

LETTERS

The Teaching Of English

Sir,—English is one of the most important subjects taught in schools. The purpose of teaching English is to enable the students to speak and write the language correctly. But do we ever think how far this object is being achieved? As a teacher so far as I have observed, not five per cent of our pupils can write even a sentence in their examinations unless it is learnt by heart nor can they speak it correctly. I think there are two reasons for this.

First, our method of teaching is quite defective. Our teachers insist on teaching the tongue through its dry-as-dust rules of grammar and practical lessons in composition occupy a subordinate position in the scheme of our teaching.

Secondly, it is very important to have good text books in the hands of pupils. But the books on the English language now being taught in our schools are pieces of more or less clever patch-work and are not suitable to meet the requirements of our students.

In this context I would like to lay before the authority concerned as well as the teachers engaged in teaching English the following suggestions for their consideration.

Grammar is an art of putting the right words in the right place. In other words, it is a collection of a few rules by which pupils can learn to avoid errors and thus come to speak and write correctly. A learner of English may find it a great help to have an early acquaintance with the grammatical rules; yet, it should not come first. It must follow composition. It is useless to expect good speech or good writing from pupils whose teaching consists in reading or learning something and reproducing it while fresh in memory, and learning essays by heart. English composition must be largely oral and must be a matter of constant practice and correction from the simple spoken sentence to abstruse written essays. It should begin when English begins and essay stages should be the final marches of a long journey.

Again, the text books on the English language should be written on a progressive plan suited to the standard of our pupils and must contain graduated lessons on English composition, adapted to the actual conditions and attainments of our boys and girls—Yours etc. M.A. RAZZAQUE Rani Bilashmani High School, Joydebpur, Dacca.