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The Passing of Great Penmen

Dwight L. Stoddard,
Indianapolis, Ind.

Possibly the passing of great penmen is not different from the passing of any other great men. Yet to me there seems to be a gap created by the individuality lost that can never be filled. In the case of Father Spencer, the father of the highest penmanship the world will ever know, his own family surely did its full part. Great as Father Spencer was in his day, before the accidental discovery of photo engraving, we know comparatively little about his actual work as it was fresh from the pen. Even the later Spencerian work was mostly hand-engraved, which was always a mystery to me how a human hand could be so accurate.

To me the next two in line are G. A. Gaskell and D. T. Ames. Gaskell excelled in awakening in the people of the entire world the desire to become good writers, while Ames through his mastery of the beautiful art in all its many branches, inspired thousands to take up the work and improve it.

No man at any time in the world could name five greater penmen than the five in my day and age, and all very near my age also: Taylor, Madarasz, Zaner, Moore and Dennis. I think I have named them in the order they left the world. No man on earth could name them in the order they ranked as penmen. Some a little younger in the work who have passed away are Holt, Canan and scores of others.

With all this passing of great penmen, we still have the big four with us; though Schofield may not be able to flourish as he once did; and Flickinger, the prince of penmen, may not today be able to equal his work of years gone by; but the specimens that appear in each number of The Business Educator from the pen of F. B. Courtney are as good as ever; and the penman who has excelled as a real writer for more years than any other living penman, and who had a few signature in the June issue without flourish or shade which contained practically the entire alphabet, the most graceful and beautiful ever penned. We all lay down our pens and take off our hats to E. W. Bloser, the greatest writer for the greatest number of years who ever lived in this great country of ours.