

may not be appreciated. A successful teacher of the right spirit is quite sure to be sought for, and to be awarded a compensation that will enable him to devote his life to his profession. He will secure the co-operation of the public, and of all friends of improvement in particular; will be recognized as an useful citizen; and will have assigned to him that position, socially and otherwise, in the community, that will entitle him to the respect and confidence of his fellow-men. To such a teacher every valuable member of the community will say, in the language of the curate Nathaniel to the schoolmaster Holofernes;—"I praise the Lord for you. You are a good member of the Commonwealth." *IDEM.—English Journal of Education.*

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF PUNCTUATION AND THE BEST METHOD OF TEACHING IT.

[An Extract from a prize Essay, by WILLIAM A. WHEELER, Principal of Partridge Academy, Duxbury.]

More than four hundred years ago, the celebrated Caxton discovered that "the craft of poynting, well used, maketh the sentence very light;" and there are probably few persons to be found, who would unqualifiedly deny the importance of punctuation; but, at the same time, the fact cannot be disputed, that a vast majority, even of otherwise well-educated people, are wholly ignorant of the very first principles of the science. This is not an unfounded, nor too sweeping a statement; it can be easily proved. Passing by, as unworthy of notice, the ridiculous autobiography of the notorious Lord Timothy Dexter,—who printed his book without a single stop-mark of any kind, and then placed a large supply of "the raw material" at the end, for each reader to "pepper and salt" according to his own taste,—we find abundant evidence of the correctness of the assertion, in the columns of every newspaper, and the pages of more than half the magazines and books that issue from the press.

It is only a few months since, that a pamphlet of about six pages, containing over two hundred errors of punctuation, was published by the Superintending School Committee of one of the towns in this country. Many of these errors were ludicrous enough, most of them perfectly obvious, and all of them extremely discreditable to their authors. The importance of punctuation might be very happily and conclusively illustrated by citations from the pamphlet referred to; but the writer of this essay prefers, for reasons which need not be given, to draw his examples from other sources.

The following sentence may be punctuated in a great many different ways:—

"The persons inside the coach were Mr. Miller; a clergyman; his son; a lawyer; Mr. Angelo; a foreigner; his lady; and a little child."

As here punctuated, with a semi colon after each noun, the number of individuals is eight. Arranging the names in pairs, thus,—

"The persons inside the coach were Mr. Miller, a clergyman; his son, a lawyer; Mr. Angelo, a foreigner; his lady; and a little child." we reduce the number to five, and entirely change the meaning of the sentence. Varying the punctuation a third time, we find that

"The persons inside the coach were Mr. Miller; a clergyman, his son; a lawyer, Mr. Angelo; a foreigner, his lady; and a little child."

The number of combinations which can be produced in this sentence by very slight changes of punctuation, is surprising. But it may be said that this is citing an extreme case, and that the ambiguity of sentences oftener depends on the faultiness of their construction than the faultiness of their interpunction. This may be true in a measure, but not merely. Many obscure passages in ancient authors have been elucidated by simply changing the old and absurd pointing. Examples without number might be adduced,—forty-two thousand emendations of this kind have been made in the text of Shakspeare alone,—but three or four will be amply sufficient. \* \* \* \* \*

But let us take an illustration from Shakspeare. In the "Merchant of Venice," Bassanio, moralizing upon the deceitfulness of outward appearance, has uniformly been made to say,—

"Ornament is but the gulling shore  
To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf  
Veiling an Indian beauty: in a word,  
The seeming truth that cunning times put on  
To entrap the wisest."

Now, none of the commentators have been satisfied with "Veiling an Indian beauty:" because "beauty" is obviously just the opposite of what the poet intended. One of his editors, therefore, has proposed "Indian dowdy;" but the obscurity of the passage is entirely cleared up by carrying back the colon after "beauty" one remove, and reading as follows:—

"Ornament is but the gulling shore  
To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf  
Veiling an Indian: beauty, in a word,  
The seeming truth that cunning times put on  
To entrap the wisest."

Again, in King Henry VIII., the character of Cardinal Wolsey is most absurdly given in the following lines:—

"This cardinal,  
Though from an humble stock, undoubtedly  
Was fashioned to much honor. From his cradle  
He was a scholar, and a ripe and a good one."

"It is astonishing," says Collier, "that so decided a blunder, as to represent that the cardinal was a ripe and good scholar 'from his cradle,' should have been repeated over and over again from the year 1632 to our own day." The passage should obviously be punctuated to read thus:—

"This cardinal,  
Though from an humble stock, undoubtedly  
Was fashioned to much honor from his cradle.  
His was a scholar, and a ripe and a good one."

It may be remarked, in passing, that Shakspeare could never have used the semicolon; for its introduction into our language did not take place till 1633, seventeen years after his death. This is a circumstance "which the profound George Chalmers mourns over, opining that semicolons would often have saved the poet from his commentators."

A single quotation from Milton shall close these illustrations. In the eighth book of Paradise Lost, Adam relates to the arch-angel Raphael the story of his creation, and tells him all that he saw and did, when he first found himself "a living soul." In the old editions of that poem he has been made to say:—

"I saw  
Hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny plains,  
And liquid lapse of murmuring streams:—  
Birds on the branches warbled; all things smiled  
With fragrance; and with joy my heart o'erflowed."

This is not the true reading of the passage. By placing a semicolon after "smiled," and removing the one after "fragrance," an important emendation is made, and the real meaning restored. Thus:—

"I saw  
Hill, dale, and shady woods, and sunny plains,  
And liquid lapse of murmuring streams;  
Birds on the branches warbled; all things smiled;  
With fragrance and with joy my heart o'erflowed."

By "fragrance," Milton has endeavored to convey, in one word, an idea of that exquisite and delicious rapture, which most resembles the perfume that flowers emit after a shower or dew.

But these examples, taken almost at random from hundreds of others, are not needed to convince the practical and reflecting teacher, of the importance of this subject. If he has ever been accustomed to hear classes read, or condemned to correct "compositions," he knows its importance from actual experience. He knows that young and unpractised readers often fail in the correct delivery of a given passage, in consequence of its false or defective pointing; and he also knows that young writers are extremely apt, either to neglect punctuating their productions entirely, or else to err by excess, and mark off even the minutest members of a sentence. This, however, is not at all to be wondered at. Ignorance cannot be imputed as a fault to those who have never been able to obtain instruction. \* \* \* \* \*

—Connecticut Common School Journal."

#### EDUCATION IN IRELAND.

[Dublin correspondence of the London Times.]

Quite a commotion has been created among the Irish journals, by certain interviews upon education in its highest branches, propounded by Dr. Lyons.

The name of Dr. Lyons is familiar to the profession at large, not less by his eminence as a practitioner, than by his recent scientific visit to the Crimea at the instance of the government. Here is an extract from the address above referred to:—

I have been at some pains to bring together from various sources such available evidence as can be reached with regard to the status of superior education, as tested by university graduation, in several of the countries of Europe in which public attention has been given to educational movements, and in America. These results have been collated with such authorities as are accessible, and though they are to be regarded only as approximations to correct data, they are yet, I think, worthy of some confidence. With your permission, I will cite from the list which I hold in my hand some of the more remarkable results. It may be observed that no very constant or unnecessary connection is to be found between the status of primary and that of secondary education. Thus it will be seen that, in a country in which primary education is compulsory and all but universal, superior education is by no means so high in proportion to the total population as in several other countries in which voluntary education is the rule.

At the top of the list Scotland must be placed; it furnishes a proportion of one in 5,000 of its entire population. The several countries of which these data have been ascertained are as follows:—

Scotland, one graduate in 5,000 of population.	
Norway, one " 7,428	
Holland, one " 7,692	
U. States of America one in 7,795	
Saxony, one " 7,826	
Austria, Archduchy of one in 8,000	
Belgium, one " 8,670	
Ditto, in 16th century [6,000 students at Louvain.]	
Bavaria, one " 9,000	