

Gleanings.

HOW TO REFORM THE SCHOOLS.

There is a cry abroad in the land for a reform in the public schools. True, much of the howling about abuses is senseless and idiotic, but even this is better than the deafness of apathy. The following suggestions are offered for the benefit of "reformers" who are burning to distinguish themselves by a raid on the schools.

1. Don't go to the Legislature with a bill.

There are some things that even Legislatures cannot do: They cannot make people temperate, virtuous, or industrious. They cannot legislate about what people shall eat, drink, or wear; about what they shall say, or how they shall think. For these pseudo-reformers whose panacea is "law," a study of Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill is recommended as a specific remedy.

2. Begin by reforming the school in your own district.

The loudest grumblers about the failure of our public schools are those who never visit one, and who know nothing about them except from hearsay. See that your trustees employ a good teacher. Visit the schools and suggest to the teacher some of your "reforms." Look after the school library. Talk to the children. Get your neighbors to visit the school. Are you a stranger? Suggest to the teacher a course of oral instruction on things relating to farming, horticulture, and botany. Start a school cabinet of minerals, woods, grains, pressed flowers, etc. Help the teacher to ornament the school-room with pictures. Question your own children about what they are doing in school.

Many country schools are almost worthless on account of the utter indifference of the "reformers." *No school can be made to rise very high above the average culture of the community which environs it.*

There is a country district in this State where a "Normal graduate" taught once on a time. A "trustee" visited him one day as he was giving an exercise in *vowel sounds*. The trustee didn't like the method. It was a new-fangled notion. It wasn't the way he had been "brought up." So he waxed wroth, took off his coat and dared the pedagogue to come outside and fight it out. He was a "reformer" willing to fight for the faith that was in him.

3. See that your neighbors elect the best men in the district for trustees.

If you take no interest in the annual school election, the Legislature cannot prevent the election of incompetent officers. If you are wild with "reform," run for the office yourself.

4. Try to keep a good teacher when you get one.

5. Offer a fair salary and the chances are that you will get and keep a competent teacher.

If you have to employ a teacher without experience, engage one that has had a full course of Normal School training. *Verb. sat-sap.* ("A word to the wise," etc.)

6. Don't expect to reform schools by abolishing text-books.

They are necessary evils. Good text-books rank next in value to good teachers. The Chinese have had a uniform series of text-books unchanged for 3,000 years.

Are their schools better than ours? If you believe that the school books in use are worthless, go to work and make something better.

If you are an old sandstone fossil, and have never examined a school book during the last thirty years, you undoubtedly believe that there is nothing better than Webster's Speller; that in Murray's Grammar, the art of writing culminated; that Pike's Arithmetic is the best the world ever saw; and that Morse's Geography, A. D. 1807, is better than modern trash. The Chinaman does better: he believes in books republished B. C. 1500.

7. Don't imagine that you, or the teacher, or the legislature, or reformers, can overdo the laws of hereditary descent, and make all children good scholars, or industrious, temperate, frugal law-abiding citizens.

You believe, perhaps, that it is the duty of the State to teach every boy a trade, and then find him employment. This comes to you from a past age, when men believed that kings were gods; or you believe in curtailing the studies in school to reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography.

You will find the hard common sense of the American people is stronger than your conservatism.

Neither you, nor President Eliot of Harvard, with his imitators, nor the enemies of free schools, nor the friends of religious schools, can stem the mighty current that has set in for *free higher education, and for technical and industrial education.*

The instincts of the masses are sound.—*John Swett, in Pennsylvania School Journal.*

WHY NOT SPEAK PROPERLY?

The careless, slipshod manner in which people who deem themselves educated use common English words in their every-day speech is scarcely short of amazing. If appearances deceive in any particular, it is certainly in this; for if we were to infer the degree of culture possessed by the men and women we meet daily from the character of their verbal expression, we should set it, in most cases, at a point much below their claims. Every word in the English language has its peculiar significance and application, just as would be rationally thought, and the cross uses and false applications so common in ordinary parlance are totally unwarranted.

Society has fallen into a vicious habit in the use of terms, and it is time that a strong effort was made to eradicate it if we would preserve the English tongue in its purity and simplicity. The little volume, "The Right Word in the Right Place;" and Mr. R. G. White's larger book on "Words and their Uses," are excellent monitors for popular reading, and show clearly the errors we are constantly committing without a thought of their glaring absurdities.

"*Aggravate.* This word should never be employed in reference to persons, as it means merely to add weight to—make evil more oppressive, injury is aggravated by insult. It is sometimes improperly used in the sense of irritate, as 'I was much aggravated by his conduct.'

"*Balance,* in the sense of rest, remainder, residue, remnant, is an abomination. Balance is the difference between two sides of an account—the amount which is necessary to make one equal to the other. . . . Yet we continually hear of the balance of this or that thing; even the balances of a congregation—of an army.

"*Bountiful* is applicable only to persons. A giver may be bountiful, but his gift can not—it should be plentiful, or large. 'A bountiful slice' is absurd.

"*Fetch* expresses a double motion; first from and then toward the speaker. It is exactly equivalent to 'go and bring,' and ought not to be used in the sense of 'bring' alone.

"*Calculate,* besides its sectional misuse for think, or suppose, or suspect, is sometimes in the principal form—calculated—put for likely, or apt: 'That nomination is calculated to injure the party.' It is calculated (designed) to do no such thing, though it may be likely to.

"*Couple* applies to two things which are bound together or united in some way. 'A couple of apples' is incorrect; two apples is meant.

"*Dirt* means filth, and is not synonymous with earth or soil. Yet people sometimes speak of a dirt road, or of packing dirt around the roots of trees they are setting. They mean *earth*.

"*Expect* looks always to the future. You cannot expect that anything has happened or is happening, but only that it will happen.

"*Get* means to obtain, not to possess. 'He has got all the numbers of the *Christian Instructor*.' 'Have you got good molasses?' 'They have got bad manners.' Why will people persist in introducing the word in such sentences as these, where it is so evidently superfluous?

"*Help meet.* An abusive use of these two words, as if they, together, were the name of one thing—a wife—is too common. The sentence in Genesis is: 'I will make him a help meet for him; that is, a help fit for him. There is no such word as helpmeet.

"*Lie—Lay.* Persons not grossly ignorant sometimes say they will lay (meaning lie) down, that they have laid (lain) an hour, or that the hammer is laying (lying) by the tacks. Lie means to recline; its past tense lay—'I lay there all night;' its participles, lying and lain. Lay (used of present time) means to put something down—one lays a carpet; its past is laid—'I was interrupted while laying it, and it was not laid until night.'

"*Love* rules the heart, not the stomach. You love your wife, or ought to; but favorite articles of food you *like*.

"*Observe* should not be used for say, as in the oft-heard sentence: 'What did you observe?'

"*Sit,* often mispronounced set, is occasionally written so; but it is to be hoped rarely."