

**Correct English in the Lower Grades.—III.**

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In the last article it was shown how children can be taught to reproduce short stories, with the help of questions. This help should gradually be withdrawn. Little by little, less important questions may be omitted, until only two or three leading ones are given. Then questions may be abandoned altogether, and a short analysis of the story substituted.

For instance, suppose the story is the well-known one of King Alfred and the Cakes. After it has been told, the children should tell it orally in their own words, one taking up the story at the point where another leaves off. Then some such outline as this should be put on the board:—

King Alfred fights to defend his county—he loses a battle, escapes and wanders about, hiding from his enemies.

He comes to a farm house—the farmer receives him kindly and lets him stay. The people at the farm do not know who he is.

One day the farmer's wife is baking cakes. She asks King Alfred to watch them. The King is thinking how to save his country. He forgets about the cakes. They burn.

The farmer's wife comes back and scolds him. The king's soldiers come to look for him. The farmer's wife finds that it is the king whom she has scolded and frightened. The king is kind to her and laughs about the scolding.

Each group of notes should have a separate paragraph. Show that we make a new paragraph when we begin to tell about something new. Insist upon each paragraph being properly indented. This will not be a stumbling block if children have been used to indenting their disconnected sentences.

The outlines should gradually get more and more scanty, as the questions did, until finally only a few words are given for each paragraph. The analysis will then read something like this:—

King Alfred—his wars and wanderings.

The farmhouse.

The burnt cakes.

The scolding.

The surprise—the king's kindness.

This sort of work, increasing difficulty and variety, may now go on throughout the school course, until it culminates in the historical essay written from lecture notes, of the High School.

After the early stages, it should be connected, where possible, with other work—history, geography and literature lessons, will supply stories in

plenty. But at first, and until some facility in writing has been acquired, the giving of information should not be made an object. Children will write so readily on a story that they like, that the chief aim should be to secure their interest. It is not always easy to find the right kind of story for the purpose. An excellent collection is to be found in the "Handbook of English Composition Exercises," published by Blackie & Sons, London, at one shilling. This book contains also some admirable hints on teaching composition. Another very useful set of longer stories, all on one subject, is "Favourite Greek Myths," by L. S. Hyde, D. C. Heath & Co., Boston, 50 cents. Sykes' "English Composition" also has very good stories, with outlines for reproduction.

Parallel with practice in reproduction, should run some attempts at original composition. Begin, as before, with short, simple, disconnected sentences. From writing sentences containing given words, it is an easy transition to a set of sentences on a given subject. Tell the little ones to write five or ten sentences on, *e. g.* A picnic. A pet animal. What I did yesterday. A snowstorm. The sea-shore. What you find in the woods.

Some child will be pretty sure to ask if what they write must be true. This will be a real trouble to some children, and it should not be made light of. Show them that it is a kind of game, as when they play "house" or a game that begins "Let's pretend," and that if they are writing about their own doings, they may tell what they *would have liked* to do or see, without fear of being untruthful.

Before going on to connected narrative, teach the children to try to avoid repetition. They will probably want to begin all their sentences in the same way. "Then I went to school," "Then I came home," "Then I had my tea," and so on. Give a short lesson on this point, getting them, if you can, to suggest various beginning, and it will soon become an ambition to see in how many different ways they can open their sentences.

How much time and attention should be given to original composition is a matter to be decided by the abilities and tastes of the class, and the judgment of the teacher. Some children will welcome an opportunity to express themselves and pour forth their fancies and opinions in most fluent fashion. With others—with most, I think, of our Canadian children—it is a painful and some-