

thought expressed. Let us now consider the inquiry,—

“WHAT IS READING?”

Hon. J. W. Dickinson, Secretary of the Board of Education of Massachusetts, says :

“Reading consists, first, in forming ideas which are occasioned by recognizing the printed or written forms of words used as the names of these ideas; second, in forming thoughts which are occasioned by recognizing the construction of these words into sentences used to express these thoughts. In addition to these two processes, ‘Oral Reading’ requires that these words and sentences shall be pronounced with the voice, so as to excite similar ideas and thoughts in the minds of others.”

I like this definition, for the reason that it recognizes the vital principle that lies at the foundation of all reading; *viz.*, that thoughts are formed directly and *immediately* by recognizing their *graphic* expression. It excludes all calling of words, phrases, or sentences dissociated from intelligence. The thought being the constant unit in the mind, and the sentence the unit of expression, can the child so take in the written or printed expression with his eye as to form the thought, without being conscious of the elements, at least so far as words are concerned.

Sight is a sense quicker in action than hearing. No one is directly conscious of words when listening to speech; why should he be while looking upon the written or printed page? That this is possible is evident, for were it otherwise *eye-reading* would only keep pace with oral utterances; while, as a fact, *good* readers are able to take in through the eye many times more matter than they are able to pronounce in words. This being the case, we have made progress in the solution of our problem. The thought

being formed directly from the page through the medium of sight, without translation into oral speech, will control the oral utterance the same as if it had its origin in the mind of the reader.

A New Use of the Eyes.—A difficulty here presents itself, not at first observable, and of which little note has hitherto been taken. Reading by the eye requires a *new* use of that organ. The child is accustomed to observe things as they actually appear. He judges with tolerable accuracy of the form, colour, and relations of objects by direct observation, and is accustomed to trust with confidence his power to discriminate between them. This power being in full and active exercise, when his attention is called directly to a letter, word, or even a sentence, he will judge of it as he judges of other tangible objects—by its visual characteristics. He learns these *objects* by their names, which, when repeated, recall these objects, and *nothing more, necessarily*. So it is no uncommon thing for a child to learn the names of all the letters of the alphabet, to arrange these letters into a great number of words, and to recognize these words at sight, and still do nothing more than exercise his external sense. No new power has been acquired. The eye has simply performed its accustomed office—that of discerning forms; but these forms are no medium of thought, are no language.

THOUGHT PRIMARY—EXPRESSION
SECONDARY.

When the eyes rest upon a sentence, as “The cat plays,” the thought occasioned by recognizing these words and their arrangements should be formed directly, without reference to the sounds they represent when pronounced. All the attention bestowed upon the forms, to make us conscious of their peculiarities or elements,