

in indissoluble union, and sometimes the *training system*, because it essays to develop and strengthen all the energies and powers of that combined nature by use or exercise—to reduce this system to practice in the case of little children just entering school, we must treat them as rational, thinking beings, and yet very much under the influence of their senses. To teach the alphabet, or any other branch, under these conditions, nothing must be done but what we can assign a reason for; and the more extensively we find access to the understanding through the medium of the senses, the more successful are we likely to be. This, then, at once discards the old fashioned style of teaching the alphabet, learning the names of the letters, as a stepping-stone to reading, as altogether irrational and unmeaning—and introduces the principle of teaching the sounds of the letters, a considerable time, at least, before the names. This mode, although not perfect, and subject to some difficulties, in consequence of the disproportion between the number of letters in the alphabet, and the number of elementary sounds in the English language,—there being but 26 letters and upwards of 40 elementary sounds,—thereby imposing the necessity of giving several sounds to the same letter. Yet upon the whole, it is the most natural and useful in many respects. The word HAT, for example, easily pronounced after a knowledge of the sounds of the letters is obtained, is puzzling to the child, when spelt *aitch, ay, tee*,—the names of the letters having no natural association with the sound of the word HAT. There is, it is true, a number of anomalous words, such as *rouan, wrouan, &c.*, which are equally difficult, whether we follow the principle of names or sounds. The majority of words as they are pronounced, however, bear a closer affinity to the sounds than to the arbitrary names of the letters. Children, therefore, learn more quickly and more agreeably by their being trained according to the sounds than the names of the letters. The names may be taught in a few weeks after the commencement of their studies, and then both methods may proceed together. But not only is this the most natural course, it is vastly the most useful, as it forms the best possible preparation for what lies at the foundation of all good reading, of all genuine elocution,—we refer to the muscular exercise of the lingual organs. One of the principal reasons of the imperfections that obtain in reading is the want of the exercise of these organs in the acquisition of the art; and how is this to be remedied? In no other way, we apprehend, than by teaching the sound or force of the letter, whether it be a labial or a dental, a palatal or a guttural, and by persevering in the exercise until these respective organs are strengthened and brought into vigorous operation.

With these preliminaries, we are prepared to take up the mode of teaching the alphabet according to our system, and this we shall do in our next.

III.—OFFICIAL NOTICES.

THE Superintendent of Education begs to call the attention of the Clerks of the Boards to the following intimations:—

1. That the Commissioners shall return to the Governor, on or before the 31st day of December next, a true account of the monies received and distributed by them, and a report of their proceedings, with such other returns as may be directed by the Governor.

2. That the Grammar School Returns for the two half years ending 30th April and 31st November be returned along with the general one.

3. That the Trustees of Academies forward before the end of December, to the Superintendent of Education, a duplicate copy of the report of their proceedings during the past year.

4. Will the Clerks state fully all they know about the division of their school section into school districts, and whether anything has recently been done by the Commissioners to make the division more perfect.

5. Will the Clerks be so kind as ascertain the exact number of children within each district capable of receiving instruction, that is, between 5 and 15 years of age. This is a matter of vital importance, as it is the only data whence we derive authentic information as to the quantity of education given.

6. It will be exceedingly obliging if the Clerks will find out the exact number of school districts within their bounds that possess no school houses at all, as well as the number that have school houses, but which are not tenable in winter.

7. Will the Clerks state as correctly as they can the various Christian denominations to which the teachers within their respective bounds belong? There seems an unnecessary delicacy in the minds of some on this matter, as if it involved something inquisitorial. We see not how it should be accounted more so in Nova Scotia, than it is in New Brunswick or Upper Canada, and it is a matter of no small importance, bearing as it does so directly on the moral character of the teachers.

8. As it is desirable that the different educational institutions of the Province be fully reported, Dr. Forrester will be greatly obliged to the Secretaries of the different institutions to forward to him a full statement of the number of Professors and Students during the past year, the Income and Expenditure, &c., &c.

9. Are there any districts where the voluntary assessment principle for the support of schools is acted on, and with what effect?

A WORD TO PARENTS, AND ESPECIALLY TO MOTHERS, ON INFANT EDUCATION.

ISAAC TAYLOR, in his treatise on Home Education, divides the early life of man into the three periods of Infancy, Childhood, and Youth. The same able writer thus characterizes these periods:—

1. Infancy, embracing the period from birth up to the sixth year, is the period during which the *animal organization* of the mind is advancing more rapidly than at any other period of life. Infancy, therefore, is the season in which everything, so far as education is concerned, should be made subservient to the healthy growth and consolidation of the *Brain*. During infancy whatever might irritate or disturb the nervous system, is utterly to be condemned and avoided.

2.—Childhood, the second period of early life, embracing six years or seven, is the time during which the brain, having nearly reached its organic perfection, and ceasing therefore to be in a critical condition, the body—the muscular and osseous systems, and the digestive functions, expand, consolidate, and are or ought to be corroborated. Nature, therefore, still demands that our first cares be devoted to the welfare of the animal economy, and denies any such excitements to be addressed to the mind, as tend to disturb or retard the physical growth. Nevertheless the mind has now at its command a remainder or overplus of power, and it may therefore be wrought upon with advantage; for there is at our disposal some power of attention, and some intellectual motive; and while, during this flowering season, the plant should be kept in the sunshine of enjoyment, an initiation may be made, such as shall render the aftercourse of study less difficult by a degree of familiarity with the subjects it is to embrace.—As infancy is unconscious life, childhood is conscious life; and it is the season when the soul begins to recognize its individuality, and to inquire concerning its own well-being: it is now, therefore, that its free co-operation in the process of culture may