

at the close or beginning of each exercise, or at the commencement of the next, according to its merit.

There are some advantages in preferring the commencement of the exercise, because the work is no longer so fresh a production of the scholar's and he will therefore more candidly admit its faults: also because the criticism you make will be more immediately of use.

At the commencement of the exercise, then, we would have the books open where they last wrote; and then, going backward down the first aisle, we would place with a lead pencil, at the bottom of the last column written, a number which should mark its merit. Suppose 6 was adopted for excellent: then 5, good; 4, middling; 3, poor; 2, bad; 1, very bad.

The marks should be determined by the scholar's attention to and execution of the instruction specially given in the lesson on the copy and in previous lessons, and not merely for general appearance; for some copies, through fineness of lines, and accuracy of slant, will present a good appearance, while the turns are broad, connections bad, and so forth.

Our habit is to mark right and left as we go backwards down the first aisle, and the same as we come forwards up the third, and so on. Make your decision rapidly, and mark at once. A class of fifty or sixty may be thus ranked in two or three minutes. It is time well employed.

At the same time that you make the mark, you can drop a word of criticism; for instance, Turns too broad, Bad slant, Down-strokes not straight, and so forth.

Now, it seems that it would be a convenience to the teacher to remember at the next lesson what this criticism was, that he may observe whether it has been heeded. We have therefore devised the following simple and convenient plan by which he can place it on record. Certain significant signs easy of execution are placed besides the merit-marks, or where the fault occurs in the writing.

The meaning of these should be explained to the scholars.

/ Too heavy.

\ Bad slant. The mark slants the wrong way.

— Wrong spacing. The mark indicates width.

× Beginning or ending wrong.

|| Height not uniform.

= Width of letters uneven.

∩ Upper or lower turns too broad.

∧ ∨ Upper or lower turns too narrow.

() Curve instead of straight line.

S Element I, neglected in Principle 3.

∩ ∪ Connection too long above or below.

A profitable way to use these is to mark one of them above a column, without saying anything, as you go round and observe a fault. It can be done rapidly, is a standing warning to the scholar, and is a permanent record of your criticism.

We merely throw out these suggestions. Every teacher can modify, extend, or abbreviate them, as he pleases: or he can adopt some similar method.

It is hardly necessary to add, that where so many minute points require attention, as is the case in learning to write, the great secret of success lies in confining the attention to one point at a time. Thus, to make the right use of the corners of the boxes, to touch the top and base lines, to make straight down-strokes, to have correct slant, to place the down strokes at correct distances, to make fine lines, and so forth, should be taken up in turn, and perfected, by devoting several lines to each, fixing attention on it, criticising it, and correcting as we have suggested.

If, in this statement of our method of instruction, we have seemed to dwell more particularly upon teaching beginners, it is because we feel that this will be particularly useful to teachers. This branch of education differs from other branches. The eye is to be trained to know peculiarities of form, the hand to execute them. In other school-studies, the mind is to be trained to know, to recall, to compare, to judge, and, by the voice, to produce. Observe the difference: here a sense is to be educated, and an organ trained to obedience. If, then, those who are required to teach this branch can only be induced to begin right, they will find little difficulty in carrying their scholars on to the most satisfactory results, working out our principles in their

legitimate development to suit their own methods. Besides, farther on we give full instructions for teaching classes as they advance.

OUR HABITS OF READING.

WE are a reading people: so we claim to be: sometimes we boast a little of it, and I suppose the boast is not without foundation. There is probably no other country where the proportion of the native population that cannot read at all, is so small as in our own. Nor is it merely in the number of readers that we may claim some pre-eminence, but in the amount read as well. So far as these two items are concerned, our boast can be maintained.

If we are satisfied, then, with mere quantity, we may indulge in some congratulations; if, however, the question of quality comes in,—if we insist on the questions what we read, why we read, and how we read, our self-complacency receives a severe check. It is not proposed to give an analysis of the reading matter devoured by our people; if it were possible to give an exhibit of all the books, magazines, pamphlets, and newspapers read in the course of a year, and the number of perusals of each, such an exhibit might furnish a good deal of food for reflection, though I fear not very palatable food to a people that like flattery as well as we do. While it would be impossible to bring the matter to the basis of statistics, and state, with precision, the various kinds of reading matter, and the quantity of each consumed, there are scores from which some general conclusions can be safely drawn. Publishers can furnish the number of impressions taken of their various publications; and this, on the ground of the natural relation of supply and demand, would furnish important aid toward the solution of the question. An account of the sales of book-sellers would be in the same direction; personal observation would supplement the information from these sources. Without pretending to state with exactness the conclusion that would thus be reached, we know enough to know that it would not be very complimentary to our national taste.

To judge of the value of our reading, it is proper to ask some of the objects of reading. We may read for information, to gain valuable knowledge; we may read for mental discipline, or for æsthetic culture, or for moral improvement. All these are legitimate objects for which to read, and the literature which furnishes material for such ends, may be set down as valuable. But further, we may read for amusement or entertainment; and this may be regarded as a rational means of entertainment; but, considering the disproportion between the amount of the most valuable reading matter and the time we can give to it, the conclusion will be readily reached that we ought not to give very much time to books that merely furnish entertainment, especially when we remember that there are multitudes of books of the highest value, which give a reasonable amount of entertainment.

But again; we read sometimes merely to pass away time. It will hardly do, by a single edict, to put this practice under the ban. If a man finds himself compelled to spend four or five hours at a railway station, somewhat remote from the centres of civilization, we ought, perhaps, to admire, rather than reproach him, if, after having exhausted the last month's newspaper and the medical almanac, that make up the stock of literature, he can begin at one corner of the room and make the entire circuit of it, making a clean sweep of the time-tables of the various trains, with maps of routes, together with the advertising cards of merchants and quack doctors, besides the notices of stray dogs and lost sheep, and other such like gems of literature, so entertaining to weary travellers.

But this kind of reading is not to be commended except in emergencies, and it may be a question of some moment, whether it would not be far better, if most of the time spent in reading in this way, were given to entertaining conversation, or music, or gentle physical exercise.

It is sufficient barely to allude to those diabolical works designed to subvert morality, published in violation of law, and sold by shameless villains.

Somewhat higher than this grade,—how much it might be difficult to say,—is the lowest form of the sensational novel, the