

easier way to make what means as many as one mark, and so used 1. Teacher has children make marks, and these they have learned about which mean the same as marks, telling each time that they use them to save time and room. Teacher erases all marks, leaving figures on the board. Teacher questions, and children give name of each. Teacher, pointing to each and all, "Who knows what we call all these that mean the same as marks, and which people use instead of marks, to save time and room?" Children or teacher give term, figures. Question children on what figures are. Teacher should have children make figures, state what called, what used instead of, and why used.

FIRST STEPS IN WRITTEN LANGUAGE.

BY F. B. GREEN, A.M.

I.

The growing interest in the methods of teaching language suggests the question,—"What is the real object of language-lessons?" The ready answer is, "To impart a proper knowledge of the use of language." No one will doubt the soundness of this theory, but there seems to be reason to question whether its purpose is fully carried out in the schools of to-day.

To use language is to speak, read, and write well. Do the scholars who leave our public schools fulfil these requirements? Whatever may be said of the speaking or reading, there is a lamentable deficiency in the writing. Little attention has been paid to writing language. There probably has been plenty of instruction in writing the letters, and combinations of them, but a knowledge of penmanship, however thorough, does not enable the pupil to write a good letter, or in any way to express his ideas with the pen.

By written language is meant all forms of language which appeal to the eye. Reading is therefore included in this classification, as well as writing itself. It should be an exercise in interpreting the thoughts of others, while writing should be the expression of one's own thoughts. When the child can read or write, unconscious of the characters which he sees or makes, with his attention occupied solely by the thought, then he is using language as it was intended to be used. To attain such a result should be the real aim of lessons in language.

To become acquainted with language, it is necessary that it be presented in a natural way, just as it is used. The child is ever ready to receive language in this way, but naturally rebels against an array of letters, sounds, principles, elements, and all the technicalities which render the school-room so distasteful to him. In other words, if he is to make a successful study of language, he must view it as the medium for expressing thought. The anatomy of language,—its grammatical relations, its orthography, the analysis of the letters used in writing it,—must be made subordinate to the main idea. In time all this may be investigated to advantage, but not at the outset. Neither should one phase of written language be developed to the neglect of the other. As reading and writing are the counterparts of one another, they should be developed together. Generally the scholar learns to read long before he learns to write. He should do both at once, and will learn to do each more rapidly by combining the two processes.

When this plan is faithfully followed, the teacher is rewarded by the most substantial results. The scholars may not be able to recite many abstract rules and definitions it is true, but they have acquired something far better,—a practical knowledge of what the rules mean. They can do what another class can only tell how to

do. They can read intelligently, not mechanically. They can spell correctly, for it is impossible to write without spelling. They use capitals and punctuation-marks properly, because they learned to speak; and in addition to all this, they are unconsciously gaining an acquaintance with many of those subtle constructions which it is so hard for the grammarian to define.

The greatest difficulty to be encountered in this method is at the start. If a teacher once begins right, the way will be clear. It will be the aim of succeeding articles to furnish such hints as may be of service in the school-room.

THE RECITATION.

BY PROF. JOHN OGDEN, WORTHINGTON, O.

It would seem that this topic, which constitutes the chief staple of the school-house, should be well understood. But such is not always, nor even generally, the case. Like other duties of the school-room, it requires diligent study, and a careful adjustment of its inherent forces, in order to render it an efficient measure in education.

Notwithstanding the very great preponderance of the time and energies of teachers devoted to this one important duty, it does not rank as high, as an educational instrumentality, as study; and yet its chief object is to excite and direct the latter. Indeed, it fails in its most legitimate purposes, so far forth as it does not do this. Perhaps no exercise of the school is subject to as great abuse among teachers. No two of them will conduct a recitation in precisely the same manner. Indeed, in the smaller details this is not desirable. There should be a unity of principle and purpose, and a diversity of practice in detail. This gives just that variety necessary to make teaching lively, comprehensive, and efficient, adapting it to the wants of every individual capacity and want.

There are principles and laws regulating this exercise, not less than in other departments of labor and growth, and any departure from these laws or violation of their principles of action, whether from sheer ignorance or more culpable neglect, is as disastrous as in any other—nay, as much more so as the material upon which it operates is more precious and enduring than any other. So that it becomes a matter of very serious importance, that the teacher be both wise and well skilled in matters of recitation.

It is claimed for this exercise, as in all others relating to the management of schools and education, that its principles may be so classified and arranged, that they may be learned, and by right and necessity ought to be learned, at least theoretically, before the teacher is permitted any independent practice. A well-organized normal school will afford the requisite opportunities for this purpose. The practice here is not only guarded from any excesses or abuses, but is made to conform to true theory.

It can be conveniently studied under the following heads, viz., the objects of recitation, including the tests that may be employed for ascertaining the extent of preparation of lessons, and various other items under this head; the helps afforded in recitation, how, and by whom; and the applications, which should be made to cover, prospectively, the whole field of culture, business and progress. This not only invests the recitation with an air of importance, enhancing its value in the eyes of the pupil, but makes it a real living and vitalizing thing, instead of the tedious and unmeaning cramming process which, without this knowledge, it surely becomes.

It also looks after the necessities and conveniences for the recitation, in the way of room, seats, apparatus, etc., together with the methods, both general and special,—general as they relate to all the branches of learning, and special as they relate to the particular