

reading. The end sought was an intelligent, natural, and simple delivery of every sentence.

Of course, a lesson in reading like this was no trifling matter. It was, indeed, the longest recitation of the session, and the one at which the instructive powers of the teacher were most severely tested. But it was the most valuable, the most important, lesson of the day. By it the pupil was taught not only to read well and speak well, but to think. His powers of attention and apprehension were put in exercise, and he was obliged to discriminate shades of meaning before he could express them by inflection of voice. Reading aloud well was then regarded as inferior in importance to no other "branch" of education; it was practised until pupils were prepared to enter college, the latter reading lessons being taken from Milton or Pope or Burke, or some other writers of the highest class, and being again accompanied by explanation and criticism. In the earlier years of a boy's school-time any other recitation would be omitted by the teacher sooner than that in reading aloud.

How it is, or why it is, that such instruction in reading has fallen into disuse I do not know. Indeed, I know that it is disused only by the chorus of complaint that goes up on all sides, both in England and in the United States, that children cannot read aloud and that they cannot write from dictation. This, of course, could not be if children were taught in the manner which I have endeavoured to describe. A school-boy of eight or nine years old, if taught in that way, would know how to read English aloud decently well, if he knew nothing else. And it is really more important that he should know how to do this well, and that he should learn to do it in some such manner as I have described, than that he should

begin the study of the arts and sciences.

I do not forget that the boys of whom I have been writing were children of parents who themselves were well educated, nor do I underrate the effect which the home associations of such pupils have upon their mental condition, and upon their command of language. Children who live in an atmosphere of intellectual and social culture absorb knowledge as they acquire good manners, unconsciously. Above all do they acquire unconsciously such a command of language, and also of the voice, as is attained by others only by severe training, which must be begun in early years. There is nothing more unmistakable than the voice of a cultivated person. Few such persons lack this voice; and those few fail to possess it from some accident or some vocal malformation. It is needless to say that the vocabulary of an educated person is easily distinguishable from that of one uneducated. And this difference begins to shew itself in very early years. Children who live among cultivated people usually know the meaning of more words than they can write—of more than they have ever seen. They can understand the talk of their elders, even when their ignorance of the subject under consideration would prevent them from joining in it so far as it would be becoming for them to do. When they come to read their trouble is rather to fit the signs of the words to the sounds than to understand the words or to pronounce them properly.

It is not so with the children of the uneducated, who largely, but by no means exclusively, fill our public schools. They come with a very limited vocabulary, a perverted notion of the meanings of words, with a bad pronunciation, with slovenly habits of mind and of speech. But, on the assumption that it is a good thing for