

For the REVIEW].

**LANGUAGE LESSONS.**

Some years ago it was taken for granted by many teachers that children knew nothing when they first entered the school-room, had no power of acquiring facts, and that the first and for some time the only thing they should learn was to read. Now we regard these small folk as interesting possibilities, endowed with a complete mind (though in a rudimentary state), and know that they have already begun the storing up of facts and ideas to which it is our business to add, while constantly seeking to develop two things—*thought* and its *expression*.

In order to furnish material for the former, and also to train the senses (that they may make discoveries for themselves) we give our primary scholars lessons upon all kinds of objects; likewise upon number, size, direction, form, color, etc. All of which, as well as every reading lesson implies, of course, training in language. But, since the aim of all our teaching is the development of thought—and language is, perhaps, as needful to thought as to its expression—it follows that children require a closer and more persistent training in language than these lessons afford.

This we endeavor to accomplish by means of language lessons on pictures, plants, animals and rocks; natural phenomena as hail, snow, rain; and physical features such as hills, valleys, rivers, etc.; while at the same time a small beginning is made in scientific study. Doubtless, many will smile at the idea of science in connection with a child of six or seven years; yet, experience has taught that at no later period of school-life will they enter into the study of nature (presented after a child-like fashion) with a keener zest, for they love animals, birds, and growing things, and delight in learning about them.

Nevertheless, while laying the foundation upon which geography, botany and zoology may in due time be reared, we must not lose ourselves in these; but, bearing in mind that the controlling subject at this period is the impression of thought, teach *language* from beginning to end of every lesson.

Though it is a difficult matter to lead young children to express their ideas clearly in the school-room, yet under the stimulus of some thought they desire to convey they will talk as freely as if at home, thus proving that it is not so much their limited *vocabularies* as self-consciousness that embarrasses them and hinders expression.

Hence, the first part of language work takes up what may, perhaps, be termed the *unconscious* side, where the child is so under the control of the thought that he is, in a measure, unaware of the means by which he expresses it.

The exercises at this stage are necessarily simple, and may be conducted in various ways. For example: Ask the class to tell the names of different kinds of birds; from the array of hands select the dullest pupil to give the first answer, which is quickly printed on the board, the next, and the next, until all the hands are down. Question until their small stock of knowledge concerning birds and their habits is exhausted, continuing to print the best answers. Next morning the children find the words and sentences neatly reprinted on the board, and copy them as *busy* work, while at a later period in the day they construct oral sentences, each containing one of the words.

After a similar plan, one may give lessons on animals, fishes and flowers. Still another form of language work calling for at least one original sentence from the children, is illustrated by the following:— Ask what day of the week it is, print the answer, then what kind of a day, what season of the year, and so on, printing the various descriptive words under the date as fast as given. (I find even the youngest child quite ready to talk about the weather). Have them read by the pupils. Next morning they copy the list, and in the afternoon print short stories containing the words, some of which are interesting weather reports.

When we have succeeded in getting the children to talk freely, we take up the second part of language work, during which they are trained in the use of new words, introduced to new idioms, led to make new combinations of sentences, and to describe accurately what they see. Action lessons are good training in the latter, while a *picture* may be used very successfully to familiarize them with new idioms such as, "this is," "here is," "he has," "is going," etc. When, by a few skilful questions, they have been led to use these words in describing the picture, the best sentences are printed on the board, to be utilized next day as busy work.

Again:—A story lesson may be given—its purpose being to arouse thought, and lead to its expression, as well as to *give* and teach the children to *use* new words. It should be made graphic by sketching the objects introduced, whenever practicable, while the new words are printed on the board instead of spoken. To illustrate: The teacher standing in front of the blackboard says, "I am going to tell you about an—" turning quickly to the board, she 'prints'; "animal," read the children; "that wears—" she prints; "horns," pronounce the children; "like that," she continues, rapidly sketching the horn of a moose, "called—" she says; then prints antlers; but not a hand is raised, not a voice is heard; no one knows the word.

Slowly she reprints the first syllable, the scholars