

The Engineer's Library

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Composition of Technical Papers—Part I. General Principles of Expository Writing. By Homer Andrew Watt, Assistant Professor of English, New York University. Published by the McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, and the Hill Publishing Co., Limited, London. First edition, 1917. 431 pages, illustrated, 5 x 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins., cloth. Price, \$1.50. (Reviewed by A. J. Meyers, chief draftsman, Board of Engineers, Quebec Bridge, Montreal.)

A careful examination of the contents of Homer Andrew Watt's book on the composition of technical papers will convince the responsible engineer, the leader in his profession, no matter what the branch, that this is a work which it will pay to have at hand and to diligently study on convenient occasion. The great majority of engineers, especially those in responsible charge of engineering undertakings, firms or corporations, in all probability master to a passable extent, after an average amount of experience and practice, the art of ordinary every-day business letter writing or correspondence, but when they are confronted with the task of giving a clear, connected, concrete and comprehensive description of an engineering undertaking in which they have been closely interested, they are frequently at a loss to present and describe their subject in a proper compositional manner.

Mr. Watt has clearly realized this difficulty of even the best engineers, and when treating his subject, describes in logical sequence and clearness of detail the real problems to be met in the composition of papers descriptive of every-day engineering undertakings, and gives in a clear and precise manner the solution of the main problems in analytical English composition, together with numerous examples of good and bad arrangement of the sentence and paragraph, and the skeleton construction of articles.

The work is divided into two parts and its character is clearly indicated by the title. Part I. is devoted to the study and explanation of the laws governing good writing and the fundamental ideas and principles at the bottom of

expository or explanatory composition, which is the class of article mainly dealt with by the engineering body of writers. The laws of good general compositional organization are given and explained, together with the principles of construction of the paragraph and the sentence. The chapter devoted to the description of the functions of the sentence has an added value in the definite and clear instructions as to punctuation and the numerous examples given as to when and how to use the many and varied characters of punctuation, some of which are extremely hazy in the mind of the average engineer.

Part II. is devoted to the principles governing the exposition of processes, methods and ideas, and technical descriptions of all kinds. Numerous and varied examples of each type of composition are given and valuable criticism made.

In the final two chapters of the work especial attention is devoted to the method of making technical and practical reports on engineering undertakings, in an interesting, concise and instructive manner. Also the principles of good business letter correspondence are here dealt with, how a real business-getting letter should be written and what it should contain to serve the highest purpose of the writer or a firm employing the writer of a business letter.

The book should be especially valuable as a study in connection with an university engineering course. Probably in the near past it has been the practice to give too little attention to the art of good composition in curriculum of even the most advanced colleges of engineering, and a proper realization of the necessity of every prominent engineer to be able to express himself either written or orally at all times in an acceptable and pleasing manner, would go a long way to accomplishing the desired result. In any such case, Mr. Watt's work could well be used for instruction and guidance.

Power Wiring. By A. T. Dover. Published by Whitaker & Co., London and New York City. 1917 edition. 208 pages, 254 illustrations, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins., cloth. Price, \$1.50 net. (Reviewed by H. W. Price, University of Toronto.)

Few books of pocket size contain so many line-diagrams of apparatus and plant connections,—about 250 in 200 pages. The intention is to furnish engineers with actual connections of representative control apparatus in all ordinary industrial and power work, excepting electric traction. The apparatus referred to is mostly of English manufacture.

The general plan of the book is best explained by reference to one typical item, e.g., "Automatic Control Systems for Continuous-current Motors." A concise explanation is offered of the essentials of time-limit, counter-emf.-limit, and current-limit methods of control. Then follow eleven excellent diagrams of typical apparatus and connections, each explained in so far as necessary to understand operation. In cases where diagrams of actual connections are complicated, schematic diagrams are added.