

SCHOOL REFORM.

The readers of the JOURNAL will remember that a meeting of the superintendent, assistant superintendent and principals of the city schools was held some weeks ago to discuss the advisability of a revision of the course of study.

At this meeting committees were appointed to investigate different phases of the subject and report back their conclusions in the premises.

In pursuance of the adjournment of this meeting another session will be held in the near future to take action on the reports of these several committees.

The discussions in the JOURNAL during several weeks of last winter called attention to the schools in such a manner that the people have a better view of the situation than they had prior to that time.

There is a general demand on the part of thousands of the most intelligent parents and patrons for many important changes. Those having authority in school matters should remember that these demands require satisfaction.

There does not seem to be any desire to dictate in the matter of methods.

But there is a feeling that our school system should be held accountable for results. Judged by this criterion, there is reason for complaint. If the changes recommended by these committees are along the line of improvement, no conservative spirit should be permitted to prevent their adoption.

A full discussion of these proposed reforms before the reports of the committees are made public would be premature and discourteous to those to whom these matters have been referred, but the deep interest felt by the public demands that the information be given out that action is soon to be taken by the school authorities on these vital questions.

The prevalence of one noticeable defect was not emphasized in the discussions of last winter as it should have been. This is the poor results usually attained in the use of English. As before stated, there is no desire to cover the whole ground on this occasion, but the exigencies of the case seem to demand a few words along the line of this one much-needed reform.

The theory of the English receives much attention. But its practical, everyday use is much neglected. There is no question but what the *how* of the language should come before the *why*. Technical grammar has no proper place in our ward schools. At most, it should be confined to the highest class. It is impossible for any one who has not had occasion to examine manuscripts to have any conception of the widespread inability to employ good English that prevails among even our most intelligent people. Many who are good talkers and thinkers cannot express themselves grammatically in writing. All such must be greatly handicapped in the race of life.

If there is any one thing that the public school system should do for our young more than another, in the way of intellectual training, it should be the imparting to them of the knowledge necessary to enable them to make their mother tongue a swift and easy-going vehicle of thought.

The misspelled words and bad grammar, so common in the manuscripts of our children of all ages, from primary grades to grammar grades and from grammar grades to and through the high schools, show the need of a change in methods of teaching language.

The boy who would learn to swim must jump into the water and strike out boldly and independently. He might sit on a log and study the "Swimmer's Guide" and look longingly at the water without ever learning to swim. So with the child who would learn the use of the English language. He must make daily and hourly efforts for himself. His mistakes must be pointed out and corrected. Thus he may go on approaching perfection.

Let us have more composition work. Instead of parsing, a very antiquated proceeding with children, and a doubtful exercise for adults, give daily drills in the use of the language. Give more attention to correct forms, the use of capitals, punctuation, etc., etc.

All this can be done without memorizing a single rule in grammar—in fact, without the use of a text book.