

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY  
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THE TEACHING OF READING IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOLS.

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F.E. The teaching of reading in New South Wales schools. M.Ed.

R. B. L.PART B

An Historical Analysis Of

THE TEACHING OF READINGINNEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOLS,

Illustrating the complexity of the  
learning and teaching of reading in  
a particular society.

"we often see only the ebb of the  
advancing wave and are thus dis-  
couraged. It is history that  
teaches us to hope.....KELLER

In Part A of this thesis an attempt has been made to examine reading, not as a mental and visual process taking place within the narrow confines of a scientific laboratory, but as a human activity subject to all the pressures and demands, the irrelevancies and distractions, which complicate other normal human activities. This examination, necessarily brief and incomplete, has nevertheless touched on sufficient issues to verify our basic contention that reading is a most complex activity and that this complexity must be understood, and its components evaluated in relation to each other and to the whole, before optimum conditions for reading growth can be promoted within our schools and community. It is now incumbent upon us to prove that this is no fatuous theory by illustrating what has actually happened in New South Wales schools as a result of our inability to see the reading problem as a whole, our half-knowledge, and our failure to make adequate provision for the harmonious development of the fundamental parts of the reading activity.

An historical analysis of the teaching of reading in our schools since the beginning of the colony shows four distinct periods of emphasis:

- (a) a period of religious emphasis (1788 - 1848) during which reading instruction was directed towards the spiritual advancement of society,
- (b) a period of cultural emphasis (1848 - 1905) when both the nature and the content of reading activities were influenced by the endeavours of our society to improve its intellectual and moral standards, and its literary and cultural tastes,
- (c) a period of linguistic emphasis (1905 - 1941) during which our educationists were preoccupied with solving the language difficulties associated with reading, and with

school problems relating to the organization of reading activities, types of lessons, and the application of educational theory to reading practice.

- (d) a period of learner-centred emphasis (1941 - ) in which reading methods are determined by the way in which the child grows and develops; reading activities are based largely on the immediate interests, needs, and purposes of the child; and reading growth is integrated with the child's total growth.

In each of these periods, stress on one or two of the four major factors involved in the teaching and learning of reading - the CHILD, the SOCIETY, the LANGUAGE, the SCHOOL - has influenced the character of the reading methods and the school primers and readers used during that period. And comparative neglect of the other factors has been the source of the reading difficulties common to children of that period. The implications of this will be dealt with in Part C.

In reading this history, one should keep in mind three dangers:

1. the danger of interpreting the division into periods too precisely and forgetting the overlappings and mergings which are a feature of all educational developments,
2. the danger of assuming that during any one period all of the reading methods and materials used conformed to the general character of the period,
3. the danger of forgetting that, although we are still close to the beginnings of our educational history, many of the early reading books, charts, and explanatory materials do not seem to have survived, and our interpretation may be distorted by placing too much importance upon the evidence which - through chance rather than through its intrinsic significance - has been preserved.

CHAPTER 5:THE PERIOD OF RELIGIOUS EMPHASIS1788 to 1848

From the beginning the colony of New South Wales had unique educational problems. Founded primarily as an adult prison settlement, it had not been provided with any facilities for the education of the handful of children, twenty-six in all, who landed with the First Fleet in 1788. Some of these boys and girls were prisoners under 12 and 13 years of age,<sup>\*1</sup> the remainder were the children of convicts and soldiers. By 1800 the number had soared to 958 and included now the children of free settlers and early emancipists, but the need for schools still received very limited official recognition. The British Government's apparent lack of concern for the educational welfare of its citizens was typical of the times and reflected the indifference of many sections of English society. Some of the ruling classes actively opposed the education of the poor, claiming that<sup>\*2</sup> "it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in

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\*1. J.P. M'Guanne, Early School Days in N.S.W., A paper read before the Australian Historical Society, October 10, 1906. Available in the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

\*2. Quoted by De Montmorency, State Intervention in English Education, Camb. Uni. Press, 1902, pp.219-229, from a speech delivered by Mr Davies Giddy during a parliamentary debate on Whitbread's "Bill for Establishing a Plan for the Education of the Poor", April, 1807. Care must be exercised, however, when criticizing such views out of their historical context. The need for universal education was not as urgent nor as obvious as it is to-day, and the 'equality-of-opportunity' concept was at the embryonic stage.

agriculture, and other laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them."

During this period in the history of English education, however, more progressive, enlightened forces were slowly gathering momentum. The Sunday schools advocated by Robert Raikes were spreading rapidly throughout England, meeting an awakening desire for literacy with a simple curriculum which included religious observation of the Sabbath and exercises "restricted to reading in the Old and New Testament, and to spelling as a preparation for it".\*<sup>1</sup> William Wilberforce and other humanitarians were teaching society to feel a new sense of responsibility for the moral condition of the labouring classes. The Church of England, stirred by the great religious revival of Wesley and Whitefield, was displaying renewed interest in its traditional duty of giving children "thorough grounding in their religious faith and such reading ability as would enable them to pursue the Word of God themselves".\*<sup>2</sup> Educational issues were of national importance, as Frank Smith clearly suggests in observing that:

" the Bishop of London thought it necessary, in his Charge of 1803 to expose the doctrine maintained 'by men of considerable ability' that 'it is safest for both the government and the religion of the country to let (the lower classes) remain in that state of ignorance in which nature has originally placed them." \*<sup>3</sup>

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\*1. Frank Smith, A History of English Elementary Education, 1706-1902, p.51, Uni. of London Press, 1931. Reprinted from the rules set up by the York Sunday School Committee.

\*2. Nila B. Smith, Successive Emphases in American Reading Instruction, p.189, Teachers' College Record, Dec., 1932.

\*3. Ibid., p.54.

This controversy, which ultimately emerged as the struggle for national education in England, was still in its infancy when the new penal settlement was made at Sydney Cove. Naturally, then, in its plans for the colony, the British Parliament followed the traditional practice of adopting a 'no-business-of-the-State' attitude towards education. In the beginning, apart from instructing Governor Phillip in 1789 to set aside two hundred acres of land in or near each township for the maintenance of a schoolmaster,<sup>\*1</sup> the home government gave no real consideration to the educational needs of the colony. No teacher of any kind was sent out in the early days, and it was not until 1809 that a qualified teacher (Mr. Hosking) arrived in Sydney.<sup>\*2</sup> No provision was made for school buildings, for school books, or for equipment. These did not appear until the colonists themselves, becoming aware of their real needs, did something about them. The government's policy of non-interference had a more disastrous effect upon life in the young community than had been anticipated, for in this distant, isolated land there was no well-established group of endowed or Church schools to offset the mushroom growth of ignorance and immorality. Briefly to sum up these introductory views, it comes to this. Education in Australia began by inheriting many of the problems facing the English education system but virtually none of its material advantages. Nor were the 'First Fleeters' the type of people who thirsted after education.

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\*1. Historical Records of Australia, (Series 1), Vol.1, p.127.

\*2. S.H. Smith & G.T. Spaul, History of Education in New South Wales, 1788-1925, G.B. Philip & Sons, Sydney, 1925, p.25.

Against this background of neglect, any survey of specific aspects of teaching in New South Wales schools during the early years must reveal a bare and dismal picture. In studying the teaching of reading, for example, we find that any contemporary interest in the finer points of reading method was dwarfed into insignificance by the huge sprawling shadow of deplorable school conditions in the physical sense. The pioneers of Australian education - the Rev. Richard Johnson, Missionary Hassall, and the Rev. Samuel Marsden - needed schools, teachers, and books. Their interests lay not so much in determining the best method of teaching reading as in finding someone capable of doing the teaching and in finding something for the children to read.

i. The Educational Background of School Reading Activities From 1788 To 1848.

The shortage of trained, skilful teachers was the core problem in our early endeavours to establish schools. The first reading lessons were given by two convict women who, under the guidance of the Rev. Richard Johnson, gathered together a few children in their huts. We know nothing of their methods or materials but, without doubt, they were concerned with teaching the children 'to read well in the Bible'. For some years most of the instruction was done by convicts under the direction of clergymen. Thomas Macqueen (Norfolk Island) and others among these convict-teachers had been schoolmasters in England but any merit which they may have possessed as teachers was marred by their drunkenness and bad conduct. Then clergymen started to supplement their very

meagre incomes by teaching, and the missionaries also helped out, although they were ill-prepared for the task. Australia's second qualified teacher, Thomas Bowden, master of the Sydney Public School, arrived in the colony in January, 1812, but the number of skilled teachers in the country did not increase appreciably until the Rev. Thomas Reddall,\*<sup>1</sup> who had been trained as a teacher under Dr. Andrew Bell's system at the Central National School in London, was given authority in 1824 to adopt the system in all the public schools throughout the colony. But the monitorial systems of Bell and Lancaster offered a doubtful solution and, in any case, their popularity soon waned. It was not until the early 1850's that "Australia began the organized preparation of teachers".\*<sup>2</sup> Prior to that innovation our "teachers were, in the main, untrained, unskilled and incompetent".\*<sup>3</sup> As P.R. Cole states:

"their character, not their education, had secured their appointment; their status was that of a domestic servant; they were tempted by the practice of head money to be dishonest; and their superiors the clergy too often were indifferent or incompetent supervisors of their labours." \*4

The shortage of teachers, combined with the general lack of skill among those who professed to teach, and the non-existence of an efficient organization for establishing and inspecting standards

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\*1. Governor Brisbane appointed the Rev. T. Reddall Director-General of all the Government Schools (Public) of New South Wales in 1824. Hist. Records of Australia, Vol.11, p.586.

\*2. I.S. Turner, The Training of Teachers in Australia, A.C.E.R. Research Series No.61, p.9, Melb. Uni. Press, Melbourne, 1943.

\*3. S.H. Smith, op cit., p.96.

\*4. P.R. Cole, Education in Australia, Chapter 1, "New South Wales" p.2, Edited by G.S. Browne, Macmillan & Co., London, 1927.

of achievement, meant that the teaching was - in the worst sense of the word - remarkably 'individual'.

For many years the school buildings and teaching materials were as inadequate and as crude as the teachers. The first school-house was erected at the expense of the Rev. Johnson and opened by him in 1793.\*<sup>1</sup> It was built of slender posts, the joints filled with clay, and the windows unglassed. The teachers, William Richardson and William Webster, used the earthen floor as a blackboard and upon it, following the custom of the Eastern world,\*<sup>2</sup> they taught the alphabet and the rudiments of reading. In this manner, according to J.P. M'Guanne, the poverty of the times often determined both the teaching methods and the equipment:-

"The alphabet was ... taught on square frames of moistened sand, with a pointed peg; later, with pipeclay or chalk, and red tiles, followed by blackboards. Quills of the magpie and larger birds were used for pens when paper was available and home-made ink procurable. Old hands state that even in the twenties of last century pens and pencils were not used in some schools, and writing books were practically unknown; when such were used a little dust was spread on the ink to hasten drying ... Much of the teaching was vive voce, and the chastisement was as severe as the teachers were ignorant". \*<sup>3</sup>

Educational conditions gradually improved throughout the 1788-1848 period. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel subsidized teachers' salaries and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge provided some school reading books. Governor King and

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\*1. Historical Records of Australia, Vol.1, p.451.

\*2. "Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground." (John viii. 6.) These early teachers anticipated the practice of the Madras school in which Dr. Bell used a sand-board.

\*3. J.P. M'Guanne, op cit., p.3.

later Governor Macquarie took a genuine, personal interest in education and, supported by benevolent citizens in the colony, built many new schools including the Orphan Institutions. Nevertheless, conditions in general were far from satisfactory. In 1823 Commissioner Bigge reported<sup>\*1</sup> that only one child in eight was actually attending a school, that many buildings were either inconvenient or in a state of dilapidation, that in some schools the children made little progress, and that - as the Rev. Reddall claimed - "although the parents did not forbid the attendance of their children, yet they were too frequently in a state that rendered them incapable of compelling it". These deplorable school conditions persisted throughout the thirties and forties and in addition the interests and welfare of the children were not uncommonly subordinated during these decades to partisan tactics in the bitter battle between the supporters of a national system of education and the stubborn advocates of the denominational system.

ii. School Reading Books.

The school reading books provide a good starting-point for a detailed study of the teaching of reading in these times. For our knowledge of the books actually used we are confined to historical records of correspondence because the original sources, other than the traditional religious texts, do not appear to have survived.

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\*1. Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry on the State of Agriculture and Trade in the Colony of N.S.W., 4 July, 1823. Cited by D.C. Griffiths, Documents on the Establishment of Education in N.S.W. 1789 - 1880. 1957, p. 26-28.

In 1796, the Rev. Johnson applied to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for some books for the schools which were already receiving financial assistance from the society.\*<sup>1</sup> The Missionary Hassall, writing to the Rev. G. Burder, Coventry, on August 8th, 1801, stated that "the schools in the colony are most in want of 1st and 2nd books, as well as spelling books, testaments and Bibles".\*<sup>2</sup> William Crook, writing to the London Missionary Society in 1804 agreed with Hassall: "Books are much wanted here - spelling books, Watt's catechisms, especially the second, Scott's Dictionary, arts, grammars, Bibles, etc., etc."\*<sup>3</sup> This correspondence leaves little doubt that the religious motive controlled the choice of reading materials in New South Wales schools at the beginning. Indeed it controlled every aspect of education and the Hobart Town Magazine of the day was merely expressing the educational philosophy of the people generally when it stated that "religion, in its extended sense, should form the corner stone of the temple of education".\*<sup>4</sup>

No conclusive evidence appears to have survived, but it seems reasonable to assume that the most common school reading books up to the 1820's were the readers published by the S.P.C.K., the catechisms, the testaments, and the Bible. This diet was obviously intended to provide moral and religious fortification. Reading

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\*1. Historical Records of New South Wales, Vol.3, p.184.

\*2. Ibid., Vol.4, p.446.

\*3. Ibid., Vol.5, p.313.

\*4. Quoted by Henry N. Murray from the Hobart Town Magazine in The Schoolmaster in Van Diemen's Land, p.35, Printed by A. Bent at the Colonist Office, Hobart Town, 1834.

instruction was designed to guide the child towards personal, independent reading of the Bible and sought, through this activity, to promote good moral and religious behaviour. If this could be achieved "all the rest of the moral evils would begin to abate".\*1 Such was the place of reading in our schools throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.

Opinions differed concerning the use of the Bible in schools. Some teachers held that it should not be used as a 'reader' but should always be opened with awe. Others raised moral objections. In 1834, Henry Nairne Murray, private tutor in Mr. Gregson's family at Restdown, Van Diemen's Land, wrote:

"It is not advisable, however, that the whole of the Sacred Volume should be taken together, without any choice or selection. The many valuable precepts it contains are mixed up with an alloy of baser metal, with matter either beyond the comprehension of juvenile readers, or unattractive, and unprofitable (to say the least), to young eyes. Mrs. Austen's Selections, and Mrs. Trimmer's Abridgements, are, therefore, best suited for the use of schools and families." \*2

How different things are to-day, with educationists advising parents to let the child read whatever he wants to!

Despite the shortage of paper, some school reading material was produced by printers in the colony. No copies of these books seem to have survived, but contemporary advertisements show that they were compiled from recognized English texts, not from the original writings of Australian authors. Until James Bonwick

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\*1. This view of education appears in a letter sent by William Wilberforce to Viscount Castlereagh, 9th November, 1805. Historical Records of New South Wales, Vol.5, p.727.

\*2. op cit., p.33.

published his Reader for Australian Youth in 1852 "to meet the requirements of Australian schools and families",<sup>\*1</sup> all school 'readers' were the same as those used in England or Ireland. Our children read a great deal about the history, geography, economy, and literature of those lands but nothing about their own. The high interest-appeal of stories and articles dealing with Australia's explorers, aborigines, and fauna, would have been a luxury beyond the resources of the times.

Our knowledge of the first reading books published in the colony is covered by the following entries from J.A. Ferguson's Bibliography of Australia<sup>\*2</sup>:

"Entry 507

SPELLING BOOK.<sup>\*3</sup> (Sydney: George Howe, Government Printer, 1810.)  
Not seen.  
This primer was announced in the Sydney Gazette of January 7, 1810, as follows:

'A Spelling Book has been printed for the Orphan Institution which cannot be otherwise than of much utility in facilitating the progress of the children in the first principles of education. The compilation is made from an 'English Spelling Book' prepared by Mr. Lindley Murray, author of a much admired Grammar of the English Tongue. The skill and judgment displayed by Mr. Murray in the composition of his elementary productions for the benefit of youth are the strongest evidence of the taste and genius of this polished writer, in whose labours we are happy to reflect, the children of New South Wales have now the opportunity of benefitting (sic).

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- \*1. James Bonwick, Reader for Australian Youth, from the Preface, Part 1, printed for the author by T. Strode, Adelaide, 1852.
- \*2. John Alexander Ferguson, Bibliography of Australia, Vol.1, 1784 - 1830, p.203, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1941.
- \*3. The reader should bear in mind that when the A-B-C method of teaching reading held sway, the first primer was usually designated - as it was in fact - a spelling book.

'Above the number printed for the use of the orphans, which will also be distributed to the children in the public school at Parramatta, a few copies were requested by Mr. Crook, for the use of his Academy, and for sale also. Those teachers and others, therefore, who are studious of facilitating the first principles of Instruction, are informed where they may be purchased, and at as cheap a rate as possibly they can be sold for.'

The first school book printed in Australasia. Unfortunately no copy appears to have survived."

"Entry 837

PRIMER FOR CHILDREN.\*<sup>1</sup> 12 mo. (Hobart: Andrew Bent, 1821.)  
Not seen. Mentioned in the supplement to the Hobart Town Gazette, August 25, 1821, as follows:

'A small Primer for the use of children on their first going to School, will be published in a few days at the Printing Office: Price 2s to be paid on Delivery.'

This was probably the first school book printed in Tasmania.'

The earliest copy of a school catechism known to have been used in our schools is in the Education Museum at Armidale Teachers' College. Printed in 1825, it bears the title: Pinnock's Catechisms - A Short Bible and Gospel History Adapted to the Capacity of Young Minds in Question and Answer. It commences thus:

CHAPTER 1 \*<sup>2</sup>

Question: Who made you and all the world?  
Answer : God.  
Q. : What is this world called?  
A. : The earth.  
Q. : What did God call the light?  
A. : Day.  
Q. : What did He call the darkness?  
A. : Night.

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\*1. Ibid., p.319.

\*2. Pinnock's Catechisms, p.3, Nineteenth Edition, printed for Geo. B. Whittaker, Ave-Maria-Lane, London, 1825.

In addition to the school reading-books, some general children's literature was available to our young colonists in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was a time when parents not uncommonly looked on secular literature for children with much the same troubled suspicion as modern parents look on comic books and television serials. Books, they feared, encouraged idleness and tempted boys and girls to neglect their household chores. Hence, most children's books were consciously didactic, written with the distinct - and often declared - intention of improving immature minds. Even romances and fairy tales acquired moral tags. The following list of popular titles reflects the attitude of the age towards juvenile literature: "Jack the Giant Killer", "St. George and the Dragon", "Valentine and Orson", "The Seven Champions of Christendom", "Tom Hickathrift", "Tale of Fair Rosamund", "History of Friar Bacon", "Fox's Book of Martyrs", "Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress", and "Robinson Crusoe".\*1

A very interesting account of the reading fare offered to eight or nine year olds appears in the letters written by a Sydney school-teacher, Mrs. Hannah Villiers Boyd, to a friend in the bush who sought guidance in educating her own children:

"I do not send the Arabian Nights' Entertainments to Fanny, .....in some cases they have been found useful to give children a taste for reading, and Doctor Johnson recommends them particularly for children of slow capacity.

"I have appropriated a portion of the money you sent me to lay out, in purchasing Miss Edgeworth's 'Early Lessons', her 'Parent's Assistant', and a small specimen of Grace Kennedy's works called 'Anna Ross'.....

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\*1. J.P. M'Guanne, op. cit., p.5.

"I send you also a few little books, which cost but 3d each. I think Fanny will take as much pleasure in reading 'Grandmama Gilbert', 'Grandfather Gregory', and 'Bewildered Henry', as my little girl did when I first read them to her, before she could read herself. They are a specimen of the interesting cheap publications, published by the Tract Society. 'Todd's Lectures', is a book which I think will please you, and if you will read one lecture to the children every Sunday, and go through the book three or four times in this way, it will be a preparation of the soil of the intellectual garden....." \*1

One cannot help thinking that Fanny would have preferred the Arabian Nights' Entertainments.

No copies of most of the children's books in common use before the 1850's have survived in our libraries, but some volumes are available in The Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books 1566 - 1910 at the Boys and Girls House of the Toronto Public Libraries, Canada. With the kind permission of the librarian in charge of The Osborne Collection, Miss Judith St. John, specimen pages of these are here reproduced from: The History of the Apple Pie (1808), a book much used for teaching infants the alphabet; A.L.A. Barbauld's Lessons for Children (1794) and R.L. Edgeworth's School Lessons (1817), exceedingly popular books of instruction in New South Wales; and Maria Edgeworth's story book, The Parent's Assistant (1796). \*2

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- \*1. Mrs. Hannah Villiers Boyd, Letters on Education addressed to a friend IN THE BUSH OF AUSTRALIA, W. & F. Ford, Sydney, 1848. (The friend was Mrs. Hannibal Macarthur of Vineyard.)
- \*2. In 1949, the distinguished English librarian, Mr. E. Osborne, presented his very valuable collection of early children's books to the Boys and Girls House of Toronto Public Libraries. Now maintained and added to by the Canadian library, it constitutes a representative library of the books that have been read by English children from the days of Queen Elizabeth the First to the close of the Edwardian era.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

*They only, who have actually taught young children, can be sensible how necessary their assistances are. The eye of a child and of a learner cannot catch, as ours can, a small, obscure, ill formed word, amidst a number of others all equally unknown to him.—To supply these deficiencies is the object of this book. The task is humble, but not mean; for to lay the first stone of a noble building, and to plant the first idea in a human mind, can be no dishonour to any hand.*

## L E S S O N

## FOR CHILDREN,

FROM TWO TO THREE YEARS OLD.

**C**OME hither, Charles,  
come to mamma.

Make haste.

Sit in mamma's lap.

Now read your book.

( 54 )

The moon shines at night,  
when the sun is gone to  
bed.

Is the sun gone to bed?  
Then it is time for little boys  
to go to bed.

The chickens are gone to  
bed, and the little birds  
are gone to bed, and the

From: A.L.A. Barbould

LESSONS FOR CHILDREN

1794

(Original in The Osborne  
Collection of Early  
Children's Books 1566-1910)

Toronto Public Libraries  
Toronto  
CANADA

THE BIRTH-DAY PRESENT.

"MAMMA," said Rosamond, after a long silence, "do you know, what I have been thinking of all this time?"

"No, my dear.—What?"

"Why, mamma, about my cousin Bell's birth-day; do you know what day it is?"

"No, I don't remember."

"Dear mother! don't you remember it's the 22d of December; and her birth-day is the day after to-morrow?—Don't you recollect now? But you never remember about birth-days, mamma: that was just what I was thinking of, that you never remember my sister Laura's birth-day, or—or—or—*mine*, mamma."

A 2

THE  
BARRING OUT;

OR,

PARTY SPIRIT.

"THE mother of mischief," says an old proverb, "is no bigger than a midge's wing."

At Doctor Middleton's school, there was a great tall dunce of the name of Fisher, who never could be taught how to look out a word in a dictionary. He used to torment every body with—"Do pray help me! I can't make out this one word."—The person who usually helped him in his distress was a very clever good-natured boy, of the name of De Grey. De Grey had been many years under Dr. Middleton's care, and by his abilities and good con-

VOL. VI.

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From: Maria Edgeworth THE PARENT'S ASSISTANT 1796

Vol.2 The Birth-day Present  
(Original in The Osborne Collection &c.)

Vol.6 The Barring Out;  
or Party Spirit.

*I inspected it. I jump'd over it.*



From: J. Harris A HISTORY OF THE APPLE PIE WRITTEN BY Z 1808

The catalogue of the 1949 Exhibition of Books for Children held at Eastbourne states that the apple pie's life, as the subject for an ABC, extends at least from the 17th century to Kate Greenaway.

(Original in The Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books 1566-1910 .....Toronto)

tion ; and it may be said of a poor man who is perfectly honest, " that an honest man is the noblest work of God."

There is one virtue that is common both to the rich and to the poor ; this virtue is economy, which is the only sure means of becoming richer.

There is nothing more certain, than that a boy of fifteen years of age, may, by laying by one penny a day, be possessed when he is about thirty years of age, of five and thirty pounds ; and if he continue to save a penny a day, for fifteen years longer, he would be worth one hundred.

Saving of time is as advantageous as the saving of money. The time wasted

in Ireland, by almost every poor man, would, if properly employed, bring him in the value of a cow.

There is a method of spending time, that is worse even than losing it. Playing at pitch and toss, head and harp, and gaming at lotteries and fairs. In great cities, lotteries lead numbers, particularly servants, to ruin and disgrace.

There is no country in the world where the people are more disposed than in Ireland, to believe in good or bad luck. The best luck generally follows the best conduct.

Boys are frequently disposed to torment animals, not so much from cruelty

From R.L. Edgeworth, SCHOOL LESSONS 1817

(Original in the Osborne Collection of Early  
Children's Books 1566-1910 .....Toronto)

land, if it could be always said, with equal truth, that good tenants will have good landlords.

To see his tenants thrive, must give pride and satisfaction to a generous mind.

To squeeze from the hard hauds of peasants their vile trash, is unworthy of a gentleman.

To indulge the idle, to permit the drunkard, to live upon his land, and to waste his substance; is unworthy of a man of sense, and of a true friend of his country.

To dismiss the worthless, and assist the worthy, is the interest and the duty of a landed proprietor.

On the other hand, the farmer and the labourer, should be taught from their earliest years to know that some men must be richer, and some men poorer than others, and that by care and industry, the poor may better their condition, and in time their children may be advanced to situations in life better than those, in which they are themselves placed.

In every ladder, some of the steps must be at the bottom, and some at the top.

Were the poor and the rich to change places, it would only be turning the ladder upside down. The forefathers of the richest persons in the nation must at some

From R.I. Edgeworth, SCHOOL LESSONS 1817

(Original in The Osborne Collection of Early  
Children's Books 1566-1910 .....Toronto)

### iii. The A-B-C Method of Teaching Reading

Our pioneer teachers, following the example of English school-masters of the day, used the A-B-C or alphabet method of teaching reading. This highly formal, spelling method held sway in English and American educational circles until the 1840's, by which time the growing interest in Pestalozzian principles had ushered in modifications based on the 'word-method'. But even as late as 1881, Professor J.M.D. Meiklejohn made the comment that:

"the superstition, that it helps a child to make him say 'double-you-aitch-eye-see-aitch' before he says 'which', and that 'tee-aitch-ee-why' is an "account", both rational and philological, of 'they', still survives in some of the darker parts of educational England." \*1

It survived slightly longer in New South Wales schools.

The A-B-C method approached reading purely as a technique to be mastered. First, the children learned to recognize and recall the names and shapes of the letters in alphabetic order. They did this by constantly repeating the letters after the teacher, or by writing them on a slate or in sand until the correct habits were firmly established. If the children were very young - four or five years - progress was slow and time-consuming. With painstaking care, the children sometimes embroidered the letters of the alphabet on a sampler\*2 and, as a reward for good work, were given gingerbread letters. In the Dame-schools, especially, the unskill-

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\*1. J.M.D. Meiklejohn, An Old Educational Reformer, Dr Andrew Bell, p.76, William Blackwood & Sons, London, 1881.

\*2. The Armidale Teachers' College Education Museum has several excellent examples of these pieces of alphabetic needlework made by pupils in a small country school in the north-west part of the state some time in the 1880's.

-ed teachers introduced the initial mysteries of reading with such incompetence and disregard for individual needs that the average child was rather like Pip in Great Expectations who "struggled through the alphabet as if it had been a bramble-bush; getting considerably worried and scratched by every letter" until at last he "began, in a purblind groping way, to read ... on the very smallest scale". \*1

Next, the letters were combined into syllables, the syllables into words, words into phrases, and finally into sentences. At each stage in this apparently logical process the main teaching technique was repetition - constant repetition. Children spent whole lessons reciting lists of meaningless syllables - "ba, ca, da, fa, ga ...." - but seldom was a voice raised in protest for the content value of the beginning reading material was a matter of no consequence. The sole purpose of teaching was to establish instantaneous associations between the elements of the written language and their articulated correlatives.

In theory, once a child had achieved this he could read, and it is significant that the earliest primers of Protestant England first listed the alphabet, diphthongs, and vowel-consonant combinations, then passed immediately to the Lord's Prayer, the Creed,

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\*1. Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, p.43, Thos. Nelson & Sons London. First published in 1861, this story contains also a satiric description of a more advanced reading lesson at a Dame-school: "Biddy gave us out the number of the page, and then we all read aloud what we could - or what we couldn't - in a frightful chorus; Biddy leading with a high shrill monotonous voice, and none of us having the least notion of, or reverence for, what we were reading about". (p.73)

select passages from the Psalms, and the Ten Commandments.\*<sup>1</sup> In practice, however, knowing the alphabet was of limited practical value to the would-be reader seeking a key to unlock the world of books, and in the end he probably learned to read by building up an enormous 'sight-spelling' vocabulary. No use was made of any other method of word-attack except syllabification.

We have two reasonably detailed accounts of the A-B-C method as used in New South Wales schools. The first, slightly unorthodox in abandoning alphabetic order for the grouping of like sounds, appears in Henry Nairne Murray's "Manual of Tuition for the Guidance of Parents and Others, not Professed Teachers" (1834):

"In all languages, the sounds of homo-organic letters, those sounds which are articulated by means of the same general conformation of the organs, and between which there subsists only a difference of degree, or impetus, are mutually interchangeable. This is manifestly the case with F and V - the latter being the attenuated sound of the former, just as P is the attenuated sound of B, and T of D . . . . By attending to these principles, in teaching the alphabet, instead of scrupulously following the arrangement, in which the characters, composing it, are usually placed, by teaching the child to distinguish and repeat those letters first, which are nearly allied in shape, or whose powers are somewhat alike, and which he can most easily pronounce, his first lessons will be rendered uniform, simple, and intelligible. Still farther to preserve uniformity, in this respect, those consonants, which have double powers, should be taught first by the one pronunciation, and then by the other, first with a vowel after, and then with one before them. In the national plan of tuition, which has contributed so much to simplify the business of education, the pupil forms the letters on sand, or on a slate, at the same time that he learns to distinguish and to sound them. This has the double advantage of engaging his young mind, as well as fixing the character in his memory; and, in every lesson, he learns to read, to write and to spell." \*<sup>2</sup>

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\*1. R.R. Reeder, The Historical Development of School Readers and Method in Teaching Reading, p.11, Columbia Uni., New York 1900.

\*2. Henry Nairne Murray, The Schoolmaster in Van Diemen's Land, OP. CIT., p.44.

Indirectly, this extract reveals how completely teachers accepted the alphabetic method, for Murray never doubts its validity; he is concerned purely with determining the most efficient way of putting it into practice. It is interesting to note, also, the attention given to different pronunciations of the same consonant. It suggests that interest was awakening in the reading difficulties created by the phonetic anomalies of English, but there is no evidence during this period of a similar investigation of vowel and diphthong spellings, and no attempt was made to develop either phonetic analysis or sound blending as techniques that the child might employ in achieving comparative independence in word recognition.

The second account of the A-B-C method in action in New South Wales appears in the letters of Mrs. Hannah Boyd. Writing to her country friend, she gives a lucid description of a teaching procedure that dates back to the earliest Abecedarien and hornbook:

"I do not know what plan you may have adopted in teaching Fanny, but I shall give you one which I have found successful.

I send you a nice little book called 'Little Lessons for Little Learners', one page of which will be quite sufficient to try to keep his attention to at a time. The first lessons contain words of three letters each, and you should assist him in spelling over every one of them to you, whether he previously knows some of the words or not. Do not let him try to read any of the stories until he can spell every word without assistance. Limit the task every day to spelling one page over three times on the book, then read it to him yourself, and talk to him about the subject of the story, patiently answering him any questions he may ask you. You will find at the end of six months, that this method of agreeably exercising the reasoning and observing faculties will imperceptibly enable him to conquer the difficulty of learning to read; and the correct manner of spelling all the smaller words will be impressed on his memory." \*1

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\*1. Letters on Education, op. cit., p.119.

iv. Emphasis on the Oral Aspects of Reading

After the elements of reading had been taught, the reading lesson became primarily an oral activity as the following extract, from a lecture delivered by the Rev. W.R. Wade at Hobart Town, clearly illustrates:

"We suppose our reader to have long since mastered the mysteries of alphabetic symbols - to have gone through the drudgery of syllabic combinations - to have been thoroughly drilled in the methodic timing of his sentences, and to have attained, moreover, some correct notion of accent, emphasis, and cadence. We suppose him, further, to be practically working, with the most scrupulous attention, the whole mental machinery of 'Rules for Reading' which he has acquired in his halcyon schoolboy-days." \*1

And those 'Rules for Reading', reiterated again and again in the teachers' manuals of last century, were concerned exclusively with oral reading. They fell into three broad groups:

- (a) rules for distinct articulation and enunciation; for the clear precise utterance of every syllable and especially every consonant - "a correct pronunciation of the unaccented vowels forms one of the greatest beauties of reading", \*2
- (b) rules governing the right use of the rhetorical pause, and
- (c) rules for just intonation and expression, designed to train children "to read as they speak, putting the same variety of inflections into the printed words, as into their own conversation". \*3

Many conditions combined to bring about the emphasis on oral reading and the corresponding neglect of 'silent' reading. Methods

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\*1. Rev. W.R. Wade, Lectures, delivered at the Mechanics Institute, p.34, 'Colonial Times' Office, Hobart Town, 1849. The lecture 'On Reading' was delivered by the Rev. Wade, Curator of the Institution, on 3rd August, 1849.

\*2. Henry N. Murray, op. cit., p.48.

\*3. J.G. Fitch, Lectures on Teaching, delivered in the University of Cambridge, 1880, p.219, Cambridge Uni. Press, 1882.

of testing reading comprehension had not been developed and, in fact, they were not developed as effective teaching devices until the movement for scientific educational diagnosis in the 1915 - 1925 decade led to the construction of standardized reading tests. Throughout the nineteenth century, oral reading served a multitude of educational purposes. Pursued ostensibly as a fine art, it nevertheless fulfilled the functions of modern tests of word recognition and many of the other basic reading skills. To the astute and sensitive teacher, it even had diagnostic value and, to some extent, comprehension also could be gauged by a subjective analysis of the child's oral reading, for his inflection and phrasing provided evidence of insight. As the only known basis for appraising a pupil's progress oral reading predominated in our early colonial schools.

Contemporary forms of school organization, likewise, favoured oral reading. In the national schools (Bell) each child prepared a very short passage, usually no more than a sentence. When he read it aloud all the others listened, and the next boy corrected him if he made an error. Then the monitor pupil recorded the boy's progress in a register. In the other common form of organization, "the individual system", the children came up separately about four times a day to "say" their lessons to the master while he - according to Dickens, Meiklejohn and others - tried not to let the "saying" interfere with his own private reading. Neither system could have incorporated modern silent reading activities into its normal routine.

Out of school, oral reading was a popular form of entertain-

ment and, because of the high illiteracy rate and the shortage of reading matter in the young colony, a vital means of propagating ideas and passing on religious and secular knowledge. Many settlers had but one book in their homes, the Bible, and in the evenings the family gathered in the firelight to listen to one of the members read from it. A clear expressive reader was an acquisition to the household, bringing happiness and a glimmer of gracious living into an otherwise rough existence. Allied with the emphasis on oral reading was the prominence given to rote memorization of lengthy passages from the scriptures, the poets, and the many literary reciters then coming into vogue. It is not to be wondered, considering its importance in everyday life, why oral reading played a dominant role in school, influencing the aims underlying the teaching of reading, the methods used, and the books read.

This oral emphasis is seen in the Rev. Wade's definition of reading as "subdued Oratory", as against the twentieth-century definition of reading as thinking under the stimulus of the printed page.\*<sup>1</sup> Out of this definition grew teaching aims which are still valid but too narrow:

"As the great purpose of reading is to understand a book ourselves, and to convey the sense of it to others, in an intelligible and pleasing manner, it is obvious that good reading consists simply in speaking from a book. It follows, therefore, that the child should be taught to read as he would speak, laying the emphasis upon the appropriate words....." \*<sup>2</sup>

Reading instruction was based on the fundamental principle that

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\*1. E.L. Thorndike, "Reading as Reasoning", Journal of Educational Psychology, pp. 323-332, Vol.8, 1917.

\*2. H.N. Murray, op. cit., p.46.

good reading communicated the author's feelings and intended meaning to the mind of the hearer. The non-oral aspects of reading were certainly recognized by educational authors but in most cases it was no more than a perfunctory mention introducing or rounding off a detailed treatment of oral reading. Authorities recommended that teachers should deal with the general subject-matter, the meanings of words, spelling, the derivation of words, points of grammar, and examples of literary skill. But they should do most of this work incidentally, perhaps using it to relieve the lesson of tediousness and monotony or to regain good discipline if some children were not "following the place".

The method used in all reading lessons beyond the elementary level varied slightly under different school organizations but a basic pattern can be discerned. The teacher read, then the class chanted the passage together ("simultaneous reading") until word perfect, then each child read aloud one sentence while the others followed the place. Thus there developed in our schools as an inevitable concomitant of oral reading that most deadly and uninspiring of all classroom activities - reading around the class.

Although the school reading-books were selected primarily on their moral and religious value, their suitability for oral reading also received some consideration. Henry Murray used as readers Mrs. Barbauld's Hymns and Watts on the Improvement of the Mind, both of which contained "many beautiful passages proper for youth, in which harmonious language charms the ear without cheating the understanding".\*<sup>1</sup> He also recommended the measured prose of

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\*1. Ibid., p.50.

Fenelon for its eloquence, "which young people can taste and comprehend".\*1 In Van Diemen's Land, the Psalms of David, a locally published volume containing select portions of the Psalms of David and a collection of hymns, was not only a hymn book used by the congregation of St. David's Church at Hobart Town but also a school reading-book. It was first advertised in the Hobart Town Courier on 21st June, 1833, with typical nineteenth-century highlighting of religion and oral reading:

"As this little collection of the most beautiful psalms and hymns forms an excellent reading junior class book for schools, the attention of teachers and others is invited to it, to whom on purchasing a quantity a very liberal allowance will be made. The soft and easy flowing metres of this version are singularly calculated as exercises, to improve and harmonize the voice and to smooth the progress of the juvenile reader." \*2

#### v. Some Unorthodox Viewpoints

One of the dangers to be avoided in any historical study of teaching method, is the danger of over-simplification, of conveying the impression that all teachers conformed exactly to the method in fashion and practised by the majority. Every age has its rebels. They may be advanced thinkers, stubborn old-timers, or even reactionaries. To-day, for example, in the schools of New South Wales, there are teachers who still cling to elements of the out-moded Jones System of teaching reading, others who flout modern trends by using a pure phonics approach to reading - often a homespun version, and others who are experimenting with more advanced procedures than those suggested by the departmental

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\*1. Loc. cit.

\*2. J.A. Ferguson, op. cit., p.106, Item 1697a. (Not Seen.)

reading committees.\*1

One of the early nineteenth-century individualists was the Tasmanian educationist, Dr. James Ross.\*2 Like Murray, he saw no benefit in teaching the letters of the alphabet in their traditional order, indeed, he saw no benefit in teaching the names of the letters at all. He maintained that children could master monosyllables, and easy dissyllables, without any previous knowledge of the A-B-C. This knowledge would come incidentally through the spelling of syllables. Some of Dr. Ross's ideas foreshadowed later developments so, to do full justice to them, they are quoted here at length from one of his essays upon education:

"If we are to teach a child to read, let us set before him such combinations of the letters, as he will meet with when he does read; that is, the commonest words in the language. Suppose then, we take the child and teach him to pronounce the letters A, M, N, without showing him the book; then point out to him the three characters that indicate these sounds, first uncombined, and afterwards combined as in the words 'a man'. His mind will thus have an idea impressed upon it, and at the very first step, will be convinced of the utility of the exercise, for it will be put to use and meaning. We may venture, in the second lesson, to give him another letter as I, going over the former ones again, thus, 'I am a man', and in this way his progress will be rapid and interesting. Great care must be taken, when once the child has learned to pronounce two or three letters, in combination, that he should pronounce them together, whenever they occur, thus acquiring a knowledge of the syllables of the language, as well as of the single letters, without the useless trouble and delay, required in repeating what was already known, and naming over again, or spelling as it is called, each letter separately." \*3

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\*1. The N.S.W. Department of Education Infants' Reading Committee, for example, while being progressive in spirit produces primer and reader series which constitute a compromise between research findings and established practices.

\*2. Tasmania was proclaimed an independent colony and separated from N.S.W. in 1825, but the educational history of the times justifies the inclusion of Ross's views in this thesis.

\*3. Quoted by H.N. Murray, op. cit., p.45.

Certain features of this syllabic system of teaching reading merit further mention for had their value been recognized some of the blind alleys so meticulously explored by later inventors of reading systems could well have been avoided. The proposal to allow a child to master the elements of the language as they occurred in his reading, not wholesale but gradually, not as a mass of gibberish but as part of a meaningful sentence, has all of the merit of commonsense. So many of the reading schemes that followed tried to teach too much too quickly. They attempted to teach the child to read in "ten easy lessons" when in truth it takes a lifetime. They treated reading as an isolated skill, failing to appreciate that it is an integral part of the child's linguistic growth and that he should grow into it in much the same way as he grows into the spoken language - slowly but surely as he becomes "convinced of the utility of the exercise". Again, the approach to reading through "the commonest words of the language", now an accepted principle, was years in advance of phonetic primers of the early 1900's in which the "pig did a jig" for purely educational reasons. Ross apparently realized that children can learn to recognize syllables as readily as letters, but he failed to anticipate the 'word-method' by developing this line of reasoning a stage further.

Many were the 'rebel' views on causes of backwardness in reading. While the majority belonged to the laziness school and took remedial measures with a birch, one of the most fascinating theories advocated that individual differences or idiosyncracies could be traced to bumps on the cranium, and suggested that teachers resort to the science of Phrenology in diagnosing cases

of reading disability. This science, now largely discredited, had scores of learned supporters last century - including that tireless correspondent, Mrs. Hannah Boyd:

"You say, that you find many more difficulties in teaching George how to read than you found when you were instructing Fanny. This may proceed from his not having the observing faculties so well developed as hers were; and I can fancy a reason for this. She being your eldest child was a greater novelty to you, and you may perhaps have taken more pains to point out every new object to her, and been more interested in seeing her pleased with them than you were when George was the same age, and when you had more household occupation to attend to. If you observe the upper part of his forehead project much over the region of the eyebrow, it is an evidence that his observing faculties require stimulating." \*1

Be that as it may, for we shall never know about George's bumps, Mrs. Boyd's analysis of the problem as a case of parental neglect of the child's background of experience and language, would meet with approval in modern times.

This discussion of the teaching of reading in our schools up to 1848 would not be complete without more specific consideration of DR. Andrew Bell's somewhat unorthodox yet most influential system. In the early 1820's Governor Macquarie, acting on the advice of Lord Bathurst, directed the Rev. Thomas Reddall "to extend the benefits of education on the Bell system to all the public schools"\*2 and, to this end, ordered from England a large supply of school books "adapted to the system"\*3 including "1000 complete sets of books, including the cards used in the system, 1000 stereotyped cards of monosyllables, 100 do. of written

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\*1. Mrs. Hannah Boyd, op. cit., p.119.

\*2. Governor Macquarie to Lord Bathurst, 16th March, 1821, Historical Records of Australia, Vol.10, p.441.

\*3. Loc. cit.

characters, 100 do. of figures, 48 Bell's instructions to be given to the masters and mistresses".\*<sup>1</sup> Reddall re-organized the Male and Female Orphan Schools on the Bell or Madras system and the historical documents of the period provide ample evidence of the use of the system by New South Wales teachers,\*<sup>2</sup> nevertheless, no copies of Bell's books or teaching aids appear to have survived in this country and inquiries made in England have proved equally unfruitful. (See Appendix I.) Professor Meiklejohn's biography is our sole source of detailed information.

Basically, the fractious old doctor followed the orthodox A-B-C approach to the teaching of reading:

"I have satisfied my mind that there is no difficulty in teaching the alphabet. I have applied a tutor to every child - made copying to be done first, the tutor helping as much as possible - repeating, and requiring to be repeated, the letter on which the child is employed - registering each letter taught - reading aloud, and taking places for every possible superiority, and writing afterwards from dictation on the opposite side of their slates." \*<sup>3</sup>

But he introduced three modifications of the alphabetic method as it had been taught for centuries under the "individual system":

(a) Children no longer learned the A-B-C by chanting it after the teacher. Imitation was replaced by self-activity, for the beginning of reading - the alphabet and the monosyllables - were acquired at the sand-board:

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\*1. Loc. cit.

\*2. For example, William Cape in a letter to the Governor, 29th July, 1826, states: "I have instructed 320 pupils to read, write, and cypher on Dr. Bell's system". Historical Records of Australia, Vol.14, p.16.

\*3. Quoted from the writings of Dr. Bell by J.M.D. Meiklejohn, op. cit., p.76.

"The advantages of teaching the alphabet, by writing the letters with the fingers in sand, are many. It engages and amuses the mind, and so commands the attention, that it greatly facilitates the toil, both of the master and the scholar. It is also a far more effectual way than that usually practised, as it prevents all learning by rote, and gives, at the instant and in the first operation, a distinct and accurate notion of the form of each letter, which in another way is often not acquired after a long period, and after a considerable progress in reading, as may be seen in those who write letters turned the wrong way, and other instances familiar to everyone. It likewise enables them, at the very outset, to distinguish the letters of a similar cast, such as b,d,p, and q ....." \*1

(b) The letters were not taught in alphabetic order. Bell taught reading through writing rather than through the traditional oral and visual recall exercises, it was only natural, therefore, that he should start with the easiest letters to write: I, L, T, O. Unfortunately, Bell's dogmatic thinking led him to elevate ILTO - "simultaneous instruction in reading and writing" - to the status of an educational cult. This meant that when his system as a whole fell out of favour the very important association between reading and writing, which was later to form the basis of Dr. Grace Fernald's work in remedial reading,\*2 also suffered a temporary lapse from popularity with teachers. The stigma justly attached to the worthless aspects of many teaching practices and educational movements tends always to leave unwarranted prejudices even on the minds of well-educated citizens.\*3

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\*1. Ibid., p.173.

\*2. See Grace M. Fernald, Remedial Techniques in Basic School Subjects, McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1943.

\*3. The worst example of this 'black-or-white' thinking in recent years has been the complete ban placed upon phonics, even as a supplementary word-recognition skill, by some post-war N.S.W. Infants' Inspectors, blessed with a little overseas reading.

(c) The process of teaching a child to read was reduced to an orderly, rigid system. Professor Meiklejohn tells us that Bell devised a methodical arrangement of lessons, thoroughly and minutely graded in difficulty, which began with the plainest and simplest of tasks, "and making that familiar by practice and repetition till it (was) fixed in the scholar's mind as a habit", proceeded gradually by short, easy, and almost insensible steps to increasingly difficult tasks.\*<sup>1</sup> Although modern educationists would decry such ruthless disregard for individual interests and aptitudes, the description of Bell's systematic approach seems remarkably applicable to the modern American primers with their scientifically controlled vocabulary.\*<sup>2</sup> Of course, modern readers have additional advantageous features and are designed for more enlightened teaching methods, but the following quotation from Bell's writings could well have been culled from the 'reading-readiness' theory underlying a modern basic reading programme:

"He is never put into a new lesson, or a new book, till he has well learned the former; and never put into a book till a trial has been made of his ability being equal to the book."\*<sup>3</sup>

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\*1. Op. cit., p.180.

\*2. Cf. the vocabulary data from a series of primers and readers published by the Silver Burdett Company in 1945.

	No. of New Words	Average No. New Words Per Page	Ratio: New Words to Running Words
Readiness Book	6	-	-
Pre-Primer I	20	.5	1:15
Pre-Primer II	32	.5	1:40
Primer	127	.8	1:44
First Reader	180	.9	1:56
Second Reader	377	1.3	1:60

\*3. Quoted by J.M.D. Meiklejohn, op. cit., p.181.

vi. Summary and Evaluation of the Period 1788 - 1848

Paradoxically, both the main strengths and main weaknesses of the teaching of reading during this pioneering period may be traced to the same source: society. But in each period of emphasis this same paradox may be noted, for we find that excessive concentration on one aspect of the reading activity invariably results in weaknesses developing in neglected areas.

One important requirement for the successful teaching of reading is that the teacher and the home, the school and the society, must work in harmony, pursuing a common purpose, having faith in the same methods, and believing in the same ideal. Petty differences aside, such was the case in this pre-Darwin era when a spiritual stability prevailed throughout the nation and its social institutions. The state, the Church, the school, and the parents all believed in the Christian religion, and they believed that education was a fitting means of promoting knowledge of Christian principles, and consequently that reading, as a part of that education, should help lead a child to God. Thus were the educational, the social, and the spiritual forces in a child's life, forged into a chain that was sound and strong.

"God's in His heaven -  
All's right with the world!"

Whether one agrees with these religious beliefs or not is a matter beyond the concern of this thesis. The point is that, right or wrong, the Christian religion provided the basis for a purposeful unity between school and society. Society expected that every

child, who could be given the opportunity, should learn to read the Bible, and that the other books he read should be of such an uplifting, edifying nature that he ultimately

"Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

And the schools did genuinely endeavour to fulfil these expectations, because schoolmasters held the same convictions. What a child read, in school or out, mattered very much; it was a potent influence for good or evil:

"The conduct of men, in after life, is much influenced by the principles they imbibe, the views they entertain, and the books they read, in early youth.

It is of great consequence, therefore, that the books which are put into the hands of children, should be carefully selected - such as will give them a just representation of human nature, of the duties and practice of common life, and of the nature of that world in which they are placed; books which will enable them to distinguish between real and imaginary wants." \*1

Herein lies the other major strength behind the teaching of reading during this period. Although the physical quality of children's books was bad, especially the print and the illustrations, and although the quantity of reading matter in our early colonial schools was most limited, the actual reading content was good in that the authors selected had something worth saying and worth reading. The effort of learning to read, under the laborious and cumbersome method of the day, reaped its own reward in a rich crop of biblical stories, moral lessons, general instruction, and treasures from our heritage of mythology and literature. There was some rubbish, there always is, but in general the child was a

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\*1. H.N. Murray, op. cit., p.31.

better person for having read those early nineteenth-century school readers. We to-day may shudder at the way in which "the terrible twins, Morality and Instruction, stalked arrogantly through almost every story".\*<sup>1</sup> They would have looked askance at the intellectual and cultural aridity of our 'Reading-is-Fun' type of reader story. They would have wondered greatly at the inane stuff devoid of all literary quality - and even meaning - in our scientifically prepared infants' primers:

"I see you, Baby.  
I see you.  
Play with me, Baby.  
Daddy! Daddy!  
See Baby.  
See Baby play with me." \*<sup>2</sup>

And as for the modern child's consumption of sadistic and sex-slanted comic books - well!

The emphasis on the social aspects of reading, however, the emphasis which gave the teaching of reading in our first schools such stability, purpose, and worth, was largely responsible for its weaknesses also. Concern for the preservation of society's moral standards and religious ideals diverted attention away from the child. What reading might do for society took precedence over

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\*1. Geoffrey Trease, Tales Out of School, William Heinemann Ltd., London, 1948. (p.3) Trease also relates a true story illustrating the absurdity of some 19th century moralists:

"'Cinderella', wrote a lady in 1802, 'is perhaps one of the most exceptional books that was ever written for children. It paints some of the worst passions that can enter into the human breast - envy, jealousy, vanity, a love of dress.' No doubt she was somewhat mollified when Cinderella, later in the century, was re-written as temperance propaganda, and the wedding scene culminated in a grand bonfire of all the alcohol in the royal cellars." (p.1.)

\*2. N.B. Smith, Bill and Susan, p.41, Silver Burdett Co., New York, 1945.

what the process of learning to read was actually doing to the child. No importance was placed on how the child felt about reading, how it affected his self-concept<sup>\*1</sup>, or how his reading successes or failures modified his total development. Every child, irrespective of his natural ability, his maturity, and his language background, was treated alike. Interest, the sine qua non of modern reading instruction, was practically unheard of. In fact reading lessons quenched children's interest in reading more than they kindled it and in most cases built up undesirable attitudes towards the activity and a life-long dislike for books. As similar criticism could be made of the teaching of other subjects, it is not surprising that truanting was common and that the school environment was more disciplinary than educational.

The seeds of a later interest in the language problems associated with the teaching of reading can be detected swelling into life during this period. Dissatisfaction was mounting against the custom of teaching the letters in alphabetic order, and teachers began to analyze the anomalies of English spelling in relation to reading and to seek more logical and more 'reading-conscious' ways of organizing this section of their work. Dr. Bell had unwittingly scratched the surface of the modern theory that all the language skills are interrelated. The growth of interest in these linguistic problems, however, had to await stimulation from the great language scholars of the late nineteenth century, before it flourished into a crop of reading systems in which the ingenious

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\*1. T. & R. Boning, "I'd Rather Read Than", p.198, The Reading Teacher, Vol.10, No.4, April 1957. International Reading Assoc.

inventors attempted to reduce the irregularities of English orthography - by means of phonetic alphabets, diacritical marks, and contrasting styles of print - into such orderliness that a child could almost teach himself to read.

Finally, the school, with its inflexible routines, untrained or semi-trained teachers, and unscientific methods, contributed very little to the teaching of reading during these years. The study of pedagogy as a science rather than as an art was still at an elementary and amateurish level. For example, Henry Murray's views on beginning reading by presenting in groups those letters which have phonic or calligraphic similarities would not survive exposure to the light of carefully controlled research. Indeed the evidence available to-day<sup>\*1</sup> supports the opposite viewpoint. Modern teachers avoid teaching confusions; they wait until the child notices similarities himself before they draw his attention to the differences. Nor do they teach the 'double powers' of the consonants together, but they allow the child's knowledge of these to develop gradually through observation and timely guidance, because experiments have proved that in the early stages of learning to read, too big a bite from the apple of knowledge usually causes mental indigestion accompanied by emotional distress.

With the emphasis primarily on the religious and moral content of school reading and on its social utility, the period 1788 to 1848 was one in which learning to read was far from being an

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\*1. See Marion Monroe, Children Who Cannot Read, pp.117-119, Uni. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1932 as an example.

exciting intellectual adventure, or even a particularly satisfying one. Admittedly, the shortage of reading material, the monitor-style instruction, and the allocation of excessive time to oral reading, may be excused in an impecunious pioneering colony, but for the majority of children reading lessons were more monotonous, mechanical, and meaningless, than they should have been. And for the poor readers, for those who felt totally inadequate to cope with the reading task, the lessons were times of anxiety, apprehension, and fear.

Regardless of all their shortcomings, however, these lessons had two worthwhile features which are relevant to modern reading philosophy: the content of the readers used was challenging, and it had a definite, far-sighted purpose - to build ideals of virtue, morality, and the good Christian life. Henry Dunn and John Thomas Crossley sum up these points of emphasis and the general position up to 1848 in the Preface to their Daily Lesson Book published at the conclusion of this first period:

"The main design of the present volume ... is to favour the production of good moral and religious influences in connexion with a rigorous course of intellectual instruction and discipline. With this view each day's lesson has been made to include, first, a text of Holy Scripture, which, being committed to memory, may serve as a motto for the day; secondly, a brief poetical extract, adapted to improve the taste and excite the affections; and, lastly, a portion of useful knowledge intended as a general exercise in reading." \*1

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\*1. Henry Dunn & John Thomas Crossley (Joint Editors), Daily Lesson Book for the use of schools and families. No.111, printed for the Van Diemen's Land Public Day Schools, Hobart Town, 1849. (By kind permission of the Mitchell Library, Sydney.)

CHAPTER 6:THE PERIOD OF CULTURAL EMPHASIS1848 to 1905

The decline of the religious emphasis in New South Wales reading instruction began with the setting up of the National and the Denominational Boards in 1848. The need for such a dual system had arisen as the expanding pastoral industries dispersed a small population over vast areas and the four major religious persuasions which had, from the first, exerted some measure of ecclesiastical control over education, found it difficult and uneconomical to maintain separate schools in every district. To meet this need and to provide some form of schooling for a larger percentage of the children,<sup>\*1</sup> Governor Richard Bourke in 1833 recommended to the Home Government:

"that schools for the general education of the colonial youth, supported by the Government, and regulated after the manner of the Irish schools, which since the year 1831 receive aid from the public funds, would be well suited to the circumstances of this country ..... (Schools) in which Christians of all creeds are received, where approved extracts from Scripture are read, but no religious instruction is given by the master or mistress, such being imparted on one day in the week by the ministers of the different religions attending at the school, to instruct their respective flocks." \*2

A bitter controversy ensued in which each denomination fought for the right to educate its children, until the Legislative Council, in 1848, spurred on by the inadequacy of these church schools and

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\*1. The Lowe Report of 1844 stated that of the 25,676 children in the colony between the ages of four and fourteen years, about 13,000 were receiving no education at all.

\*2. Historical Records of Australia, Vol.17, p.230.

by the success of Lord Stanley's system in Ireland, established a Board of National Education.

The books used in the new National schools were the publications of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland. They presented a 'plain and practical course of instruction calculated for people's schools',<sup>\*1</sup> with no specific religious doctrine but a wealth of factual material, general information, moral stories, social teachings, and literature. 'Useful information' replaced religion as the underlying theme in these books.

Under the direction of William Wilkins and the political tutelage of Parkes, the National System - and indirectly the Irish National Books - grew in popularity. By introducing the pupil teacher system, payment by results, the inspectorial system, the classification of teachers, and new methods of classifying children and organizing school records, Wilkins gave the National school system a centralized efficiency. The Denominational schools lacked the unity to make similar progress and their Board was finally dissolved by the Public Schools Act of 1866.<sup>\*2</sup> As S.H. Smith says:

"Under the guidance of the Churches, education ... languished, not so much because of their incapacity to teach, but because of their impotency in a mixed community to organize and administer an educational system, acceptable to the nation as a whole."<sup>\*3</sup>

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\*1. Quoted from the Dublin University Magazine, August, 1856, in Educational Pamphlets, p.41, W. Baker (pub.), Melbourne, 1857.

\*2. This thesis is limited to a survey of the teaching of reading in the National or public schools. The omission of further mention of the Church schools is in no way intended as a reflection upon their contribution to Australian education. Their reading books and teaching methods have, however, generally been less progressive than those of the public schools.

\*3. S.H. Smith and G.T. Spaul, op. cit., p.143.

When the Council of Education took over in 1867 it sanctioned the use in schools of three sets of books; the Irish National Books; the Australian Class Book (Parts 1, 2, and 3) published by J.J. Moore, Sydney; and the "Constable's Series" of English Reading Books (1 - 5) published by J. Laurie, Edinburgh.\*<sup>1</sup> As time went on criticism of these information-type readers snowballed. They were not written 'expressly for the colony';\*<sup>2</sup> they were full of errors and vulgarisms;\*<sup>3</sup> they were not to the liking of the School Management text-book authors who, coming under Herbartian influences, wanted history, the classics, and real literature included in the school reading books. And finally, they were unacceptable to the Catholic clergy\*<sup>4</sup> who saw them as part of a 'godless', secularist education which constituted a return to paganism.

Consequently, following the educational turmoil of 1879 and 1880,\*<sup>5</sup> the introduction of a new type of reading book in the public schools was not unexpected. As if in answer to the Pastoral Letter of 1879, which held that education could not be divorced from religion without corrupting the morals of youth, the new

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\*1. See the Report of the Council of Education upon the Condition of the Public Schools for 1868, p.54, Appendix G., Sydney, 1869, for complete details of these publications.

\*2. The Australian Journal of Education, p.351, Vol.1, No.10, October, 1868, published in Sydney by a Committee under the Council of Education. (A. Lansdown in a letter to the Editor)

\*3. Ibid., p.192, Vol.2, No.5, May, 1869, in a letter to the Editor by a correspondent, 'Philelipsis'.

\*4. See U. Corrigan, Catholic Education in New South Wales, p.70, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1930.

\*5. The Pastoral Letter of the Roman Catholic Archbishop and Bishops in June, 1879, and the Public Instruction Act of 1880.

"Australian Reading Books" published by William Collins Brothers & Company in 1880, were permeated with stories for promoting 'the good life'. Pacifying the Herbartian school, were historical writings and poems, but the conventional informative essays still greatly outnumbered the extracts from real literature. An attempt was made "to meet the requirements of education in Australia"\*<sup>1</sup> by including material on local industries, fauna and flora. So that, altogether, the books were an educational hotchpotch, more suitable than the Irish National Books which lingered on into the nineties, but essentially English texts garnished with some Australiana.

The next movement for improved reading books pointed up a significant new trend in educational philosophy for it came entirely from within the education department; it was an early example of the 'rule-by-experts' policy which prevails to-day. In 1889, a Sydney Conference of Inspectors and Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the Collins' readers. No social or religious objections were raised, however, only educational ones. The primers failed to stress reading for meaning, and the advanced books were too difficult, lacked local interest and pictorial appeal, and contained insufficient genuine literature. A tender for reading books with these desired educational and cultural features produced "The New Australian School Series", published by William Brooks & Co., of Sydney, and adopted for use in the schools by the Department of Public Instruction in 1898. These readers survived the upheaval of 1901 - 1905, when Professor Francis Anderson and Commissioners

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\*1. From the preface to The Australian Reading Books, p.iii, Collins' Australian School Series, Sydney, 1880.

Knibbs and Turner exposed the defects of our education system which, stifled by its own mechanical efficiency, was lagging behind developments abroad. The Brooks' readers survived temporarily, because the emphasis in reading instruction was swinging rapidly away from content and towards method as we shall see in the next chapter.

This brief survey of the 1848-1905 period has shown that each important turning-point in our educational history was brought about by forces which called, also, for a review of reading materials and for appropriate adjustments in reading programmes. It has shown that reading reform has always been part of the general pattern of educational reform, not an isolated development. This being the case, the wisdom of maintaining a broad, flexible approach to reading, based on sociological as well as psychological study, is reasonably obvious.

i. The Educational Background of School Reading Activities from 1848 to 1905.\*

School conditions during this period varied tremendously with time and place. 'Catch-as-catch-can' schooling in a rough school-tent on the goldfields in the fifties or sixties of last century had little in common with, say, education at Fort-street in the 1890's in the Kindergarten Department conducted according to the principles of Froebel by Miss E.L. Banks, a certificated Kindergarten with experience in infants' schools in England and Germany.

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\* Professor Anderson spoke to the Teachers' Conference in 1901, but the 'New' Syllabus did not appear until 1905.

The effect upon children's reading of the school conditions and of the features of the education system described below was so detrimental that there is reason to doubt the truth of Chief Inspector<sup>\*1</sup> Bridges' categorical statement that "our teachers teach the children how to read and what to read, and give them a love for reading."

(a) The System of Payment by Results

A teacher's income and professional advancement depended upon the results of the school inspection, upon the total marks awarded following a detailed examination of the children in each subject. But the marks were distributed among the subjects in a manner that tempted unscrupulous teachers to neglect the teaching of reading and arithmetic, as Inspector Maynard pointed out in 1872:

"The inspectors, in judging a school, are instructed to give an equal value (a maximum of ten marks) to each of these subjects (reading, writing, arithmetic, dictation, object lesson, singing, grammar, geography, drawing, and Scripture); but reading is divided into four parts - reading proper, spelling, meanings, and knowledge of the subject; and arithmetic into three - notation, statement, and mental operations. But as reading and arithmetic in all their phases can only command a maximum of ten, and as the getting of these ten involves an immense amount of labour - an amount out of all proportion to that required for obtaining the same number in any other subject - it follows that teachers who desire a good report - i.e. a high total of marks - are tempted to give their chief attention to easy subjects, and to trust somewhat to chance for the score they may make on the heavy ones, of reading and arithmetic." \*2

This anomaly, which sacrificed reading to the rote memory subjects, was not rectified until 1883 by which time the low reading standards prompted administrative action.

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\*1. Report of the Minister of Public Instruction upon the Condition of Public School established and maintained under the Public Instruction Act of 1880, (1900), p.122, Sydney, 1902.

\*2. J.C. Maynard in the Braidwood District Inspector's Report, Report of the Council of Education upon the Condition of the Public Schools for 1872, p.67, Sydney, 1873.

(b) The Training of Teachers

One factor most intimately related to children's success or failure in reading is the quality and competence of their teachers. Children need teachers who are properly educated and fully trained. During this period of our educational history, however, most of the teachers had only a very ordinary primary education and many had received no training at all. The Commission of 1854-55 reported that 105 of the 204 teachers in the National and Denominational schools were untrained and that most of the so called training was 'nominal only'.<sup>\*1</sup> As late as 1891, a correspondent in The New South Wales Educational Gazette wrote about "the army of untrained and partially trained teachers in the service",<sup>\*2</sup> and pointed out that although "no candidates are accepted by the Department until certified by competent teachers to be able to manage a class ... many teachers who certify to the ability of candidates have themselves never been trained".<sup>\*3</sup> These untrained novices may have been systematic in their teaching of reading but they were not scientific. Inspectors repeatedly commented on their ignorance of mental philosophy and pedagogy in criticisms of the following nature:

"They seldom inquire why one method rather than another is necessary to the successful treatment of any given subject, and it is therefore not infrequently a matter of chance that the correct method is selected." \*4

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\*1. D.C. Griffiths, op. cit., p.97.

\*2. The New South Wales Educational Gazette, p.81, Vol.1, No.4, Sydney, Sept., 1891. A footnote to the letter reads - "This is being every day remedied by the gradual introduction of trained teachers in country districts. -Editor."

\*3. Loc. cit.

\*4. Edwin Johnson, Cumberland District Inspector's Report, Supplementary and Final Report of the Council of Education etc., p.75, 1880.

In the 1850's when the quality and the supply of teachers were both dangerously low, Wilkins organized the pupil-teacher system of teacher training. It served a useful purpose at the time but its virtues on the economic side were soon offset by its many defects on the education side. Discipline tended to break down when youngsters of fourteen years of age tried to control large classes and, battling against the rumpus, they often took as long as six months to complete a simple task such as teaching First Class the names of the letters of the alphabet. Silent reading lessons were out of the question; oral reading and simultaneous reading were more effective in bringing a class to order. But even in these lessons few pupil-teachers had the necessary training or skill in pattern or exemplar reading to give any real help to their classes.\*<sup>1</sup> In brief, the pupil-teachers heard children read, they did not teach them to read.

(c) The Physical Condition of the Schools

In "The Old Bark School" Henry Lawson describes the miserable schools in which many country children during his youth applied themselves to their books:

"It was built of bark and poles, and the roof was full of holes  
 And each leak in rainy weather made a pool;  
 And the walls were mostly cracks lined with calico and sacks -  
 There was little need for windows in the school." \*<sup>2</sup>

Lawson was not indulging in poetic exaggeration. The following

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\*1. In 1868 the Council of Education employed Mr. T.P. Hill to give a course of lessons to metropolitan teachers in the art of reading. This early forerunner of the modern 'post-college course' was, according to inspectorial reports, much needed.

\*2. Henry Lawson, "The Old Bark School", Poetical Works of Henry Lawson, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1925.

extracts from official reports reveal much the same picture of deplorable school conditions:

- \* "Many (schools) are built of slabs, floored with mud and roofed with bark." \*1
- \* "At the close of 1881 there were 36 tent schoolrooms in various parts of the colony." \*2
- \* "Education is always at a low ebb in a school where there is no blackboard." \*3

Add to these the restricted choice of basic readers, the lack of library facilities and the shortage of teaching equipment, and our contempt for the methods of the nineteenth-century Australian teachers turns to respect for their remarkable achievements.

#### ii. School Reading Books

Copies of the different series of school reading books used during this period have survived in either the Mitchell Library, the N.S.W. Education Department Library, or the Education Museum at Armidale Teachers' College. The essential difference between succeeding series lies in their content. A distinct transition can be discerned from the religious theme to useful knowledge and then on to the cultural theme. No significant changes are apparent in the format of the books, the size and type of the print used, the quality or purpose of the illustrations, or the readability of the material.

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\*1. Quoted from the report of the Commission of 1854-55.

\*2. Edwin Johnson, Chief Inspector's Report, Report of the Minister of Public Instruction etc., 1881, p.53.

\*3. W. M'Intyre, Goulburn District Inspector's Report, Report of the Council of Education etc. for 1872, p.97.

In 1848 the various Denominational schools used reading books appropriate to their respective religions. The Church of England schools had publications of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; the Roman Catholic schools had one series by the Society of Christian Brothers and another called the Catholic Series, compiled in the colony and published by Burns & Lambert; the Presbyterian and Wesleyan schools had publications of the Religious Tract Society and of the Sunday School Union. The religious motive was dominant in all of these books.

When the newly constituted National Board met on 8th January, 1848, it selected for use in schools the books published by the Irish National Commissioners<sup>\*1</sup> because of their non-denominational basis. These Irish National Books had been specially compiled<sup>\*2</sup> to meet a similar religious problem in Irish education and were gaining popularity and prestige throughout the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the British Colonies. All told, there were 37 Irish schoolbooks (total cost for the set: £2/6/10½) including reading, Scripture, geography, arithmetic, grammar, and agriculture class books. The Lesson Books, or readers, contained:

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- \*1. The Board ordered £300 worth of books. The first batch of £195 worth reached Sydney on 12th February, 1853, in a damaged condition, not having been thoroughly dried after printing.
  - \*2. According to Sir Roger Therry, in the Sydney Morning Herald, 11th October, 1844, the book of Scripture Extracts was compiled in the following manner: Mr. Carlisle, a Presbyterian Minister, and member of the Board, made drafts of the Scripture Lessons, which were submitted to the Anglican and Roman Catholic Archbishops of Dublin, and if they approved of them they were sent to the printer. Proofs were sent to every member of the Board, and if they approved of them they were printed, in some instances however being first submitted to Dr. Arnold of Rugby.

"a large amount of instruction regarding agriculture, manufactures, and commerce; the phenomena of the simpler parts of Natural Philosophy, the principles of mechanics, and the results of machinery; the laws which govern our social and economic relations; the great truths of animal and vegetable physiology; the general conditions of life in health and disease, and the relation which these bear to the observance of cleanliness, ventilation, and other sanitary provisions and regulations." \*1

From the content of these books one can readily glean that they were written expressly for Irish children of the lower class, and that they were slanted towards inculcating the virtue of a thrifty, moral life. In the Fifth Reading Book, \*2 four chapters are devoted to the Coast Scenery of Ireland and five chapters to the Industrial Resources of Ireland. Small wonder that Australian children found the books uninteresting! As Henry Lawson writes:

"And Ireland! - that was known from the coast-line to Athlone,  
But little of the land that gave us birth;" \*3

In the Fourth Reading Book, the chapters on political economy explain to the young potential labourer that the existing class structure of society is both inevitable and desirable, and try to persuade him to accept and be content with a life of poverty:

"It is, of course, not to be expected that many poor men should become rich, nor ought any man to set his heart on being so ... Can it be supposed that the poor would be better off if all the property of the rich were taken away and divided among them ..? The poor would then be much worse off than they are now, for food and clothes cannot be had without somebody's labour ..." \*4

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\*1. "Present State of Education", Educational Pamphlets No.2, p.65, W. Baker (pub.), Melbourne, 1857, quotes this extract from the 21st Report of the Commissioners of Education in Ireland.

\*2. Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, Fifth Reading Book, printed by Alexander Thom, Dublin, 1876. (See Appendix 3 for details and present availability in N.S.W. of these books.)

\*3. Quoted from Henry Lawson's poem, "The Old Bark School".

\*4. This extract from the Fourth Reading Book, p.186-7, echoes the ideas - and words - of Edgeworth's School Lessons (1817), p.77.

These sentiments received little sympathy from young colonial readers living in a land where fortunes were made more often than inherited. And finally, the content was liberally seasoned with moral teachings and with dark, even gruesome, forebodings -

"Oh, the grave! the grave! It buries every error, covers every defect, extinguishes every resentment! From its peaceful bosom spring none but fond regrets and tender recollections." \*1

How difficult were the old Irish Readers? Comparison with modern standards presents problems. The child usually got through the Second Book at the age of eight,\*<sup>2</sup> so the early part of the book (see sample page overleaf) should be approximately equal in difficulty to the Seaside Story used by our Second Classes at the start of the year. Applying the Spache Readability Formula\*<sup>3</sup> to both, we find that the Second Book rates 9th month in 3rd Grade and the Seaside Story 3rd month in 3rd Grade. But this difference of six months in reading difficulty is more apparent than real and arises from the controlled vocabulary of the modern reader with its frequent repetition of known words. The present writer verified this judgment by testing Second Class children in a Newcastle school on extracts from the Second I.N.B. The Fifth Book was read by pupil-teachers fourteen years of age but we have no standardized reading matter for comparison with this age group. On the Spache Formula this book rates at the last month in Seventh Grade.

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\*1. Fifth Book, op. cit., p.369, "The Grave".

\*2. See the Braidwood District Inspector's Report for 1872, Report of the Council of Education etc., for 1872, p.67.

\*3. George Spache, "A New Readability Formula", Elementary School Journal, L111, p.410-13, March, 1953.

was not a good girl. She did not do as she was bid. One day when she ought to have gone to school, she went to play; and when at last she came to school, she was too late. Then she was put down in her class.

The clock struck twelve, and the boys and girls went out to play, but Anne could not go too. She had to stop and learn her task.

Bess, who was but six years old, though her home was far off, came in good time and got her task. She went out to play with the rest, for she had been a good girl. If you will be a good girl, you will be as she was, glad to come to school, glad to learn, and glad to play.

## SECTION II.

### *Words of Two Syllables.*

#### LESSON I.

##### HOW THE WORLD WAS MADE.

Bible	se-cond	o-ver	rest-ed
with-out	cat-tle	ap-pear	fowl
heav-ens	sixth	se-venth	end-ed.

We are told in the Bible that God made all things in six days. The earth was at first dark, and without form. Then God said, "Let there be light;" and there was light. This was the work of the first day. On the second day He made the sky, or heavens. On the third day He made the dry land, or earth; and He

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brought the waters into one place, apart from the land, and called them seas. On that day, also, He made the earth to bring forth grass, and seed, and trees of all kinds. On the fourth day He made the sun, and moon, and stars to appear in the sky, and give light upon the earth. On the fifth day He made all sorts of fishes that swim in the waters, and all sorts of fowls that fly above the earth.

On the sixth day God made all kinds of beasts, and of cattle, and of things that creep on the ground. On this sixth day He made man also, to whom He gave power over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all things that creep upon the earth.

On the seventh day God ended the work which He had made; and He rested from it, and called the seventh day holy.

#### LESSON II.

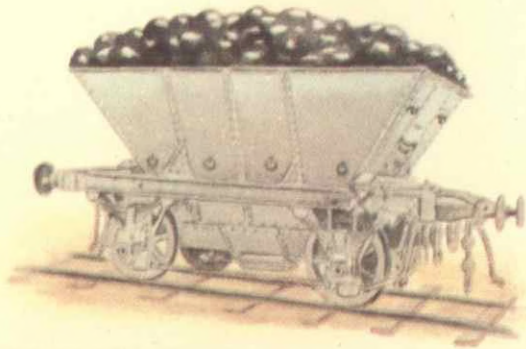
##### ADAM AND EVE.

gar-den	sure-ly	be-come	cat-est
love-ly	E-den	chil-dren	tempt-ed
know-ledge	good-ness	Je-sus	a-way

As soon as the earth was fit for man to dwell in, God made Adam, and then Eve, his wife, and put them into a lovely garden called Eden, to take care of it, and to till it.

And the Lord God bade them eat of all the trees in the garden, except one, which was

1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3  
Mitchell Library  
Sydney  
Second Book of Lessons  
428.6/F



## The Little Coal Truck.

A little coal truck was full of coal.  
It was waiting for an engine to pull it  
up the hill, and over the hill,  
and down the hill on the other side.

The people on the other side of the hill  
wanted the coal to cook their dinners.

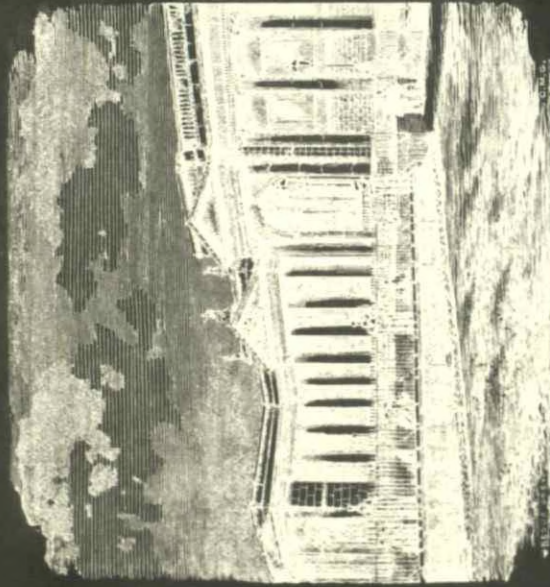
Soon a big engine came puffing  
into the station.

“Oh, stop, please stop, big engine,”  
said the little coal truck.

From the:

SEASIDE STORY

published by the N.S.W. Department of Education in 1952 as a basic reader for use in the first half-year of Second Grade. In size and style of print, use of colour and illustrations, phrase spacing and the control of vocabulary, it is remarkably different from the Second I.N.B.

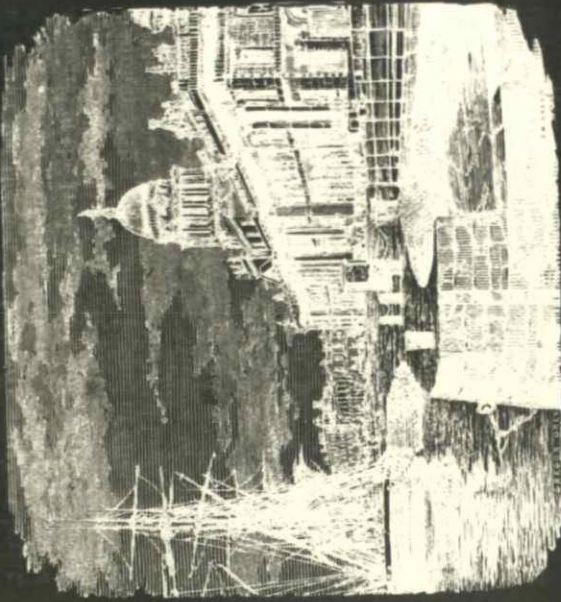


BANK OF IRELAND.

Westmoreland-street, terminated by the ancient walls of Trinity College, and the noble Corinthian portico of the Bank of Ireland. On the north bank, east of the bridge, stands the Custom House, a magnificent structure; and westward in the distance is seen the massive dome of the Four Courts.

Viewed from the Hill of Howth, Dublin Bay forms a picture whose features are as varied as they are beautiful and extensive.

A lighthouse stands on the southern side of the hill, on a small promontory nearly detached from the mainland by a deep ravine. Here, it is said, the remnant of the Danes who escaped from the battle of Clontarf insulated themselves by digging a fosse across the neck of the promontory, and



CUSTOM HOUSE.

defended their little fortress until they were carried off in their vessels.

A few years ago the handsome and flourishing town of Kingstown, situated on the south side of Dublin Bay was a poor village, called Dunleary, consisting almost entirely of fishermen's cabins. The construction of a capacious harbour was the first and great step for the prosperity of the town, which was further advanced by the formation of a railway, which connects it with the metropolis.

The County of Wicklow has justly been termed "The Garden of Ireland," for nowhere else is to be found assembled such a variety of natural beauties, heightened and improved by the hand of art. The beauties of this region have afforded

1 | 1 | 2 | 3  
 Mitchell Library

36

The Irish Readers certainly look less readable. In the Second Book the size of the print is only 12 points, whereas in the Seaside Story\*<sup>1</sup> it is 22 points with extra lead between the lines. In the older book there are no pictures to help carry the story or to provide the young reader with word-recognition clues, no lines broken into phrase units, and no colour illustrations to attract interest. These are matters of recent concern. Contemporary criticism of the Irish books concentrated entirely on content and technical inaccuracies. Teachers objected to the lack of Australian material, the adult appeal of the more advanced lessons, the poor sentence construction, the numerous errors in punctuation, the tautology, and the many unintelligible expressions.\*<sup>2</sup> And it must be admitted that the books were, in the words of the Commission of 1854-55, "defective in several points".

The earliest Irish National Books used in New South Wales were printed in Dublin by Alexander Thom, but some time after 1876 William Collins & Sons of London and Glasgow took over the work. Therefore, the demand in 1880 for more suitable readers led - for commercial rather than educational reasons - to the introduction of a Collins' Series, The Australian Reading Books.\*<sup>3</sup>

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\*1. N.S.W. Department of Education, Seaside Story, Sydney, 1952. Some of the 'modern' features of this book may not be advantageous. The selection of the size of the print and the breaking up of the lines into phrase units are debatable and have not been tested under strict experimental conditions. The larger print may restrict eye-word span, and the phrase units may teach the child bad habits in his reading of books which have normal lines.

\*2. The Australian Journal of Education, op. cit., p.192, May, 1869.

\*3. Primer 1, 11, 111; Books 1 to 4; Book 5 (Boys), Book 5 (Girls).

## LESSON LIV.

## THE SPINY ANT-EATER.

Cu-ri-ous.	Mar-su-pi-al.	Ir-rit-a-tion.
Ven-om-ous.	Con-sid-er-a-ble.	Prin-cip-al-ly.
Spec-im-ens.	Ter-min-a-ting.	Cap-tiv-it-y.
Ac-com-pan-ies.	Ra-pid-it-y.	In-con-ve-ni-ence.



Of all the curious animals that inhabit Australia, the Spiny Ant-eater is one of the strangest. Like its relative, the watermole, it seems, in some respects, to resemble a bird; but learned men have now ascertained that it belongs to the great marsupial, or pouch-bearing, order of animals. Its common name is derived from its habit of feeding upon ants, and from the spines with which the upper part of its body is clothed.

The Ant-eater is not a large animal. Its length

From the:

THIRD BOOK

of The Australian Reading Books, Collins' School Series, 1880.

These readers were virtually a reprint of the Collins' Series used in England, with the addition of lessons adapted to Australian circumstances (as above). The preamble to the series states that "these lessons have been prepared by writers acquainted with the country, and with the requirements of its schools", but the mode of expression suggests that the authors were not native-born Australians.

In general lay-out, print, and content, the Collins' Readers differed only slightly from the Irish books. The emphasis on useful information had scarcely begun to wane and most of the reading lessons still dealt with such topics as The Opossum, Maize, Paper, Health, Society, The Domestic Fowl, and The Cultivation of Flowers. However, two new features appeared. As a concession to educational interest in "the principle of special locality"\*<sup>1</sup> and its link with the growth of knowledge from the known to the unknown, the publishers made room for many lessons and illustrations on "Australian Natural History and Scenery".\*<sup>2</sup> And as a concession to the progressive educationists of the day, they added more poetical pieces ("The Last of His Tribe", "The Wreck of the Orpheus") and a considerable amount of historical material ("Life of Captain Cook", "Regulus", "The Romans in Britain", "The First Voyage of Columbus").

These innovations did not go far enough. In the decade following the introduction of the Collins' Readers dissatisfaction steadily mounted, and most of it was directed, significantly enough, at the cultural poverty of the series. In 1882, Inspector F. Bridges, later Chief Inspector, "pointed out the benefits that would result from the introduction in our schools of a book containing judiciously selected extracts from the works of standard authors".\*<sup>3</sup> In 1887, Inspector J. Kevin (Braidwood Inspectorate) said:

"I cannot help thinking that the phraseology of our Australian series of lesson books is unnecessarily inflated, and that we should have been none the worse for a little more homely Saxon.

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\*1. Third Book, p.iii, The Australian Reading Books, William Collins, Sydney, 1880.

\*2. Loc. cit.

\*3. Bathurst Inspector's Report, 1882.

The poetry, too, is ill-selected and of a commonplace character. ... one might reasonably have looked for more of the classic element." \*1

Probably the most influential critic was F.J. Gladman, author of School Work,\*2 the School Management text-book used in the Fort-Street Training School and prescribed for study for teachers' examinations. In commenting on reading books Gladman wrote:

"Higher up the school, tales and spirited extracts, travels and descriptive writing, poetry and good dialogues, make up the bulk of the book; 'useful information' should have a place, but not so large a one as was allotted to it in the older reading books." \*3

This criticism, direct and implied, culminated in 1890 with a ministerial statement and decision, so vital and informative that it is presented here in full:

"School Books. - At present there are two series of Reading Books in use in our schools, namely, the Irish National School Series, and the Australian School Series, published by Messrs. Collins and Sons; but, in the opinion of our Inspectors and Teachers, these as well as other series now published are in several respects objectionable as School Reading Books for Australian pupils, and it is considered very desirable that a new series, specially suitable for Australian schools, should be obtained. The matter was discussed at the Conference of Inspectors and Teachers held in December, 1889, and it has since been referred, for special consideration and report, to each Inspector on the staff, and to a number of the best informed and most experienced teachers employed under the Department. The objections to the reading books in use may be summarized as follows:- The primer, or first book, instead of being written in a continuous narrative form, is to a large extent made up of detached words and sentences expressing no connected meaning; while the more advanced works are too difficult, and otherwise unsuitable, for the pupils for whose use they are intended, and their subject matter is not sufficiently Australian.

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\*1. Inspector J. Kevin, Braidwood District, Report of the Minister etc., for 1887, p.151, Sydney, 1888.

\*2. F.J. Gladman, School Work, Jarrold & Sons, London, 1885. The author was Superintendent of the Central Training Institution at Melbourne, Victoria.

\*3. op. cit., p.160.

After careful consideration of the whole matter, and the reports furnished thereon, it is deemed advisable that a new series of books should be obtained, arranged in six "Readers", to suit pupils of different ages and progress. Touching the contents of the new Readers and their general characteristics, it is considered necessary that the subject matter of the lessons should be interesting and appropriate throughout all the books, and that the lessons should be carefully graduated with special reference to the difficulty of the words used. In the first two Readers the new and difficult words in each lesson should be printed at its head, with meanings, roots, prefixes, affixes, explanatory notes, etc. To a large extent, the subject matter of the lessons should be Australian, while other subject matter used should also be dealt with, as far as practicable, from points of view interesting to Australians. As a rule, rhymes and poems should not be invented or compiled for the Readers, but copious selections of these, of kinds suitable to pupils in the different stages of progress, should be carefully chosen from the writings of the best authors, and the whole of the Readers should be copiously illustrated in the most suitable manner. In the Advanced Readers there should, among other subjects, be suitable lessons on Agriculture, The Laws of Health, Natural Science, Art and Literature, Australian Birds, Mammals, Timbers, &c., on Education, and the Choice of Occupations in Life, on Sanitation, and on Political Economy and the Higher Duties of Citizenship, &c.

The production of the books required is the next matter to be considered, and here some difficulties will have to be overcome. As the books are to consist to a large extent of Australian matter, and are to be made suitable in all respects for Australian readers, it is not likely that any writer or compiler, personally unacquainted with Australia, will be able to produce what is required. Under these circumstances, the production of the proposed series should be entrusted to local people; or, if the series be produced by a writer residing in another part of the world, local revision will be necessary before the books are published." \*1

The N.S.W. Department of Education subsequently called for tenders for the production of a complete series of cultural-type readers with an Australian bias. William Brooks & Co., the Sydney school text-book publishers, won the tender and their New Australian Reading Books came into use in schools in 1898. The series consisted of two primers and five readers (see Appendix 4).

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\*1. Report of the Minister etc., for 1890, p.56, Sydney, 1891.

\*2. R.F. Irvine (ed.), The New Australian Reading Books, William Brooks & Co., Ltd., Sydney and Brisbane, 1898.

## LESSON XIV.

## THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

## PART II.

swords	listen	soft-hearted	shelter
fought	fellow	country	wandered
sorry	outright	forest	further
knew	world	frightened	number
depths	clasped	second	afraid

1. One of the men, who was softer-hearted than the other, became sorry for what he had taken in hand to do. But the second man was hard, and would not listen to his fellow, and said he would kill the babes outright.



2. So they fell from words to blows. They drew their swords and fought, and he who

From the:

FIRST READER

of The New Australian Reading Books, Literary Editor - R.F. Irvine, Art Editor - D.H. Souter, published by William Brooks & Co., Ltd., of Sydney and Brisbane in 1898 as the reading part of The New Australian School Series.

will still be drawn. It is worthy of note, that in Australia there are two other mountains of valuable ore: Mount Morgan (gold) and Mount Bischoff (tin).

Small things make base men proud.—SHAKESPEARE.

### LXXIII.—THE TEACHER AND SICK SCHOLAR.

From "The Old Curiosity Shop," Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

#### PART I.

displaying	capacity	abstracting	totally
vacant	tedium	grimaces	impunity
minnow	relapsed	constraint	approving
absolutely	remorseful	affectionate	manufacturers

Shortly after the schoolmaster had arranged the forms and taken his seat behind his desk, a small white-headed boy with a sunburnt face appeared at the door, and, stopping there to make a rustic bow, came in and took his seat upon one of the forms. He then put an open book, astonishingly dog's eared, upon his knees, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, began counting the marbles with which they were filled; displaying in the expression of his face, a remarkable capacity of totally abstracting his mind from the spelling on which his eyes were fixed.

Soon afterward, another white-headed little boy came straggling in, and after him, a red-headed lad, and then one with a flaxen poll, until the forms

From the: FOURTH BOOK

of The New Australian Reading Books, William Brooks & Co., Sydney and Brisbane, 1898. Dates and references in the text suggest that some revised editions were produced between 1898 and 1916 (See letter from the publishers in Appendix 1).

How far did the new Brooks' Readers comply with Departmental suggestions? The publishers obviously made a determined effort to improve the cultural tone by including selections from acclaimed poets such as Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats, Byron, Blake and Stevenson, as well as extracts from outstanding authors - Bunyan, Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Swift, Defoe, etc. They re-introduced readings from the Bible.\*<sup>1</sup> Whereas Collins' Third Reader had no biblical material, Brooks' Third Reader contained "The Birth of Moses", "David and Goliath", "The Twenty-third Psalm", "The Parable of the Sower", and other extracts directly from the Bible. So one cannot help feeling that although children's reading interests vary somewhat from generation to generation, as far as content is concerned, the compiler did provide young readers with reading matter that was varied, interesting, worthwhile, and of literary merit.

On the mechanical side the series achieved reasonable success. The books were better graded than the Collins' books and the standard was modified. On the Spache Formula the Third Reader rates at the beginning of 5th grade and is approximately one grade easier than Collins' Third Reader. The Fifth Reader, however, jumps rather erratically to a 2nd Year High School level. In brief, the reading difficulty of the Brooks' Readers is between that of the Irish National Books and the Collins' Readers.\*<sup>2</sup>

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\*1. There were three reasons for this: the disappearance of the I.N.B. Scripture Book from schools, the greater ease with which this could be done now that the readers were essentially for Protestants, and the desire to avoid criticism from churches.

\*2. Brooks' Second Reader is 3 months more difficult than the old Irish Second Book. This probably came about because there were no primers in the I.N.B. series.

An outstanding feature of the new Brooks' Readers was the work of the art editor, D.H. Souter. For some of the geographical and factual articles he used photographs, the remainder of the material he illustrated himself with black and white or wash sketches which 'come alive' with interest, vitality, and atmosphere. The magic of his pen enhanced the rich humour of many poems, especially "John Gilpin" and "The Priest and the Mulberry Tree". His superb illustrations for Cervantes' "Don Quixote" in the Fifth Reader and Lamb's "On Roast Pig" in the Third Reader show the value of his association with the Sydney Bulletin and with Norman and Percy Lindsay. Souter's work clearly demonstrated the role of pictures in a school reading book: to attract the child's interest, to help carry the story, and to establish an appropriate reading atmosphere. Since his time, the N.S.W. Education Department has pursued a policy - finances permitting - of getting good artists to do the illustrations in children's readers and the editor of the School Magazine has insisted upon high quality art work even in her monthly publication.

In pointing out the defects of the Brooks' series we must, in all fairness, remember that our knowledge of the reading process has advanced by leaps and bounds since 1898. Most of the criticism stems from modern findings. Surviving pupil-teachers attest that the books were still too difficult and that the high vocabulary and concept loading gave the poor readers neither peace nor reward. The print was close and less readable than that used in modern readers. The content had a mildly didactic, 'this-will-do-you-good' tone and was based on what adults thought children ought to read, not on

what children wanted to read or needed to read for immediate life purposes. But, all in all, the series was a good one, admirably suited to educational theory and practice at the turn of the century.

Why did it lose popularity so quickly? Not because of any real defect in the books themselves. They were sound enough readers for use with the methods of teaching which prevailed in our schools at the time, but when the methods changed - quickly and radically - they had to be replaced. They were designed for teaching methods which developed word-recognition power through spelling, word-building or simple phonics (as we shall see in the next section of this chapter). In the early 1900's, however, the central emphasis in reading instruction shifted from cultural to linguistic matters, educationists sought to simplify the teaching of reading by inventing phonetic alphabets, and many teachers began to teach reading by adhering closely to phonetic reading schemes of the type devised for use in New South Wales schools by Miss Lillian Ellis. These 'pre-packed' reading schemes called for specially constructed primers and readers which were an integral part of the inventor's 'system' and, as a result, the Brooks' Readers were pushed into dusty oblivion.

### iii. Methods Used in the Teaching of Reading

No marked changes in teaching method accompanied the introduction of the Irish National Readers, the Collins' Readers, or the Brooks' Readers. In fact, the centuries-old alphabetic method enjoyed considerable support throughout all this period, for

although some educationists as early as 1867 were decrying the common practice of teaching "the names of the letters of the alphabet instead of the sounds",\*<sup>1</sup> inspectors at the beginning of the twentieth century were still giving the method official sanction by examining children "in alphabet" and "in monosyllables".\*<sup>2</sup> But the reign of 'the good old way' of teaching reading was fast drawing to a close, for even the Department was toying with the ideas of Jacotot, Wood and Pillans,\*<sup>3</sup> and alert teachers were experimenting with the new methods gradually infiltrating from overseas - the phonic, the syllabic, the phonetic, the look-and-say or word method, and various combinations and modifications of these. Awakening interest in the method of beginning reading had no parallel, however, in the more advanced stages of teaching the subject in which "reading aloud intelligently and intelligibly"\*<sup>4</sup> remained the direct and ultimate aim of every reading lesson.

(a) The Continuing Emphasis on Oral Reading

As in the first half of the century, the community still needed good oral readers. Hence, once the elements of reading had

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\*1. E. Johnson and J.S. Jones, Report of the Sydney District Inspectors, Report of the Council of Education - 1867, p.127.

\*2. The annual report on reading proficiency generally took the following form:  
 "Of the 140,713 pupils examined in reading, 7.8 % were in alphabet, 22.9 % were in monosyllables, 29.4 % were in easy narrative, and 39.9 % were in ordinary prose."  
Report of the Minister for Public Instruction, 1893.

\*3. In 1882 a question in the teachers' examination paper on Principles of Teaching read: "Describe the methods proposed by Jacotot, Wood, and Pillans for teaching young children to read."

\*4. F.J. Gladman, op. cit., p.140.

been mastered, teachers and inspectors alike regarded reading as essentially an imitative art. The teacher's primary function in reading lessons was to set an exemplary pattern of intelligent and effective reading, for to read well a child had to hear good expressive reading. The teacher was expected to hear each child read at least once during the reading lesson, and the general practice was for each child to read one sentence - only! Oral reading held such sway that a teacher who hurried over the reading to get to other important work - meanings, explanation of the subject matter, 'felt meaning' - risked a severe reprimand. Inspectors' reports left no doubt as to what they were looking for:

"The great defect is a lack of expression. There is almost no attempt at elocution, and the rhetorical and musical effects of reading are looked for nearly in vain ... The repeating of poetry from memory, as provided for in the new standards, will, I think, have a beneficial effect." \*1

"The pupils would progress more rapidly in reading if the different classes were permitted more frequently to read aloud simultaneously, as such an exercise, when carefully superintended, promotes distinctness of utterance, checks those who read too fast, and trains the pupils to read intelligently." \*2

Authors of educational text-books, when dealing with common faults in reading, rarely went outside the oral aspects of the subject. Ignoring errors in word-recognition, comprehension and critical reading, they dwelt at length on imperfect enunciation and articulation, misuse of the aspirate, vulgarisms such as 'drawring', monotonous tone, hesitancy, inattention to inflection, mumbling and affectation. They assumed that a pupil could not read aloud as though he understood what he was reading, unless he had some

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\*1. Inspector R.N. Morris (Maitland), Report etc. for 1883, p.99.

\*2. Inspector M. Willis (Grafton), Report etc. for 1883, p.107.

intelligent comprehension of the material.

Gladman did actually mention "silent reading", almost apologetically, and - one feels - without any real enthusiasm. He thought that it had a place in the higher classes only, and in well disciplined schools only. His procedure for silent reading lessons was to warn the children that they would be questioned on the subject matter and to allow them during the reading to ask for help with difficult words and phrases. He sometimes varied the concluding test by "confining it to a discussion of the meanings of words and allusions".\*<sup>1</sup> Oral questioning seems to have been the main testing technique and, as a rule, the child was asked to recall or summarize material rather than think critically about it, read between the lines, and arrive at his own conclusions. This failure to put sufficient emphasis on reading for meaning led to all kinds of abuses and malpractices. The Commission of 1854-55 recorded the following example of children being trained to 'bark' at print:

"Little pains appear to be taken to enable the children to understand the passages they read ... We found a class of children of about seven years of age reading the 8th Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. They read fluently, but, as might be expected, without understanding a word." \*<sup>2</sup>

(b) The Decline of the A-B-C Method

The first breach in the traditional method of teaching reading developed during this period but it affected little more than

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\*1. F.J. Gladman, op. cit., p.158.

\*2. Quoted by D.C. Griffiths, op. cit., p.95. The 8th Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans has a reading difficulty equivalent to early 5th grade and, in addition, the concepts in it are abstract and complex, and cloaked in repetitive verbiage.

the preliminary stages of teaching the subject. The A-B-C method had persisted for so long because it was so well suited to the nineteenth-century concept of education as mental discipline. Nothing was left to chance, every difficulty was graduated, and every step had to be thoroughly mastered before proceeding to the next. All this produced good spellers - clear proof of its disciplinary value! Consequently, when progressive teachers attacked the method in the second half of the century, its supporters confidently resisted any revolutionary change, although they did try to allay criticism by making their presentation of the 'old' method more interesting to the children. They varied the innumerable repetitions of the alphabet by adopting new procedures and devices: teaching the letters in groups based on similarities in shape or sound in place of alphabetic order, letting the children play with loose cardboard letters or build up the letters with small sticks, introducing activities with alphabetic blocks or polygons, letting the children write the letters on slates or on paper with red ink. This window-dressing delayed the final decline but could not prevent it for the method was educationally unsound.

By the 1880's the shortcomings of the A-B-C method were being openly analyzed and exposed by education leaders such as J.G.Fitch:

"Against the purely Alphabetic method it is easy to urge that the names of the letters do not express their powers; that singly and apart they have no meaning for children, and are held in the mind by no associations; that analysis is always easier than synthesis, and that it would interest a child much more to learn about a word first and examine its parts afterwards, than to begin with the letters which, after all, do not really represent its parts and afterwards to build up the whole." \*1

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\*1. J.G. Fitch, op. cit., p.207.

In his text-book on School Management, F.J. Gladman maintained that teaching reading as a result of spelling "inverts the natural order" for spelling follows reading in the development of the child's acquaintance with the written language just as the ability to isolate sounds comes after the mastery of words and even simple sentences in the spoken language. The same educational authority<sup>\*1</sup> claimed that Mavor's spelling book, and others used in conjunction with the method, required children to learn meaningless combinations of letters such as, ab, eb, ib, ob, ub. This gibberish bore no relation to the child's experience, and in the hands of the average teacher the method became so tedious that children often acquired a dislike for reading.

We see then that the leading educationists of the time were aware of the weaknesses of the A-B-C method but, at this stage they were not prepared to sweep it aside as Professor Welton did later with his famous comment that: "No child ever learned to read by this method, but in spite of it". Their reluctance to cast the old aside was understandable for none of the new methods had proved entirely superior in every respect.

Foremost among these was the phonic method. It was also a spelling method, but the children gave the letter sounds instead of the names and attempted to blend the sounds constructively in attacking unknown words. Phonic methods had been developed years before by the Jansenists in the Port Royal Schools but it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that they gained any

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\*1. F.J. Gladman, op. cit., p.144.

real popularity in English or American schools. They received indirect approval in New South Wales schools in the 1860's when a phonic method was explained and recommended for adoption in the preface to the Australian Class Book which the Council of Education sanctioned for use in schools in 1867. Unfortunately, this phonic publication was too expensive and most schools used the Irish books. It was not until the turn of the century that such methods were used at all extensively in our schools. Meanwhile the 'look-and-say' method had won widespread support but all of these new methods are more appropriate to the chapter on linguistic emphasis and will be analyzed fully in that section of the thesis. Let us turn now to consider the typical reading lesson of the day.

(c) Reading in the Lower Classes

The lesson commenced with the children finding the page and then showing their books to indicate that all were ready. After checking to see that the books were held properly - in the palm of the left hand - the teacher introduced the children to the new lesson with a few stimulating pieces of illustrative knowledge from his own richer cultural background. Then, using either the spelling, the 'look-and-say', or a phonic method, the teacher endeavoured to teach the children to recognize the words. He treated the words mechanically as separate units of language, no reference was made to the context, meaning was not stressed, and the story appeal of the extract as a whole had last priority. Gladman recommended the following procedure:

"Go over each sentence with them word by word, and point to the words if a card be used. The words may be taken in any order at first, or the children may point to each word as you say it, if

they read from a book: see that all point, whether the reading be simultaneous or individual; secure careful looking ... Insisting on children spelling words from or without their books, or writing them on the blackboard will encourage careful looking.

Repeat this exercise with judgment, but do not allow it to become tedious ... Do not iterate in this unintelligent fashion: the, the, the - boy, boy, boy - is, is, is - good, good, good; read the sentence, call children to point to words, and so on.\*1

Having thus disposed of the mechanical difficulties, the teacher laid the foundation for intelligent reading by reciting the sentence himself "with proper or perhaps exaggerated emphasis",\*2 by explaining the meaning of words and phrases, and by questioning the children. The children were then called upon, individually or collectively, to read the sentence aloud. In large or unruly classes, the masters favoured simultaneous reading in which all of the children, reading together, tried to imitate the teacher's pattern of good reading, but opinions differed concerning the merits of this practice for its value in attacking major errors scarcely balanced its imperfection as a method of teaching the subtleties of effective reading.\*3 Following the general plan outlined above, teacher and pupils worked through the lesson sentence by sentence, devoting as much time as possible to actual practice in reading.

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\*1. F.J. Gladman, op. cit., p.155-6.

\*2. Loc. cit.

\*3. Simultaneous reading has no defenders to-day, hence, the following succinct summary of its advantages and defects has both historical and educational significance:

"Its advantages are:

- (a) It promotes uniformity of tone and rate.
- (b) It enables children to read a great deal more in class than any other method.
- (c) Timid children acquire confidence.
- (d) Stammering has been alleviated and even cured by it.

"Its defects are:

- (a) Individual faults cannot be easily detected.
- (b) Lazy children may shirk work.
- (c) It may produce an artificial style." (N.S.W. Educ. Gazette, Vol.1. No.6, November, 1891, p.115.)

Faulty reading was corrected, according to the text-books, by the teacher or a competent pupil reading the faulty passage as it ought to be read and the offender then attempting to imitate the performance. But according to inspectors' reports, the more common practice was for the child to read, make mistakes, be told to read again, fall into the same errors, be told to read again, and so on ad libitum. If the error related to word recognition the offender had to be told the word for no systematic method of word attack, making use of context, structural analysis and phonetic analysis, had been devised.

The approved method, as outlined above for the lower grades, was basically 'look-and-say' incorporating features from the alphabetic and the 'word-and-sentence' method. To put the method into effect the teacher had to divide the subject into three progressive stages. In discussing these Inspector Dwyer stated that;

"In the first, the sounds and combinations of letters form the chief exercise; in the second, the mechanical utterance of words; in the third, the intelligent and sometimes expressive reading of ordinary prose passages." \*1

What the modern teacher tries to achieve through interest and experiential learning, the nineteenth-century teacher tried to achieve through drill, repetition, imitation and mechanical reading. His faith in these techniques had not been disturbed by the iconoclastic activities of educational research, while the educationists of the period were both eloquent and persuasive in explaining the function and purpose of a mechanical approach to reading:-

"The muscles of the throat, like those of the hand, have to be trained to their work, to be made flexible, to be brought under

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\*1. Report of the Council of Education for 1867, p.88.

the ready command of the will. Both organs are educated by example: the copy is set to the hand by the eye, to the throat by the ear. The singer's exercises, the painter's touch, must needs be mechanically excellent before they can themselves excel. So in the use of the throat or hand in reading or writing, the excellence of their work depends on the perfection with which the uses of those instruments have been learnt. Articulation must come before expression. The eye must acquire great readiness in translating symbols into sounds, before that much more difficult translation of them into sense can be accomplished ... If mechanical excellence be not acquired by beginners, they spend their whole school-life in acquiring it, and in learning to use instead of using the implements of their minds." \*1

(d) Reading in the Upper Classes

In the more advanced classes, the emphasis shifted from the mechanics of word recognition and the rudiments of oral reading to reading for information and the cultivation of literary taste, with special stress upon reading as a fine art demanding elocutionary skill. The preface to the Fourth Book of Lessons<sup>\*2</sup> leaves no doubt that the children were expected to acquire knowledge from their reading:

"The pupils should be made to spell, without the book, all the difficult words in every lesson ... Any sentence can be made an exercise in Grammar ... After having been examined on a Lesson, the pupils should also be made to state, in their own words, all that they have learned from it ... teach the First Section by prescribing for each Lesson a page to be spelled, read, and explained, and six (Latin and Greek) roots to be committed to memory."

Apart from minor variations, the typical advanced reading lesson usually followed this plan:

Step 1: The children skimmed quickly through the story or lesson to get a general impression of its nature and to locate difficult words. These were written on paper or underlined.

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\*1. Loc. cit.

\*2. See Appendix 3A for the complete Preface to the I.N.B's.

- Step 2: The teacher dealt with the difficult words by pronouncing them carefully, explaining or illustrating meanings, and having the children look at each word while they spelt it orally. If possible pictures or actual objects were used.
- Step 3: The teacher read "the passage aloud very carefully with the proper intonation, requiring the scholars to fix their eyes on the book, and to follow the teacher, pointing out word by word as he utters it".\*<sup>1</sup> He also commented on passages requiring special emphasis or inflection.
- Step 4: Then followed the pattern reading and simultaneous exercise. The teacher read a passage and the whole class read it after him simultaneously with the correct pauses and intonation.\*<sup>2</sup>
- Step 5: The class read the lesson simultaneously without any prior guidance from the teacher.
- Step 6: The teacher challenged "the scholars one after another to read the sentences separately, selecting them by name promiscuously, and causing the worst readers to be appealed to much oftener than the rest".\*<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, reading practice could be gained by breaking the class up into small groups with a good reader as monitor in each group, and the teacher passing continually from group to group.

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\*1. J.G. Fitch, op. cit., p.210.

\*3. Loc. cit.

\*2. In the early days of this period, the children did not read the matter fluently at this stage in the lesson. The following extract from The Australian Journal of Education, p.50, Vol.2, No.2, February, 1869, outlines the procedure favoured:

"The pupils should then read the whole or part of the lesson simultaneously, varying the mode occasionally, such as allowing the boys to read one part and the girls another, taking care not to allow them to make any attempt at reading fluently, during the simultaneous reading, until they have had considerable practice in reading slowly, that is to read each word as if it stood alone, as in the following example -"strong - winds - blow - on - high - hills!" where the dash represents a rest equal to about half the time taken to read each word." (From J. Coleman of Kurradjong's reply to a correspondent, incorporated into an article on "The Art of Reading".)

Step 7: The children closed their books and answered simple questions based on the text. Paraphrasing was the most popular comprehension activity but Gladman noted a tendency - "contrary to the generally received principle" - to ask some questions which the children were allowed to answer in the words of the book.

In the above lesson plan the stress appears to lie too heavily on oral reading, however, teachers used Steps 2 and 7 to teach the subject matter of the lessons and expand the children's knowledge. Inspectors frequently complained about the excessive time devoted to 'knowledge' at the expense of actual reading. The advanced reading-books contained a high proportion of literary material, the fifth book in fact was commonly known as the literary reader, and consequently as a child progressed through the classes his reading lessons tended to become lessons in literary appreciation, even in their oral aspects.

The present discussion on reading method would be unreal and incomplete without some mention of the tremendous attention given to class routines. Educational articles on "How to Teach Reading" normally dealt with these, not with method as we understand the term. The following extract, from an article written by a senior inspector, reveals the typical nineteenth-century approach to 'method' and recreates the astonishingly formal atmosphere of a reading lesson in the 1848-1905 period:

"'How should I give a reading lesson?' In answering this question I venture to offer to my readers the following hints, which my own experience has proved successful:-

1. See that the monitors have the books neatly placed on the desks, before the pupils come in. Material should never be given out during school hours.

2. An order should consist of two words, the first being a caution. When every eye is on the teacher, give the order "Books - pass". At the second word every hand should come out simultaneously, and the books be passed silently from one to the other. The books should be held steadily until the teacher gives the order to open them. See that the books are held in the palm of the left hand, (some teachers prefer to have them placed on the desks). If held in the hand they must on no account be thumbed by the pupils.

3. Stand well back from the class, and take care that nothing passes unseen. Vigilance is an essential quality in a good teacher.

4. See that every boy when reading stands upright, head and shoulders erect, and with the book in such a position as not to interfere with the sound of the voice.

5. Insist upon pupils reading so as to be heard by the whole class, but do not allow shouting. ....

7. Never interrupt a boy while reading to correct an error, unless under exceptional circumstances, and do not allow the members of the class to hold up hands while a boy is reading, as it is certain to distract his attention. ....

11. If your class is well up to the standard, devote, say one day per fortnight to recitation, cultivating, in addition to the actual reading, sympathy with the author, rhetorical style (beware of affectation) and appropriate gesture." \*1

#### iv. Remedial Reading

Both the term, remedial reading, and the concept, are comparatively modern developments. As in every age, of course, the good conscientious teachers gave the slow learners as much individual attention as conditions would allow, but that was the full extent of remedial teaching and facilities. Reading failures, classified as either too dull or too lazy to learn, soon came to regard school life as uncongenial and unprofitable when teachers did no more than force them through the same frustrating material again and again without adapting the method of presentation to circumstances. In

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\*1. "How To Teach Reading", The N.S.W. Educational Gazette, p.113-115, Vol.1, No.6, November, 1891.

1898 the average attendance for New South Wales public schools fell as low as 62%. Old-timers tell of teachers who inflated their inspection results by instructing backward pupils to stay at home on the day of the inspector's visit. Consequently, any comparison between the reading standards of yesteryear and to-day should be tempered by the fact that to-day practically every child attends school regularly and the needs of retarded and backward readers are considered and catered for by the majority of teachers.

As universal education became more of a reality, towards the end of the century, the wide range of individual differences among children forced itself upon the educational conscience, for the teachers found increasing difficulty in attributing all of these differences to laziness or social background. Thoughtful teachers doubted the wisdom of subjecting children with diversified tempers, talents, and inclinations to mass teaching techniques involving the same monotonous routines for every child irrespective of his unique pattern of strengths and weaknesses. But the education authorities did not agree. The official departmental policy right up to 1905 was very much the same as that outlined in the prescribed School Management text-book by J.G. Fitch:

"Should any attempt be made to adapt training and teaching to the special tastes and capacities of children? This is a grave question and one which must often have occurred to you. There are those who complain not without seeming justice, that our plans treat all children alike, and do not sufficiently recognize inherent differences both in the amount of power and in the special direction of that power. George Combe spent his life in advocating this doctrine, and he taught that the true key to the idiosyncrasies of children, and therefore to the right and philosophic treatment of various natures, was to be found in the study of the cranium and in what he called the science of Phrenology. He was a man of very clear purpose and strong will, and had the art of inspiring his disciples with much enthusiasm

and admiration. But he never got so far as to induce one of them seriously to attempt the classification and teaching of a school on his principles, and the experiment yet remains untried. There are others who would urge you to study the temperaments of children, and to give to the lymphatic, the sanguine and the nervous scholars respectively, special and appropriate discipline. But I cannot counsel you to concern yourself much with such speculations. For there is first the danger that perhaps your diagnosis of the case may be wrong; and then there is the further danger that even if it be right the treatment you adopt may not be after all the best. It is not yet proved either on the one hand that the child with a particular liking or talent, should have that tendency specially cultivated in his education, or on the other hand, that it is always wise to attempt to restore the balance by working at the development of those faculties in which he is deficient. By all means watch your pupils, see if experience shews any particular form of intellectual exercise to be burdensome or injurious to them; give prompt relief to those who seem in the smallest degree to be disheartened or overwrought; and having done this, devise the best course you can in the interest of the average scholar, and make all your pupils conform to it. Do you not in looking back on your own mental life, feel thankful that you were forced to learn many things for which at the time you had no special appetite, and which a scientific analyst of your yet unformed character and tastes might have declared to be unsuited to you?" \*1

This being the official policy, there were no organized remedial reading programmes, only corrective work at the classroom level. The assumption underlying this work was that reading faults are specific and call for specific cures. Inability to read a particular sentence with proper emphasis, for example, was remedied by teaching the child how to read that particular sentence. Direct, superficial correction of this type tended to ignore the fact that inability to read with the right emphasis may be symptomatic of a general weakness in reading for meaning. For a long time this concentration on isolated errors and on tricks of the trade for overcoming them, prevented teachers from observing and studying the basic causes of reading disability.

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\*1. J.G. Fitch, op. cit., p.425-6.

v. The School Library Movement

The earliest account of an organized school library movement in New South Wales appears in Archdeacon Scott's final report to Governor Darling, 1st September, 1829.\*<sup>1</sup> The archdeacon reported that he had tried to increase the effectiveness of education in the Church's schools by requesting -

"each chaplain to establish a lending library for the use of children, lending such books as were calculated for their capacities, selected from the catalogue of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and other useful publications."\*<sup>1</sup>

Interest in libraries gradually expanded with the establishment of a School of Arts (Mechanics' Institution) movement in 1833 and the library at the University of Sydney in 1853, but it was not until the emphasis in primary school education moved towards literary, historical, and cultural aims that attention was focussed on the desirability of making library facilities available to all children. The school library movement was a natural adjunct of the cultural emphasis in reading.

Official recognition of the need for libraries came in 1889 when a conference of departmental inspectors "recommended that circulating libraries should be established, wherever practicable, in connection with Public Schools, and that half the cost of such libraries should be borne by the State".\*<sup>2</sup> No immediate action was forthcoming, however, for the Public School Circulating Library

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\*1. Historical Records of Australia, Vol.15, p.214.

\*2. Report of the Minister of Public Instruction (1889), p.54. The library subsidy, now 8/- in every £1, did not come in during this period and school libraries were financed entirely by annual concerts and voluntary subscriptions.

scheme was suggested again in 1893 as the major topic for a proposed conference of teachers.\*<sup>1</sup> Ultimately the scheme did come into force as a function of the Country Reference Section of the Public Library of New South Wales and boxes of books were sent to schools in areas not served by a branch of the Public Library. It proved a great success. To-day, this excellent service still provides children in isolated and remote country schools with a free library of good quality books which may be 'changed' several times each year.

In the 1890's, without waiting for the circulating library scheme to eventuate, teachers started to build up school and class libraries themselves. The outstanding pioneer of the movement was Inspector Kevin who, by the end of 1894, had established 30 odd libraries in the Lithgow - Bathurst district with about 4000 books in circulation. He stated that he had three things in mind in launching these libraries:

"The first was the deplorable absence of any kind of literature in the bush. The second was to get the town children, if possible, to stay at home and read, instead of walking about at night. The third object was to cultivate a taste for reading in the minds of the young." \*<sup>2</sup>

The library movement grew out of this desire to make education both universal and cultural, but the more conservative teachers supported it for its disciplinary value as "a great counteracting force to the attractions of the bar-room and the evil influences

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\*1. "A Conference of Teachers", an article signed by S.C.R. in The N.S.W. Educational Gazette, p.87, Vol.3, No.5, Oct., 1893.

\*2. From a speech delivered by Mr. Kevin at the opening of the Eskbank Superior Public School library, 8th December 1893, and reported in the Lithgow Mercury.

of the streets".\*<sup>1</sup> By 1900 the Chief Inspector, himself a pioneer in the work, reported that libraries were rapidly spreading all over the state and that there were tens of thousands of good books in the school libraries, "provided without the aid of one penny from State funds".\*<sup>2</sup>

Since World War 11, we have witnessed the mushroom growth of attractive, well-stocked children's libraries throughout the State, made possible by the co-operation between the Public Library and local government bodies. The Education Department has established a School Library Service which provides information, guidance, and expert assistance to schools. In addition most high schools and a small number of primary schools have properly housed and catalogued libraries under the care of a full-time teacher-librarian. Nevertheless, considering that a library is the cultural centre of a school and an essential teaching tool in the modern approach to education, our primary school libraries are still inadequate.

#### vi. Mounting Criticism and the End of the Period

As pointed out previously not every teacher conformed to the general and officially sanctioned methods of teaching, although, as our highly centralized system crystallized out, non-conformity became almost tantamount to rebellion and was treated as such. Among the 'rebels' was A. Lansdown, an indefatigable correspondent to the 1868-69 Australian Journal of Education. He championed the

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\*1. The N.S.W. Educational Gazette, p.7, Vol.1, No.1, June, 1891.

\*2. Report of the Minister of Public Instruction (1900), p.125.

cause of extensive as opposed to intensive reading, suggesting that children should be given the opportunity to widen their reading horizons and not restricted to set texts. His views, now recognized and sometimes even practised, could have embarrassed the central authority by undermining standards or raising dangerous religious issues, and he was curtly rebuked:

"We do not think the Council of Education would sanction the use by the pupils of any books not included in the authorised list. ... If, however, children need such reading as 'a great relief' from being 'condemned to always pore over the same thing', there must be a serious defect in the teaching. Properly treated, the Reading Lesson, even from a dull book, is the most interesting lesson of the day - not from what is found in the book, but from the illustrative knowledge the Teacher is able to bring to bear on it." \*1

At the other extreme, of course, there were narrow-minded teachers who took the Council of Education to task for sanctioning three sets of books and thought that it would be less injurious to the children to have but one.

Another teacher with divergent and advanced ideas, James Routledge, wrote articles on the progressive levels of reading ability. He contended that an acquisition of the mechanical processes of reading, writing, and ciphering did not constitute an education. The reader must also be able to grasp the meaning and follow the author's argument. Some of Routledge's views, perhaps unwittingly, anticipated modern educational thought. What a vast amount of time and tears would have been saved had educationists realized the full meaning and implications of his following notion:

"Admitting that Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic must be taught the inference is tolerably plain that they should be taught

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\*1. Australian Journal of Education, p.228, Vol.1, No.7, 1868.

thoroughly - not simply as mechanical arts, but as portions of certain great subjects which exert a high degree of educative power and are of vast importance in the affairs of life. Reading and Writing, for example, belong in one aspect to the department of Language which again is connected with the wide domain of Thought. Viewed in this light, teaching a boy to read should be equivalent to teaching him to think, .... \*1

This simple truth is a fundamental concept in the modern developmental reading programme. Unfortunately, teachers were to push their pupils along many tempting but unprofitable short cuts before discovering that the correct path to reading teaching, as stated by Routledge, included reading as an aspect of language growth.

Towards the end of the century a significant number of New South Wales teachers had become interested in the work of the American educational reformer, Colonel Francis W. Parker. This was one of the earliest overseas influences, of the modern progressive type, to filter into our schools and our debt to America has steadily increased for to-day our teaching of reading is more akin to that of America than of England or any other nation. Col. F.W. Parker's very influential Talks on Teaching was first published in 1883 and ultimately became a recommended text for teachers' examinations in our State.\*2 Parker defined reading as "getting<sup>\*2</sup> thought by means of written or printed words arranged in sentences" and he described the way in which a child grows into reading:

"First, a child has acquired ideas from the external world by means of his senses. Second, he knows the ideas in their relations, that is, he has thoughts. Third, the child has associated

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\*1. Ibid., p.362, Vol.2, No.10, October, 1869.

\*2. F.W. Parker, Talks on Teaching, p.22, E.L. Kellogg & Co., Chicago, (Memorial Edition) 1903.

spoken words with these ideas. Fourth, he has associated idioms or forms of sentences with his thoughts. Fifth, he has learned to utter these words and idioms in order to express his thoughts. Sixth, the ideas that he has associated with spoken words are associated with written or printed words. If I am not mistaken, this is the sum and substance of learning to read." \*1

In details of teaching method, Parker's ideas ran counter to New South Wales practice on two major issues:

1. He maintained that just as the child learns every spoken word as a whole and just as it would be disastrous to try to teach him "the elementary parts of a spoken word while he is learning to talk", \*2 so too in beginning reading the written word should be learned as a whole. He would not tolerate the A-B-C method at all because it did not directly associate the printed word with its appropriate idea but actually hindered any such association.

2. He did not teach a method but the child. No one method was used to the exclusion of all others. The object, word, script, sentence, and phonic methods were all used in their proper place and proportion and blended into a unified approach. But he would not use the imitation method (see pattern + simultaneous reading) - "the worst way of teaching reading" - because the child was not allowed to get the thought himself and the method broke the supreme pedagogical principle: we learn to do by doing.

Parker's influence extended to one key personality, Inspector Peter Board, who stressed again and again the importance of teaching children to read for meaning.

As progressive overseas developments infiltrated into our education circles, criticism and discontent gradually mounted.

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\*1. Ibid., p.23-24.

\*2. Ibid., p.29.

Much of the criticism was directed at the school system itself. In Wilkins' day, the system had admirably met the requirements of a young, sparsely populated, impecunious colony but, being highly centralized and authoritarian in character, it tended to expand in the physical sense more readily and rapidly than it grew in the professional sense. Headmasters and inspectors bred in the system perpetuated 'the good old way' of doing things; our geographic isolation restricted the interchange of ideas with overseas educationists, and the demands of the standard of proficiency discouraged experimental work.\*<sup>1</sup> For decades the educational leaders had tussled with the problem of organizing a system that was equitable and efficient, now they faced the far greater problem of breathing life into their creation and investing it with the means of continual and vigorous growth.

Among other things, the system laid a cold hand upon classroom teaching methods. Teachers were tied to traditional methods that were mechanical, stereotyped, inflexible and uninteresting, and the whole educational process was "steeped in formalism". The inevitable storm of protest against all this finally broke in 1901 when Professor Francis Anderson delivered a forthright address to a Conference of Teachers at Sydney in the course of which he claimed that the existing methods "were stifling the life and stunting the growth of education in our schools". This precipitated the 1902 Education Commission and led to revolutionary changes in the teaching of reading as we shall see in the next chapter.

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\*1. In his report for 1888, the Chief Inspector stated that the standard of proficiency in the colony was probably the highest in the world.

vii. Summary and Evaluation of the Period 1848 - 1905.

Looking back over this period in which the New South Wales system of public education was founded and passed through its formative years, we see the gradual growth of the cultural emphasis in reading instruction. The motivating forces behind this growth were those terrible twins of Australian education: our small widely dispersed population and our rather sizeable religious minorities. These problems led inevitably to the introduction of a non-denominational system of schools which, in turn, required reading books with no particular religious bias. In seeking for content material that was safe, neutral, and above suspicion, the compilers turned to general knowledge. Enthusiasm for these soulless lessons about "The Eagle" and "The Industries of Ireland" soon waned, however, and when the final split came in 1880 between the Church schools and the State school system, the latter was only too ready to anticipate criticism from religious groups and to make its readers more interesting and spiritually stimulating by introducing new books with moral stories and cultural extracts. At the same time the growing spirit of nationalism in Australia gave rise to a demand for reading material with an Australian background, and Herbartian influences from abroad called for more history and more literature in the schools. By the end of the century, therefore, the Department of Public Instruction was obliged to put into the schools new reading books with a strong cultural emphasis, including tales of virtuous and moral behaviour, extracts from literature and the Bible, and stories from British and Australian history together with the myths and legends of Greece and Rome.

As the compilers of a school reader are guided by certain principles in their selection and arrangement of material, their basic principles influence the teacher in his choice of a teaching method for the handling of that material. This meant that teachers using the knowledge-centred I.N.B. Series acquired methods of teaching reading which employed spelling, analysis of sentence structure, recitation of material by rote, learning of Greek and Latin roots, and extensive oral testing of a factual nature. Later, with the culture-centred Collins' and Brooks' Series slightly more emphasis was placed on examining the literary qualities of the reading matter and rendering it artistically in oral form. But, all in all, little progress was achieved in teaching method during this period apart from the work done in some schools with the phonic and 'look-and-say' methods.

In evaluating this period we will not labour the point by reiterating fully those strengths and weaknesses which it shared with the earlier period. The major weakness still was the failure to consider the role of the child in the educative process and to adapt methods and materials to his interests, abilities and needs. Then came the failure to analyze the peculiar language problems associated with learning to read English; the exception to this being, of course, the attention given to the phonic method. Linked with both of these weaknesses was the failure of the school to devise effective methods and techniques that would bring the child and his language together in meaningful and purposeful language situations involving reading. Reading remained part of a discipline-type education based on the erroneous concept of children as

immature adults. Reading programmes were built around idealistic adult notions of what children should read and why they should read.

In other words, the social motive still dominated the teaching of reading. But now this social motive was cultural whereas in the earlier period it had been religious. It is here, therefore, that we find the major strength of the 1848 - 1905 period. Both the school and society sought to promote literacy for the civilizing and cultural value to be derived from it. Moral stories would show children the narrow path to a good life, historical tales of the nation's heroes would inspire them to noble thought and behaviour, genuine literature would give them an understanding of the heights and depths of the human soul, even the factual articles on natural phenomena would foster reverence and a refined, reflective quality of mind.\*<sup>1</sup> And all this was good in intention if not in execution.

Scoff as we may at the comparatively unattractive format and print of the readers of the period, at their unscientific control of vocabulary, at their unfashionable leaning towards moralistic and patriotic themes, and at their obvious belief in the Classical languages and Classical literature as the essential foundation of a liberal education, we must not ignore the fact that the compilers had something to contribute to the developing philosophy of reading

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\*1. A popular book in New South Wales schools in the 1880's was M.C.E. Leigh's, Simple Lessons from Nature (J. Nisbet, London). The preface stated that "the facts can hardly fail to increase the love and reverence of our scholars for their Maker", while the contents included chapters on:  
 God's Power - Shown in the Workings of Coral Polypes  
 Faith - Taught by the Parable of the Larva, Pupa &c.

instruction. We can scarcely approve of their methods or of the crude grading and arrangement of much of their material, but we must not pass too lightly over their extreme concern about the intellectual and spiritual quality of their children's reading fare. It may well be that the modern reading teacher concentrates too much upon methods and means at the expense of fundamental aims. It may well be that the influential American reading specialists are promoting reading teaching which is soulless because they have no common faith in an ultimate purpose underlying the teaching of reading. Their desire to develop teaching methods which allow maximal individual growth, their deep concern for the right of the individual to have every opportunity and freedom to reach full self-realization, may be disguising and hiding the confusion in their minds. They have created a magnificent educational machine but they are not quite sure what it should be producing and they don't altogether like what it is producing.

One thing is sure. Whatever a child reads in his early school days helps to mould his thinking, personality and behaviour - it becomes a part of him. To deny this is to reduce reading to a meaningless, mindless, unconscious activity. It is imperative, therefore, that while the child's reading should be interesting and suited to his individual abilities and inclinations, it should also be a worthwhile intellectual and spiritual activity. What the child reads does matter. We should see that he becomes acquainted with his cultural heritage, that he reads the best children's books and poems in our literature, that he becomes familiar with the great minds of past ages and other nations, that during his

childhood he discovers through reading the extent and limitations of human civilization. The late nineteenth-century teacher realized this but didn't know enough about child development and the educative process to bring the child and his culture together in purposeful learning situations. The modern teacher knows a great deal about how children grow and learn through reading but he does not always use this knowledge to the best advantage in the child's cultural growth, he tends to fritter away time, know-how, and opportunity on second rate reading material.

The outstanding feature of this period, then, was the scurry to find a place for culture, and especially literature, in the schools. With the advent of universal education, children had to be protected from shallow and indiscriminate reading if the wholesale prostitution of tastes and morals was to be averted. This cultural emphasis was neatly summed up in a paper by J. Abernethy:

"Literature is the expression in artistic form of the finest impulses and ideals of men. Good books are our highways to the beauty and nobility of the world, and the ability to distinguish those ways with ease and pursue them with confidence is the noblest privilege conferred by education. Montaigne said that he read books in order "to live and die well." This object of reading may be established in every life by proper teaching. Children read voraciously, and with or without instruction in tastes and habits, they are sure to obtain their ideals largely from their reading, and to form from these ideals this permanent character. Nowhere are the teacher's opportunities so glorious and his responsibilities so great as in this matter of directing the untried literary perceptions of his pupils." \*1

\*1. J.W. Abernethy, "Literature in the Schools", The N.S.W. Educational Gazette, p.35, Vol.6, No.2, July, 1896.

CHAPTER 7:THE PERIOD OF LINGUISTIC AND METHODOLOGICAL EMPHASIS1905 to 1941

The story of Professor Francis Anderson's famous address to the annual Teachers' Conference in 1901; of the appointment of Commissioners Knibbs and Turner to inquire into the condition of education in New South Wales compared with education abroad, and of their subsequent sweeping recommendations; of the passing of "the Old Regime" following the 1904 conference of administrators, inspectors and teachers called by the Minister of Public Instruction, Mr. John Perry; of the appointment of an enlightened educational reformer, Mr. Peter Board, as Director of Education, and of his prominent role in the construction of our first syllabus for primary schools in 1905 - a familiar story - needs no detailed reiteration here. This great educational awakening was mainly a reaction against the academic education of the past, against its narrow, prescriptive courses of study, its mechanical methods and its outdated aims. These no longer served the purpose of a changing, democratic, technological society in which education, far from being the privilege of a few or even the right of most, had become an absolute necessity for all. Mr. Board expressed the spirit of the new movement in his first annual report when he wrote: "The work of the Primary School should be vital, rather than academic", and again, when he told a gathering at Parramatta Teachers' Institute in 1906 that whatever would not issue in the pupils in the conduct of life, directly or indirectly, should be

rejected from our schools.\*<sup>1</sup>

Revolutions, new deals, and reform movements generally, tend to mean all things to all men. Our 1901-05 educational upheaval was no exception, and even within the limited field of the teaching of reading, different interpretations were made of what the new education meant in action. To Mr. Peter Board, a far-sighted yet practical mathematician-cum-educationist, it meant placing the emphasis on reading as a thought-getting process. He wanted the children to be taught to read not words but ideas. He wanted new methods which did away with meaningless word-saying or the endless repetition of sounds and nonsense syllables, and he wanted the inane statements, the disconnected sentences and the uncommon words removed from the primers. To Chief Inspector Dawson and to Mr. P.R. Cole, later Vice-Principal of Sydney Teachers' College, the new education meant reading programmes built around pupil interest rather than any coldly logical scheme. Mr. James Dawson believed that reading could be delayed until the desire for reading awoke in the child even though he may be seven or eight years of age.\*<sup>2</sup> To Inspector C.H. Northcott, the new reading meant pupil activity - "expression should always accompany impression". He decried passive, imitative techniques and maintained that reading demanded effort from the reader and that reading content could only be grasped by "an attentive and active child". To two of the

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\*1. P. Board, "Practical Orientation of School Work", The N.S.W. Educational Gazette, p.199, February, 1906, being the summary of an address given before the Parramatta Teachers' Institute.

\*2. From a speech delivered by Mr. Dawson at Tenterfield on 17th November, 1906.

leading educationists of the day, Professor A. Mackie, Principal of the Teachers' College, and Mr. S.H. Smith, later Director of Education, the new reading was not revolutionary, it meant better teaching and a more scholarly approach to the problem with special attention to the way in which children progress. In 1907, Professor Mackie wrote:

"When reading is made the means of gaining ideas and gaining thought ... the teaching is made more real. At Home, and especially in America, the tendency of late has been to overdo this aspect to the neglect of the formal. But it must not be forgotten that the mechanical difficulties of reading must be mastered if the child if the child is to have facility in the higher aspects of the work." \*1

Amid the surge of new ideas, the person who saw the basic problem most clearly and, as time has proved, most correctly, was Mr. P.R.Cole. He recognized that there are two main sides in reading - ideas and symbols - and that:-

"in any one system of teaching reading, say as embodied in a reading primer, one or other of these sides must be subordinated, is a proposition not theoretically necessary, but in practice inevitable. Phonics as a system frankly subordinates the thought. The word system subordinates the form." \*2

These two sides of reading have given rise to the classification of methods of teaching reading into two broad groups: 'synthetic methods' and 'analytic methods'. The 'synthetic' methods start with the elements of words or their sounds and combine these to achieve recognition of words and sentences. These methods include the alphabetic, the syllabic, the phonic, the various phonetic

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\*1. From an article in The Public Instruction Gazette, p.2, July, 1907, Government Printer, Sydney.

\*2. P.R. Cole, "The Teaching of Reading", The N.S.W. Educational Gazette, p.275, May, 1906.

methods, and the word building method. The 'analytic' methods start with the larger, meaningful units of language (words, phrases and sentences) and in time break these down into their constituent elements. These methods include the word method, the phrase method, the sentence method, the story method and more specific versions of these such as the experience chart method, the incidental method, the Nursery Rhyme method and, in a sense, most of the modern eclectic methods. The 'synthetic methods' place enormous emphasis on the linguistic problems associated with reading while the 'analytic methods' emphasize the semantic problems. This clash between the two sides of reading is one of the major difficulties confronting the teacher and one which tempts him into making a decisive choice and staunchly upholding it, so that he becomes a dyed in the wool 'phonics' supporter or a rather self-righteous advocate of some more 'progressive' scheme.

Mr. P.R.Cole, however, thought that it was not "theoretically necessary" to make such a choice - and the modern trend away from highly specialized methods towards learner-centred methods supports his notion - but, at the time, educational studies in the teaching of reading were not sufficiently advanced to show that the subordination of one side of reading to the other was not inevitable. At Columbia University, Dr. Cole had been influenced by Charles A. McMurry, who taught that children's reading should begin with and develop through oral work with stories. McMurry's teachings were based fundamentally:

"upon the idea that suitable and interesting thought matter is the true basis of progress in reading, and that the strengthening of the taste for good books is a much greater thing than

the mere acquisition of the art of reading. The motive with which children read or try to learn to read is, after all, of the greatest consequence." \*1

Hence, Dr. Cole, in his writings and lectures, proposed a teaching method which approached reading through the appeal of the stories and ideas to the infant mind rather than through a systematic mastery of the elements of the language:

"My own preference is to begin the teaching of reading with a primer based on the idea of exercising thought from the outset. Such a book will be judged mainly on a basis of interest. I would banish as far as possible the prejudicial idea that the appeal to interest is a degradation of the mind, for we now hold interest not to be a substitute for thought, but its invariable concomitant, its obverse, its other self." \*2

He favoured a primer with a few connected stories as against the "miscellany of petty jottings", with the repetition necessary for permanent learning being achieved by using the words again in new contexts in supplementary readers. Also, in line with much modern practice, he favoured the 'whole word method' of building up a basic sight vocabulary of approximately 100 words before the child commenced to read from a primer. So we see that in 1906 Dr. Cole was advocating a teaching method remarkably similar to that used in present-day infants' schools, while other leading educationists in the State - Mr. James Dawson, Inspector Northcott, Professor Mackie, and even the Director, Mr. Peter Board - enthusiastically preached the doctrines of reading for meaning, pupil interest, and pupil activity. Yet, within a decade the Department of Public Instruction had published one series of primers and readers and

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\*1. Charles A. McMurry, Special Method in Primary Reading and Oral Work with Stories, p.9, Macmillan & Co., New York, 1907.

\*2. P.R. Cole, op. cit., p.275.

officially approved another, both of which were an absolute denial of these principles and placed the emphasis in reading instruction almost exclusively on the linguistic side.\*<sup>1</sup> Why did this happen? Who was to blame for the lost forty years in which New South Wales teachers turned away from the light of truth kindled by Cole, Northcott and Dawson, and wandered in the wilderness of the phonic and phonetic systems of Ellis, Jones, and Caldwell?

It is all too easy to over-simplify such issues and to ignore the complex of reactionary forces, social inadequacies, and educational problems which beset the would-be reformer. It is all too easy also to forget that the stated aims, principles and methods of our educational administrators, even those propounded in The Education Gazette or the Curriculum, sometimes bear only a mild resemblance to what is actually happening in the schools. In the field of education, the time lag between theory and practice may extend over a generation if the headmasters lose the capacity for professional growth and fall into a groove as deep as a grave. This seems to have been the main reason why the teaching of reading made little real progress in this State until the 1940's. At the beginning of the period our teachers had not the professional training necessary to enable them to make the ideas of Col. F.W. Parker, Edmund Huey, Charles McMurry and P.R. Cole, function effectively. They could not get the old formal methods out of their souls nor adapt their teaching to the new educational philosophy.

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\*1. The two series referred to are the 'Red', 'Blue', 'Green', and 'Brown' Primers and Readers published by the Department in 1917 and last reprinted in 1943, and Primers and Readers for The Ellis System of Teaching to Read, published in 1917.



e-n en hen  
e-t et pet

The Picnic. III.

en  
ten  
Ben  
men  
hen  
pen

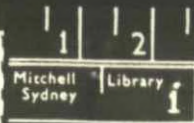
1. It is ten.
2. Here is Ben.
3. Has he seen the men ?
4. Rags sees the men.
5. The men met the van.
6. The men are here.
7. Here is mother !
8. Let mother get in.
9. Has she set  
the hen ?
10. She has set  
the hen.

et  
pet  
set  
met  
let  
get  
wet  
net  
yet



San Ben. man men.

(8)



Pye, Emmeline,  
Federal Primer.

428/P

From: Emmeline Pye's FEDERAL PRIMER By Courtesy of the Mitchell Library.

Popular during this period, the Pye Primers were used with phonic and word-building methods as supplementary readers. Note the marked linguistic emphasis and the secondary role of continuity of thought and interest.

But the spirit of change was in the air, not even the conservative teachers could avoid infection, and in searching for a new method to take the place of the discredited A-B-C method, teachers found the phonetic methods most appealing. These methods, which made use of diacritic marks, new alphabets, or different types of print to achieve the ideal: one sound, one symbol; one symbol, one sound, were approved by the rank-and-file of teachers because they amounted to little more than a variation of the A-B-C method except that they substituted sounds for letter names. Moreover, these phonetic methods followed a similar teaching pattern, the work was systematically graded and organized according to its apparent linguistic difficulty, and by following a prescribed course of lessons in a single standard primer the teacher could be sure of success or - probably more important - he could feel secure against criticism.

Other factors also favoured the growth and popularity of the phonetic schemes. Although in some respects they clashed with Herbartian philosophy, the orderliness and the systematic progression built into all of them with revision struck a harmonious chord. Then again, it was possible to carry out the drills associated with the phonetic systems in very large classes, so they tended to alleviate the growing problem of over-crowding. And it is a fact still that a bright child will probably learn to read, and teach himself, more quickly with the Jones system than with any modern system - with undesirable after effects! But some of the blame for the unfortunate growth of methods which over-emphasized the linguistic and methodological aspects must rest with the Director of Education, Mr. Peter Board. One realizes that the power of a

Director, far from being absolute, is hedged in on all sides by a multitude of legal, political, and social forces. And Peter Board had reduced his own direct control over classroom teaching methods by fathering a New Syllabus which "emancipated the teacher from adherence to any particular method, and gave him the opportunity of blazing a professional trail of his own".\*<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, as Director, he could have done much to promote reading methods more in keeping with his own advanced philosophy of education - but he did not! He allowed the old Brooks' Series of reading books to be used as basic reading material for over a decade despite their errors\*<sup>2</sup> and outdated features. He authorized the production in 1917 of departmental primers in which the demands of a phonic system took precedence before the principles of pupil interest, pupil activity and reading as a thought-getting process. He gave departmental sanction for the printing and use of Lilian Ellis's offensively phonetic primers, and he publicly praised Mr. Jones's phonetic system. In 1921 he told a Sunday Times representative that he was deeply impressed by the possibilities of the Jones system and thought that the novelty of the handplay method would do a great deal to interest children.

"The system itself is a valuable aid to young scholars. It teaches them to enunciate words that come within their own vocabulary, and enables them to express such ideas as come within their comprehension. There are several different methods of teaching reading, and this is one of the good ones." \*<sup>3</sup>

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\*1. S.H. Smith & G.T. Spaul, op. cit., p.196.

\*2. A detailed summary of Mr. Peter Board's own critical analysis of the educational weaknesses in the Brooks' primers appears in The N.S.W. Educational Gazette, p.199, February, 1906.

\*3. Reported in the Sunday Times, 13th February, 1921, Sydney.

It is only fair to record, however, that Mr. Board had detected some of the defects inherent in this same method:

"One has to remember that it is useless to teach a child to read words he does not comprehend, if that is done, it becomes a mere parrot-like repetition, without meaning anything. In this lies the only danger in the system - that it may be overdone; but intelligent teachers can easily safeguard children from that." \*1

Furthermore, he did nothing to prevent the growth of other methods, but maintained an amazingly open and receptive mind on the whole problem. When the Practice School of Blackfriars, and later of North Newtown, were established and the word and sentence methods of reading introduced there spread to other schools, he approved. And he fostered the Extension Courses given at the Teachers' College on freer ideas of reading method, which, by 1915, had helped spread the word and sentence methods to many infants' schools.

During the 1905-1941 period, then, New South Wales educationists in classroom and in conference tussled with the burning subject as to which reading method - if any - was to be used universally in infants' schools and their failure to develop those systems consistent with the educational reform movement of the early 1900's cost our State forty years of progress. Instead, they gave us a policy which can be summed up as: indecision with a phonetic bias. The 1925 Syllabus (reprinted 1929 and 1932) stated that - "No insistence is placed on any particular reading method" but then pointed out that - "In the initial stages, the reading-matter should consist of easy phonetic words" (p.16). And thus,

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\*1. Loc. cit.

throughout this period, preoccupation with the linguistic difficulty in reading, and with the methodological problems associated with the operation of the various phonetic schemes designed to overcome this difficulty, dulled the sensitivity of our teachers to the less obvious but more vital issues.

Although much less spectacular, the progress made in primary school reading during this period was actually sounder and more valuable than that in infants' school reading. Commissioner Turner found no cause to criticize our reading in 1903. He reported that he had "heard reading in every English-speaking community, and he (had) no hesitation in saying that the reading in the schools of New South Wales (was) equal to that of any other country".\*<sup>1</sup> He did, however, think that simultaneous reading - "which often degenerates into a sing-song" - was a bad feature of our lessons, and he considered that "one set of readers used in schools all the year round (did) not give a reading boy sufficient opportunities for extending his vocabulary".\*<sup>2</sup> His recommendation that we should follow the practice of the London School Board by making a wider range of literary-type readers available on the teacher's requisition list, combined with the decidedly cultural nature of the existing readers, with the school library movement, and with the demand from teachers for supplementary readers and a school magazine or newspaper, all added up to produce a healthier state of affairs in primary school reading. Less time was devoted to the

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\*1. J.W. Turner, "General Criticism of Courses of Study and Standards of Instruction of the Primary Schools of N.S.W.", p.483, Interim Report of the Commissioners &c, Sydney, 1903.

\*2. Ibid., p.484.

pedantic study of isolated extracts from literature and more time to reading that widened the range of the pupil's ideas. The literary emphasis of the previous period continued, but in a more liberal and humanistic form. These words from the 1925 Syllabus express the general trend and the principal objective of primary school reading:

"In using a literary reader, information, spelling, meanings of individual words are secondary; dictation and grammar inappropriate. Attention to form, style, aptness of diction, and all the other qualities of good literature are, in their proper places, all desirable; but the outstanding feature of the treatment of literary reading should be the relation between motive and act, the emotional appeal to the reader, the sentiment to be created or strengthened; and the choice of a reader should provide that the motives of action shall be within the reader's comprehension, and the emotional appeal ethically desirable."\*1

All this paved the way for long-needed improvements in reading instruction, but it must be remembered that in practice the fine, artistic oral reading of laboriously studied extracts from the School Magazine only became the basic reading activity with the majority of teachers.

The other important development of this period occurred in the field of silent reading. It had long been common practice to test comprehension by asking the child to reproduce the thought of a passage in his own words, now teachers became suspicious of the value of this procedure unless the child first read the passage himself, silently. The utilitarian trend in education pointed up the anomaly of stressing oral reading in school when most adult reading was silent. But the most conclusive and influential support for silent reading came from overseas experiments in the

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\*1. Course of Instruction for Primary Schools, p.18, Sydney, 1925.

psychology and physiology of reading. The scientific study of the reading process carried out abroad by Valentius, Cattell, Javal, Erdmann and Ahrens had revealed the basic facts about visual span and eye-movement during reading and suggested that the traditional 'round-the-class' oral reading lesson could establish bad reading habits because of the enormous differences between the speed of oral reading and of silent reading. Mr. Peter Board and Professor Mackie\*<sup>1</sup> knew of these findings and tried to check them against Australian conditions. In 1905, however, the prejudice against and ignorance of silent reading prevailed generally and the new Syllabus only recommended silent reading for limited periods. This provoked a prophecy from the new Director:

"For limited periods seems to imply that silent reading is to be the humble drudge of the proud sister, oral reading. If so, I believe the Prince is even now approaching to raise this humble maiden to a position on the throne. But our Cinderella will not behave haughtily when so exalted." \*<sup>2</sup>

The Prince did not arrive until the 1910-1920 period with the great burst of educational interest in standardized and objective tests. Silent reading lent itself to the techniques of the testers more readily than oral reading, consequently they tended to concentrate on it. Some educationists abroad misinterpreted this emphasis as implying that oral reading was "out" entirely, but New South Wales teachers never went to this extreme. They did, however, begin to treat silent reading as a respectable and worthy partner and to look upon reading as a much more complex process than they

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\*1. Professor A. Mackie, "The Study of Education", Schooling, p.87, Vol.1V, No.3, February, 1921, mentions Valentine's findings.

\*2. Peter Board, "Practical Orientations of School Work", p.199, The N.S.W. Educational Gazette, February, 1906.

had hitherto thought. The 1925 Syllabus encouraged this trend by advising teachers to make use of the standardized reading tests of Ballard, Thorndike and Starch, and it introduced the modern practice of isolating skills within the reading process and giving special exercises to improve them. Teachers were advised to study the mistakes made by individual children in:

- (1) Ability to name the main topic in a short paragraph read.
- (2) Power to get the thought generally.
- (3) Power to reproduce the thought.
- (4) Estimating the relative importance of different points in the matter read.
- (5) The degree of relevance of contributions to the discussion.\*1

For the first time, also, attention was drawn to the importance of cultivating the speed of a child's silent reading.

Silent reading did not emerge as a vital reading activity without some set-backs. In 1924, G.T. Spauld described an experiment carried out at Darlington Practice School at the instigation of Professor Mackie to verify Pintner's conclusion that "silent reading leads to a more prolific reproduction of ideas than oral reading, that the mechanical difficulties of the latter ... have an inhibiting effect upon recall".\*2 The children were divided into equal groups based on Burt's Reading Tests, general ability, and age, then tested on Starch's Reading Tests, Series A, one group reading orally and one silently. Spauld found that:

"in every instance the oral reading gave better average results than the silent, the average advantage being 12.4%. In the ten tests also, the 7 highest scores were registered by oral readers, while in 6 out of ten cases, the lowest scores were those of silent readers." \*2

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\*1. op. cit., p.18.

\*2. G.T. Spauld, "The Effect of Oral Reading upon Reproduction of the Thought Content", p.98, Schooling, Vol.VII, No.3, April, 1924.

Some of the conditions of this experiment are suspect. It is highly probable that, prior to the experiment, the children had been taught by predominantly oral methods, and that the period of the experiment was too brief to give the silent readers an opportunity to master efficient techniques. In any case, such experiments helped keep the enthusiasm for oral reading burning vigorously. It was generally felt that oral reading was superior because it demanded greater mental concentration, exercised the kinaesthetic sense, and provided clues to word-recognition, whereas silent reading presented ideas so quickly that the reader became confused, gave no indication of how the child was reading, and provided a temptation to skip unfamiliar words in the hope of getting the general meaning from the context. After the publication in America of The Twenty-fourth Year Book of the National Society for the Study of Education (1925), however, the nature and purpose of silent reading gradually came to be better understood and to find a place in our schools. This was, perhaps, the most important progress made in the teaching of reading in the 1905-1941 period.\*1 Let us turn now to a more specific analysis of the methods used in the infants' schools.

#### i. Methods Used to Teach Reading in the Infants' Schools

Writing in Schooling in 1920, D. McCarthy called attention to the need for a central educational body such as the present-day Australian Council for Educational Research for the purpose, inter alia, of keeping "the vendor of quack specifics in his place".

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\*1. The 1941 Syllabus specifically mentions the N.S.S.E. Yearbook.

Although directed particularly at Mr. G.E. Jones and Miss Lillian Ellis, this criticism had a wide reference at the time. The number of private reading schemes which the unfortunate young learners suffered, under a blaze of "noisy popularity", reached fantastic proportions. Throughout the English-speaking world between 1870 and 1930 one may find references to: the Ward method, Miss Nellie Dale's method with its coloured letters, the Newark method of cumulative repetition, Thornton and Leigh's phonetic methods, the 'Scientific Alphabet' in Funk and Wagnall's Standard Readers, the Rev. James W. Shearer's system which introduced diacritic marks, the word method of Jacotot in France and Worcester, the sentence method of Farnham in New York, the comprehensive method of Emma K. Gordon, Soames's Phonetic Method complete with musical score for singing the monosyllables as an aid to sound-blending of words, not to forget the three types of print in Miss Ellis's method, the Jones system with its hand signs, and the phonic method of Agnes E. Caldwell. Truly, a horrifying memorial to human ingenuity, to the vagaries of the English language, and to the well-meaning ignorance with which teachers torture children! It is not so very difficult to devise practices whereby the child's contact with the spoken and printed word passes gradually and naturally, almost imperceptibly, into a mastery of reading. Not unless you make the problem a purely linguistic one!

After the A-B-C method, the first of these to have some real impact on New South Wales teaching was the phonic method briefly referred to in Chapter 6. In most phonic methods the child first learns some common consonant sounds and the short vowel sounds,

then he has to master the difficult skill of blending these sounds together until he 'hears' the words. After this he proceeds to simple primers (e.g., Miss Pye's Austral Primers or Whitcombe & Tombs Progressive Phonic Primers) and supplementary readers (e.g., Oxford University Press New Steps for Tiny Folks-) consisting of short phonetically regular words made up of the sounds he knows. Gradually he learns the more difficult consonants, the double consonants (ch, sh, th), the consonant blends (bl, st, str, &c.), the long and irregular vowel sounds, the diphthongs and the whole gamut of English sounds and silent letters. With the aid of word-building exercises he learns to attack new words by manipulating his knowledge of these sounds, and to speed up the process he then passes on to a study of word families having similar endings.

In common with other synthetic methods, the phonic method has the advantage of being thorough. It also provides the child with a method of word attack which will unlock approximately one half of the words of our language. Its weak point is that it makes for a narrow outlook in educational practice, it subordinates thought to the needs of the system, and because one half of the language is not spelt phonetically it leaves wide and confusing gaps in the child's knowledge. To overcome this, all modern phonic methods teach lists of common 'look-and-say' words (the, you, was, said &c) by means of wall charts.

In New South Wales some form of phonics teaching was used from about 1880 onwards. Most teachers incorporated it with other methods but it was not until the 1930's that a fully developed phonic system appeared. This was the system devised by Agnes E.

## Lesson 7.

Look and Say:—

as	says	live	want	come
made	near	like	goes	tune
out	noise	work	grass	all
	school	there	could	

Endings:—

-es	-ed	-est	-y	-ly
-le	-en	-er	-ing	-ed

unc-le      cou-s-in      fri-end

### Play in the Hay.

1. Betty Bray lives in town. One Summer when she was ill, her mother sent her to stay for a few weeks on her uncle's farm.

The print was very heavy and large. Words such as 'Bray' were obviously selected for phonetic rather than any other reason. A line under a letter indicates that it is silent, otherwise there was no tampering with the normal forms of the letters.

## THE CALDWELL SIMPLICITY READERS - BOOK 2.

Word Building Chart. No. 1V.

(a)

(b)

(c)

f m n r s

b c l t p

h g v y k

d j w z x

a	e	i	o	u*
ay	ee	y	oa	ew
ow	oy	ir	ar	or
	ou	air	oo	

f m n r s

b c l t p

h g v y k

d j w z x

th ch qu wh sh

th ch qu wh sh

\*ck nk lk sk ng

\*ll ss ff zz

(Note: Each child had a copy of this chart in his Primer and a corresponding Wall Chart was displayed in a readily accessible position.)

Words were built up by the teacher pointing to a beginning consonant from Group (a), a vowel from Group (b), and an end consonant or double consonant from Group (c), e.g., b - e - t. The children, who had been drilled in the individual sounds in earlier lessons, now blended the sounds together to form words. The chart could also be used to 'unlock' difficult words encountered in the reading lessons.

On several occasions the writer of this thesis has seen teachers modify this chart to suit their own ideas. The silent letter in a diphthong may be put into a different colour, or pictures drawn on the chart to suggest the sound, e.g., a train near the 'ch' sound.)

Caldwell, Headmistress of the Superior Public Infants School at Drummoyne, Sydney, and built into her Simplicity Readers<sup>\*1</sup>. A sample page from Book 2 and a copy of one of her Wall Charts appear above. Despite its limitations, its linguistic rather than child-centred approach, the Caldwell System still holds the respect of many teachers in our State and it has retained considerable popularity in one-teacher schools. One cannot deny that it is a very honest system, well graded, thorough, and scarcely less interesting in content than the Departmental readers.

In the last half of the nineteenth century the 'look-and-say' or 'word method' slowly gained some support alongside of the phonic method. As a matter of fact, it is an essential concomitant of the phonic method. The word method, first described and recommended by Comenius in his Orbis Pictus, published in 1657, involves presenting a word along with a picture representing its meaning or, better still, an actual object. The child learns the word as a 'whole', he does not dissect it, and Comenius argued that he did this more quickly without the usual 'tedious spelling' which is a 'troublesome torture of wits'. Various reformers and reading specialists, notably Horace Mann, Decroly and Jacotot, have since advocated and used it, and it had definite affinities with the popular 'Object Lessons' of the nineteenth century and with the teachings of Pestalozzi. In New South Wales, we learn from the 1882 Report that the method was in use and gaining ground:

"It is worthy of note that fewer children than formerly are presented in the alphabet. More schools have now adopted the

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Bookman Press,

\*1. A.E. Caldwell, The Caldwell Simplicity Readers, Sydney, n.d.

'look and say' method with beginners. For this method the cards used in the Australian Reading Series are well adapted .." \*1

Thereafter, the method remained in favour to some extent, although the majority of teachers preferred to use it as a word recognition technique introducing or reinforcing some other method, and even to-day there is a general feeling that too much emphasis on 'look-and-say' work is detrimental to spelling ability and to the growth of independence in reading. Throughout the 1920's and 1930's, teachers relied on 'Look-and-Say' devices to get children over the hurdles of non-phonetic words such as 'there' and 'said', and finally the method received full and proper recognition in 1952 when the Curriculum suggested\*2 that at the beginning reading stage "a sight vocabulary of from fifty to a hundred words should be built up before phonetic analysis is attempted." To-day, most children acquire an initial reading vocabulary by this method, even though the words that they are learning may be as phonetic as 'cat'.

Success comes to the young reader very early in his career with sight or word methods. This is the major advantage of the method. Moreover, under wise teachers, the child learns those words which interest him and he learns them in meaningful settings associated with appropriate pictures, objects or nursery rhymes. The method lends itself to 'flash card' games, word and picture matching activities, sentence building, and a host of other games

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\*1. Inspector M'Credie, Report of the Metropolitan Inspectors for 1882, Report of the Minister for Public Instruction &c., p.165.

\*2. op. cit., p.85. Inspectors and Headmistresses tended to interpret this suggestion as a categorical order.

which keep interest alive while the teacher gradually incorporates into the child's sight vocabulary those words which he will find in the early primers or pre-primers.

Against this, the main disadvantage of the word method is the need to repeat the same small group of words over and over again, or in new contexts, or in activities, to ensure mastery. With inefficient teachers this can easily become a weariness to the flesh, especially for the bright child. In 'Look-and-Say' Readers, it can lead to a strange, echoing style of English, rather like a stammer in print. (See overleaf.) Then there is the danger that teachers using this method will delay the teaching of other word recognition skills, or even omit them altogether. This did happen in some New South Wales schools in the mid-fifties and was one of the causes of backwardness in reading increasing at the Third Grade level.

Despite these dangers, the word method must continue to play an important part in our teaching of reading. Combined with the 'kinaesthetic method'\*<sup>1</sup>, the tracing of words, it rarely fails even with slow learners. Children seem to be able to handle the individual <sup>word</sup> as a basic unit of recognition more successfully than the sentence, and they grasp the reading-for-meaning concept more readily with the word method than with any phonic or phonetic method, and finally, they benefit from simple training in a method which adults normally use more than any other.

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\*1. G. Fernald & H. Keller, 'The Effect of Kinaesthetic Factors in the Development of Word Recognition in the Case of Non-Readers', Journal of Educ. Research, p.355, December, 1921.



Look, look.

Sue can jump.

Jump, Sue.

N.S.W. Dept. of Education.

A BOOK TO READ.

This Pre-Primer, compiled by the Infants' Reading Committee, is designed to promote the child's initial sight vocabulary. Notice that the three sentences in this story contain only four different words, this is one of the limitations imposed by the word method.

After the phonic and the word methods, the incidental method of teaching reading appeared next in our schools. So revolutionary was this approach, so opposed to the formal synthetic methods, that teachers never accepted it in its entirety without modifications, but during the past sixty years some of the techniques and practices of the method have gained full recognition and done much to promote a commonsense attitude towards the teaching of the subject. An inevitable outcome of the educational philosophy of Col. Francis Parker, the incidental method does not make reading an end in itself or a fetish. The child's reading vocabulary grows gradually and naturally as he needs it in his play, his work with drama and stories, his experience charts recording excursions, and his observations of the weather, plant growth, and other natural phenomena. Reading activities such as labelling, compiling picture dictionaries, following written directions prepared by the teacher, and playing postman, have an important part in the method. In brief, the method consists of making the child acquainted with words incidentally in meaningful situations and gradually developing his familiarity with reading through stories, poems, plays, and the normal everyday use of language.

In 1908, the Maitland District Inspector, Mr. Friend, reported that Colonel Parker's ideas had "borne good fruit" in many of the schools in his district,<sup>\*1</sup> thus giving us evidence of the spread of the reformer's methods in our State. Mr. Friend tells of reading beginning with the children learning familiar words from

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\*1. Senior-Inspector Friend, "Maitland District Inspector's Report", The Public Instruction Gazette, p.281, Feb., 1908.

the blackboard, writing sentences which they illustrated with pictures, and building up brown-paper charts of interesting words and sentences. The Chief Inspector, Mr. Bridges, had given official encouragement to such activities at a conference of Infant School Mistresses and Inspectors (July 25, 1902) at which he suggested "a freer use of the blackboard in teaching reading", and since then the use of informal reading activities closely related to the children's experiences and interests has always been approved. But it did not become a common practice until the 1940's because the formal phonic and phonetic methods could not cope with it.

Parker's incidental method liberated our children from the shackles of a text-book. Learning to read could now be an activity associated with immediate purposes and interests. Like every other method, however, it can be misused and overdone. Incidental teaching can degenerate into scrappy, piecemeal teaching in which the child fails to receive guidance in general principles and in efficient labour-saving procedures. The child nurtured on incidental reading methods will undoubtedly read for meaning, but his reading will probably lack organization, skill, and efficiency.

Incidental teaching methods threw up the problem of the difference between letter shapes in handwriting (cursive) and in print (script). As long as a child used only a printed text and oral spelling or phonic methods in learning to read, there was no problem. When he began reading with methods which combined reading and writing, he faced the confusion of learning two different sets of letter shapes simultaneously. Parker argued in favour of using the cursive form right from the beginning in both reading and

writing, on the ground that:

"Writing is the second great means of language expression. It should be put into the power of the child just as soon as possible, in order that he may express his thoughts as freely with the pencil as with the tongue." \*1

The big disadvantage of this, of course, is that the child cannot read ordinary books until he has mastered both forms. Nevertheless there are compelling educational advantages in using reading and writing to reinforce each other, and some teachers adopted Parker's practice and called it the Script Method of teaching reading.\*1

Then two happenings completely changed the state of affairs while, at the same time, preserving the essential principle. From overseas came reports of teachers who were teaching printing instead of writing in the initial stages of education. A child first learned to write in a form rather similar to that found in ordinary books. This meant that he had to learn only one set of letters and those the normal ones found in all books. Then, in 1917, the Education Department published the Ellis Primers and gave its blessing to a method which cannot be adapted to handwriting. Adherents of the Ellis System had to turn to the overseas idea of starting with printing. At Professor Mackie's suggestion, Miss Margaret Miller, Mistress of the Infants' Department at North Newtown Practice School, began an experiment in July, 1918, in teaching manuscript writing (i.e. printing) in conjunction with the Ellis System. Her report reads:

"At the end of a year's trial, it has been found that the

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\*1. F.W. Parker, op. cit., p.37. \*2. See the reference to Script Reading lessons in The Public Instruction Gazette p.127, Nov., 1907. It was not really a distinct method.

writing is proceeding at rather more than a normal rate, and that manuscript writing has proved an interesting and attractive subject to the children." \*1

Other teachers found the new 'script' writing (printing) equally satisfactory, it survived the decline of the Ellis system, and to-day is standard practice in our schools. Whatever its defects, it has the one overwhelming advantage of allowing the child to read the printed word and to reproduce it with his pencil without being confused by unnecessary variations in writing and printing styles.

Another new method of teaching reading which was used largely in Colonel Parker's schools and came to Australia at the turn of the century was the sentence method. And akin to it in many ways was the story method advocated by Charles McMurry of Columbia University. Miss J. Archibald states that the sentence method was used in the early days of the Practice School at Blackfriars.\*2 The educational principles underlying the method were summarized in 1908 by Edmund Huey:

"The method urges that the sentence, and not the word or letter, is the true unit in language, expressing whole thoughts which are the units in thinking. If the sentence is the natural unit in language, it is the natural unit in reading as in speaking. As the word is not the mere sum of letter-sounds and word names, neither is the sentence merely a sequence of word sounds and word names. It has a distinctive total sound and appearance and meaning indicated plainly in the way it is spoken when its meaning is felt. It is read and spoken naturally only when the total meaning is prominent in the consciousness of the reader or the speaker." \*3

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\*1. Margaret Miller, An Experiment in Teaching Manuscript Writing, pp.14, Teachers' College Press, Sydney, 1919.

\*2. See The Education Gazette, p.180, August, 1922.

\*3. Edmund B. Huey, The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading, p.273, Macmillan and Co., New York, 1908.

This method also made much use of the blackboard. The teacher drew or displayed an attractive picture, or directed the attention to some object or activity of interest to the children, and from the ensuing discussion selected a sentence appropriate to it. After this was written on the blackboard, the children read it several times until word-perfect. They were then required to locate particular words or groups of words within the sentence - words with a high interest or frequency value. Some of these words would soon occur again in subsequent lessons and in this way the child built a reading vocabulary of sight words. Ultimately, by comparing the elements of new words with those of known words, the child acquired sufficient knowledge to attack new words independently.

By using stories instead of sentences, this method was expanded into the story method\*<sup>1</sup>; if you used stories which the children had heard, dramatized, and perhaps memorized in Kindergarten, it became the method of cumulative repetition\*<sup>2</sup>; if you used the old favourite rhymes about "Jack and Jill" or "Humpty Dumpty", it was called the Nursery Rhyme method; if you were less ambitious and started with phrases only, it was called the phrase method. All of these methods were quite similar except that the phrase method was based on the dubious assumption that good readers fix their eyes on phrases.\*<sup>3</sup>

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\*1. The story method appeared in Charles A. McMurry's Special Method in Primary Reading and Oral Work with Stories, Macmillan Co., New York, 1907.

\*2. The Newark method, or method of cumulative repetition, was described in I.E. Goldwasser's Method and Methods in the Teaching of English, Heath, 1913. (Copy from Miss E. Skillen)

\*3. Eye fixations occur at regular intervals, not at thought units.