

II.—PRACTICE OF EDUCATION.

WRITING.

The following extract on the teaching of Penmanship is from a Treatise "on School Management" recently published by the Head Master of the Glasgow Normal School. It embraces, in our apprehension, all that is valuable and useful in Mulhauser's System, as well as in other modern improvements. We cordially recommend its perusal, and, in as far as it is practicable, its adoption by the Teachers of the Province. This, we fear, is a matter too little attended to by many.

METHOD.

Three things go to constitute good writing:—the form of the letter,—their inclination,—and the distances between them. If any of these things is overlooked, the writing, to that extent, will be defective. Now in order to the acquisition of these three things, it is obviously necessary that some method, based on natural principles, be adopted. The mere blind imitation of examples may, in the case of a boy who has a steady hand and a good eye, lead him to write well; but the good writing, in such a case, will be the result of accident, and the acquisition of it will only serve to develop the boy's power of imitation, without calling into exercise any of the higher faculties of his mind. But with many, who do not possess the faculty of imitation in any strong degree, and who see in writing only so many unmeaning lines, the hour set apart to writing is dull and monotonous, and their great desire is to have the prescribed page filled up as speedily as possible. Nor can it well be otherwise when we remember that work, which does not exercise the understanding, possesses no charms for the young. Teachers at the outset of their career are apt to forget this; and hence, too often, they consider it quite sufficient to occupy their pupils, without observing whether or not the occupation is fitted to lead them to reflect on what they are doing. This holds true very specially of writing. The pupils are arranged at the desks, their writing books are given out, a pattern is set before them, and they are left to imitate it as best they may. The consequence is that the writing rapidly degenerates as it nears the bottom of the page; for the scholars, when they have written one line, set themselves to imitate their own writing, instead of the copy which has been set before them. Not only is this the case, but it almost always happens that the pupils have no adequate idea of what is required of them. Why a certain letter rises above the line a certain distance and no more, why one occupies more space than another, are matters with which they never trouble themselves; or should a boy whose mind desiderates reasons for what he does, make any enquiry into the principles which ought to guide him, he is rudely interrupted and told to imitate what is set before him. But writing is no mystic art which refuses to give up its secrets to the anxious enquirer; it follows laws well defined and easily comprehended by the meanest capacity; it appeals not only to the eye and the hand, but to the understanding and the memory, and only when these are taken into the account can we expect writing to assume in our schools the place which is due to it, and to receive that amount of attention without which there cannot be, except in accidental cases, good writing. To any one who examines with any degree of attention the written characters of our language, it will be evident that these characters can be analysed into a very few simple elements, and that all our letters are made up of simple modifications of these elements.—Such being the case, it would seem to be the natural method of teaching to write, to commence with analysis. The complex written characters should be analysed into their elementary parts; these elements should be arranged in the order of their complexity, and thus presented to the child, who, in reconstructing them, learns to write. The self-same principles which we endeavoured to establish when treating of reading, should, *mutatis mutandis*, be applied to writing. The simple should always precede the complex, and the knowledge which

the child possesses should be made the stepping-stone to further attainments. The known should always go before the unknown; what the child knows, either by natural or mental vision, should be laid hold of as the hand to guide him to what he does not know.

ANALYSIS OF OUR WRITTEN CHARACTERS.

Such being the natural method by which our knowledge is attained, it is obviously the teacher's first duty to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the elements which go to compose the written characters of our language, and with their classification in the order of their complexity. For the following observations on this subject, we are mainly indebted to the "Manual of Writing" by Mulhauser, who was the first to give a complete analysis of the written characters. We can only make one or two brief remarks, and must refer the reader for a fuller discussion of the subject to the manual itself, merely reminding him that, while he will meet with many things worthy of his attention, he will also find much which is both useless and impracticable. The hand in writing has four principal motions:—

1. The downward motion /
2. The upward motion \
3. The motion from right to left (
4. The motion from left to right)

From these four motions there result two sorts of lines,

1. The right line / /
2. The curved line ()

These two sorts of lines supply us with the four elements of letters; viz:—

1. The right line /
2. The curve line (
3. The loop ; h
4. The crotchet ,

With one or two slight modifications, we can resolve all the written characters in our language into these four elements. For the purpose of joining right lines to one another, we have recourse to what are termed the *hook* and the *link*, both of which are seen in the written character *m*, the hook at the beginning, and the link at the end of the letter.

CLASSIFICATION OF OUR WRITTEN CHARACTERS.

Having thus analysed the characters used in writing, the next step is their arrangement in the order of their complexity, and we have

1. The letters formed of the right line and the link, viz:—
i, u, t, l.
2. The letters formed of the right line, the hook and the link, viz:—*n, m, h, p.*
3. The letters formed of the curve, viz:—*o, e, a.*
4. The letters formed of the curve and of the right line, viz:—*a, d, g.*
5. The letters formed of the loop, viz:—*j, q, y.*
6. The crotchet letters, viz:—*l, f, v, w, r.*
7. The complex letters, viz:—*h, s, x, z.*

THE HEIGHT OF THE LETTERS.

Not only must the teacher be thus able to analyse the letters into their elements, he must also know their relative heights. All the letters are not of the same height, and in order to make this clear, we shall give a more particular analysis of each letter, in the order in which they are placed in the last paragraph. For the sake of explicitness, let us call the space between three horizontal lines \equiv a height. According as a letter passes above or below these three parallels, it is one height and a half, two heights, two heights and a half or three heights. To indicate that the line passes below these three parallels, we may use the word *down*. The *absolute* height of the letters will depend upon the size of the hand