

PENMANSHIP, AND HOW IT IS BEST TAUGHT.

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HANDWRITING is not an accomplishment for the few but a necessity for all, and, hence, how it is best taught is a practical issue in practical education. There are four methods of teaching penmanship which are widely different from each other, and which comprehend all those having any hold on our modern educational system. The first we shall distinguish as the imitative; the second as the movement; the third as the natural; and the fourth as the analytic methods.

The imitative is not a modern product but still has a strong lease of life. Its central idea is that writing is a purely imitative art, and that the constant repetition of perfect models will invariably produce good handwriting. There are four main defects inseparably connected with this method. First, it suppresses all individuality. The second objection is that it calls for no special thought on the part of the pupil, and does not strengthen or bring out independent effort. It has no educating force. The third objection is that it furnishes the pupil with no gauge of criticism or comparison, and hence with no adequate guide to the construction of the letters and the improvement of his handwriting. The fourth objection is that it requires none of that vigorous energy of teaching imperatively demanded in other branches of education. This, the one only branch which is supposed by many to require no teaching at all, and this false idea that the art of penmanship can be self-taught, depending upon imitation rather than upon in-

struction, has misled a large corps of teachers to guide an army of uneducated pupils into the blind acquisition of some sort of a cramped hand writing, the result of which is that many of our business men and teachers (those especially who should write well) are suffering from it to-day.

On the other hand we have the movement method, the fundamental theory of which is, that all forms of the script character are but the result of certain free movements of the hand and arm. The natural deduction, therefore, is, that if the muscles are fully developed and carefully trained in movement, the rapid and easy execution of the script letters will flow therefrom as a matter of course. That the written forms are the result of certain laws of movement none will deny. But movement in penmanship is absolutely subservient to form. This will be apparent if we consider the identity of each of our written signs. It is the individual character of the forms and not the movement which preserves to us the identity of the letters. The pupils must have a definite objective point at which to aim, namely, the visible forms of the copy; and having been given the correct position and general directions of movement in making the particular forms, the only way by which he can educate the muscles and cultivate the movement is by continued and intelligent practice of those forms, whether it be a movement exercise or a letter.

We now come to the youngest child of modern thought in penmanship, *the*