

at what he aims? If we teach grammar, it is surely not too much to expect that we shall treat of language, and that the child will know that we do so; or if we teach geography, that we shall treat of the earth; or if we wish to treat of arithmetic, that we confine ourselves to number. And why should we not expect that in a reading-lesson the subject-matter will form the sole ground of our remarks, and that the child will feel that this is so?

I cannot see anything in the lesson, for instance, from which the above extract is taken, to authorise my asking how many letters there are in *foundation*, or how many will remain when all the vowels are taken away. I might just as well in a grammar-lesson ask how many letters are in the words *proposition*, or *conjunction*, and follow it up by asking how many parts of speech would remain if the noun and adjective were gone. Nor can I at all understand why the time of a class should be taken up in enumerating the words which begin or end with *y*. I know that it is argued that by such an exercise a valuable facility of expression and a command over our language are acquired. But, in my opinion, this is quite a mistake. There is certainly a facility acquired of selecting words beginning or ending with this letter, but I have yet to learn how such a facility is to be made valuable.

ITS DISPLAY IS THE CHIEF CAUSE OF ITS POPULARITY. The chief cause which makes it popular is the display which is naturally attached to it; and on this account it is the vice of many of our most promising teachers at the outset of their career, or after a short course of training in some model school.* It is a change from the old system sufficiently showy to please themselves, and sufficiently like good teaching to deceive most others. They are attracted by the quickness with which questions can be put, and with the appearance of vivacity and skillfulness with a lesson presents when so conducted. But the trick will soon be discovered, and must bring discredit upon all who have recourse to it.

No system of teaching can ever succeed that thus fritters away, among several subjects, the time designed for one, which allows the facts to enter the mind distorted and disjointed, and which does not admit of the employment of the best methods of teaching the subjects it treats of.

EXAMPLE OF LEGITIMATE EXPANSION. Expansion to be legitimate must, as I have said, naturally spring from the text, and be easily traceable to it. To illustrate this, take the lesson on 'The Ant,' already given. It is clear that the author wished to tell: (1) where ants live; (2) in what they live; (3) of what their hills are formed; (4) of their foresight in laying up food; (5) of their size in warm climates; (6) of the injury they do; (7) of the good they do. And it is clear, also, that the following questions would elicit all this information from the children with as much brevity and accuracy as are desirable.

- (1) In what localities are ants found? 'In fields and waste grounds.'
- (2) What are their little houses called? 'Ant-hills.'
- (3) Of what are these hills made? 'Of leaves, bits of trees, gum, earth, &c.'
- (4) What do they do with the food they collect? 'The part they do not eat, they lay by for use of winter.'
- (5) What size are the ant-hills in other countries? 'From ten to twelve feet.'
- (6) How do they injure us? 'They destroy our food.'
- (7) Of what use are they? 'They kill rats, mice, and other vermin.'

In this there is no expansion of the text whatever. The questions test merely the children's knowledge of the author's statements, and the lesson is valuable in proportion as these statements are satisfactory, important, and complete. It is good, in fact, as far as it goes, but it ought to be expanded somewhat in the following manner, and in the places selected:—

- (1) The different places in which insects take up their abode may be stated. Some dwell in the air, some in water, some in marshes, some in old walls, &c., but ants live in mounds of earth, which they build in commons and the waste portions of fields. (Why the cultivated portions would not answer might also be stated.)
- (2) The methods by which ants carry their food, and the materials for their hills, should be explained; because children cannot understand without explanation, how such very small insects can perform these tasks.
- (3) The facts that ants live together in societies should be illustrated by the parallel case of the bee. The proof of the foresight given in the lesson should also be shown to be an error, and from what it sprang.
- (4) Some tangible illustration of the size of the ant, in this and other climates, is necessary (that is, when the insects themselves cannot be produced). Their hills, also, should be compared in height with the height of what the children know, as the height of the ceiling, or of the desk, &c.

* It is probably from finding this system practised by such men, that it is called *intellectual*; but, in addition to other reasons, to show that it is anything but intellectual, we have only to consider the amount of mere routine into which it almost always degenerates. For when teachers are at liberty to depart on every occasion from the subject before them, they naturally become at last to wear fixed channels, into which they always diverge—their questions become stereotyped in a certain fixed order, and when they ask the first of the series, they continue asking them until the end. And this happens so frequently that, as Mr. McCredy says, an experienced inspector, in the case of many schools, could name beforehand thirty per cent. of the questions he is destined afterwards to hear in his presence.

(5) Again, it should be shown that the injury done by these insects is very little in comparison with the good they do; and, moreover, as we can prevent the injury, we can reap all the benefits of these useful creatures without any of their disadvantages.

(6) And finally, it should be explained how much better it is that they should eat and drag off their prey in warm climates, than that they should simply kill and leave it as a dog does a rat.

IN EXPANDING A LESSON THE QUALITY OF THE TEACHER IS KNOWN. It is in this that the difference between teachers is most perceptible. The man of experience and intelligence easily selects from the information which he has acquired by reading, facts illustrative of the lesson. His judgment enables him to reject what is inapplicable, and by his superiority of skill he dovetails what he does select so cleverly into the text, that the whole appears as one completed piece. Whereas, one of the other class of teachers either confines himself exclusively to the text—from having no stock of information from which to call, or taste to guide him in his choice—or else he wanders into a set of stereotyped questions upon every subject in the school course, distracting and bewildering his pupils.

EXPLANATIONS.—STYLE OF. The explanations should be brief, so as not to weary the children, or burden their memories. They should be definite and complete, so as to suggest no doubt, and require nothing supplementary, and, above all, they should be couched in plain and intelligible language. The children should, immediately after each explanation, be questioned upon it, as upon the text itself, to see that it is understood, and in what way; for much of the value of explanation is lost by taking it for granted that it is understood.

EXPANSION TO BE NOTED ON MARGIN, OR IN LEAVES INSERTED FOR THE PURPOSE. In Rule 2, I recommended the teachers to note in the margin the facts to be brought before the class, as contained in the text-book itself; I think they should also note which of these they intend to expand, and how. In doing this each teacher will adopt the system of marking most intelligible to himself. If there is no room on the margin, he should get the lesson books rebound, desiring the binder to insert two or three white leaves between each pair of printed leaves, and use these for notings. The expense would be very trifling.

USE OF MAPS IN EXPLAINING READING LESSON. Where allusion is made to countries, it is sometimes necessary to point them out on the Map of the World—no other map can afford so good an idea of their position in respect to other countries with which they may be compared; but it is not correct to speak of these countries further than it is absolutely necessary to explain the text. If we say, for instance, that 'the people of Great Britain and Ireland form but a small portion of the people of this world,' it will not do to take occasion from such a reference to these countries to ask, as some do, the boundaries of Great Britain, the chief towns and rivers in England and Scotland, and the provinces and counties of Ireland. These do not explain the text, and should be postponed until the Geography lesson, to which they really belong.

WHEN COUNTRIES ARE REFERRED TO WITHOUT BEING NAMED, CHILD SHOULD GIVE NAME IN HIS REPLY. In some lessons a country may be referred to without being named, as for instance, 'the country where man was first placed,' 'the country opposite Gaul,' 'the most populous empire in the world,' &c. In such cases, the child should in his answer give not only the description, but the name of the country referred to, and, of course, he should point the country out on the map.

MANNER AND CUSTOMS OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES TO BE COMPARED WITH OUR OWN. Again when reference is made to the manners and customs of foreign countries, the true expansion of the lesson requires that any difference existing between these and ours should be carefully pointed out. For, thus comparing them with a standard with which they are already acquainted, the children will be enabled to form correct ideas of them.

THE OBJECT ITSELF—ITS PICTURE, OR A SKETCH ON BLACK BOARD, REQUIRED OFTEN FOR EXPLANATION. In some cases either the object itself, or its picture, or a rough sketch on the 'black board,' gives a distinctness to the lesson which it otherwise could not possess. No amount of description will enable children to realise the true form of any object; or, if it could, would it enable them to do so as quickly and adequately as a glance at its picture or at the thing itself. The impression made is also more vivid, and for that reason more permanent and valuable. How interesting the lesson on 'The Ant' becomes by the production of one of these insects for the inspection of the class; or how vividly the facts of the lesson on 'The Butterfly' would be understood and impressed upon their minds if the teacher laid before them one of these animals in its various stages of egg, larva, chrysalis, and winged inhabitant of air! How easy to explain lessons upon the tiger, lion, fox, &c., by the aid of coloured prints of these animals! Take, again, a lesson on botany. How long would one discourse about the calyx, corolla, stamens, petals, sepals, pistil, &c. without making himself understood, or producing the same impression that he would make by picking a flower to pieces before the class, and naming each part as he threw it aside!

All required in the way of tangible illustrations is happily inexpensive, and the collection of most of them may be made a pleasant occupation to both teacher and children.

HINTS TO FORM AN OBJECT CABINET. The chief expense is in the purchase of prints; but teachers, both in England and Ireland,†

† In Ireland the Commissioners of National Education supply their schools with apparatus at an extremely low cost.