

## English.

All articles and communications intended for this department should be addressed to the ENGLISH EDITOR, EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL, Room 5, 11½ Richmond Street West, Toronto.

### SUGGESTIONS ON TEACHING LITERATURE.

We are told that the way to become a good writer is to write; this sounds plausible, like many other pretty sayings equally remote from fact. No one thinks that the way to become a good medical practitioner is to practice; that is the method of quacks. The best way, indeed, to become a good writer is to be born of the right sort of parents; this fundamental step having been unaccountably neglected by many children, the instructor has to do what he can with second or third-class material. Now, a wide reader is usually a correct writer; and he has reached the goal in the most delightful manner, without feeling the penalty of Adam. What teacher ever found in his classes a boy who knew his Bible, who enjoyed Shakespeare, and who loved Scott, yet who, with this outfit, wrote illiterate compositions? This youth writes well principally because he has something to say, for reading maketh a full man; and he knows what correct writing is in the same way that he knows his friends—by intimate acquaintance. No amount of mere grammatical and rhetorical training, nor even of constant practice in the art of composition, can attain the result reached by the child who reads good books because he loves to read them. We would not take the extreme position taken by some, that all practice in theme-writing is time thrown away; but after a costly experience of the drudgery that composition work forces on teacher and pupil, we would say emphatically that there is no educational method at present that involves so enormous an outlay of time, energy, and money, with so correspondingly small a result. To neglect the teaching of literature for the teaching of composition, or to assert that the second is the more important, is like showing a hungry man how to work his jaws without giving him something to eat. In order to support this with evidence, let us take the experience of a specialist who investigated the question by reading many hundred sophomore compositions in two of our leading colleges, where the natural capacity and previous training of the students were fairly equal. In one college every freshman wrote themes steadily through the year, with an accompaniment of sound instruction in rhetorical principles; in the other college every freshman studied Shakespeare, with absolutely no training in rhetoric and with no practice in composition. A composition of the themes written in their sophomore year by these students showed that technically the two were fully on a par. That is weighty and most significant testimony. If the teachers of English in secondary schools were people of real culture themselves, who both knew and loved literature, who tried to make it attractive to their pupils, and who were given a sufficient time-allotment to read a number of standard books with their classes, the composition question would largely take care of itself. Mere training in theme-writing can never take the place of the acquisition of ideas, and the boy who thinks interesting thoughts will usually write, not only more attractively, but more correctly, than the one who has worked treadmill fashion in sentence and paragraph architecture. The difference in the teacher's happiness, vitality, and consequent effectiveness is too obvious to mention.—*The Century*.

### FIRST LESSONS IN GRAMMAR.

#### DEFINITIONS.

The object of study in grammar is the sentence, precisely as the mineral is the object of study in mineralogy, or the plant in botany. Beginning with the sentence, therefore, or with several sentences, we first lead the pupils to know and define a sentence and its related parts. Two points are to be observed in teaching definitions: first, to see that they are constructed by the pupils upon facts which they themselves have observed; secondly, to secure accuracy of statement. When the definitions have been properly taught, and when the statements are made by the pupils in accordance

with the facts observed, it may be well to compare those statements with others which are found in the text-book, and which may sometimes be substituted for their own. But even the text-books are not always correct, as when it is stated that "the subject of a proposition is that of which something is said," and that "a noun is a name."

To illustrate how definitions may be made, the following examples are given:

The pupil is first asked to express a thought about the book, the crayon, and the schoolhouse. These and other expressions are placed upon the blackboard, and the name "sentence" is given to each expression. The pupils soon see and state that "a combination of words expressing a thought is a sentence." By observing the sentences it becomes apparent that there are two distinct parts in every sentence, one part expressing that of which something is said, and the other part telling what is said of that expressed by the first part. The definitions of subject and predicate are accordingly made from these facts.

#### ETYMOLOGY.

The parts of speech and their properties are also learned by observation. Sentences, as before, are written upon the blackboard, and the attention of the pupils is directed to those words which name objects of thought, or things of which we may think. A noun, then, is seen to be a word which names an object of thought. By this definition which they have made the pupils should point out the nouns in many written and printed sentences, until the nouns of any sentence which they understand are quickly recognized.

From what has been said it will be seen what use should be made of the book. It may be used by the pupils after the topics have been taught, chiefly for guidance in accuracy of statement and in furnishing suitable sentences for illustration and study.

Much practice will be found necessary before the parts of speech can be readily distinguished and named. It is well for the pupil also to give definitions as he names the parts of speech.

When the parts of speech can be readily distinguished they may be talked up separately, beginning with the noun. As before, present to the pupils sentences containing nouns having various uses and properties. As these uses and properties are distinguished they should be classified, named, and defined. The following example will illustrate the method of teaching the kind and properties of all parts of speech. Place several sentences upon the blackboard, as—

The boy lost his knife in Boston.  
John bought an apple for his sister.  
The man's coat was torn.  
William's sister Kate went to the city.  
The girls went to the concert.  
There are seven days in a week.  
The dog is named Donald.

First ask the pupils to select those nouns which name an individual object. The nouns, *Boston*, *John*, *William's*, *Kate*, and *Donald*, would be selected, to which the name *proper* would be given by the teacher. Proper nouns should then be selected from the reading books and defined. The other nouns will be seen to be, not the names of individual objects, but the names of classes of objects. These are named and defined as before. Further classification of the kinds of common nouns, as collective, abstract, and verbal, may be made in the same way, and each kind be defined.

Numbers and genders are easily taught. The pupils' knowledge of language will enable them to distinguish and define these terms at once. Cases are also easily recognized and defined when it is known that there are only two case-forms of nouns—one used to denote possession, and the other all other relations. The subjective and objective relation of nouns should be indicated in parsing, and in the case of pronouns the names of the cases should be given. Persons of pronouns should be taught by placing before the pupils many sentences in which different forms are used to indicate whether they denote the speaker, the person spoken to, or the person or thing spoken of. The pupils will see that only some pronouns have person, and will call these *personal* pronouns. The cases of pronouns should be taught in a similar manner, and when the various forms indicating the different relations are easily distinguished and named the definition should be given. The inflec-

tion will follow, and should be made, as far as possible, by the pupil alone.

The other parts of speech and their properties should be taught in the same way. First present many examples of the fact which it is desired to teach, and, when the fact is well understood, lead the pupils to apply the knowledge gained in many different sentences.

#### SYNTAX.

The right construction of sentences is the object of the study of grammar, and its rules should be considered as soon as possible after the study of grammar is begun. Greater interest in the study will be awakened when its practical bearing is seen, and a greater variety and amount of practice in correcting false syntax will be had by learning the rules of syntax early in the course. As soon, therefore, as the properties of the parts of speech are known, their rules of construction should be learned. The rules are taught in the same way as are definitions. Put upon the blackboard many sentences like the following:

John struck his ball.  
I saw him in the city.  
He taught me to read.

By observing these sentences the pupils will be led to see the changed forms of the nouns and pronouns in different relations, and will also discover that in certain relations the same form is used. From the facts thus learned the rules will be made.—*Prince's Courses and Methods*.

### "FINE-EAR OF THE FAIRY TALE."

The following, addressed to the editor of the English department, should have appeared in July, but were accidentally overlooked:

Miss Teresa McKenna, Spadina avenue, Toronto, writes: "In an article on 'The Age of Trees,' in THE JOURNAL of the 16th inst., the writer, M. A. Watt, asks for information in regard to the allusion to 'Fine-ear of the fairy tale.' The Century Dictionary and Cyclopædia gives the following: 'Fine-ear. One of Fortunio's attendants in the fairy tale of that name. He could hear the grass grow.' 'Fortunio. A fairy tale of ancient but unknown origin. Fortunio is the daughter of an aged nobleman, in whose stead she offers her services to the king, disguised as a cavalier. A fairy horse named comrade, and seven servants, Strongback, Lightfoot, Marksman, Fine-ear, Boisterer, Gormand, and Tippler, aid her to slay a dragon and regain the treasures of the king.'

Hoping some other correspondent may be able to give a fuller explanation of the reference."

Miss Eva Lee, of West Ward School, Barrie, quotes the following somewhat fuller account:

"In fairy tales of the Countess D'Aunoy (1683) we read: 'Fine-ear was a servant of Fortunio, one of the three daughters of an old lord, who, at the age of fourscore, was called out to join the army against the Emperor of Matapa. Fortunio put on military costume, and went in place of her father. On her way, a fairy gave her a horse named Comrade, not only of incredible swiftness, but all-knowing, and endowed with human speech. By the advice of Comrade, she hired seven gifted servants, one of whom, Fine-ear, could hear the grass grow, and even the wool on a sheep's back. After performing several marvellous feats—by the aid of her horse and servants—Fortunio married Alfurite, the king of her country.'"

### SOLECISMS IN SPEECH.

There is force in the objections generally made to setting before pupils examples of bad English, to be made over into good. An exception may be made in the case of such wrong forms as may be habitually used by the children of the school. It will be found, we think, very useful to put such solecisms prominently before the school, on the blackboard or otherwise, as expressions to be avoided. There can be no danger of teaching them to the children who already use them. Care should be taken, however, to indicate that they are wrong and to be shunned, so plainly that they are not be overlooked or forgotten. In this way a critical habit may be encouraged which, within proper limits, is useful and desirable. More of this anon.