

difficulty. In these cases the persons abandon the effort to see the thing as a whole, and resort to the objects to help them out. They have only to do one thing at a time precisely as they are directed; and they fail in this. It is evident that they do not take in the details distinctly. The language is definite, but their ideas are vague and confused. They are capable of uttering to themselves words which say do one thing and in response of doing quite another thing. They are somewhat in the condition of Sir Hudibras:

"His notions fitted things so well
That which was which he could not tell."

Thus we arrive at the fundamental difficulty, and find it to be essentially what Rousseau points out in his tirade against books: "*The abuse of reading is destruction of knowledge.*" Imagining ourselves to know everything we read, we conceive it unnecessary to learn it by other means. Too much reading, however, serves only to make us presumptuous block-heads." This will at once suggest that the loose habits of which we are complaining are the results of general reading and reading for amusement, in which the reader is content to take what he gets easily and without effort, and to let other words float through his mind without caring whether they suggest definite ideas or not. Enough is seized to keep up interest, and the matter is not worth laborious attention to details. In this way one learns to read rapidly, and in a way increases his knowledge and his vocabulary. Now, the school exercises in the higher grades ought to supplement this loose and haphazard learning, by furnishing the kind of training which this cannot give. One of their chief ends should be to form critical habits, to make every word significant, to call into full play the imagination and the

understanding. We are not now thinking of that distinctively literary training upon which Mr. Matthew Arnold sets so great store; that appreciation of the artistic element in literature, which purifies the taste and refines the nature. This, too, is important to develop in the advanced reading class. But the more elementary work is the more indispensable, and this consists in teaching pupils to get out of books what is in them. When they have learned that, books will be to them, as they ought to be, interpreters of things. They will at least have the power—and they ought to have the habit also—of interpreting exactly what they read, not missing any part of it and not misinterpreting any part. Almost any school-room will furnish to an observant teacher evidence how difficult a task and how rare an attainment this is. Much of the trouble which pupils experience in stating problems in algebra or arithmetic arises out of their inability to read, and a good book of problems is therefore an excellent instrument for developing this power. The shortcomings and errors of recitations are often attributed to the defect of memory or weakness of understanding, when, in fact, they are due to the pupil's inability to read: and it would be a great service if teachers would point this out, and thus not merely correct the special error, but the mental habit which caused them. Put pupils to drawing definite forms from written or printed descriptions, and observe what effort it costs them to translate the sentences which they read into visible forms. Or let them read such a description as carefully as they wish, and then from memory direct others how to draw the figures. Clearly, then, we need more training in reading critically, reading whose aim shall be to get exactly what is said, and to get every detail of it