

# MODEL ENGLISH

BOOK I

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOUGHT

BY

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## PREFACE.

THE present book was formerly called *Imitation and Analysis*. The briefer and more suggestive title of *Model English* is now given to the book. The sub-title, *The Development of Thought*, explains the exact difference between *Book I* of the course and *Book II*, which has for a sub-title, *The Qualities of Style*.

Rhetoric or the art of composition has from the beginning recognized three stages in writing or speaking. After the subject has been chosen, the first work of composition is to find material which will prove and amplify the subject. This stage was known as *inventio* and is called here Development of Thought. After the material has been gathered, it must be arranged. This stage was called *dispositio* or Arrangement of Thought. Both books of the series treat adequately of the ordering of thought, a stage which requires, at best, but brief discussion. The last stage is the actual expression of the developed thought and was called *elocutio*, which corresponds to what is comprehensively described as Style. The second book of this course in English, the sub-title of which is *The Qualities of Style*, keeps in view throughout the third stage of composition.

Very early in the history of composition, teachers of the art classified under different headings the various sources of proofs used in establishing and amplifying a statement. The writer might derive his proof and development from some idea in his proposition, by

defining that idea, by referring to the class characteristics of the idea, by citing specific instances of it, by adducing its constituent parts, or by insisting on the term or etymology of the term embodying the idea. All proofs drawn from the idea itself, therefore, were classified under six headings: definition, class, species, parts, name, etymology.

It was also noted that proofs might be drawn from sources connected with the idea. There were five such sources distinguished according to the closeness of the connection: two, causes and effects, had essential connection; two, antecedents and consequents, had very close connection; one, circumstances, had less intimate connection with the original idea.

Finally, it was seen that proofs might be drawn from sources related to the idea through likeness or unlikeness, by comparison and contrast.

In *Model English, Book I*, only eight of these sources are used. Definition is called paraphrase here, while in *Book II*, the two terms are more exactly discriminated. Species and parts are grouped under Enumeration. Name, etymology, antecedents and consequents are omitted, as not of wide utility for younger students.

To teach the development of thought is therefore the specific purpose of *Book I*. This teaching is carried on under the guidance of model passages which afford concrete embodiments of the eight general categories just described.

Analysis is demanded, too, because analysis insures a better imitation. The effect of analysis is to generalize the model by stripping it of particular allusions and references and by revealing the fitness of the model for many other topics. The paragraph, for instance, on

page 7, taken from *The Widow and Her Son*, when analyzed, is shown to be composed of two contrasted parts. The heart-ache of the spectator does not arise from contemplating the sorrows of the rich or the sorrows of the young, but from contemplating the sorrows of a poor, old widow, bereft of her only son. In the case of the rich three outward appliances give them solace; in the case of the young their natures, likened to three things, easily cast off sorrow; but the mother has not the solaces of rich or young and has in addition particular causes of distress which pain the spectator.

Now by studying the outward form and the contents of this paragraph, we may generalize and see that a certain effect produced by an object will be intensified by contrasting it with lesser effects from other similar objects, and by placing last the most potent cause of the required effect. If I wish to produce love of a book, I select several of its good points, keeping the best for the last and showing how the other points are better exemplified in this particular book than in other books. Enthusiasm for any cause, admiration for any object, shrinking from a peril, the purchase of an article of any kind, these and many other subjects can be handled with a development similar to Irving's.

This analysis illustrates how originality is not impaired by rational imitation. The student furnishes his own thoughts and words in a free imitation, following the model in the method of development. The resulting product may have not a single idea and very few words like the model and so there is no interference with the student's original power of thought. If composition is not to be kept always at an elementary stage, every

one who wishes to write must avail himself not only of the idioms but also of the forms of sentences, paragraphs, and longer compositions, which have been perfected and handed on. To originate idioms and forms belongs to experienced writers; beginners can only give what they have heard or seen. If a standard model is not proposed to them, they will give the English they know by talk or the English they see in the newspaper. This latter English at its best is mostly of one kind, simple narrative, and unless the finer rhythms of the best writers are kept before students in their reading, study, and composition work, other processes besides narration and the finer types of composition will not receive adequate and fitting expression.

Reynolds has very shrewdly said that the painter who refuses to study and follow other painters will end in the monotonous imitation of himself. In like manner, the student who would cease reading and exclude all imitation will inevitably reproduce himself and the inferior models he hears. Quintilian has marked the extremes, stating that a larger part of all art consists in imitation and yet that no advance is made by imitations alone. The present course of composition encourages originality of thought while proposing excellent models for students to follow in their work. The fitness of the models is guaranteed by a select choice from standard authors and by brief but suggestive study in each case of the passage chosen. We may therefore attain finally the result described by Coleridge, repeating a like idea of Reynolds: "To admire on principle is the way to imitate with originality."

This first book of the course has been criticized for confining its models to Irving. It should be noted that

Irving's *Sketch Book* is not a book of one kind of composition written in uniform style. The *Sketch Book* furnishes examples of all kinds of composition. Besides, beginners must learn the method first, and too much variety might confuse. Again, it was hoped that teachers would apply the method to the other authors studied in their courses. However, all force the objection may have had is removed now in the completed course. When the student has mastered the art of developing his thought, a great variety of standard authors is presented to him in *Book II* for the mastery of expression or style.

F. P. D.

JANUARY, 1920.

## INTRODUCTION.

“Whenever I read a book or a passage,” says Stevenson,<sup>1</sup> “that peculiarly pleased me, in which a thing was said or an effect rendered with propriety, in which there was either some conspicuous force or some happy distinction in the style, I must sit down at once and set myself to ape that quality. I was unsuccessful, and I knew it; and tried again, and was again unsuccessful, and always unsuccessful; but at least in these vain bouts I got some practice in rhythm, in harmony, in construction, and the coördination of parts. . . .

“That, like it or not, is the way to learn to write; whether I have profited or not, that is the way. It was so Keats learned, and there was never a finer temperament for literature than Keats’s; it was so, if we could trace it out, that all men have learned; and that is why a revival of letters is always accompanied or heralded by a cast back to earlier and fresher models.”

Many writers besides Stevenson have left on record their evidence in favor of imitation. Cardinal Newman, in his *Idea of a University*, says that the style of gifted writers “forcibly arrests the reader, and draws him on to imitate it,” and continues: “For myself, when I was fourteen or fifteen I imitated Addison; when I was seventeen I wrote in the style of Johnson; about the same time I fell in with the twelfth volume of Gibbon, and my ears rang with the cadence of his sentences, and I dreamed of it for a night or two. Then I began to

<sup>1</sup> R. L. Stevenson: *A College Magazine* in *Memories and Portraits*.

make an analysis of Thucydides in Gibbon's style." Ruskin, in the second volume of his *Modern Painters*, imitated Hooker; and speaking of his early writing, he declares, in *Praeterita*, "I have said above that had it not been for constant reading of the Bible, I might probably have taken Johnson for my model of English. To a useful extent I have always done so; in these first essays, partly because I could not help it, partly of set, and well set, purpose." The method that Buckle used to secure force and clearness is related to us by Nathan Sheppard in his work, *Before an Audience*. The method is imitation. "While studying style practically for his own future use, Buckle had been in the habit of taking a subject, whether argument or narrative, from some author,—Burke, for instance,—and to write himself, following of course the same line of thought, and then comparing his passage with the original, analyzing the different treatment so as to make it evident to himself where and how he had failed to express the meaning with the same vigor or terseness or simplicity." A similar method was adopted by Franklin, and will be found fully described in his autobiography.

What so many authors have practised, the following pages attempt to apply systematically to English composition. In his first essays at writing, the beginner must imitate. He must have a model. Where no model is furnished by the teacher, the student will either blindly grope his way along in an unknown kind of composition without interest and without good results, or will call to mind inferior models that his limited and more or less careless course of reading has made him familiar with. The first object, therefore, of this book is to furnish models for imitation in the work of English composition.

The method of imitation will do more than furnish good models. It will help in some degree to teach the development of thought. Every teacher with any experience in the matter of English writing must have noticed how difficult a task it is to make students follow out a line of thought. Those who are learning to write are wanting in a grasp of their subject; they do not look ahead. In imitations, however, they will be forced to think consecutively and according to a plan, even though the thinking is somewhat mechanical. Their thought must conform itself to the mould before them.

Exercises in imitation serve also to make students realize their deficiencies. Students write up to their ideals, whatever these may happen to be, and have no means of judging in what they have failed. An extrinsic standard is required, and a good model affords such a standard. Words, sentences, paragraphs, the whole composition, are held side by side with the model, and the dullest will find it hard not to detect some difference. It was thus, as we have seen, Buckle and Franklin improved; and Stevenson tells us, in the essay already quoted: "It is the great point of these imitations that there still shines beyond the student's reach his inimitable model. Let him try as he please, he is still sure of failure; and it is a very old and true saying that failure is the only highroad to success. I must have had some disposition to learn, for I clear-sightedly condemned my own performances."

There are other advantages to be gained from a book of exercises of this kind, and a little experience will soon bring them to light. Some apparent disadvantages should be considered. First of all, there is the appearance of insincerity and falseness in the best imitations. They

look like counterfeits or wax models of living originals. The fact must be admitted. It should be remembered, however, that these are exercises, and all exercises labor to some extent under the same difficulty. Besides, this disadvantage does not deter painters and sculptors from copying the old masters, and need not necessarily frighten us away from imitation.

More serious, at first sight, is the difficulty which is proposed and answered by Stevenson in the same essay (*A College Magazine*): "Perhaps I hear some one cry out, But this is not the way to become original! It is not; nor is there any way but to be born so. Nor yet, if you are born original, is there anything in this training that shall clip the wings of your originality. There can be none more original than Montaigne, neither could any be more unlike Cicero, yet no craftsman can fail to see how much the one must have tried in his time to imitate the other. Burns is the very type of a prime force in letters: he was of all men the most imitative. Shakespeare himself, the imperial, proceeds directly from a school. It is only from a school that we can expect to have good writers; it is almost invariably from a school that great writers, these lawless exceptions, issue. Nor is there anything here that should astonish the inconsiderate. Before he can tell what cadences he prefers, the student should have tried all that are possible; before he can choose and preserve a fitting key of words, he should long have practised the literary scales; and it is only after years of such gymnastics that he can sit down at last, legions of words swarming to his call, dozens of turns of phrase simultaneously bidding for his choice, and he himself knowing what he wants to do and (within the narrow limits of a man's ability) able to do it."