

COMLY'S

SPELLING AND READING BOOK.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

Of Letters, called the Alphabet.

IN the first efforts of the young pupil to acquire a knowledge of letters, the eye, the ear, and the memory are called into action. The *form* of a letter strikes the sight, but the *name* of it must be communicated to the ear by the teacher. To fix and retain the combination of the form or shape, and the sound or name of a single letter in the memory of a child, requires a great effort of his infant powers. Adepts too seldom (if at all) remember their own difficulties in acquiring this important knowledge, and therefore do not enter into those sympathies with the learner, which are requisite to furnish him with such aids as may render the task less arduous, and facilitate his knowledge of the twenty-six letters or characters contained in the alphabet of our language. Hence the whole alphabet is often given as one lesson to be learned; that is, to be seen, repeated, and retained in the memory at once: and no common capacity of mental powers is adequate to so gigantic a labor.

Beginning with the small letters, as being most in use, let the first three or four, or any others more easily learned, be pointed out as the first lesson; for it makes no difference which are first learned. In the following examples, when the eye of the pupil has been directed to any particular letter, by pointing to it, for instance **a**, let him have time sufficiently to view its form; then let the name **a** be distinctly pronounced by the teacher, and repeated by the child. The next thing is to assist the memory in retaining the form and sound. Various methods may be used for this purpose. The *shape* of the letter may be made by the teacher in the presence of the pupil, on a slate, or on paper, and his memory exercised in repeating its name or sound, as associated with its figure thus made before his eyes. He may also be encouraged to make the letter himself, in imitation of the one made by his teacher, or the one in his lesson, and repeat its name. Or, he may be told that **a** stands for *apple*; **b** for *book*, &c.; and thus his recollection of the names of letters be associated with his taste for an apple, his sight of a book, or other object; or with wood-cuts of visible and well-known things. Again, wood or metal letters may be procured and put into his hands as toys, which he may show to his playmates, brothers, sisters, or teachers, and tell their names.