

by the diligence and good conduct of their scholars, and by their affection when they have won it. The school trustees, too, are not always without need of stimulant. Their office may sometimes seem a thankless one, they don't invariably draw together, they are associated with some it is hard to work with, and may be disposed at times to throw up their official duties, or, at any rate to decline re-appointment to office for which they may be better fitted than others. In such cases, the needed stimulant to perseverance may be found in visiting the school, finding harmony and progress, that their visits are received with pleasure, and however little they may think it, with benefit. The parents of the scholars, too, may be stimulated as the teachers, by the good conduct of their children, by their diligence in their work, and by the school training leading those children to be considerate and thoughtful. They, on the other hand, may stimulate their children very much when they have the ability, by assisting them, when allowable, in their home exercises, attention to which is expected, and failure in which may often prove discouraging to the scholars. Such exercises, I think, ought not to extend over very much of their time out of school, but most probably many scholars would be greatly better engaged in attending to such as are required, than in being allowed to run round and pick up a street education. The question of having such exercises at all I am aware is one which, like that of prize distribution, on which a difference of opinion is held. If not too severe, and that no unreasonable time is allotted to them, or required for their study, I think they may do good rather than harm; and that when a parent can and will, and may properly give some assistance in their preparation, child and parent will alike be stimulated, the one coming to regard such exercises without aversion, the other being led to take an interest in their children's progress, and their ability to go on hopefully with their studies. I only add, that the community may be stimulated in regard to the school by the nature of the public examinations when these are held. I think they should be calculated to be interesting to any and all visitors; not tedious, confined chiefly to such subjects as most can appreciate, and varied by occasional vocal music and recitations, but devoid of any aim at theatrical display. Anything of the kind, in my opinion, tends to induce and perpetuate a desire for the sensational, which is so marked and, in my apprehension, so unfavorable a feature of the age. I would rather seek to guard the young from imbibing a taste for it, as I feel persuaded it is calculated to do them harm rather than good; and I believe, at the same time, that school examinations and school festivals can be made quite satisfactory, independent of any such attraction; yet we find teachers, I regret to think, not only allowing this to creep in, but making provision for it. Simplicity should, in my opinion, be encouraged and cultivated in our schools, cherished, I should say, and unnecessary display avoided. Such display may be desired by the young, but I am persuaded it is not a safe stimulant; and that all teachers will do well to educate them in really simple tastes, not catering to a perverted taste in the community by opening the door for its introduction when the design and desire is to benefit the school and extend its influence for good.

Most of the shadows that cross our path through life are caused by standing in our own light.

The Alphabet.

AN ESSAY ON "PHONOGRAPHY AND THE ALPHABET,"
READ BY MR. FOSTER BEFORE THE ESSEX TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

The subject I am about to introduce to the Convention for the present hour is the A B C. It is a subject that is generally regarded by most teachers as rather dry and uninteresting; this is, however, the greater reason why we should make ourselves more familiar, if possible, with the philosophy of our alphabet, and scatter a flower here and there in teaching it, thus making it more interesting to both pupils and teachers.

In speaking on the alphabet at our last convention, one of our young teachers very properly enquired why the vowel sounds of consonants in some cases preceded the consonants, while in others they follow; as an example, cf, f; ge, g. The idea was then new to me, but since, in thinking the matter over, I have been led into a train of thought on the alphabet which I shall take the liberty of giving you, and which of course you will receive for what you consider it is worth.

In introducing the subject, I have concluded to give a very brief historical sketch of the alphabet up to the time it was adopted by the present European nations. Several nations claim credit for the invention of the alphabet, the chief among which are the Phœnicians, Egyptians, Hebrews, and Chinese. Though the subject is involved in considerable doubt and obscurity, it is generally admitted that the Greeks obtained it from Cadmus, a Phœnician, when trading with them 1500 years B. C. Goodrich in his Universal History says that the Phœnician language was derived from the Hebrews, and that their characters correspond with the very oldest Hebrew letters. If so, the invention of the alphabet will date back to a period as far B. C. as it is now after Christ.

The Phœnician alphabet contained 16 letters, but Salomades and Samonades, two Greeks, added to the number till it reached 26, and there, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, the number, though acknowledged faulty, has remained unchanged to the present day. The Romans obtained it from the Greeks during the first century B. C., but they made no change beyond the rounding off of some of the corners, and through them it reached the different nations of Europe.

The first attempt at writing was made by pictures; for example, a ship turned bottom side up represented a shipwreck; the second attempt was made by symbols, a ring representing eternity, an ant wisdom, and so on. The Peruvians and Chinese expressed their thoughts by means of characters and knots tied on different colored strings. The next and more advanced system was by naming characters to represent the different syllables, but their number was necessarily large, so that writing was still a difficult and laborious task.

While writing was in this state, some shrewd person, whose name is lost to us, observed that, as a ray of light may be resolved into its parts, so each syllable may be resolved into one or more elementary sounds. It will be observed that the vowel sounds come from the lungs, without any effort of the tongue or lips; while consonants are produced by the tongue and lips, combined with a vowel sound. Consonants, however, when in a syllable lose their vowel sound, and combine with the vowel in the syllable; that being the case, it is a matter of no consequence whether a vowel