

every other part and conserve the general symmetry of the whole. I fear that much of the teaching in our schools lacks this definiteness of aim and singleness of purpose. Even where there exists a true conception of the nature of education, there is little co-ordination of means or right direction of individual steps towards the object sought.

OBJECTS TO BE KEPT IN VIEW IN TEACHING TO READ.

Turning now to the subject in hand, it is not unimportant to inquire what should be the leading objects in teaching children to read. It will be readily admitted that the mere ability to read is not to be our ultimate object. In fact, this is in itself of no value whatever. It is not knowledge, but simply a means for the acquisition of knowledge. Many persons possess this means, but derive little benefit therefrom, for the simple reason that they seldom read, or they read what is of little value, or they read in a loose, careless way, without attention or thought. Regarding school education as a foundation on which life's work is to be built, and not as a thing rounded off and finished, reading presents itself as one of the corner stones on which the superstructure rests. Looking at the subject in this light, and independently of these early steps by which the child is taught to name the written word at sight, two distinct objects claim consideration:

1. The child should be so taught that his ability to read shall become to him an effective means for the acquisition of knowledge.
2. The child should be so trained to read aloud that he can convey to others in a distinct, impressive, and pleasing manner the ideas of the printed page.

We should, as a primary aim, qualify the learner to read with the fullest profit to himself, both in silent reading and reading aloud, that he may be able to associate the written word with the thought represented, as well as with the sound of the spoken word.

It is important to lay the foundation of good habits at an early stage. To secure this object we must awaken in the pupil an interest in books, and lead him to come to them as a source from which he can both gratify and develop his desire for knowledge. It should be an object so to direct him and cultivate his taste that he shall discriminate wisely in the selection of reading matter, and that he shall enquire into the meaning, inwardly digest, remember and reflect on what he reads. These fruits of priceless value are not of spontaneous growth, but are the products of the most careful and well-directed culture. Nor should this culture be deferred wholly to the more advanced stages. If in the early reading lessons we give the child unmeaning syllables, as in the old-time a-b ab, b-l-a, bla, or even significant words which represent no idea to the mind of the child, he will acquire a habit of listless reading—naming words without receiving or seeking ideas; or, it may be, a complete disgust for an exercise so devoid of interest. Possibly some of us have experimental knowledge of the stupid fashion in which reading was formerly taught. Do not some of us who were nurtured under the old education remember how the impatient teacher with his goose-quill pointed to the letter, and with his sharp "What's that?" followed perchance with something still more incisive, sought to open an avenue for the admission of the unmeaning a b c. Meanwhile the poor, tortured victim twisted and writhed, and was sent blubbling to his seat as a hopeless blockhead. It is said that Garrick could move an audience to tears by repeating the alphabet in school-boy fashion, thus reviving the painful memory of early school-days.

THE CHILD'S FIRST READING LESSONS

should not only be significant, but they should mean something to him. The first lessons should not aim to convey new knowledge, or to enlarge the child's vocabulary, but rather to show him how

the objects with which he is familiar may be represented by written characters, to lead him to recognize in the written word the representation of the sound of the spoken word, and also a new symbol of the idea. They should bring before the child the objects and incidents of his own little world. The teacher's ingenuity will be laid under tribute to devise interesting lessons, as well as ways of presenting these lessons, so that they shall become pictures of real life to the young learner. As the learner acquires the ability to read, he should be encouraged in the practice of reading by providing for him supplementary reading matter suited to his ability. The teacher's desk should be furnished with children's magazines and books, so that when the pupil has finished his work assigned, he may be allowed to peruse these as a reward of diligence.

The ability to read so as to profit and please others involves the culture of all those qualities of voice, manner, and expression, which distinguish the elocutionist from the drawler and the stammerer. Success in this direction demands constant effort and vigilance. Throughout every recitation, and in all the speech of the children, we must carefully cultivate those qualities of voice and expression which make reading effective.

In our written language words are made up of separate characters, representing (or as some one has aptly said, *misrepresenting*) elementary sounds. Hence there have arisen various ways of teaching children to pronounce words. There are, at least, five different methods of teaching beginners to read. These are known as the A-B-C or alphabetic method, the phonetic method, the phonic method, the word method, and the sentence method.

The ALPHABETIC METHOD teaches the names of the letters at the outset. Formerly the learner, after getting the names of the letters, was given syllables—first of two letters, as *ab*, then of three letters, as *bla*. When he had named the letters, he pronounced the word as told by the teacher. These syllables were so arranged as to secure frequent repetition of each letter with some one sound, so that the learner was led, in an unconscious way, to discover the power of the letter and associate it with the name and form of the letter. This drill on unmeaning syllables is probably a thing of the past. Significant words are taken instead, and after naming the letters, the child is told what to call the word. As there is generally not the slightest connection between the name of a letter and its sound or power in combination, the child readily obtains the word from the pronunciation of the teacher, and he would learn it just as readily, to say the least, if he were told it without reference to the letters.

The PHONETIC METHOD analyzes the sounds of the language, and forms a new alphabet, with a character or letter for each elementary sound. The spelling of the word then suggests its pronunciation, and the pronunciation is a key to the orthography.

The PHONIC METHOD also begins with the elementary sounds, but it uses the ordinary alphabet. As many of the letters of our alphabet represent various sounds, to avoid confusion the beginner is kept exclusively to some one of these sounds,—the words being selected with this object in view, and when he is familiar with these sounds others are given. Thus, in the first stage, he takes the short sounds of the vowels, and the hard sound of *c* and *g*. New difficulties follow gradually, one at a time, such as the long vowels, the diphthongs, and combinations of consonants, as *ch*, *sh*, and *th*.

There are two distinct ways of teaching the sounds. As these are of very unequal merit, the distinction should be carefully noted. One way is similar to the old method of teaching the names of the letters. The teacher points to a letter and gives the sound; the child repeats the sound and associates it with the letter, regarding the sound as the name of the letter. When the sounds have been learned in this way, words are presented for the child to make out.