

markable variable star Algol. It varies from the second to the fourth magnitude in about three and a half hours and back again in the same time; after which it remains steadily brilliant for two and three-quarter days, when the same changes take place again. It is said that the French astronomer, La-Lande used to remain whole nights upon the Pont Neuf in Paris to show to the curious the variations in brilliancy of the star Algol. When once found this star is a source of never-ending interest to those who delight in the wonders of the sky. It may be easily found by observing the following directions: Nine degrees east by north from Algol is the bright star Algenib, of the second magnitude, in the side of Perseus, which with Almaack in the constellation of Andromeda makes a perfect right angle at Algol with the open part towards Cassiopeia.

In the early evening the constellation of Perseus may be easily found by drawing a line, nearly parallel to the horizon, from the Pleiades to the brilliant first magnitude star Capella, in the constellation of Auriga, the Charioteer. Above this line is Perseus with his body in the milky way. Capella, the Goat, with the two "kids" to the right and a little below, may be easily seen forming part of the pentagon which makes up the figure of the Charioteer. The planet Venus is now evening star but too near the sun for observation. What bright young eyes will be the first to detect it low down in the west? The great planet Jupiter is morning star and may be seen well up in the eastern sky two or three hours before sun-rise.

This is the last month of the year. In the Roman calendar, traditionally ascribed to Romulus, the year was divided into ten months, the last of which was called December, or the tenth month. This name, though etymologically incorrect, was retained for the last or twelfth month of the year as now divided. In the Romulian calendar December had thirty days; Numa reduced it to twenty-nine; Julius Caesar added two days to this, giving the month its present length.—*Encyclopedia Britannica*.

In some of the London hospitals patients have been inoculated with a serum specially prepared to render them immune from taking cold. As there are several different causes of colds, it is necessary first to find what germs are most likely to attack the patient, or rather to what particular group of germs he is most susceptible. When this is done a preventive serum can be prepared to suit his special needs, and he may be rendered immune for several months by its use.

English Composition in the Higher Grades.

BY ELEANOR ROBINSON.

(Continued.)

Although the setting of subjects for reflective and purely imaginative essays is deprecated, it by no means follows that the powers of reflection and imagination should not be exercised at all at this stage. Their incidental use should be encouraged. For instance: I received, not long ago, from some girls of twelve and thirteen, a number of compositions telling the story of Echo. The analysis given was the brief one in Sykes' *Elementary Composition*. One child wrote a pretty description of Echo's imagined home in the woods; another told of the effect of her charming stories upon the birds; and a third invented June's scoldings; all without any suggestion from the teacher. The subject for a history lesson was "The Test and Corporation Acts—their enactment, working and repeal." The text-book says: "These acts prevented the Dissenters from having their rights as citizens." After a detailed explanation of this statement had been drawn out, the question was set, to be answered in writing. "What difference would these acts have made to your father, if he had been a Dissenter living in England in the 17th century?" That called for both imagination and reflection.

I have dwelt at length upon this division of my theme—the choosing and setting of subjects—because half the pupil's difficulty in the way of clearness is overcome if the teacher chooses the subject well, and states it definitely. In other words, if the pupil knows exactly what he is expected to do, and that it lies well within his powers to do it.

Until they can write correctly and clearly, pupils must be rigidly kept to *short* compositions, and, by short, I mean about half a page of foolscap. One such paper, *strictly corrected, and copied*, is worth any number of compositions too long to be more than glanced over, and roughly valued. For the ordinary boy or girl, untrained in writing, uncorrected and unamended compositions are practically worthless. Time can be saved by using a set of correcting signs, a list of which should be posted in the schoolroom. All faults in spelling, punctuation and grammar should be marked in this way, and the pupils required to make the corrections themselves. All papers need not be copied, but only those that fall below a certain standard of accuracy