

PREFACE.

The study of English Composition in schools is still of comparatively recent date, and the organization of the class work in this subject, when compared with such subjects as the mathematics, for instance, leaves much to be desired. Older branches of study have been systematized by successive generations of teachers, their principles have been made clear, the natural order of their development established, exercises composed and graded, so that as subjects of class study they are in a high degree economical and efficient. English Composition has won a permanent and a leading place among school studies, by reason of its value as discipline for the mind and of its importance in life, but the teaching of composition has not yet been systematized. In aims and methods the teaching of this subject has been uncertain and faulty. Composition has meant to some merely the correction of errors in English—a valuable but a very subordinate part of composition work. To others it has meant ‘sentence-building’—exercises of a purely mechanical nature. It has meant to some the study of rhetoric, the analysis of style—really the counter-process of composition. It has meant to others the writing of essays, and the pupil has been required to be an architect before he could draw a plan; often, when the themes were beyond the scope of his experience, to make bricks without straw.

Truer notions of the teaching of composition have in recent years made headway. It has become clear that,