

Practical Education.

HOW TO TEACH DRAWING IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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I.

CAN ALL PUPILS BE TAUGHT TO DRAW? A great many teachers say that the ability to draw is "a natural gift which cannot be acquired by those who are not born with it." This opinion, if given by teachers of training and experience, who are capable of *teaching* the subject, would have some weight; but the evidence of all such teachers in all countries goes unmistakably to prove that "every sane and physically sound person is able to learn how to draw." The reason that so many regard it as a natural gift is obvious. In most schools where pupils have been allowed to draw, they have merely been supplied with copies and told to imitate them. A few years ago writing was taught (?) exactly in this manner, and in many schools there is no improvement even now. Every teacher who thus neglects to teach writing, says "the ability to write is a natural gift, &c." If, under such circumstances, a pupil does learn to draw or write respectably, the teacher is forced to the conclusion that his ability must have come to him naturally. How else could it come? The teacher knows very well that it was not communicated or developed by him; and, lest he might be held responsible for the failures of the many, he wisely takes no credit for the success of the few, but shirks all responsibility in the matter. Such a course is highly improper. It is unjust to the capacities of the pupils and the pupils themselves. This is shown to be true by the fact, that in schools where writing is taught on correct principles the pupils in the highest classes often write so much alike, that it is difficult for any but a practised eye to distinguish the penmanship of one pupil from that of another. A uniformity of excellence nearly as surprising may be secured in the work of a class in drawing, if the subject is properly taught. If pupils, when studying arithmetic or grammar, were treated in a manner similar to that indicated above, the ability to acquire a knowledge of these subjects would be "a natural gift" also, and one possessed by a small number, when compared with those who have a gift for drawing or writing. The principles of drawing are as definite as those of arithmetic, and no more practice is needed to secure a ready application of a principle in the one case than in the other. All pupils cannot become artists of great merit, neither can they all become mathematicians of a high order. To become an artist a pupil requires special genius; to learn to draw it is only necessary that certain ideas be fixed clearly in the mind, and the eye and hand trained to transfer these ideas to paper.

WHO SHOULD TEACH DRAWING? Perhaps nothing has done so much to prevent the successful introduction of this subject into public schools as the idea, that no one but a skilled artist is able to teach it. This is a great mistake. There would be very few teachers in any country if a similar principle was carried out in connection with the other subjects taught in public schools. If, for instance, no one but a great mathematician were allowed to teach arithmetic there would be very little arithmetic taught, and the probabilities are that little would be badly taught to junior pupils. The best and most experienced special teacher of drawing in America—Mr. Walter Smith, of Boston—says: "I have had under my continued observation for a long period some classes in schools which have been taught by their own teachers, and other classes taught by visiting teachers. From practical experience I prefer that the teaching of drawing should be undertaken by the regular school-teachers themselves, not only because it is more economical for the public, but because it is the only possible way to reach every child in the

schools, and secure the most efficient instruction as well." In teaching a drawing lesson it is not so necessary to be able to present a finished picture to a class, as to be able to explain the principles in connection with it. The construction or guide lines, and where to draw them; the parts to sketch first; the comparative measurements, and how to make them; the lines which should be light and those which should be heavy; those which should be similar in length, direction, or curve, and the best means to adopt in order to secure the required similarity; the convergence or divergence of certain lines, and the reasons for their so running; the fact that lines of equal length in any object must be represented by lines of different lengths in the drawing, and the reasons for these differences: these are the points which pupils should have clearly impressed on their minds before they commence to draw any subject, and in impressing these and similar ideas it is necessary to be a teacher, not an artist.

NECESSITY FOR A MANUAL OR TEXT-BOOK IN DRAWING. No teacher can teach any subject except he has a knowledge of its principles. These principles may be learned from a living teacher or from books. All teachers have not received instruction in even the elementary principles of drawing. Hence the necessity for a good Manual on this subject, containing not only simple explanations of the principles to be taught, but also specific and complete directions as to the method of teaching them. This indispensable requisite has been supplied by the gentleman above named. He has published three Manuals—Primary, Intermediate, and Advanced. The Intermediate is best adapted to the requirements of the Public Schools of Ontario. From this book any practical teacher can obtain all the information concerning principles and methods necessary to enable him to teach drawing as he does any other subject.

MISTAKES IN TEACHING DRAWING. 1. *Neglecting to Teach Elementary Principles.* The ability to draw does not depend on mere hand skill. It is of much greater importance to have clear ideas in the mind regarding the subject to be drawn. A good deal of teaching should be done in drawing before the pupils attempt to draw at all. Object lessons in drawing should be given in the junior classes, to familiarize the pupils with the technical terms used in drawing, such as vertical, oblique, and horizontal lines; curves of different kinds, and geometric figures. A very little child will readily learn the names of these figures, if the teacher clearly presents them on the black-board. It has to learn the names of hundreds of things between the ages of two and four years, and it will learn the name of a triangle or an ellipse just as readily as the name of a cupboard or a table, or any other article, if the triangle or ellipse be placed properly before it. Of course, no teacher of any thought would try to teach geometrical definitions to little children. What is necessary is that they understand clearly the meaning and application of the terms used.

2. *Teaching the same subjects to all irrespective of their age and advancement.* "The great secret of teaching drawing well is the grading of the exercises, so that no element necessary to the understanding of it shall be left out, no exercises be unreasonably difficult or a heavy tax upon the pupils, and every fresh example contain some new feature of interest or vary an already familiar subject. Many, if not all, of the difficulties arising in the teaching of this subject will, on close scrutiny, be found to proceed from a teacher's first taking up the middle of the subject instead of the beginning, or the pupil being required to do work involving a knowledge of preliminary exercises which he has had no opportunity of acquiring."

3. *Want of practice in the elements.* When a child is taught to make a certain principle in writing, it has to practice that princi-