

INITIATORY METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

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Notwithstanding all that has been said and published upon this subject, many teachers fail to communicate to their pupils the power of composing their mother tongue with ease and accuracy. Much time is spent in teaching grammar from text books, and in training children to analyze and parse sentences, imparting ability to pull down, but doing little to help them to build up. If half the pains were bestowed upon synthesis that there is upon analysis, the same expertness would be exhibited in the one as in the other.

The methods I am about to give a short exposition of, have from long experience been found to be very effective; children enter upon and continue to engage in them with avidity and delight, and if the teacher will give them a fair trial, he will be astonished at the results. The writer is not the originator of them, they have been gathered from various sources, or suggested to him by kind friends.

OBJECT AND MEANS OF COMPOSITION.

The object of composition is to give expression to thought; thoughts are acquired by observation, reading and reflection. Young people at an early age express orally their thoughts and feelings with a wonderful degree of fluency and correctness, an ability which is in striking contrast to the difficulty experienced when at a later period they are required to engage in written composition. Whence—it may be asked—this disparity? The power of utterance is in most cases voluble; how does the presentation of pen and ink lay an interdict upon the power? Stop effectually the quoting stream of the living voice? This is both an interesting and important enquiry. Look at Virago as she stands with her hands upon her sides, pouring forth her bitter invective, unrestrained by modesty or any other decent check. Thrust into her hands some knitting needles and worsted, and require her without delay to cast on forty or fifty stitches; the hands are removed from her sides, the lips are closed, the direction and glare of her eyes are altered, the current of feeling and thought has been arrested and changed, and they have to be con-