

learning to spell all the words of his vocabulary correctly is a hopelessly bad speller, yet I have seen some severe cases cured even after attaining high school age.

The habit of spelling modern English, also, must be thoroughly fixed before the child is set to reading the early forms, else he will be liable to substitute the phonetic orthography of the one for the arbitrary spelling of the other.

Another largely arbitrary part of English is the pronunciation. The sounds of the vowels in any language must be learned mechanically; but in English each vowel has so many different sounds that a greater effort of the memory and more practice is necessary to ensure correctness. If all English people pronounced their language correctly, the surest and easiest way for a child to learn English pronunciation would be by imitation. Since this is not the case he learns the more common words by imitation and the others from the dictionary by a slow process of looking up each word, and memorizing the pronunciation. Since the acquisition of new words continues throughout a man's whole life, as long as he reads at all he should read aloud. Every word added to his mental vocabulary must be added also to his oral vocabulary. Experience has taught me that every important piece of literature studied by the junior and senior classes in a high school should be read aloud in the class-room.

Composition or the written expression of thought should begin as soon as the child begins to think for himself and has learned to write. He should put down his bits of knowledge and thoughts just as he would tell them. Especially should young writers be encouraged to write as they talk; only in this way will they learn to enjoy doing it, and acquire an easy style.

The first corrections should be simply on the use of a capital at the beginning of a sentence and a period at the end. Here is the place for a little elementary grammar. They can learn that a sentence must possess a name word, or noun, and an action word, or verb. When they have learned to write a sentence and recognize one when they see it—it matters not at this point whether they can define it—then call their attention to the violation of some other simple rule, of capitals or punctuation. I have it as a general guide in all elementary teaching, and especially in composition, not to call a child's attention to a rule until he has violated it, then to yoke the violation and the rule together so that he does not forget either. If he never violates a certain rule he need never know of its existence until he reaches the reflective or scientific phase of the subject, and then he will get the rule in its proper relation to the whole science and see the reason for it. It is then he learns the theory of the subject; for practical purposes he need never be conscious of a rule unless he transgresses it.

When a child has reached the eighth or ninth grade he is perhaps ready for the theory of punctuation or the classification of the rules, and for the theory of grammar. From this point on, the child desires to learn the ornaments of composition. The first two years and a half in the high school should be devoted to preparing his mind for formal rhetoric, as the first years of composition have prepared him for formal grammar.

First to be considered is clearness of expression, then energy, and choice of words; after these, figures and metrical forms. It is best probably to devote especial attention to one of these subjects at a time, not omitting occasional reference to such of the others as the child has already studied.