

THE
TEACHER AND THE PARENT;

A TREATISE UPON

COMMON-SCHOOL EDUCATION;

CONTAINING

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

BY

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PREFACE.

IN the preparation of this volume, it has been the author's aim to furnish for teachers a work which should at once lead them to view their calling in its true light, stimulate them to fidelity, and furnish them with such plain, practical suggestions, as might prove valuable to them in the performance of their important and arduous duties. In the execution of his design, he has been free to make extracts from the writings of others, when he has found their views in accordance with his own. In all such cases he has made the proper acknowledgment; and it is believed that the quotations he has made will not diminish the value of the work.

Having had an experience of nearly twenty years as an instructor in public schools, the author feels that he can, in some degree, appreciate the nature of the teacher's work, the qualifications essential to a wise discharge of appropriate duties, and something of the trials, perplexities, and pleasures, connected with the same. How

far he has succeeded in accomplishing his design, must be for others to decide.

With the sincere desire that this volume may prove an acceptable addition to works on education, and be instrumental in advancing the great interest of common school instruction, it is affectionately and respectfully commended to the candid consideration of teachers and parents, with the hope that the truths advanced may have their proper influence, though dressed in a plain and familiar style.

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CONTENTS.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.	
Common Schools,	11
CHAPTER II.	
The Teacher,	15
CHAPTER III.	
Thorough Knowledge, Aptness to Teach, Accuracy, Patience, and Perseverance,	26
CHAPTER IV.	
Candor, Truthfulness, and Courteousness,	31
CHAPTER V.	
Ingenuity, Individuality,	36
CHAPTER VI.	
Kindness, Gentleness, Forbearance, and Cheerfulness,	41
CHAPTER VII.	
Common Sense, Knowledge of Human Nature, General Inform- ation, Desire to do Good, and Hopefulness,	46
CHAPTER VIII.	
Correct Moral Principles, Exemplary Habits and Deportment ; Diligence,	53
CHAPTER IX.	
Neatness and Order ; Self-Control,	58

CHAPTER X.	
Earnestness, Energy, Enthusiasm,	66
CHAPTER XI.	
Judgment and Prudence; System and Punctuality; Independence,	71
CHAPTER XII.	
Professional Feeling and Interest; a Deep and Well-grounded Interest in Teaching,	76
CHAPTER XIII.	
Means of Improvement,	81
CHAPTER XIV.	
Teaching,	98
CHAPTER XV.	
Discipline,	106
CHAPTER XVI.	
Means of Interesting Pupils and Parents,	119
CHAPTER XVII.	
Moral Instruction,	130
CHAPTER XVIII.	
Emulation and Prizes,	147
CHAPTER XIX.	
Primary Schools,	154
CHAPTER XX.	
Lessons and Recitations,	163
CHAPTER XXI.	
Examinations and Exhibitions,	178
CHAPTER XXII.	
Multiplicity of Studies,	182
CHAPTER XXIII.	
Reading,	186

CHAPTER XXIV.	
Spelling,	194
CHAPTER XXV.	
Penmanship,	204
CHAPTER XXVI.	
Geography,	211
CHAPTER XXVII.	
Grammar,	219
CHAPTER XXVIII.	
Letter-Writing and Composition,	225
CHAPTER XXIX.	
Arithmetic,	229
CHAPTER XXX.	
Book-Keeping; Declamation,	237
CHAPTER XXXI.	
Singing,	241
CHAPTER XXXII.	
Miscellaneous,	245

PART II.

CHAPTER I.	
Introductory Remarks,	251
CHAPTER II.	
School Houses,	257
CHAPTER III.	
Children should not be sent to School too Young,	262

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER IV.
To Provide Good Teachers, 268

CHAPTER V.
School Supervision, 278

CHAPTER VI.
Parents should Encourage the Teacher, 280

CHAPTER VII.
Specific Duties, 284

CHAPTER VIII.
Candor and Charitableness, 307

CHAPTER IX.
High and Honorable Motives, 314

COMMON SCHOOL EDUCATION.

CHAPTER I.

COMMON SCHOOLS.

The establishment and liberal support of common schools should be objects of special interest to every citizen of our Union. On them, more than on any other cause, under Providence, depend the general diffusion and perpetuity of those great national blessings and privileges which tend to the true exaltation of a people. Free schools are the nurseries of the public mind,—the lights by which republican virtues and honors are most clearly and extensively reflected,—the best safeguards against all the ills of ignorance and vice. Without them no republican government can long exist and flourish; with them, wisely fostered and generally supported, no tyrant's sway can long continue, no bigot's views be widely disseminated. In view of this, how earnestly and assiduously should every good citizen strive to guard and improve a judicious system of public-school instruction!

Common schools have been very appropriately styled the "People's Colleges;" and the character of those who graduate from them must determine what the general condition of our country shall be. It is true that our academies and colleges exert a powerful influence, and

interrogative pronoun, a conjunction, and a verb in the infinitive mode.

By proceeding in this way, a class will make more sure and pleasant progress than by giving their attention to prepare for a verbatim recitation from a text-book.

As soon as sufficient advancement has been made, much time and attention may be given to the analysis of different sentences, and, also, to technical parsing,—though the last named is of but little value, without the ability to comprehend the other points alluded to.

At an early period, much attention may be very profitably devoted to the writing of sentences of a simple nature, which will prove useful, as preparatory to the more formidable exercises of composition and letter-writing,—subjects which I shall reserve for consideration in another chapter.

Northerd

1853

CHAPTER XXVIII.

COMPOSITION AND LETTER-WRITING.

THERE are so many individuals who have thoughts, but cannot express them,—“who know, but cannot tell,”—that it seems very desirable that pupils in our schools should be carefully and early trained in the practice of writing composition. I am aware that many teachers, and many pupils, regard the subject with a peculiar dread; but it is, nevertheless, a subject of much importance, and may be made an interesting one. The reluctance with which this exercise is undertaken often proceeds more from the manner in which it is treated, and from an injudicious selection of themes, than from any inherent difficulty.

The exercise is usually delayed till too late a period of the pupil's life; and then it is treated in a manner so formal and repulsive, as to create a strong disrelish for the whole subject. If, instead of being delayed till scholars are nearly ready to leave school, it should receive attention much earlier, and in a less formal and less exacting manner, the general results would be much more satisfactory and gratifying. Let scholars, as soon as they are able to use a pen or pencil, and to spell with a fair degree of correctness, be required to write short sentences on some subject of interest to them, and, if they are judiciously managed, they will surmount many of the difficulties which usually—though, in a

SUBJECTS FOR BEGINNERS.

great degree, imaginarily — hang around the subject, before they are aware of having taken the first step.

For illustration; suppose a teacher should say to a class of young pupils, "I wish each of you to write something about your school-house, and tell me all you can about it." Or, instead of this, either of the following, or similar subjects, may be given to a class, with a request that a description of each may be given:

THE FARMER.

THE CARPENTER.

A WALK.

A JOURNEY.

A VESSEL.

A TRAIN OF CARS.

The wise teacher will not be at a loss in the selection of subjects; and, if those are selected in which the pupils manifest an interest, they will acquire considerable skill in writing, before the direct exercise of composition is named. By pursuing a course similar to that named, gradual improvement will be secured, and the subject will be divested of its uninteresting points.

It is a very common fault to use words which are, strictly, unmeaning. With a sort of impression that the attractiveness of an article, the interest that which they so studiously acquire. If they are early taught to use plain and familiar language, and to give all their descriptions in an easy and natural style, they will more surely succeed in becoming good and interesting writers.

The exercise of composition requires a degree of ac-

LETTER-WRITING.

quaintance with so many particulars, that it is really deserving of more attention than it ordinarily receives. If especial attention is required in relation to spelling, use of capitals, punctuation, &c., the exercise may be made as profitable as any of those introduced into our schools. No pupil should feel that he is prepared to leave school, until he has acquired the ability to write a legible and intelligible composition; and no teacher should feel that he has discharged his whole duty, until he has imparted suitable aid and instruction in reference to the whole subject, and done what he could to inspire those under his charge with a just appreciation of the importance of the same.

LETTER-WRITING.

Intimately connected with the above, and, I may say, a part of the same, is the practice of letter-writing. Every individual in the community, who occupies any important station,—and, indeed, every person, high or low, rich or poor,—may have, and probably will have, occasion to write letters. To do this in a neat and easy manner is of no trifling consequence; and yet, every one who has ever looked at the letters in any post-office must have observed the very general want of taste and neatness in the modes of folding and superscribing letters; and, if the contents should be examined, they would be found to correspond with the external appearance.

Now, it should be the aim of every teacher to impart instruction on the subject of letter-writing. General directions and explanations, in reference to the commencing and closing of a letter, the manner of folding, superscribing, and sealing, may be given to a whole school, by

A LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION.

using the black-board ; and it will not require much of the teacher's time or attention to furnish all the instruction that may be needed.

It is to be hoped that more consideration may be attached to this simple but useful exercise, and that all pupils may possess the ability, when they cease attending school, to write letters which shall be accurate and natural in their style, correct in orthography, systematic and proper in all their parts. A letter neatly written, correctly expressed, and properly folded and superscribed, will always prove a "letter of recommendation" to its writer ; while the reverse will exert an influence in no respect favorable or complimentary.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ARITHMETIC.

It is, probably, true that more time and attention are devoted to the study of Arithmetic, in our schools, than to any other branch. Perhaps its practical importance renders this advisable. Be this as it may, no one will deny the great value of a familiar and thorough knowledge of the science of numbers. To give precise and specific directions, in relation to teaching the various principles and rules of arithmetic, would require more space than can be given to it, in this connection. It will be my aim, simply, to offer a few suggestive hints, in reference to the subject.

1. *I would urge the importance of careful training in mental arithmetic.*

It will be but the expression of a common feeling and opinion, prevailing among the best of teachers, to say that Warren Colburn did more for the science of numbers, in the preparation of his "First Lessons" in mental arithmetic, than has been done by any other individual. Others have attempted to eclipse him, by improving upon his plan ; but we have yet to learn that any one has been successful in this particular. It is unquestionably true, that pupils, properly trained in exercises similar to those contained in the book alluded to, will make more intelligent and rapid progress in written arithmetic than those who have not had such mental discipline.