

Practical Department.

TOPICAL SPELLING.

1. Direct the whole school to write on their slates fifteen names of objects they can see in the school-room. The first one who has the requisite number raises his hand, and is then requested to copy his list on the black-board. As soon as this is done, the whole school rise, turn their backs to the board and spell the words from the board, dictated by the teacher or the pupil. When this is finished, the teacher calls upon the school to raise their hands if they have any words on their slates *not* on the board. The teacher points to each one who spells his additional words. In this way, in a few minutes, every object in the school-room is spelled by the whole school; difficult words are noted, and the whole school is educated in spelling, so far as the school-room is concerned.

2. For the next exercise, let them rise from their seats, look out of the windows five minutes, by your watch, and then spell everything they can see. Drill them on difficult words.

3. Give them for topics everything they saw on the way to school; everything they can see in a store of goods; everything on the dinner-table; names of all kinds of cloth; all the parts of a wagon and harness; names of quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, shells, garden vegetables, flowers, trees, fruits, metals, rocks, and minerals.

4. Let them write the name of every object made of iron, or that has any iron about it; also, everything made of wood. A live teacher can draw out of pupils an immense number of words from the foregoing subjects.

5. Let them write the names of the capitols of the different States in the Union; also, of different countries of the globe.

6. Let them write the names of all the persons living in the school district.

7. Let them write the names of the days of the week, and of the months.

8. Let them write the names of the parts of an apple, a ship, or a house, different kinds of food, and names of different trades.

9. Let them write a list of all the persons necessary to make a loaf of bread, commencing with the felling of trees in the forest. It is said that one thousand different occupations are involved in making a loaf of bread. Let them see how many they can write.

10. For an occasional exercise, let the first pupil in an advanced class spell the name of some town or city, and then let the next mention the name of a town whose first letter is the same as the last letter of the name just spelled. If a scholar fails to do this, he is seated at once.

11. Make the whole school rise, and as soon as any scholar can mention the name of a town in the State, he raises his hand. The teacher asks him to spell it, and he is then seated. When the class are all seated, they rise and repeat the exercise, with a new list of words.

12. Tell a class to spell, for their next lesson, all the words they can think of, commencing with the letter A. Go on this way through the alphabet.

13. Tell small scholars to spell, for their next lesson, as many words as they can think of which contain but one syllable. Go on through the different grades of words by syllables.

14. Give them some familiar work for a subject, and tell them to write on their slates everything they can think of about it, and then make them spell the words in the order in which they have written them. This is an excellent introduction to the writing of compositions, though the teacher should not be so unwise as to call them such.

15. Dictate to a class ten words difficult to spell, and see how many will write them correctly on their slates.—*Teacher's Manual*, No. 1.

NOTE.—Teachers who desire to see a school text aiding the teaching of spelling as above, would do well to examine Gage's Practical Speller.—[ED. SCHOOL JOURNAL.]

TOPICAL EXERCISES.

The term "topical exercises" is used by some teachers to cover "talk" by pupils. The former term is not very clear, and the term "pupil talks" is much more descriptive of the facts.

Each pupil, even the youngest, selects some theme, and when called on, either at his seat or on the platform, states his thoughts in the best manner possible. The teacher should keep a book, and in one column put a list of subjects, and opposite in another column, let the pupil put his name and the date when he selected it. The same may be taken by a second pupil three weeks afterward. In this book the teacher should gather subjects for talks. They should be classified under Literary, Biographical, Historical, Geographical, Scientific, Humorous Anecdotes, etc.

The pupil generally selects his own subjects, but he may be assisted. He then looks in some cyclopedia for his materials. I encouraged the use of scrap-books, and so all of my pupils made scrap-books. They selected from these books things *the* suited them and told them in their own words. In this case the subject goes into the "Subject-book," and the scrap-book is referred to with page, etc., so that any one else can get the same information at another time.

This plan secures two results: (1) It gives the pupils power to describe. (2) It increases the stock of general knowledge wonderfully. No talk is over a minute long, usually, but some are two and even three minutes. In a school of 40 pupils, during the year, there are 130 biographies, 30 battles, 20 literary, 200 stories, 80 humorous, 300 geographical, 117 scientific, and 20 local. This is an average of about five per day. The "local" referred to was concerning the town, people, manufactures, etc.

In given these "talks" the pupil should stand in a natural attitude and speak naturally and easily. At first there will be diffidence and awkwardness; these will disappear by practice.—*N. Y. School Journal*.

METHODS OF TEACHING READING.

On Thursday, the 7th inst., a lecture on the above subject was given by Mr. J. B. Rundell (Guunersbury) to a gathering of school teachers at the Chiswick Globe Board School. He said that the art, which all must now acquire, was almost invariably taught in a way which over-burdened a child's memory, confused a naturally bright intelligence, and hopelessly stupefied and discouraged children who were naturally dull and backward. The reason of all this was no other than the idea, of which few people appear able to disburthen themselves, that to spell—i.e. to pronounce the ordinary names of the letters which make up any given word—was a guide to a child who had to sound the word as a whole. It seemed part and parcel of the order of things that a teacher shall repeat to a child who is beginning to learn to read such utterly irrelevant sounds as *see, ay, tee, cat; dee, ove, jee, dog; see, owe, double-you, cow!* Writers on education, from the time of Miss Edgeworth, and long before, had called attention to this absurdity, but the genius of misrule was nearly as prevalent as ever. In 1844 appeared a Phonic Reading-book, in two parts, published under the authority of the Lords of the Committee of Council on Education, in which a mode of teaching reading, better than that in ordinary use, was explained. The dead-weight of resistance on the part of teachers and school managers proved, however, too great, and the effort to bring the book into general use was abandoned. And at the present time, in spite of the progress which education had made in many respects, in the matter of the first steps of teaching reading we were very much as we were fifty years ago. A remedy would be very speedily found, Mr. Rundell contended, if people would