

themselves a new notation. The cure is not to be found in that direction. The language is poor in letters; but it is rich in words. The wealth of the vocabulary may make up for the poverty of the alphabet. There is no more common experience in the writing of English than the quickness which the mind soon acquires in rejecting this phrase and preferring that—in substituting one word for another, in selecting, among a number of candidates, the aptest word for the purpose. There is probably no European language with so many different words for the same notion; and it is quite possible to write one's ideas in two perfectly different kinds of English—Latinised English or pure English. This then raises the hope;—is it possible that, by conscious selection, we should come to write English which should present no difficulties to the learner, and which should be printed in a self-consistent notation?

(To be continued).

LANGUAGE LESSONS.

INTRODUCTION.

To teach pupils to think and to express their thoughts in good language is admitted by all to be an essential school duty. But how they shall be taught to think, has been often overlooked; still oftener, how shall they be taught to express their thoughts.

As a rule, pupils do not think severely while pursuing their studies, because they can so much more easily commit to memory enough of their daily lessons for the purposes of the recitation; and the lesson well recited is too often considered sufficient. Again: they fail to think because from their first entrance into the school they have not been taught to enlarge their vocabulary, or how to classify, and express in their own language, the ideas that are crowded upon them from day to day. Hence the necessity not only of requiring pupils to think, but also of securing good expression of the thought.

The child from six to eight talks freely and fearlessly, so far as being retarded by any doubt of the correctness of his language is concerned, but, as a rule, from this period thought and expression are hampered by lack of fitting words, or aptness in arranging those at his command. This is a result of learning to read by a method which presents a multitude of ideas that do not accord with his habits of thought, or rather, do not take a natural place in his thoughts. A legitimate result of teaching by the old alphabetic method, with no effort made to connect the new ideas with those of his daily life, is that monotonous, high pitched drawl which, having become habitual, is so difficult to correct. Such results are easily avoided by the use of the word and phonic methods, accompanied by familiar conversations upon the ideas found in the lessons from the first day of school. There is perhaps no period of life when so many new ideas are poured in upon the mind as during the first few months at school. For this reason special efforts should be put forth to have the pupils' ability to use and express those ideas keep pace with their acquisition.

To aid in this, language lessons are devised by which the pupil is expected to gain information, to gain a larger vocabulary, and especially to study out the best methods of expressing ideas.

To the teacher of this work we would say, that, to secure the best results, the work should be frequent, easy, and attractive, but thoughtful. The gaining of ideas, learning of words, and facility in expression, must keep pace with each other. No rules or directions can be given that will apply to all cases. Perhaps in no other study is it so essential that the teacher should have an active sympathy with the pupil, and the pupil a thorough confidence in the teacher.

By too great exactness, too much formality, and in numerous ways, the interest in the work may be destroyed. By just what

means the pupils are to be drawn out into regular and enthusiastic action is in each instance a new problem. But the skillful teacher will solve it. In applying the work which is to follow in a few brief articles, the teacher will find that a degree of perseverance and enthusiasm, together with discretion, will often lead to excellent results when least expected. The teacher should let the pupils join her in a pleasant criticism of the errors made by them either in talking or writing; but dealing with errors made by those outside the school-room, as well as with those collected in grammars, should be avoided. It is better to spend the time in reading and discussing the thoughts of good authors and their manner of expression.

Pupils can learn more by studying a good model than by trying to imitate a bad one. Take a little time each day for the presentation or discussion of topics. In ungraded schools, divide the pupils into a few divisions, and present the work to each separately.

Neither the simplest exercises nor the more advanced essays can be written until there is material for the writing; hence be sure that the pupils are well informed, and then be sure that the work is well done.

It is not expected that the following exercises will be taken up in any school in the exact order given here. The teacher must judge as to the proper work to give a class, the number of times it be given, and much other minutiae that can only be determined upon when the conditions are fully known. The teacher alone can do this. The amount of explanation, of giving information, of personal assistance, and of criticism will vary much for the different grades, and will require great care and discretion, especially on the part of the country school-teacher who has all grades. But remember the old maxim, "Never tell a child that which he can find out himself;" only be sure that he has the means and opportunity for finding out, and that he does it.

FIRST YEAR.

By skillful questioning and pleasant conversation about things of interest to the pupils, the teacher may beget such a feeling of ease and confidence on their part that they will talk freely.

So essential is this confidence that, if necessary, the teacher must for a while sacrifice other objects to secure and retain it. Criticism must be guarded; even serious faults in articulation and choice of language may often be overlooked. Liberal praise for good work and correct expressions will excite the ambition and strengthen the confidence of the pupil, while severe censure may do much harm. A quiet repetition of an inaccurate sentence, in correct form, is often more effective than more direct criticism.

If the pupils are animated and eager to ask and answer questions, a good beginning has been made. The following exercises are suggestive merely. Supply others of a similar character, taking care that they are not beyond the easy comprehension of the pupils.

1. Begin the language work with the first reading lesson. Ask questions about the picture which illustrates it—a cat for example. Get the pupils to talk about their cat at home. Show them the printed word *cat*, and ask them to find the word in other places on the page; then follow with some general talk about cats, or other things that are of interest to them.

2. In subsequent lessons continue the talks about the pictures, etc., leading them easily to the succeeding words; and take up other things, such as asking them to give the names of several things in the room. Ask them the uses of such things, or any other questions likely to excite interest and discussion.

3. Ask for the names of things which they can see out of doors. Get them to talk about the form, color, use, and other plain qualities of each.

4. Ask for the names of some things at home. Find out something about each.