

COMPOSITION.*

BY JAS. H. KNIGHT, PUBLIC SCHOOL INSPECTOR, LINDSAY.

A SHORT time ago, at the close of a class in prosody at our teachers' convention in Lindsay, one of our number objected to the introduction of prosody on the ground that very few of the pupils were likely to become poets. Very few persons, I presume, will object to the teaching of composition on the ground of inutility. Probably most of you will admit that it is desirable that the next generation¹ should be much in advance of the present in this important subject. The fact that sensational stories, dime novels, and the like, are a greater attraction than useful literature, calls for a better class of writers. The fact that a minstrel concert is sure to be better attended than the best lecture on any literary or scientific subject, demands more attention to composition; and the general complaint that the influence of the pulpit is well nigh gone, cries emphatically for better sermons.

It may be affirmed that the writers and speakers of the present day are as good as those of former times. This I do not deny. But I say that this is not enough. Our youth, as well as our men and women, read more to-day than they ever did, they talk about what they read and hear, and this they do in a more critical manner than ever, and if they cannot be interested in that which is profitable, they will seek for gratification in some other way.

In the present paper I propose to make a few suggestions to teachers respecting the various methods of treating composition, both in commencing and in the more advanced stages. Composition may be divided into four divisions: I. Ordinary conversation. II. Extempore speaking. III. Written addresses. IV. Correspondence and miscellaneous writings.

With composition several other subjects are intimately connected, such as writing, spelling, reading, elocution, and grammar, and our proficiency in any one or more of the divisions of composition will, to a great extent, depend on our proficiency in its kindred subjects. As much of our composition has to be written, facility in writing greatly assists in recording what we compose. As much that we write will often be read by imperfect readers, it is well to bear this in mind, for it is better to use a familiar though less suitable word, and have our thoughts correctly rendered, than to have the most correct language murdered by mispronunciation or incorrect intonation.

The importance of correct spelling is too obvious to need comment.

Fluency of utterance and correct enunciation are highly necessary whenever we practise reading aloud or elocution. Public speakers adopt one of four different methods. 1st. They read what they have previously written or perchance selected. 2nd. They use notes to call to mind the headings of their subject. 3rd. They

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