

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE ALPHABETIC METHOD.

(a) ADVANTAGES.

(1) This method is the general one. Other things being equal, methods which are most in use are the best. If a boy came from another school, for example, where the ordinary method had been adopted, he would lose time if he had to commence on another system.

(2) It is very minute in its processes, proceeding letter by letter, and thus cultivates the attention by requiring the scholars to pay regard to small details.

(3) It teaches spelling simultaneously with reading from the very commencement.

(4) Being the common method, it is provided with abundance of good material and apparatus. With other methods the books, sheets, etc., are more scarce, and not so perfected and elaborated by the labor and experience of many minds.

(5) It facilitates reference to dictionaries, encyclopædias, and other works drawn up in alphabetical order.

(6) It commands greater confidence among parents than any other. They can tell whether their children are "getting on," when their young ones are learning by the ordinary method, that with which they are acquainted themselves. They are apt to consider phonetic and other systems as mere "nonsense," and will sometimes take their children away in consequence. Of course mere prejudice against improved methods must not be regarded; this has to be overcome in the case of nearly all improvements. Still it has to be considered, and a novel system should not be introduced unless it presents decided advantage over the old one.

(b) DISADVANTAGES.

(1) It is of a dry and formal character, requiring great and exceptional skill on the part of the teacher to awake an interest in the learner.

(2) It follows the names of the letters instead of their sounds. As in English there is a great divergence between the names and the sounds of the letters, this method is a difficult one.

(3) The teacher is obliged to begin with very small words, and even with syllables which do not alone constitute words. Hence it is impossible to present the children with interesting lessons at the early stages of their school course, when it is so important to gain their attention and interest.

(4) Owing to its difficulty, much time is required to make good progress under this system, and thus many children, who have to leave school at an early age, go forth into the world without the power of reading fluently or intelligently.

(5) The mechanical difficulties of this method absorb the time which, under an easier one, might be devoted to explanation and illustration of the matter of the lesson.—*Moffatt's Scholarship Answers.*

SCHOOL MATTERS IN ENGLAND.

BY CHAS. W. ATHENS, O.

There are some things in the English public school system to which attention may very properly be called here. My observations have been confined chiefly to London; but its schools are conducted in the main like those of other large cities in England, some of which they do not surpass in excellence. The code of regulations now in effect was adopted in May, 1882, and all quotations in this paper are from the document of that date.

England has no free public schools. As compulsory education is

pretty stringently enforced there are of course a good many children whose parents are too poor to pay for tuition, and in such cases it is remitted by the board of education. The minimum weekly tuition fee for each child is two cents; the maximum, eighteen cents. As the law however compels children to attend only "half-time," they are required to pay no more than half tuition, except in the lowest grade. The head teacher in each department is charged with the duty of collecting the fees. As an offset to this, the pupils do not furnish their own books, these being, in most cases, at least, provided by the boards of education. In London, there is in vogue a system of prize-giving by which pupils may earn books as rewards of merit. Each pupil that has attended punctually for one quarter receives from the head teacher a card of which the pecuniary value in books or work-boxes is from six to thirty-six cents, according to the grade of the school. Only girls in the advanced classes are allowed the option of work-boxes. But teachers may withhold from pupils the rewards earned by punctuality if their conduct in other respects has been unsatisfactory. Thus while there are no free schools so-called, children may not only receive gratuitous instruction, but earn articles of value in addition.

On the subject of punishment, I cannot do better than quote the words of the code: "Every occurrence of corporal punishment must be formally recorded in a book kept for that purpose. Head teachers must exercise the utmost caution in inflicting corporal punishment so as never to strike a child on any part of the head, either with the hand or any instrument whatever. Corporal punishment must not be inflicted during school hours. The name of any child to be punished shall be put down, and the cases of corporal punishment be dealt with at a particular time set apart for the purpose. Head teachers may inflict immediate corporal punishment in exceptional cases which, in their judgment, require such a course; but a special report of each case must be made by them in the punishment book, giving in full the reasons for departing from the ordinary rules of the board. Assistant teachers and pupil teachers are absolutely prohibited from inflicting such punishment. The head teacher is held directly responsible for every punishment of the kind."

I found among the London teachers, and also in the board, a strong sentiment against the infliction of corporal punishment. Some teachers with whom I conversed seemed to take pride in showing that their punishment books contained but a meagre record. An instance was related to me of a school in the East End of London, attended chiefly by the children of the worst and lowest classes, which had caused the authorities a great deal of trouble, because no teacher would remain long in charge of it, even if some would go so far as to try. At length, with considerable difficulty, the services of a lady were secured who had made an exceptionally fine record in another part of the city. She at once wholly discontinued the infliction of corporal punishment, and in a very short time, by the mere influence of her admirable tact and skill in school government, had transformed the school into one of the most orderly.

As a rule, teachers in England are not employed independently who have not attended a training school and served an apprenticeship to some older teacher. Head teachers may have in charge as many pupil teachers as they can oversee, but cannot receive pay for more than six. Naturally those teachers who have the best reputation are most sought by those intending themselves to enter the profession. Pupil teachers pay for this instruction—males twenty-five dollars, females twenty dollars per annum—and head teachers whose services are in demand may thus considerably increase their income. The absurd notion so prevalent here that any young person who knows a trifle more than other youth is a proper