

follows that reading should be last after explanation and interrogation on the subject matter. *Purity of utterance.* Provincialisms are difficult of removal and are best eradicated by attention to the pupil's speech, and by a careful supervision in the earlier lessons. *Indistinctness* may be considerably checked by teaching them to use the teeth, lips, and tongue, and not slur the sounds together. Modulation is taught with much difficulty to the usual class of children attending our national schools. Social circumstances are against them, and home influences, which are to the higher classes elevating, often undo the teacher's work. The conversation engaged in at home confirms them in local sounds and incorrectnesses, which it is the labour of the teachers to eradicate. Good reading is the result of imitation after mechanical difficulties have been overcome. Good speech and good reading are indissolubly connected. The teacher must use a good style of speech himself. When he is a distinct speaker the whole school is influenced by it. He reads a passage to show how it should be read. The pupils observe his modulations and imitate him: this is both pleasant and profitable. Practice alone, although it enables the eye to follow the words with rapidity, will not make good readers, and may only confirm a bad style instead of forming a good one. Continuous reading is necessary: not merely short passages. Reading is required to be a *distinct* lesson. Our present reading books give great variety, especially in poetry. Some teachers would recognise a greater number of stages in progress, and recommend more graduation. Our fourth book is considered difficult by some, but when we remember that the great majority of our scholars do not go beyond this book, it is well to introduce them to the average style of composition to be found in our newspapers.

As reading is the means by which pupils afterwards instruct themselves when they are becoming men and women, its importance cannot be over estimated. The school knowledge they have is but the groundwork of education, on which they themselves must erect the superstructure. If fluency in reading is not carried from school, the likelihood is, that its practice will be given up, intelligence will flag, and contact with information cease. Let the teacher then, without aiming at too high a standard, which may be impossible under existing circumstances, as an elementary instructor in a country district generally, endeavour to reach some standard of proficiency which will leave his pupil with such a skill, as will materially be the means of extending his education beyond the short period of school life.

WRITING.

Writing is a compromise with printed characters. Printed forms are too round and detached to be made with rapidity, and writing, which is neither too rounded or too sharp, as in Mr. Vere Foster's head lines, is most practical for use. A sloping style being easier to the hand is preferred to the upright. Proportion is necessary to prevent indistinctness. The lines forming the letters should be of nearly uniform thickness, *a la Palmerston*, which aids legibility. Fine lines make a "scratch." Some writers adopt a third plan of jerking on the pen, leaving blotches of ink throughout, as if to let off a superfluity of fluid. The beauty of writing is chiefly owing to the curved line, but a portion of this beauty may be sacrificed in order to gain quickness of acquirement. The straight line is not in itself beautiful. The chief curve is the oval or ellipse. Rapidity is a test of writing, but can only be applied in the more advanced pupils. In the earlier stages they are engaged for the most part in watching and imitating the shapes of the letters, and rapidity would be ruinous. The teacher aims at being himself a good writer, as it has a great influence on his success in teaching it.

AIDS IN TEACHING WRITING.—A good desk, not too much sloped, sufficiently wide; the light in front. Desks should be graduated to size of pupils. In sitting at desks, the breast should not lean against them, but should partly rest on left arm. This position must be insisted on in the earlier lessons, and will then become a habit. Paper should be smooth. That supplied in the

national school copy book is generally too rough. Thanks to Mr. Foster, smooth can now be had as cheap as the rough. The best pens we have found to be the 'Waverley,' which has a turned point, and which gives the hair lines nearly as thick as the others. The 'Owl' pen may be used for finer writing, if it be required. The teacher should keep a supply always ready and not depend on the pupils taking care of them. The holding of the pen is now taught; between first and second fingers, and at a distance from the nib, sufficient to prevent the fingers being inked. As in reading, the pupil commences with larger characters than he will afterwards require. Large hand is not necessary, as was taught by the teachers of a bygone generation, but the hand sufficiently large to let the eye easily see the formation of the letters. Some recommend pencilling, afterwards to be gone over with ink, others decompose the characters into their elements; then synthetically the child combines these into letters, and writing is taught. As a child has little sympathy with portions of letters, many do not consider the plan interesting, and therefore not advisable. Writing is a species of drawing, and the pupil, some argue, can imitate a letter or word at once without decomposing it into elements, which present no interesting features to him. The usual way is to write parts of letters, then words and sentences. These different methods may be successful in practice according to the zeal of their advocates. As before remarked, earnestness combined with cheerfulness and judicious management, will bring success to almost any method. The elements of success in writing appear to be, *imitation* combined with *intelligence*, *gradation*, then freedom, and afterwards sufficient application of writing to useful purposes. In imitation, the pupil may be allowed to copy the outlines of letters and simple words, with a black-lead pencil; the premature use of ink is often discouraging. Half-text seems about the size which shows the exact form of the letters accurately, and not too large for young hands deficient in firmness. Small hand comes soon after and needs not be too long deferred, in which size alone it is useful as applied to other instruction. Common letters, as in reading, are taken up before capitals.

The elements are the straight line, the straight line with the curve, the full curve as in O, the simple line and loop as in g. As more interest is attached to words they should be formed as soon as possible, also simple sentences. The capitals are afterwards introduced. Their elements first as in Mr. Foster's copy books. As young hands are easily fatigued, two short lessons for junior classes are to be preferred to one long one. The black-board may be freely used, as giving full scope to exhibit proportion and distance. Copy-books with head lines are now generally preferred. The argument against them is, that pupils imitate the first line or so, and gradually imitate their own writing towards the end. To remedy this a second head-line has been introduced in the middle of the page. Another suggestion is to have fewer lines and these longer.

INSTRUCTION.—The teacher gives instruction aided by the head-line and black-board, as models; and questions the children as to relative lengths, &c. During writing lessons he must be vigilant as to faults, pointing to the model before them and guiding the hand if necessary. Collective demonstration and individual correction are always necessary in class teaching.

It has been urged that the writing exercises be not too formal, but that the scholar should now apply what he has learned to a useful purpose.

Transcribing and dictation may be employed with the more advanced; not only to teach spelling but to produce facility in writing. Small hand may now be introduced.

BUSINESS HAND.—The school hand must now be applied to business. Rapidity is necessary, but not at the expense of legibility. The pupil may be gradually broken into this by causing him to write whole words without lifting the pen. The change must be gradual, or the hand may be broken down and spoiled. Writing without lines can afterwards be introduced.