

of Pictou, Nova Scotia, of whose schools I was then Principal. I prepared blank forms for each department to contain the names of all the pupils of each. The teacher was instructed to obtain from each parent or guardian an accurate statement of the time taken by each pupil in the study of home lessons—of each home lesson. From these returns it was a very simple thing to calculate the percentage of home study absorbed in the department of orthography. From the time tables in each department, the percentage of time devoted to orthography in the school room was computed. The gross results were briefly as follows:

Pupils from	5	to	7	years	were	spending	64	per	cent	of	time	on	spelling.
"	"	7	"	9	"	"	"	47	"	"	"	"	"
"	"	9	"	11	"	"	"	37	"	"	"	"	"
"	"	11	"	13	"	"	"	25	"	"	"	"	"

That is forty-nine per cent. of the whole time of study at home, and in school for the first six years was absorbed in spelling lessons. Or over forty per cent. of the first eight years of school time. But making allowance for other work done incidentally in connection with the spelling, such as the study of definitions, etc., and of incidental reading, expression and elocution in the higher classes, more than twenty-five per cent. of the first eight years of school work was absorbed entirely in overcoming the difficulties of orthography, such as do not now exist in simplified phonetic languages as German, Italian, Spanish, Danish, and even Welch. There is nothing more clearly proved to my mind than that the English child is handicapped to the extent of two years' work by the difficulties of our orthography as compared with the nationalities above referred to. What a tremendous boon would a relief of two years' work be to our crowded course of study in our elementary schools! What a splendid opportunity would be given for the study of the correct and fluent use of the English language under such circumstances! Now the most of our time is spent in drudgery which is not English language at all, but which is so closely connected with it as to create in advance a distaste for the study of the language itself by the unfortunate association.

In the London schools, and in the schools of several of the larger cities of the United States, similar investigations have been made, all proving that the loss of time is from two to three years. Such, beyond the limit of any reasonable doubt, is the time lost in this one feature of our system.

But there may often be worse than lost time in it. Of all tasks for young children, spelling with its polyglot affinities, its half phonetic, half hodge-podge orthography, is the first, as a general rule, to beget a