

THE READING CLASS.

The teacher who expects to attain the best results in her management of the reading class, must be attentive to the following particulars: 1. She must comprehend what are the desired ends of her teaching of this class. 2. Knowing these, she should understand the best means and methods of reaching them. 3. She will have to be persistent in her efforts to accomplish them, and be able to know when a fair degree of proficiency is attained.

I propose only to say a few things concerning the first of these particulars—the ends to be accomplished in the teaching of the reading class. When I refer to the reading class, I wish to be understood as that class which begins with the child in its first attempt to learn the signs of ideas as associated with visible objects, and continues on up through every grade of advancement, till it finally emerges from the tuition of a teacher. The question which every faithful teacher should settle within her own mind is, "What are all the objects to be arrived at in teaching reading? What is the nature of them?" If she has finally settled this matter, she should then familiarize herself with every principle, every method, calculated to develop that purpose, until to her mind they are as simple as the alphabet.

To one who has never given this subject much thought in its broadest sense, an outline of the main things to be accomplished may not be inappropriate.

1. *A Mastery of Words.*—The beginning point in the commencement of teaching every child is to teach him *words*. He must be taught to recognize them as the representatives of ideas, first as the signs of objects familiar to him; and as he advances, by reversing this order, for he then learns *ideas* by learning to recognize words which were not familiar to him. When the child learns to know a word, he should be taught to speak it and write it. By the latter process he is taught to spell the word. It will not be attempted in this article to suggest methods. The skillful teacher's ingenuity will devise her own. The result is all that shall claim our attention. In the mastery of words, the pupil must learn to *recognize* words; to *associate* the word with the *idea* it represents; to *speak* the word; and *spell* the word by *writing* it. The accomplishment of this result is not confined to the primary teacher, but will continue to be an object of importance as long as the pupil studies the art of reading. The methods only need varying.

2. *Delivery.*—After the pupil has been taught a sufficient number of words to construct into sentences, he should then be taught to read them in a proper manner. The first principles of delivery should be taught them at once. The habits of articulation, emphasis, inflection, etc., are only perfected when they are enforced in early youth. As the pupil progresses, more of the principles of expression should be taught him, and when sufficiently advanced, the terms, definitions, rules, etc., of elocution should be mastered. All the arts of oratory, all the graces of the elocutionist, should be taught, if he continues in school long enough for their accomplishment.

3. *Increasing the Child's Vocabulary.*—No other subject is so important as this. When a pupil becomes the master of a large vocabulary of words and knows their meanings, he is then in possession of such means as enable him to *think*. Our ideas are always *thought* in words and *expressed* in words. If we notice our own cogitations, we will always find ourselves employing words to aid us in following out a train of thought. The child's knowledge of words should be as much expanded as is possible. Right here I will venture to suggest that the dictionary is perhaps the best aid in the accomplishment of this end. Giving definitions, synonyms, and the various meanings will be a most valuable exercise. As the pupil

progresses, a study of the etymology of every new word coming up for discussion will strengthen this knowledge. A thorough drill in these exercises will prove most invaluable to the pupil in the pursuit of the knowledge of other branches.

4. *The Study of Language.*—The reading recitation affords many and excellent opportunities for acquiring an intimacy with the structure of our language. The relation and government of our words may be taught a long while before the pupil is capacitated for the investigation of technical grammar. Certain slate exercises on the reading lesson will result in a development of the powers of expression. Children under skillful teaching will have made considerable progress in a knowledge of their language while yet reading in the primary readers. It should not be taught in a desultory manner, either; the simplest principles should be first developed, and afterwards more complex ideas mastered. What is taught should be thorough as far as it goes.

5. *Learning the Elements of other Branches.*—In our reading books there are many lessons which teach facts pertaining to other studies. Biography, history, geography, and science are all more or less represented in the reading exercises of our text-books. The teacher should see that they are fully understood by the pupil. It will often be necessary to supplement these lessons with explanations by the teacher, in order to make their meaning plain. It is proper that pupils have regular exercises in reading, writing, or script. Lessons placed on the board by the teacher, in which are stated the elements of science, or some other branch of knowledge, will answer a two-fold purpose—a reading lesson, and a lesson in a collateral study. Such lessons heighten the interest, quicken the thinking faculties, increase the common fund of knowledge, and improve the memory.

6. *The Study of Literature.*—Just now this subject is receiving some of the attention that its importance deserves. While it is impossible to discuss this matter as fully in a brief space as it merits, a hint ought to be sufficient to the wide-awake teacher, that her work is not satisfactorily or effectually preformed if she pass this matter unheeded. Biographical sketches should be written on the board, and the pupils encouraged to hunt up information on the same subject for themselves. They should further be required to write up such sketches. They must be instructed in the peculiarity of style of each author. The productions should be analyzed, and the choice thoughts memorized. By beginning with the child at an early age, and teaching no more than it is able to comprehend, and keeping it until it has grown into the young lady or gentleman, a large amount of culture in this direction will be quite preceptible.

7. *The Cultivation of the Voice.*—If the teacher is perfectly well informed regarding all that is incumbent upon her in developing a proper culture of her pupils, she will not neglect this. No rules are to be given here. Pleasing voices delight us all. They impress us agreeably or otherwise according to their character, and if there is such a thing as improving an unpleasant voice by cultivation, that teacher is greatly to blame who fails to make an effort towards its accomplishment. The voice is susceptible of cultivation to a great degree of power; its expression may be made beautiful and varied; and its care should constitute a large share of attention. The nature of certain kinds of food, the dress, the use of stimulants, and exercise, should be fully explained to every one, and all be required to conform to such rules as will promote and preserve its power and beauty.

8. *Cultivating a Love for Reading.*—No teacher has fully succeeded who has failed to implant in her pupils a passionate love for reading. Not reading for mere entertainment of the mind, but the nobler, the higher uses of seeking wisdom in the realm of thought,