

Special Articles.

THE RIGHT USE OF WORDS

Every teacher will have learned by experience something of the difficulty to be met with in trying to convey to the average pupil a correct notion of the use of a word by a formal definition. Some amusing instances have come under our notice of late. One journal collates the following:—"A teacher in an English school, giving a reading lesson to his class in the presence of an inspector, asked the boys what was meant by 'conscience'—a word that had occurred in the course of the reading. The class having been duly crammed for the question, answered as one boy: 'An inward monitor.' 'But what do you understand by an inward monitor?' put in the inspector. To this further question only one boy announced himself ready to respond, and his triumphantly given answer was: 'A hironclad, sir.' Asked what were the chief ends of of man, another boy replied: 'His head and feet;' and a third, questioned as to where Jacob was going when he was ten years old, replied that he was 'going on for eleven.'"

Another Exchange gives two or three other instances equally amusing and instructive.

"A teacher told her pupils that *ferment* means to work. When she requested them to give sentences illustrating the meaning of this word, one pupil said, 'My father ferments on the Boulevard.'

Another teacher, attempting to describe the meaning of *effervesce*, told her pupils that it signifies to bubble or froth up, and fall over. To illustrate the idea received of the meaning of this word a pupil said, 'A man effervesced on the elevated railroad.'"

The fact is, it will often be found almost impossible to convey by definition such an idea of the meaning and use of a word as will insure its correct employment by the pupil, if he is previously unacquainted with it. Any one on recalling and analyzing the process by which he has acquired his own vocabulary, will find that he is mainly indebted not to the teacher or the dictionary, but to conversation and reading.

The principle that in this case the child must "learn to do by doing," is easily reached. The moral is obvious. Let the pupil learn to make his own definitions from observation of the uses of words as they occur in the course of his reading.

In order to cultivate the habit of observation there are no better exercises than at one time to require the pupil to express the thoughts of a paragraph or poetical extract in his own language, and at another to construct original sentences embodying words used in such passages. Care should be taken to select passages for practice only from such authors as are noted for accuracy in the use of words.

The same kind of exercise will be found to serve another equally valuable end, in compelling the child to seize the meaning of the author. The teacher will be astonished to find how often boys and girls, even those who read with tolerable correctness, fail to gain any definite conception of the author's meaning. This is probably due in a large measure to defects in the elementary training. But whatever the cause nothing is more common than to find that to even bright pupils reading is very largely a new mechanical process. The teacher who can succeed by the use of the methods suggested, and others he may devise, in compelling his pupils to think, will accomplish more for their real development, which is the only education, in a day than the mere routine outline will in a week. Better still, he is aiding in the formation of the habit which makes study a delight, and the whole after life one long process of ducaal growth.

EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT GERMS.

The *New York Journal of Education* gives a full and interesting resume of the papers and addresses presented by distinguished educators at the recent Educational Convention, at New Orleans. The space at our disposal will not permit us to attempt even a summary, but we have culled a few passages, which seem to us worthy of special emphasis at the present stage of educational progress. We give them rather for what they suggest than what they contain.

Mr. Andrew J. Rickoff—*School Economy*.—"There are many kinds of waste, but they are not merely waste of money, or time, etc., but waste of opportunity. The speaker classified the expenditures as follows:—For school houses, supplies (including apparatus), and instruction. Under the first head he considered that the revival of interest in public education of late years was attended by an injudicious outlay for the erection of grand, imposing structures, to the prejudice of the work to be done in them. Communities went far beyond their means to satisfy local pride, which would have been nobler had it recognized that, after all, the teacher, and not the building, is the school. The speaker spoke upon this idea at length with emphasis. He said people build workshops (fine school houses), and neglect to put in good machinery, and their funds were insufficient for hiring good workmen. They build school houses of which they are proud, and have schools of which they ought to be ashamed. What would it profit them if they had Windsor Palaces for school houses, and ignorance, inexperience and stupidity at the teacher's desk?

Dr. W. T. Harris—*The Relation of the Common Schools to the University*.—"It is both good policy and wise administration to plant the University on the popular affections and interests, and to aid public instruction wherever it can be safely done.

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The common school gives the general education, the secondary schools the higher education, and the University the highest of all. The University creates the elite corps of culture,—the engineers of thought. The approaches to it should be open to every corner, whose faculties are trained for service in the field of life.

Here the University has much to do which may be called supplementary. A part of the work is the elevation of the public tone and culture. This last is done in part unconsciously and without any direct effort. The speaker then showed how it was effected through the influence of the faculty and alumni, and through the influence of a fine public library, offering and opening its benefits to all. This is true, also, of art galleries and museums. The museum is the workshop of the scientist and kindergarten of the people. It taught natural science without a master.

The most direct method of reaching the popular mind is popular lectures. Conducted by able men they awaken the spirit of inquiry in many breasts, and diffuse important information. This is said to be a difficult community to reach by this method. But if free and guaranteed by the University, and on subjects interesting to the community, it will after awhile become the habit and perhaps the fashion to attend."

George Hicks, Esq., of Kingston, Jamaica.—*Educational progress in Jamaica, West Indies*. Mr. Hicks then discussed the question whether education in Jamaica has been accompanied by general progress or the reverse,—whether the planter's cry, that Jamaica is ruined, is well founded. He showed that the people are better housed, better clad, better fed, than formerly; that they have schools, and some have books and papers in their homes; that they have a largely increased number of churches, which they attend on Sunday, instead of using the day for a market-day, as in the olden time; that they, of late years, are bearing more of their own bur-