

PUBLIC SCHOOL DEPARTMENT.

SPELLING.

HOW best to teach spelling is a subject that has received no inconsiderable attention in both our High and Public Schools, and although great efforts have been put forth to master the intricacies of English spelling, no easy path has as yet been discovered. It is, therefore, quite apparent that the sound of a word is not always a correct criterion for spelling that word, and hence other means have to be used. Of these, written exercises are the most valuable, since we spell more by sight than by sound. The forms of words are impressed on the mind as pictures, and these appear marred when any of the letters forming the word are omitted or misplaced. Memory is then called into play to restore the harmony that should exist, and the proper succession of letters will usually suggest itself to the mind, more particularly if the word has frequently been seen. From what has already been said, it is apparent that to impress the forms of words upon the memories of pupils is the most important thing to be attended to in teaching spelling. The manner of doing this in detail must be left, to a great extent, to the judgment of each teacher. Variety in this, as well as in every other exercise in the schoolroom, is of the utmost importance, since doing the same thing in the same way in the schoolroom from day to day, renders it not only monotonous but positively irksome to the pupils. Let teachers then exercise a certain amount of ingenuity in changing the routine of each particular lesson, so as to keep the attention of their pupils and arouse

them to greater diligence in their studies.

The old and time honored method of memorizing column after column of meaningless words from the spelling book or dictionary, or of giving isolated words from any of the lessons taught, without the pupil having a clear conception of the meaning of the words given, is still in vogue in some of our schools. The following observations are made with a view to direct the attention of teachers to a more excellent way, and to assist both them and their pupils in reducing to a minimum the labor necessary to acquire a correct habit of spelling.

In order to form a true estimate of the value of an exercise in spelling, it is necessary to consider the relation it bears to language and culture. Spelling can only be considered as one of the accomplishments of learning, and nothing more, for the relation it bears to written language is similar to that which correct pronunciation bears to spoken language. Bad spelling is a deformity of composition, and, as such, should receive the most careful attention of teachers, so that our pupils shall at least know how to spell correctly the words in ordinary use. Those who possess cultured minds and are conversant with literature are seldom poor spellers, for the reason that their familiarity with language impresses the form of the word upon their memory. If the English were strictly a phonetic language, words would be spelled differently from what they are now, but their sense would be just the same. Spelling would then be the