

THESE words and SENTENCES in which they occur, or are worked up by the teacher, should be dictated to the pupils, who should either spell every word as it occurs, or if they are competent, write down the entire sentence on their slates. The latter mode is preferable, for no person arrives at accuracy in spelling till he has frequent occasion to write.

In the absence* of a text-book, containing the *difficulties of orthography*, the teacher must have recourse to the *reading books*. Let him make his pupils spell and explain the words at the head of each lesson, before commencing to read it; and, after the lesson is over, let him direct them to close their books, and spell any word or sentence he may select from it.

The practical superiority of such a plan is obvious. For the language of letters, and of composition in general, consists of such combinations of words as occur in the pages of a reading-book—not of words syllabically and alphabetically arranged, as we see in the columns of a spelling-book. Let the reader who may be disposed to dissent, dictate in the manner recommended, a few familiar sentences to a young person who has learned orthography from the columns of his spelling-book only, and, unless we are greatly mistaken, the inferiority of the old plan will be evinced by the erroneous spelling of some, perhaps, of the easiest and most familiar words.†

But how, it may be inquired, are children, without dictionaries or spelling-books, to learn the MEANING of words? By being accustomed

* And even in connexion with such a text book this plan should be used.

† The sound or pronunciation of a word will not enable us to spell it, because, as we have seen in page 8, the same sounds are often represented by different signs or letters. The words *meet*, *meat*, and *meat*, for example, are spelled differently, though the sound or pronunciation of each is the same. To spell a word correctly, therefore, we must be well acquainted with it. We must know its meaning or signification, and the identical letters which compose it. The *sound* of it is not sufficient; we must know how it looks: and this the eye will enable us to do, for, as has been well said by an American writer, "the eye in such cases may be said to remember." Hence, when we are in doubt as to which of two ways a word should be spelled, it is a good rule to write down both, and the eye will enable us to decide which is correct. Hence, too, persons that write or even read much are, in general, correct spellers; for their eyes are so well acquainted with the form or appearance of the words, that they can at once detect the errors which arise from wrong or omitted letters.

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