

the tediousness of frequent repetition of one and the same syllables or words is avoided. The method rests on the assumption that children are intelligent, not mere machines.

In regard to writing the lessons, I do not consider it essential that the pupils write the whole of them. The smaller or greater quantity of writing may be left to the judgment of the teacher, who must act according to local circumstances.

Nor is it, in my opinion, essential to the method, that the introduction of the letter press characters be postponed till the thirty lessons in script characters are completely mastered by the children; though I would express my conviction that there is no greater impediment to the progress of learning for young children, than confusion of ideas caused by a multiplicity of subjects.

What we call want of attention on the part of children is often simply their incapacity to take in the various ideas that are crowded before their minds. The maxim "Slow and sure," applies to the first steps in learning more than to the last.

Although on these points there may be a difference of opinion, yet of the utility of one of the two main principles of this method—the most intimate union between Writing and Reading—there cannot be a doubt on the mind of any one who has seen what immense advantages accrue to Reading from the facility with which, by the use of strokes, dots, ties, and brackets most difficulties in teaching Reading are removed, apart from the other great gain, that the young child has at first, so to say, only one tool to handle.

But as in every happy marriage both partners profit equally through their union, so the *Youth Writing*, which in the first instant led *Lady Reading* to the altar, is ultimately not less blessed than his lady love; for it may be a matter of doubt whether writing is not as much promoted as Reading by this method, particularly English Writing in regard to spelling, in as much as the pictures of the words, with all the contrivances employed, impress themselves deeply on the memory of the children, and enable them to reproduce the words correctly.

The complete mastery by a child of this *Write and Read* course would lead it to the next step, the *Read and Write* course, in which, as the name indicates, Reading letter-press characters comes first, and copying would follow. But into that time forbids me to enter; nor is it necessary, for with a proper text-book it offers no difficulties.

I stated at the beginning, that I proposed this method as a substitute for what I consider the inadequate methods prevalent in England. But are not these methods really everything that could be wished for? Do the young children of this country not learn Reading very easily? In answer to these questions, I beg first to state that, even if the results were satisfactory, it would still be a question whether they might not be obtained in a more rational and cultivating manner. But, according to the best authorities in this country, these results are bad. Speaking of the results of our teaching in elementary schools, the *Times*, Nov. 22, 1873, says:—"The Reading, in particular, at many schools, is not at all what it should be, and what it might be made with care. We need better text-books, and a more intelligent use of them on the part of both masters and pupils." And Mr. Robson, one of the Vice Presidents of the Council of the College of Preceptors, writes to the *Times* a few days later:—"I cannot, however, refrain from saying, that the argument affords a sufficient explanation of the fact acknowledged by Dr. Abbott and Mr. Morley—that the results of our existing system of primary education show it to be a miserable failure."

How could it be otherwise? Let us glance only a few moments at what is being done.

A child, on entering school, is first taught the alphabet—not a difficult task to be sure. But no sooner has the young pupil to make out, from the names of the letters, syllables and words, than there begin that misery and darkening of the mind so much in accordance with the notice of the Principal of Flushing Institute, who wrote shortly thus: "Dear boys, Trouble begins September 15." How can it strike the intellect of any rational being that de-o sounds do; orbe—double o—kay book; or double u—e—ar—e were? What misconception of means to an end! What an unnecessary waste of words! Nay, what a lavish of rubbish strewn upon the path of a little child, that should be guided gently and lovingly on its new road! What is the explanation that so intelligent a race as the English have suffered so long such an absurd system almost unchallenged? for in a book on "Primary Instruction," by Mr. Simon S. Laurie, I find it stated that the Alphabetic or Spelling Method is thus almost universally practised. Is it not possible to find the explanation in the spirit that prompted the declaration of a well-known English divine, who, according to Professor Max Müller, thought that the fearful orthography of English formed the best psychological foundation of English orthodoxy, because a child that had once been brought to believe that t-h-r-o-u-g-h sounded like "through," t-h-o-u-g-h sounded like "though," r-o-u-g-h sounded like "rough," would afterwards believe anything.

Surely, if many other divines are of the same opinion, need we wonder if England, in regard to education, is behind several continental nations, who in other matters willingly go to school to England. But let it be remarked, the mischief above referred to does not arise so much from the *spelling* of words, that is to say, from the signs employed to represent their sounds, but chiefly from the absurdity of saying the name of each letter; the truth of which statement is clear from the facility with which the above words can be read by the method I have suggested, although their spelling is not changed at all.

Not much better than this Spelling method is the so called "Look and Say" method, in which Spelling is, indeed, dispensed with. But in this method too much power of abstraction is demanded from a young child, to find out by himself the sounds of each letter from the syllables and words printed, with all the irregularity of English spelling; and the whole method, however cleverly worked out by some authors of elementary books, embodying this system, resolves itself into a mechanical and tedious repetition, without causing any pleasure to the child, or improving his intellect.

Most extraordinary proposals have been made to avoid these staring evils, and to obtain better results.

One of these proposals before the public is, to introduce a purely phonetic method of spelling, which is much as to allow everybody to write each word as he likes. The consequence of the general adoption of this plan would entail the extinction of English culture at the earliest possible time; for an unsettled condition of the language would undermine every solid foundation of knowledge, culture, and laws. Another proposal is the introduction of an enlarged alphabet of 40 letters, so as to have a distinct sign for every sound in the English language. The consequence of the general adoption of this method, which would virtually require every child to learn 4 times 49, or 160 signs, to be able to read and write, would restrict the means of acquiring knowledge to a few intelligent children, while the mass of them would be debarred from acquiring the most efficient key to knowledge.

But there is no fear that England's high position will ever wreck on such small rocks ahead. A greater danger might arise from the acceptance of a proposal emanating