

Manual again of
certain movements
until they



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Manual training, then, means the training of the hands, especially to do manual work (or “handiwork”) skilfully, accurately and quickly. This training mainly consists in constant practice, or the repeating over and over again of certain movements until they become what we call automatic. When we first begin to learn any manual work (for example, carpentry, sewing, knitting, typewriting, spinning, weaving, carving, etc.

), we have to think carefully of every movement and do it with conscious attention. And at that stage our hands are clumsy and awkward, and do not answer quickly to the direction of the brain. In consequence the work is slow, and mistakes are constantly made.

For example, watch a person learning the typewriter. He has to remember where the key for each letter is in the machine and carefully pick it out, and then strike it; and consequently he types very slowly, and sometimes his memory fails and he gets confused and touches the wrong key. But constant practice teaches his hands to answer immediately to the direction of his brain, and he knows without thinking where each letter-key is, and his fingers find it promptly, accurately and without any conscious direction. In consequence, he can type off a letter correctly and at great speed. The same applies to writing. At first we have to form each separate letter with laborious care; but when we get used to writing, our pen flies over the paper without our consciously thinking of the letters we are so rapidly forming. All manual training must of course begin with careful teaching by precept and example, and with conscious effort and concentrated attention: but the rest is all practice. In nothing more than in manual training is the old maxim true that “Practice makes perfect.

” William Hazlitt has brought out this point in a very interesting way in his essay on “ Indian Jugglers”, in which he contrasts the marvellous dexterity of a juggler in tossing three brass balls in the air without a single mistake, with the comparative imperfection of all purely intellectual work. Manual training ought to form a part of School Education, which at present is as a rule far too abstract and literary. In England there is some provisions for this in schools; and more of it should be introduced into Indian schools.