

words. Those who adopt the elementary theory also forget that children are analytical in their disposition. Watch that little girl with the new doll just presented to her. After amusing herself with it for a short time, dolly requires to be undressed, and the clothes come off bit by bit, and if possible she would even dissect the doll itself. Watch that little boy with a new toy, and what does he do with it? After it has lost its interest, the inquisitive young urchin following the inclination of his nature breaks it up to see how it is constructed. Now, it is a much easier process in the case of the little girl to take off dolly's clothes, than to put them on again, and in the case of the little boy it is a much easier process for him to break his toy to pieces than with these pieces to reconstruct it. From these and similar observations we learn the important lesson that analytical teaching is best adapted to the capacities of children. Unquestionably it is easier to take a "whole" and separate it into its parts, than to take these parts and construct a whole, and hence children taught on the analytical method make much more rapid progress and with less difficulty, than those taught on the synthetical method. But if we begin reading by teaching to construct words from certain characters, we are pursuing a system quite contrary to one of the soundest principles in the art of teaching. If we would be guided by this principle we would present the whole word to the child and assist him in finding out its different parts, rather than give him the parts and require him to form words from them. Our elementary theorists also forget that teaching a child the names of the letters of the alphabet does not assist him in pronouncing words, although this is the object in learning the letters, but if we take the simplest word in our language, and pronounce it according to the names of the letters of which it is composed, we will produce a word of an entirely different

sound from that intended. And if learning the names of the letters does not assist the child in pronounciation, wherein consists the utility of imposing upon the child a useless drudgery of some weeks and even months? Again, our elementary theorists forget that nature who is always a safe guide to follow, always presents wholes for our contemplation and not parts. The botanist plucks a whole flower from its stem and by carefully separating its different parts, he is enabled to classify it, &c. The medical student has a whole body given to him and by skilfully dissecting it, he is enabled to acquire a correct knowledge of the anatomy of the human frame. If these two illustrations have any bearing upon the subject we are discussing, they indicate that the natural order would be, first the whole word, then the form of its letters, their sounds and names.

Another argument might be raised, in favor of teaching the child words instead of letters, from the fact that nature always presents ideas before signs. I fear, however, that we too often disregard nature's teaching, and labor arduously to get the children acquainted with the signs and neglect the ideas as altogether unimportant. The mind through the perceptive faculties has certain impressions of any object conveyed to it, and we then seek to give expression to these impressions by word signs. This order, first the thing signified, and then the sign, is exactly the order we should follow in teaching. For example, I wish to teach my pupil to read the word "cat." Now, there is not a little absurdity in doing it in this way: first, teach him to name the initial letter "see," the next "ay," and the last "tee," and then put them together and call them cat. Such a process appears ridiculous when we consider that the names of the letters do not assist the child in pronouncing the word. Were we to construct a word from the name sounds it would be an entirely different word from