

but only, it seems to me, when reading has been allowed to do its work in training the passive imagination. Here we meet another abuse altogether too frequent in our schools in recent years. The young child is given a picture and is asked to write a story about it. Now in addition to the fact, already suggested, that in his spasmodic effort to invent a story, the child makes sad work with his written forms in which he has not yet had enough practice to render him trustworthy, he makes up his story by merely stringing together ideas which present themselves to his mind, as he looks at the picture, with very little if any logical sequence. Because now and then a child with inherent story-telling power does a good bit of work in this direction, because most of the children like it, and because it keeps them busy and produces a tangible result with very little work on the part of the teacher, this method of training the language power and the imagination has found great favor in our city schools of late years.

Let us see what the actual results of this training are. In addition to habits of careless writing, including spelling, with which legacy the child is passed on to the higher grade grammar teacher and not infrequently to the much-suffering high school teacher, he develops a reckless illogical method of tacking ideas together, and is permitted to dignify the performance with the name of *thought*. Could any training be more misleading?

That the story-telling power—than which there is no more delightful and attractive accomplishment—can be developed by patient, judicious training, in which the study of pictures plays a very small but not unimportant part, I have no doubt whatever. But one trouble has been that we have looked for harvests in seedtime.

As was suggested earlier in this

paper, composition work, properly conducted with older pupils, increases the appreciation of good literature. If the effort to think for himself and to express his own thought is supplemented by reading what other people have thought and said so much more clearly, more convincingly, and more gracefully than is possible for him, this very effort toward expression on his own part brings a keener realization of the merit of what he reads. I have sometimes thought that this is not merely the best, but perhaps the only, reason for allowing pupils to write verses. The effort to clothe thought in metrical language and the search for felicitous expression, awaken a keener delight in reading true poetry. The moment a boy or girl is allowed to feel any great degree of satisfaction in his or her own work,—whether prose or verse,—the moment that the time given to original production is allowed to outweigh the time devoted to the study of real literature, that moment finds the composition work an injury rather than a benefit.

In some schools the matter of composition is pressed too far, I think, and reading suffers in proportion. To use the ever serviceable simile, the teacher attempts to draw water from dry wells. Let reading and free discussion of what is read have their rightful place in the school course, and with less time than is now devoted to composition, better results may be obtained. A few words of no uncertain sound from John Morley's address to the students of the "London Society for the Extension of University Teaching" bear directly upon this subject. "I venture, with all respect to those who are teachers of literature," he says, "to doubt the excellence and utility of the practice of over much essay-writing and composition. I have very little faith in rules of style, though I have an unbounded faith in the virtue of cultivating direct