

divisions of the schools. The first three are generally easy and fairly suited to the tastes of children. They are, however, open to the objection that they can do nothing toward developing any higher tastes in those who read them, and very little in the way of storing the mind with ideas worth retaining through life. And, seeing that no impressions are so vivid or so lasting as those which we receive in the beginning of our education, these are very grave defects. Children ought not to read in school, as a serious lesson, anything that is not worth remembering. They need not read anything in school which is beneath the serious interest of those who teach them, and which may not therefore react beneficially on the teachers at the same time that it maintains the interest of the scholars. Unless this principle be observed in the selection of subject-matter for the lessons, it will be impossible to impart any dignity to the education given in elementary schools, or to secure a high tone in the teachers. I believe that a great deal of the eagerness shewn at this moment by the masters and mistresses for the introduction of the more difficult scientific subjects arises out of weariness of the frivolity and inconsequence of the lessons in the unscientific books, and that a really interesting course of Reading Books would be even more welcome to them than the children.

"Nelson's Royal Reader" for the first standard division contains forty-four lessons, of which eighteen are poetry and twenty-six prose. The prose pieces are simple in style and feeling, and of a nature to interest children mildly; but they are without positive merit of any sort, and might easily be replaced by something better. The poetry is well chosen, and of some of the pieces it may be said that they are all that can be desired. Only, as they are intended to be

learned by heart, it would be better to remove them from the Reading Book to the Learning Book. The principle that the chief business of the Reading Book is to teach children to read, and to care for reading, is now recognized on all hands. It has been announced in official circulars, echoed in the prefaces to the books, and insisted upon by the inspectors in their reports. It only remains to carry it out, and the first step in this direction is to make the Reading Book as much like a book, and as little like an educating machine, as possible. A collection of stories to be read, questions to be answered, and poems to be learned by heart, no more deserves to be called a book than does a volume in which a year's series of a magazine is bound up. Both may contain excellent matter, but they contain it in the form least attractive to readers. I should like, therefore, to see the poetry put into the book from which lessons are to be learned for repetition, and the prose lessons replaced by a selection of *Æsop's Fables* suitably rendered and illustrated. These books are generally illustrated, but the illustrations have the same faults as the text—they are not particularly good in themselves, and they lead to nothing better. It would be a help to future education if all the woodcuts were reproductions of well-known pictures; and this could be managed easily if a corresponding principle were observed in the selection of the subjects of the lessons. The *Fables of Æsop* are among the classical things of knowledge. The ideas embodied in them are part of that common stock of culture which it is desirable to make known to everybody. And they are a part of it which children can understand and enjoy. *Fables* always have delighted children, and there is no reason to fear that they will ever cease to do so. The talking of beasts and birds comes