

## EDUCATION

### Drawing as an Aid to Observation.

BY PHILOMATH.

Drawing deserves to be regarded as something more than a mere accomplishment. It is because educators have so regarded it that one of the most important aids to mental discipline has not held its rightful rank as a branch of school study. The same may be said of music. Now that the tide in education is in the direction of disciplinary means, instead of the acquisition of facts we may hope that the truly practical side of human nature, its expressive powers, will receive due attention. As yet, very little has been done in this direction. Much has been said, and the so called new method by object-lessons is urged upon the public notice on account of its efficiency in training the observing faculties. We can not do less than sympathize with this natural method, but at the same time we feel that it is quite liable to abuses which would, in prevailing, defeat the end aimed at, and that too by the very means adopted. The evil of the old methods which object teaching would supplant, consisted in imposing upon the mind, in ways having but little regard to time, order, or faculty, too many unrelated facts, which, at the time they were inculcated, were supposed to be knowledge, but which a too frequent experience has taught us were at best but disjointed skeletons.

Now, we fear that the new method comes too richly laden and with stores too promiscuous. Its efficiency is thought to be adequate to the doing of much greater things than can be done in the old ways. The mind of the young learners must not only be *trained naturally*, which, of course, always means correctly, but it can now be charged with a vast number of facts,—facts, too, of importance, of scientific character. It is true that the senses are often appealed to by the presentation of many facts important to possess, but in a manner too frequently regardless of the arrangement of the qualities of individual objects, so generally without reference to any sequence of governing principle to form an intelligible bond of union between the objects in mass, that we feel free to criticise this method of object-lessons. The mind must be *regulated*, and to attain its full efficiency, must be built up, and must itself work by uniform impulses and movements. If it be an organization, it has its chief tendencies through which its life progresses from strength to strength on to maturity. These tendencies provide the reason with channels for long continued efforts. It can not be too often said to educators that the peculiar something which is worthy of the name character, is the product only of persistent cultural means applied day after day, year after year, along but few lines of advancement until all the forces of human nature become feeders of these main currents. It is also a law of mind, the importance of which cannot be overestimated, that in proportion to the intensity of effort on the part of any mental force, is the aid afforded by all the other intellectual powers in the individual. Strictly speaking, no faculty can be exercised apart and to the exclusion of the others. The least mental effort engages, in some degree, every power of thought. The truly great intellect, makes every special task a crucible to all elements and forces that bear any relation to the one thing in hand. Is it not plain then that most of our instruction tends to distraction, rather than concentration of efforts? Is object-teaching, as we now understand it by virtue of its great merit, above the criticism?

We venture to affirm that object-teaching, in its present phase, does not train the mental powers to close and concentrated labor. Indeed, the general tendency of education seems to be toward diffuseness. In abandoning classical training for something that is doubtful as yet, the advanced student loses much, for the present, at least, that was valuable as discipline. Teachers of primary schools, in their haste to anticipate the new movement in education, readily fall in with what seem to be *natural* methods, forgetting that there are not a few things in nature that are transitory in character and influence. To meet the demands of the times branches of study are multiplied; text-books are

changed from year to year to get the latest and best. Now, all these irregularities are detrimental, in some measure, to the steady, onward progress of the *average* mind.

But there are avenues, lines of pursuit, means of culture, or branches of study, so to speak, along which the chief tendencies of mind may find free play and ever move forward with increasing strength. Among these are the art of speech (not taught in our schools at present), music and drawing. These can have no conflict with nature, because they rely upon nature and human nature for their expression.

But we must now speak of drawing, particularly. This subject holds definite and fixed relations to both mind and nature. It introduces the former to the most pleasing aspects of the latter by routes not difficult, if the journey be begun in time. It acquaints the mind with some of the prominent qualities of objects, and, at the same time, lays a foundation for the geometrical sciences. It addresses the sense of sight, the faculty of observation *par excellence* and tests the quality of observation by at once securing the expression of what is perceived. As words on the tongue acquaint us with the subtle movements of the mind within, which, unuttered, soon escape from consciousness, so drawing imparts intelligible forms to the images of objects formed in the sensorium, and made to stand out anew before the eye.

This subject possesses many of the best qualities of a good method of instruction. To make a correct picture, one must *see* the object to be drawn. To see well, implies much more than is common to the ordinary eye. It is not seldom that we are ignorant of many things near at hand, although we have seemed to look at the same objects with wide open eyes. This is often true of objects we have attempted to describe to others.

Now, to draw an object we must attend closely to all its features. The attention must be minute and long continued. The color of the object is first perceived. There are many eyes that need to be educated carefully, that they may distinguish colors. The prevalence of color-blindness is but little understood among teachers. Now, although drawing does not set forth the colors of objects, yet the correctness of outline in a pencil sketch will depend very much upon the impressions which the colors of the object make upon the eye, for colors determine the boundaries of outlines. The outlines having been fixed, the eye is next led to observe the relations of parts to the whole and to each other. The harmonies and contrasts of light and shade are finally discovered and expressed.

To be able to see all these things, is to be highly qualified to observe what passes before our eyes, and one thus qualified possesses a prime quality of an educated character. The artist sees more than other men.

Thus understood, drawing assumes a very important place in a course of study. It does what object-lessons aim to do. Habits of patient attention and accurate observation are required by no uncertain means. The exercise of the powers engaged is consistent and continuous. Combine patient endeavor and close observation in one person, and you have the fundamental characteristics of genius.

But there is still another quality of drawing to recommend it as a means of culture, and this is the highest possible virtue in whatever may be applied to the development of the forces of human nature, viz: *it enforces the expression of what is acquired.* — *Educational Monthly.*

### Oral Instruction.

Perhaps the people who had the brightest minds in proportion to their stock of knowledge, and who gave to mankind the most thought, were the Greeks. It still remains the greatest problem of intellectual history, how the Greek mind came to have this special characteristic of vivid thought, and this ability in the diffusion of ideas. When we notice not only the philosophy of Plato and the dilectics of Aristotle, but the brilliant geometers, the scientific grammarians, and the architects of Greece, we see