

frequently directing the attention of teachers to this subject, may tend to show them the great importance of this part of their work, and that it claims for more consideration and deeper study than is generally supposed.

One of the duties of inspectors—and a most important one—is to bring more prominently under the notice of teachers generally, and also of the public all real improvements in methods of teaching. Indeed one of the prospective benefits of inspection, is, that peculiar advantages of improved teaching shall not be confined to isolated and individual discoverers, who arrive at them slowly,—but shall *at once become part and parcel of the art and science of education, and patent to all educators and students in the profession.*

Before proceeding to give the directions I intend to offer, let me direct the attention of teachers to the following introductory observations.

10. The art of reading, which is easily attained by the use of books, forms an essential part of education. But reading is useful only when we understand that which we read; and as reading without the exercise of the understanding frequently settles down into an injurious and inveterate habit, it follows, that children should never be taught to read before they can understand that which they do read; nor should they, when taught, ever be allowed to read a sentence, without at least an endeavour on their part to comprehend its meaning.

20. As the understanding and the memory are the principal mental agents in learning, their cultivation should always be a preliminary object of education. For this reason, every thing that is taught to a child should, in the first place, be reduced to the questioning and analyzing form; by which the understanding and the memory are disciplined in conjunction, and enabled to assist each other.

30. Whatever is taught, should, at the same time, be taught well. Uncertainty or doubt as to one letter, one word, or one truth, is most easily removed when it alone occupies the attention; but to proceed while the uncertainty remains, tends only to increase and to perpetuate it. This is, perhaps, the most perilous rock in the sea of education; and in the present day it has covered its waters with fragments, and its shores with wrecks.

Thoroughness in every thing taught has clothed our most improved systems of teaching with a power which as yet is only beginning to show what it able hands it can accomplish. By its means individuals who only knew their letters, have frequently been taught to read in less than an hour.

40. To read with ease can only be acquired by practice; and as this will certainly be attained by the pupil in delivering and preparing his exercises, it should not be pursued merely for its own sake. Every sentence that is read should convey some useful information; and the section should never be left till its meaning be understood, and till the use of the information which it contains be preserved, and can be applied by the pupil in his own case when practical. Hence the ease and pleasure taken by scholars thus trained, and their rapid progress in intelligence and useful knowledge.

1. On teaching the alphabet.

The first object of teachers in commencing an alphabet class, should be to draw out and to discipline the powers of their children's minds as a preparation for teaching them the alphabet and the art of reading. In doing this the most suitable subjects should be used, and on these their powers of observation, expression and reasoning, should be well exercised. These exercises may be variously conducted. The following hints will suggest other ways:

Let the teacher bring the children around him, and engage them in a familiar conversation with himself. To his questions they may give answers simultaneously, or individually, as he may find most suitable. Let him first direct their attention to those objects which are most familiar to them, speak of their position, form, size, colour, uses, &c., then require of them, in return, precise and correct descriptions, and repeating these till both the memory and the understanding have got hold on them. Begin with things in the schoolroom; then with objects in the fields, in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, &c. The external heavens will furnish with many interesting subjects for excuse. The sky—its appearance and colour at different times; the clouds—their varying forms, character and movements; the sun—its rising and setting, its concealment by clouds, its great heat, how it gives life and fertility, danger of being exposed to it too long, &c.; the moon—its appearance by night, full, gibbous, horned, its bright and dark parts, and its occasional absence from the heavens; the stars—their difference in size, colour, brightness, their number, distances from each other, &c.

A very interesting, profitable lesson to them would be the family and family duties. love to parents, to brothers and sisters, &c.

But I would warn the teacher against passing from this exercise before the intended effects are produced—before the children are able readily and correctly to answer questions and put their ideas together with tolerable correctness. Those who may be found imperfect in this exercise, should be taught singly on as simple ideas as possible till their minds collect strength sufficient to comprehend with their companions, the things on which they may have been exercised.

Having gone through this preparatory training, they may then, at intervals, be taught the alphabet, exhibited on a sheet, classified as follows, each class of letters to make a lesson, not to be passed till mastered.

- 1. class. i, j, l, f, t, r.
- 2. " b, k, n, u, m.
- 3. " o, c, e.
- 4. " v, x, z, w, y.
- 5. " s, a, g.
- 6. " d, p, q.

Double letters: th, sh, ch, ph.—Terminations: ing, tion, ble, ple.

One of the most important exercises at this stage is training the organs of sound till they have perfect command of their own vocal powers. The character representing these sounds should then be shown and described to them, till the form and power of each are distinctly impressed upon their memories. This may be done as follows:

With the classified alphabet before him, let him direct their attention to the first class of letters, under the title of "single upright letters," and without naming any of them, ask what kind of letters these are,—taking care that they understand the meaning of upright. How many strokes has each? How do the lines of these letters stand? Are they all of the same length? What letters are dotted? Continue such questioning till they can describe them readily.

When the characters of the first class of letters are known, the teacher takes up those of the second class, as the "double upright letters," and questions them similarly on them,—still without telling the names of any of them. He does this to every line in its order, taking care to go back to the former lines frequently, and to exercise the pupils upon the "practice boards," by asking to what class the letters which he forms on the board belong, and making themselves make them too. This exercise will impress them more and more upon their minds.

Another excellent method for exercising the descriptive faculty, and familiarizing the children with the different forms of letters, is to take two or more letters having certain parts in common, as c, e, o, for a lesson.

c, e, o.—These may be compared with each other, and c e may be separately compared with o, and then with each other. The teacher points out as little as possible the differences to the children, but asks them to point out these to him. The children will often reply by saying, that is o, that is c. But is c exactly like o, or is it different?—Different, may be the reply. Then, where is c different from o? Show me with the finger, or pointer, &c.—Still the difference may not be brought out. But, the catechising must be continued till they are able to trace the difference correctly. And this will the better prepare them for the next step in advance.

Similar comparisons may be made of all the letters in the alphabet. Take as another example v, w, y.

v, w, y.—"How many straight lines has v? Where do they meet? Which is the thinner stroke? Where is the space between them widest, and where does it end? &c. Compare w with v. Wherein do they correspond? Is the w not just two v's joined; if so, how are they joined? Compare the v with the y, and show how they agree, and in what they differ, &c."

Continue the questioning till the whole differences are completely and clearly brought out. Thoroughness at each step of advance must never be lost sight of.

b, d, p, q.—The most difficult distinction to retain are those between b and d, p and q; and I have often found children confounding these letters, even after they have made considerable progress in reading. The most effectual method, perhaps, for removing this difficulty is to draw on the black-board line perpendicular line or bar which these letters have in common, and then with the pointer, or finger, trace the various positions of the round or looped part at either side, at the top and bottom alternately. The same thing is done sometimes with a solid model, of which the round part is moveable.