THE PROBLEM

OF

ELEMENTARY COMPOSITION

SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS SOLUTION

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THE PROBLEM OF ELEMENTARY COMPOSITION:

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CHAPTER I.

A WORD TO THE READER.

THESE chapters were written for delivery before the Brooklyn Teachers' Association, and without thought of subsequent publication. They are now gathered into a book in response to the request of many interested in elementary composition. It has seemed desirable to retain them in their original form, familiar and unconventional as that is.

The writer believes that composition work need not be restricted to the production of written themes, but that it may include speaking as well as writing, work by a little community as well as work by individuals, and interesting conversations to rouse thought and deepen feeling.

Another chapter might have been added, on the subject of versification. There appears to be no reason

why children should not write songs, even at a comparatively early age. A class might select a well-known air from the song-book, mark on the blackboard its metre, choose a subject, and, as a class, find words to suit both subject and metre. The rhyme would furnish material for a second exercise. It is true that inspiration might seem to follow rather than precede such work; it would be felt, however, as soon as the stanza had begun to take shape, and it would be more fully felt when the stanza was sung. The words would very likely reproduce the class environment, experience, wishes, or aspirations. By degrees considerable knowledge of versification would be acquired, and a teacher might be surprised by original arrangements. Is there danger that such study of ways and means would make children lovers of mere form? Hardly, if at the same time they were reading poems that stirred their blood or charmed their fancy. Quite spontaneous efforts of their own might come later.

Who that has had children stand beside him, trembling with eagerness to attempt his work, and has listened to their "Let me try!" would refuse them their opportunity? Does not expression, like every other natural thing, grow into the perfection of power? Had not logic its beginning in a first judgment, and the novel in a narrative sentence or paragraph? Is not race history being used as a key to child development? Because the child cannot write the logic or

the novel, shall we invent for his outreaching mind a barrier of formulas and conventionality, thicker and thornier than the hedge which shut in the Sleeping Beauty and all that she influenced; shut them in with their beauty and their torpor — away from the awakening presence?

These pages are for those who would give life to grammar and rhetoric by means of original and vigorous effort in composition.

CHAPTER II.

LETTER-WRITING.

To enable a student to grasp another's thought, and appreciate the force or beauty of another's language; to enable him, also, to utter himself, either by voice or by pen, — this, no one will dispute, should be the chief aim of the teacher of composition.

How shall we begin elementary instruction in composition? I am convinced that, in order to gain co-operation from the pupil, — and this is absolutely essential, — two things must be given to him: a sense of security, of confidence; and a glow of delight. The sense of security, the feeling of confidence, will, I believe, best be gained by working together at the very outset. A dozen timid souls, if companions, gain courage to brave work as well as danger; and, while so entirely untrained and unaccustomed to the work, their union of effort, under intelligent guidance, is likely to give a result more tangible, more effective, and so more encouraging, than the single effort of any one of them — unless a genius — could have given. Self-reliance is, undoubtedly, a necessity; but there is a genial something infused into

composition work by a combined effort at the start. We all are friendly, are working at the same thing; there is no cause for painful self-consciousness nor for embarrassment, surely none for fear. The feeling of confidence may be heightened later on by conversations about the mother-tongue. A pupil may realize that his native language is his rightful possession — veritably the "mother"-tongue and his: that it will aid him to utter *himself*, to set free his otherwise imprisoned thoughts; that it will make fruitful the work of his brain; that it will make helpful the love in his heart. He may also come to understand that his mother-tongue deserves his respect and protection, that it is beautiful, that the greatest minds have reverenced it, that its purity should be even jealously guarded.

What shall be the first work done together? Not written work, by any means. I should be tempted to "spring" my first lesson on the unsuspecting children. There would be some event, some happening, that might be orally told, one and another contributing to the narration of the incident. "Why, how easily you talk, do you not? Did you ever try talking with your pens or pencils? What is the use of trying it, anyhow?" Among the many, some answers there will be making clear to the boys and girls that there is a use, even a need, for writing; that he who cannot write is to a degree dumb.

The natural way to show this need, this usefulness, is, I think, to write a school-letter — a simple, brief little letter, contrived by putting all the heads together; a letter neatly written out, and actually sent somewhere — to another school? from No. 11 to No. 15? from No. 15 to No. 45? to an absent friend across the sea? There is a sense of neighborliness born of a letter and its quick reply, as there is a zest in communicating with far-off lands.

Of course in such instruction we shall not be hypercritical, but we may be discriminating. "Oh, dear! would you put that in? It is so unpleasant; and what good does it do? Would you care for it yourself?" The Golden Rule applies here as elsewhere.

So, discriminating we will be; but we will be tolerant, generous. The little artist shall feel his power, and shall delight in it too. We will give him his opportunity. He shall share his gifts, shall bestow something of his own insight upon his duller neighbor. It may be that the children in their letter have said that the wind "sounded strange." We shall find some one ready, perhaps after a quiet minute for thought, with a good verb for that "sounded strange." It "howled" or "sighed," it "shrieked" or "whispered." Suppose the children have told of the flight of birds. Did these "swoop," or "flutter," or "circle," or what? Some one thing they certainly did do, and not the others. The fitting in of the

proper word will have given an impetus to an entire class. This is nice work? It is what the children like; and it is what kindergartens are making possible, because they cultivate the power to observe accurately. It is in just such ways that delight takes possession of the child. He intuitively appreciates words that are exact; he is a lover of the truth.

The actual sending off of the little paragraph, or page or two, helps. Why? Because it makes all the work very real; because, too, it will bring up for discussion many of the points of letter-writing, and it will do this most naturally. For instance, the boys and girls eagerly await a reply. Promptness in answering a correspondent is considered, and a second time that embodiment of ethics, the Golden Rule, determines; or, possibly, the hurry and keen competition of the business world — so apparent, alas! even to childish eyes — decides.

Perhaps the letter went astray! *Was* it properly addressed? The right way, the usual way, is emphasized, — it has already been taught, — and the horizon of the little people may be widened by an imaginary peep into the Dead-Letter Office, and by a little clear information regarding the postal systems of long ago and of now. Some knowledge of the blessings of civilization and government may be acquired, while the little correspondents, in imagination, follow their letter as it is carried in safety to streets or cities or

lands quite new to them. And why should not patriotism begin to be; or, if already existing, why should it not thus be fostered?

Our first letter accomplished together, others will naturally follow, done by individuals, but not too many, nor all at once; for letter-writing may be kept up for years: moreover, monotony is killing to the spirit.

Surely, although we would not be mere imitators, it is not amiss very early in this work to read some of the letters of Phillips Brooks and of other lovers of children. Bishop Brooks's *Letters of Travel*, especially those to "Gertie" in *A Year in Europe and India*, are a veritable mine. How living a thing geography becomes with such parallel work. From Kandy he wrote: —

> "Oh, this beautiful island of Ceylon!
> With the cocoanut-trees on the shore;
> is shaped like a pear with the peel on,
> And Kandy lies in at the core."

The rhyme sent from the P. and O. steamship Verona to "Little Mistress Josephine," and the letters to "Gertie" from Jeypore and Venice, could not be passed by. His visit to Tennyson is charmingly told to one of his correspondents. His letters unify themselves not only with geography, history, and literature, but also with the glad nature of the child.

Some of the older pupils will appreciate Benjamin

Franklin's letter to Noah Webster, written while the latter was compiling his dictionary. I refer, of course, to the correspondence "On New-Fangled Modes of Writing and Printing." To know that the man who was stiff-necked before royalty could beg Webster to guard the purity of our language, might add to a pupil's respect for English.

Holmes's letter to the school-children of Cincinnati on their celebration of his seventy-first year, would have a personal interest for any class.

We would not forget some of Eugene Field's letters, Edwin Booth's to his daughter, Macaulay's to his little niece Margaret, some of Marjorie Fleming's, many of Chesterfield's to his son, the *Familiar Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, extracts from Cowper's letters, and countless others, — all interesting, and more or less educative.

Charm and Courtesy in Letter-Writing, by Callaway, is profitable collateral reading.

It will easily be perceived that letters bring us closer to men and women than does any other kind of writing; closer, sometimes, than conversation could bring us. For instance, will not this extract from Keats, printed in *The Outlook* of Oct. 26, 1895, not only amuse a class, but also help to a conception of the personality of the poet whose genius they will some day reverence? This letter is to Keats's sister Fanny: —

"I get so hungry a ham goes but very little way, and fowls are like larks to me; a batch of bread I make no more ado about than a sheet of Parliament, and I can eat a bull's head as easily as I used to do a bull's eye. I take a whole string of sausages down as easily as a pen'orth of lady's fingers. Ah, dear, I must soon be contented with an acre or two of oaten cake, a hogshéad of milk, and a clothes-basket of eggs.

"My dear Fanny, I am ashamed of writing you such stuff, nor would I if it were not for being tired after my day's walking, and ready to tumble into bed so fatigued that when I am asleep you might sew my nose to my great toe, and trundle me round the town, like a hoop, without waking me."

And is not the man who could love a nation with absorbing devotion and yet have a haunting pity and tenderness for others sacrificing themselves for the same nation, revealed in more than one of Lincoln's brief letters? To Mrs. Bixby of Massachusetts, whose five sons had died on the battlefield, Lincoln wrote with warm sympathy, hoping that the anguish of her bereavement might be assuaged, and there be left only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and a solemn pride to have laid such a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom. Such words teach more than the art of letter-writing: patriotism is in them; and those who read may some day assume with "solemn pride" responsibility for the land that such men and such women bid them love.

It would increase both interest and friendliness to have a letter-box in the room, and, of course, that box would have a key; otherwise, how much of importance and of mystery would be lost, and what a reward of merit would be overlooked. Each row of pupils might have their day for writing to the class. Some homely thing would be attempted, — the telling about a pet, or about anything dear to the writer's heart. The most desolate child finds something to love, and about that something it will think, and chatter, and — write.

During these exercises, each member of the class will have learned how to fold and address a letter, how to begin and end it, and will have indicated the proper place for the stamp. Even the very young members might learn at least the how and wherefore of letter-writing.

In connection with such practice in correspondence, the making of a scrap-book would be quite absorbing. There might be pictures of the old mail-coach, of the modern mail-car, of steamships, of monograms, of postage-stamps from different countries. How much of history postage-stamps reveal, with their changing national devices and their heads of leaders or of sovereigns.

Should we hesitate to make use of the dictionary, even in the primary school? I have heard the puzzling question of a four-year-old boy answered in this

way: "I do not know; I am learning just as you are. I like to learn, don't you? I have been learning longer than you have been, and I ought to know a good deal more. And I do know where to find out about that." Then the boy and his friend — truly she is his friend — sought for the information together: and the little fellow was more than satisfied with the result, especially since there was a picture of just what he had asked about. He now pulls out the dictionary when perplexed; and although he cannot read, — having spent nearly all his life in alternate sleep and out-of-door play, — he knows a good deal about sources of information and how to utilize them.

It is difficult to understand, moreover, why the upper schools have the most of the ease and joy of work — the most of the fine tools. Surely they do not wish to monopolize them. A primary school needs its well-selected library of wonderful scientific facts, of charming correspondence, of true or fanciful descriptions, of fascinating stories, of instructive travels. And why should it not have its dictionaries — the usual dictionary, and, in addition, at least a dictionary of names? And who, with the teacher to simplify and interpret, would forbid a free use of the books? Suppose they do become shabby? Suppose they wear out? So much the better, if the wearing out be not the result of carelessness. Fresh books may be had, and the keener intelligence of the class will pay for them.

SUMMARY.

During this one set of exercises, then, —

I. We shall have either created or increased: a feeling of friendliness, of fellowship; a sense of power; that delight which comes from the fine accomplishment of any worthy thing; appreciation of another's work; and a realization of the value of composition, — perhaps especially of written composition, — which value we shall have illustrated.

II. We shall have begun to think about purity, propriety, and precision, although we may not have breathed their names.

III. We shall have connected our little letters with the postal systems of the world, shall have roused an interest in foreign nations, and shall have increased the love for our own.

IV. We shall have met familiarly, by means of their correspondence, a few great men and women.

V. We shall have begun the collection of interesting material into scrap-books.

VI. We shall have located and looked into some of the sources of general and special information.

How much more any one of us might do, who will venture to say? These are the merest general suggestions.

CHAPTER III.

STORY-TELLING.

NARRATION presupposes, of course, the possession of imagination by the narrator: sometimes, of only the imagination that represents, calling to mind what has been tasted or felt or seen or heard; sometimes, of the inventive imagination, which creates. To describe a city so that those who actually dwell in it will feel at home in your pictured city, requires the imagination that reproduces; to make an ingenious plot requires inventive imagination. Perhaps I cannot do better, just here, than to quote half a page from Compayré on this subject: —

"Let us then," he says, "nourish the imagination of the child with noble images taken either from real history or from the purest inventions of human genius. But let us not think that our task, even in the primary school, is confined to this somewhat passive education of the imagination. To this must be joined a sort of active education, by discreetly exercising the pupil at brief efforts in literary composition. To get pupils to acquire a taste for this exercise [exercise in literary composition], and to succeed in

it, is not, perhaps, so difficult a task as is generally believed."

Compayré then quotes Tolstoï's opinion, that "instructors are deceived when they choose for the subjects of early composition the description of an object, as a table or a bench for example;" adding that Tolstoï "maintains, and not without reason, that those descriptions which bring into play only the representative imagination interest the child much less than the relation of a story. 'The same pupil,' says he [Tolstoï], 'who weeps over having a bench to describe, will give ready expression to a sentiment of love or hate.'"

Agreeable as it may be to have Compayré and Tolstoï indorse us in the teaching of narration to young children, I fancy that it will be quite satisfactory to be assured that we may do so by the children themselves, as we watch them at their work or at their play. After we have seen them construct men, women, and furniture from mere nothings; make bird-cages out of disks of pasteboard, with pins for cage-bars and with flies for birds; and go to sea in a hammock, riding safe over imagined rough waves, — we may be ready to grant that they have a good deal of inventive power; if we are still sceptical, they will eventually convince us by a thousand ingenious contrivances. Everybody knows that some children prefer imagined playmates to real ones, and will perplex a more

practical brother or sister by crying out, "Oh, *please* don't sit there! Alice is in that chair!" Alice being nothing but air to those who live altogether in the world of realities. I have known a little bit of a girl, just for the delight of romancing, tell of an afternoon walk full of imagined, but not improbable, adventures. Later it transpired that she could not have taken the walk. It is, indeed, sometimes difficult to know, unless we can read the face, when a child is deliberately falsifying, and when he is innocently inventing.

Children may have, too, a sense of plot-construction. I have known a boy of four, without a hint from any one, so to fit parts of several songs together as to weave them into a story. He had often heard the song, "Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching." One day he said, "Sing about the boy that cried." He listened throughout the stanza: —

> "In the prison-cell I sit, thinking, mother dear, of you,
> And the bright and happy home so far away;
> And the tears they fill my eyes, spite of all that I can do,
> Though I try to cheer my comrades and be gay."

Then, alive with excitement, he exclaimed, "Stop right there! Now sing, 'Marching through Georgia.'" He allowed that to go on until he had evoked the fifty thousand troops marching through Georgia. Then, just as excited, he said, "Now go *back;* sing, 'Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys *came* marching,'" which was the chorus of the first song; and, having thus provided the fifty thousand necessary troops by means of "Marching through Georgia," he listened with shining eyes to the account of how the prisoners were set free. Then he concluded with a sigh of relief, "Now sing, 'When Johnny comes marching *home* again.'" His eyes beamed as he remarked, "I suppose the boy that cried must have lived in Georgia;" adding, with great content, "He is at home now."

How shall we manage work in narration? As hitherto, we will make it oral at the start, and we will do it together. We will read and discuss short stories. For purposes of illustration, let me outline one from the German, with which you may not be familiar: —

A humpbacked child has a loving mother, who strives to shield her. Mother and child walk out together daily; when they return the little girl asks, "Mother, why does everybody look at me so?" The mother answers, "Perhaps because of your pretty dress;" then she catches the child to her heart, sobbing, "No one would care for you as I care for you." One day the loving mother dies; and, after a while, the little humpback has a new mother, not so loving. This new mother never takes the child out-of-doors; day after day the humpback looks wistfully through the window. Finally she gains courage enough to ask the step-mother to take her out. "Hunchbacks

stay in the house," answers the new mother. That day, after the step-mother has gone for her afternoon walk, the child climbs upon a chair and peers into a mirror. She sees the ugly hump and wonders what is within it. Days go by, and the little humpback begins to droop. She grows weak, and at last cannot leave her bed. There she lies, thinking of her own sweet mother, or wondering and wondering *what* is within her hump. By and by an angel comes to her, and asks if she would like to go to heaven. "Oh, *I* couldn't go; nobody wants a hunchback!" she cries out sadly but submissively. The angel smiles, and with her beautiful strong hand strokes the ugly hump, saying, "You have no hump. Look!" The child peeps over her shoulder; the hump opens like a shell and falls off, leaving two lovely white wings that had been growing within it. With a glad cry, the child floats away and into her own sweet mother's arms.

Suspense, surprise, and suggestion are, I think, the main points to bring out in the teaching of elementary narration; and skilful questioning will enable the children to make their own discoveries here. For instance, after reading the story just outlined, we may ask, "What did you like best in the story?" I fancy that nearly every one will have been especially pleased by the finding of the beautiful wings within the ugly shell of a hump. "Did you suspect that they were there?" Surely nobody did. "Do you think that

you would have been so delighted had you known all along that there were wings in the hump?" By means of this and similar stories, the children will discover that suspense and surprise are likely to add to the enjoyment of a story. Even that surprise which comes from making the climax of a story utterly unlike what one has been led to look for, is by no means beyond the appreciation of a very little boy or girl. Often such a contrast has in it something akin to the spirit of mischief that will lead a child to ask you what "soft, cunning little speckled thing" is in his hands, letting a toad hop out.

By means of this same method of questioning, we may enable our class to prove that a hint, now and then, of something that is coming will keep the reader or the listener alert, because it will rouse expectation. "Did you begin to get curious about that hump?"—"Why?" Very likely some of the class will have noticed that the hunchback herself wondered and wondered about it; for the original story makes a good deal of her perplexity. The children ought to appreciate this principle of narration, that indefinite suggestion—a hint of something on the way—may prove valuable. Do they not make use of the same principle in other ways? At Christmas time, for example, how many hints they give of something that may happen sometime, hoping in this way to excite curiosity; and that is just what the story-teller plans to do by means

of his hints — to excite curiosity, and keep alive his reader's interest.

Although we may content ourselves in elementary narration with the teaching of these three points: suspense, surprise, — sometimes the surprise that comes from a contrast, — and suggestion, yet later, in another grade, we may show that we should always work for the climax of our story, that we should bring into it only what will help it, and that its climax is not necessarily at its end.

After reading many stories together and talking about them, the children will be ready to set to work on something original. Another story from the German may be suggestive: —

The attendant spirits of a good man wished to bless him; he was always blessing others, and his guardian spirits would bless him. But the good man, when they asked what he would have, could not help them; he knew of nothing to wish for, helping others was his happiness. Then his guardian spirits consulted together. They were in despair until one cried, "If we cannot bless him, let us bless his shadow!" and that is what they did.

Without finishing the original story, — it does not end here, — we might get each member of our class to invent for himself "What Happened Where the Shadow Fell;" for marvellous things might come to pass.

Personification will help some of the class. It will be natural for them to write about what the brook told of its run to the sea; or how a mast felt as it sailed by the point on which it grew; or how a fern, taken from the woods and planted in a window-box in the school-room, liked the change. Somebody else, more practical, may tell "How a Little Boy Helped a Big One," or, "How Uncle Jack Walked Home in the Blizzard."

Does the work as thus far sketched cultivate inventive rather than representative imagination? No: for we cannot write of the brook without picturing it, nor of Uncle Jack without a mental image of him; our representative imagination is always serving us. We will insist upon accurate observation, — which is so important a part of primary instruction, — requiring true pictures in words, and this truthfulness on the part of the representative imagination, which will give careful reproductions of persons and things, will be likely to counteract any tendency to extravagance on the part of the inventive powers.

But the teaching of narration will be a failure unless it cultivates the sensibilities. Whatever else it may do, it must do this. A question of the right sort will set pupils thinking. Suppose we should ask, after the story outlined at the beginning of this talk had been read, "Wouldn't you have liked to be that angel? Wouldn't you have liked to stroke the awk-

ward hump, and show the little girl the graceful white wings that she had never dreamed of?" This would start conversation. By degrees, we might get well into ethics; and likely enough this story, with its patient hunchback, its loving and its unloving mother, and its helpful angel, would symbolize a good deal for the children, some of which they might assimilate and use in their daily life. At least they might realize that, if not angels, yet they may do angelic things. Suppose to an older class we had read from *The Talisman* the trial of strength and skill between King Richard and the Saracen, giving necessary explanations. We might say, "Isn't it a fine thing to be strong?" Then, by means of other questions, we might bring out the fact, that the strength of the tiger is one thing, and that of the man or woman, of the boy or girl, which comes from a loving heart or a pure soul, is quite another; that we fear the strength of the untamed beast, a strength which tortures and kills; while we seek the strength of a strong friend, the strength which protects and keeps. We might show that power to resist, to dare to turn one's back on baseness, is of a superior kind. We might throw a bomb into the class, and exercise their memories at the same time, by declaring, "Do you know, I think that the little hunchback we read about last year was strong." Possibly some one will see that it was in patient endurance and uncomplaining submission. Before leaving

the subject, we might be able to show that a strong spirit can do most when it has a strong body to act for it; and, on the other hand, that the strong body needs the strong will and the strong spirit to control it. Suppose we had read a little from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, making the extract easily intelligible by means of our own explanations. That might call out the question, "What is it to be a slave?" You will readily see how interesting and profitable a conversation with this for its topic might become. For the first time, the children might behold their own fetters, and they might break some of them; and the thought of helping those enslaved by poverty, or crime, or appetite, or disease, thus germinating, might in later years bear fruit in fine action. Suppose we had briefly told Edward E. Hale's story of *The Man Without a Country*, letting the class read parts of it aloud, perhaps some of Philip Nolan's words to the midshipman: "And for your country, boy, and for that flag, never dream a dream but of serving her as she bids you. . . . Never let a night pass but you pray God to bless that flag. Remember, boy, that behind these men you have to do with, behind officers, and government, and people even, there is the Country Herself, your Country, and that you belong to Her as you belong to your own mother." Our questions might be: "When you look at the flag, what do you see?"—"When armies salute the flag, to what do they do

reverence?" — "When men give their lives to rescue their flag, what is it that their blood flows for?" A good many will see red, white, and blue bunting when they look at the Stars and Stripes: but some young patriots are likely to feel that it is a symbol; and, putting all our heads together, we may at last perceive that it is the symbol of a land and a wonderful history. Little patriots will have stirred the blood of their indifferent neighbors, and will have made the banner of dullest stuff a splendid thing.

Where shall this work in composition be done? By all means, in the school-room. There we may create the proper atmosphere, may push the little boats off rocks or sand-bars, may stimulate and encourage. We shall expect very little, but we must get something.

Practice in story-telling may most profitably be unified with work in science and history; for the telling of true stories will be helpful, whether they be of plants or of animals, of patriots or of discoveries.

But it is to literature that the teacher will naturally go for much of her material. There she will find illustrations for every phase of narration: stories to warn, or to encourage, or to excite pity, or to rouse heroism, or to increase generosity, or to foster tenderness, — stories that will cultivate the sensibilities. Is there a possibility of life or of the soul that is not vividly revealed in some story?

I think that our scrap-book work will now be most interesting if mainly given up to the authors of those stories read and discussed together. Pictures of the writers, of their homes, of their families, will make the men and women seem less mythical.

SUMMARY.

If this chapter has accomplished its purpose, it has shown: —

I. That narration is natural to young children.

II. That the early work in it should be oral, and done by teacher and pupils together.

III. That the first work will naturally be the reading and discussion of short stories or of extracts from longer ones.

IV. That, by means of skilful questioning regarding the stories read, we may show how the effect of narration is enhanced by means of suspense, surprise, and suggestion.

V. That we shall probably leave for later years special consideration of the climax and the end of stories.

VI. That original work will be helped by a wise choice of subjects.

VII. That work in narration gives opportunities for the cultivation of both the representative and the inventive imagination.

VIII. That exercise of the representative imagination will act as a check upon any tendency to extravagance in invention.

IX. That, above all else, the study of narration should cultivate the sensibilities, and that this is likely to be most successfully done by means of conversations.

X. That work in narration should be unified with that in science and history.

XI. That to literature we shall naturally go for much of our illustrative material.

XII. That scrap-books will enable us to know the authors of stories and to feel a personal friendship for them.

Truly, the universe serves the story-teller.

CHAPTER IV.

WORD-COLLECTING: ETYMOLOGY.

MAY we not, in a third series of exercises, venture upon simple work in etymology? The need of larger vocabularies has been felt in letter-writing and descriptions, as well as in reading; pupils have not always had ready the proper words for their own thoughts, and have often found their book friends using expressions altogether unfamiliar. If, then, there is to be scope to this composition work, vocabularies must be enriched; new words, with their fresh mental images, must be acquired. Therefore, for a third series, I suggest digging-exercises, — mining-work among the treasures of language, where so much knowledge and so many nuggets of wisdom are hidden away.

How is it best to set about the work? Perhaps your classes have made a collection of flowers or of minerals? At all events, I should suggest to the children that we make a collection of words as we would make one of minerals; and that we be just as inquisitive about the words as about the minerals, finding out whence they come, what they are good for, why they were made. A pupil likes to know

if his granite came from Maine or from Massachusetts, his crystals from the Carolinas or from Colorado, his malachite from Russia or from Arizona; he likes to know, too, the uses of his minerals: and why should he not like to know whence his words came, and what they may do for him? Some of them sailed into our harbors with a ship's cargo; one of them holds the legend of a mythical hero; in another is a chapter of veritable history. The faithful seeker, willing to do a little digging among the roots of language, will look up from his discoveries with sparkling eyes.

Suppose we give our class an inkling of what is coming? "I knew that I was going to ask you to begin to-day a collection of words, so I got a little bit ahead of you and started on a word-hunt yesterday, all by myself. I will tell you about some of the things I came upon. The strangest thing is, that I first heard some news — it was news to me — about very old acquaintances; about the words *squirrel*, and *daisy*, and *biscuit*, and *buckle*, and *petrel*, and *pilgrim*. I learned that the family to which our little squirrels belong was named, hundreds of years ago, by the old Greeks, who lived — where? Does anybody know? Yes: away off there in the south of Europe. These old Greeks called our shy friends *skiouroi;* and *skiouros* means, in the Greek language, 'shadow-tail.' Was there any sense in calling them by such a name?"

Of course somebody, probably many, will see the reason for the name; and surely all will do so if the picture of a squirrel sitting under the shadow of his bushy tail be at hand, and such a picture is in many dictionaries. It will be easy to show that the word *squirrel* actually means nothing for us unless we know its meaning to the Greeks that gave the name; just as the word *Mississippi* holds little or no significance unless we know its full significance to the Indians. That *daisy* means the eye of day, that its yellow centre and white rays have classed it in men's minds with the real eye of day, the sun, will be interesting enough. The derivation of *buckle* from *bucca*, a face, because buckles originally bore the cast of a human face, will hold the attention that has been roused. *Biscuit*, and *pilgrim*, and *petrel* — the last especially satisfying to a child's fancy — may be looked up together.

This will be the natural time to enforce the truth, that in word-collecting it is not safe to accept the statement of anyone without verifying it, not even the statement of our sister or brother or teacher. Before we label our words, we must have actually seen their meaning and derivation.

While we are busy looking up words and talking about them, we will satisfy ourselves that the children appreciate the fact that this work is worth while, that we are going to make something, and that words are

our implements; that we need them, just as the farmer needs his plough, the carpenter his plane, the fine sewer her needle, and the artist his brush. That we are going to make letters and stories and songs, as the farmer makes ready his field, as the carpenter makes his box, the fine sewer her garment, and the artist his picture; that we are going to write of the sky and the earth and the sea, of storms and of sunshine, of deep mines and of ripening fields, and of people — down to the funny old man grinding away this very minute at his organ under the school-room window. Can we ever get words enough? We shall need words that will roll for the thunder, and words that will dance for the sea, and words that will laugh for the brook, and words that will grin for the organ-grinder. To find them we shall have to look, and listen, and think. If we use our ears we shall hear new words; if we use our eyes we shall see them on the printed page; if we think and go to our dictionaries, we shall find in familiar words meanings that we never dreamed they held.

Attention has already been called to the necessity of verifying all statements in this language work. It is, of course, equally needful to have a clear idea of the primary meaning of each word. Coleridge's advice, to make a mind-picture of what any word symbolizes in its first meaning, is worth following.

Now for a detailed plan of work. How would it

do for the class to learn each day one word? That word might be contributed by a member of the class, who should be able to tell all about it. Collections of minerals are kept in the school-room; I should keep this collection of words there, written on a large, stiff sheet of paper, and pinned in some conspicuous place. A collection of minerals would be labelled; these words should be — from the Latin, from the Anglo-Saxon, from the Greek. And I should add something more, a sort of second history, telling how the boy or girl came upon the word; for instance, —

MARGARET —

History of the word according to the dictionary; contributed by Margaret Peabody, who, while writing her name, wondered what it meant.

At the end of the month the list would be pasted into the scrap-book, and a fresh piece of paper would be pinned up for the second month's memoranda.

This word-collecting will naturally lead to the consideration of synonyms; moreover, it will be interesting, before filing away any paper, to group the words on it according to derivation. *Candy*, *candid*, *candidate*, *candle*, *candytuft*, *Candia*, make an interesting group.

Surely, nobody will deny that these exercises may continue as long as a pupil goes to school. Wisely

taught, they will suit any grade from the primary school throughout the high school, and beyond it. The teacher will be at the elbows of her class at first, not to make parasites of the children, but to interpret what would otherwise be incomprehensible.

I could not carry on this research satisfactorily to myself, even with an elementary class, if I did not first succeed in giving to them some notion of the history of our language, and of the peoples that have contributed to it. Reality in their work appeals to children; and when they feel, as Trench says, that "words are not, like the sands of the sea, innumerable disconnected atoms, but growing out of roots, clustering in families, connecting and intertwining themselves with all that men have been doing and thinking and feeling from the beginning of the world till now," — then they will have that sense of reality which comes from grasping the actual. A child old enough to understand and appreciate one of Grimm's fairy-tales can understand and appreciate the story of the English language, especially if maps, and blackboards, and blue-prints are used to illustrate it. The early Britons in their rude huts, the conquering Roman legions, the fierce Teutonic sea-wolves, the gay but brave Normans, furnish material for a continued story so interesting that each chapter will be anticipated, and, better still, will be remembered.

While we may easily leave derivatives from other

tongues than those mentioned to be accounted for as they occur, this bit of history just outlined will prove valuable at the start. Without it, we shall have to confine ourselves to mere definitions; with it, we may acquire the habit of searching into the origin of words, Coleridge's habit of "reflecting on words — their birth, derivation, and history." *A.S.*, *O.E.*, *L.Gr.*, will no longer be mere cabalistic signs.

It will be in line with our synonym work to show how its different elements make English especially rich in synonyms, giving to the worker with words as many shades and tints as any painter can command; so that the fresh greens on a hillside in spring, — a hillside of fields and woods, — or the faces of an excited group at the street-corner, will be no truer as represented on the painter's canvas than as they take form and color on the printed page.

For practice in synonym work, some of the older pupils will like to take Anglo-Saxon rhymes — perhaps even Mother-Goose Melodies, as Mrs. Lockwood suggests — and substitute for their simple words those derived from the Greek or the Latin. The simplicity of many of the original rhymes will be appreciated after such translations. A class that had been requested to tell of any benefit derived from making a classical version of an Anglo-Saxon extract, said, "The exercise has added to our vocabularies, has given practice in the use of the dictionary, and has

made us appreciate as never before the value of the two chief elements of our language."

The children may be made to realize that Anglo-Saxon words are likely to lie very near our homes and hearts, as they tell of life by the hearth or in the field, and of all that is dearest in that life. Almost any stirring line or sentence that appeals to all men — to their sympathy, to their love, to their patriotism — may be read and appreciated, and then translated into tamer classical language. Take, for instance, Halleck's lines, as applicable to Americans as to Greeks: —

> "Strike — till the last armed foe expires;
> Strike — for your altars and your fires;
> Strike — for the green graves of your sires;
> God and your native land."

How spirited this is will be more evident after we have made a classical version, whether better or worse than the following: —

"Sacrifice your existences till all enemies have perished; defend your Lares and Penates, your domiciles, and the mausoleums of your ancestors; defend your tutelary deities and your native territory."

The value of the classical element might be proved by quotations from Milton alone. In whatever is meant to be sonorous its usefulness is evident; while the pleasing variety to be gained by drawing wisely

from the two principal elements of our language may be made very clear by means of illustrative extracts. There will be little of this work in very elementary classes, however, and that little will be done together.

How grateful in after years will our classes be that they acquired the habit of studying words — their origin, their proper use, and the distinction between one and another; that they learned thus early to value them. For it has been truly said, that "Language is the amber in which a thousand precious and subtle thoughts have been safely embedded and preserved." The Roman empire is gone, but we teach her language; Christ no longer walks the earth, but his words are the world's spiritual life. Though the colors on the canvas pale or fade altogether, yet the light of the first morning, caught and held in a word, pulsates still; safely still, single words guard their treasures — too well, often, for the careless to discover them.

Happy is the child that has the power of expression, that can utter again what The Infinite tells to him in secret; for each has his own message, and joy comes only with its utterance: happier the world, too, that it does not lose the message.

How much literature offers in its connection with word-study. There are Gilman's *Short Stories from the Dictionary*, Palmer's *Folk-Etymology*, Trench's *The Study of Words*, Waites's *Forgotten Meanings*, Swin-

ton's *Rambles Among Words*, and many another volume of the same sort. And then there are Norse sagas, stories and songs of vikings; glimpses from the *Idylls of the King* of Arthur and his knights; glimpses from *Ivanhoe* of sturdy Saxon and of bold Norman; glimpses, too, of Roman legions and eagles and — of what not?

Not less enticing will be scrap-book work — that already indicated, the lists of words, and, beside these lists, pictures of Celtic cross, of Druidical ruins, of fragments of Roman roads and walls, of archer and Crusader, of joust, of tournament; and accounts of friendly or of hostile invasions of land and language.

SUMMARY.

During this third set of exercises, (I.) we shall have gained: —

1. A knowledge, however meagre, of our heritage in language, becoming grateful to peoples and to centuries.
2. An appreciation of the value of words, and a desire to discover their origin, their uses, etc.
3. A realization of the fact that the study of language is an exact science, that nothing is to be assumed, that statements must be verified.
4. A perception of the truth, that, as the archer needs a full quiver, so the writer needs a full vocabulary.

II. We shall have sketched a plan for work: —

1. A little work each day; that work thoroughly done.

2. The work to be written out and placed where it may be read over and over.
3. Each word to have not only the history given in the dictionary, but also the history of its discovery by our pupil, thus introducing the personal element and making legitimate use of self-love.

III. We shall have considered some synonyms.

IV. We shall have felt the reciprocal influence of literature and word-study.

V. We shall have added to our scrap-books.

What study will not feel an impetus from this work with words?

CHAPTER V.

DESCRIPTIONS.

A SERIES of descriptions is another set of exercises that I shall suggest for composition work.

We first select an object familiar to us all, and within our range of vision. Once again, oral work precedes written work; and work in common comes before individual effort. The object chosen, one child and another is asked to mention a characteristic. These are jotted down. Very soon the truth taught by the old story of the shield with its gold and its silver side will again be exemplified. For one child, the shield will be yellow; for another, silvery. A little questioning brings out the fact that there have been different points of view, that this group of pupils caught a glimpse of something quite out of sight for the others; that, moreover, any one describing any thing should stand here or there, on this side or on that, should carefully select the place from which to make his observations.

We will try again. Shall we look at our shield from the front or from the back? Let it be from the front. Then follows a second description, but

again there is a difference in the classes of facts contributed; for those who sit at a distance, there have been color and general outline, while those near by have discovered details of the design. Why is this? The children themselves will tell. And then they will have learned experimentally that the point of view — which means not only where, but also how far off, we are — determines the relative dimensions and details of our description; that it is one thing to describe a river from its bank, and another to picture it from a mountain-top; that to one near by it may be a noisy torrent plunging over hidden rocks, or a singing stream, sunny and serene; while from the mountain-top it is only a shining thread binding the fields of grain together, or, as Lowell says, "a jewelled arm clasping cloudy heaps of forest."

It is a sort of surprise and a corresponding delight to come upon these facts, and so to realize that there is law and order in the world of composition; and it will be pure joy to make use of the facts. We will keep the work largely oral and common to both class and teacher as long as need be. Perhaps a tree is easily accessible. If so, we will sketch that together as we see it from the window, and again as it looks to us when we stand under its branches. For the wet black trunk and mass of shining foliage that we describe as we look at the tree from our window, we substitute details as we stand under its boughs: the

roughness or smoothness of the bark, the peculiar branching of the tree, the shape of its leaves, even the life upon it — surely insect life, and perhaps we may be fortunate enough to catch a glimpse of birds or squirrels that make it their haunt or home. Our descriptions shall be short, and they shall be the children's; we will be satisfied with a little original, genuine, intelligent work.

After some time and a good deal of practice, there will come a day when it will be right to ask for individual description. Why not have this almost a game? "Now, don't tell anybody but me what you are going to write about. Choose something in the room, and keep it just as secret as can be. Then, after everybody has done two or three lines, we will read your paragraphs and guess what each one is meant for." The clock, with its face and hands, its figures and case, would be suggestive.

This, of course, will be no time for the teacher to stand aloof; it is a critical hour, and she will move round among the writers, holding whispered consultations with them; for each one *must* accomplish, with some degree of satisfaction to himself, what he has attempted. There must be no complete failure for any one.

This set of exercises, descriptions, should, like letter-writing, extend over a period of years, and become more and more skilful. Even older pupils will now

and then enjoy this guessing-game. They will, however, make the solving of their problems a less easy matter. The clock, for instance, may be personified, and, if a dainty one, may become a lady discovered peeping inquisitively through her window, and holding her hands before her face, abashed; or, if the clock be plain and prim, up may go its hands to shut out the sight of school-room pranks.

While in this earliest work there may, perhaps, be no occasion to speak of local coloring, and while it may be wise not to touch upon the necessity for outlining, for using economy in details, for choosing only those features most characteristic of an object, I should surely teach the value of onomatopoetic words — words that by their sound tell their meaning. The fact that these words are of value will, after all, require no teaching; it will need only emphasizing, for children know it of themselves. If they are telling of something huge, they will unwittingly try to make their description sound huge. If they say only, "It was so big!" they will make over that *big*, by elocutionary means, into a *huge* or a *monstrous;* they will make it hold, and carry, their meaning. And is not that onomatopœia? Does not Browning do the same thing, — though he does more, too, — and does he not mean to do the same thing, when he writes of the ivy that "winks through the chinks," and of the sheep that "tinkle homeward"? Artists have been children.

Almost any class, be they novices or adepts, will enjoy practice in the use of these imitative words. Here are several original uncorrected paragraphs. The requirement was: "Write a paragraph in which you try to use imitative words — words that by their sound convey their meaning. Be wise in selecting a subject. 'Early Morning at the Farm,' and 'A Busy Street' are suggestive, but you will think of better ones. After finishing, look over your work, substitute for general words those more specific, descriptive, or imitative, and cut out any word or expression that is doing nothing for you." These are several of the paragraphs written in class, without preparation. altogether unexpectedly: —

1. The Race.

First, the flutter of the starter's flag, a few sharp cracks of the whip, and, in a cloud of dust, a dash of color flies past you. Up the track like a whirlwind speeds that streak of dust, round the turn, rushing down the home-stretch; the jockeys yelling at their horses, and the crowd madly calling out the names of favorites. The horses dash under the wire, three so close together that no one can tell which wins.

2. (*Without a Title.*)

The roaring fire wrenches piece after piece from the burning building, and, whirling them round and round with a crack of the golden tongues, sends them flying into the calmer air above. The hissing and seething of the flames, the crash of falling timbers, the shouts of frenzied men mingled with the bellowing of the engines, the thrill of horror, the tranquil heavens above the warring earth, the grandeur of a conflagration, — who can forget the picture?

3. Sunrise on a Spring Morning at a Farm.

A faint glow in the east, tinting the few scattered clouds with a delicate pink, heralds the morning sun. The slam of a kitchen door, a cheery whistle, and the squeak of a pump-handle indicate that the day's chores have begun. The rattling of a barn-door, the "co-boss," the snap of a whip, and the tinkling of bells tell that the cows are being pastured. The sun rises, the air grows warm, the locust begins to sing, and the farmer takes his plough to begin his day's work.

4. Lost on a Raft.

Two children played on a broken raft of rotten wood. They chattered merrily, while around them the waves lapped the sandy beach. The raft was fastened to a pile by a rope sawn almost in two from its constant contact with the wood, while the waves swung it to and fro. The stillness was broken only by the prattle of the children and the roar and swish of the waves. Suddenly a creak, then a jerk! and the raft floated slowly out to sea. At first the novelty of the situation kept both from realizing their position; but before they had drifted far the boy screamed lustily, while the girl cried hot tears into her drenched apron.

Who will not grant that beginners should not be expected to grow if nourished on skimmed milk; that they need the fruit, not its husk; that the difference between them and maturer pupils is this: beginners should not be troubled with too much analysis, but should do, and do, and do; if the simpler things, yet the interesting things, the wonderful things, gradually rounding out their course with the years, doing work that becomes more and more skilful and scholarly?

Can it be necessary to suggest that work in description, from first to last, be connected in thought with the painting of pictures? While at the very beginning we are discussing point of view and scale of description, — although probably we have used simpler terms, — it will be easy to ask, "What other class of workers are equally careful about such things?" And, no doubt, some one will say, "Painters!" or, it may be, "People that take photographs!" "Sure enough. Do you know that some wonderful writers are said to paint with words? I wonder how they get their colors?" If no one suggests, you can afford to let the question wait for its answer. Later, when together you are reading some word-painting by a master hand, — something that has in it the rosy wonder of the dawn, the green beauty of the heaving sea, or the white splendor of sun-swept snowy hills and fields, — the answer will come.

It seems to me that these little word-painters should

be as happily busy during their English lessons as they usually are when at work with brush and colors. Surely, the results in one case may be as promising as in the other, provided that we are wise, and ask for only the possible.

It helps the children even to call them word-painters; they are then keenly alive to what they are attempting: "Come, little word-painters, are your brushes ready? Shall we get out our colors? But how can we until we know what we are going to paint?" We ought to be of service in selecting a good subject. Something suggestive of picturesque language almost writes itself. What a wealth of topics comes to mind for the country child. But even the city boy and girl have their glimpses of green grass and blue sky, of sunset flushes and of shining river. Even they, bless their hearts! have a black cat with yellow eyes and white velvety paws, or a snowy one, or a tawny one.

While they themselves are writing, we shall, of course, introduce our class to the fine things that the years have been sifting out for them. Great minds are childlike, and the creations of their wisdom and genius hold many things for little people. These, selected, make for the children a long panorama of delight. It unrolls for them pictures of jolly Dutchmen and stern Puritans, of mailed knight and archer in Lincoln green, of Greek and Trojan heroes, of magic, haunted wood. The panorama is endless; it

will unroll as long as we can look — with our ears. What child will not appreciate the pictures in *Snow-bound*, — the happy fireside group, each member of it; the "whirl-dance of the blinding storm;" and, next day, the beautiful new world, the universe of sky and snow, — snow that puts a fantastic hat upon the bridle-post, and gives a Chinese roof to the well-curb? And, after two or three years of work, perhaps, will they not like to go sight-seeing, picture-hunting, in *Little Britain?* Yes: they will enjoy all this literature work if we are wise and watchful, if we cut short details, and even throw aside what the world honors, provided it does not appeal to this little handful of humanity just now.

They will like some things well enough to learn and remember them easily. Shall we give them the reins once in a while, especially at first, and let them choose their own course — what they will learn, what one or more of the stanzas or paragraphs read together?

Many a little gardener that knows the shapes of his flowers will appreciate Keats's: —

> "Open afresh your round of starry folds,
> Ye ardent marigolds!
> Dry up the moisture from your golden lids;"

and the fortunate child that has stretched out among the grasses and clover will remember it all as he memorizes Lanier's: —

> "Now the little winds, as bees,
> Bowing the blooms, come wandering where I lie."

Some there are who will like the smell of powder and the shock of armies in Victor Hugo's "Waterloo;" or, it may be, the Sir Galahad of Tennyson will touch them, and the poet's onomatopoetic words will appeal to their ears as the knight's chivalry appeals to their hearts.

The combined narration and description in the *Song of the Chattahoochee* will catch the fancy, and train ear and mind as well, while the class learn what would make the Chattahoochee tarry on its way: —

> "The wilful waterweeds held me thrall,"

sings the river,

> "The laving laurel turned my tide,
> The ferns and the fondling grass said, *Stay*,
> The dewberry dipped for to work delay,
> And the little reeds sighed, *Abide, abide*."

Both the practical and the poetic will be interested in Scott's description of Robin Hood and in Hugo's of Napoleon.

The very practical may fancy: —

> "The cart-chain clinks across the slanting shafts,
> And kitchenward the rattling bucket plumps
> Souse down the well, where quivering ducks quack loud,
> And Susan Cook is singing;"

which is full of words that adapt sound to sense, and which will be as a stepping-stone to higher things.

Is there a boy or girl that will turn away from the following? —

> "I was rich in flowers and trees,
> Humming-birds and honey-bees;
> For my sport the squirrel played,
> Plied the snouted mole his spade;
> For my taste the blackberry cone
> Purpled over hedge and stone;
> Laughed the brook for my delight
> Through the day and through the night."

What if the child with slowly-awakening mind choose a material theme? So much the better for him, if this means something to him and the others nothing. He will grow, but neither by abstaining altogether nor by taking indigestible food. Next time, or some time, he will crave something finer; the other children, with their selections, may have helped him. And this occasional freedom of choice exercised by the pupil will give the teacher an insight into his nature, especially if he tells why the selection appealed to him, why he chose it, what he likes in it: she may learn something of his aspirations, or of his lack of them; she will have, too, a new way of noting his mental and moral progress.

Scrap-books, during this second set of exercises, will grow apace. Pictures of town or country, of highway or byway, of familiar or historic figures, will be pasted in; and under them descriptions of similar scenes or personages, — perhaps, happily, of the same, — descrip-

tions by those who knew them and loved them, and knew how to write about them. Side by side with these might be anecdotes of writers. Boys might like Keats better if they knew what a fighter — for the right — he was, and that everybody thought he was going to be a soldier, — this poet of marvellous power. They would appreciate his standing guard with an old sword at his mother's door, lest any one should disturb her needed rest, all about which Kenyon West tells in his charming article for young people. They might have an added fondness for Scott, if they had learned about his love for animals, and how when his favorite, Camp, died, he declined an invitation to dinner "on account of the death of an old friend."

Is there not material enough, even if we confine ourselves to that herein considered, for our fourth set of exercises?

I. We have tried to make the picture of something. In so doing, we have learned: —

1. That we must have and keep a point of view.
2. That our point of view will determine for us many things: relative dimensions, details, etc.
3. That words expressing our meaning in their sound will help us.

II. We have, therefore, learned that law and order rule in the composition world as in the natural world.

III. We have found that there are food values to be recognized in the teaching of composition, and that

the assimilation, as well as the provision, of food is essential.

IV. We have read together fine descriptions, being mindful of their authors, and so have added to our list of book friends.

V. We have, to a degree, made their occasional unguided choice of selections to be memorized an open sesame to the nature of our pupils, as well as a means of registering growth.

VI. We have noted the kinship of writing and drawing — painting, sculpture; and our work in literature has doubtless given opportunity to unify the study of composition with that of history and of geography, as we have described persons and places.

VII. We have continued to recognize the whole province of composition, teaching it by means of both oral and written exercises.

VIII. We have embodied in a scrap-book something of our work.

IX. We have, above all, created a genial atmosphere, in which growing minds and hearts and souls could expand, opening out into life and upward toward the light.

NOTE. — We shall, of course, seek to obtain descriptions that will appeal to our class through the senses of hearing, touch, taste, and smell, as well as those which call up visions.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SIMILE AND PERSONIFICATION.

"As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Tho' round its breast the rolling clouds are spread
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

Is it a very long step downward from this simile of Goldsmith's to "Tom runs like a fire-engine," or "That pond-lily bud looks like one of grandma's pickles," as a very little boy said last summer? Assuredly not; a long series of steps leads from the boy's figures to that of the poet; but the same principle of construction underlies the three, and their purpose is identical. Boy and poet have, more or less intentionally, illustrated the thought by a kind of picture, and both have bound thought and picture together by a word of comparison. Goldsmith's picture is that of the master, clear and strong, artistically conceived and executed; but the boy's pictures are as truly spontaneous, and, although crude, clearly illustrate how swiftly Tom can run and what the shape of the closed pond-lily is.

Everybody knows that children are forever noting resemblances and differences; shall we, then, be un-

wise to try some very elementary work with figures for a fifth set of exercises? Genung says: "The fact that figurative language deviates from ordinary expression is not to be taken as an argument against its naturalness. It is just as spontaneous and artless in its place as any manner of speaking for cultured and uncultured alike."

For some time our work will naturally be oral, and done together, and will be confined to two figures — the simile and personification. At first we shall simply read aloud simile after simile; but we shall talk about each one, and we shall discover for ourselves truths that rhetoricians learned long ago. Our discoveries will be made through the curiosity of the children, which psychologists declare to be a legitimate and most useful aid to the educator. Pertinent questions will set minds agog, and, sooner or later, the class will evolve their page of rhetoric.

First of all, they will become convinced that the office of the simile is to illustrate, to make a picture, of their thoughts. They will realize that the thought is of prime importance, and that the simile merely re-presents what has already been expressed; but that it does this in a new way, figuratively.

"I found the Battery unoccupied, save by children, whom the weather made as merry as birds," gives a tolerably clear notion of the mood of the little people on the Battery; and, were our own little people from

the kindergarten, they would become birds for the time being, to illustrate for us the illustration.

> "Patter — patter —
> Listen how the raindrops clatter,
> Falling on the shingle roof;
> How they rattle
> Like the rifles' click in battle,
> Or the charger's iron hoof!"

The children will find this a representation — a picture — of sound.

There is an appeal to eyes rather than to ears in the following: —

> "Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising through the mellow shade,
> Glitter like a swarm of fireflies tangled in a silver braid."

It will not be difficult for our class to realize that these pictures are not photographs of children, raindrops, and stars, but of the merriment of the children, of the patter and clatter of the raindrops, and of the glitter of the stars; that children are quite unlike birds in very many ways; that raindrops by no means resemble rifles and horses' hoofs; and that stars have not the heads, nor the wings, nor the motion of fireflies. So, after a while, they will come to see, that it is one point of resemblance common to two otherwise unlike things that we seize upon for our simile. The child that said, "Tom runs like a fire-engine," did not for a minute think that Tom and fire-engines had much in common except swift-

ness of motion; and the little boy that noted the resemblance in coloring and shape of his closed pond-lily to a small rounded pickle, discovered that similarity alone.

As time goes on, and their acquaintance with similes grows, the class may be led to see that surprise has a good deal to do with our enjoyment of them; that we laugh most heartily over the humor of one because it greets us unexpectedly, and that the beauty of another especially satisfies because unlooked-for, just as the flower that smiles up at us, as, unawares, we are about to crush it, seems sweeter for its escape and for the surprise of its presence. It follows that a comparison of man to man, of beast to beast, of flower to flower, — in short, a comparison between the members of a class, —will not be a simile.

Pupils will enjoy finding these expressed comparisons in many of Longfellow's poems; as, for instance, in *The Children's Hour*, in *The Village Blacksmith*, in *Rain in Summer*; and they will feel the beauty and the vigor of these and others from Revelation: —

1. "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind."
2. "And there fell a star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp."
3. "And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle."

Shall we end our work here? Shall we be content with enjoyment of what others have done, with drinking in beauty? I have just read, in a much-prized text-book written by a man of ripe experience, the following: "Figures have been defined and illustrated, not with a view to giving the student something new to put into his writing; for the charm of any production would be entirely lost if the writer should feel that, having just finished a chapter on figures of speech, he must keep on the lookout for a chance to put in a simile, or ask himself what would be a good metaphor for this thought, or how this idea could be best personified."

Nevertheless, I should surely aid the children to put into use what they had learned about the simile. Benjamin Franklin's verses helped him, though he called them trash; and I believe that the making of similes will help a class, at least in closeness of observation, as they mark likenesses and differences; and observation comes within the province of the most elementary instruction. Moreover, genuine artistic power, if it exists, is likely to be developed. So it would not be unwise, I think, to encourage a class to make similes, somewhat after this fashion, perhaps: "Whenever you are writing a letter, or a description, or anything, you may have a chance to use a simile in the right way. Perhaps you will be telling of something unfamiliar to the one who is to read your letter

or description. You may be writing about a new pupil whom you like ever so much, but who has a funny way of shaking hands. You are puzzled enough to think how to describe that hand-shake. All at once you seem to see an old pump that your correspondent and you used to play round, and there you have your simile: 'When he shakes hands, his arm goes up and down just like the handle of that old pump in Jack Smith's yard.' Or it may be that one of you girls is writing to a friend, and is telling how sweet and fresh your little bit of a sister looks, but she is so rosy and lovely that you cannot think how to tell it; then suddenly, perhaps just because your thoughts are of things sweet and fresh, you seem to be picking cherry blossoms again, and there is *your* simile: 'She is as pink-and-white and sweet as the blossoms on the tree by our gate.'"

Let me give several original figures. The first is taken from a familiar letter, and was written by a girl just from the grammar school: —

1. "We used to bring up an umbrella and a book, the former to keep the sun off, and the latter to read when we got tired watching the river plunge headlong, and of seeing the mountains frown gloomily at the happy little hills. These were continually waving their flags of apple and peach blossoms in joy at the approach of summer. But the trouble was, that, as we would get very much interested in our book, along would come the wind and say, 'Come, little umbrella, and have some fun!' and then the umbrella would fly over the railing down into the yard; and either Beth or I would have to go down five flights of stairs to get it."

2. "The windows that we make now are like eyes without lids."
3. The third was so spontaneous that its five-year-old author was unconscious of his figure: "Where *is* my magazine's little coat?" referring to its brown-paper envelope.
4. The same boy exclaimed, on glancing at some shelves that held pamphlets, as well as books substantially bound, "Why do you put your thick-skinned books on one shelf, and your thin-skinned ones on another?"
5. While watching bonfires spread, a little child cried out, "See them root!" He added later, "They look like a string of jewels."

Must we prove it right to teach personification to children? Rather let us prove that they might teach it to us.

Wise men say that a child typifies in his growth the growth or development of a race. The Greeks, for example, in the childhood of their race personified all things in nature. For them the trees had tongues; for them the sun, the winds, the sea, had a life like their own. The river flowed because it willed to flow;

the sun rose because it willed to rise; the sea beat fiercely against the shore because it was angry with a human anger, or broke into smiles because of its good-will; and flowers wished to poison, or to heal, or to gladden.

As a race in its childhood, so is a child. He looks on the world around him with believing wonder: the wind whispers to him; the stars wink at him; the little waves actually chase him and try to give his feet a wetting: the slippery rocks mean to trip him; the flowers nod, and the brooks sing. Your story of wood or shore is no story for a child if your bears cannot talk, if your brooks cannot carry messages; if you do not bestow human powers upon plant and animal; if, in short, you do not personify.

You will remember that Tennyson writes in an idyl: —

"'O babbling brook,' says Edmund in his rhyme, 'whence come you?' and the brook, why not? replies." The poet is not less, nor more, imaginative than the child; "Why should not the brook reply?" he asks, and expects no answer to his query.

One might teach personification with only Tennyson's idyl for an illustration. What stanzas will the children enjoy best? One that has leaned from a little bridge to watch a hurrying stream may choose for his stanza: —

"By thirty hills I hurry down.
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

If another has waded barefoot over pebbles, with the water bubbling over his toes, he will, perhaps, especially enjoy: —

"I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles."

If another has sailed leaves and blossoms down his brook, he may best like: —

"I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling."

It may be that our pupils will have their own examples of personification to contribute. It would not be strange, for instance, if some one knew the lullaby in *The Princess*.

This work in figures will be play as well; but we have the word of Compayré and others who have studied the mind, that "we should, as far as possible, eliminate from instruction its asperities and useless rigors, and render it in some measure attractive." Moreover, the study of figures has a charm all its own.

We will not, however, let the pendulum swing too far toward the side of mere pleasure. There shall be effort too; otherwise, these same psychologists might take issue with us. Gradually, we will choose examples of personification that it will require some thought to explain. This from *The Lotus-Eaters*, for instance, would be less simple than the brook's song: —

> " And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
> And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
> And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep."

This work will, of course, make use of literature all the time. Our care will be to choose wisely just what is adapted to the needs of our own class. It may be something quite simple, like Ruskin's "Here at the fruiterer's, where the dark-green watermelons are heaped upon the counter like cannon-balls;" or it may be something more difficult to grasp, like Hawthorne's "The cold regions of the North, almost within the gloom and shadow of the Arctic Circle, sent him [Mr. Gathergold] their tribute in the shape of furs; hot Africa sifted for him the golden sands of her rivers, and gathered up the ivory tusks of her great elephants out of the forests; the East came, bringing him the rich shawls, and spices, and teas, and the effulgence of diamonds, and the gleaming purity of large pearls." But, whatever it is, the results of its use will prove — they must not disprove — the wisdom of our choice.

I believe that scrap-book work in connection with the study of figures may be made both inviting and helpful, especially in the case of similes. The line, or sentence, or stanza containing the simile might be copied into the scrap-book, and beside it might be put a picture showing the value of the figure. For instance, there might be the sentence of the little girl that wrote of her sister, "She is as sweet as the blossoms on the tree by our gate," and a picture of a branch of cherry or of apple blossoms: or there might be two pictures, as of a boy running and of a fire-engine dashing along. To render the exercise not only pleasing but also profitable as calling out effort, the point of likeness should be noted. Under the picture of Tom and that of the fire-engine might be written, "Both are swift." Under the branch of blossoms and its accompanying sentence might be written, "Both child and blossoms have sweetness and pretty coloring." I infer from experience that pupils will be able to find pictures for a good many similes. The most interesting collection under personification will be that of original figures contributed by the class, who may also find pictures to show "whispering trees," "proud ships," and other personified objects.

SUMMARY.

During this series of exercises, —

I. We shall have considered: —

1. The naturalness of figures.
2. The nature of the simile and of personification, both of which lead up to the metaphor.

II. We shall have found: —

1. That the office of the simile is to make even clearer our statements, which should, nevertheless, have their own clearness.
2. That the simile gives clearness by making a picture, not of the whole thing talked about, but of some one or more of its properties or characteristics.
3. That surprise should have its part in the simile, and that, as a consequence, the comparison of one member of a class to another will not be a simile.

III. We shall have learned to recognize similes, to enjoy them, and to make them.

IV. We shall have become familiar with the figure personification, also; and in the study of both figures we shall have cultivated the power of accurate observation, shall have given pleasure, and shall have required effort on the part of our pupils.

V. We shall not have made the most of our opportunities if we have not connected this series of exercises with that in which onomatopoetic words were considered; for in quoted examples of simile and personification will have occurred many words carrying their meaning in their sound.

VI. We shall have added to the word-collection — to which our third set of exercises was especially devoted, but which was to have no end — the words *simile, personification, figure.* But we shall have looked up the exact definition and the derivation of these words after we have become familiar with the figures themselves, I fancy.

VII. We shall have profited by literature, and we shall have added to scrap-books.

VIII. And we shall have deepened the feeling for the beautiful, "the sovereign smile of God, eternal loveliness."

CHAPTER VII

FINDING MUCH IN LITTLE: ELABORATION OF SENTENCES INTO PARAGRAPHS.

It will be remarkable if the work thus far done has shown much skill in elaboration. The observations of the children may have furnished abundant material for composition, but the expression of it has been difficult. Probably letters have been abrupt, descriptions inadequate, and stories but a paragraph. This abridged kind of writing is far better, it is true, than the use of too many words; but it shows that pupils need wisely-conducted exercises in elaboration. I think of none more helpful in improving a tongue-tied condition than the making of paragraphs out of sentences that actually contain material for paragraphs.

By this time we shall have a good deal of original matter on file. Let us refer to it, and choose half a dozen sentences that are kernels of paragraphs. Suppose that one of those selected is: "It was a beautiful morning," this statement being unsupported by detail. We may have the sentence read aloud, and then ask: "A——, how do you imagine that morning, as warm or cold?" — "Had there been a snow-storm that would make good sleighing, or was there a stiff summer

breeze just right for sailing? What do you think, B——?" Answers will vary as tastes differ, one pupil picturing a clear, crisp day in winter, another a warm June morning. It will be evident that the writer has left his reader in perplexity with reference to every thing but the general beauty of the day. We may, therefore, let the class guess to what time of the year allusion is made. Suppose they fancy it to be the early spring. We may ask for suggestions as to what goes to make up a beautiful morning in the early spring. Our request will undoubtedly excite effort, and call into action both representative imagination and memory. As a result, we shall obtain data enough. Suppose the data to be: a soft air, a warm sun, swelling buds, crocuses and snowdrops in gardens; and suppose this list to have been written on the blackboard. Together we may connect the data and form a simple paragraph, perhaps something like this: —

> "It was a beautiful day in the early spring, with a soft air and a warm sun. Buds had begun to swell on many of the trees, and, in some sunny gardens, crocuses and snowdrops were up. It was just the day for our ride up the river."

Next let us try the same sentence elaborated to suit an autumn day. The data contributed will perhaps be something like the following: bright leaves,

nuts falling, squirrels on the walls, children in the woods. Together, using the blackboard, we might make our autumn paragraph: —

"Red and gold leaves fell softly to the ground, ripened nuts dropped with a little thud, frisky squirrels ran along the walls; it was a beautiful October day, and we were glad to be out in its sunshine."

By this time, very likely, the class will wish to make a summer morning and a winter morning. Or perhaps they will choose to do something with the following: (1) The orchard was the pleasantest spot on the farm. (2) Boys were playing leap-frog. (3) The river seemed alive with boats. (4) The kitchen looked inviting. (5) The dog was a pitiful sight.

The following are original uncorrected paragraphs elaborated from original sentences, and let me add that the boys and girls who did the work heartily enjoyed it.

1.

Sentence: "The river presented a picturesque appearance."

Paragraph: "The river rippled and murmured as it lazily flowed along. On the banks were beautiful oaks covered with spring foliage, the branches of which nearly met in the middle of the stream. Here and there might be seen a quaint-looking old negro in his heavy bateau, either fishing, or taking his little pickaninnies out for a ride."

2.

Sentence: "Tools are interesting and useful to me."

Paragraph: "Tools possess a peculiar fascination for me. I view them as if they were the mystic key to a secret they invited me to discover. They seem to say: 'We don't tell,' 'We won't tell,' 'We will tell if we must.' I handle them as new friends, awkwardly; as old friends, with skill, learning to fashion things of use and things of beauty. They say to me: 'Though we pick the lock for the burglar, beware how you slander us; for the things that we destroy we also make; and remember the spacious halls and the vast cathedrals we build. Even the home you live in was fashioned by us.'"

3.

Sentence: "The scenery around the railroad station was grand and imposing."

Paragraph: "The little railroad station was nestled in the valley made by two towering mountains, the sides of which, covered with grisly coats of forest, were broken only here and there by a few bare spots of rocks or by small cataracts that plunged to join the broad stream in the valley beneath."

Having properly constructed many paragraphs, the class may study them carefully and find out some truths about them.

First they may learn, that a paragraph is actually an elaborated sentence, and that, consequently, its sense may be given in a sentence. Some practice in

reducing paragraphs to their simplest forms will not be amiss. Irving and Hawthorne furnish good material for this work, both because they are specially skilful in construction and because they have written much that children like. But there are Addison and Burke and De Quincey and Macaulay and many others to help us. Naturally, if the paragraph may be condensed into a sentence, there must be something in it that is talked about, — the topic, — which corresponds to the subject of a sentence; and something must be said of the topic, as something is said of the subject in a sentence. The class may with advantage find the topic of a paragraph and then make a list of what is said about it.

> "So his mother told him a story that her own mother had told to her, when she herself was younger than little Ernest; a story, not of things that were past, but of what was yet to come; a story, nevertheless, so very old, that even the Indians, who formerly inhabited this valley, had heard it from their forefathers, to whom, as they affirmed, it had been murmured by the mountain streams, and whispered by the wind among the tree-tops."

I think that we should be warranted in taking this first half of a paragraph from Hawthorne for the use of an elementary class. The topic is made so prominent by means of repetition that it will be easily found, and the predicative matter makes an interesting list; for the story — "story" is, of course, the topic — is told to Ernest by his mother, was told to her by her mother, is not a story of the past, is a story of the future, is very old, is so old that the Indians who used to live where Ernest now lives had heard it from their forefathers, and was whispered to the early Indians by Nature herself.

After the extract just quoted, follows a brief paragraph of which the topic is Ernest's exclamation after hearing the story of "The Great Stone Face;" then comes his mother's response, — a topic for a new paragraph, — with an allusion to the wisdom that led to her response. An understanding of the fact that the topic naturally limits is more easily obtained if successive paragraphs are read.

We may take for further illustration of these same truths the first paragraph of Hawthorne's "The Ambitious Guest," in which the family forms the topic, and from which the predicative matter may be easily selected: —

> "One September night, a family had gathered round their hearth, and piled it high with the drift-wood of mountain streams, the dry cones of the pine, and the splintered ruins of great trees, that had come crashing down the precipice. Up the chimney roared the fire, and brightened the room with its broad blaze. The faces of the father and mother had a sober gladness; the children laughed; the eldest daughter was the image of Happiness

at seventeen; and the aged grandmother, who sat knitting in the warmest place, was the image of Happiness grown old. They had found the 'herb, heart's ease,' in the bleakest spot of all New England. This family were situated in the Notch of the White Hills, where the wind was sharp throughout the year, and pitilessly cold in the winter, giving their cottage all its fresh inclemency before it descended on the valley of the Saco. They dwelt in a cold spot and a dangerous one; for a mountain towered above their heads, so steep that the stones would often rumble down its sides, and startle them at midnight."

Just here, the coming of the stranger introduces a new topic, and consequently a new paragraph.

We may, moreover, note how these two paragraphs are connected: the second as you know begins, "The daughter had just uttered some simple jest," and, the family being the topic in paragraph one, this mention of one member of it at the beginning of paragraph two serves as a connecting link. It will always be interesting to observe how ingeniously authors bind together the parts of their work. In classes not too elementary we may be able to show, that an author welds together his paragraphs and chapters as a skilful mechanic welds his metal. If the connection is very close, one thought naturally suggesting another, he may do without connecting links, as a mechanic needs no link when he welds the ends of his metal bar together. If, however, the

connection is less close, the writer may use a conjunction, as the mechanic uses a link or a hook.

Now, as heretofore, our method of eliciting and giving information regarding the topic and its limitations, predicative matter, and means of connection, will be that of question and answer. Suppose that a brief paragraph has been read aloud and copied upon the blackboard; this one, for example, from Irving's *Bracebridge Hall:* —

"They found the doctor seated in an elbow-chair, in one corner of the study, or laboratory, with a large volume, in German print, before him. He was a short, fat man, with a dark, square face, rendered more dark by a black velvet cap. He had a little, knobbed nose, not unlike the ace of spades, with a pair of spectacles gleaming on each side of his dusky countenance, like a couple of bow-windows."

We may ask, "What is this all about?" And the class must, sooner or later, decide that it is all about "the doctor." Then predicative matter may be picked out, and a sentence — as simple in form as possible — may be formed from the topic and what has been said about it. Successive paragraphs in this chapter may then be considered with reference to one another, and their connecting links — whether they be words or thoughts — may be designated. This somewhat analytical work will, of course, come after a good deal of original construction.

Having had much practice, not only in making clear in paragraphs what has been implied in original sentences, but also in reducing paragraphs to sentences, — which will have involved a knowledge of topic and of predicative matter, — having also noted that paragraphs may be bound together, and that they should have a sequence, the class will be ready for another question: "What may be put into a paragraph?" The answer to this question will show that we are always in a world of law and order, and that what constitutes our paragraph is not determined by our whim. We shall, thus early, attempt to do little more than show that whatever directly pertains to our topic may be included under it. The most elementary class will see that in the same paragraph mention may be made of a horse, a broken window, a hat rolling down the street, and two frightened boys, if our topic is "The Runaway." While a hat rolling down the street has not, necessarily, anything to do with two frightened boys, yet, the condition of both being the result of one accident, they may be alluded to in the same paragraph.

Some day, in our reading, we may come across a paragraph that tells of war and peace, of storm and sunshine, or of any other thing and its opposite. The class may — let us hope that they will — question such an arrangement of material; but a little thought should convince them that storm may suggest sunshine, and war may suggest peace, as any one thing may suggest its opposite; and that, consequently, there may be mention of opposites in one paragraph.

It will hardly be desirable, in this elementary work, to consider more specifically paragraph construction: we will, however, note, that, while a sentence has a capital to mark its beginning, a paragraph is indented; and that, if several successive paragraphs are quoted, each will take the inverted commas at its beginning, but only the last will have the apostrophes at the end to mark the close of the quotation.

Work in paragraphing may be unified with almost every study, for it will aid any topical arrangement. Note-books in other classes than ours should begin to have order and system as a result of this analytical and constructive work.

But this set of exercises brings us dangerously near reefs that have wrecked many a class in composition; for, although children like to investigate, much analysis with a dearth of original writing may give a lifelong distaste for composition. Literature has been our friend all along; will it not help us here? Let us go to the humorists and the story-tellers for our illustrative extracts, choosing such as have not already been culled for the reading-books. After a hearty laugh over a paragraph from Holmes or from Irving, we may analyze its structure closely, yet with zest; after a page or two of "Rip Van Winkle" we are ready

to search out even a remote cause of its author's charm. We would by no means coddle the class; but we would occasionally take advantage of humor — that sunshine of the mind — to help us through a difficult task.

We would, however, above all, go again and again to the class scrap-books, choosing therefrom suitable sentences for elaboration into interesting and original paragraphs. To give to the merest hint of something both shape and beauty will fascinate any pupil. I think that the most interesting work to select for our scrap-book will be original sentences with original amplifications.

Intelligent work in paragraphing will give opportunities for continued practice in descriptive writing and the use of onomatopoetic words, for word-collecting, for the finding or use of similes and personification, and for the telling of short stories. It will also cultivate both judgment and taste, and prepare the way for the consideration of entire compositions.

SUMMARY.

During this set of exercises, —

I. We shall have helped expression by means of elaborating original sentences into paragraphs. This work will have called forth effort, and may have cultivated both the representative imagination and the memory.

II. We shall have carefully studied paragraph construction, learning: —

1. That a paragraph is an elaborated sentence, with a topic corresponding to the subject of a sentence, and with predicative matter corresponding to the predicate of a sentence.
2. That the topic sets limitations to the paragraph.
3. That successive topics have a sequence, and that the passage from one to another is often marked by a word of connection.

III. As heretofore, we shall have begun with oral work done together, and we shall have used question and answer to elicit information.

IV. We shall have noted the proper arrangement of a paragraph upon the printed page, and the punctuation of quoted successive paragraphs.

V. We shall have continued to use literature.

VI. We shall have begun to refer to old scrap-book work for material.

VII. We shall have incidentally reviewed descriptive writing and onomatopoetic words, etymology, the simile and personification, and story-telling.

VIII. We shall have prepared the way for the successful consideration of entire compositions.

NOTE. — Edwin Herbert Lewis's *The History of the English Paragraph* may prove helpful as a reference-book.

CHAPTER VIII.

BUILDING: OUTLINING COMPOSITIONS.

THE Indian woman weaving at her wigwam door chooses her withes with critical eye, and in her mind already exists the shape of the completed basket her fingers are beginning to fashion. Birds select with no less fastidious care such straws and feathers and hairs as will best serve them for a nest lining, clinging obstinately to a specially suitable bit; perhaps they see just the coming place for it. He that is to create a parthenon for the world not only has careful plans for design and materials; he also sees his finished temple already marking the sky, while the first stone is yet unlaid. The sculptor thinks, and dreams, and thinks of his work, until in his mind it rises, so fair or so strong in its ideal perfection that he may never equal it with reality. Just as surely does the little child, building his house, marking out its grounds, or constructing a bridge over a stream, often work with reference to a model that memory or imagination furnishes. It is clear enough that anything worthy of construction requires a definite idea of its completed self.

In composition work, our class should by this time have acquired some freedom of thought, some power of execution, some knowledge of words, some understanding of simple construction, even some appreciation of the elements of style. We shall not, then, be too bold if we now venture upon the designing and building of compositions.

I think that we may simplify such work, which at first will be oral and done together, if we associate it at every stage with the construction of an object — a building, for instance. By means of questions and answers, it may be made evident that we can do nothing until we know our subject; as the builder can do nothing, either with materials or designs, until he knows whether his work is to be a house, a bridge, a cathedral, or what. Suppose, to begin with, we decide to describe an object in the school-room. If we do this, we shall profit by the ease that comes from writing of a thing actually before the eyes; for neither the representative imagination nor the memory will be taxed: moreover, our class has already learned how to manage descriptive writing. All effort thus saved by a wise choice of subject may be given to thinking out a plan. Our subject may easily be a fanciful and amusing one, which will rouse inventive imagination, and which will satisfy the liking for fun that every young thing ought to have. Suppose we suggest: "A Ruler that I Know."

What is the second thing that the builder must know? Surely he must know the general style of his structure; if a place of worship, whether it is to be a vast cathedral or a modest chapel. Let us choose our style. Shall we make our composition matter-of-fact or fanciful? Shall we write of some king, or of the ruler that is on our desk, or shall we write of the desk-ruler as if it were a king? The fanciful and humorous treatment of our subject may be the most likely to keep us awake and call forth interested effort on the part of our pupils.

Our style is chosen, and we are ready for the next step. Questions and answers should enable us to draw attention to the fact that everything has its framework — its skeleton, as it were. It may be that we shall say: "All of you have watched the building of houses. What was first put up? — framework? or walls? or roof?" — "Has any one ever visited a shipyard?" — "Did you see men beginning to make a ship?" — "How did it look?" We may show that a fish, a leaf, our own bodies, have framework, and that, if we are going to make a composition, we would best make its skeleton, its outline, first. So we will next get together our materials; afterward we may dispose of them to advantage.

"If you were describing a real ruler, — a man or a woman, — what would you be likely to mention?" is now our inquiry. We may hear for answers: "His

looks!" — "His name!" — "Where he lives!" — "The people he rules over!" Under our subject, written on the blackboard, we will add these as topics, reminding the class — or letting them remind us — that each one of these topics will form a paragraph. We will head each topic with a Roman numeral, and we will suggest that the name come last, as a sort of surprise. These, then, will be the big bones of our skeleton: —

A Ruler that I Know.

I. His looks.	III. His kingdom.
II. His subjects.	IV. His name.

Now for the little bones. We will have somebody hold up a good-sized ruler with metal edge while we ask, "Well, what does he look like? Is he straight or crooked?" Of course, he is straight and thin, and has a stiff back. These facts may be added under the Arabic numeral 1. Next, we may inquire, "How about his face?" Perhaps we shall learn that it is lined with fine regular lines. If so, we will add that to our first topic under the Arabic numeral 2. "Has the ruler any deformity or peculiarity?" may bring out the fact that he has but one foot, which may make a third entry under topic I. and headed by the Arabic numeral 3. And under topic II. — "His subjects" — won't the class enjoy outlining themselves as: 1. A race of dwarfs; 2. Wonderfully industri-

ous, etc.? About as well, I fancy, they will like jotting down points about his kingdom, — the schoolroom, — which we have taken for a third topic and paragraph. Although we might do many other things with this subject, we will be satisfied with four short paragraphs, making the topic for the last one "His name." The class could now utilize in some way the divisions of the ruler, or call him "Ruler of the Metal Back," or "The Twelve-Inch King."

Suppose, for a second exercise in outlining, we choose a subject suited to the guessing-game described in Chapter V. "Something Flat that ought to be Round" would do, if it had reference to a flat map of the world. The children should be able to outline this with little help. How shall this second composition be ended? Shall we proclaim what we have been describing, or shall we mystify our readers? Happy ought we to be if the class furnish half a dozen different endings. If we decide not to give it a name, we may make the guessing of our riddle difficult or easy: "It shows where you live; where your neighbor, the Frenchman, used to live; where you would like to spend your long vacation."

The subjects I have suggested may seem trivial, but they lend themselves to mirth and jollity; and will not anything that turns the outlining of compositions from drudgery to merrymaking help the teacher of elementary composition?

In both our outlines we have shown the importance of having purpose and climax. In both, as it happens, the climax is at the end, the point being to give the name, to lead up to its inference, or to mystify. I think we need do little more in elementary work in outlining than has been indicated, provided that we have all along insisted upon clearness and sequence in arrangement; upon that fine orderliness which so satisfies both reader and writer. For there is, of course, a clearness that comes from arrangement, as there is a clearness that comes from expression.

By means of such work as has been described, children will learn how to assort facts, — as doubtless they have already learned how to assort colors, — and they will acquire a method in composition. It seems to me desirable not so much to teach this plan as to teach some plan.

But are outlines never to be filled in? Some day, after pupils have aquired facility in making them, we will assign one previously prepared by the class, and, after a little fresh discussion of it, put the flesh and blood on its bones. This work should be carefully done, paragraph by paragraph; for as in a mosaic each separate piece must be adapted to its place and properly fitted into it, so in a composition each word, sentence, and paragraph must be suited to its purpose and put where it belongs. The work done may be

read aloud and talked over. We shall gain something from having had our piece of work on hand for a while. We shall form the habit of giving time and thought to composition as to other genuine work. We shall have respect for this work as for any other, if we do it with faithfulness and finish it with nicety. And we shall be able to finish it with nicety, because our material cannot get away from us; it has been crystallized into an outline; we can afford to take time to elaborate it. At the completion of the composition, we shall feel there has been actual achievement.

The value of an outline may be shown in yet another way. Let some one make a synopsis, and the topics be distributed among the members of the class. If the outline is clear and simple, the entire production — though so many brains have helped to make it — will have unity; just as a building will have unity if carefully designed, though many workmen help in its construction. Truth will require us to show, however, that such apportioned work can hardly fail to lack the perfection that marks what is both conceived and executed by one workman. Outlining and elaboration as here described may be carefully and patiently finished, and yet compositions need lack nothing in spiritedness and spontaneity.

All work, thus far, has been done in the school-room. Is no composition to demand outside work? After

a good deal of practice in writing compositions together, we may select a class outline from our scrap-book and ask for a composition. This is the first time that we have assigned a subject to be carried round in the mind and brooded over. But the fact that all of us together have made the plan will simplify the work. Finally, there will come the proper day for requiring an original composition built up from the subject alone. We need much judgment and a knowledge of our pupils in order to assign suitable subjects. "The Magic Board" — the blackboard — will be suggestive; so will be "A Hanging Garden," referring to a flower-box at the school-room window; or "My Tree;" or "Trees;" or "One Thing that I saw on My Way to School;" or "The Place to which I oftenest go in Thought;" or "The Black Well" — the ink-well — for an imaginative child, who will tell what drinks from it, whence its waters came, and what they do. Dozens of subjects, probably better than those mentioned, will come into the mind of any teacher.

Having assigned subjects, we will give a few days during which facts and thoughts may be jotted down. An elementary class will undoubtedly be given fewer days than would be allowed to an advanced class; for, since children weary quickly, prolonged effort on their part may not be required. We will show the importance of selecting the subject early, and of keep-

ing it in mind; the pupil that knows what he is going to write about will gain legitimate help almost without seeking it. He will, for instance, have opportunities to observe his tree, its beauty and the life upon it, at different hours; or to notice how the magic board changes as work during various recitations is represented upon it or erased from it; or he may hear facts and myths about trees. If only one here and there may wander with Orlando through the Forest of Arden, or rush with Lanier out to the "braided dusks of the oak," or wait, awed, while The Master withdraws to the woods where

> "The little gray leaves were kind to Him;"

surely all may meet Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest, or steal up to the Charter Oak with men of old, or with Hiawatha strip its "white-skin wrapper" from the birch-tree.

After materials have been gathered, each pupil may make his own outline in class; and at a later time may, still in the school-room, elaborate his outline into a composition. Although this work is to be original, during it the teacher will be ready for consultation or friendly suggestion.

There is, of course, no study that compositions do not touch; they may help every other, and every other may help them. Perhaps their closest connection will still be with literature. We shall read compo-

sitions similar in purpose to those which our class have undertaken; we shall find the skeletons of descriptions and stories; and shall perhaps note sequence and climaxes.

Our new scrap-book work will probably consist for the most part of subjects, with outlines and compositions. It will be well to have for one subject as many different outlines and compositions as the individuality and originality of the pupils make possible. There are both satisfaction and inspiration in the clear and original expression of thought; and just so far as composition work enables a pupil to translate himself will it be profitable and enjoyable. It will also be interesting to have the parallel work of authors and pupils collected and pasted side by side; for instance, descriptions of holidays, scenes, and processions.

The course of our class need not be over a dreary waste, but along a definite path, which, even if marked out by others, yet will disclose for every newcomer, and at every step, fresh knowledge and delight; sometimes a pupil will be so wise, so keen of vision, or so pure in heart as to find truth or beauty that has been hidden from other eyes; for the world's coming wisdom and light and life are in the keeping of the children.

SUMMARY.

During these exercises in the building of compositions, —

1. We shall have shown the need of a working-plan.

II. We shall have made our work, as hitherto, common to class and teacher, and oral at first.

III. We shall have associated it, at every stage, with the construction of an object.

IV. We shall have chosen for our first work the description of something in the school-room, thus taxing neither the memory nor the representative imagination, and concentrating effort upon the plan.

V. We shall, perhaps, have found it an advantage to select a subject somewhat fanciful or suggesting humorous treatment.

VI. The order that our work naturally follows we shall have found to be: choice of subject, choice of style, making of outline, elaboration.

VII. We shall have shown the necessity of having purpose, sequence, unity, and climax.

VIII. We shall have recognized the fact that something is to be gained from having our piece of work on hand for a while, — the habit of giving time and thought to composition work, and a respect for what has required genuine effort.

IX. We shall have confined ourselves, at first, to work in common, — the making of outlines, and the elaboration of them; then we shall have required the writing of original paragraphs, making original compositions, but in accordance with an outline taken from our scrap-book; finally, we shall have called for both original outlines and original compositions, assigning only subjects.

X. We shall have made an especially careful selection of subjects for this last quite original work, and shall have given a very few days for the acquisition of material.

XI. We shall, moreover, have made clear the importance of keeping a subject in mind, in order to gain material legitimately but with little effort.

XII. We shall have done all writing, except the jotting down of material, in the school-room.

XIII. We shall have unified composition with other studies, chiefly by means of subjects and illustrative material.

XIV. We shall have continued to recognize the helpfulness of literature, and to profit by it through the reading of work parallel with that attempted by our class; through the noting of unity, climax, and sequence, as well as through the finding of the hidden outlines of finished productions.

XV. We shall have added outlines and compositions to scrap-book work, endeavoring to have several original outlines and completed compositions for each subject; we shall have added, also, parallel work of authors and students.

XVI. We shall, let us hope, have made definite purpose and accomplishment as possible in composition work as in any other.

CHAPTER IX.

A WORD ABOUT WEEDING AND OTHER TOPICS.

ONE exercise that will suggest itself sooner or later to the teacher of elementary composition is "weeding." After our class have become somewhat accustomed to writing, and have filed a good deal of work in their scrap-books, we may begin to teach economy, quite in accordance with Herbert Spencer's teaching of it in his *Essay on the Philosophy of Style*. We shall show that economy should exist in the world of composition as elsewhere — especially that economy which saves effort on the part of reader or listener. After pupils have acquired even a little knowledge of construction, they will enjoy taking one of their old paragraphs to "weed." They will require of each word that it do some service — a service which they may tell about. Sometimes, of course, they will err in judgment, as they will surely be deficient in knowledge; very likely they will often begin to pull out a useful expression; wise supervision will be needed. But with wise supervision the exercise will be play and analysis combined; and I believe that it will greatly aid routine grammar work.

Having taken out the overgrowth, or the undergrowth, — those snares that keep the reader from penetrating to the thought they hide rather than reveal, — we may look at our work anew with reference to its power to please. We shall be almost sure to find monotony, that monotony which comes from a constant repetition of words and phrases. It will be easily appreciated by our class, that monotony of sound is wearisome. Who willingly listens to five-finger exercises, unless she be a doting mother responsible for her child's practice and progress? If we tell our class that one of the most painful tortures is to have water fall drop by drop at regular intervals upon one spot on the body, they may reason from analogy, and be glad to go over their work, trying to save their reader's ears from the frequent repetition of a word. They have at hand one means of doing this: synonyms. The work of acquiring a vocabulary outlined in the fourth chapter, and which has been going on day by day ever since, has added to vocabularies, and has given groups of synonyms for our etymological sheets. We may now, therefore, gain variety, become nicer in our distinctions, and be sure of finer effects.

Yet a third time we may go over our paragraphs, using onomatopoetic words where they were not used but might have been. The result will be quite in the nature of an inspiration to the boys and girls. Here are two original paragraphs written during an

examination. The requirement for this especial question was: Write a paragraph in which you make your words convey their meaning in their sound.

1.

Did you ever visit the editorial rooms of a great newspaper office? I once had that pleasure, and found it interesting to notice the style and rapidity with which the different men wrote. I recall one on my left as I entered. His artistic touch and the gentle stroke of his pen indicated that he was a fine penman, and not pressed by time, as were the others. In marked contrast was a man in front of him, scribbling in a race with time; and another, whose scrawling was legible only to himself. And there was still another, his pen jumping and shooting along like zigzag lightning; with one beside him whose creations were so fine you imagined he might be drawing straight lines, and wondered how he could read them without a microscope. Each man gradually had acquired a style that suited him.

There is not a wealth of onomatopoetic words here; for the pupil understood that he was not to use an imitative word unless it helped him in the expression of his thoughts.

2.

Mr. Quak waddled along the path to the pond and met Mr. Baa, who was browsing along in a contented manner. As they neared the pond, they met Mr. Neigh sucking up the water in long gulps. They all said, "What a blessing is water!"

After this weeding, substitution of synonyms, and introduction of onomatopoetic words, the class will enjoy comparing their original paragraph with the reconstructed paragraph. This will put them into the proper mood for some work in phraseology. They will perceive that their work has gained something: for weeding will have given strength; synonyms, smoothness and variety; and imitative words, vigor. They will be patient during more prosaic work.

If we next look within sentences, we shall find errors that may be classified, errors that seem to require technical terms for their explanation, and that may seem to demand (of the young) too much analysis. Some of these errors necessitate the consideration of:—

1. The misuse of the simple future and the future of volition.
2. The misrelated participle.
3. The incorrect sequence of tenses.
4. The lack of direct discourse.
5. The chain construction of relative clauses.
6. The misuse of explanatory and of restrictive relative clauses.
7. The separation of the infinitive and its sign.

I think that many errors may be discovered by quite elementary classes, and that the principles they violate may be clearly and simply shown. Let us consider our topics in the order given.

Then follows the inflection:—

I will	We will
You shall	You shall
He shall	They shall

Under the inflection is a picture, representing a cat with front paws extended, and each paw holding the tail of a mouse. This is the legend written under the picture:—

"In the above illustration the cat evidently has full control over the mice. One can almost see the mouth smile with satisfaction as she says, 'I have waited for you day and night, and now I have got you! I *will* eat you; you *shall* not get away!'"

The second paper of this same pupil deals with the simple future, as follows:—

"This is the future of fate. Everybody and everything, apparently, is helpless. Outside circumstances control."

Then follows the inflection:—

I shall	We shall
You will	You will
He will	They will

The illustration under this inflection represents the cat of the first picture, but clasping tails that have parted from the bodies of the mice. Underneath is this legend:—

"But—outside circumstances control. The cat, and probably the mice also, did not count on the mice losing their tails. Her smile of victory changes to a look of disappointment, as she adds: 'I *shall* have to go without my dinner, and you are safe in your hole. What did your tails break for, anyhow? Oh, dear! How trying life is!'"

I think that this class understood the distinction between the simple future and the future of volition.

2. The misrelated participle is often found in the work of young people. "Having missed his examination, I asked his teacher to let him try another," will do for our purpose of illustration. This mistake, as well as many another, is owing to carelessness. Perhaps we may induce our pupils to become heedful if we say something of this sort: "What takes care of *having* in that sentence?" Of course it is not cared for. "What have you done, but treat a word as you would not dare to treat anything else? Would you turn a child into the street, with absolutely no protector nor protection? That is what you have done to that little word. Please look after it, plan for it." We may have to help and suggest; but we may—I speak from experience—very soon get rid of misrelated participles. We may show that words have their rights, and that there are such things as morality and justice in composition.

3. The desirability of using direct discourse, some-

times or often, may perhaps be most clearly shown by means of a story. Suppose we write together a brief narrative in which conversation is reported. Left to themselves, the class will probably use the indirect discourse to represent the different speeches. After our work is done, we may suggest letting each person speak for himself. The gain in life will be noticeable. If requested to tell how we have added to the interest of our narrative, I believe that the class, or one or more members of it, will explain. Suppose the anecdote is one about Grant or Lincoln. When Grant's exact words are given, we shall get more or less of the man; his manner, at least of speaking, and his laconic style will tell us something of himself. Lincoln, with his peculiar humor, will be a relief to Grant; and, when we again take up the thread of the narrative ourselves, we shall be more welcome to our readers or hearers because of our brief absence from the stage while Grant and Lincoln were the actors. Direct discourse, then, gives a pleasing variety, a picturesqueness, and a vigor that the monotonous telling at second hand cannot give. It may easily be shown, as every grammar shows, how direct discourse often serves clearness. Who is not familiar with, "He told him that his cattle were in his fields," and equally familiar with the correction of it?

4. Will not our class be likely to see that the

chain construction of relative clauses is weak, provided this construction with words be compared to a similar construction elsewhere? After explaining to a class, by means of some simple diagram, how each new relative draws the mind away from the actual subject of the sentence, and so diverts attention rather than concentrates it upon the theme that should be kept in mind, we may ask them to tell us of a similar violation of the principle of strength in some other kind of construction. I required one of my classes to do this. One boy made a picture of a ship with a line of small boats in tow — a weak construction easily broken; while his contrasting sketch was the same big boat with each little boat tied to *her*. A young girl illustrated the same principle by means of an umbrella and its ribs.

5. It may seem somewhat difficult to teach a class to perceive what determines the sequence, or following, of tenses. First of all, let us get them to understand that there is a regulator somewhere; a word, or group of words, that will manage everything for them. We may, in our scrap-book, find something like this: "How I should have liked to have gone to that birthday party!" We may ask, "When *was* the party?" Suppose the answer to be "Last June." — "When were you wishing about it?" — "That was in last June, too." — "Very well; please go back in your mind, just for a minute, *to* last June. Are you

there, yet? Very well; now it is June, and the party is coming to-morrow. What do you say to your mother, as you think of the coming party? How I should like to — what?" We shall succeed, sooner or later, in getting the present infinitive *to go*. Such exercises may be multiplied until our pupils appreciate the fact, that, where there is a principal tense with subordinate tenses, the principal tense is the regulator of the others; that all we have to do is to live in imagination in the time referred to by the principal tense, and, living then, not now, to think and speak naturally.

6. Classes nearly always find stumbling-blocks in restrictive and explanatory relative clauses with their distinctions and punctuation. These stumbling-blocks may be removed, it seems to me, by the pupil's intelligent questioning of himself. Let me illustrate: — Our scrap-book may give us a sentence somewhat like the following: "The man that ran down the street just now is giving the alarm." Suppose we ask, "Who is giving the alarm?" There can be but one answer: "The man that ran down the street just now." — "Can you not give a shorter answer?" we ask. Of course, the class cannot. "Well; try this sentence: 'John Parsons, who ran down the street a minute ago, is giving the alarm.' Who is giving the alarm?" Of course it is John Parsons. We may now, by continuing our questioning, help the class to

see, that the restrictive relative — the form of which is usually *that* — is needed by its noun to prove the identity of that noun. In the sentence, "The man that ran down the street just now is giving the alarm," the only thing to show what man is giving the alarm is the relative clause, "that ran down the street just now;" therefore, this clause is tied tight, as it were, to its noun, and will not let even a comma squeeze in between them. But in the other sentence, — "John Parsons, who ran down the street just now, is giving the alarm," — we know perfectly well who is giving the alarm without help from the relative clause, "who ran down the street just now." Therefore, this relative clause tells something new; it is equivalent to "and he ran down the street just now." Moreover, it is not tied so closely to its noun, and it lets a comma in before it and after it. If a class once appreciates the distinction here made,— that the restrictive relative is needed to determine the identity of its noun, while the explanatory relative is not so needed, — then its only remaining difficulty will be the management of exceptional cases, which may be left for a later time.

7. Many a boy or girl will enjoy answering an inquiry similar to this: "Will you make us see that the sign of the infinitive ought to be put before it?" I once required the following in an examination, without a hint of its coming: "Show, by means of

a reference to trade, to algebra, or to chemistry, the absurdity of separating the infinitive and its sign." One boy wrote, that, if he had a carpenter's shop, he should put his sign over the door of his shop, not in a place where there was no shop. Another said, that he should not put his label for a barrel of grapes on a box of tea. Another said, that he should put his radical sign where it belonged, over the quantity it affected, not somewhere else, where it would only mislead and work mischief. All connected these statements with the proper use of the infinitive and its sign. If work in language is seen to be based on general principles that hold true everywhere, — in the factory, in the blacksmith's shop, or in the artist's studio, as well as in the class-room, — boys and girls begin to respect language work, and to enjoy doing it.

The teacher of elementary composition, or of any kind of composition, is likely to find it necessary to cultivate the power to think and the power to feel. May not examination questions help to do this? Let me give a few questions, not because they are by any means model ones, but because they are intended only secondarily for review, and primarily to provoke thought. The first question was upon the examination paper of a class just from the grammar school. It was made optional, and little was expected from the class, but much was obtained.

1. Try to find the two words in the following quotation that show why Eustace Bright thought that the summer-house (little edifice) would be "just the spot" for his fanciful tales.

"Simple as it looks," said he, "this little edifice seems to be the work of magic. It is full of suggestiveness, and, in its way, is as good as a cathedral. Ah, it would be just the spot to sit in, of a summer's afternoon, and tell the children some more of those wild stories from the classic myths."

Magic, *suggestiveness*, and *cathedral* were quoted.

2. *a.* What is the difference between the myths as told by Hawthorne in the *Tanglewood Tales* and as given in the *Classical Dictionary*?

b. Which reading do you prefer?

c. Why?

A boy preferred the reading in the *Classical Dictionary*, because it is an exact rendering of the myths; a girl better liked Hawthorne's versions, because she enjoyed the play of his humor and fancy about as much as she enjoyed the myths.

3. "*Brutus.* A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.

Cæsar. Set him before me; let me see his face.

Cassius. Fellow, come from the throng; look upon Cæsar.

Cæsar. What sayest thou to me now? Speak once again.

Soothsayer. Beware the ides of March.
Cæsar. He is a dreamer; let us leave him: pass."

a. Why is it that Cæsar wishes to see the face of the soothsayer?

b. Prove, by means of Cæsar's own words in the quoted lines, that your answer is correct.

4. *a.* Name any characteristics common to Shakespeare's Shylock and Scott's "Isaac of York."

b. Has the study of these two characters given to you new thoughts about the Jews? If so, briefly tell those thoughts.

5. Contrast Scott's "Rebecca" and Shakespeare's Jessica with reference to their filial devotion.

6. "*Speak, strike*, redress! Am I entreated,
To speak and strike? O Rome! I make thee promise,
If the redress will follow, thou receivest
Thy full petition at the hand of Brutus!"

In the last two lines of the quoted extract, what does Brutus pledge himself to do? Material for your answer is contained in the extract.

7. Defend the repetition of words in the following:

"Two attempts were made to disturb this tranquillity, the banished heir of the House of Stuart headed a rebellion; the discontented heir of the House of Brunswick headed an opposition. Both the rebellion and the opposition came to nothing."

8. From the action of the "dark-gray charger" of Mamilius, and from that of "Black Auster," as described by Macaulay in "The Battle of the Lake Regillus," what do you infer regarding the character of each master?

9. From stanza i. of Macaulay's "*Lays of Ancient Rome*" quote the words that would lead you to infer that Lars Porsena would keep his oath.

10. If these events were being represented on the stage, what would be done between stanzas xii. and xiii.?

11. "This is she, the shepherd girl, counsellor that had none for herself, whom I choose, bishop, for yours. She it is, I engage, that shall take my lord's brief. She it is, bishop, that would plead for you: yes, bishop, *she* — when heaven and earth are silent."

Do you think that De Quincey was warranted in assuming this of Joan of Arc? Prove that your opinion is well-founded.

12. Of the enemies of Cæsar with whom you have thus far become acquainted, — Flavius, Marullus, Cassius, and Brutus, — whom would you be most unwilling to have for your enemy?

Give a reason for your answer.

13. Write the name of any American citizen of any period who, had his countrymen been Athenians of the time of Themistocles, would have been in danger of ostracism.

NOTE. — Both Washington and "Dick" Croker were thought to have had sufficient power to be included in the list.

14. When the Greeks returned to the interior of their country after the battle of Thermopylæ, the Athenians

had command of the rear. Why does Plutarch say that they had "the place of honor and danger?"

15. If you had to write a composition composed mostly of Anglo-Saxon words, how might you help yourself by a choice of subjects?

These questions have been selected to illustrate the meaning of the term I used, "questions to provoke thought;" there will, however, be others, intended to cultivate the sensibilities. We may readily prove by psychologists, naturalists, and poets, that much will remain hidden from him who has great intellectual capacity but is without deep feeling. You will remember, for instance, how careful Richard Realf is in *Symbolisms* to make every wind that blows a wind of music, and the humblest flower of the hedgerow and the bird of dullest color, bearers of "a living word to every living thing." The reading of such living words requires more than thought; it requires feeling. Surely, moreover, the power to think and the power to feel demand something more — the power to utter. Is not composition successfully taught only as it fulfils its threefold mission, — giving mental grasp, a sympathy for what is fine, and the power to use both brain and heart?

CHAPTER X.

CRITICISM.

If "the art of judging of beauties and faults" is criticism, as no one is likely to deny, then the critic must be a judge. But what kind of a judge? Symonds, in his essay "On Some Principles of Criticism," says, "Aristotle laid it down as an axiom, that the ultimate verdict in matters of taste is 'what the wise man would decide.'" Who, then, is the wise man? Not necessarily he with the most learning; but surely he that knows goodness and truth and beauty, he whose own mind and soul ring true. With knowledge, but without wisdom, what man ever looked into the heart of things? ever read the soul of a brother? ever understood its utterance? With wisdom alone, may not a man learn — has he not already begun to learn — of eternal things? and so may he not recognize work that interprets eternal things? Doubtless, he may do this, and so truly value — in so far as his personality and environment permit — the spirit of a work. "A sensible, unlettered girl," says an authority, "is a better critic than the learned simpleton who uses the stores of a vast

library to bolster up some baseless paradox. Sense, in the region of criticism, is equivalent to imagination. It enables its possessor to distinguish what is or may be from what cannot be."

But the spirit has its body, and the most helpful critic will add knowledge to his wisdom, even a knowledge of technicalities, and will then be able to appreciate and to estimate both spirit and body. Matthew Arnold declares that "the judgment which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the valuable one; and thus knowledge, and ever fresh knowledge, must be the critic's great concern for himself." From all this we infer that the true critic is both wise and a learner; taught, perhaps, by the very work that he reviews, sometimes led by a child to the perception of a higher truth.

The rule for criticism has been summed up by Arnold in one word, — "*disinterestedness.*" Preconceived notions, whims, fancies, predilections, — from all these and all similar things the mind of the critic must be free; he approaches a work to test it. Impersonal Truth is his magic wand.

What should be the critic's attitude? If I were to paint him, it should be as a listener, as one receiving understandingly into a mind free from prejudice; but he should unmistakably show — by his clear eye and noble head, by his repose and dignity and spirituality — that he would refuse to hear, and pass on, an unworthy message.

Let us leave the critic, and, for a moment, consider what he judges. Art is his province; and "All art is a presentation of the inner human being, his thought and feeling, through the medium of beautiful symbols in word, form, color, and sound," says Symonds. Realf had the same thought when he wrote: —

> "Back of the canvas that throbs,
> The painter is hinted and hidden;
> Into the statue that breathes,
> The soul of the sculptor is bidden."

And Arnold declares, that the best spiritual work of criticism is "to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarizing, to lead him toward perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things." His work will then reflect him at his best.

Agreeing that criticism is an art which concerns itself with eternal things, with "abiding relations," to quote Goethe through Symonds; that the critic needs to be without prejudice, and to have not only wisdom but also knowledge, both general and special; that the rule for criticism is disinterestedness; and that the critic's mission is helpfulness, the keeping of man to the best, — what may we evolve from all this for the teacher of elementary composition?

With reference to herself, first of all, we are sure:

1. That she should have, at least the beginning of wisdom. 2. That she should continually supplement this with knowledge, culture. 3. That she should have a spirit of fairness, bringing to her work a mind free from prejudices. But it seems to me that even more is required of the teacher — and so the critic — in elementary composition; her task is harder than that of one who judges a great and finished production. Often, she must make the creative atmosphere, must give the impetus, must help the halting speech, before material for criticism can be obtained. So it seems to me that sympathy, a certain kind of clairvoyance, — the second-sight that can read another's mind and interpret it to himself, — are needed by a critic of the most elementary work. Let me illustrate my meaning: —

A composition teacher whom I used often to see had been told of two boys about to enter her class. "You can do nothing with them," said her informant. "Why not?" — "They care for nothing but drawing." — "Oh, they do care for drawing, then." She added mentally, "If they care for any earthly thing, they shall care for composition."

The boys entered the class and wrote an exercise, a description of an afternoon on a skating-pond. The teacher interviewed the elder, Ernest, first. He had written practically nothing but a number of short, disconnected statements. The teacher glanced at his

work, saw that there was not, apparently, the least bit of "the inner human being, his thought and feeling" in it, and said, "Ernest, did you enjoy doing this?" — "No'm." — "Why not?" — "I hate composition." — "Why?" — "Oh, I hate it!" — "What do you like?" — "Drawing and painting." — "I cannot believe you. You draw nothing here." — "You didn't ask me to." — "Oh, yes, I did; a description is a picture — in words. Where are the life and sparkle, and the glitter and color, that were on the pond? I shall not believe that you like to draw and paint until you sketch and color in words this scene on the ice." Before their talk was over, the boy had ceased to hate composition. He had suggested his outline, and was lighting up his picture.

Then came Max, a wide-awake little fellow, but dreading his talk with the composition teacher; for he, too, cherished a hatred for work with language. "What do you like, Max?" — "Music." — "Then you like composition, only you do not know it." And he was shown that he might do with words what he had been doing with music.

Later came a young girl, sweet and intelligent looking, and older than the boys. She "simply loathed composition work." — "Why?" — "Oh, I hate it!" — "What do you like?" — "Mathematics." — "Then you will like composition. But, let me see, *do* you like mathematics? You haven't been exact in this sen-

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tence. You mean, practically, that two and two make four; but you have contradicted yourself, and your sentence is valueless. It is as bad as if one of your signs in an algebraic equation should represent two different unknown quantities. Take back this composition, and criticise it yourself as you would criticise your work in mathematics; then, let me see it again."

The next time this teacher met the pupils to whom we have referred, she actually had something from each that she could criticise with enjoyment and profit for all. Ernest had made a sketch — a clumsy but promising one — and he helped the teacher find in it the true and reject the false. And he wished to work over it a second time. Max had done something rhythmic with words, and said that he would like to write the words for a familiar air. And the young girl had a page that said something in accurate fashion. All were eager for criticism — the criticism that creates, as Arnold says, "a current of true and fresh ideas." The dead were alive.

It may have been noted that the criticisms of this teacher were broad ones, at first. As young children cannot do the finest work that calls into play the finest muscles without harming themselves, so, in their writing, if they develop naturally, they will not, at first, show great nicety and perfection in details, but will rather gain broad effects.

The teacher of elementary composition, moreover, needs to be both generous and patient. She has, let us suppose, a paragraph to criticise. It appears to have no meaning. She looks at its title. She might so easily say a dozen things that would be to the point. Pitt's or Burke's or Webster's treatment of the same thing — perhaps the subject is "Independence" — comes into her mind. This is her moment of temptation. No; she will not yield, but will find out what this pupil meant, or get him to tell it orally. And then she will help him to write out clearly what he meant. With the thought uttered, she can, at last, criticise in such a way as to create "a current of true and fresh ideas." No matter what Pitt or Burke or Webster might think or say; that, at first, is of no consequence; the thought in the boyish mind must be discovered and clothed with speech. That will be his victory; he will begin to like composition. Later, after his own little rough diamond has been brought to light, he may, with profit, study some gems of literature that express a thought similar to his own.

In order to obtain material, the teacher of elementary composition needs to cultivate in her pupils the power both to think and to feel; for only out of the fulness of the mind and heart can the mouth speak; only thus can composition reveal "the inner human being, his thought and feeling."

So, to the qualities required in a critic of adult work, we would add for the teacher of elementary composition: a kind of sympathetic second-sight, enabling her to read even what is obscure in the childish mind, generosity and patience enough to make her successful in bringing to light and helping to shape half-formed thoughts, and the power to rouse thought and to feed the sensibilities.

But there is left, it seems to me, another point for us to consider. How shall criticisms be made? Shall we see each pupil by himself? That is often most desirable and profitable. But class-room criticism is inevitable. If we undertake it, shall we approach our class as if they were our victims, and seek to conceal our sharp knife by an apologetic bearing? Shall they feel that we are about to make a savage and personal attack, and, as a consequence of such feeling on their part, shall we conceal the identity of the boy or girl to be criticised? "By no means," I should answer to all these questions. I would have a class learn to consider its own work impartially; I would have individuals do the same. I would show them that only vanity can create restlessness or pain under criticism. Something after this fashion, it might be:—

"To-day, we have our first talk about what we did last week. These talks are meant to help everybody — you and me. If you feel friendly toward anyone, you will criticise him, provided you have grounds for

criticism; just as you would tell him if there were a bunch of burrs on his coat-sleeve." Then I would select a boy, and say, "We will take your paragraph first. But before your friends — the class and I — help you, help yourself. You are a week older than when you wrote the exercise; you have, undoubtedly, grown mentally. While your friends are thinking, become your own judge." Often, a boy will do a good deal for himself. After his own criticism, if no one volunteers and there are evident faults, I would say, perhaps, "I am sorry that you are not more popular!"

In all my own experience of many years I have never found it difficult to have both class and teacher criticise freely, and yet have the feeling of good-fellowship increase. If this direct method be used, it is not long before a pupil asks for criticism, as naturally as he might ask whether or not his hat needed brushing. If his class give the criticism, he is as little offended as he would have been had his teacher done so.

William E. Dodge, in a practical talk to a class of boys and girls about to graduate, assured them that an important factor in their success and influence would be exact knowledge of themselves, — of their own strength and weakness, and of their ability or lack of ability in any special direction. Such criticism as the class criticism just described helps a pupil to estimate himself.

It follows, therefore, that the teacher of elementary composition is something more than a critic; she is a maker of critics. If her classes become heedful, if she rouses "currents of true and fresh ideas," she will have done more for them than the mere elucidation of pages in grammars and rhetorics, or the correction of dozens of formal exercises, could have done. Education is, of course, progressive, and it is the teacher of elementary composition that begins to educate the critical faculty, — that power to perceive what is in accordance with what actually is or may be.

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