

**A METHOD OF TEACHING
LINEAR
DRAWING: ADAPTED TO
THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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A Method of Teaching Linear Drawing: Adapted to the Public Schools by Elizabeth Paimer Peabody

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ELIZABETH PAIMER PEABODY

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OF

TEACHING LINEAR DRAWING,

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BY THE AUTHOR OF "EASY LESSONS IN PERSPECTIVE."

Elizabeth Palmer Peabody

BOSTON:
E. P. PEABODY.
1841.

INTRODUCTION.

REASONS FOR INTRODUCING LINEAR DRAWING INTO THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE object of public education is to prepare good citizens for the State ; in its provisions, it should involve the whole nature of man, physical, moral, and intellectual. No state can be true to itself, which disregards either of these points. If private education, when left to the guidance and resources of parents, fail to accomplish either of these, then it is the part of the State to provide for such deficiency ; since its prosperity, its very existence, depends on the character of its citizens. Truths so obvious would not have been stated here, were it not evident, that, though never denied, they are generally disregarded, and with respect to them, very little of that conviction which produces corresponding action, is to be found in the community.

Hitherto, intellectual education has been the chief object of our public schools. Although in our system of intellectual instruction, there is room for many improvements, yet in this department, the public schools are not behind those of private teachers ; and in the branches taught in them, the pupils will, we believe, sustain a fair comparison with those of any, even the most costly private seminary in the

country. The exhibitions of our public schools justify this assertion. Physical and moral education have received less attention, we might almost say no attention among us, as a public object. Many persons are of opinion, that these departments belong exclusively to home culture. They might undoubtedly be accomplished in the domestic circle, if parents had the leisure, knowledge, and money requisite. The question, however, is not whether this might be, but whether this actually is done; for, as was said above, it concerns the State vitally to have it done, universally, and with fidelity. We know that want of health and strength deprives society of the labor of the individual so disabled, and renders him a burden instead of a helper to the community.

Moral deficiency is even worse than this; a very few vicious characters are sufficient to destroy the peace, contaminate the innocence, and endanger the safety of a city. We feel justified, in assuming that improvement in moral education is needed among us; or in other words, that our youth are not as innocent and virtuous as it is possible they might (with all the imperfections of human nature) become; and that any plan, which proposes to lead them to the cultivation of purity and virtue, is worthy attention; and if, on examination, it is thought to be feasible, ought not to be rejected.

The influences which go to form the sum of individual, and therefore of national character, are infinitely varied; each has a limited and often a hidden sphere of operation, and this brings doubt and difficulty into the business of public education, — acknowledged by all to be a most important concern, yet despaired of by many, as offering no fixed principle, opening no certain road to its objects.

We are about to take up one of these minor, unobserved means of influence. If it can be shown that its operation,

though small, is, as far as it goes, salutary, and that it is of easy attainment, we do not see how it can be conscientiously disregarded by the trustees of public education. As yet, we are not so overstocked with good influences, as to render it advisable to reject any which may be offered.

Linear Drawing is a valuable acquisition, both on account of its moral and intellectual influences, and its use in the arts and business of life. And first, in a moral point of view, it affords innocent occupation and amusement. Occupation and amusement are things children will have; it is a demand of their nature. No systematic provision is made for the last of these — amusement; and a very incomplete one for the former. The long winter evenings, and yet longer summer days, present many unappropriated, unprovided-for hours; now one such hour, — what mischief will it not furnish to the vacant mind, the unemployed eyes and hands of a child! But give him a taste for anything interesting, innocent and attainable, he will never be at a loss for something to do. When the lessons are learned, the business of the day finished, the street amusements (for our children, with individual exceptions, rely chiefly on these) have ceased, he will not sit down listlessly, or busy himself in meddling with what is troublesome to others or hurtful to himself; but with a pencil and slate, or paper, nay, with a bit of charcoal and a shingle, he will be charmed in delineating the forms of objects he has observed (and observed all the more accurately, for the purpose of imitating them) in his daily walks. Nor, secondly, is the intellectual influence less apparent. This simple recreation always at hand, never troublesome or expensive, cultivates in him the powers of observation, of curiosity, of comparison, and of imitation. It exercises his eye, his hand, his attention, his discrimination — invention. A child cannot look at a house, a bridge, or a tree, or any

object whatever, with the design to make a drawing of it, that every one of these faculties is not brought into action. And what is the great purpose of education? not merely the knowledge of this or that fact or principle; but the free use, the fair development of all our faculties, ready for any application which after life may demand.

The direct influence which the taste and talent for drawing exerts on the moral feelings, is worthy attention. It leads to a careful observation and a true enjoyment of the beauties of nature and art; it developes and feeds that precious element of our nature, the sentiment of the beautiful—universally diffused, and designed to elevate and refine the soul, to turn it from gross enjoyments, to tranquillize its ruder passions, and lead it, by the pure delight it supplies, from self and selfish gratifications, to high and holy objects. Those only, in whose souls this sentiment has been developed by education, know how vivid and satisfying is the delight experienced from music, from the visible beauties of nature, and the works of the fine arts; and the mind which has once acquired a relish for such refined pleasures, will surely find in this taste, some protection from the attacks of vicious and low desires. And thirdly, drawing is a talent which may always be turned to use. There is scarcely a trade, profession, or science which does not require its aid. It conveys knowledge which could in no other way be imparted, and those who can exercise it, whether male or female, are in possession of a certain means of earning a subsistence. There is an increasing demand for artists, to draw plans, patterns, anatomical, botanical, and other scientific representations, and diagrams. Not a patent for a machine can be taken out, unless a correct drawing accompany the petition. Not a lecturer on any subject which embraces objects of sight, such as Astronomy, Geology, Natural History, Scenery,

or the Mechanical Powers, but must rely on some artist for his diagrams and drawings ; without which, he would in vain attempt to communicate clear ideas to the audience he addresses. There is scarcely an individual to be met with, who will not admit that he has often wished he possessed the power to delineate, even in a rude style, the object he has occasion to describe or remember. Next to writing, the-art of drawing is of general use, and its acquisition will be valuable, whatever may be the business or condition of life.

This art may be taught in our public schools, with very little expense of time or money. By the plan here presented, it will be seen that one person may teach (and that in the best manner, as far as regards linear drawing) fifty pupils at a time. If the room in which he teaches were arranged conveniently, with circular seats, two hundred might be taught at once ; so that it is evident, that a few instructors might teach all the children of a suitable age, in Boston, without laboring more than during the hours usually given to business.

As the time of males is more costly than that of females, and as it is desirable to increase the resources by which the latter can earn their own subsistence, we would recommend that the employment should be given to young ladies. It would not be difficult to find a number in this city, well qualified, who would gladly accept the office for a reasonable compensation. It is recommended that the hour previous to that of dismissal, when the pupils have become wearied with more laborious studies, be appropriated, on two days of the week, for drawing lessons, and that a lady be selected for each of the public schools, to instruct in this branch. The teacher should be required to furnish her own patterns, and the pupils their own pencils, drawing-books, or slates. Good patterns are an important part of

instruction ; they must be interesting, adapted to every stage of progress, and abundant, so that each pupil can take home, for practice, one after each lesson. A good draughtsman could easily supply these ; and having once completed a number equal to that of the scholars, they would, by changing, last a long time. Thus, fifty patterns would last a school of fifty scholars, twenty-five weeks.

The experiment might at first be limited to the two highest classes in every school, although the instruction would be as advantageous, and in a moral point of view, even more so, to the younger children.

An experiment has already been made, on a small scale, with satisfactory results ; the details of which are here given, as nearly as possible, in the words of the instructor, in the hope that it may serve as a guide to those who may undertake to teach in the public schools. Fifty pupils have been taught gratuitously by a lady, at the Franklin School, during the past winter, (1838-9.) They have received one lesson (three fourths of an hour long) a week, and there has been about twenty lessons. As attendance on the part of the pupils was altogether optional, and as they gave to the lessons a period reserved for recreation, and when they were fatigued by the morning school, the circumstances were less favorable than might be selected. The result answered the expectations of the teacher.