

done, I shall present a chapter of errata.—N. L. N.]

The relation of conversation to reading is a point very important for teachers to keep in view. In France oral discourse precedes and determines written discourse, both in education and in literature. French newspapers are but a transcript of French talk and manners. It is for these reasons that the French are such fine conversationalists.

In England all this is reversed. The spirit is the slave of the letter, much to the loss of naturalness and vivacity. It is a doubtful compliment to say of a man, "He talks like a book," but strong praise that his written style is natural and life-like.

What shall children read? Just as we have no moral right to give doles to beggars—since we thereby render them more helpless by confirming their evil habits—so we have no right to teach children to read unless we are willing to take pains to direct their reading. Undirected, this acquirement may sink its possessor to lower depths than he could possibly have reached without it. The converse is equally true. In view of this fact, it can be maintained. I believe that there are people who ought never to be taught to read; just as there are multitudes of boys who ought never to go to college. Their capabilities and destiny are such that an oral life is the most economical and best for them; and is in fact the life to which they settle, whatever might have been their training.

The question of what to read is a most vital one. In 1776 it led to a war in Germany: one party contending for a secular and the other for a religious text in the school readers.

Shall there be fairy tales? By all means. Fairy tales appeal to the heart-life of children—a life which matter-of-fact literature is powerless to nourish. Take this story for instance:

"Once a little girl was left all alone in the world without friends or any place to go to. But before her father and mother died, they gave her a new pair of shoes, a silver dollar and a loaf of bread.

"One morning she set out to find herself a home. She had not gone far, when she met a little girl bare footed and with bleeding feet; so she gave her the shoes. After a little while she met a poor woman who had no money with which to buy medicine for her sick child; so she gave her the dollar. Towards night she met a gray-haired man tottering along on his staff. He had not eaten anything for three days; so she gave him the loaf.

"Night came on, and she found herself in the middle of a deep, dark wood. What should she do? She remembered that her mother had said God would be her friend; so she knelt down and prayed, and what do you think happened?

"The stars fell down all around her, and when she picked them up they were silver dollars. So she was rich, and grew up to be a princess."

Now, what amount of didactic preaching could leave the impression on a child's soul that this simple story leaves? As the child grows older and spiritualizes his conceptions he will read new truths from the objects in this story. The stars and silver dollars will stand for virtues, which heaven reigns down upon the doer of good deeds.

Fairy stories should, therefore, form part of child literature. For the rest, let the reading of children contain the easier classics, books on history, travels, biography, and books on science. Fiction of the yellow-back variety should be rigidly excluded.

As to the range of reading, it should

be as wide as the experiences or sympathies of the child enable him to fully assimilate what he reads—but no further. To read what is but faintly understood or appreciated, tends to enfeeble the mind.

In choosing books for children it is well to bear in mind the onomatopoeic faculty. Children above all things love rhyme and jingle. The writer of Mother Goose's Melodies was a genius. So strong is the love of noise and rhythm in children that some teachers have advocated making use of it in teaching reading, geography, arithmetic and other studies; but this is manifestly carrying the tendency too far.

A more important question still, is quality of reading matter to be placed before the young. Our rule should be nothing but the best. Dallying with the second best is a crime. Much of the best is always copyrighted, placing it practically out of the reach of the poor. One of the questions of the future will be the moral right of a government to subserve the interests of the individual at the expense of the nation. The injustice bears more heavily upon the masses, and is least felt, in the matter of literature than in any other protected article.

However, there is much good matter outside copyrights, which if properly selected will enrich the fireside of every home at a trifling cost.

Foremost among best books is the Bible. No other book can be compared with it, from whatever point of view it is looked at. Its stories interest children, its maxims are a practical guide to the everyday laborer, its human nature appeals to the psychologist, its psalms and prophecies to the poet and mystic, and its deep spirituality to all natural men and women of every age and clime.

It is in centering the interest of children upon this book that teachers can do most in the way of directing the reading of their pupils.

Next to this library of sacred writings there should be a selection from the very best library of literature—a selection which the consensus of cultured opinion would entitle to be called the secular Bible.

Here are some of the things that should, in my opinion, be found in the child's department of this Bible: Stories of a dozen of the Greek dramas, Collin's Abridgement is a good text. Stories of the Iliad and Odyssey. Esop's Fables. The Niebelungen Lied. A dozen of Plato's Myths, Shakespeare, Dante, Faust. Nature Myths. Babbitt's Advice to Young Men. [Some others that the reporter failed to get.]

These two Bibles taken to heart would place any man or woman among the noblest average of the human race. Of course, other things would have to be studied to inform the understanding and give the technical knowledge and skill necessary for the chosen profession in life. But I would rely very much upon these two for forming the character.

The need of reading for information brings us to the consideration of a very important question, viz., how to economize time. Literature is multiplying so fast in every department of investigation that he who would keep abreast of the times must learn how to read as he runs. It is a fact not widely enough understood that the eye can be trained to take in printed matter at three or four times the speed ordinarily followed. It is not an unusual feat for minds thus trained to read a book bearing on their own trend of thought at the rate of one page per second. Surely the great need of saving time should make rapid reading a matter of training in every school. But

all books should not be treated in this way. Some are to be "chewed and digested."

Connected with this subject is learning to read in a foreign tongue. The ear and mouth, or short circuit, method should be the one followed. It is the only natural method. Then, too, time is too precious to waste it in looking for little words in a big dictionary. Better use a good translation, to aid you in getting the meaning of words.

Finally, a few words on the subject of theme-writing will not be out of place here. The key to success is choosing subjects near the life of the writer. The circle of deepest interest is the circle of personal experience; and this is precisely the circle within which the child can write most intelligently. No more fatal mistake could be made than disregarding this simple law. Writers are not made by choosing subjects remote from the life experiences. The plan may, with an exceptional few, lead to the gift of gab; but most of the pupils will become too much disgusted with composition work ever to figure as writers.

N. L. N.

OUR SAN FRANCISCO LETTER.

San Francisco, Cal., Oct. 13th, 1897.—The most notable feature of the week's happenings was the reinstatement of the old board of supervisors to office under a decision of the state supreme court in the mandamus proceedings filed by Supervisor Morton, an active member of the notorious Shifty Eight, to compel the auditor to accept the tax levy made by the old board. The court ruled that while the lower court had the jurisdiction to remove the old board of supervisors, the appeal taken from that judgment acted as a stay of execution and pending the hearing, and final determination of the appeal the officers so removed were entitled to remain in office and continue the management of the city's affairs. Consequently the newly appointed board stepped down and out as gracefully as could be expected under the distressing circumstances; but it is expected the supreme court will take up the matter of the appeal at once, and if the decision of the lower court is sustained, Mayor Phelan's appointees will again jump into the municipal harness. Immediately ere returning to their old positions the old members started in to undo the work accomplished by their temporary successors and seemed to take great delight in regaining power, even if only long enough to manage things to suit themselves. The official ax did not remain idle, and all who had gained the displeasure of the Shifty Eight during their recent difficulty were called upon to contribute their necks to the slaughter. The mayor's position is anything but pleasant, for he finds himself presiding over a body of men the majority of whom are his deadly enemies, owing to the prominent part he played in having them removed. The evil effects of this official muddle are beginning to assert themselves, and before many months go by citizens will have cause to regret ever supporting the movement and this like many other reforms may for the time being result disastrously. The tax levy was placed at an unreasonably low figure, owing to the rivalry existing between the two boards, and consequently the appropriations for maintaining the city departments will have to be cut far below a conservative estimate, and already the cry is heard from the chiefs of the different offices who complain of their inability to properly carry on their work with the money it is proposed shall be allowed them. Chief of Police Lees has threatened to discontinue the patrol wagons for a part of the year unless the allowance for that