

their English writing must be at once reduced to a small minority who cannot interfere with the growth of a good public spirit. That there will not remain a small residuum of intractables is not pretended. But these should be the intractables in other departments as well. The presence of a few such laggards is a perennial fact in all classes, and teachers know how to make their account with them. But the public sentiment of the class must make for excellence. If not alacrity and gaiety of heart, at any rate sturdy resolution and energetic effort, must become the note of the composition exercise.

To bring such results to pass is not altogether easy. If the teacher of English has many pupils, he will have, unless he guards against such a catastrophe—so much written work thrown upon him that he *cannot* read it all nor could read it all were the days twice as long and his nerves and his eyes twice as enduring. Against this imposition he must strictly protect himself.

Many are the devices that may be used to improve the composition work in the earlier high school classes. The points to be kept in view are,—to exact mental effort and careful attention on the part of the pupil, and to leave the teacher time to read every paper and to note every elementary fault in it. Suppose the method indicated below be given a trial.

Announce to the class two or three days in advance that on such a day they will write a little composition; and do not leave them in doubt about the topics on which they are to write. For instance, tell them to describe something they know from their own direct observation—something they saw this summer, for example. Forbid them to recount anything they have read. They will commit things to memory if you do not head them off. Forbid them to write on any

school theme. In short, the material for their exercise must be got from their own experience. It must not have been conveyed to them already in language. Give them specimens of the kind of subjects they are to choose and the kind they are to avoid. Thus you will leave them some responsibility for choosing what they will write about.

In the above suggestions as to themes, it is intended only to show a good way of drawing the limitations for any given occasion. On another occasion some topic from the range of reading may be in place. Here again careful precautions are necessary to secure the indispensable conditions of originality and personal interest in the subject.

Having secured an understanding as to the kind of topic to be chosen, explain to the class that they will have a certain number of minutes, say ten or twelve, in which to write the composition, under your eye, on the appointed day. Tell them they may have one page of ruled letter paper on which to write, and must on no account turn the leaf to write on the other side. You thus limit them in quantity and in time, you secure concentration of effort on a minute area of work, and you prevent dawdling. Each pupil must come somewhere near filling his page.

These preliminaries being fully explained, you go on to direct the class to take as a home lesson—if in your school economy you have home lessons—on that very day, the writing of a first draft of their composition. This they must do with all possible care. They must consult their dictionaries about every word as to whose spelling or meaning they can raise any doubt. They must consider where paragraphs can best be divided. They must decide on the punctuation, and if they are in doubt about any point, they must pursue you or any other