

acquired only by imitation, as in singing.

Natural Expression.—All have observed that when children are free from external restraints, they express their thoughts with perfect clearness and propriety. They require no drill to make them throw the emphasis upon the right words or to give the right inflection to their voices. Indeed, for years we have been told to go to the playground for our models of delivery; but so far our instructors have failed to bring these models into the school-room.

It is too early to assert that the method here presented for your consideration has overcome all difficulties; but after a trial of several years in the schools of Binghamton, we can state that desirable results have been accomplished, and that bad habits have been avoided with an ease and certainty hitherto unknown in our experience.

THE SENTENCE METHOD.

We call this the Sentence method because we make the basis of our work the complete thought as expressed in the form of a complete sentence. We do this believing that the unit of thinking in the mind of a child is a thought, and that all his impulses are toward giving his thought complete expression in sentences.

We are led to this conclusion by observing the process by which children learn to talk. Parents are often anxious upon this point, and quite early attempt to teach their children the use of a language adapted to their infantile state. They practise "baby talk," repeat half-formed sentences for their children to imitate. Fortunately for the child and for our language, these efforts have little effect except to afford a temporary amusement. The child does not learn to *talk* by any such process.

It is to be observed that a child

understands what is said to him long before he attempts to express his own thoughts in any connected form. It is sometimes years before he begins to use the language of those around him. A child of four years, of my acquaintance, had never talked in complete sentences. Returning, after the absence of a week, he was talking so much that his parents were obliged to check him in the use of his new-found powers; and he was as fluent and correct in the use of language as any member of the family. It is related that Charles Wesley, the brother of the distinguished divine, did not talk until he was nearly or quite six years old. His parents were greatly afflicted at his backwardness, although he was bright enough in other respects. One day his mother called for him, when the boy himself answered, "Here I am, mother, in the parlour, under the table." This sudden gift of speech, in this instance, was regarded as a special interposition of Divine Providence. But every child exhibits the same phenomenon to a greater or less degree. Where he attains a considerable age, say three and a half or four years, before talking, the transition from his *patois* to correct speech will be quite abrupt, and he will use the forms of speech he is accustomed to hear. He glides into the use of complete language so naturally that he is unconscious of the change. He spontaneously thinks in thoughts and speaks in sentences. If it were otherwise—if it were conscious of separate ideas and of separate words to express them, it would require years of experience and effort before he could have any connected thought, or intelligent use of language. The very consciousness of the elements of the language would be fatal to both thought and expression. Language, as the instrument of thought, must be habitual—must be used without consciousness, while the attention is fixed upon the