

which has so lately shaken off the incubus of slavery. But is there not a great deal of the same silly snobbery in our own Canada, the land of the working man? Every teacher in the country should set himself to eradicate a prejudice so senseless and mischievous from the minds of the coming generation, and to inspire them with a genuine appreciation of the worth and dignity of manual labour.

We gave last week an American journalist's version of the language of every day life as he alleges it is spoken even by educated people. We hope nothing so atrocious is to be heard in such circles in Canada. But our abuse of the Mother tongue is bad enough, and it is worth while for each teacher to ask himself what he is doing to purify the language of the children in schools. The evil must be corrected at the fountain head. The habits of speech formed in youth are, as too many well educated men and women know to their frequent chagrin, well nigh ineradicable. We have often spoken of the great benefit children derive from being frequently required to reproduce in writing the leading facts of some interesting extract or brief narrative read to them. Another exercise which should be placed side by side with this in importance is the oral reproduction of a similar paragraph or story. Let every child be called upon at intervals to tell a story to the teacher, or to give the substance of something he has been reading, or, better still, to describe some incident which has come within his own observation. The criticism should not be too severe at first. The child will soon learn to criticise himself. His faculty of language will be cultivated, memory and observation improved, and a steady approach made towards ease, correctness, and even, under good instruction, elegance of expression. Try it, teachers. Do not say you have not time. This is the very thing schools are for, the very best kind of work a teacher can do, and there should not be time for anything which interferes with such exercises.

SCHOOL RECITATIONS.

We reprint in another column a suggestive article on "Elocution."* The subject is an eminently practical one, and worthy of the consideration of every teacher. It is to be hoped that *Intelligence* is correct in its opinion that a reaction is setting in against the would-be dramatic style so much cultivated in most of our schools. We have no doubt that, properly employed, an hour or two devoted to school recitations on Friday afternoons, or at any weekly period most convenient, may be made one of the most profitable in the whole routine. In so saying we speak as much from observation and experience, as from theoretical conviction. In our own teaching we introduced the practice reluctantly, but were thoroughly convinced by observation extending over a number of years that the results were unmistakably, even strikingly, beneficial. The rapidity with which an unintelligent monotone became frequently transformed into a thoughtful, appreciative inflection, convinced us that the exercise was of great educational value.

The question of the right use of gesture is difficult. No one

can doubt that by skillful management, hands and arms and facial expression can be made of great service in conveying thought and feeling, which is the true aim of all speaking. Should gestures be mainly literal, or should the use of literal gestures be wholly discouraged as inartistic and unscientific? That such gestures are unnatural! no one can contend. To aid language by various bodily movements in the way of illustration or emphasis is certainly an universal impulse, if not an instinct. But carried, as it so often is, to an artificial extreme, literal gesture becomes ludicrous and justly merits the ridicule so often heaped upon it.

We have sometimes thought that two distinct kinds and uses of gesture may be traced to quite dissimilar origins, and that each has its place and use in speech. There is the literal gesture to which we have referred, which is called in merely as a kind of picture to aid description, to illustrate an idea clearly stated in language, or to add force to a strong or impassioned utterance. There is another gesture quite distinct in kind, which is the result of sympathy between body and brain, the outer sign of intense mental activity and effort. The one necessarily accompanies or follows expression; the other precedes it. The latter, which is often the more effective, belongs wholly, by its very nature, to extemporaneous speech. Its use in reading or recitation of what is already thought out and shaped into language would be an absurd mimicry. But in the case of the cultivated speaker, whose thoughts are being shaped into glowing periods as his oration proceeds, the constant movement of limb, and play of feature, are so many outer symbols of vigorous mental action, and excite a degree of nervous sympathy in the hearer, which assists very materially in keeping him *en rapport* with the speaker.

It is obvious, however, that only the first named, the literal gesture in some of its forms, is permissible in the school room recitation. If we were to attempt to lay down any rule in a matter which must be left largely to the judgment and taste of the individual teacher, we should advise on the whole repression rather than encouragement of gesture. Gesticulation is, after all, largely a matter of temperament. To the Celt it is a second nature, almost a necessity of speech. The Teuton on the other hand, can manage very well with a little of it. Analogous differences will always be found between individual pupils. To one gesture is as natural as speech itself. To deny its use wholly to him, is to deprive him of one of his most effective means of expression. In such a case restraint correction, cultivation, are what is needed. To another, of a more coldly intellectual type, it is equally natural to rely upon the modulation of the voice. Any gestures he may be taught to use are pretty sure to be stiff and mechanical, and so to mar rather than improve the effect of the language. It may be questioned whether in such a case the voice under proper training, may not by its modulations of tone, inflection, &c., be made both a higher and a more powerful instrument for the forcible expression of ideas than is possible when it is hampered, at the same time it is aided, by gesticulation.

We have dwelt much longer than we intended upon this point. Whatever difference of opinion there may be as to

*The article referred to is crowded out of this number.