

6. Finally, when you have found one with proper qualification, do not try to get him for nothing. Do not ask him what salary he wants, but offer him fair and liberal terms. If he can do better elsewhere, do not let a few paltry dollars stand in the way of the children's welfare. Their future success in life may depend to a great extent on the choice you are now making, and this thought should never be absent from your mind. You may be denounced by the ignorant, the selfish, or the unthinking as extravagant. Pay no attention to such criticisms. The discharge of your duty to those entrusted to your care is of far more importance both to you and to them.



COMPOSITION.

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Composition, in the sense in which we use the term in schools, means the expression of our own thoughts in writing. I wish to extend it to the expression of our thoughts in spoken as well as written language. A great many people who talk tolerably well profess themselves unable to write a letter or an essay. The reason is, not that they lack either the ability to write or the knowledge of what to write, but they have not written often enough. We learn to do a thing well only by doing it often, and those who write seldom need not expect to write well. This idea will point out to the teacher a method of lessening this trouble, i.e., frequent practice in writing down one's own thoughts.

I shall in this paper try to indicate some of the means at the disposal of teachers by which the composition of pupils in our schools can be improved, and thus the composition of the future men and women.

In order to write well two things at least are indispensable, viz., the possession of ideas and the expression of them in language. Both are necessary. With the former I shall deal but little, as it falls within the province of education generally to impart knowledge, train the observation, and develop a taste for reading—these being the chief means of getting ideas. To express our thoughts well in language, we must have observed very closely the different ways of expressing the same idea, so as to be able to choose the best. Then we must have a full and ready memory, and be able to select the best form of expressing the same idea. Generally, then, the teacher can best prepare his pupils to write well by teaching them to observe closely in their reading the way in which a thought is expressed, suggesting other modes, or having the pupils suggest them, getting their opinion as to the best, and finally giving his own opinion with reasons. Something can be done in this direction even before the pupil can read well.

The children who enter the lowest classes of our schools have some knowledge of words, and can compose, whether correctly or not will be determined by the correctness of the language they have heard used by their parents, playmates and others. They learn to speak by imitating the sounds they hear, and it is not likely the imitation will be more perfect than the model. When the pupil's language is incorrect, and I think it generally is, it can only be improved by the good example of the teacher, and constant care on his or her part to correct *wrong expressions*, i.e., vulgar or ungrammatical expressions, whenever they are heard. In addition to this the child should be required to repeat frequently the correct form, so that both ear and tongue may be familiar with it. Some children, however, are so timid and retiring that the teacher seldom hears them speak at all. I think these should be encouraged to talk by familiar questions on the various objects they see in the school-room, on their way home, &c. The reading

lesson is a valuable help in this exercise, not only in the lower classes but in all, as by it the pupils gain a knowledge of a large number of new words. These require to be thoroughly explained to the pupil, so that they really become "signs of ideas" to them, and not merely empty forms and sounds. During this explanation, which can best be given by means of familiar questions and answers, the pupils are connecting the words they are learning with those already known, and are thus improving their ability to compose. Care is here necessary in wording questions, so that the answers may be complete sentences, and not isolated words.

When pupils can write—which in our schools would be in the seventh, possibly eighth division—they may be required to write on slates the answers to the familiar questions on their reading lesson and other subjects. Occasionally they should be asked to write something on some easy subject, such as the "dog," "horse," "street," "school," &c., one sentence being sufficient. Before they write the teacher should ask them a few questions on the subject, to supply some of the class with ideas, for all will not be able to write even a single sentence, and many will not be conscious that they know anything to write. After the sentences have been written, the teacher should look over the slates and point out errors in spelling and language. During the pointing out of errors, the blackboard may be profitably employed for writing the mis-spelled words, so that the eyes of the pupils become accustomed to the *written form* of the words. As many of the criticisms as possible should be heard by the class; a large number, however, must be criticized privately by the teacher in going round to examine slates. For the purpose of impressing the correct mode of expression, the sentences should of course be re-written correctly. I think in these classes I would require the use of only one capital letter, viz.: the pronoun "I," which is so frequently mis-spelled in writing (shall I say *by* by children. For future use, I should ask them to observe in their reading the difference between a letter at the beginning of a sentence and elsewhere. This may be done with advantage with children in the ninth and tenth divisions. There is no time for composition on the time-table of seventh and eighth divisions, but grammar is taken twice a week in seventh. At one of these times composition might be taken with advantage. Composition, and the application of grammar to writing and speaking, is of far more importance than a merely theoretical knowledge of grammatical rules and of parsing.

In the fifth and sixth divisions, the written exercises may be extended to the writing of several sentences about the thing chosen as subject: the teacher, as before, asking a few preliminary questions to make the pupils certain that they know something of the subject. The pupils then write on books a few sentences on the subject, care of course being taken in the penmanship as well as in the composition. The books are then collected, afterwards examined by the teacher, and the errors marked. In marking, the best plan is to underline words and phrases which are wrong, and refer to the particular kind of mistake by certain characters placed on the margin. I think the best marks for that purpose are those recommended in *Douglas' Composition Blanks*. At next composition time, the teacher writes a few sentences on the board containing the most common errors made by pupils, and by a few questions gets the class to criticize them, and with very little real help they will generally correct the mistakes. In this way I think the teacher will best teach the proper form of words, and impress it on the minds of his pupils. After about half the time has been spent in this manner, the pupils re-write their compositions, making the necessary corrections as indicated by the marks in the margin.

In order to give practice in letter-writing, probably the most