

HINTS ON TEACHING.

BY JAMES LAWSON, ODESSA.

I have frequently seen and heard "hints on teaching," but propose to offer a few which I have never seen or heard except in my own school. It is possible, however, that my system is more common than I am aware of, but, knowing as I do that it is not common enough, I venture the following suggestions:—

I believe the greatest impediment in the way of a child learning his lesson is his inability to get a perfect understanding of it. The difficulty does not lie so much in his memory, as in his understanding. If he can be made to thoroughly understand a lesson he will very soon commit it to memory. And I am thoroughly convinced that a great amount of time is wasted by most of our school children in trying to commit to memory what they don't understand. I have been led to this conclusion by my own observation, having had the benefit of several years' experience in school teaching. And now it seems strange that for so long a time I should have failed to realize the fact. I have seen children whom I knew were anxious to have their lessons well prepared, but who utterly failed in reciting though they had spent plenty of time in preparation. From this fact, as well as the strange answers given, and the questions asked before reciting, it was very plain to be seen where the difficulty lay.

The remedy of course suggested itself. Instead of merely assigning the lesson for next day and allowing them to prepare it as best they could, I not only assigned them their amount of work, but, as far as time would permit, went over the lesson with them, asking them questions, and allowing them with the aid of their books to give the answers, and when they were unable, I

gave them the answers myself, at the same time offering whatever suggestions or explanations I deemed necessary.

First, I saw that something was wanted in order to have the lessons in oral spelling learnt. Time after time I was annoyed by the failure of those who were evidently attentive and studious. I found that very frequently when a word was given out for spelling they did not recognize it at all; no more than any word not in the lesson. Consequently I introduced the plan of going over the lesson at the time of giving it, plainly and distinctly pronouncing every word, the pupils at the same time looking at each word and pronouncing it themselves after me. In this way the *sound* and *appearance* of the word are associated together in such a way that when the class come up to spell, as soon as the word is pronounced it is immediately recognized, and is consequently correctly spelled. It is a well-known fact that far more depends on the eye than the ear in spelling. The eye is far more accurate in this than the ear. Spelling in English, especially, must be learnt by the eye, on account of the numerous silent letters, as well as their strange and irregular sounds.

Grammar, so highly important and intensely interesting, is generally looked upon by the beginners as the most dry and irksome of all their studies. Simply because they don't understand it, children acquire a distaste for it which seriously impedes their progress, and which it is no easy matter to remove. A little assistance from the teacher might have prevented this. When I assigned a lesson in grammar (to the junior class,) I asked the same questions as I intended asking next day, and assisted the class