

from models set by the teacher—parsing and analysis being wholly left out of the question. But the teacher has much to do; his labour will not be light; involving wide reading on his part of general literature—the more extensive the better. The un-read teacher *cannot* teach English.

I have already pointed out, in the main, the course to be pursued. The pupil must be allowed to write just as he pleases, which will be just as he thinks—in his own language. The teacher must then go over the exercises, and make minor and verbal corrections; but any serious error—a badly worded, or badly arranged sentence—should not be corrected, but the pupil's attention be drawn to it, in a way best adapted to show him why it is an error, and then he must write it over again, better if he can. I have frequently selected from the exercises, or "compositions," some of the most characteristic or absurd mistakes, and written them on the black-board; indeed a whole composition has often been thus treated; and then I have called for criticisms. Rarely has it been necessary on my part to point out mistakes; some one in the class was sure to see or to feel them. Of course as the mistakes are often absurd, a great deal of amusement may thus be created, but no ill-feeling, if the teacher is careful by word or manner to make it evident that no ridicule is intended. The effect of this practice, I have found most telling. The method of dealing must naturally vary with the age of the pupil; but one principle should run throughout the whole. Get the pupil to write as he talks. If I take up the production of a little boy, I want to see the little boy all through, in language, style and thought—to see the teacher in such a case is simply absurd; no good can ever come from it. With advancing years and wider reading, the style of talking will change too; and frequent writing

will make the advancing knowledge of language available at any time, to be an instrument, with the use of which the owner is perfectly familiar.

It is thus that composition and the study of literature, in our schools, should go hand in hand. The imitation of the characteristic features of any writer is to be avoided, and this cannot be done if we confine our study to one author. A wide range must be taken, and from this a style natural to our pupils will be the result.

One word of caution to the teacher before closing. If we wish to *instruct* our pupils, we must be far ahead of them ourselves. Let us study, not our newspapers—often vicious in thought and word—dragged down by party hate and party hypocrisy, whose writers study only a condensed encyclopædia, or the columns of newspapers of their own stamp. Let us not study *these*, but let us read and study the *masters* of our language—those who write for fame, and who have won it.

A few words now on the teaching of poetry. I suppose our understanding must go along with us as we read it; I suppose we must know what is meant by the author, and that we must clearly see wherein verse differs from prose; that we must talk about figures of speech; that we must do several other things; and we may do them with an easy conscience, as violating nothing sacred. But I can appeal to you all, with the assurance of a hearty assent, if there are not occasions when one who has a spark of poetic fire, may *not* ask a question, or make a comment. Often, after reading a fine passage to my class, I have been compelled to sit silent for a time with downcast eyes till the effect has passed away, and then I have felt like a desecrator, like a profane person violating what was holy, when I have ventured to ask a question; and you all have felt as I have