

be on the only high road which leads to correct spelling and a correct use of language.

WHILE we are on the subject of spelling, another point should be noted. As most of us know by painful experience, there is a formidable army of words in the language which are identical or similar in sound, but different in spelling. These are not generally words "of learned length and thundering sound," but little, unobtrusive words, which are constantly appearing and which every one is expected to use correctly. It may possibly be advantageous to have these arranged in lists for oral practice, though we doubt it. Our observation has been that, in three cases out of four, the child who has learned these lists to perfection, and can gallop from end to end of a column orally, without a mistake, will misapply half the troublesome words in his letters or composition exercises. Nor have we much faith in those sentences artfully constructed to bring the words of like sound but varying meaning into juxtaposition. The pupil may learn to apply them infallibly in such sentences, but fail ignominiously when he needs to use one of the words apart from that to which it is thus related. It is only by diligent practice in the writing of exercises such as above indicated, in which such words recur frequently in various uses and connections, that the victory can be assured.

ONE other hint and we dismiss the spelling-book. Every teacher will have noticed that there are certain words not necessarily included in the classes above described, which the average boy or girl habitually, perversely, almost infallibly mis-spells. The fact is a suggestive one for the advocate of spelling-reform, but let that pass. It is a fact none the less, and one not always easy to account for. One is examining, for instance, a set of answers furnished to examination questions. A certain word necessarily appears in each of the papers. It seems no harder than either of a hundred other words which all or nearly all spell correctly. Yet for some occult reason more than half the writers mis-spell this particular word. Every teacher, by a little careful attention in looking over the various exercises handed in by his pupils, can make a list of such words. We have found it a good plan to write such upon the blackboard, in conspicuous letters. Not more than three or four, perhaps better not more than one or two, should be exhibited at once. It will be unnecessary to call particular attention to them; that will be surely given. Leave them standing for two or three days, or a week, and the probabilities are that those words, at least, will be correct in all future exercises.

WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS.

"MANKIND," says Arthur Helps, in one of his "Hints for Essays," "is always in extremes." This is certainly the case with teachers, or at least with some classes of teachers. The vagaries that have been propounded within the last ten years in the shape of educational theories would make some interesting volumes for the study of the Evolution of Pedagogy by educators a hundred years hence. A curious collection might already be made, if one could but collate what has been said and

written on the one subject of Written Examinations within the period named.

That the written examination has been grossly abused, and has in many cases been made an instrument of torture for both pupil and teacher, is beyond question. That within its proper sphere it is, and must always remain, one of the most effective educational agencies, is, we believe, equally true and scarcely less demonstrable. And yet, strange to say, an educational writer and practical teacher, Anna C. Brackett, can find it in her brain to write as follows in the *American Journal of Education*, and "stranger still, the editor of that Journal apparently approves such hasty generalizations. Referring to the child, who wrote in reply to "Describe the position of the liver," "The liver is situated south of the stomach and a little to the right," Miss Brackett says that she is quite positive that it was the answer of an imaginative girl and not of a boy; and she thinks she should like her for a pupil.

She then proceeds:—"If she were my pupil, however, she would never have a written examination to pass, for we have long ago abolished them, as not only a snare and a delusion, but also as a grinding up of the working power of the teacher, which seems to me far more profitably employed in class work. My teachers can give their whole attention to their recitations, as they do not have to consider how to express the mind-growth of the pupil by an arithmetical figure, and they do not know what it is to sit up late at night over a pile of examination papers, consequently they come in every morning fresh, and ready to arouse, guide, and lead the minds of their girls. The girls are relieved from all the nervous tension inseparable from set examinations, and their minds are bent only on the matter of the lesson, and not on the possible marks which they may receive for it."

The writer defines the object of an examination as follows: "If an examination is to test anything, it is to test the *real* knowledge of the pupil of the real facts of Mathematics, Natural Science, History, etc. I am not aware that any teacher has the power of altering these," and proceeds after a little to dispose of the matter in this summary fashion:

"I most emphatically agree with Prof. Woodward in saying that no entire stranger can properly examine a class. The ways of looking at a subject are legion, and a class who really do know what they have been studying can easily be made to appear ridiculously ignorant by the clumsy way in which a question is put by an inexperienced teacher, or even by an experienced teacher who has been in the habit of looking at the subject from a different point of view.

"Now I wish to posit one other statement, and that is that it is a great waste of time for a teacher to give her own class a written examination. Does not every teacher know how much her class knows by their daily recitations? She examines them orally every day, and that gives her the best possible chance to find out what they know. What a ridiculous farce it is to see a teacher, who has examined a class every day for six months, sit down and prepare a set of written questions to find out what they know!

"But, thirdly—for I think there is no 'excluded middle' in the case—if it is useless for a stranger to examine the class, and useless for its own teacher to examine it, what is gained by a written examination? Will somebody tell me?"

There is a good deal of force in what is said of the tendency of written examinations to grind up the working power of the teacher. This, however, by no means settles the question of the educational value of the examinations, unless we take with