

The use of our Blackboard Tablets will also be found extremely advantageous. They are described in another place.

Secondly, With regard to the Manner of Executing, we would suggest,—

1. That the teacher should show it by example.

Let him take a large book,—a geography, for instance,—and place his right arm and hand on it in the correct position, with the pen properly held. Let the scholars view this on all sides. In the same way let the movements be illustrated.

2. That the scholars should learn it by experiment.

For instance, it is directed that the corner of the thumb should be opposite the first joint of the middle finger, and a little under the holder; and it is stated that the object of this is to keep the holder above the knuckle. Let them try with the thumb at the end of the fingers, and it will be found that the least pressure on the pen causes the holder to sink down. A like result follows if the thumb is placed at the side of the holder, instead of underneath it.

The scholar, thus proving the facts by experience, will see the value of the directions given, and remember them; for he will perceive that they are not mere arbitrary rules, made and enforced to gratify a fancy, but that they teach the best and most convenient way of attaining certain necessary ends.

#### METHOD OF TEACHING EXECUTION.

With regard to teaching Execution, it may be worth while to make a few observations.

1. Let the teacher determine that he will have correct execution; that the precise forms of the copy shall be accurately made, not merely by the few who have natural aptitude, but by all. This can be achieved; for it has been again and again.

2. It will be well also to settle in the mind that correctness of form is preferable to mere rapidity of execution.

Therefore let the scholars proceed very slowly at first. As soon as the forms are correctly made, they may then advance more rapidly, but not faster than is consistent with accuracy.

3. Whilst they are writing, let their attention be frequently called to position, penholding, rests, and movements.

REMARK.—It is very important that they should aim at writing successively the principles of which the letters are composed, instead of writing the letters as wholes.

They should understand that the modern style is based upon the oblique straight line and very short turns, formed by an up-and-down or forward-and-backward movement of the pen, whether this is produced by the fingers or by the forearm. This movement should be dwelt upon to overcome the tendency to rounded down-strokes and “scooping” turns.

#### METHOD OF TEACHING CRITICISM.

With regard to the art of Criticism, we remark,—

1. The scholars should learn this art, and practise it themselves.

Experience has long shown, that whatever any one will do for us we are seldom inclined to do for ourselves. If, then, the teacher criticises for the scholars, they will not consider it their business to do so for themselves.

It is, besides, a very difficult thing to judge our own work fairly; and to children, especially beginners, their own writing seems so wonderful, that they cannot help thinking it excellent. The fact that they can actually read it, and that it can be read by others, confirms them in this idea.

Therefore the formation by them of the habit of criticism—that is, the training and constant exercise of the faculty of judging form—is of the highest consequence; in fact, it is one of the great secrets of success. A great many scholars at first, judging from our own experience, cannot distinguish between a straight line and a curve, or between the right and left curves: all varieties of slant are equally satisfactory; and a turn is a turn whether it is as sharp as a knife, or as round as a hoop.

They must be trained, then, by every means to improve the deficient faculty, and to acquire the habit of always criticising their own work. It is very curious to observe how much more readily and accurately they will criticise any erroneous form the teacher puts on the board than they will their own.

2. Teach them to criticise, therefore, by questioning them successively on each particular of their knowledge. It will be

found desirable to take up the Critical Points first: afterwards to go through the particulars of the letter in order.

Suppose a line written, the following questions should be asked:—

- (1.) What are the critical points of the principle, or letter? Which is the first?

- (2.) How many scholars have this right?

REMARK.—Instead of putting the question in these words, it is better to make it more definite. Thus, supposing the critical point to be that the down-stroke should be straight, the question should be, How many made it straight?

- (3.) How many have it wrong?

REMARK.—This question should, in the case just mentioned, take the shape, How many did not make it straight?

- (4.) What was the cause of the failure?

REMARK.—In the case mentioned, the answer would be, perhaps, Turning too soon.

- (5.) How can it be corrected?

REMARK.—It is not enough to discover the fault. They must know what to do and make the desired change.

- (6.) What, then, are you going to do next time?

REMARK.—This leads them to a definite object in writing the next line.

Another line should then be written, when the questioning should be thus resumed:—

- (7.) How many have it right now?

- (8.) How many still have it wrong?

- (9.) How many have it better?

The teacher can also show on the board how the error was made, and what must be done to correct it.

Line after line is thus written and criticised, and thus each with a definite purpose.

3. Another excellent method is, as soon as a line is written, to ask, How many can point out a fault? One after another may be called upon to state the one he discovers; and all who observe a similar fault should raise their hands to acknowledge it when it is mentioned. The question should follow, What must be done to correct it?

This method may be varied by telling them to write another line, and leave out the faults they have noticed without asking what they are. The question may then be put, How many have written better than before? When the hands are raised, ask in what particulars they have made it better.

4. We consider this method of teaching them to criticise their own work as of the very highest importance; but it will still be necessary for the teacher to move constantly about among them, to observe whether they criticise correctly, and to aid their immature judgments by his own remarks.

We would suggest, that whenever he discovers a fault, he should embody it in a question to the whole class; for there are sure to be several other scholars who have made the same mistake. He thus saves himself the labor of many repetitions.

5. Criticism should not contemplate merely the discovery of an error, but also the causes of failure, and the precise direction that the effort to correct it must take.

6. Our critical points and our analysis of the principles enable the teacher to bring the knowledge of them before his class in an orderly manner, and suggest the proper succession of questions in criticism.

The order may be as follows:—

CRITICAL POINTS.—(1.) The main lines in their several particulars of straightness, slant, and height.

(2.) The turns as to their shape and width.

(3.)—The connecting lines as to their curve and slant, determining width.

(4.) The connections.

7. A simple yet exhaustive rule for the teacher's guidance in criticising is this,—that the errors may always be looked for on each side of the truth. Is a line to be curved?—It will be curved the wrong way, too much or too little. Is a turn of a certain width to be made?—it will be too broad or too narrow. Is a line to be of a certain slant?—It will be slanted too much or too little.

8. Lastly, the teacher should rank the copy of every scholar,