

Another good rule is to give the subject out a week or more before the essay is to be written, and to have the pupils come without notes, and write it in the class-room within a limited time. All the essays should then be taken in, criticised, corrected, and classified, and all the faults of all gathered together and explained and emphasized to the whole class.

Such a system will make the dullest pupil write fluently and accurately in a short time. And this latter part of the method does more: it teaches the pupils to think for themselves over the books they read, and to read in the most beneficial way, whilst by no means turning pleasant books into taskwork.

In this department of the work there is no text-book that will much assist; perhaps Hall's *Manual of English Composition* might give a few hints. But a good teacher with some literary taste is what is wanted more than any manual; so much is there in the manipulation of ideas and in the formation of paragraphs that is not definable by rule, although there is little for which a good critic and teacher will not be able to give a good reason. And in this higher sphere, as well as in the mere mechanism of composition, the best teacher will avoid dogmatizing, trace his rules back to first principles, and show, as far as he can, the secret of the pleasure that is to be found in a good sentence or passage. Though this may not enable the unimaginative amongst his pupils to put the secret into practice, it will tend to develop what imagination there is in any of them.

One fallacy about the teaching of English composition has perhaps stood in the way of its advance more than any other. It is commonly thought that a pupil is learning English when he is being taught Latin. But this assumes that he has got so far in Latin that he can translate with some ease—a stage which very few reach in schools or even in universities—and that the teacher of Latin pays as much attention to the correction of the pupil's English as to his understanding of the original. But, as a rule, teachers of Latin have no very clear notion of teaching English, and, even if they have, the majority of their class are so entangled in the difficulties of the older language that their whole energies have to be given to the elucidation of these. Even assume that as much attention is paid to correction of the English as to the original, the method does not carry a pupil far in the use of his mother-tongue; it only extends and refines his vocabulary, and gives him no guidance in the manipulation and expression of his own ideas—by far the most difficult and most necessary part of composition; it habituates him to the slavery of following step by step some model or original; and it fails to make him think for himself, or find pleasure in getting appropriate expression for the thought when it has come into his mind. After Latin has been well learned, and English composition has been well learned too, without a doubt translation from Latin is a valuable auxiliary to the English scholar. But nothing can take the place of painstaking and direct teaching of English composition.

[*Approximate Cost of Paper.*—Preparation, nil; printing (2,900 copies), £20 4s. 6d.]

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1886.