

order to express, with more force important truths and maxims.

We do not intend here to undertake an extended argument for the practical utility of a conversational knowledge of the modern languages in order to prove the amount of loss suffered by the pupil in thus being thwarted in his ambition to possess himself of this most useful art. But we beg to submit that if the pupil were taught to utilize all his knowledge of any language in conversation, his progress in that language would be twice as rapid as by the ordinary method of instruction; for, in the first place, all the irregular verbs and the most abstruse idioms of any language continually recur in common conversation. And these, being repeated by the tongue over and over again, from day to day, soon become so ingrained into the very properties of that organ, and grow so familiar to the ear, and are so embedded into the memory by continual use, that they are never erased from the intelligence. Even in foreign languages words thus used, especially by the young, are seldom ever forgotten.

In the second place, we submit that conversation is by far the most natural and effective means to acquire a perfect mastery of the inflections and order of words. The declension of nouns and other parts of speech, and the conjugation of verbs become, in a short time, so extremely easy by this method, and so natural to the learner, that it is amazing with what readiness the words glide along, fitted for each other, and take their proper places in the sentence.

Besides this, we submit that the exercise of common conversation is the only true, natural groundwork of an ability to write in any language, and that the stiff, stereotyped phrases of the majority of our

text-books for composition in foreign languages can never be successfully used to build up a vigorous, natural and fluent style of writing. We therefore conclude that all languages ought to be taught colloquially to secure, in the first place, greater facility in their acquisition; and that this should be urged also for the Latin, especially since it is a very difficult language taught in any other way, and since mankind, for many cogent reasons, can never be weaned from its use as a very potent factor in the education of youth.* And modern languages especially ought to be taught colloquially, in the second place, for practical use in communicating with foreign nations. All the peoples of the earth are now brought into such immediate contact with each other by the electrical telegraph that the divine gift of language alone is needed to enable all to talk with each other in a moment of time.

Then let not our institutions of learning treat these luring vehicles of thought any longer as dead languages. But, alas! the ability to read and translate the fictitious and romantic literature of foreign peoples seems to be about all those venerable institutions are disposed to grant the fair youth of Canada, and, we may say, of the greater part of the world!

One can easily see, in looking back upon the History of Education that, wherever instruction in the conversation of any language has ceased to be given, the status of scholarship in that language has immediately fallen. The history of instruction in the Latin language

*One of the most significant facts, disclosed by the percentages in the last ten years, is the steady increase of the per cent. of students in Latin. In 1889-90 the per cent. in this study was given as 33.62; in 1894-95 it was 43.76, and in 1898-99 it had reached 50.29. *Educational Report of the Commissioner of Education in the United States for 1898-99. Vol. 1, page XL.*