

THE

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## DRAWING IN SCHOOLS.

By the direction of the Council of Public Instruction drawing materials have been placed within the reach of our public schools, at a trifling cost. It is hoped that Inspectors will lose no opportunity of bringing before teachers, trustees, and people, the importance of introducing into their schools the art of drawing, as a regular branch of school work. And we would here state, lest some teacher is disposed to say, "I cannot teach drawing, the subject is of no interest to me," that the instructions which accompany every package of the prescribed models, are so simple and full that any teacher of ordinary ability can take up the study and readily instruct pupils without the aid of a teacher of drawing. A child can understand the lessons with little help. We do not mean that teachers should not set themselves to master the principles of drawing in order to teach the art effectively, but we do mean, that the old idea of some special gift being required to comprehend these principles and reduce them to practice is an erroneous one, and should not be allowed to deter any teacher from addressing himself at once to this branch of common school instruction. We think that it is as easy to teach children the skilful use of the pencil as it is to teach them the use and practice of the pen. There exists no possible argument to show that a child cannot as easily and as readily comprehend, and mark out upon slate and paper, the four lines forming a *square*, the three forming a *triangle*, and the continuous line forming a *circle*, as he can the forms of the capital letters H, A, and O, which they somewhat resemble. These figures comprehend the basis or structure, so to speak, of the entire art of drawing. All its minutiae of detail are but variations of these simple forms.

To this day, a notion prevails among many persons, that drawing is at best a mere accomplishment. This is a strange mistake. Drawing is the handmaid of all other branches, both in the process of acquiring and in that of imparting. In its first stage, it furnishes some of the most appropriate lessons for the elementary school, whilst more advanced stages furnish an equally appropriate study for the Preparatory and the High school. The forms of the alphabet are most quickly and pleasantly acquired by the use of the slate and pencil. Elementary drawing lessons form the most natural introduction to drawing. Map drawing on the slate, black-board, and on paper, is an essential feature of the method pursued by the most successful teachers of geography. Lessons on the natural sciences are best taught when the pupils are made to produce accurate drawings of the plants, animals, minerals, and other objects studied. Skill in drawing is a necessity to the architect, the engineer, and the artist; and it is almost equally necessary to the teacher, the farmer, the miner, and the surgeon. A few strokes of the pencil afford explanation where language fails. There is no situation in life in which drawing would fail to prove a most useful auxiliary. What a source of pleasure to one visiting objects of interest to be able by means of the pencil to bring away that which will recall to the mind and the eye, at a future day, those objects in all their truth, freshness, and reality!

But beyond the advantages already suggested as accruing from a practical knowledge of the principles of drawing, there are others of sufficient importance to warrant all earnest educators in striving to secure a place for this branch in every school. To draw well one must observe closely. The eye must be trained to see, and the mind to reflect, while patience must be exercised in the execution. These are ends to be aimed at in education, and each is compassed, in a high degree, by this study. Even where a good degree of excellence in execution is not reached, that which is higher may be attained. According to Blair, taste consists in the power of judging, genius in the power of executing. It can hardly be questioned that the art of drawing may be made a very powerful auxiliary in the aesthetic department of education. By its instrumentality, natural sensibility is subjected to culture; and the beautiful is discerned, judged of, and enjoyed. This seems to be the natural tendency of the practice of the art. The pupil sees objects with new eyes. Observation is stimulated by teaching the eye to perceive and the hand to reproduce. The exquisite forms of nature are constantly brought under scrutiny, and the learner gradually, but most surely, experiences a refinement and elevation of taste. This power of mind, once awakened, hears the voices of a thousand teachers, else dumb. Light and shade evermore lend eloquent expression to form, as they play about its calm and silent existence, embodied in the rock and wave, the tree and flower. The lines of beauty that glide along the falling water, or repose upon the sloping hills and hollows, or for a day, stand inimitably chiselled in the piles of drifted snow, if viewed with studious eyes, are subtle refiners of that sensibility which delights in ease and grace of outline. No other instructor is so wise and many-sided as nature, and her pupils are ever rewarded by the perception of new beauties the more closely they strive to imitate her. An intelligent practice of the principles of drawing requires and begets this careful study of nature, and when drawing rises above the sphere of an imitative art into that of a creative art, no study can furnish a severer or better culture for the imagination, the judgment, and the taste. This higher department of the art, is not, in a large degree, within the range of the common school, but its humbler departments are open to all who choose to enter and enjoy the advantages they so abundantly confer.

We have already stated that drawing should be taught in every grade of schools. Children should begin to learn to draw as soon as they enter the school-room, and thenceforward its practice should be regularly imposed. The following initiatory exercises in drawing are for the most part condensed from Wickersham's treatise upon instruction in the arts. There are two methods of teaching drawing. The first begins with a straight line, as the simplest element used in drawing, and is called the *Abstract Method*; the second begins with objects, or the pictures of objects, and is called the *Concrete Method*.

**THE ABSTRACT METHOD.**—All objects that can be represented by drawing them are bounded either by straight or curved lines. The straight line is the more simple of the two, and teachers generally begin their instruction with