

The Educational Weekly.

TORONTO, FEBRUARY 5, 1885.

THERE is a little matter upon which we should like to say a few words—not an insignificant matter at all, but one which is often overlooked. It is that of pronunciation. Teachers, as a rule, little know to what severe youthful criticism they lay themselves open by a careless or faulty habit of pronouncing words. We remember an ex-pupil (one who had had the advantage of a school in England before attending a certain collegiate institute in Canada) saying to us: "Think of the hundreds of people Miss So-and-So is allowing to pass out of her class pronouncing—" and then followed a long list of mis-pronounced words which seemed to have sunk into his memory.

NOTHING is so easily or so unconsciously imitated in childhood as pronunciation. Knowing this, the teacher should exercise the utmost care in training himself or herself into a scrupulously correct habit of utterance. It is well worth a large share of time and trouble spent upon it.

It is unfortunately true that a great many teachers allow themselves to fall into a most slipshod diction. We do not refer to the correct accentuation of particular words so much as to looseness in the articulation of sentences. This fault is thrown into great relief when a teacher recites a poem. Then the difference between his ordinary speech, and what we may call his artificial one, becomes painfully marked, whereas the difference should be merely a histrionic one—or at most consist only in the different degree of dignity with which the latter is uttered. Nobody would dream of saying 'm'dsno-ance' for "mid snow and ice," and yet many will think nothing of contracting 'and I asked him' into 'niast'm,' in common conversation.

BUT there are also particular words which suffer terribly in the mouths of careless teachers: such, for example, as 'vehement,' 'vehicle,' 'harass,' 'advertisement,' 'superfluous,' 'Hindustan,' 'Afghanistan,' 'barrel,' 'orange,' 'mattress,' 'record,' 'inquiry,' 'princess,'—the list might be indefinitely extended. We recommend young teachers to consult their dictionaries for the correct pronunciation of each of these words, and for that of every word upon which they are doubtful.

AN excellent way to discipline oneself into habitual accuracy of expression, and into an avoidance of that so rife a custom of slurring over the various syllables of a word, is to read aloud to oneself for a few minutes every

day. This could easily be done in one's own room during, say, the few minutes before each meal. We recommend teachers to pin the page of a book, or even a newspaper, over their wash-hand-stands. In a month they will be surprised at the wonderful progress they have made (even by so easy and apparently frivolous a way) in teaching themselves to pronounce.

THERE is a little monosyllable which can become a weapon of astonishing *educating* (*e* and *ducere*) power in the hands of a skilful teacher. It is the word, 'Why?' From the lowest forms of the high school to the matriculating classes of the collegiate institute it can be brought into excellent use.

IT tends to create original thought. If one tells a class that William the Conqueror landed in Britain in 1066 (one fact); and if one tells them it was an important event (another fact); they learn but little. But if they are asked *why* it was important—what new fields of thought are opened up! How interestingly one could then expatiate upon this epoch-making landing, with all its consequences: the changes in kings, courtiers, churches, manners, customs, laws, language, literature, grammar, vocabulary, etc., etc., etc. What a profound mass of interest our 'why?' has stirred up!

'WHY?' teaches pupils to think: it shows the consequence or connexion of facts and ideas—that is its chief office. And, after all, is not this the grand aim of tuition? We do not want to instil facts and ideas only; we want to teach *law*—that which connects facts and ideas. He who knows facts, may *ken*—may be filled with *knowledge*; but it is the man who knows why and how facts follow each other—he is the truly wise man—the man gifted with *wisdom*.

IF we were to examine its uses from a metaphysical point of view, we should probably find that its chief function was in rendering intelligible the application of a rule to a fact. It brings a particular fact under dominion of a general law, and points out its rightness or wrongness. But this abstract view we need not discuss. Interesting as it may be, it perhaps will not aid in showing us the practical value of this useful word.

IT must be used with excessive caution however. Like the little lancet in the hands of an unpractised operator, it can cut far

more than is necessary—can touch thoughts altogether beyond the scope of the learner and in so doing will destroy curiosity and ambition instead of stimulating them. But having previously thoughtfully gauged the capabilities of our pupils, we need never go far wrong in a frequent and serious use of the word 'Why?'

WE have heard of masters bringing a newspaper into a school-room from which to teach their pupils something of the current events of the day, but we have not heard of any one using a newspaper as an example of what should be avoided in the shape of inelegancies, and inaccuracies of language. It would be a useful exercise for pupils in the higher forms.

IF the columns of our newspapers were comparatively well-written, their influence would undoubtedly be a beneficial one; but as the case stands, it is quite the reverse. So much so, that we think it would be no loss of time occasionally to exercise pupils in transforming into better language the more glaring errors of these papers.

IT would be no difficult task to discover these. There are some that perpetually recur; as for instance, "We came Saturday night," for, on Saturday night; "It will not take that long," for, that length of time; "He drunk considerable," for, he drank considerably; "We will be pleased to have him come," for, we should be pleased if he came; "There were about a hundred came," for, the number of those who came was about a hundred; "He got caught, anyway," for, at all events, he was caught—and so on; it is unnecessary to continue the list.

NOT an insignificant point, too, would be that much could be learned about punctuation. From such comparisons the subject might be made most interesting to higher class pupils. To point out briefly in what way, we may just hint at the varieties of punctuation adopted on the one hand by the *London Times*, and on the other by Carlyle, or Charles Lamb. It the case of the two latter their punctuation may almost be called a part of their style. Carlyle's manipulation of the colon (a mark of punctuation entirely eschewed by the *London Times* in its leading articles) is well worth pointing out; and a dash from the pen of Elia is often amazingly effective.