

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

WRITING is a mode of expression. It is a mode of expression with which nature does not freely endow us at birth; on the contrary, its development demanded a tremendous expenditure of energy by the race and its acquisition makes fairly large demands upon the individual. It must be learned; and it is the business of educational psychology to discover how it can be most easily and economically learned by the child. Many of the best psychologists of recent times have brought their intelligence and industry to bear upon this problem, and the results which they have obtained are of sufficient importance to justify the compilation of their data and an attempt to apply their findings in a practical way to the problems which beset the teacher of writing.

The earlier investigators of handwriting confined themselves closely to the act of writing, devoting their attention to an analysis of the movements used. Because of their labors it is now possible to state in a fairly authoritative fashion just what is the best type of movement and how it may be most easily acquired.

Until some device for the accurate measurement of quality in writing was devised, it was almost impossible to investigate the product of the writing act with any degree of accuracy. Thorndike made this possible by his Graphometer. A new era of investigation opened then, and following his lead Ayres, Freeman, and others have constructed more or less efficient scales for the measurement of handwriting. While not as much work as could be desired has been done with these scales in the way of school surveys, comparison of methods, and the solving of various problems in writing, still sufficient has been accomplished to justify the publication of a book which attempts to bring together the main facts in a way which makes an intelligent and comprehensive view of writing and its problems possible.