

this. Correctness and clearness, closely allied qualities appealing to the understanding, are the first essentials, and the only two of which it will be practicable to treat in these short papers. The other two qualities, force, and ease, or elegance, those qualities which appeal to the feelings and to the taste, demand more elaborate treatment. They depend more upon the natural gifts of the student; they are very much more matters of degree; and may be developed further and further after absolute correctness and clearness have been attained. But correctness and clearness must come first. How are they to be taught?

The first questions to decide upon are: What subjects shall we choose to set? and, How shall we set them?

To write with clearness necessitates knowledge of the subject matter. This admission narrows our choice of subjects.

Until some degree of skill and confidence in writing correctly and clearly has been attained, all subjects should be matters of the pupil's own knowledge. His subject matter will be drawn from books (or oral lessons) and from his own observation and experience. Do not set him, *at first*, to hunting up new facts in strange books, or to observing something that he has never noticed before, or to imagining an unknown experience, or to arranging reflections which he has not made on a subject which does not interest him. Let him not be worried about what he shall write, and at the same time about how he shall write it. Rather let him practice writing about what he has already studied in school, or is thoroughly familiar with in his every day life. If he has been studying, *e. g.*, English or Canadian history, and has the defeat of the Spanish Armada, or the voyages of Cartier, at his fingers ends, don't ask him to write on the battle of Marathon or the explorations of the Congo. If he lives in a seaport town, and can tell you all about how an ocean steamship comes to her dock, don't tell him to take for his next composition the points of difference between a frog and a toad. When he cannot write half a page correctly about the last base ball game, or how he went fishing, wait for a while before you ask him to describe his first voyage in an airship. And don't force him to set down a string of platitudes and quotations about the influence of Shakespere, until he can tell you clearly on paper why he liked the last book he read, or why he would "rather go to the circus than read any book."

In other words, *don't attempt to combine the gaining of information, or the analysing of impressions, with the beginnings of learning how to write.*

History and literature will supply plenty of subjects for practice in narration and suggestive or artistic description, while science lessons will furnish material for exact or scientific description and simple explanation.

But none but familiar topics should be set, and no forms but simple narration and description required, until the more glaring mistakes in grammar and construction and the faults of vagueness, ambiguity and obscurity have been largely overcome.

Having thus restricted our choice of subjects, how shall we set them? At first, not only should the material be supplied, but the arrangement and proportion should be indicated. Suppose that after the history of England in the reigns of the first two Georges has been studied, I am setting the class a history composition, I set for a subject "The Jacobite Rebellions."

I say to the class, "In writing an account of any war, five points must be made clear. These are: Who were fighting? Where? When? What were the chief events in the struggle? What was the final result? Or more briefly, Who? Where? When? Why? With what result? (N. B. I use this same analysis, with modifications, for a struggle of any kind, *e. g.*, The Abolition of Slavery, The Passing of the Reform Bill.) To go on with my instructions: "You will find information on all these points about the Jacobite Rebellions on such and such pages of your history. Write one paragraph about the Rebellion of 1715; another, nearly, or about, twice as long on the Rebellion of 1745; not more than a page in all. Write in your own words, not the words of the book, and follow the order that I have given. Begin the second paragraph with a sentence showing its connection with the first." (With a weak class, I should suggest one or two such sentences, *e. g.*, "not discouraged by their failure in 1715, the Jacobites, etc., or, "The rising of 1715 was not the last attempt to restore the Stuarts to the throne.")

I go on: "You will come to-morrow prepared to write this in school from memory;" or, as the case may be, "You will write it at home to-night, using your history and no other books."

I then allow two or three minutes for the class to ask questions, if they want to. These questions may be on the subject matter, or on the form; but