

after receiving the *spirit* of the answer, stop to instruct the pupil in the proper *letter* of its expression. We pluck the fruit and disregard the flower. An answer should not be rejected if it is right, however crudely expressed, neither should it be finally received till the pupil has been shewn how to clothe and present his idea in the *best* form. I do not say that *all* answers should be, in themselves, complete sentences, but they should be definite, full, and well expressed. I have known teachers, by their manner and remarks, discourage the attempts of pupils to give full and well-composed answers. How little attention our own teachers paid to this subject we well remember. Are we doing any better than they? I shall not go further into the matter of "question and answer" but content myself with the affirmation that pupils, as a rule, are too monosyllabic in their answers and are not sufficiently encouraged to be more elaborate and explicit. [Oral composition is neglected.] There is too much dry "question and answer" and not enough conversation—too much lecture—too much driving *in* and not enough drawing *out*. Pupils should rise in giving their answers as it isolates them from the class and engenders a feeling of self-reliance. At first their ideas, like Nebuchadnezzar's dream, may pass from them, but the practice will be found beneficial in the end. Pupils should be upheld in maintaining their opinions, while their fellows are encouraged to combat them. Those innocent little debates, in class, are worth more than all your learned lectures. So much for oral composition. [Composition is an imitative art.] I now come to what, in my opinion, is the best means of teaching written composition in our schools. I have tried it and know its practical value. Pupils, from the first book to the fifth, should copy the reading lesson, while

on their seats, on their slates, and in recitation, read from their slates. I cannot put this idea too strongly. In the last country school which I taught, some seven years ago, the pupils, during the year, from the highest to the lowest, never read a lesson from their text books, but always from their slates. While one class was reciting, others were preparing, at their seats, for recitation. What did I hope to gain by this? Many things. Imperceptibly the pupils learned to spell every word in the lesson by the only rational method, of writing it; they learned to know the physiognomy of the words, so to speak, and were able to read them better than from the book; they learned to punctuate and use the capitals properly, and that without any dry rules for their guidance; they caught the meaning of what they read the more readily; they learned, in a word, composition from the best models. No, I mistake, our Readers are not examples of classic English, I am sorry to say; but, if they were, the system of copying the reading lessons and reading from the slates, would constitute the finest exercise in composition that can be given. I know systems of punctuation differ, and that almost every writer is a rule unto himself. I have not forgotten the Lord Somebody who published a book, minus all points and capitals, and who, in a fly-leaf at the close gave all the points and capitals he could think of, excusing himself for not having used any of them by saying, "Tastes differ, the reader may pepper and salt to suit himself." Our reading lessons *ought* to be models of good English, and then my rule of copying would hold good. I repeat, *copy the reading lesson on slates and read from them*. I cannot express my opinion on this point too strongly. But you ask, will there never come a time in the pupil's life when the subject of composition must be taken up as a