

ference), and, standing at some considerable distance, to make the ear the sole judge. That this organ may be a true judge, however, it is necessary that the master should seek every opportunity of hearing good reading.

PUPILS TO BECOME MERE LISTENERS ALSO.—It is also an excellent plan to make the whole class occasionally form themselves into mere auditors. The reader will thus find that he must speak clearly, distinctly, forcibly, and naturally, if he would have himself understood; and both he and his class-fellows will learn what the objects of reading aloud are, and in what its excellences consist. This will, no doubt, prove, in the present state of the classes, a very severe test for the junior children, but it is nevertheless the master's duty to apply it early, because, from a want of early attention to the formation of good habits, many teachers are now obliged, too frequently, to occupy their time in curing those faults that, had proper means been adopted in proper time, they would have had, only to prevent. Incorrectness of utterance, apathy in speaking, general listlessness of manner, inattention to what is read, monotonous tones, cadences in speaking, &c., all have their rise in sources scarcely discernable at first, but they grow upon children if permitted, until it is scarcely possible to cope with them. In these cases, therefore, as in most others, 'prevention is better than cure.'

READING MUST BE TAUGHT AS A DISTINCT LESSON.—The second condition required to give the previous suggestions full force is that reading should be practised for itself and by itself—*practised, in fact, as a distinct lesson.* At present, the time of the reading lesson is occupied with reading, spelling, meanings, subject-matter of book, and sometimes, etymologies, grammar, and geography. Among so many subjects the actual practice of reading is exceedingly little, especially so if the classes are large; and therefore, one of the most important rules about good reading—that to read well we must read much—is violated. Besides, so long as it is not the immediate object of the lesson, it will be exceedingly difficult to fix the child's attention satisfactorily upon it and upon any remarks that may be made as to its improvement.

Some inspectors say that every class should receive four lessons daily; some three; and some two; but all agree in saying that one lesson at least should be set apart exclusively for mere reading. During this time the portion allotted to each child should be large—in fact, it cannot be too large consistently with the time allowed—not only for the purpose of giving greater practice in reading, but also to accustom him to that continuous and connected reading which aims at taking in the whole of the subject, and which he must follow in his more matured studies. The lessons selected should be those which are most familiar, so as to secure the greatest freedom of expression, and to occupy little time in the explanations of such words and phrases as it will be found necessary to explain in order to make the reading forcible and intelligent.

SHOULD READ POETRY.—During this time, also, they should read a great deal of poetry; the junior classes from their ordinary reading-books, and the more advanced from good authors, or from good selections from their works. With the advanced classes, the object should be, not so much to learn to read, for this they ought to have acquired already, as to improve in reading; and I know of no better way to do this than to read poetry extensively. When read and recited well, it tends to produce expressive reading, in the highest sense of that term; it also has a powerful effect in awakening the feelings and in inculcating sentiment—one of the most important agents in the formation of character. But that it may be of any advantage, due regard should be had to the repetition. All errors of affectation, exaggeration, hurry, &c., should be carefully watched and removed. The utterance should be clear and distinct, with as little musical intonation as the nature of poetry admits of; and that attention should be paid to the modulations of the voice which is necessary to bring out, not only the true meaning, but the true feeling also.

INTELLIGENT READING: ITS IMPORTANCE.—It will be noticed that the suggestions up to this refer almost solely to expression and utterance, and relate, in but a secondary way, if at all, to the comprehension of the text. It is now my duty to deal with this, the most important part of reading. It is important, because 'the foundation upon which every system of intellectual instruction must rest, is the ability to read with ease and intelligence, so as to evince a clear conception of the subject,' and because when attained, all other excellences in reading either follow of themselves, or are more easily acquired. Intellectual reading, however, is not only valuable in itself, but, inasmuch as it is an exercise which requires a due appreciation of their ideas, as well as of the peculiarities of the language used in their expression, it becomes a valuable agent, in the hands of a skilful person, for developing and strengthening the mind.

'MEANING OF WORDS' AT ROOT OF IT.—As the meaning of the entire sentence depends upon the force of the words made use of, that exercise which has for its object the explanation of those words must necessarily lie at the root of this branch of our subject, and, therefore, it naturally demands our first consideration.

OBJECT OF THIS EXERCISE.—This exercise seeks to make the text intelligible by translating its imperfectly understood phraseology into a language of more ordinary use. It is sometimes incorrect, therefore, to require the children during this exercise to be very particular in the choice of those words which they give in the explanation of others. A distinction, however, ought to be made in this respect between the two divisions of the school. From the ju-

nior section, because the children have not yet had sufficient opportunities for getting up a good vocabulary, the words commonly used by the uneducated should be accepted; but from the senior classes something higher, I think, ought to be expected. They should convey their explanations not only clearly and definitely, but in neat and correct language; not indeed, to render their meaning more easily understood—for many of the rough words current among the unlearned cannot be exceeded for terseness and force—but to give them the habit of using the more canonical words of our language. Their acquaintance with the words and style of the advanced lesson-books, the improved taste and the increase of ideas consequent upon their progress through these books, naturally point out why a difference should be made, in this respect, between the senior and junior classes.

THIS EXERCISE BADLY CONDUCTED AT PRESENT.—This exercise is very badly conducted in schools at present.

1. **JOINED WITH SPELLING.**—It is for the most part, connected with the spelling rather than with the texts of the reading-lesson. The very nature of the exercise ought, however, to show to those teachers who adopt this course that it has no more connection with spelling than grammar has, which they also join with it. The late Mr. McCreedy, Secretary to the Board, writing on this point, says, 'That in a large number of schools, the old and absurd system is persevered in, of teaching the meanings of words in connection with the spelling—in which the sense is unsettled and arbitrary—rather than with the reading exercise, or, more properly speaking, with the analysis of the text of the reading exercise, where only can the words of the lesson have their meaning properly determined by their application.'

2. **DICTIONARY MEANINGS GENERALLY UNSUITABLE.**—The meanings given are also, too frequently, the mere meanings contained in a dictionary.—But such are almost worthless in securing the object in view, as they are generally less familiar to the children, and much more difficult of comprehension than the words they seek to explain. Take, for instance, the following meaning for 'network,' extracted from Johnson's Dictionary:—

'Network, is anything reticulated or decussated at equal distance, with interstices between the intersections.'

This may be very accurate, but fancy the puzzled expression of a poor child after reading it!

The fact is, that the ends aimed by a teacher and a lexicographer are so very different, that a dictionary must be used with great caution. The one seeks solely to explain, the other to define; the one sacrifices precision in his desire to be easily understood, the other sacrifices clearness because it may sometimes prevent his being rigidly exact. The meanings required by a child may indeed define, but they must interpret and this they cannot do if couched in unusual language. The children, except some of the most advanced, ought not, therefore, to consult a dictionary, he should, as a general rule, use his own language only in all the explanations which he gives to his children.

3. **MEANINGS OF THE WORDS AT THE TOP OF THE LESSONS.**—Error.—In some books there are small columns of words drawn out at the commencement of each lesson. Where this is the case, the teachers confine themselves almost entirely to these. Their practice is, either to tell the children the meanings of these words before reading, or else to give dictionaries into their hands that they may find them out themselves. By such a course, the pupils are forced to get the meanings of many words, of little or no importance, simply because contained in the columns, while many words, upon which the sense of several of the passages in the text may depend, are passed by unexplained.

IT IS INEFFECTUAL, UNINTELLECTUAL, AND LABORIOUS.—Such a system, moreover, is ineffectual, unintellectual, and laborious. It is ineffectual, because, as the dictionary gives many meanings, the children are left in the dark as to which of them they should select. It is unintellectual, because its tendency is to produce mere rote answering, the children in general getting the credit of understanding what they repeat with fluency. Fluent repetition and intelligence do not necessarily, however, go together. What knowledge, for instance, could a child, who never saw a package of goods, or heard of a law court, possess of the real meanings of the words *bail* and *bale*, even supposing he could repeat readily and correctly that,

Bail, was a surety for another's appearance in court, and Bale, a package of goods?

The system is also laborious, for it forces the memory to deal with disconnected and uninteresting facts.

OPINIONS.—The following opinions may be of advantage in support of these statements:

1. 'To say that it would be impossible to remember definitions thus abstractedly learned, would be to assert what must be perfectly obvious to every one; and even if they could be remembered, they would be of little utility; for, as the right application of a definition must depend entirely upon the situation of the word to be explained, and the office it performs in a sentence, the repeating of half a score of meanings as obscure, perhaps, as the word itself, conveys no definite thought, and serves rather to darken than illuminate the mind.' And again: 'Merely the learning to spell unconnected words, without any assistance from reason or analogy, is nothing compared with the difficulty of learning the explanation of them by rote, and the still greater difficulty of understanding the meaning of the explanations.'