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The Problems of English Teachings in Indian Schools



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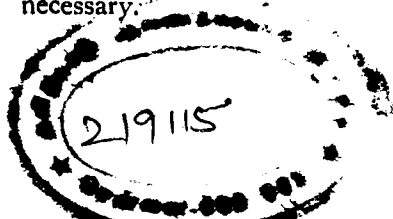
The Problems of English Teaching in Indian Schools.*

THE formation of a South Indian Branch of the English Association is an event of good omen for the schools. There has been great need of a central body in which all those who are engaged in the teaching of English in schools may focus their interests; and especially those who advocate radical changes both in the aims and in the methods of teaching. I believe there is now a chance that English teaching may be given a scientific and an æsthetic trend; and hope that the severely practical aim may receive clearer emphasis. This Association may do much to remedy what was and still is in my view the radical defect of most school English teaching, namely, the tacit assumption that English is best taught as a vernacular. The use of translation is but a half-grudging admission of the foreignness of English. Perhaps we may rather say that the prevailing practice shows either an extraordinary confusion of thought or an amazing lack of thought, according as we choose to regard the state of affairs. I look to this Association to bring the teacher to reason, to a recognition of the absurdity of following methods that involve opposed aims.

The text-books, whether readers, grammars or hand-books of composition that were till recently in common use, need only be referred to to explain my meaning: there were the primers and infant-readers, where the child learnt rhymed lists of unconnected words, *e.g.*, b-a-t, bat, c-a-t, cat, b-u-n, bun, d-u-n, dun; was put foolish conundrums in the form of question and answer, *e.g.*, 'Is this silk?' No, it is 'milk'; ran on through brief paragraphs of monosyllabic words to longer paragraphs of hyphenated dissyllables and polysyllables; and before he had been taught to speak a single rational simple sentence of daily use was landed in tales written in complex grammar. Though the fallacies of the use of such books are very obvious, I may, since even now they are not generally perceived,

* A paper read before the South Indian Branch of the English Association, on the 5th August 1911.

be permitted to point out one or two of the most patent. In the first place Indian children beginning English are not infants. I do not discuss the suitability of employing what often seems to be mere rubbish in teaching English infants to read and write their vernacular: but whether monosyllables are the right pap for them or not, it seems obvious that they are wrong for Indian boys. The latter have learnt to read and write in far more complicated characters (though perhaps in far more consistent spelling than English possesses) big polysyllabic words. Dissyllables and trisyllables, in which with monosyllables the first lessons in English must be conducted, can have no terrors for them. Secondly, these English readers assume a capacity to speak: hence elementary grammatical facts, the orderly introduction of forms that are essential yet strange to a foreign boy, are neglected. To illustrate:—No child of English birth and speech would use 'bun' by itself: he would invariably use an article and say 'give me a bun or the bun;'; he would in fact have breathed in the subtle distinction between the indefinite and the definite article. If of ordinarily cultured origin he would make no mistake in the forms of the tenses: he would use the first and third persons of the verb correctly; and would infallibly distinguish in practice between the two forms of the present tense, and between the present and the past. But for foreign boys, it is just these elementary distinctions that are the essential matters in which training is needed: by means natural or unnatural they must be led to that correct speech-feeling of which the Germans talk. The teaching must realise the fact of their foreign birth. Thirdly, it is plain that children of eight or nine, who have received some five or six years instruction in their mother-tongue and in common school topics through the mother-tongue, need not be treated as if they were babes in a kindergarten. The nonsense which English pedagogics deem the fit starting point for English infants is not obviously suited to Indian children beginning the English tongue. Fourthly, these readers neglect the fact that whereas English children are acquainted with the simple facts of their English life, to foreign children, especially children so differently circumstanced as Indian boys and girls are, English books, involving acquaintance with English life, inevitably present tremendous difficulties of understanding. A careful choice of vocabulary and topics must be made at the outset: later, to help Indian children to understand much that occurs in English books, special teaching will be necessary.



There are many other fallacies of method that strike one acquainted with the details of the teaching of English in Indian schools. But these I have given will suffice to suggest that in its transplantation from England to India, the work of this Association—as far as the aid it can give to the schools and the schoolmaster is concerned—must take very different lines and have very different aims from what it has in England. It will be my task to suggest these aims and these lines of work.

It has been remarked that the mind of man is apt under the influence of early religious associations to adopt trinitarian classifications: or perhaps the influence is the unconscious analogy of the primitive classification of the facts of the world into animal, vegetable and mineral. So schoolmasters still retain their pet division of a Secondary School into Primary, Lower Secondary, and Upper Secondary classes. Perhaps the original organizers of departmental examinations, Primary, Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary, gave the idea; but whatever the reason, the fact remains that, despite the disappearance of all the three external tests, the names and the notion of a rigid scission of the school into three grades keep their popularity. Professedly the department regards the Secondary School from the lowest class to the highest as one indivisible whole, providing for the possibility of the mental growth of a child from the time when he joins the lowest class as an infant to the day he is, as a youth, ready to enter life or to join a college. Yet, notwithstanding the preachings of Inspectors, the conservatism of the schoolmaster clings to this division of the school course into three grades. Compartmental rigidity in teaching is the result: the separatist attitude finds its expression in more ways than one; thus the class-master of one form knows little or nothing of what his colleagues in the forms above and below him are doing: the work of the three higher forms is still thought of as something quite different in aim and character from that of the three lower: the conception that a boy may for one subject be in a lower set and for another in a higher is very rarely attained. Again, rightly or wrongly the current belief is that up to Form III the 'non-language' subjects must be taught in the mother-tongue and above that in English: but the true ideal, as it seems to me, is to use the mother-tongue in teaching such subjects right through the school, except to those who are intending to proceed to University education. Whether this ideal be practicable or not, it is certainly practicable and still more certainly desirable to make no breach in the

continuity of English teaching. The whole must represent an organic growth. The aims of teaching English to Indian pupils must from the very outset be clearly perceived: the methods of teaching must be consistently adapted to those aims: the teacher must equip himself with a knowledge of common spoken English, English literature and style and of many other matters which I shall enumerate later on, and with a comprehension of the most suitable methods; so only can he anticipate even that partial success, that limited accomplishment of his ideals, for more than which no school-master can hope, aspire as he will.

What these aims are should be the subject of our first consideration: the neglect of them, or rather the determined blinking of the eyes at what is perspicuous as the day, should bear the main blame for the atrocious waste of effort and poverty of result in the English teaching of the schools. It is a commonplace to remark that after eight or nine years of continuous study of English at the rate of nine or ten hours a week, representing at least 250 hours of class-work in the year, and at least 2,000 hours in the course of his school career, with a certainty that he has spent almost as many hours over English out of school, the average Indian boy can neither write nor speak the commonest English with accuracy. He has had set before him an *olla podrida* of scientific snippets, fragments of literature from Shakespeare to Browning, has read in English about life in countries as far apart as Italy and Japan, has catalogued and attempted to memorize all the out of the way tricks of writing in English authors, and can tell you of all the strange oddments of gender (which, by the way, does not exist in English), but yet knows nothing of English life, family or civic, nor of the history of the English speech and the lessons it might have for his own: he has been given no key with which to unlock these mysteries. He is in a worse quandary than the English boy of our childhood set to learn and read French: for at least there is no such great gap between the climate and civilization of England and France as between that of India and England. And the Indian teacher of English is, as a rule, but a faulty master: he does his best, but he has inherited the traditions and the ignorance of his school days. There are sporadic instances of men with clear aims, there are rare enthusiasts who have thought out the *rationale* of their work: but the bulk are hard-working, aimless plodders. The purpose of this Association should be to focus the clear vision, to centralize the enthusiasm and to give sight to the eyeless,

The rock-bed of thought in this matter of English is the recognition that it is a foreign language. This may seem a very patent fact, but is of the class of facts that for their very obviousness are disregarded. The disregard is especially unfortunate in its effect on the common estimate of what are the right methods of teaching English. It is difficult and perhaps unscientific to separate method from object: for the end is nothing without the means, and the end looks back to the beginning. Now the beginning is this elementary fact I have mentioned, that the first aim is to make the pupil speak the language: of the means I shall talk briefly later. Is it not self-evident that a language—the idea is contained in the very word—primarily involves utterance? The use of the vocal chords, the tongue, the teeth, the lips? And is it not equally self-evident that in a school, as in private study, correct and idiomatic use of words is or should be the prime object of instruction? This idea has been the motive power of all the reforms that have taken place in the teaching of foreign languages to children of the West. Yet there the foreign tongue whether English, French or German, can be but little used and heard in the land in which it is taught. There learning to speak looks across the borders: the pupil may want to travel, to study abroad, to carry on trade in the country of the newly acquired speech. But here, in India, English is at the very doors of the child: in this Presidency at any rate it is of widespread daily use. It is the *lingua franca* of the educated, the means of communication between a Tamil and a Telugu of culture, and the language of business with foreign countries and with other provinces of India.

I do not think that any one would seriously regret the disappearance of what is called 'Babu English,' that strange compound of bad grammar, bad idiom and big words. There is always a tendency of the man born to a speech to laugh at the foreigner's attempts to speak it: on the other hand there is a tendency, due to pleased surprise, to welcome the foreigner who speaks correctly the language of the stranger. I believe that it is possible by sound teaching to get rid of 'Babuism' in its worst forms and so to make easier those friendly relations between Englishmen and Indians that all desire. A great deal of what is comical English is really nothing but a translation of a vernacular idiom into English words. On the side of method the persistent use of translation is, I am convinced by observation and experiment without translation, responsible for a large part of the errors of English made by school-

boys and graduates. Faulty pronunciation again is mainly due to lack of instruction in the elements of English sounds. That many Indians speak English with remarkable accuracy both of grammar and sound is due to their own aptitude for picking up languages, not to the teaching they have received. The majority of the products of the schools however speak ungrammatically and with bad pronunciation: this, as it seems to me, is the first great blot on our methods. Not merely in simple correct colloquial English—idiomatic slang may be left out of account—but also in formal consecutive speech, such as is required of a schoolmaster, a *vakil* or a Legislative Councillor, should training be given. The average boy gets no mastery over his tongue in speaking English of either kind. It ought to be the object of the schools to give that mastery. I cannot agree with those who argue that bad pronunciation is inevitable and that there is a certain charm, a curiosity, a niceness of its own in the hybrid speech, part vernacular, part English which the schools purvey to the country. The argument is a confession of inability; perhaps of slackness. It would certainly be condemned by German and French and English reformers.

That writing is subsequent to speech is a simple truism. Nevertheless in the practice of the schools it has, until quite recently, been forgotten. Even now in the majority of schools a special value is put upon teaching the alphabet first. Here we trace the influence of indigenous methods: both in the *Pial School* and in the better equipped *Board School*, infants are set for some months to learn to write the elaborate syllabaries of the *Dravidian* languages. The schoolmaster is the thrall of the written symbol and his infant pupil is made its slave; the child learns to write a 'grammatical' dialect before he is taught to express in written symbols the living speech. Much the same thing happens in the teaching of English: the child is required to copy out sentences, the construction of which is beyond his lingual capacity, long before he can speak a sentence correctly. The artificial instance of a rule of grammar must be memorized and written out, rather than a sentence which he can use with advantage in his daily life; and a special virtue is found in grammatical definitions. I have found pupils who could define in speech and writing a conjunction, but who could not tell me the name of the day of the week, or in reply to a question such as 'what are you doing?' give the answer 'I am standing or sitting or walking or running.' As the pupils rise in the school, their composition depends more and more on their

memory of the master's summaries or of the words of a book: at an equal gait their English, in proportion to the complication of sentences demanded of them, becomes more and more faulty.

It may perhaps be claimed that the object of good writing has been kept in view by the schools; the reply is that, owing to the fallacy that writing precedes speech rather than speech writing, the object, except in those exceptional cases I have already noticed, is ridiculously remote from attainment. The fallacy has vitiated the methods. Now no one can deny that, secondary to good speech, good writing in the case of all languages which possess a script and a literature, should be the goal of all teachers and learners. But the teacher must not expect his pupil to walk before he can crawl. He must remember that in proportion as speech in a foreign tongue becomes semi-automatic, coming plump on the desire to speak, so will writing, once the difficulties of the formation of letters and the spelling of the words are learnt, come easily and correctly. Indeed in actual teaching, writing should not be long delayed after reading, and reading and spelling after speech. But the writing should at the beginning (and probably through all the earlier stages of instruction) be either repetition of words, phrases and sentences used in speech or free renderings of tales or subjects read and talked about. And never should the master ask the boy for more elaborate constructions in writing than he can use in speech, or expect words not in his vocabulary.

I may seem to have wandered from the aim into the method: I have done so to illustrate what I conceive the chief function of writing from the very beginning, *viz.*, to clarify and express thought and to correct speech. The beginner has time when he writes to think of the form of what he has to say,—*i.e.*, more time than he has when answering in class: he can attain with greater sureness to right form; which attainment must react with advantage on his use of the phrase or sentence in future speech or writing. This function, working in the early stages on mere accident and elementary syntax, later on, as the grammatical apparatus at his disposal grows, can under the wise and orderly guidance of the teacher be applied to such matters as the form of the sentence, the order of words in the sentence, the logical expression of ideas, the logical relation of ideas, the form and logic of the paragraphs: in short, the elements of rhetoric, as they are not now, will be a part of the school curriculum. A boy will be enabled to proceed to the University, far better-equipped than he is now to tackle the difficul-

ties of literary and historical essays and the careful statement of experiment and result in science. Those pupils who go out into the world, in whatever occupation English is required, whether as clerks in offices or as business men, will have received a training that they never get now. For in a good school I should consider the teaching of English incomplete that did not introduce the pupils to a good business style and teach them systematically something of letter forms. As for the schoolmaster, his task of correction would be considerably eased by the orderly, in place of the present haphazard, methods of teaching the art of good writing.

The third aim of English teaching needs no elaborate exposition: it is one that none can fail to see. For a very long time to come, higher study of literature, science, history, mathematics and art must be carried on through the medium of English. Even philosophy, in which India in the past has specialized, may claim that it should be pursued through that language. That branch of Western knowledge which is needed most, according to those best entitled to a hearing, *viz.*, science, cannot be studied except in a very elementary and untechnical way in the Dravidian vernaculars. This is a misfortune, but the reason is plain to seek: for higher purposes the vernacular literatures have a very undeveloped prose: what there is, we are told, is wanting in that lucidity, that simplicity of expression which English the most developed, analytic and copious language of the world possesses. Certainly the experiments that have been made to write popular science in the vernacular do not hold out much hope of any early satisfactory adaptation of Tamil or Telugu to scientific treatises. Not only are these languages altogether wanting in scientific terminology that is clear or that can be accepted by all, but the literary orthodoxy which makes it imperative to use a multitude of archaisms is against popularizing scientific knowledge. These are the facts that necessitate the teaching of scientific subjects through English in the High Schools. Again though probably English might be dispensed with for the teaching of school history, the absence of historical literature in the Dravidian languages of any value makes higher study of history in the mother-tongue at present out of the question. As long, therefore, as these subjects are in the schools studied in English, attention to grammar, spelling, and form in notes and essays should be paid and not, as now, persistently neglected. The pressure of examinations and the belief that facts not expression are more required by examiners have brought about this result.

Though English, in these subjects, may be regarded as a means to an end or a handmaid of study, neglect of form in them reacts to the disadvantage of the learning of English as a language.

The most lamentable fact as far as English is concerned is the altogether unliterary nature of the work done. Not only in the selection of texts, but also in the composition practised is this unliterariness evident. It would seem certain that, if a language with a literature is studied, the aim of knowing something of the literature, of giving the learners an insight into its range, its varied quality and its beauty should be constantly kept in sight. One is struck almost more, perhaps, by the unæsthetic nature of the teaching of English than by the unsystematic attempts to teach the language for practical purposes. I have already referred to the futility of the readers which are employed in the lowest classes: it is nothing when compared with that of the reading matter of the higher classes. We must admit that there some improvement has of late taken place: the University re-introduced texts for examination purposes and the department, in its School-Leaving Certificate Scheme, is following suit. The improvement however touches merely the highest forms: and the purport of the change has not been learnt as a lesson by the majority of teachers. One has only to enquire in any school what scheme of English reading is provided to discover the truth of the statement. Even where more reading is now done than in the past, there is no more system in the selection than in the schemes of grammatical progress. The teachers are not altogether to blame. For many years—perhaps since the first day on which English was learnt in any school—the readers employed have been the publishers' surplus stock of books for English Elementary Schools: and no serious attempt has been made to write English books suitable for children of an Eastern race and an alien civilization. It is perhaps not likely that reading matter of a literary kind can be provided at the very beginning. 'Yet even then the literary and the practical aim can be combined.' There is plenty of simple literature for children, both in prose and poetry, from which selection can be made or which can be adapted to the needs of the linguistic progress made from class to class; and in the selection and adaptation the stock of ideas at the command of the children need not be overlooked.

There comes a stage in the school career, when (provided the schemes of work and the teaching have been sound) the pupils

should be capable of reading good literature—not in snippets and not with minute annotation—but in solid blocks and in whole works. The parallel study of English in German schools or of French in English schools of the best and most advanced type is here worth considering. One hears of a novel of Dickens or a play of Shakespeare being read in the highest forms of German Schools, after half the number of years that are spent in study here. In India Shakespeare's plays, except perhaps in fragments such as the Trial Scene in 'The Merchant of Venice,' and classic novels of all kinds are reserved to the College classes. About two years ago, in 'Modern Language Teaching' there occurred a most interesting article on the teaching of French literature in English Schools by a well-known reformer, Miss A. M. Purdie. The list of classics read in a single year was most remarkable; by comparison the ground in literature covered in our Madras High Schools is of the meagrest. In the latter the habit of reading good literature is not formed: school libraries are seldom well equipped, and the stimulus of the teacher which is needed by the majority of pupils is not applied. Only the exceptional few take advantage of a library for out-of-school reading: for though browsing is an admirable habit and to be encouraged, the larger number of boys and girls are, if left to themselves not given to it. Cheap school editions of classics are legion; and it should be possible to draw up suggestive lists—not of the length of the list published by the Text-book Committee—but reasonable, carefully considered alternative lists. These would contain two main divisions of books for intensive and books for extensive reading.

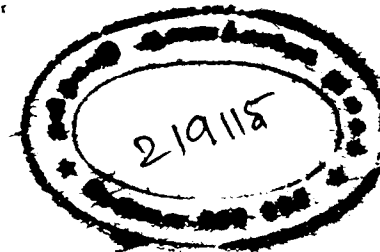
It is not likely that the reform I have indicated will be accepted immediately: the teachers will need educating up to the idea; they will need to realise that the teaching of literature has an æsthetic as well as a practical aim, the latter of which would probably first need emphasis. It should be possible to begin the reform with special classes: under the School-Leaving Certificate Scheme for instance there is nothing to prevent English being taken as an advanced subject under Group C. No school has up-to-date, as far as I know, proposed to take English otherwise than as a compulsory subject. Yet a large proportion of pupils propose to proceed to the University: and all who do must take English. Would it not be to the advantage of University lecturers, to get a supply of students who had covered a much wider, a much more literary range of reading than, as things are, they traverse?

This Association might do much by suggestion to stimulate the production of such students.

It may seem impertinent in a foreigner to consider the teaching of English literature from the point of view of the Indian, from the inside as it were. But I am emboldened to do so by the example of my friend Mr. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar, whose pamphlet on the study of the vernaculars* has caused so much discussion and is so stimulating. On the one hand there is the question of language. With very few exceptions, English writers, both poets and prose authors, have made the spoken language of the time the basis of their utterance. Even those of the most artificial, the most Latin and archaic style, have used the common speech as the substratum of their literary dialect: there never has been such a violent divorce between literature and speech as is found in the literatures of Southern India. The result has been that each age has had its own tone, its own mode of expression: throughout the history of English literature one remarks the readiness of writers to experiment, to be individual and to speak for themselves and the age in which they live: the formation of a school of style has been always followed by revolt: never-failingly is the ground-bass of popular utterance heard. Is there not a lesson here to be drawn for vernacular literature? What teacher ever draws it? What for instance is the lesson to be drawn from the English ballads, ancient or modern imitated specimens, which are read in schools? Have not great poets such as Tennyson, Rossetti and Browning loved and caught the spirit of the old ballads? Do not Englishmen and Scotchmen cultured and uncultured alike find delight in them? But in Southern India the ballads of the people are disregarded; they are to the large but select class of *littérateurs*, vulgar and unclean; so too are the songs and lyrics of the common folk. Can it not be said that English poets are democratic in spirit? At one, at least in their appreciation of popular poetic form, with the people?

Also does not English prose suggest lessons? Even more than poetry it approximates to the spoken tongue: modern novelists employ local words both in their dialogue and in the body of their narrative. Many instances could be culled from the novels of Hardy in the south and of Neil Munro in the far north. Novelists of the sea use freely of the dialect of mariners: the Cockney lends expressions to writers about London: because he borrows from the

* 'Death or Life—a plea for the vernaculars.' (Messrs. Srinivasa Varadachari & Co.)



dialect of Anglo-India, Rudyard Kipling is regarded as none the worse writer. Not so the majority of writers of vernacular prose: to use an English word, understood of all, instead of a Sanskrit invention is an unpardonable sin. Other lessons can be drawn from the reading of English prose by the skilful teacher, such as the use of stops, the arrangement of paragraphs, variety in the order of words in a sentence, the suitability of words, the fitting of sound to sense and the need of that Hellenic quality restraint. In these and other ways may the reading of English be made to subserve—in after-school days perhaps—the development of the South Indian Literatures; lack of ideas as to what literature is, more than anything else, is responsible for the present stagnation of Dravidian prose and poetry. Only, I venture to think, by a revivification of ideas and by getting inspiration from outside can literature be made popular and the much-talked of education of the masses become a reality.

In treating of this cultural aim, it is not out of place to remark on the absence from the school course of any study of the history of the English language and of English literature. Without advocating elaborate or detailed study of either, it may be urged that, in outline and with special emphasis on the progress of both and the absence of rigidly binding rules in either, some treatment of each is both possible and desirable. Particularly might such elementary study be made in a special English class, such as I have suggested above. There is no reason why pupils of a Secondary School should be introduced to scientific thought through physics, chemistry and geography alone: they can be made to find interest also in the science of language, of which English presents many admirable phenomena. Any Fifth Form of good average intelligence should find the development of English from a relatively synthetic to an advanced analytic stage a matter of intelligent interest: some study in detail of the sounds of existing English, compared with the sounds of vernacular, and compared again, in such simple instances as passages from Shakespeare and other early authors would supply, with earlier sound in English, should teach that sounds are not fixed any more than accident and syntax: and that meaning remains unchanged no more than sounds may be learnt by a comparison of words in Shakespeare with the same words as used in modern English. The congeners of the English language might be shown and illustrations given both from Latin and Greek words, borrowed and existing in

English side by side with Teutonic words, and from Sanskrit; even pupils who do not study Sanskrit have knowledge of a sufficiently large number of such Sanskrit words, commonly used in the vernacular, as are capable of being used as illustrations. The difference between inflexional and non-inflexional languages can be shown from English, which, while largely of the latter type, has relics of inflexion. The Dravidian language would illustrate another type—the inflexional-agglutinative type, as it has been called. Lastly the manifold borrowings of English should be brought out; these could be illustrated from the course of English History, the various influences of the Christian Conversion, the Danish Invasion, the Norman Conquest, Latin Civilization, the Reformation, the Revival of Learning and the Expansion of England; parallel borrowings in the Dravidian languages might be pointed to, the difference being noted that the latter borrowings are found mainly in the popular speech and not in literature. In the history of English literature perhaps the main lesson to be learnt is the growth of a literary dialect without the aid of an academic prescription of forms. The influence of great historic events on literature, from the Reformation onwards, *e.g.*, the Revival of Learning, the Puritan Revolution, the Restoration and French Influences, the French Revolution and the Romantic Revival, could be brought out by linking the study of English History with the reading of selected lists of texts. What one feels about the present teaching is that it is spasmodic, isolated, lacking in correlation. It is possible to co-ordinate and correlate English with history and geography and with vernacular and Sanskrit and should, at any rate in three higher forms, be attempted. Complete success could not at once be hoped for: but both for the relief of University professors and for the development of pupils' intelligence, the attempt is worth making.

A statement of what should be the equipment of the ideal school-teacher of English must be mainly a re-statement of the aims already described. If in all the schools of the Presidency an enquiry were made, a very small list of adequate teachers would result. Grant that reform is beginning; it is however mainly reform of methods in the lower classes, where for some years to come spade-work is inevitable. The road to really sound literary teaching is likely to be long and difficult: there are too many obstacles to clear: too many false methods and wrong ideals at present hinder progress. In a country where education has been conditioned by examinations,

perhaps on examiners must the main blame fall. In the past they have set forth as the aim of teaching, tricks of accident, odds and ends of syntax and substitution of synonyms. Good literature, the study of form and of the value of words to express ideas, is only now being dimly perceived as the object of reading. There are special stumbling-blocks in the teachers' way. The recent re-introduction of the text-book has brought forth a swarm of annotated editions, even though questions on details are rarely set. How can the teacher stop their use at home? Again, he is hampered by having classes whose ability to speak or write the most elementary English is of the weakest: himself and his pupils aim at the elaborate before the simple: they want to run before they can walk. Lastly the teacher himself reads very little and what he reads is often of the most unliterary type. It is the misfortune of democratic literature that it contains along with the good a mass of the trivial and vulgar: it needs a certain cultivation, such as the average teacher of English does not possess, to distinguish the one from the other. The latter is frequently sensational, appealing to the half-educated mind. It is sad, but, I fear, true that many, if not most, teachers of English are but half-educated to a literary taste and that, while they read no poetry and no good novels, they find enjoyment in such vulgar stuff as Miss Marie Corelli's works or in such worse stuff as Reynold's *Mysteries of the Court of London*! Their school days are perhaps responsible: early training in a taste for the good should have made such later selection of books to read impossible. It is then with the teacher's education that such an Association as this should primarily deal.

An accurate description of the average teacher's qualification must be a catalogue of negatives: he cannot use good common English: his errors of grammar are numerous and gross: he has developed no taste for good prose and good poetry: the art and spirit of English literature are closed to him: he forgets what in college days he learnt of the progress of English language: certainly he makes no use of his past study of it: he is generally deficient in pronunciation and cannot tell the differences between English and Vernacular sounds: he mostly uses the latter in speaking English and conveys his errors to his class: of the topography, the social life and history of England, without a knowledge of which much of English literature is only partially intelligible, he makes little study. I do not blame the teacher: I state mere facts. Every man's progress is largely dependent on the

impetus he gets at the start: and seldom did a teacher get any inspiration in his school days: even though his interest was roused in his college days, in after-life the stress of family cares and the lack of opportunities for intellectual intercourse, have caused him to stagnate. There are many exceptions, to this rather dismal picture I have drawn; especially among the lower teachers, in whose classes reform has made some headway: and here and there among all grades of teachers occurs an enthusiast. I believe, too, that the majority of teachers of English are capable of being roused, if the proper stimulus is given, to an appreciation both of the delight to be got from wide reading and of the value to their pupils of more inspiring teaching. The teacher wants to be shown the way: here comes another opportunity for this Association. By the dissemination of pamphlets giving hints upon the ways in which a foreign language should be taught, much of the ignorance and apathy which too commonly exist may be dispelled.

This is not the place to do more than outline the ways in which reform can come. Sufficient insistence has been already put upon the fact that English is a foreign language: the methods therefore to be employed must be suited to the teaching of a foreign language. In this matter, England has learnt from Germany: it is to Germany recourse has been had for ideas. The 'reform' movement has found its greatest exponents and has been most widely successful in that country. Of adjectives suitable to these new ideas in teaching, 'reformed' seems the best: it does not commit one to any special line; nor does it specify any particular method. When one speaks of new ideas, one is using a word to which objection may be taken; for strictly speaking there is, as has been remarked, nothing particularly new about the individual methods: what is new is the spirit, which, while using old methods, as occasion demands, looks to ends not contemplated in the old grammatical, construing, translating modes of study of foreign languages. Those ends once more may be summarised, as ability to speak fluently and correctly, ability to write easily and correctly, and through the literature of the language studied, understanding of the thought, mode of life and surroundings of the people speaking the language.

Of the many means to attain this end, there is one method, the name of which, if not the thing itself, has almost become a fetish in some parts of Southern India: this is the Direct Method. It is probably the best and only method of linking names with things,

persons, actions, simple adjectives, adverbs and prepositions at the very earliest stage of learning. The popularity of the term is possibly due to the striking antithesis in which it stands to the former usual method of translation. It makes talking possible: a thing is named not only by the teacher but by the whole class: as soon as possible in systematic order verbs are introduced: so also are other parts of speech. Some people call this the natural method, because it imitates the early efforts of the child learning to speak its mother-tongue. The learning of a class is of course more formal than that of an infant in its home: but there is this element in common to the two cases, that in each the ear, the eye and the tongue (and other organs or sense) are employed to record and settle the memory of names. As soon as possible whole sentences are practised and memorised: attention is paid to pronunciation and strict watch is kept over grammar. This kind of learning may be labelled learning by immediate perception; if pictures are employed, the perception is mediate. As time goes on the use of direct means to connect the symbol with the thing, becomes only one of several methods. The gradual acquirement of a vocabulary enables the teacher to use the apperceptive method; in common English, he helps the pupils to get at the new idea by means of the old: he uses known words to explain a novelty. Thus if laughing and smiling are known, he can employ these words to get at the meaning of 'merry' or 'mirth.' It will be observed from this that the books employed and the schemes of lessons drafted by the teacher must develop gradually: each lesson must give opportunities for revision of old ideas and for explaining new by old terms.

The use of direct means does not cease with the early stages: as the pupils progress upwards and begin to read English books, it becomes needful to introduce them to English surroundings. This is what the Germans call the study of *realien*, a study neglected in our schools. Without some such study, it is plain that many phrases in poetry—*e.g.*, those in which reference is made to the English seasons or to English plants—are empty words. The danger of a course of learning in which from first to last no attempt is made to give content to words is that pupils regard words as in themselves realities, instead of as mere symbols of realities. This is a danger especially great in India and not confined to the teaching of English: it ends in vernacular literature with altogether conventional poetry, in which the sound is of more importance than

the sense, and with an appalling desert of ideas. An instance or two will explain: India—at least Southern India—gets no winter or snow. How then can the ideas in such phrases as 'poor as winter' or 'garments white as snow' be conveyed? Nor does it get spring. How then convey the notion of 'The merry month of May'? Customs vary: 'drinking the King's health' is a notion strange to the Indian boy. It is obvious that he cannot be transported in body to England: but by the aid of copious pictures and by simple description an enthusiastic teacher could bring him to that partial understanding which is certainly better than a wholly blank mind. What is wanted is a carefully thought-out scheme of *realien*, which would start from ideas or things that are common to India and England and yet are different and proceed to those which are wholly strange. A study of French and German English readers might suggest both topics and reading selections. The habit of illustration—at present found hardly anywhere—should grow into universality.

I shall briefly summarise the other matters of method which need consideration: the discussion of each is highly technical and better taken up separately and in detail on other occasions. First in opposition to direct means comes translation: it is the centre even now of strong battle. There are many who advocate its use from the very outset: there are others who say it is valueless in a school. My own position is one of compromise: experience, the results of experiments (most notably that made by Mr. G. V. Ramamurti Pantulu and his son at Parlakimedi) have confirmed me in my predisposition to have none of it in the lower classes: at the same time for practical purposes, *e.g.*, translation of letters in offices, of Government proclamations and the like, it is worth while taking up in the higher forms. Translation of literature is, I think, in view of its difficulty as an art, out of the question in schools. Next comes the equally difficult problem of the choice of topics for conversation: the majority of existing readers seem to neglect the practical issue, the need of English by pupils in their daily life. It is significant that not a single reader, as far as I am aware, sets out to teach its readers how to tell the time idiomatically or how to use (in combination with verbs) the names of the days of the week, 'yesterday,' 'tomorrow,' 'the day before yesterday,' and similar phrases. As to the use of the text, both prose and poetry, teachers both in the lower and higher classes incline too much to excessive expla-

nation : they love synonyms and long periphrastic phrases : they dilate on minute and altogether unnecessary particulars of grammar. It is plain that after a year or two's reading, in any new passage there must be a number of words that are old and that require no illustration : iteration of old explanations retards progress and dulls interest. And again are children never to learn to walk upright by themselves ? Must they always depend upon the guiding hand of the master ? Are they never to find out meanings for themselves from dictionaries ? Here I see the effect of indigenous methods of explaining texts. We get the pandit, necessary in his own sphere, transported into the English class. In connection with the text comes the question of the use of note-books. The books of most pupils, well-called rough books, are monstrosities of untidiness and cumbrousness. Much too much goes down. There is use in phrase-books, note-books, and the like : but it involves selection, neatness and careful correction either by the master or by the pupils or by both.

Grammar is one of the greatest rocks of offence. In a country where all literature is unorthodox that does not rest upon certain pre-historic grammatical rules, the suggestion that formal grammar need not be taught at the beginning is received with horror. Yet grammar though not taught as a matter of definition and classification by reformers is yet more systematically taught than by the unreformed. The teacher has his own scheme of forms, which he takes up and drills one by one. Such a scheme involves selection : there is never any need for the use of elaborate grammar text-books with hundreds of pages of rules, illustrations and exceptions, a hotch-potch of the necessary and unnecessary. English grammar is, in outline, very simple : and peculiarities of idiom are best left to notice in the course of reading. First teach the boys not by learning rules, but by practice, and the subsequent formation of rules, based on the practice, becomes a matter of intelligent and scientific statement. A grammar text-book then becomes merely a book for reference and verification. Again grammars to be of any use must look at English from the point of view of the foreign learner : no book at present in use in India does so. Nor does any book draw consistent and systematical comparison between the English mode of saying things and the Dravidian. Comparison of this sort should lay the foundation of a scientific study of languages. Lastly in what language should grammatical rules be framed and formal

grammars be written ? Should not the mother-tongue be employed ? Certainly, I think, for the lower classes.

Composition is another vexed question : the points to be considered are how far composition can be linked to the conversation lessons and to the reading lessons and how far independent topics may be set for writing. I think it is undoubted that in the beginning no boy can write about a thing for which he has no vocabulary : yet many teachers (such also as deem a new word explicable by other new and longer words) do not agree with me. It is possible, however, after a tale has been read to suggest a parallel story, known to the pupils, such as can be told with a use of old vocabulary. For instance the story of Alcestis and Admetus can be paralleled by the tale of Savitri which every Indian boy knows. Throughout attention to form ought to be paid—*e. g.*, to the proper location of related words : but in the higher forms, where subjects drawn from various sources of the school curriculum and not merely from the English text may be prescribed, what is called 'rhetoric,' systematic study of sentence and paragraph structure should be a matter for concern. Another point that arises for consideration is the length of the exercises at different stages : so also do questions concerning the type of writing, the type of exercise-book, whether double-ruled, lined or blank.

Lastly I come to the use of phonetic symbols. Many advocate the use of such symbols alone at the commencement. In the *Parlakimedi experiment* I have referred to, they were employed with the greatest success. While it is obvious that phonetic symbols are of no use without knowledge of the sounds they represent, the very use of such symbols, which is not likely to be made by any but earnest teachers, tends to draw attention to the correct pronunciation. It is improbable that, until teachers are taught pronunciation in the training schools and until a class of teachers who have learnt good pronunciation as schoolboys arises, pronunciation can even approximate to the reality. Still a great deal can be done : if only the study of phonetics results in a recognition that English sounds are of different value from Dravidian sounds, much will be gained. In the class pupils are made more lively and interested by this additional exercise of their activity. Not merely speaking, but speaking with correct accent and pronunciation of sounds may in language teaching be compared to the accuracy demanded in the practical work of the science classes. And plainly, if a language is learnt at all, it should be learnt as thoroughly as possible : a study

of the sounds of the language and the training of his pupils to utter them correctly, ought to be to the teacher but the rounding off of an artistic whole.

In bringing this paper to a close, it will not be amiss to suggest shortly in what ways this Association can help the teacher. Primarily only the earnest man will seek its aid: but enthusiasm is contagious and experience proves that where there is one inspired teacher, the dull ones are apt not to be untouched. Here and there reform has begun; a new interest in the teaching of English has shown itself. This Association I believe can deepen and widen the interest.

The ignorance of the mass of teachers about the sources of information is extraordinary. Only the other day I was told of a teacher in a big school who had not heard of the possibility of direct teaching or of the word reform. For such teachers lists of books on English teaching would be most useful: such lists should include, besides books on mere method, suggestive foreign text-books, magazines, grammars, books on phonetics and apparatus. The Association might suggest books of a more general character, such as books on language in general and the English language in particular and useful literary histories: it might draw up schemes of reading to go along with an outline of literary history: and might map out for teachers courses of private reading both in prose and poetry. Perhaps in course of time the Association would develop a line of activity similar to that of the National Home Reading Union, with special attention to the needs of English teachers. Possibly a Sub-Committee might be formed to proceed with work of this character. It is certain that its work would not be in vain: by its agency widespread improvement in the teaching of English would be effected. It is often remarked that the standard of English is high in this Presidency: the truth is that there is a widespread smattering of English, but that the standard is not high. This is all the more to be regretted since the time spent on learning English is very great and the money spent by parents incommensurate with the results. Finally, a study of English, where both the ends of daily use and of an inspiration to a sense of the beautiful, are kept in view, must react, as it has not yet reacted, on the life and literature of the people.

