

What a drilling we got in English composition from Mr. C—! How proud we were if our exercises received his "Good!" How exultant over the rarely gained "Very good!" Now-a-days, much less attention is paid, as far as my limited observation enables me to judge in the matter, to the proper expression of thought in language, which is the only practical application of grammar. Scholars are required to memorize a lot of rules of which they neither comprehend the meaning nor the use, and of which consequently they will never make any practical application either in written or oral expression, whereas they should be habituated to the correct use of language in ordinary conversation as well as in the studied composition exercise.

School life is so short, and the practically important branches of education so many, that no time should be devoted to what will not be of essential service. There is indeed a great deal of hard, even fatiguing and disheartening work, such as memorizing dates of historical events, dry numerical statistics and facts of geography, and the exact wording of rules, required of scholars that might be dispensed with, not only without detriment to their educational welfare, but with positive advantage to the supreme ultimatum, "a sound mind in a sound body." But, if time and effort is worse than wasted in such memorizing, what shall be said of, how shall I characterize, the terrible struggle of the infant mind in its efforts to memorize our most unphonetic, most barbarous orthography!

Were our language destitute of characters for its visual representation, and were a commission appointed to supply this desideratum, common sense would dictate that the phonetic elements of the language be first ascertained and classified, that in devising an alphabet there be but one simple, easily and quickly made character to represent each phonetic element or sound of the language, that each such character be sufficiently distinctive in shape or appearance to be readily distinguished from the one from the other, while possessing certain class characteristics, and finally that they be susceptible of being easily joined together into words. The result would be a scientific alphabet, or system for the visual representation of the language, such as was invented by Isaac Pitman, of Bath, England, and is now extensively employed wherever the Anglo-Saxon language is used, and which with slight modification is applicable to all languages. When a child has learned a phonetic alphabet it can read, as the mere utterance of the phonetic elements of a word with the correct accent produces such word.

If the commission I have imagined were to devise and recommend for adoption such a complicated, cumbersome, unphonetic alphabet, and such a barbarous system (pardon the misnomer,) of orthograph as the alphabet and orthograph to which Anglo-Saxon people cling with barnacle-like tenacity, how think you would the result of their labors be received? Would their report be regarded as a huge practical joke? as a production of lunatics? or as the work of men whose ingenuity had with demoniacal perversity been employed in devising "how not to do it?"

Did any one ever give, hear or conceive one practical common-sense reason why our present system of visual sound representation should be retained in preference to a phonetic system, such, for instance, as that invented by Mr. Pitman? When such a system shall have been adopted, the years that past generations of children have wasted in learning to read will be so much added to the school life; language will be free from a burden that it has so long carried, free to speed with all the speeding forces of the age; and only the funny men, who will be deprived of an inexhaustible source of material for bad puns, will have reason to regret the change.

The electrocution of William Kemmler, concerning which you ask my views, when an event of the past, crowded out of the public mind by fresh horrors, will, I believe, have prominence in history as an unique and pregnant event, even though there be other or many other electrocutions, which at present does not appear probable. I have not the technical knowledge essential for arriving at correct opinions as to the respective merits and demerits of the various modes employed or proposed for accomplishing the death penalty. I have, however, no doubt but that life would be extinguished instantaneously, painlessly and quietly by the passage of an electrical current of sufficient though not necessarily very high voltage through the body of the victim from an electrode held in one hand to an electrode held in the other hand, and that this as a method of criminal execution would compare most favorably with the horrors inseparable from the gallows, the guillotine or any other mode at present practised. The first electrocution was bungled and therefore a failure. The published accounts of the event sent a thrill of horror through the anxiously waiting world, and I am impressed with the opinion that not only will the voice of the people declare against electrocution, but that it will also be aroused and stimulated to demand the abolition of the death penalty.

Is it not far better that ninety and nine wretches who have, with malice aforethought, slain a fellow being, should be spared from just retribution, and be punished by imprisonment for life and the lash of conscience, than that one innocent man should meet the death penalty?

Now, time's up, and I must close. How is the orchard panning out? Can we get from you our winter's supply?

As ever yours,

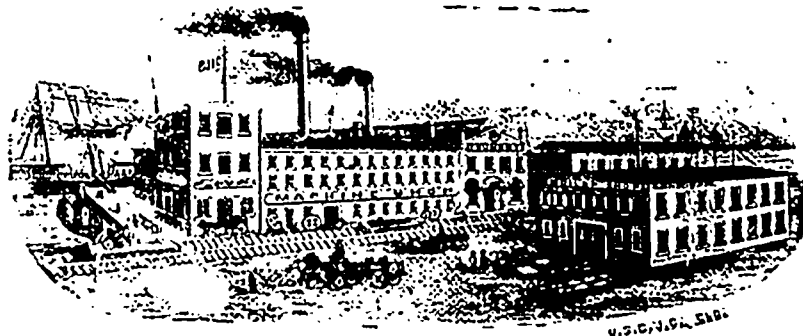
S. C.

INDUSTRIAL NOTES.

Mr. Walton, of the Avonport brickyard, has just opened up for shipment a new kiln of brick containing nearly 450,000. The burn was an unusually good one, Mr. Walton using for the first time quite an amount of coal with gratifying success. The bricks are thoroughly burnt, of a deep red color, and when laid are sure to make a handsome wall or chimney.—Acadian.

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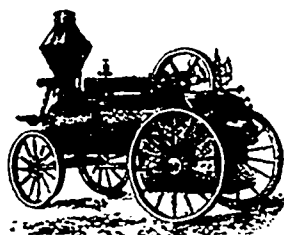
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