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The Beginning Class in Penmanship

Copies By Mr. W. D. McDaniels, Oshkosh, Wis. Comments And Suggestions To Students By A. N. Palmer.

With the opening of the of schools fall term during the present month, a vast army of young men and women will seek educational institutions in which, among other branches, practical penmanship will be taught them. The student who lets enthusiasm for penmanship run away with his better judgment makes a mistake. Certainly penmanship is not the only thing in the business course, but it should be given its proportionate amount of time and should be recognized as one of the most potent factors in the education of young men and women who seek positions in the business world. In fact, the mastery of a fluent, plain style of writing is well worth to any one the time and effort expended.

Thousands of those who enter business schools to be fitted for practical affairs will have but meager ability in what is known as practical writing. In fact, many will write so poorly that they and their forebears will be ashamed of their penmanship. The business training school is expected, in a few short months, to correct the ungainly, dissipated, and entirely impracticable styles to which the greater number of these students will lay claim upon entering, no matter if these bad habits in writing have accumulated through years of patient, finger movement digging in copy books, and through other years of erratic scribbling in high school and college examinations. The business training schools are doing their work nobly in this particular branch, but perhaps not more successfully than in other branches. The public, however, expects the business college to do this one thing as well as, if not better than anything else and the public is paying the tuition fees.

The mission of the American Penman is auxiliary in its character, it is not expected that it will take the place of the rather than a teacher who has established a reputation for doing such accurate work that none of his pupils may ever hope to excel, or even approach, his skill.

The copies presented this month to be used as auxiliaries in the classes of hundreds of teacher,, where the Penman will be liberally circulated among students were written with an easy, free, swinging movement and at a commercial rate of speed. They were reduced but very little in the process of engraving, and they come from the pen of W. D. McDaniels, Oshkosh Business College, Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Is there a teacher of practical writing in America who disapproves our publishing these copies in rapid, easy business writing? Pupils can hope to approximate these, but mechanically accurate copies no pupil can ever hope to approach, unless he fall into the hands of someone who discloses the hidden secrets to him, and shows him how to cut across the chirographic farm and fool the natives with accurate drawing instead of good rapid writing.

How to Learn, Muscular Movement Writing

A Heart To Heart Talk With Students.

Correct position, not in the penmanship classes only, but in all written work is of the most vital importance. Let us call correct position the first step, and let us pause right here and consider this important first step until it is understood; completely understood. Passivity on this subject of position, a failure to grasp its true significance in penmanship practice and in all writing, will mean a tremendous waste of energy, and ultimate failure.

It would be just as sensible to enter a foot race with your ankles securely bound together, as to try to master muscular movement writing in a position that so cramps the muscles of the writing arm that relaxation is impossible. You are ambitious to excel as a rapid, easy, business penman; you have entered the class of a penmanship teacher in whom you have confidence. It is all right so far, but will you heed your teacher's constantly repeated admonition to sit in a good position a correct position in which you may develop the habit of muscular relaxation? Surely you will if you are in earnest in your laudable ambition to learn to write well. If you are in earnest, you will use muscular movement in all your writing just as soon as you can; you will use it at once, and continue to employ it whenever you use a pen. You cannot control the muscles of the arm: your hand runs away, and your writing takes on a dissipated, zigzag appearance, you say. Never mind, there must be a starting point; old habits cannot be eradicated in a day, a week or a month. Neither can new habits be established nor a new set of writing muscles brought under perfect control without constantly repeated efforts during a reasonable period of time.

What is a good position for muscular movement writing? Watch someone who writes a good muscular movement hand; walk around him, study him from the front, sides and rear. Induce your teacher to write for you, and watch him closely. You will probably discover that he sits in an upright healthful position, that he does not lean forward until he crowds against his desk, but that his body is self-supporting in his chair, that his right arm is well away from his side, that there is nearly, if not quite, a square turn (right angle) at his right elbow, thus forcing the right hand well in front of the eyes. You will also notice that as his pen glides easily and rapidly over the paper, the weight of his right arm rests on its larger portion just forward of the elbow, and that the third and fourth fingers are bent until their sides or nails form a rest which, in writing is moveable. If your instructor's hand is a short and thick one, with short stubby fingers it is quite likely that his penholder will drop low in the ball of the hand; but if he has a long, slim hand with long fingers, he may hold the penholder as the old time writing master used to insist that all should hold it, crossing the first finger at the knuckle joint.

The most successful teachers of practical writing now consider this matter of pen holding from a physiological point of view, studying the construction of hands and length of

fingers, and letting the pupil hold the penholder in the most comfortable position, so long as the position encourages muscular movement, and gives the best control in writing.

Study the position illustrations on the opposite page. Number one is a photograph of L. E. Stacy of Meadville, Pa., one of the most successful teachers of practical writing in America; numbers two, three and four are photographs of Miss Lena Vogt, cashier and bookkeeper in the office of the Cedar Rapids Business College. Miss Vogt writes an ideal business hand, and if several student readers of the Penman express a desire to see her writing, a specimen will be engraved and published. Photographs five and six show the arm and hand of Mr. C. C. Lister, for twelve years the teacher of penmanship in Sadler's Business College, Baltimore, Md. Mr. Lister, who is rightly considered by good judges one of the most successful teachers of practical writing, and one of the best all round penmen, has entered the service of The A. N. Palmer Co. and will be connected with the New York City office. This information is given here at this time because he will be a regular contributor to this department of the paper, and our subscribers will have ample opportunities to follow his excellent style of muscular movement business writing.

But to return to the question of muscular movement writing as it relates to students. In illustration one, your attention is called to two very essential things in Mr. Stacy's position. First point, the right arm is not held in a parallel position to the sheet of paper on which he is writing, but takes a position that is oblique with it. Second point, the penholder points a little to the right of the right shoulder. With the two points above mentioned in view, study, number four. In this illustration the penholder points to the upper arm about one half the distance from the shoulder to the elbow, the lower left corner of the paper points toward the center of the body, and the left hand is placed at the upper left hand corner of the paper. The last direction will bear repeating-the left hand placed at the upper left corner of the paper brings the left forearm into a position to support the body and preclude the possibility of getting the face too close to the writing. In fact, the left arm becomes a prop in this position compelling the upright, good position at all times.

Study numbers two and four closely with special attention to the distance between the right arm and side. To find the best position for the right arm on the desk, assume the correct body position, raise the right arm entirely above the desk, withdraw control, and let it drop. Wherever it hits, will be the correct position on the desk, and to draw the arm nearer the side would force the right shoulder upward into an undesirable position, and cramp the muscles of the arm, making muscular movement difficult, if not impossible.

Again, to push the arm to the right, would incline the body in that direction, force it away from its upright, healthful position, and would throw, weight from the body on the right arm.

Illustrations five' and six should be carefully studied with reference to the position of the penholder in the hand, the bending of the fingers, and the relative positions of the third and fourth fingers. To find the best, which is the natural position of the fingers, remove the penholder from the hand, let the fingers bend naturally as they do in repose, and pass

the penholder from the left to the right hand without changing the position of the fingers more than is necessary to grasp the penholder firmly.

To pinch the penholder will cramp the muscles, induce a condition of muscular rigidity, unnecessarily tire the writing muscles, and make muscular movement difficult. The pressure on the holder should be only enough to hold it in position. Since business writing is not shaded, the penholder need not be held so firmly as in ornamental writing, in which heavy shades are important.

It is believed that in discussing the subject of position at such length, no time or space are wasted. Position, good position, correct position the vital point, beginners should be discussed, studied and, constantly, reviewed until it is' fully understood in its relation to the business of learning a good style of writing. Students are advised to give the most serious consideration to these suggestions and to study till of them, until they are clearly understood. In the end it will prove to be economy in time.

Muscular Relaxation the Second Step

The two great obstacles to good writing are poor position and muscular rigidity. The first step in the right direction is good position, and the second step is muscular relaxation. Students should keep these two things constantly in mind. To secure good position and muscular relaxation in the shortest time possible, and to develop a needed amount of automatic movement it is well to practice the movement at frequent periods during the early stages without the pen. First raise the right arm above, withdraw control of it letting it drop of its own volition to the desk; close the fingers making a fist and in this position move the hand in various direction's such as straight slant line, direct and reverse ovals. While practicing callisthenic exercises of this character watch the arm the writing machine get entirely away from the thought of writing, and think of the muscles that must be trained.

As students progress in muscular movement practice it is well to put down the pen, whenever the muscles become tired, or cramped, and practice exercises that will overcome muscular rigidity. Open and close the fingers, drop both arms at the sides, make the aims as limber as possible and shake the hands. In fact give more attention on the start to right physical conditions than to the forms of letters, and the outcome will be more satisfactory in the end.

There may be developed a slow, heavy style of muscular movement writing, just a little better than finger movement, but that is not the style you want.

Excellence in business writing comes through the practice of very light, elastic, gliding movement until it has become automatic.

The third step in the process of learning to write well is through study and practice in the specific application of movement to form, but extended discussion of that third step at this time would be entirely out of place. It belongs to a more advanced stage of the work,

and will be discussed by the editor in another issue if teachers and pupils who read what is here printed desire it.

Copies for Practice

As stated above the copies for practice this month were prepared by Mr. W. D. McDaniels of the Oshkosh, Wis., Business College. They are good rugged coarse pen copies, written at a commercial speed, and the element of speed should be constantly kept in mind as they are practiced.

In number one count ten for each drill and make about twenty completed exercises in a minute. Since number two is smaller than number one, more completed exercises can be made in a minute. Beginners should frequently test the movement with the pen a little above the paper, starting the movement in the direction of the exercise, and bringing the pen to the paper without a decrease in speed. The reverse motion may be used to advantage in this drill, as well as the direct oval movement.

Early in the course students should constantly keep in mind the self-evident fact that the movement makes the form. If the oval is made too wide it is because too much lateral (right and left) movement is used and if too narrow because too much direct forward and backward motion is applied.

To secure correct slant with little effort be careful to maintain the correct position of the paper, and make all downward strokes toward the center of the body. If the downward motion is toward the right elbow, a back- slant will result, while making the downward motion toward the left shoulder will give the forms excessive slant. As the motion so the form, is axiomatic. Keep that constantly in mind. The direction in which the pen moves is an advance indicator of the form that will be produced. Do not forget that, and in the early stages the learner should give by far more attention to correct motion than to correct form. A successful experienced teacher of practical writing can usually determine the character of the forms being made by the movements of the upper end of the penholder or the hand.

In copies three and four the objects to be attained are: lightness, compactness, speed, (200 ovals to the minute) and regular automatic movement. In connection with the copies is printed a photo-engraved oval containing one thousand seven hundred and forty continuous ovals- across the page, made with a coarse pen with one dip of ink by Richard Boyajian, twelve years of age, a pupil of the New York City public schools. Any student who will give careful study to the physical training side of muscular movement writing will soon be able to make even more than 1740 ovals with a coarse pen in the same space with one dip of ink. This is good practice, but students should constantly remember that oval practice of any kind is only a means to an end, and that as soon as a very light elastic automatic movement has been developed, ovals should be practiced sparingly.

In drill five, the pen should leave the paper while in motion, the oval motion should be continued between the drills, and the pen should be in motion as each succeeding form is started. In a word, movement with the pen in the air should precede and follow each form and in beginning letters the speed of the pen as it touches the paper should be sufficient to preclude the possibility of shaky lines. A coarse pen will make a line that is sharp and clear enough if it is carried with adequate lightness and quickness. Sixty-five to seventy-five to the minute should be the practice speed for the Capital O.

In small o, copy six, the important points are: equal curvature on each side, checking movement at the top to close the letter, and forms no larger than the copy. It would be well to practice small o in groups of five, also making about one hundred letters to the minute.

In capital C, drill seven, the closest possible attention should be given to movement direction as the pen meets the paper at the starting point. Seventy-five in a minute is a good practice speed for capital C.

In drills 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 careful study and practice should move side by side. Study the .copy, practice it; study it again, and compare your efforts with the model. When the muscles feel cramped, put the pen down and practice callisthenic exercises until muscular tension has, in a measure at least, been overcome.

Constant attention should be given to position. The learner should give himself frequent examinations in the matter of position. Am I sitting in a position that will permit the easy use of the muscles of the arm; am I maintaining a right angle at the elbow; am I holding my pen lightly in the hand; am I bending my fingers naturally; am I keeping the writing arm well out from the side; are both of my feet resting on the floor; is my body self-supporting in the chair; am I holding the paper in the correct position in its relation to the body; are my eyes fifteen or more, inches from the paper; am I resting the weight of the arm only on the desk; am I resting on the third and fourth fingers, bending them naturally and letting them move lightly over the paper; am I keeping the wrist and side of the hand free from the desk.? These and perhaps a few other questions, pupils may profitably and frequently ask themselves.

Practicing Business Capitals

In classes of older pupils, such as attend nearly 411 business training schools, it is a good plan to devote from three to five penmanship periods to the study and practice of capital letters as soon as a reasonably good movement has been established.

Penmanship students should become acquainted as early as possible with the styles of capitals they will be expected to use in all their writing, not expecting to become really proficient in making them until they have been reviewed a number of times.

Mr. McDaniels' copy, number seventy-five, is printed this month to give an opportunity to teachers and pupils to study his styles of capitals. Sets of business capitals by W. C.

Henning associate editor, F. A. Curtis, Hartford, Connecticut, F.O. Gardiner, Sacramento, California, and L. C. Horton, Trenton, N. J., are also presented, not in expectation that students will practice all of the different styles, but that teachers will make selections for their students, or students, when permitted will make selections for themselves. In each case one style of each capital should be selected and that only should be practiced and used. Mr. C. C. Lister's talk to the beginning penmanship class was postponed, but it will probably be found in the Penman next month.