

ren, the next step is a thorough physical examination which determines the condition of the organs. Physical defects must be removed, so that the child may be free to gain. A child may keep all the health rules and yet gain so slowly that he continues to remain 10 percent underweight because of some physical defect which could be removed.

"Open the Doors of Child Health" to all children of America:

1. A scale in every school.
2. Every child's weight record sent home on the monthly report card.
3. Time allowed in every school day for interesting children in the establishment of health habits.
4. Teachers trained in normal schools to teach health habits.

—*Child Health Organization*

Are we health slackers?

"To all women today we give this challenge: What are you doing to bring health, strength, and joy to every child in your community?"

—*Child Health Organization*

PEARL POWERS MOODY

#### IV

### BETTER HANDWRITING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The object of writing is to express and record thought, not to display skill or beauty. It is no longer looked upon as something mechanically exact, or as fine art in character, but should be considered as a manual art rather than a beautiful art, and should be taught as such.

The copy-book of the old days, which consisted of bound pages of writing paper, with circumscribed spaces for the pupil to copy exactly the lithographed and mechanically perfected copies printed at the top of the pages, has been superseded by textbooks of practical business writing, embodying legibility, rapidity, ease, and endurance.

"Writing is acquired, not inherited." Intelligent effort rather than talent is necessary to learn it. It is not an art by nature

any more than reading or arithmetic, and should be taught as intelligently as any other subject. So many teachers seem to think, "Oh, why bother about teaching a child to write? He will acquire that by intuition." How many children learn reading or number work without being taught?

Children are required to write soon after entering school, and must continue this work through the remainder of their school days. It is not a subject that can be completed in one grade, then omitted in the next; but it must be continued through all the grades. Then, why should the teaching of writing be treated as an unimportant subject?

Writing is the most neglected subject in the schools to-day. In the majority of schools writing is given no consideration; there is not even a writing period on the daily program. If a writing period has been allotted it is used only if the teacher has nothing else to do at that particular time; but if she needs a little extra time for some other subject, the writing period is omitted; for it is the least important! Then we wonder what is the matter with public school writing.

What are some of the results of not having handwriting taught in our elementary schools? Our high school boys and girls are going out into the business world with the untaught so-called "characteristic handwriting," which is nothing more than an illegible scrawl. But business has refused, and still refuses, to accept this characteristic writing, and demands to-day perfectly legible writing, and writing that can be executed with rapidity.

The student who comes up through all the grades without having been taught the principles of good writing is handicapped when he enters high school. He has a greatly increased amount of written work to do, lectures, lengthy compositions, and notebooks. He scribbles his notes down in class, then copies them over as presentably as his untrained hand will permit. Quite often the teacher is unable to decipher it and it is handed back to be rewritten; therefore, it is a hardship, as well as time lost, on both teacher and student. "Individual in style"? Yes, as individual as the dialect of a foreigner who attempts to teach himself the English language. An easy, rapid, legible, hand-



writing is an asset, as well as a time-saver, to the high school student.

The pedagogy of writing has been given intensive study in all its aspects with reference to the elementary schools; and it has been decided that free, easy, muscular, or forearm movement writing is the only method that produces plain, legible writing with ease and rapidity. Finger movement not only is harmful to the child, but blocks the way to easy, legible writing; while forearm movement paves the way for the most efficient method of writing.

The vital, practical question that confronts us is: how may we best teach the child writing? Let's begin right at the bottom in the primary grades and get at the matter of teaching it from the right angle. A bad start means failure in the end; so let us start right. The primary teacher, above all others, must consider the future. While she is teaching a child to write well enough to meet present schoolroom written needs, she must see that such teaching leads to the most efficient method in the future. Every child must be taught to use forearm movement in all written work. Writing must function with other subjects during process of evolution. The retarded progress often found in the higher grades is due to wrong methods of instruction in the primary grades; therefore, the adoption of free, easy, muscular-movement writing in the primary grades is essential. It is generally the custom of primary teachers to give their energies to the teaching of reading and number work. But—writing? No one had ever thought to connect pedagogy, psychology, or physiology with writing. The pupils learn to copy letters on paper in the most cramped, unhealthy, position. After copying for a short time they are fatigued, and begin to scribble and gauge away until they are completely exhausted. They should be taught from the very beginning how to sit in comfortable, healthful posture; how to place writing material to conserve the eyesight; how to develop an easy writing movement by using the big, tireless muscles of the arm instead of the small muscles of the fingers; and how to develop correct habits that will prepare them to write rapidly, legibly, and tirelessly the long and important writing tasks in the upper grades.

Now, the assumption that it is impossible for a child in the first year to use muscular movement is illogical. The child has a forearm and on it are muscles, and these muscles have flexibility and freedom proportionate to the size of the child. It is much easier to teach a first year pupil correct posture, movement, and rhythm than a higher grade pupil. For in the higher grade the teacher's first, and very difficult, task is to make the pupil unlearn all that has heretofore been taught him; and to try to break up the bad habits that have been so fixed that they are second nature to him. After a muscular action has been performed a great number of times, it becomes a habit, and the action, when once a habit, is reflex and automatic. It is the teacher's duty to teach correct habits; not incorrect ones which will have to be unlearned later.

It is now being recognized very generally that waste in any line is uneconomic; so, to teach one principle, or form one habit in the primary grade, and then to teach another principle and form another habit in the grammar grades, constitutes educational waste.

There should be time allotted on every teacher's daily program for writing, and every student should be thoroughly trained in the correct principles of good writing. Then, when the students enter the higher grades, they will be prepared to write compositions, spelling, and all written work in half the time and with much greater ease. It has been proved that students who write with free, easy muscular movement have reduced note-taking to one-half, and spelling from fifteen minutes to six minutes.

Students who have been taught to use correct habits through all the grades will write plain, legible hands when finishing the eighth grade, but writing should not stop here; it will retrograde if no attention is given it in the high school, no matter how well it has been taught in the grades. It is the duty of every high school teacher to strengthen the weak points in writing as well as in other subjects, and see that every student is doing all his written work with correct writing habits; for writing must be correlated with other subjects. This will benefit the teacher as well as the student. It will facilitate grading of papers and, there-



fore, will economize time and make for greater efficiency; it will also raise the standard of writing in the high school.

Handwriting in our public schools will not improve until every teacher has thoroughly mastered the mechanics and pedagogy of writing. "A teacher can not teach that which she does not know." After recognizing its real value, then she must be willing to give it a little consideration on her daily program.

FLOSSIE L. FRAZIER

## V

### HELPS FOR THE TEACHING OF VIRGINIA HISTORY

#### SIXTH INSTALLMENT

#### VITALIZING AND VISUALIZING VIRGINIA HISTORY

For several years past the teachers of history and geography in different parts of Virginia have been achieving fine results by utilizing local materials and resources in various projects, literary and dramatic. It is the purpose of this article to call attention to what has been done and to suggest further projects and possibilities of this sort.

Nearly every neighborhood in Virginia is rich in geographical and historical resources. Often this fact is unsuspected, and it will frequently be disputed when first asserted. "Oh yes," the good citizen will say, "I know that Charlottesville or Winchester or Richmond or Williamsburg might get up a historical pageant—those places are full of history; but nothing of consequence ever happened here. We can't do it."

But he is usually mistaken. It may be that what did occur in his community was not important enough to be conspicuous. It was so inconspicuous, in all probability, that it has never been written down as history; but, for all that, it may be interesting and perhaps significant, too. The very fact that it has never been written or published is a good reason for recording it now. And if it will serve as a means of vitalizing history or geography for the children of the community, that will give the task ample justification.

The thing to do is to set out upon a voyage of discovery. It may lead to remarkable revelations and to lasting inspirations before it is ended.

It was recently reported in an educational conference that some very stimulating results of this sort had been achieved in a neighborhood supposed to be uninteresting and by certain persons never before distinguished. One dear old lady, whose long life had been spent in quiet obscurity, proved to be a benefactor. For she, it turned out, was able, out of the abundant stores of her good memory, to give the children of the school just such information of days long past as they needed for their local projects. She became at once a figure of unsuspected distinction in her community, and thereby the whole district was given an uplift in civic pride and ambition.

The first step is to find out what happened in the community in Indian days, or Revolutionary times, or in the long period of stage-coaching, or when the drovers and wagoners camped out, or during the Civil War, or when the town or village was laid out, or when the school house was built. Somebody will know enough to give a start; then the trail widens and deepens until many facts of interest are ascertained and recorded. Old diaries, old newspapers, old furniture, old letters, all tell their story. Court records and church records are often available. The cultivation of habits of accuracy and careful reasoning should be insisted upon from beginning to end, and this is worth the effort expended.

When a mass of materials has been collected, let it be organized and shaped into some usable forms. Several essays may be written. A little drama, now and then, may be constructed. And once in a while a more or less elaborate pageant may be worked out. A pageant is a drama, rather large in setting, in which a good many persons take part. It does not demand much speaking but depends mainly for effect upon size, color, and movement. Costumes, banners, floats, and the like are desirable. Horses are a great feature in a pageant.

If geography is combined with history the task is bigger but often easier and more interesting. For one thing, the introduction of geography helps to fix and clarify the his-