

water with it. Eva may come and paint this time. Willie may paint. Who can tell me the color of this cube?

*Class.*—The cube is yellow.

*T.*—All who can tell me the three colors we have talked about may come and stand beside me.

*Ralph.*—We have talked about red, blue, and yellow.

*Class.*—We have talked about red, yellow, and blue.

*T.*—You may all take your seats, and write the word yellow ten times and number each one, and see who will write it best and make the best figures.—“*Ida*,” in *Primary Teacher*.

### SCHOOL CHILDREN AND THEIR EYESIGHT.

An interesting lecture (writes the Geneva correspondent of the *Times*) on the “Effect of Reading and Writing on the Eyesight of Young Children,” was given a short time ago, at Berne, by Professor Pflüger, a great authority on the subject. The lecturer first called attention to the portentous fact that more than one-half of 45,000 children lately examined in Germany were found to be suffering from defective vision. In some schools the proportion of the short-sighted was as high as 70 and 80 per cent. In the Heidelberg Gymnasium it was 100 per cent. every lad in the school had bad eyesight. According to Professor Pflüger, this lamentable state of things arises from several causes— from insufficiently lighted school-rooms, bad print and bad paper, the method of writing in vogue, and ill-contrived desks and forms. An evil equally great, if not greater than all these combined, and resulting in something more than defective vision, is the burdening of children with too many lessons, and the consequent restriction of their hours of play. In order to solve the vexed question of the influence of German calligraphy on the eyes of those who adopt it, the Government of Württemberg, some time ago, appointed a commission, consisting of three schoolmasters and three physicians, to investigate the matter, and make a report. In the opinion of these gentlemen, the mere writing is least among the causes which unfavourably affect children's eyesight. They found that, while comparatively few children write with their backs bent towards the left, fully 80 per cent. give their backs in writing a right inclination. The latter position tends to produce a permanent elevation of the right shoulder, and, if persisted in, curvature of the spine. In the schools they visited the commissioners actually found 20 per cent. of the boys, and from 30 to 40 per cent. of the girls, suffering from more or less pronounced curvature due to this cause. The difference between the two sexes is probably due to the fact that lads, besides being more energetic in play, are more rationally clad than girl scholars. As to position in writing, the distance between the desk and the eyes ought to be about 25 centimetres; yet it was rarely, indeed, that the commissioners met with any children who could keep their eyes at this the normal distance from the paper. Many of them find it necessary to bring their faces within seven centimetres (2.75 inches) of their copy-books. The general conclusion of the commissioners, as of Professor Pflüger, is that, of all the evils enumerated, the worst, and those most in need of reform, are the seats and desks at present in use. The professor further remarked that only 10 per cent. of the children examined were naturally short-sighted, and that, as among wild races defective vision is almost entirely unknown, the question is peculiar to modern civilization and the existing system of teaching. In conclusion Herr Pflüger expressed the fear that he was like one crying in the wilderness, the prevailing tendency being to lay on the children of this generation still heavier burdens, and force their minds to the lasting injury of their bodies.—*School Guardian*.

### READING.—SCRIPT.\*

The written word to the little child has no element of attraction. It is, on the other hand, a repelling object. I have tried to show how the difficulties of learning the first words may be overcome by the stimulus of the idea in acts of association. It is a matter of great importance to steadily overcome the repulsion occasioned by the written word. This repulsion will grow less and less, and the acts of association will be made easier, by continued familiarity with the new forms, if the interest and the appetite of the child for words is sedulously cultivated, through the pleasure that the objects and pictures excite. All words are made, as you know, of only twenty-six different forms. The less the mental action it requires to see these forms, the easier will be the acts of association. It is important to impress these forms upon the mind in an easy, natural, semi-unconscious way. As I have shown, the best possible way to impress the word forms upon the mind is to write them—to make them. We hear the objection very often that a child does not learn the letters by the new method. He does not learn their names, but he learns *them* by continually making them. What is the best proof that any object is clearly in the mind? A word description is weak beside the representation of the object in drawing. This brings us to the question so often mooted, whether we should use print at the beginning, or print and script, or script alone. I will try and present the arguments in favor of using script alone, not denying, however, that script and print may be used at the same time with good effect. When two or more ways of teaching are presented, out of which may be defended by good reason, reasons that do not directly violate a principle, the question of choice then becomes a question of economy. If we begin with print, it certainly fixes the printed forms in the mind by reproducing them on the slates, so that if the teacher uses print alone at the beginning, she should train the children to make the printed forms. But, making the printed forms is not a means of expression that a child ever uses after the first few months, or the first year. Writing is the second great means of language expression. It should be put into the power of the child just as soon as possible, in order that he may express his thoughts as freely with the pencil as with the tongue. This fact needs no argument. Written expression is as great a help to mental development as oral expression; and, indeed, in many respects, it stands higher. Written expression is silent, the child must give his own thought, in his own way; thus developing individuality. The greatest difficulty in all teaching in our graded schools is the sinking of the individual in the mass. In written expression we find a means of reaching individuality through the mass. Why not, then, begin at the beginning with this mode of expression that the child must use all his life, and every day of his life?

Why not teach printing and script together? Because it violates the rule of perfect simplicity. Train the child to use one set of forms, made in one way, and one alone. In my experience, extending over eleven years of supervision of primary schools, I have never known the failure of a single class to change from script to print, easily and readily, in one or two days. What, then, is the use of print at first? What logical reason can be given for its use, if the step from script to print is so very simple? The writing of the words by the child on blackboard, slates, and paper, furnishes a vast amount of very interesting and profitably busy work. In writing the first word the child begins spelling in the only true way. In writing the first sentence the child makes the capitals and punctuation marks, and if he is never allowed to make a form incorrectly, it will be almost impossible for him ever to

\* From Col. Parker's “Talks on Teaching.” Kellogg & Co., New York; W. J. Gage and Company, Toronto. Price, \$1.00.