

WRITING IN OUR SCHOOLS.—The subject of writing is at present exciting much thought among teachers. All methods of teaching this branch, except the employing of professional teachers, have failed, and this is not practical only in a few schools, as the expense is too great. Hence a good writer whose only instructions were obtained in the schools, can hardly be found.

The only method that will ever reach the wants of our schools, is for the teacher to be qualified to teach this branch, and to give his personal attention to its development as strictly as he does now to arithmetic and grammar; then will it be a success in the schools, and by no other method can it be. The successful teacher of writing, like the successful teacher of other branches, must be qualified to teach it, and the joining of trained thought with personal interest will make success certain.

The time was when any one was thought capable of teaching writing. That day is past, for educated men consider penmanship a science; at least those who study it most do, and authors treat it as such. They have greatly improved and simplified the forms of the letters, and they have taken great pains in preparing series of copy-books to meet the wants of the learner, until one would suppose that the use of these books would certainly make writing a success; yet good writers are not the result, which shows plainly that nothing in the shape of helps can take the place of the qualified teacher. If those who are authorized to examine teachers would require applicants to pass an examination in penmanship at the black-board, it would be but a few years before teachers would be as thoroughly qualified in it as in any other study, and find equal pleasure in teaching it.

It may be asked, what are the requirements of a qualified teacher of writing? One of the requirements, and one that covers nearly the whole ground, is the ability to "chalk and talk." That is, the ability to put upon the black-board a system of correct forms, and to explain the same according to the principles of some generally used system of writing. It will require but little time to gain this knowledge and practice; not more than six weeks at the most, and when the whole time is given to it under a competent instructor, not over two weeks. No teacher

who desires to meet the wants of the schools will complain if the school examiners require this of him.

When the teacher is thus prepared, he feels strong before his pupils, and will not be ashamed when the subject of writing is being discussed, and he will be able to meet the wants of his pupils with regard to this branch in a business education. It is hoped that the examiners of teachers will give this subject the thought that its importance demands, and that steps will be taken to test its value to our schools. It seems reasonable that the teacher should be qualified to teach the studies that he is required to teach.

The State Normal School of Michigan has taken the proper stand on the subject, in requiring its graduates to be able to put upon the blackboard the alphabets according to the principles of some system of penmanship, and to explain the same; also to teach the method of holding the pen, the position at the desk, and movement. When other Normal Schools and Institutes take a like position, the success of this subject will be a fixed fact, and the day when good business writers will leave our schools will be near.—*National Teacher*.

It now begins to be seen and acknowledged that the completest discipline of the human mind must come from the comprehensive and systematic study of Nature itself. This step is an immense gain to rational culture by putting an end to the old anomaly that the most valuable knowledge for application in life is antagonistic to that required for mental development.

The supreme question of education is undoubtedly that of mental discipline. Its primary object is to get the use of the tools of learning—the arts of reading, writing, and elementary computation. So much is indispensable for everybody; but where education proceeds to its higher work, the next step is the application of the implements to the acquisition of knowledge. Here difficulties arise from its boundless extent. All subjects can not be studied; whole ranges of them can never be even appropriated by any single mind; and, as what can be actually acquired is relatively so small, it was long ago seen that the main work of the school must be on the mind to develop its capacities for effective action in after life.