

write a sentence incorrectly—that is beginning it with a small letter, or not using the proper punctuation at the end. In writing the words, the child follows exactly the method of learning the spoken language. Spelling is the precise correlative of pronunciation. The child hears the spoken word and strives to reproduce it by his voice. The child sees the written word, and reproduces it with his pencil. He gets the thought by means of the written word, and gives it back just as he gets it—he is talking with the pencil. He is ready to tell you any time, orally, what he is writing.

In the first three years' work, talking with the pencil may be used as a greater means of learning to read than all the books of supplementary reading. When the child writes the first word, the unity of all language teaching is begun. Getting thought and giving thought by spoken and written word should be united at the start, and grow through all future development as from one root.

What advantages has the blackboard and crayon over the chart and printed book in elementary reading? First, the words are created by the hand of the teacher before the eyes of the children, as the spoken word is created. Second, the word is written alone in large letters, separated from all other objects of interest except the object it names. How different the confused mass of black specks upon the printed page. Third, the attention of the little group is thus directed to one object in a very simple manner. Fourth, words are learned by repeated acts of association. The great fault with charts and primers is that they do not repeat words times enough for the child to learn them. On the blackboard, on the other hand, these repetitions can be easily made. It is of great importance that the first one hundred words should be learned thoroughly. Superficial work is always bad work. From the first, then, the child should write every word he learns from the blackboard, and just as soon as he is able to write sentences the word should invariably be written in sentences.

The child should be trained to read from his slate all that he writes. The reason why this change is made so easily from script to print used to puzzle me. I only knew that it could be done, but could not tell the reason why. Script and print are very nearly allied in form. The first print was a crude reproduction of old manuscript. Both, indeed, have changed since the art of printing was discovered, but the resemblance remains. The child, as you know, has a wonderful power of seeing resemblances. Like comes to like in his mind because his mental pictures are not filled out with that which produces the differences. This, to my mind, is sufficient reason for the surprising ease with which the child changes from script to print.

Says the *Boston Transcript*: "The doubt is rising whether our beautiful new literature for children is the best for them. At all events it is to be hoped that the new life of Miss Edgeworth will bring back her stories for children. Grandmothers will surely recommend them, and the present generation will sympathize when it knows them." Some of the rest of us who are called upon to think, not only what is best for our own, but for hundreds of families, have been entertaining the same doubt. The general reading introduced into schools has had the effect of animating boys and girls with an eager desire for books at home. So far, so good. That was precisely its object. Nobody could be too thankful at seeing pure books—Mrs. Whitney's, Miss Alcott's, a dozen others, in the hands of youth who had previously been only familiar with the *Police Item*, *The Fiend of the Hearthstone*, and so forth, almost *ad infinitum*. But the poorer class of children, provided with no suitable reading by parents, and having access to the public libraries, is tempted to deluge and saturate its mind with story upon story. Suppose the stories are good in themselves (and if a pupil be encouraged to report all his reading to the teacher, he will, in a spirit

of emulation, endeavor to read only those he can mention), there may be too many of them. And as for the sons and daughters of wealthy and educated parents, they are being surfeited with magazines. It is all of the very best, to be sure, but that does not save it from the charge of being a case of over-feeding. What is to be done? That is more than the teacher can say, without the parent's help.

Some one prophesies that the next two or three generations of children will be crammed with facts to an extent that would astonish even the teacher of half a century ago. "For," says he, "according to the law of reaction, after this wave of oral teaching we shall settle down to the use of books again. And as the fervor for oral instruction has been mighty, so shall the rebound of opinion to the opposite pole be correspondingly forcible. Doubtless we shall be found shutting up a child in a closet, with a supply of bread and a case of books. When he has learned the contents of the volumes, word for word, then shall he be promoted to another closet and more books. In an allotted period of years he will have completed his education by his unaided efforts. In those days everybody will be a self-made man or woman. Never smile at the vision, instructors of youth! The day is surely coming when you shall be required to talk less, and your pupils made to study more. But what becomes of the children whose minds we have spoiled, hopelessly or not, by our varying systems of teaching? The question is as pertinent and unanswerable as is the familiar one in regard to the final destination of lost pins."

A recent publication contains the following quotation from Alexandre Dumas: "There is no such thing as a stupid child. A child may have a more or less prompt intelligence; it may develop special aptitudes or antipathies; but you will never hear it say a stupid thing as long as you have not deceived it, as long as you have not told it a lie." Now that is one of the utterances which, like epigrams, sound exceedingly well, but which are not unmitigated truth. Children are quite as frequently stupid as grown people, and with no apparent cause beyond that of intuitive dulness. Doubtless the cause is to be found somewhere for the inability of any machine to work; but in the case of human beings you are more likely to find it to be prenatal—nay, even lying a century behind the child—than some effect of his own immediate circumstances.

Did you ever ask your girls how much they knew about bread-making? Unfortunately cooking cannot be taught in public schools, as sewing is; but a hint can go from the teacher to the mother which may or may not bring forth fruit. However, the chance of results makes the effort worth while. Suggest that each child watch her mother while she is bread-making, and that she ask every possible question about the process. Say, very emphatically, that she will be a fortunate girl who is allowed to try the operation with her own hands, and have a composition written on what each one has seen or done. Some of you who have not had much intercourse with the poorer class of parents will be surprised to find that a mother who works hard over sewing and housework seven days in the week is likely to have a daughter incapable of tying a knot in her thread, or sweeping a room carefully. Send out filaments in every direction. Reach the parents and force them, by the very power of your interest in their children, to help you in directions where you alone can accomplish nothing.

How shall we best teach reading in grammar schools? In the first place, beware of the school reader. Don't rely on it. It is well to bring in pieces from the outside, selections that are largely