

CONTEMPORARY OPINION ON EDUCATIONAL TOPICS.

HARVARD LECTURES ON
PEDAGOGY.*LANGUAGE AND ITS METHODS OF
INSTRUCTION.

LANGUAGE, we should bear in mind, is not a perfect machine, but one of the clumsiest; and no human mind can properly grasp it without having the natural process partly interfered with. The learning to read and write must likewise be accomplished by arbitrary processes; hence the great diversity in the methods of teaching it. Of these methods, many and various, we may first mention the *Spelling* method, as described by Quintilian, where spellings and meanings were inculcated by floggings, but no attention was paid to the sound of the letters; hence the great confusion in this latter particular in Roman letters. We then come to the artificial methods, one of which consisted in the twisting of forms of animals, trees, etc., into shapes of letters, as now shewn in old missals; another, by taking the initial letter of objects, as A, apple, etc. The next may be called the poetic method, the alphabet being taught by a series of doggerel rhymes. A fourth was by cards, a fifth by colours, another by dolls pasted over with letters. Basedow improved on these by making the letters out of sweet biscuits, till at last the children cried for the alphabet. Still another method was gesticulating with the assistance of a stick the various forms of the letters.

The first serious or at all philosophic attempt was by Gedike, which he called "Reading without A, B, C." It was a species of syllabic method, which his disciples transformed into the *euphonic* method, so ably ridiculed by Pinkerton. Pestalozzi would teach the children to spell forty or fifty words

by rote, to train the ear before commencing to learn the words. In France they inaugurated a "Mouth Consciousness" system. The pupil was required to go through a series of mouth gymnastics to develop a consciousness of the various positions of the mouth in the pronunciation of words. Each letter had a gymnastic name. P was called the "lip-shut-light" letter; M, the "lip-mum" letter, etc. Modified, this system has been very useful in the teaching of deaf mutes.

Scriptology, introduced and so named by Ratich, consisted in the writing of a number of red letters, over which the pupils wrote in black. We then come to the phonetic method as introduced by Bell, Lancaster, and others, and suggested still earlier in Germany, and which has reached its fullest development in Bell's system of visible speech. Graser introduced in 1817 a method which seems to me the most important. His precepts were: (1) Let the student write; (2) let him keep at it; (3) give him a stage of preparatory training. He writes words instead of letters, and analyzes them until he comes to the simplest letter of the alphabet. This method, though so well adapted to the German angular writing, has its defects with our English round hand. Jacotot followed with the sentence method, or the teaching of simple sentences. The child sees the sentence written, pronounces it, and writes the first word, and so on, till all the letters are written; and not till then is his attention called to the alphabet. From these sentences he is taught history, geography, arithmetic, etc., a series of selections doing duty as a universal text-book. Looking at these methods it is easy to see the confusion resulting, which was made worse confounded by the attempts made to introduce the Latin grammar methods.

In order to get any light on this matter we

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