

1. "Oh, I love the merry sunshine!
It makes my heart so gay,
To hear the sweet birds singing
On their summer holiday.
2. "Oh, I love the merry sunshine,
The dewy morning hour;
With rosy smiles advancing
Like a beauty from her bower.
3. "Oh, it charms the soul from sadness,
It sets the spirit free;
The sunshine is all beauty,
Oh, the merry sun for me!"

After the pupils have committed to memory the first stanza, the teacher would say it slowly, stopping after every word, the children repeating after him, and counting the parts which they would recognise as *words*. They would then in turn say,—“Oh” is a word, “I” is a word, “love” is a word, &c.

To effect the analysis of the words into *syllables*, the teacher would let the children find out that words, for the utterance of which we have to make only one effort, like “Oh,” “I,” “love,” “the,” &c., consist of *one syllable*; while those for the utterance of which we have to make two, three, or more efforts, like “mer ry,” “sun-shine,” “ho-li-day,” consist of two, three, or more syllables. As in the analysis of the lines into *words*, the pupils, one after the other, will say of how many syllables each word consists.

Lastly, the syllables are dissolved into *sounds*. The teacher again, in the first instance, would pronounce slowly and distinctly a syllable consisting of more than one sound, l-o-ve, when the pupils will have no difficulty in discovering that the word “love” consists of *three sounds*, l-o-ve; the syllable “mer,” of the three, m-e-r; “ry,” of two, r-y; “sun” of three, s-u-n; “shine,” of three, sh-i-ne; “it,” of two, it; “makes,” of four, m-a-k-e-s, &c., and so every word. In this manner the whole piece of poetry would be analysed into *words*, *syllables*, and *sounds*. And it is this dissolving of words finally into *simple sounds*, and not into letters, which is the key to this phonic method.

Any teacher, who can grasp this idea of analysing words into their respective *sounds*, will easily understand the rest of this method.

But in this process it is absolutely necessary to proceed in a scientific manner, namely, to look closely at facts, and not to be led away by customary or conventional notions. The results will, in many ways, be striking to some of you, for all the anomalies of English spelling will be laid bare. It will be found that several letters bear a false name; that one and the same sign or letter represents several sounds, and that in several instances one and the same sound is represented by various signs. The letter *i*, for instance, has obtained its name, not by right, but by a kind of usurpation. For if you take any page of writing, and count the letters *i*, you will find that, as a rule, there are twice as many so-called short *i* or, properly speaking, *e* sounds, as long *i*. In the Lord's Prayer, for instance, the letter *i* occurs twenty times; and only one of them has the *i* sound, but sixteen sound like *i*, as in *which*, *in*, *kingdom*, &c.

The same is the case with the letter *u*, which, if frequency of occurrence were to entitle a sound to its name, ought to be called *u*, as in *but*.

Again, you are aware that the letter *a* must stand for the four distinct sounds of *ā*, as in *fare*; of *a*, as in *man*; of *ā*, as in *far*; and of *u*, as in *war*.

While, on the other hand, the *ō* sound is represented by five different signs; by an *o*, in *do*; by a *oo*, as in *wool*; by an *ou*, as in *would*; by a *u*, as in *rude*; and by

a *ui*, as in *fruit*. The English suffer in this respect, as in other things, according to Mr. Gladstone, from an “incapacity of detecting discord;” from a partial absence “of that sense of harmony between the inward and the outward,” of which he “had been lamenting the weakness.”

The consequence is, that the art of teaching Reading is more difficult in English than in those languages where there is a fixed sign or letter for almost every sound, as is the case in German for instance. But if even in Germany it was at one time considered a matter of the utmost importance to find out the very best method of teaching Reading, how much more ought it to be considered so in England, where the difficulties are greater!

Parallel with the above preparatory exercises for the organs of speech and for the ear, must be practised the exercises for the hand and eye, the object being to enable the pupils to understand and practise the formation of letters. The pupils will draw on their slates first with the help of the ruler, afterwards free hand, the exercises contained on the two sheets, A and B.

At the same time the teacher will explain such simple but most important notions as a *straight line* (for horizontal), *upright* (for perpendicular), *slanting*, *slanting up to the right*, *standing down to the left*, *round*, *crooked*, *point*, *half*, *quarter*, *thick*, *thin*, &c.

These exercises will not only prepare the pupils for writing, but be the most useful introduction to *drawing*.

These Preparatory Exercises are, for Reading and Writing, what ploughing the ground is for sowing. If the ground is well prepared and the sower, at the right time, scatters a healthy seed, he may fairly hope for a rich harvest; for *time*, *rain*, and *sunshine* rarely fail to do the rest.

I now proceed to explain the sheets before you, containing, in thirty short lessons, every feature essential to the English phonic Write and Read method, and which I beg most respectfully to submit to your careful examination. The teacher would first write on the black-board the letter *o*, the pupils copy it, and call it *o*. Then the letter *n* is written, and called *n*, not *em*; then *on*, and *no*, &c.

In regard to the order in which the various letters and combinations are taken, I was principally guided by the facility with which their sounds can be caught by beginners. Thus the sounds *n*, *m*, *l*, *r*, *s*, are readily caught by children; and by the time they have mastered them in their combinations, they are so familiarised with the way of catching and combining sounds, that the most difficult are easily learned by them.

(After having explained the contents of the sheets, the speaker went on to say):—Both in the Lessons and in the Key, it will have been noticed that in several instances one sign or letter had to do duty for two sounds:—*a=a* in *man*, and *a* in *far*; *o=o* in *so*, and *o* in *love*; *u=u* in *bull*, and *u* in *use*; *y=y* in *yet*, and *y* in *many*, &c. The reason for this economy in signs my conviction is, that the smaller their number the less likely will confusion be caused in the minds of the children. On the other hand, experience has borne out what might *a priori* be expected, that children rarely miss the correct sound if it is approximately represented in words which they understand: their imagination makes up for the imperfect representation. But in syllables which have meaning, it does not matter which of the two approximate sounds they take.

Economy of means to the end will also be seen in the arrangement of the lessons. As a rule, the children have only one new letter or sound to learn in each lesson, and the letters previously given re-appear, mostly in new combinations; thus every lesson is easy, yet fresh, and