,

A WORK PROFFESSELY WRITTEN FOR THE INSTITUTIONS OF
LEARNING OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

AND

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO

THE DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
INSTRUCTION,

TO

THE PATRONS OF THE AUTHOR,

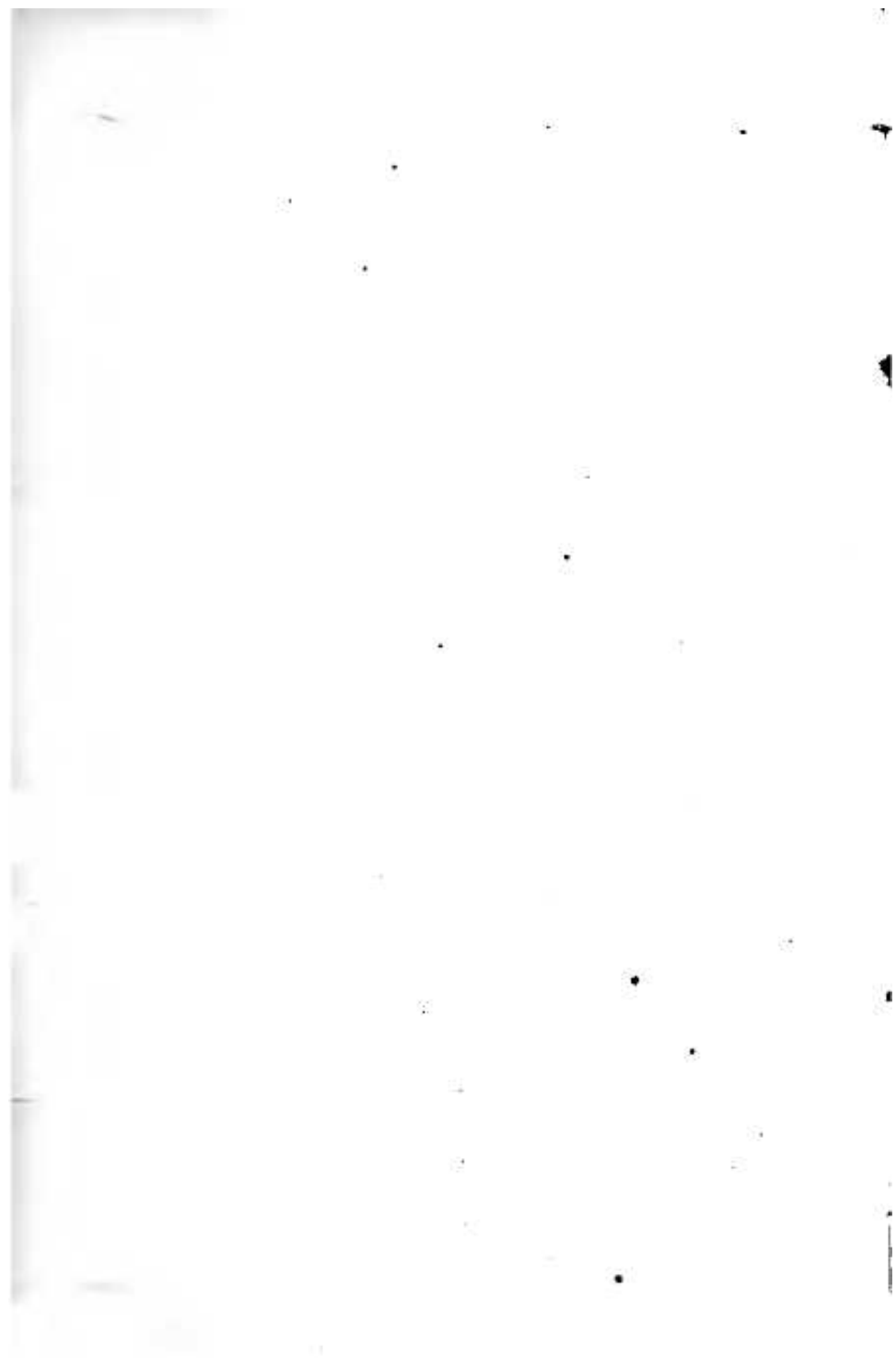
AND TO

ALL THE FRIENDS OF LITERATURE,

BY

AUGUSTUS LAYRES,

PROFESSOR OF VARIOUS LANGUAGES, RHETORIC AND SCIENCES.





P R E F A C E

TO THE WORK ON

THE ELEMENTS OF COMPOSITION, BELLES-LETTRES, AND ORATORY.

1. It is customary with writers of a new book to acquaint the reader with the motives that have impelled the author to write it; the nature of the subject; the manner in which it is treated; the sources that have furnished the materials; and, finally, with the peculiar character of the book.

2. A custom so proper and just will be faithfully observed.

3. The motives which have led the Author—a foreigner by birth—to write this work, professedly for the American Institutions of Learning, and more especially for the Public Schools, are a decided preference for their System of Instruction, and a sincere desire of promoting in them Literature, by furnishing, upon the ELEMENTS OF COMPOSITION, BELLES-LETTRES, AND ORATORY, a book clear, concise and comprehensive, which may facilitate the progress of pupils in the Art of Composition.

4. The System of Free Instruction adopted by the Public Schools of the United States of America, is certainly admirable. Its beautiful features soon reveal it as the genuine Child of the Republic. It seems the only feasible and practical system, in a financial point of view, which could be devised and successfully carried out. It is eminently adapted to impart instruction to

children of both sexes, to educate them, at an early age, in the manners of Civil Society, and to eradicate prejudices and animosities arising from different religions or political creeds, which, as History teaches, have, in other countries, finally led to strife and bloodshed.

5. The Course of Instruction imparted to pupils in the Public Schools is complete. It comprises not only the branches necessary to the ordinary pursuits of life, but also Sciences, Languages, Music, Calisthenics, and other accomplishments well calculated to develop the physical powers of the Mind and Body.

6. But the principal characteristic of the Public Schools, which cannot fail to strike the visitor with wonder, is the admirable order and discipline which prevails therein. The docile submission to authority, close application to study, polite behavior and silence observed by pupils, even of a tender age, is a marvel which exceeds ordinary belief. And yet no coercion is used—in fact, none is necessary; for, conscious of their duty, pupils submit voluntarily—and not “like dumb-driven cattle”—to lawful authority, discipline and study.

7. Thus, these newly-born children of the Republic do early arise to the full dignity of Free-Manhood, and nobly sustain the character and name of the Great Mother Country; and thus, do they completely refute the charge of Inveterate Prejudice, that “the Public System of Instruction is the natural parent of Disorder, Ignorance and Evil.”

8. Hence, the Free Public Instruction justly forms the pride of the Nation, as it is, in fact, its best ornament; and being intimately connected with its welfare, it imposes on the Government a strict duty, as well as gives it a full right of exercising over the same a constant watchful care.

9. In order, then, to cherish and promote still further a system so full of vigor and life, the present work has been written, in hopes that it may also serve as a guide and source of reference,

not only to the Teacher and Pupil, but to the Graduate also, the Member of the Legal Profession, the Preacher, and the Political Speaker.

10. The Author has divided the whole subject of Literary Composition into three books, with a design of dividing the whole course in three years, according to the system observed by some renowned Lyceums; it may, however, be finished in two, in which case the first and second book may be studied in the first, and the third in the last year, as the Directors of Instruction shall deem expedient.

11. The method pursued by the Author in developing the subject of Composition, is both the *synthetical* and *analytical*. The former is necessary to teach the *theory*, the latter the *practice* of the art; and as these are both indispensable to the scholar, so are also the two methods, as the sequel will show.

12. It is evident that *theory*, or the speculative knowledge of an art, is necessarily complex; hence, nature demands that its acquisition should proceed orderly from the simple to the compound, which method is called *Synthetical*. *Practice*, on the other side, consists in the execution of the rules of an art, and in the critical examination of the work after it has been finished, which latter part is called *Analysis*. A young pupil, therefore, who wishes to learn the theory and practice of composition, must follow both the synthetical and analytical method.

13. According to the above principle in regard to the present subject, *practice* comprises three parts; the *first* is the execution of the precepts by composition; the *second* is the critical examination after it is finished; the *third* is a similar examination of some other writer's composition.

14. These three parts the student must observe, but in a different order. *In the first place*, after he has well learned the rules and precepts of the Art, he must begin by a critical examination or analysis of some good author's composition; for, in