A gulf profound as that Serbonian bog
Betwixt Damiata and Mount Casius old,
Where armies whole have sunk.

We all know the old plan. As soon as the pupil was able to read—indeed, frequently before he was able to read with ease or profit to himself—the text-book on grammar was placed in his hands. He had then to wade through (to him) unmeaning definitions of "grammar" and of its "four parts," wade through other definitions, principles, rules, exceptions to rules, every step more painful than the preceding one, until, in the end, if his mind were not unfitted for ever from really understanding the true nature of grammar, it would be surprising.

Further on I shall state my views as to the proper method of introducing the subject of grammar; but here I may say that if, in any subject of school work, it is important to begin well, in none is it more so than in this under consideration. If we place a text-book on geography in the hands of pupils just beginning the subject, and before they have had any oral instruction thereon, harm in a certain degree will result to their mental powers. The same may be said in the case of arithmetic, history, &c. Even more so can this be said of grammar; and the incorrect notions obtained from the text-book will be even greater in the latter case than in any of the former.

This is due partly to the nature of the subject, and partly to the manner of treating that subject in the usual text-books on grammar.

No work is more difficult to write than a good *elementary* grammar, except, perhaps, a good elementary "reader." The difficulties placed in the way by text-books I will speak of first, and then turn to methods proper in teaching this branch of school study.

It should not be difficult to teach grammar properly. For, what is grammar? The usual definition is something like this: "grammar is the science which teaches us the correct use of language in speaking and writing." It seems a simple thing to accomplish after all. Then in trying to attain this very plain end, what benefits will the pupils experience by repeating, in the very earliest stages, this definition—in repeating that the subject is usually divided into four parts, orthography, etymology, syntax and prosody, and that each part is so and so? Just fancy a new beginner trying to swallow, in his *first* grammar lesson, that syntax treats of the proper collection and relation of words in sentences; that prosody treats of the accent and pronunciation of words and the laws of classification. How refreshed he must feel, in mind particularly, after such an effort as this. But, after all, what is grammar? Whitney, in his "Essentials of English Grammar," has taken "a new departure" in this matter, and in my mind with much advantage to definition learners. He says, "Grammar does not at all make rules and laws for language; it only reports the facts of good language, and in an orderly way, so that they be easily referred to, or learned, by any one who has occasion to do so. Nor is the study of the grammar of one's own native language by any means *necessary* in order to correctness of speech. Most persons learn good English in the same way that they learn English at all, namely, by hearing and reading, by hearing and imitating good speakers, by studying books written correctly and well, by correcting themselves and being corrected by others, and so on." But Whitney shows the true place which the text-book occupies in this study; and as the works in use—with a few honorable exceptions—are to my mind faulty in many ways, I will close this introduction by stating my charge against them, the discussion of which I shall enter upon in another paper.

My charge is this: The definitions in common use don't accurately define the terms they are intended to explain; the principles usually laid down are often involved in much obscurity by being stated in unintelligible language; and erroneous statements are often given as correct theories.

VISIBLE SPEECH—THE SCIENCE OF UNIVERSAL ALPHABETICS.

BY JAMES P. BURBANK, SALEM, MASS.

In the year 1864 Professor Alex. Melville Bell, F. R. S. S. H., discovered the principles of the universal Phonetic Alphabet, and shortly after invented a set of Physiological symbols, in which all languages can be written.

Ordinary letters have no relation to sounds. The associations are entirely arbitrary. That which we call *H* is the vowel *E* to the Greeks and Russians; our *P* is their *R*; our *E* is *A* to the French, the Italians, and many others; our *I* is their *E*, and our *A* is their *Ah*. Besides this international diversity, a variety of sounds are often associated with a single letter in the same language, and no alphabet contains a single character for each sound. In this respect the English language is very imperfect. We have various sounds represented by the single letter *A*, as in the words *take*, *art*, *ball*, *ask*, and *hat*. We also use the letter *E* to represent various sounds, as in the words *be*, *net*, *her*, etc. We have other letters, as *G* and *S*, each representing more than one sound. In the alphabet of Visible Speech every letter has a fixed phonetic value, which is the same in all languages, every sound its own appropriate symbol, and every part of every letter has a definite physiological meaning.

In Visible Speech the character or symbol used to represent the sound we call P, indicates to the eye that the lower lip is shut against the upper lip, and that this position is immediately relaxed with an explosive puff of breath. For *T* the point of the tongue is raised against the upper gum, entirely closing the mouth passage, and immediately relaxed with a puff of breath. For *D* the position of the tongue is the same as for *T*, with voice sounded while the position is held. For *M* the lips are closed, as for *P* and *B*, voice escaping through the nasal passages while the lips are thus held.

During the summer of 1864 Mr. Bell's system was tested by many scientific and literary men of Great Britain, and commissioners from the principal European nations, to the entire satisfaction of all. Mr. Bell demonstrated that in his alphabet could be written any language or dialect, and any one understanding the mechanism and use of the symbols could pronounce with vernacular precision any language written in these symbols, though he did not understand the meaning of a single word he was articulating.

His experiments were made in the following manner: Mr. Bell sent his two sons out of the room. Different languages and provincialisms were then pronounced, and Mr. Bell wrote them in his symbols, then some affected speech and mispronounced words were given, which he also wrote with equal facility. Mr. Bell's sons were then called in, and they pronounced whatever Mr. Bell had written with perfect satisfaction. The accent, tone, indistinctness, and all the peculiarities of pronunciation were reproduced with surprising accuracy.

It is impossible in this article to discuss the possibilities of the invention of Visible Speech. The following are a few of the uses to which it has been applied: the teaching of deaf mutes to speak; the exact pronunciation of foreign languages by learners; the establishment of a standard of the native pronunciation of languages; the prevention and removal of defects and impediments of speech; Christian missions.

The following is a specimen of Visible Speech typography. "Symbols for representing sounds in all languages":