

Selected.

HANDWRITING.

GOOD handwriting is admired by everybody, and is a strong recommendation in a literary aspirant. It was the neatness of the handwriting, rather than the merits of the essay, which led the adjudicators in a prize essay scheme to award the first prize to Edgar Allan Poe. It is said by Griswold, one of the biographers of Poe, that one of the judges took up a little book remarkably beautiful and distinct in calligraphy, and that it was unanimously decided that the prizes should be paid to "the first of the geniuses who had written legibly!" A neat style of penmanship will assuredly tempt an editor to read the manuscript of a new writer when nothing else will. Our own opinion is, that in the majority of cases the return of MSS. of unknown contributors may be attributed in part to the badness of the penmanship, not to the quality of the articles. Nobody outside a printing, or an editorial office, can form an adequate idea of the slovenliness of the writing of most literary aspirants. They seem to think the worse the writing the greater the genius. We assure those who hold such an opinion that it is erroneous. The so-called men of genius are men who take the greatest pains, and who write in most cases the neatest hand. In any case, a beginner's chances of success are greater when his MS. can be read without an effort. But we cannot do better than quote an editor's observation upon this subject—Mr. John Morley:

"There is one single tribulation dear enough to poison life—even if there were no other—and this is disorderly MS. Empson, Mr. Napier's well-known contributor, was one of the worst offenders; he would never even take the trouble to make his paragraphs. I have the misfortune to have a manuscript before me at this moment that would fill thirty of these pages (*Fortnightly Review*), and yet from beginning to end there is no indication that it is not to be read at a single breath. The paragraph ought to be, and in all good writers it is, as real and as sensible a division as the sentence. It is an organic member in prose composition, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, just as a stanza is an organic and definite member in the composition of an ode. "I fear my manuscript is rather disorderly," says another, "but I will correct carefully in print." Just so. Because he is too heedless to do his work in a workmanlike way, he first inflicts fatigue and vexation on the editor whom he expects to read his paper; secondly, he inflicts considerable and quite needless expense on the publisher; and thirdly, he inflicts a great deal of tedious and thankless labor on the printers, who are for the most part far more meritorious persons than fifth-rate authors. It is true that Burke returned such disordered proofs that the printer usually found it least troublesome to set the whole afresh, and

Miss Martineau tells a story of a Scotch compositor who flew from Edinburgh to avoid a great living author's manuscript, and to his horror was presently confronted with a piece of copy which made him cry "Lord have mercy! Have you got that man to print for?" But most editors will cheerfully forgive such transgression to all contributors who will guarantee that they write as well as Burke or Carlyle. Alas! it is usually the case that those who have the least excuse are the worst offenders. The slovenliest manuscripts come from persons to whom the difference between an hour and a minute is of the very smallest importance."—*Literary Ladder*.

WHAT IS PRACTICAL EDUCATION.

BY PROF. H. RUSSELL, JOLIET, ILL.

WHAT constitutes a practical education is a problem that receives widely different answers; from the man who didn't want his son to waste his time studying geography because he wasn't going to be a sailor, and the metaphysician who deems the solution of the insoluble and the pursuit of the uncatchable the only matters really worthy of a man's attention. To one class of persons only, that is practical in education, which teaches a boy how he can best earn a living when he is a man; to another class, usually stigmatised by the (*soi disant*) practical men as theorists and doctrinaires, anything is practical that tends to make a man good and happy; in other words, anything that develops the faculties, enlarges the mental vision, trains the judgment, and aids a man to rise superior to his surroundings, and draw his enjoyment from reservoirs that the mishaps of life cannot destroy and cannot injure. But an education that aims at this involves an expenditure of time that most boys cannot secure, and, in spite of that quality which is affirmed by the Declaration of Independence, a large proportion of boys could not appropriate even were the time and money at their disposal. For the great majority of boys and girls, education consists, and must consist chiefly in that which will make them most fully able to grapple successfully with the active duties and stern realities of every-day life; thousands of lives have proven abortive failures from lack of this education. No wonder then that the people have become disgusted and discouraged at the many clap-net systems of education now in vogue, and devotedly appeal, as did the wise old Spartan king, for an education that will be of some practical utility to their children when they are men and women; and it is fair to presume that those institutions of harmony that more closely adhere to this motto, old as it is, will of necessity be the most successful, as they undoubtedly deserve to be.