

WORDS—THEIR 'ABUSES, USES AND BEAUTIES.*

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I DO not think it necessary to offer any excuse for having chosen a theme which, although not admitting, perhaps, of that visual illustration nowadays deemed so essential to the proper elucidation of subjects discussed at the orthodox Convention, yet, considered as an educational lever, a powerful means to attain a very desirable end—to wit, culture—is a matter of deep interest, indeed of vital importance, to us all. I allude to the Study of Words.

I am one of those who fancy that something more than the prosy, mechanical commonplaces of everyday school tuition is necessary to develop aright the mental organism of the modern pedagogue; that something of refinement, of classic English training, and that too of a high order, is essential to the moulding of the intellectual personality of the teacher of the nineteenth century, be he professor on the University staff, director or tutor in the flourishing Institute, or mere educational drudge in the meanest log school-house of the backwoods. Such an one has not only to train minds mathematically, scientifically and morally—he has to foster and perfect literary taste; and as nothing is the natural outcome of nothing, if he, the caterer to the mind, has no full mental literary store-house of his own from which to furnish provender, how shall he feed the hungry souls who look to him for aid in the famine of their intellects?

Now, I have a sufficiently high

opinion both of the professional taste and mental capacity of that industrious and meritorious individual, my fellow-labourer in the vineyard of common school tuition, to conscientiously believe that he will fully appreciate any and every endeavour made—even though for once out of the beaten path of conventional orthodoxy—to awaken his interest, to enlighten his understanding, and to administer to those higher faculties of thought and that innate appreciation of the beautiful which are parts, so to speak, of every rightly-constituted mental habit. Need I ask what subject can be more fraught with interest to the student or the preceptor than the all-important one of language—that great vehicle of thought in all lands, and throughout all ages; and in the consideration of language, what of greater moment than the study of words, the verbal atoms out of which the mosaic of speech is constructed—their abuses, their uses and their beauties? Their abuses, under which heading may be classed errors arising from indistinctness of articulation, provincialisms, slang, and expressions absolutely incorrect as to orthography, orthoepy, or syntax—which latter are not the result of carelessness or local custom, but of bad training, or want of training altogether. Their uses, considered separately as symbols or verbal pictures, whose meanings are often intimately connected with their sounds. Their beauties when grouped, as exemplified in those happy combinations which are the product of the genius, the patience and the research of the master intel-

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