

**AMERICAN SYSTEM  
OF EDUCATION; THE  
SENTENTIAL READER**

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American System of Education; The Sentential Reader by Literary Association

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THE

SENTENTIAL READER.



"It is somewhat remarkable that we read pictorially."—BULL.

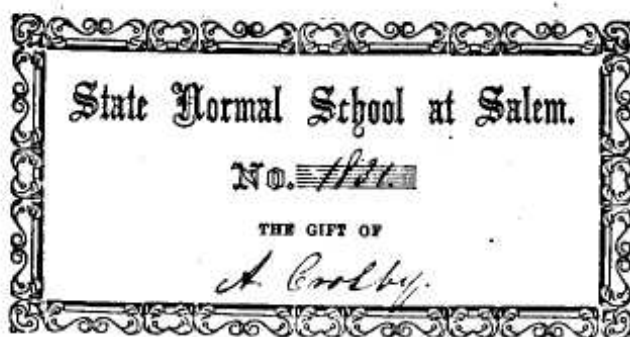
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Admirable! exclaimed Dr. Wisdom. But how is a child to attain to such excellence?

That is the question, said Professor Cadmus. It is not the definition so much as the attainment. Need I say, that reading is not to be acquired by rules? It is useless to make them the basis of instruction in reading. *Seeing* is the knowing of childhood. The *thing* must take precedence of the word.

I entirely agree with you, said Dr. Wisdom. Nor can it be taught by examples. As well might Miss S— attempt to teach my daughter the art of music by playing over some of her phantasies, as a teacher attempt to teach children reading by presenting models of the art.

I understand you, said Professor Cadmus. He must grow up into reading as he grew up into speech,—by progressive steps. Reading is a *function* of speech.

Precisely so, said Dr. Wisdom. And you would retrace in reading the steps by which we attain to speech? The idea is full of promise.

So I think, added Professor Cadmus. We began speech with words. Now, in my opinion, there is a *verbal reading* that lies at the basis of all others. Unless we can read the words well, how can we expect to read sentences and language? The word is the germ of language. The reading of the word is the true initiatory to all reading.

Your view, said Dr. Wisdom, accords entirely with mine. The utterance of the word includes nearly all the elements of reading;—articulation, enunciation, pronunciation, accent, tone, power, pitch, and rate.

The sentence, said Professor Cadmus, followed the word in speech. Why not also follow it in reading? Sentential reading is, undoubtedly, the most important. The sentence is the developed word, and the germinal form of language. He, who can read sentences well, will find no difficulty in reading language. For what is lingual reading but the utterance of connected sentences that form the body of discourse?

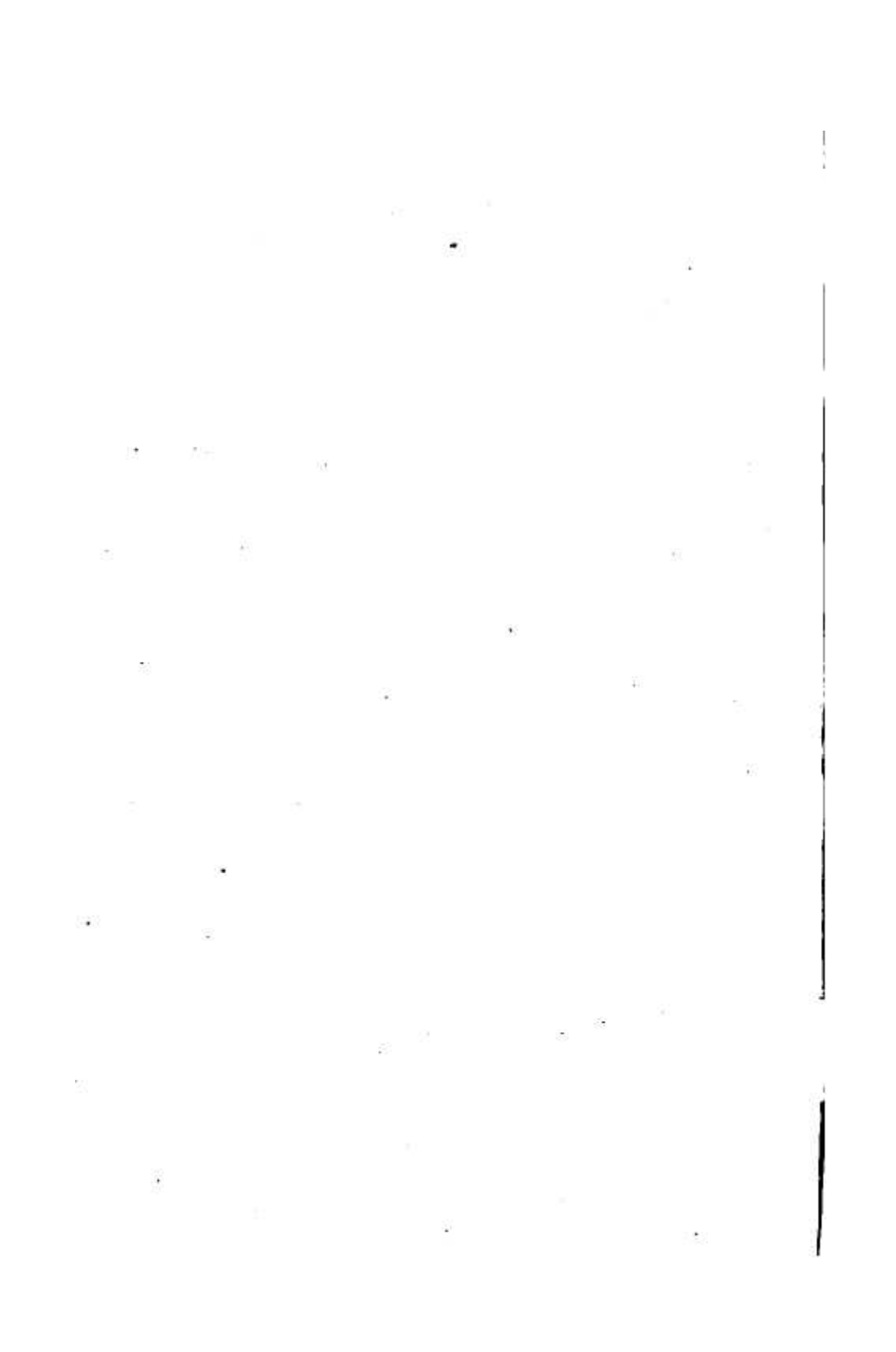
This view of the subject, said Dr. Wisdom, removes much apparent mystery. The child can comprehend a sentence. He is able to imitate the model according to which it should be read. Let us, then, reduce the art of reading to the appropriate utterance of sentences, and it is accessible to all. Its acquisition is simple.

Just so, added Professor Cadmus. And the method is a happy imitation. Art is the admirer of nature. Rules, we are free to confess, at an early age, are of little use to children—perhaps a hindrance. They follow nature, and are moulded by things. Accordingly, we find that children, who have been brought up in elegant families, speak expressively. Can we not create the same circumstances for reading? a function of speech!

We can, undoubtedly, answered Dr. Wisdom. Reading may be made a retracing of the steps of speech. The child may be led progressively into written language as well as into spoken language. He may be led, too, in the same way,—the colloquial style of expression. The school-room may resemble the social circle at home; and the reading exercise, a lively conversation. The teacher should take the place of the parent in the colloquy, and supply his pupils with the living model. *We repeat it, the teacher should be Professor Cadmus, and read to the class as the Professor spoke to his son.*

I hope and earnestly pray, said Professor Cadmus, that such a state of things may soon exist in every school in our land. Then shall pleasure be the companion of study, and reading, ceasing to be a caricature of speech, become natural discourse.





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