

the school. We give this as an example of how a teacher may find far more effectual expedients than the rod to win a child back to the right path.

READING.—Though we place this subject here, it by no means follows that it should be the first thing taught to a child. A wise teacher will exercise her discretion as to when she should commence to teach a child to read. All children should not be set down to the alphabet the moment they enter the school. In fact we would allow the infant to commence that task just when its natural curiosity had been excited by seeing its playmates engaged in giving a name to these symbols. The greater portion of the alphabet children pick up from one another without the intervention of the teacher at all, provided they are not disgusted in the outset by making a task of what can be turned into a source of enjoyment. Various plans have been put forth for teaching the alphabet, all differing, except on one very material point—their utter impracticability. The practical teacher needs none of those artificial aids. The only one of them we ever knew to be of the slightest advantage was a plan we saw in an infant school, conducted by an experienced mistress. She never asked a child to learn more than the names of three letters at a time—*giving to each child a separate lesson*—then examined them on the black board by making the letter with a piece of chalk in a style that would do credit to a professional engrosser. She never found any difficulty in this way in making the children learn the alphabet.

There is one thing we would suggest to the chiefs of inspection, to recommend at once; it would aid the teacher very much if the child had the alphabet constantly before it; and for this purpose we would recommend that it should be printed in medium type by itself, on a slip about the size of a page of the first book. The teacher could have this pasted on a strong paste-board, a piece of leather, or a square of wood, and make each child who had not thoroughly learnt the alphabet, have one in its hand. Teachers will not give books to small children, for they are sure to be torn or lost in a day or two; and, except when at lessons, the tablets are inaccessible to the children. We trust that in case the inspectors do not see the necessity for adopting our suggestion that the proprietor of the *TEACHERS' JOURNAL* will print some of those slips. They would be a great boon to every teacher; and we venture to say that if they came into general use, the alphabet would be learned in about one-third of the time it at present occupies. The advantage would be that the children during their leisure minutes would be examining each other to see which knew the most letters. They could also, when lost or defaced, be replaced much easier than books. Besides, the child having only before it exactly what it requires to learn, would not be distracted by turning over the leaves of a book. In fact we believe the same system would be found useful with all the lessons in the first section of the first book. As the child progresses we would be very much inclined to follow the plan indicated in the article, —“*INDIVIDUAL versus CLASS TEACHING.*” We have seen it successfully practised in more than one school, and these were schools which were noted for the good readers they produced. Never allow a child to leave a lesson till it is thoroughly conquered. It is a great mistake to imagine that because a child can read the greater portion of a lesson it should be *encouraged* by giving it a new one. In fact you are *discouraging* it, for you make its after progress the more difficult. Do not be satisfied with having a child read one sentence of the lesson, and the next child another sentence, and so on. Make each child read the lesson (which should be very short) through. Some of the lessons in our first book might be conveniently broken up into parts. Encourage by every means the attentive child, and the child who seems to have prepared its lesson, but do not by any means cast a slur on the backward ones. Make them promise to be better next day, and when they improve have a kind word for them. They will soon find out that it is much easier, and more pleasant, to be attentive than idle. Never permit the pupil to get into the sing-song when

reading. The best way to avoid this is to make each child keep its eye fixed on the word it is uttering. Of course natural reading with a *proper* regard to the meaning, cannot be acquired at this stage, but a bad habit should not be allowed. Make the child spell *every word* in the lesson. We do not believe that while in the first book *clause-spelling*, or spelling several words at a time, is of much service; but as soon as the first book is conquered it should be introduced. It is a very amusing thing, and one that interests the children very much, for the teacher to put one of the infants to examine the others on the spelling, she herself of course standing by. There should be *four* reading lessons every day while children remain in the first book, each of not more than twenty minutes' duration. As little of the teaching of those lessons as possible should be left to monitors, not that we by any means decried their usefulness in the school, but that we look upon the teaching of reading as *the most important* portion of the business in every school. It should not therefore be left in inexperienced hands.

As soon as the children reach the second book, their progress from lesson to lesson will be much more rapid. They may now be left more to monitors, but the principal teacher should hear them read as often as possible. Three reading lessons in the day will now be quite enough, each of twenty-five minutes' duration. The lessons, until they have gone over half the book, should, as a rule, consist of only one page or thereabouts. A long reading lesson is a great mistake, and the compilers of the Irish National School books have fallen into the error of making nearly all their lessons too long. Young teachers imagine that when a lesson is of a certain length in the book that they are bound to give the whole of it to the child. By so doing they aim at too much, and to their chagrin often fail altogether. Spelling should be more attended to now than ever, and when the reading is over at the *last* reading lesson in the day, the teacher should put a few judicious questions on the subject matter. They should be such questions as would interest the children and would cost a little thought, but not much, to answer.

If the first and second be properly taught, the child's progress in reading is afterwards all plain sailing; and this is the reason why we have dwelt so long on them. Spare therefore no pains to make those books be thoroughly conquered.

SINGING.—We assign to singing the place after reading in the infant-school curriculum, and we are doubtful but we should have placed it first. Nothing enlivens a crowd of little people so much as a song. You will see the infant toddling a whole street after a ballad singer, and going into raptures when it hears a fiddle; or that pest of our cities,—a barrel-organ. The taste for music is natural in most Irish-born children. Whether it is a peculiarity of our climate, or from whatever cause it proceeds, we are a musical people. The tender plaintiveness of the music of Ireland has passed into a proverb. In fact nature has done as much for us in that way as art has for the Italians. This taste therefore should be developed, and it is with reluctance we say that the school-teachers of Ireland have not done their part in doing so. We may allude to this more fully in a separate paper, but now we have only to do with the infant-school. It is a pleasure to go into the infant departments attached to our district model-schools, and hear the little voices all joining in chorus. Of course the music is not always the most accurate. The teacher of an infant-school should be a good singer, and there should be songs sung at various intervals during the day. Little marches are very popular with children. They at once take the ear, and are admirably suited to the time of changing from floor to gallery. Pains should of course be taken to have them sing in time, and a very little pains will have this effect. We have seen in some infant-schools formidable rollers printed over with “*Hullah's System*,” and the mistress busily engaged teaching the “*notes*” to the poor bewildered children. This was making a task of a pleasure with a vengeance. We felt very strongly tempted to throw the whole machinery