

The highest result of study is to place the mind under law, and to set it free—under the law of wise, constant, and ennobling thought—free from all that is debasing and grovelling in association and habits. Our fathers well understood this value of study by calling their schools 'free;' not because they had no fees to pay, but because they had learned that learning, study, and education alone make men free.

*Papers for the Schoolmaster.*

### Essay on Teaching Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.

#### READING.

Words are already familiar to the child. Before he comes to school he has learned a considerable portion of his mother tongue; chiefly names of surrounding objects and their qualities, and is able to form little sentences to express his wants and actions. Learning to read is, therefore, learning to recognise in signs, words already known to the ear in spoken language. From this view it follows, sense should all through accompany forms and sounds.

The organs of voice must first be made to utter correctly elementary sounds: this we have already assumed to have been done at home by the child's parents. If they have failed to do this fully, conversational lessons are necessary, for the teacher to correct any errors of utterance that may occur. The earliest lessons should be about familiar objects and actions; and the words, of a class with those he is acquainted with. A picture of some familiar animal may be presented to the eye and short sentences formed about it. The lessons ought to be composed of sentences, as they convey a sense which he is to comprehend, and with which he is to be made familiar. A good plan is to talk of the 'cow,' or whatever may be the subject of the lesson in the easy language of childhood, calling his attention to any words new to him.

**ALPHABET OR SIGNS.**—As the signs are reducible to a few elements, it seems more rational to teach these elements or letters, than to try to make the eye familiar with each word as a distinctive picture, as in the 'Look-and-Say,' or 'Reading-without-Spelling' system. In teaching the letters the writing of them on a slate should go hand in hand.

The plan of teaching the letters in groups seems to be the best, as in our First Book; but some would recommend the groups to be chosen from those letters formed of the same elements; as b, d, p, q; m, n; v, w. The objection to this plan is, that they do not form words and short sentences so easily. A box of letter cards for the formation of words at this stage is most useful.

**READING.**—Tablet lessons are required, or a primer with somewhat larger type than that used in our First Book. A few words only in each lesson. Those formed of two letters are generally the first used, as the eye can the more readily take in the two characters or signs at one look. This, in point of fact, seems the first great difficulty with beginners in reading. The eye is engaged with each separate letter, and is not yet sufficiently trained to adapt its view, or extend its sphere of vision to a whole word. After the eye is familiar with words, the same extension of sight is required for parts of sentences. When these two difficulties are overcome the mechanical part of reading is accomplished.

In giving the earlier lessons the teacher points to the letters of each little word, the pupils spell individually, or, in the case of a larger class, simultaneously; the teacher pronouncing the words for them—such as, we, go, up. Then he points to each word till the pupils read it without spelling. When they can read the sentences as they stand, he points to the words in another order, which tests the pupil's knowledge of the words, and prevents reading by rote. It is better in selecting the words promiscuously to form little sentences, than to read them without sense in

detached order. This test is given to find out if the pupils are reading by rote, but does not in itself make an examination in a reading lesson; as there is a sequence in the arrangements of the words of any language which aids the eye in following the words, and which should not be constantly violated.

After a little time, sentences may be introduced, printed in smaller type. New words may be brought in which rhyme together. Children are very fond of rhyming words together, as we may conclude from the favourite nonsense of the nursery which children delight in, and this disposition may be taken advantage of—at, pat, bat, fat; dog, bog, &c. One evil must be avoided at this stage, which is, the tendency to go on spelling even words which children know. They should be broken off this habit as soon as possible for it fosters a contraction of view which, as already observed, is to be carefully avoided. Spelling being for the most part a habit of the eye, it follows from reading, and does not precede it: the learning of the letters of a word from the commencement, helping rather the eye in its view of the letters in the whole word, and so, making a picture distinct in its outline to the vision, than as a means of learning to spell; which, as before stated, is the result of extensive reading. The attention of the class is again and again fixed on the new words. The black-board may be called in as a powerful auxiliary in teaching elementary reading. New sentences are made out of each lesson, by a new arrangement of its words.

The pupil at the next stage commences to read. He now has more words under his eye at once, and attention must be sustained. He is now carefully watched. This is the critical time. He moves from word to word in as quick succession as possible, and by degrees, accustoms his eye to catch two or more words together at one view. The book should be read over several times till small sentences are read with some degree of rapidity. A more advanced book then follows, not leading too rapidly into difficulties. This may be accomplished at the end of a year, if the pupil is diligent and attentive, and he may now be said to have learned to read.

The teacher may be here reminded that no system, even the most perfect, will be successful if he is not kind and sympathetic with childhood, and even the worst system may succeed, where the teacher's ready will determines on success. Children require tact in dealing with them; and here we may remark, that female teachers are in general more successful in dealing with the young, at least so far as the elementary branches are concerned.

**GOOD READING** next follows. It is generally defined as *distinct* which has reference to the sounds of consonants that end the majority of English words; *pure*, referring to the vowel sounds: *correct in accent*, which is giving the syllables of a word their relative force; *emphatic*, for contrasted words; and *slow*; for the last there is no rule. One man reads slowly, yet well; another much faster, yet clear and distinct. Temperament seems to have a good deal to do with this. *Modulation* is natural to us, as when pained, surprised or alarmed. There are many varieties of tone in the human voice, suited to every subject we speak of, grave or gay; to every command given, or question asked, there is an appropriate tone; and yet, how rarely do we hear this variety in reading, or in fact, any near approach to it. *Fluency* proceeds from familiarity of the eye with the words, and the mind with the sense intended to be conveyed, and results from *practice*.

**INTELLIGENT READING.**—The best general rule seems to be the familiar one, "Understand what you read, and read it as if you understood it." The language of books is strange and unintelligible to young people. They read words which they seldom or ever hear used, and whose application is to them indistinct and misty. To remedy this, and to introduce the higher class of words, not in common use, but forming a large part of book literature, conversation on the subject of a new lesson previous to its being read, will be found very useful. The parsing and analysis will also help, as pointing out where pauses should intervene, although no stops are marked. From this it