

TO CRITICS.

When I was seventeen I heard
From each censorious tongue,
"I'd not do that if I were you,
You see you're rather young."

Now that I number forty years,
I'm quite as often told,
Of this or that I shouldn't do
'Cause I'm quite too old.

O carping world! If there's an age
Where youth and manhood keep
An equal pole, alas! I must
Have passed it in my sleep.

—Walter Learned in *Century*.

LETTER-WRITING

BY C. E. BLACK, KING.

I fear that the subject of letter-writing does not receive that attention in our schools that it demands. When children have been in school two years, letter writing should begin. The work must, of course, be adapted to the children; with beginners copying letters from the blackboard or from a book until they are familiar with the form is the best thing to do. The next step may be to change names and statements made in the model letter, as would easily be done by allowing the children a little freedom in that direction. The next step may be to have them write a letter, after giving them data like the following: the heading, the address, and three or four items or incidents for the body of the letter. This furnishes a little outline to guide them, which at first is necessary, but after a time they can be tried without the outline.

I might here suggest a plan which I have carried out with good results. One day of the term is set apart as a letter day, and usually the day before a part of the afternoon is taken out of doors for observation so as to form a topic upon which to write, such as a visit to a lime-kiln, etc. On the following day each grade came provided with paper and envelopes. Those who were unable to write were requested to print. After the writing or printing of the letter and addressing of the envelope, which was to be to some one or other of the pupils, they were all sealed to be handed over to me for inspection. Before giving the letters to me, one of the pupils was appointed by the school to act as postmaster, and a box was used in which to place all the letters. Then all would march in order to the post office and deposit his or her letter. After I had carefully examined the letters and given them their due mark for penmanship, etc., they were called for at the post office on the following day, and the next day was taken up with the writing of replies. In this exercise it was of course so arranged that each person would get a letter to be enabled to write a reply. In addition to this practice in letter-writing, there was a careful practice in penmanship and a pleasant and profitable change from the daily routine of work.

The pupils seem to enjoy these letter-days as well as picture days, and no doubt much good results from the careful practice of writing letters and addressing envelopes. Try it!

PREPARATION FOR THE READING EXERCISES.

Much of the faulty work done in the reading class is due to a lack of preparation beforehand on the list of words at the head of the reading exercises. These lists contain the new words found in the reading, unfamiliar to the pupils, and unless preparation of some sort is made, form stumbling-blocks to the pupil's progress, and in many instances ruin them forever as good readers. There are methods by which the new words may be mastered almost unconsciously, as to being recognized at sight, written or spelled, and used in language work by the pupil before the reading exercise is attempted to be read.

Suppose this morning our pupils in the second reader are just finishing the first reading lesson in the book: considerably elated with being allowed

to read in the second reader, as all who have just been promoted from the first to the second generally are, the earnest and enthusiastic teacher will experience no difficulty in inducing them to work hard to have a good lesson the next day; so just before dismissing the class he will have them pronounce at sight the list of words at the head of the exercise to be read the next day. While some of the words will not be recognized at sight by all members of the class, there are generally others who will know all; so by having the list read over two or three times, passing on to the next pupil when one fails to instantly recognize the word, and having every one pay strict attention while others read their words, when through reading the list there are few unable to tell each word as soon as he casts his eye on it. It will add to the interest and good will of the pupils to explain to them that this and other work on these words is for the purpose of being better able to read the piece the next day, and also to better understand it.

But this class needs work in language; so why not take the same list of words as the basis of your language work for this grade in the afternoon's recitation? A better basis, if it is properly used, cannot be found. So, for our first work in this line, have the pupils use the words by making a separate statement containing each word; this to be done at seats, neatly on slates or paper. At the recitation the sentences will be examined by the teacher, and all errors in the use of language, capital letters and the period will be noted and talked over by teacher and pupils. Mistakes may be pointed out by the pupils, but the teacher must see that each rectifies his own before leaving the recitation, and it is a good idea to call the pupil's attention to the right form in an encouraging manner, thus impressing the right alone more indelibly in his mind. When the scholar can use words in statements, teach him in the same manner to use them in questions, using the proper terminal mark. He may be taught to give synonyms and homonyms for the words that will admit; to distinguish between name words and action words; how to use such words as this and that, these and those, raise and rise, sit and set, etc., whenever they occur. Stories may be written occasionally by the pupils after they have become used to the work, containing all the words of the lesson, and will prove very interesting and profitable.

We will now take the same list of words and have each pupil bring them once more, when he comes to the recitation to read the exercise, neatly copied on the slate in two ways—one having the words divided into syllables, with the accented syllable marked, and the diacritical marks of the letters shown; the other, the words written as wholes. As a last resort, the teacher may dictate, and the pupils write them on the blackboard. Teacher and pupils may now examine and criticize words misspelled and marked wrong, the teacher keeping in mind always to have each pupil correct his own mistakes.

Misspelled words should be kept by teacher and pupils, and copied with the next day's list of words on slate, and also on board again from dictation, although if this plan is followed, few words or their meanings are apt to be missed.

Some will probably entertain the idea that so many exercises on one list will become monotonous and pupils lose their interest. This depends to a great extent on the teacher, and the influence she or he wields in their school work. No pupil, if his teacher is possessed of the right material, wishes to do wrong work any more than that teacher does; consequently, if the teacher's heart is in his work, the pupil's is almost invariably in his, and by sympathy they mutually assist each other. The pupils need not be told that all of this work is for a knowledge of the words mainly. In

the first place they will be glad to assist in pronouncing the words, if pleasantly requested by the teacher, with the understanding that it will help them to read the piece better the next day and that he (the teacher) wishes them all to read without making mistakes.

The teacher needs to do work in practical language, and pupils in the second and third reader grades take considerable pleasure in putting these words in sentences, copying them on slates, and composing short stories containing them for the afternoon's language class, if the teacher can infuse into their minds the proper amount of enthusiasm.

Five out of every ten teachers are compelled to take a pupil over a reader twice or three before judged competent to pass on to the next grade, when once should suffice where the work is properly done. More real interest in the work can be maintained, a fuller knowledge of words and how to use them, better spelling done, and a more correct expression and understanding of what is read had, by going over the work once in this way, than half a dozen times where it is done in a slipshod manner.

There are lessons of such length that three or four reading exercises must be made from the one, and the lists of words at the head should likewise constitute more than one lesson, the work on the words always preceding the reading.—W. T. Howard in *Western School Journal*.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS IN LETTER WRITING.

Letters should always be written in a neat and distinct hand. Sentences should be constructed with care, so that the meaning will be clear beyond a question.

Gummed envelopes are now accepted everywhere, and yet a neat seal of red wax for a gentleman, and of gold or other fancy color for a lady, are appropriate and give finish to a note.

Letters of introduction or recommendation should never be sealed.

In letters of business or ceremony, do not write on both sides of the sheet.

Letters of compliment should always be written in the third person.

Do not send a blotted sheet, or one having erasures and corrections, even though you should have to rewrite.

Never write letters on scraps of paper, and always write with ink.

Do not be abrupt, and do not enlarge on your own misfortunes or ills.

Make your letters cheerful, and promotive of good will. Coarse and ill-tempered letters injure the writer more than the receiver.

To send an anonymous letter should be regarded as too mean and cowardly for any gentleman, or lady, to countenance.

Paper may be either ruled or plain, but the latter is the more elegant. In writing upon it, however, the parallelism of lines should not be disregarded.

Letters on one's own affairs should always contain a stamp for return postage. Or enclose a stamped and addressed envelope.

Every letter should be dated carefully and distinctly, should be the address of the writer, and should have the writer's name signed in full.

A married lady should invariably, except in her most familiar missives, prefix "Mrs." to her name. Letter paper and envelopes should correspond in color and quality.

Persons in mourning usually write on mourning stationery.

White should be used when addressing a lady. Good black ink is always preferable. Colored inks are in bad taste. Take care to affix the proper amount of postage, and in the proper place, and not awry, parallel to the ends of the envelope.

Do not send money or other articles of value in an unregistered letter. Registration makes detection so sure that few thieves are bold enough to meddle with it.

When it is desired to have letters returned in case of non-delivery, the name and address of the sender should be printed in the upper left-hand corner with a request to that effect.