

and sometimes while giving good local description might as well be cut out of some book of travels for all the Canadian reader would learn that the writer is a fellow Canadian and possibly a mutual acquaintance. A correspondent whose letter appears in this paper makes a like complaint to that of Mr. Robertson with regard to the teaching in our common schools. He thinks that the majority of the boys and girls who have passed through these schools can express themselves in elegant, grammatical English, but laments that there are many who cannot. We think he would have been justified in a severer statement. His definition that "true education consists in having a thorough knowledge of one's own native language, without which all other accomplishments are absolutely worthless," although it appears at first sight both crude and extravagant, comes perhaps much nearer the facts than is generally realized. The education of the mind has for its object to teach us to think and to communicate our thoughts. Thoughts uncommunicated are largely lost, and therefore if language were but a vehicle of communication the power of rightly using it is of immeasurable importance. But language is not only the vehicle by which thought is communicated, but it is the machine by which people think. Many suppose that it is quite possible to think all right without being able to communicate the thought in language. This would seem to be the case with people who have another means of expression. A man may be a very successful machinist, and may be able to put rare devices into iron, and be quite unable to describe his work so as to give clearly a reason for it. So a man may play chess, command a campaign or manage a factory. Such a one reaches his conclusions by unconscious genius, but in intellectual work which has no other expression than words there cannot be any evidence or even any consciousness of thinking without the use of language. We do not, then, half appreciate those arts by which thought is communicated, whether the art of written composition, the art of oratory or the art of conversation. Whether as a means of helping us to think or whether as a means of making any use of our thoughts, these are arts of prime importance. Oratory is of occasional value, but the others are needed by all mankind. A man differs from a factory machine, and is more or less to his fellow men just in proportion as he can communicate his thoughts. The newspaper, particularly the newspaper at the breakfast table, has done much to make that most valuable of all arts, the art of intelligent conversation, a lost one. We have come to think time given to conversation