



**SLANT IN PENMANSHIP.**

For fifty years we have been teaching an extremely slanting style of writing. For as many years a large percent of the business and professional people have seen fit to write less slanting than they were taught. Some have found it advantageous for legibility, speed, and ease to write a slight backhand. The fastest writers, such as telegraph operators, editors, and reporters, have seen fit to do so. They have found it easier and better to throw away what they had been taught and to acquire something different even after they had begun life's duties in earnest. As a rule they have, if not reversed the slant of their writing, greatly modified it. They have done this not from choice but from seeming (and it may be real) necessity. They have, as a rule, made the change thoughtlessly and gradually. It has not been done through fancy nor forethought. This shifting from what has been taught and acquired to something oftentimes radically different surely indicates something. What?

Is it not likely that it indicates we have been teaching extremity? Does it not point to the fact that we have been teaching a style of writing that would admit of little or no more slant but much less slant or none at all? A style of writing that bordered on illegibility and complexity? Not only have we taught an extremely slanting style but we have been persistent in insisting that it be adhered to to a degree. We have, as a rule, allowed no license of action, but have been rigid in our fifty-two degree requirements. The consequence has been that when pupils passed from the school into business they have gone from bondage to freedom. That is, they have passed from influences which warped individuality to those which develop it.

The handwriting they had been taught was not their own, but their teachers, borrowed. They had been allowed but little choice in its selection, and had been hindered in its modification. The result was that all pupils who did not possess extraordinary personality wrote a hand resembling the teachers, or the

copy-book. But as soon as they entered life's work in earnest they gradually drifted from early training and acquired that which seemed more natural and more adapted to them and their work.

Such seems to have been more nearly true than the most of us have, thus far, been willing to acknowledge. But we need not be ashamed of it. We did the best we knew how. To continue to do as we have, when we know or have been told better, is suicidal to our progress. The discovery of a wrong, the recognition of it, and the resolve to overcome or right it, are the true indications of progress, growth, and wisdom. Before we can improve we must recognize room for or need of improvement. To do this indicates that the past will not do for the future, except in modified form.

The plate entitled "Extremes in Penmanship" illustrates the principle of teaching one extreme and the consequent result of swinging to the other. *All* have been taught the extreme right slanting hand, but few retain as much slant as they were taught. The question, as we see it, is not whether vertical penmanship, as an arbitrary ninety degree system, is better than a fifty degree system, but whether it is best to continue to teach any one degree system of writing to all. In other words is it right, is it best, is it sensible to teach that which is extremely slanting? Is it not safer to start pupils with the up right and to let them choose between right or left slant rather than to force them to do that which is distasteful to many?

As can be readily seen, when writing begins to slant more than seventy degrees it increases in length and diminishes in distinctness. If it is longer it must take more energy to execute it. If it is less simple and distinct it must take more care to retain legibility.

But what we wish to emphasize most is the fact that good penmanship is not the result of any particular degree of slant or inclination so long as it comes within a radius of about fifty degrees, but instead, two hands may be equally good, the one a right and the other a left slant hand.

Once you see it in this light, and we believe it to be the true one, you need not then become frightened when some one mentions vertical penmanship. Not unless he is as arbitrary as many slant advocates have been. The time is past forever when it is considered wise to think that any one slant is better than all others. The fact of it is what suits one does not suit another. Our machinery, both mental and physical, differs, and the product must necessarily differ if it is normal.

If penmanship is taught correctly the writing of different members of the same class may differ in degree, angle, and curvature without conflicting one with another, nor without demanding much, if any, more attention of the teacher than if but one slant and style was demanded of all.

When penmanship is taught on these broad, universal principles the results must surely be better than by the old arbitrary, one-sided methods. If you doubt it, come to the Zanerian and see it demonstrated.

—Mr. Harry Wilson, an old Zanerian boy, has recently become half owner of the Lincoln Business College, Lincoln, Neb. Mr. Wilson is a capable and energetic young man, and we have every reason to believe that the school will be a success. Our readers will remember that a specimen of Mr. Wilson's writing (vertical) appeared in the *EXPONENT* some time ago. He is one of the best business writers in the country.

—Mr. R. M. Baldwin, who a little more than a year ago came to the Zanerian from Terryville, Conn., recently paid us a visit. Mr. Baldwin now has a splendid position as policy engrosser with one of the large insurance companies of Philadelphia.

PATERSON, N. J., July 20, 1896.

—"Zanerian Alphabets" are both handsome and useful, and I prize the work very highly.

W. L. STARKEY.

—Miss Mary E. Baker, a student in the Zanerian at this writing, was recently elected as special teacher of Penmanship and Drawing in the public schools of Bellows Falls, Vt. Zanerian ladies are getting good positions in all quarters.

CUMBERLAND CENTRE, ME., July 13, 1896.

—Enclosed find 10 cents for another year's subscription to the *EXPONENT*. It is great.

C. H. JENKINS.

—Mr. W. H. Wetzel, a '95 Zanerian, has just been elected teacher of Penmanship and Drawing in the public schools of Greensburg, Pa., at a fair salary. Mr. Wetzel says "A course in the Zanerian brings its own reward."

\* ALLEGHENY, PA., June 14, 1896.

—Wish you could arrange to make the *EXPONENT* a monthly, or at least a bi-monthly paper. It is the only way we have of knowing what becomes of our fellow Zanerians. I would not care if the subscription price were increased to meet additional expenses.

E. R. SEBRING.

HAMLIN, N. Y., July 22, 1896.

—Enclosed find 10 cents for the *EXPONENT* one year. It is worth many times the price you ask for it.

WM. TENNY.

—Mr. R. H. Peck, a '94 Zanerian, who has had charge of Penmanship and Drawing in the Western Normal College, Shenandoah, Iowa, has accepted a position for next year as Supervisor of these branches in the public schools of Villisco, Iowa.

BUTLER, PA., July 28, 1896.

—I am very much gratified at being able to inform you that I have been elected Principal of the Munnhall School, Homestead, Pa., and it was through the influence of the Zanerian that I secured the position. I feel very grateful to you for the interest you took in me while I was with you.

L. M. CALDWELL.