

PRACTICAL TEACHING.

FROM CONTEMPORARY SOURCES.

SENTENCE-MAKING.

A GOOD exercise for the younger children, and, indeed, for the older ones, if you have skill enough to make it interesting, is that of making sentences with given words. For the little ones the task must be very simple at first. Write the words *bird* and *sing* on the board, and let the children make sentences containing both words. It is supposed, of course, that you have previously impressed upon the little minds the fact that a sentence always *says* or declares something—that it is (to use the grammar's phrase) "a collection of words making complete sense." The children will give you such sentences as these: "The bird sings," "The bird can sing," "The bird will sing," etc. Or, perhaps, a more ambitious child than the average will say, "I like to hear the bird sing," or "It is pleasant to hear the bird sing," or a similar long sentence, embodying not only the fact of the bird's singing, but also the fact that its singing is sweet to the ear, and gives pleasure to all. As the children give their sentences, write each upon the board with the child's name, and when this is done, give the children a talk upon birds and their music, bringing in each sentence as you go on, and doing your utmost to awaken thought and imagination by your words.

Let another exercise be devoted to sentence-making solely. Put a half-dozen pairs of words on the board, and have the children write sentences about them on their slates. Examine

the slates carefully, and call the attention of the class to any serious mistakes made. Remember, the object of all this exercise is to teach the children how to speak and to write correctly, and you must see to it that through it you show them what correct language means. When sentences are wrong, show them why they are wrong—why they do not make complete sense. Teach the importance of saying exactly what is meant, and point your teaching with instances where a faulty sentence has caused serious mistakes to be made.

Make the words harder as you go on. Give not only noun and verb, but an adjective or adverb. Then write a number of words on the board, all to be worked into a complex sentence. Then a number to be used, permitting the children to make as many sentences as they choose with them, connecting them all with a thread of sense. Before you know it, your pupils will be able to write very good compositions in this way, without difficulty.

There is need for the exercise of good judgment in selecting words as the work grows more complicated. Give groups of words that you yourself could use in connected sentences. Don't "lump" dissimilar words together, which will simply cause the children profitless worry to bring into intelligent connection. The work is not to be regarded primarily as an exercise in mental gymnastics, but a work that shall bring into play imagination and thought as well as constructive ability.