

extra precaution, but our errors, oddities and vagaries will creep into our writings and speeches in spite of us. The editor who habitually says "I seen it myself," is very likely to get "we seen" instead of "we saw" in his paper. Therefore bend the twig in time, and allow no error in either grammar or pronunciation to pass uncorrected. To do this successfully the teacher himself must be a model in conversation. The pupils will have errors enough driven into them at home and on the street, without having them clinched at school.

As a step towards extempore speaking pupils may be trained to deliver messages verbatim. At first the messages may be composed by the teacher and memorized by the pupil; and afterwards the teacher may give the

substance and allow the pupil to put it into proper shape. Means should be taken to ascertain that the messages are correctly delivered.

I attach but little importance to exercises in composition as homework. A little done under the eye of the teacher is worth a great deal done elsewhere. The examining and correcting of composition involves much labour on his part, but it is worth all the trouble it takes. At first the poor attempts of your pupils may be discouraging, but success will be likely to follow failure. Your pupils may not all be embryo Miltons or Shakspeares, but all may be better for your care, and some may rise to important positions in the community, to which the teacher's practical thoughtfulness may, in no small degree, aid in their reaching.

CHRISTIANITY AND ITS NEW ASSAILANTS.—Those who boast or think that the intellectual battle against Christianity has been fought and won are reckoning without their host. Christianity, even in its sadly imperfect development, is, as a matter of fact, at the head of the world. I am tempted, gentlemen, further to offer you, with a daring which I hope may be thought excusable, a general observation on the frame of mind in which we all—and, most of all, those specially engaged—should meet that conflict or contact with opposing forces, which in this day no thoughtfully educated man can hope wholly to escape. No defence is to be found in timidity, but much defence is to be found in circumspection. What we have most to complain of is a perceptible rapidity of question, trial, and summary condemnation, which is perhaps as far removed from reason as is the grossest of the superstitions it condemns. There is a kind of steeplechase philosophy in vogue; sometimes it is specialism that assumes the honours of universal knowledge, and makes short cuts to its conclusion. Sometimes it is that knowledge of external nature is, by one of the strangest of solecisms, thought to convey a supreme capacity for judging questions which belong entirely to the sphere of moral action and of moral needs. All this suggests that abnormal causes are in some degree at work; that besides research and the great modern art of literary criticism,

and a useful reaction against usurping traditions, there is, so to speak, something of an epidemic in the air. We have need to examine whether there does not creep about among us a predisposition to disturb, a preference for negation, and something of a mental levity, which are more or less included in the term scepticism—a temper to be discouraged, a frame of mind broadly distinguished from what Dante has sanctioned and Tennyson has called "honest doubt," as well as from a hearty allegiance to truth and a determination, so to speak, even to hate father and mother for its sake. If this be so, what I suggest is, in a manner, to meet scepticism with scepticism, a wanton scepticism with a scepticism more legitimate. Put it on its trial; allow none of its assumptions; compel it to explain its formulæ; do not let it move a step except with proof in its hand; bring it front to front with history; even demand that it shall shew the positive elements with which it proposes to replace the mainstays it seems bent on withdrawing from the fabric of modern society. When it alleges that our advanced morality—such as it is—is really the work, not of Christianity, but of civilization, require it to shew cause why this advanced morality has never grown up except under the ægis of the Gospel; why the old civilizations were one and all smitten with decay, and degenerated in moral tissue even before they lost their intellectual vigour.—*Mr. Gladstone.*