

**DEMONSTRATIONS
IN GREEK IAMBIC
VERSE**

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Demonstrations in Greek Iambic Verse by W. H. D. Rouse

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W. H. D. ROUSE

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DEMONSTRATIONS
IN
GREEK LAMBIC VERSE

BY
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p. 213

PREFACE.

THESE Demonstrations are not printed with any idea of entering into competition with the masters of verse writing. I believe they contain no blunders, and they are as good as I can make them; but my aim is practical, namely, to teach those who know little about verses how they may learn more. In games we often learn more from those who are just good enough to beat us, than we could learn from professional players; and so I trust that if these verses are only a little better than the learner can make, he will learn from them none the less.

What is here printed is the substance of composition lectures which I have been in the habit of giving for the last ten or twelve years. They have taken shape gradually, and bear signs of their origin in the cautions which will be found here and there. When the pupil is warned against a mistake, this is generally one which some pupil has actually made, and very often one which most pupils make. Sometimes I have taken a phrase or a line from a pupil's copy, as being better than any other I could

Hamilton 30 Aug 1915

think of; and if any of my former pupils recognise their own hand, I hope they will pardon the innocent theft.

The lectures are of course not given exactly as they are here printed; but as far as possible all information is evolved from the class by questions, *more Socratico*. The requisites are a blackboard (or two, if possible, one for rough work and suggestions, one for the copy), chalk, and thorough preparation. The teacher can then begin with a simulation of ignorance, and by judicious hints and questions draw out one word or phrase after another, until he has material to begin the first section. Each phrase, when moulded into metrical form, is written on the board in its place in the line, with marks of long and short set between to show clearly what is wanted. By the time he has done his rough work thus, the line or group of lines will be written upon the board, and he can proceed to the rest.

I am not without hopes that some teachers may find this book useful, as I am not aware that this method of teaching has been advocated before, and I never knew any one who used it. If they try it, they may be sure that they will find their work more interesting and their pupils more interested. It is impossible to do without individual criticism, of course; but after the piece has been gone through in this way, each copy may be dismissed in five minutes. How weary we get of pointing out some common mistake a dozen times to a dozen different persons! This drudgery will be needless when the common mistake has been pointed out in the *Demonstration*. But the real advantage is, that we not only

show the result to a class, but the way in which it is attained. If they do not learn ten times as fast when this is done, then Greek Verses differ in principle from all other learning which is learnt on earth.

Another class of persons I have in view are those who have not had a good training in verse composition, or who have begun late and can find no teacher. Such as these will benefit most by the book if they use sheets of paper instead of blackboards, and write down each step as it is taken.

The earlier pieces are easy, and are treated in greater detail than the later. Words and Form are at first kept separate; but when the pupil may be supposed to have made some progress in understanding the principles of working, the two are dealt with together. A few have been taken from Holden's *Foliorum Silvula*; the rest were selected by myself.

Before concluding I would express my firm conviction that time spent on verse composition is not wasted, even if the pupil never writes a good copy. A knowledge of verse rhythm is worth having, and he will probably never get a sound knowledge of rhythm, either verse or prose, unless he has written verses. Rhythm is so marked in verse that it cannot be missed by any except the utterly hopeless. How any ordinary person can understand the rhythm of prose if he cannot understand the rhythm of verse, passes my comprehension; on the other hand, verse once understood, it is a shorter step to the teaching of prose rhythm. Then again, the vocabulary of the poets is so much richer and finer than prose, so full of

fleeting allusions and fresh metaphors, that the verse-writer is bound to learn a great deal more about any language than he can learn from prose merely. Nor is it of small importance, that the translator has to use the most searching care in examining pieces of classical English. An English reader seldom gets at the heart of what he reads; never, unless he makes it his business to do so, with the same care as he who has to translate it. Further, it is a curious fact, but so I have nearly always found, that a boy loses by giving up verse. He very rarely writes prose so well as the boy who does both, although he usually gives to prose the time which others give to both. For all these reasons, besides the mere intellectual pleasure, the teaching of verse composition is of real importance in all linguistic studies.

I wish to express my thanks to several friends who have been so kind as to look through the proofs of this book, in particular Prof. Conway, of Cardiff, Mr W. G. Rushbrooke, Head Master of St Olave's School, and Mr J. H. Williams. Prof. Conway's searching criticisms have cleared out many things I am glad to be rid of. I have also to thank the Staff of the University Press for their care in detecting errors which had escaped me.

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