

Another very marked error in the modern mode of teaching both modern and ancient language lies in assigning too much time and too early a time to the writing of exercises. The absurdity of writing sentences in a tongue before attaining a familiarity, by reading or hearing native authors, with its usages and idioms, is curiously illustrated in a recent serious attempt to give the Portuguese in Brazil "a new guide to English;" the English having been written by Portuguese, and being much less intelligible to an Englishman than Portuguese itself. Writing exercises in a tongue should be postponed until the student is familiar with the style of several native authors, has learned something of the grammar, and has committed to memory many passages in both poetry and prose. No preparation for writing Latin and Greek can be so good as the reading of Cicero and Xenophon; and this is true, not only with reference to the study of the classic authors, but it holds also of a more temporary preparation. That is to say, if a student is compelled to write an exercise, and has a reasonable time allowed in which to write it, he will find it to his advantage to spend the first half of that time in the rapid, cursory reading of a classic author in the language writing upon some similar topic.

These views are not new; they have been frequently urged by the best writers upon education. "The only way," says Professor Conant, "to impress upon the mind of a pupil the genius of a foreign tongue, is to impress upon it the phraseology of native speakers and writers. The habit of conception in conformity with the models thus furnished will follow of itself. The practice of expressing English conceptions in the words of a foreign language for the purpose of learning it, is not only useless, but positively injurious." Yet this positively injurious method has been of late years made a prominent feature in the teaching both of ancient and modern tongues, to the great detriment of English and American learning.

The natural mode of learning a new language by a direct attack upon the works of native authors, committing poems, and finer passages of prose, to memory, and endeavoring by incessant comparisons with the context, to elucidate the meaning without the aid of the lexicon, not only gives the pupil the ability to read the new tongue in much less time than the grammar and exercise book manner, but it furnishes a vastly better gymnastic for the mind, stimulates the pupil to more original thought, and gives him greater confidence and freedom.

We trust that a reaction has already begun, and that we may soon see the day return when classic writers of Latin, Greek, German and French literature will occupy more of the pupil's time while studying those languages, than he shall give to English or American writers on grammar; all the processes of learning will then be easier and all the uses of the knowledge more speedily obtained.

THOMAS HILL.

The subscribers, members of the Committee, finding President Hill's paper to be full of useful and timely suggestions, recommend its publication.

THEODORE D. WOOLSEY.  
B. SEARS.

—Massachusetts Teacher.

### SCHOOLS WITHOUT THE ROD.

THE following letter, written at the request of the President of the Philadelphia School Board, by Mr. W. H. Lauderbach, Principal of one of the graded Grammar Schools of that city, will be read with interest. All may not be able to sympathize with every statement made, but the experience detailed is valuable. The statement that corporal punishment is degrading to teacher and pupil appears rather broad. We admit there may be degradation to both in a majority of cases; but there certainly are times when the infliction of corporal punishment becomes a duty. We have no houses of correction to which we can send refractory pupils. Even were such the case, it would be better that most of such pupils be retained at school by a judicious exercise of the power to punish. But corporal punishment should be the teacher's "strange work." Probably many teachers use it too much. Other things being equal, "the

minimum of punishment is the maximum of discipline." We have no doubt that there are many schools in Nova Scotia, schools of the first order, where corporal punishment is very rare or even unknown.

DEAR SIR,—In response to your request that I should give you my views in regard to the practicability and expediency of the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools, I have endeavored, as well as my limited time has allowed, to submit to you some deductions and opinions, based upon an experience of the past fourteen years, during which time I have dispensed entirely with the use of such punishment in the schools under my charge.

Having formed the opinion that the use of the rod, as a means of enforcing discipline and industry, was neither necessary nor desirable, and that the best results could be obtained by other and milder measures, I broached the subject to my Committee, and, having obtained plenary powers in regard to the substitutes which I was to adopt in the place of the abandoned weapon, I commenced the trial of an experiment which I have never since had occasion to regret.

Though the proposition met with the entire approbation of the Committee, yet it was considered a hazardous one, and likely, in its execution, to be fraught with much trouble to them, in the multitudinous cases of discipline which, they feared, would be brought before them at their weekly meetings; so that while I was left untrammelled in respect to the means I should adopt, it was recommended that the change should be a gradual one, and that no immediate notification of it should be given to the pupils. Having formed an entirely different view of the subject, I announced my intention, in a brief address to the pupils, in which I asked their aid in carrying out my design.

With respect to the large majority of the boys, I had no apprehension whatever, as to trouble, but as there were many in attendance who had been accustomed, at home, to no other argument than that conveyed by the rod, I anticipated some difficulty at first with them. I trusted however almost entirely to reasoning and persuasion, and rarely failed to convince a boy that his interest and happiness in the school depended upon a faithful observance of its rules.

In a school, consisting of nearly three hundred pupils, coming from every grade in society, from the highest to the lowest, there must necessarily be many apparently naturally intractable boys, but I soon found that it was with just such boys that the good effects of the change were most plainly visible; and the experience of a few weeks satisfied me that in the case of many such seemingly incorrigible offenders the fault was not so much in them as in the unwise treatment and unfavorable influences to which they were subjected at home. In every such case, when persuasion and admonition failed to effect a reform, I made use of the power vested in me, by the Committee, and suspended the boy, until an interview could be obtained with his parent or guardian, whose co-operation I endeavored to secure.

At the sacrifice of some time outside of school hours in receiving visits, or calling myself upon such as were prevented by circumstances from coming to the school, I became more or less personally acquainted with the parents, and soon found that acquaintance to be of great advantage in maintaining discipline in the school-room and industry in study both there and at home.

I would earnestly recommend every teacher to try the plan of making the acquaintance of the parents of his pupils, more particularly in the case of those who are inclined to be troublesome. It may at first be somewhat burdensome, and require additional sacrifices of time and labor in a profession the duties of which are admitted to be already sufficiently onerous; but he will find it of so much benefit in removing almost every cause of misunderstanding and want of proper co-operation, that he will not regret the half hour per day required to accomplish this object.

In my own case, I devote a certain time each day, towards the close of the morning session (at which time the boys under my immediate charge are engaged in work which does not require any aid from me), to the reception of visitors who desire to see me in regard to the progress and standing of their children. This includes, not merely cases of suspension; as all parents who have any misgivings in regard to the conduct of their children, or who are dissatisfied with their treatment in school, are cordially invited to visit us; and in no case is a courteous explanation of the real facts