

not now held in its entirety by any considerable number of Educators,—else where would be the need for teaching the subject?—is yet, in a modified form, adhered to by many. That is to say, there are many teachers of Composition who emphasize unduly, in the opinion of the writer, the power of the pupil to discover good modes of expression for himself, and by his own efforts. Practice is within the watchword of progress. In other words, phraseology, sentence building, paragraph building, and all the other named and nameless elements of a good style, are to be evolved from the pupil's inner consciousness, chiefly by his own efforts in combining, grouping and arranging the elementary ideas and thoughts already in his mind, and in finding expression for these by means of his limited stock of language forms. Such aid as the teacher gives is usually mainly in the way of pruning off excrescences of style, or in indicating downright errors in method or form of expression. Added to this, the followers of this method sometimes give more or less aid in the way of outlining the Composition beforehand for the class, and in discussing the rules of paragraph structure, arrangement of the thoughts in the whole essay, and other rhetorical principles,—these latter often in the abstract, rather than as exemplified in some good prose selection.

A question that naturally suggests itself in regard to this method of teaching the subject, is, whether Composition, as an art, differs so much from other arts, that the methods generally followed in acquiring proficiency in these are not available for the student who wishes to obtain the best results in the art of composing. In considering this question, it may be asked, whether it is not true, that, even in the fine arts, and much more so in the ordinary arts of industrial life, the beginner at once

avails himself of the accumulated knowledge of centuries of effort after perfection in that particular line. Do we leave the beginners in Music or in Painting to discover for themselves by practice the laws of harmony, and of perspective? Or do we not rather hasten to give them the best possible instruction on these matters in the earlier part of their training? And so, too, in the industrial arts. And if individuality and freedom of expression in these arts be aimed at, it is recognized that these have their proper place at a later period in the learner's career, and that there is endless opportunity for the exercise of the creative faculty after the higher plane has been reached, where the student can at least get a view of the present boundaries of our knowledge of the art. If, then, imitation plays so large a part in the acquisition of skill in other arts, may we not naturally expect that it will be found almost equally useful in learning the art of expressing our thoughts in words? This is the only conclusion that is at all logical, unless, indeed, we refuse to consider Composition an art in the same sense as the other arts mentioned. However, as spoken language is admittedly acquired by imitation, in its highest as well as its humblest manifestations, it would seem a difficult matter to prove that written language differs so radically from it that the methods of acquisition should for the latter be altogether different from those found most effective in the development of facility in the use of the former. For instance, the awkwardness and narrowness of the forms of expression used by the illiterate person are usually due to the influence of early environment, and it is notorious that such habits of speech are most persistent, even when later in life the person's surroundings have become more favorable to the acquisition of a better style. Here practice, even when there is a voluntary