

Special Articles

SUGGESTIONS FOR ENGLISH

The following is from Cooley's "Language in the Grades" (Houghton).

First.—Make a list of the errors of speech common among your pupils and in the school neighborhood. Keep this list in mind throughout the year. Add to it as an epidemic error appears.

It is significant that in a collection of several hundred such lists made by teachers of all sorts and conditions of children in various localities and under widely varying circumstances, the universality of certain groups of errors is strikingly shown. With the elimination of a few localisms, any one of the lists would be a good working basis for all, to be supplemented in each school by the few localisms of its neighborhood.

All note among common errors in the use of tense, person, and number forms of verbs,—the forms of see, go, come, become, do, write, run, lie, lay, sit, set, sing, ring, bring, buy, begin, know, grow, throw, blow, fall, fly, take, speak, break, teach, think, catch, fight, rise, raise, freeze, eat, bite, drink, drive, ride, and be.

All note common use of the incorrect for the correct personal pronoun forms:—

(1) in the predicate in such expressions as "It is I";

(2) after certain prepositions in such expressions as "Between you and me (him, her)";

(3) after "than" in such sentences as "He is older than I."

And nearly all lists record the frequent incorrect use of this, that, these, those, them; each, every, few, fewer, little, less; many, much, most, almost; some, somewhat, real, rather, very; better, best, worse, worst; good, well, bad, badly; without, unless; between, among; in, into; at, to; no, none; either, or; neither, nor; like, as; who, whom; may, can; will and shall.

Second.—Plan a systematic series of daily oral exercises, each to have the

particular purpose of overcoming a particular fault noted on your list. Plan it thoughtfully and follow it persistently.

Third.—Inspire the pupils with a desire to speak correctly, and lead them to feel that these exercises will help them to do so, just as daily practice helps them to play good baseball or football.

When quite young, the writer learned this lesson experimentally. Her teacher was a man, now known, respected, and loved throughout the educational world. In his grammar class, she easily carried the 100% banner in parsing, analysis, and recitation of rules. As fast as "the waters come down at Lodore" she could pour out the words of the rule for the use of the predicate-nominative, and the nominative forms of the personal pronouns. But alas! the same tongue was ready to say in the same breath, "It was me that said that rule." "It was me (him, her)" had already made the "short circuit" and beaten the path.

The wise teacher said to her, "Will you for one week say 'It is I,' many, many times every day? Will you keep repeating it as many times as you can say it in a minute and make as many of these minute opportunities as you can every day for a week?"

"I will," she said, "but I don't think I shall ever say it to or before anybody. 'It is I' sounds to me like 'putting on airs.'"

"Never mind that now; just do as I ask," was the reply.

The consequences were: (1) "It is I" no longer sounded affected; (2) "It is me" became intolerable to the ear, and impossible to the tongue. She was cured. And since that time she has used this formula and cured herself of many a tendency to use a doubtful or an incorrect form.

To convince pupils that we ourselves use the remedy we prescribe often in-