

pendently of popular prejudice as of personal feeling; and having done this, it then becomes our business in the first place to bring public sentiment as far as possible into harmony with our ideas, and in the second place to bring the working out of our ideas as far as possible into harmony with public sentiment. In other words, we must consult primarily the interests and secondarily the wishes of our employers, the people, "whose we are and whom we ought to serve."

A good deal of complaint has been made about the unhealthy cramming and over-work to which girls and boys are subjected under our present system of competitive teaching; and these complaints are the more worthy of consideration from the fact that they come not merely, nor even mainly, from the parents whose children are crammed, but from the teachers who do the cramming, and who of course ought to know all about it.

Now, intensity of application to work is one of the most important habits that we can induce or assist our pupils to form. Attention to study cannot be too close, and relief from the pressure must be sought, not in diminishing the quality or force of the mind-tension, but in shortening the time of its exercise, and specially of its continuous exercise.

The development of this hard-study faculty can only be secured by long and careful training. To require its exercise to any extent of young pupils is simply absurd. Very short lessons with long intervals ought to be the rule in all primary classes. Keeping children in the attitude, while they are not in the act of learning is worse than useless. It is training in idleness, enforcing dissimulation, and compelling the formation of habits that must seriously militate against subsequent progress. Study hours at this period of school life should be few and brief, and should be increased only with the advance of age and mental and physical strength.

It has been proposed to shorten the hours of study by discontinuing the assigning of lessons for home preparation, but this plan is not commendable. We must aim as far as possible to make our pupils able to study without a teacher's assistance, to prepare them for independent exertion after their school course is finished; and this is best accomplished by requiring—without immediate supervision—the performance of work the accuracy of which is afterwards carefully tested. For this reason we cannot afford to dispense with home lessons, and the easing off must be done in some other direction.

The regular school hours, in most cities and towns, at present number five, with, on an average, say one additional hour of home preparation; giving in all six hours per day of study—entirely too much for children in our junior class, and more than they can possibly do, in the way in which study ought to be done.

I am not in possession of data from the consideration of which a definite scheme might be deduced, but from what I know I would favor some such plan as the following:

Let two hours of study per day be the maximum required of children in the first part of the first-book—where they would probably average six years of age—and let this be increased by the addition of half-an-hour for each division to which the pupil is promoted, counting two grades of promotion, i.e., two divisions, to each successive reading-book.

This would bring us to the present six hours in the junior fifth-book class at say thirteen or fourteen years of age, which is quite as early as it ought to be attempted.

An important fact confronts us here: one that at first sight might be fancied a drawback to the usefulness of the proposed reform. In all populous localities, very many girls and boys are much better off at school than they would be anywhere else. Some parents are so situated that they cannot, and some are so careless that they will not, look after their children as they should. In such cases, away from the teacher means away from all restraining and elevating influences; probably undergoing the street education that hardly ever fails to turn out apt and accomplished graduates; and shortening the hours of school is simply lengthening the hours of exposure to contaminating associations. Against such results we cannot guard too carefully. Relief must be sought that will neither diminish intentness while study goes on, nor shorten the time of the teacher's supervision and control.

It may appear somewhat paradoxical to propose to remedy the evils of over-work by increasing the number of departments of work, but in the present instance this method can be made effectual in securing that result.

There are several branches of instruction that are now barely recognized in our public school curriculum, and yet are so important that their omission leaves us a very imperfect and one-sided

education; and these branches are of such a nature that attention given to them would not at all increase the mental tension of which there is so much complaint.

One of these is physical education, development of muscle, &c., of which we hear so much but see so little. All our energies as educators are devoted to developing the mind, and the soil in which it roots, and on which it depends, is utterly neglected.

Probably much of the ill-health and physical weakness attributed to excess of mental exertion are really caused by lack of bodily exertion. Dumb-bells might often supersede doctors. Taking half-an-hour each half-day from cramming and giving it to scientific gymnastics would be a much more rational method of relief from the brain-pressure, than turning out our boys for that half-hour to learn bad practices on our streets.

Correct habits—not merely sound theories—of breathing, swimming, walking and exercising, and living generally would be, to nine-tenths of our pupils, of far more practical benefit than a knowledge of grammar or fractions.

Another of these neglected branches is morality—one of the most important and most difficult matters with which a teacher has to deal. We may rationalize about it as we choose, but experience shows unmistakably that (at any rate with children) morality is much more a habit than it is the working out of any ethical system; and is to be secured by directing the course of conduct that develops habit more than by inculcating theories and principles. A boy's character is determined by what he is and does, not by what he knows. That character is formed, not in the restraining atmosphere of school, but in the untrammelled associations of everyday life—far more in the play-ground than in the class-room. Let pupils have as much as possible of this free out-door intercourse under the watchful eyes of judicious teachers. Then they will learn to respect each other's rights; to play without cheating, to talk without swearing, to associate without teasing or bullying, and the teacher will note and remember the incipient tendencies that may almost imperceptibly be developed or repressed. Yard superintendence is one of the most imperative of school duties; and, as a rule, children had better be an hour by themselves at their lessons than ten minutes by themselves at play. The necessity of attention to this subject is imperative. The character-tone of our growing-up boys is far below what it ought to be, and it is positively dangerous to permit their promiscuous crowding and play without any direction or restraint.

What has been said about morality applies more to boys, but what has been said about physical education applies perhaps as much more to girls. Boys take more exercise in their games, and occasionally have the sawing of wood and such like blessings vouchsafed by judicious parents. And if more of the latter would provide some active work for a part of their sons' spare time, they would do incalculable good to the souls and bodies of some embryotic citizens, who are now ruining both in loafing idly or worse than idly round our lanes and lamp-posts.

In view of such facts as these but one conclusion can be drawn, that is, the longer the hours of school the better for the scholars, provided by school hours we do not mean simply hours of study, but hours of education and supervision.

This brings us face to face with the problem of where the dividing line between the duties of parents and teachers is to be drawn. Absolutely there is no such line. As far as children are concerned, teachers are a necessary evil, doing the work that in a perfect state of society ought to be the work of parents and the work of home. At present we find that one department of this work is being overdone by the teacher, and the remedy is simply to do less of that and more of something else.

The question comes up: If the duration of school hours is so desirable, should they not be lengthened? There are two reasons for answering emphatically in the negative. In the first place, it is a serious wrong to usurp the functions and lessen the responsibilities of the sacred institution of Home. Society may be too artificial, too much organized. Public schools should never become what boarding schools now are—a dangerous interference with the natural and healthful relations of domestic life. And in the second place, even where the home is so far from what it ought to be that children are happier and safer at school, we must be honest. The public is not yet educated to proper appreciation of what the teacher does, and to equitable remuneration for the time he already spends in its service; it would hardly be willing to pay for more. It is wicked to defraud or oppress even ourselves. Justice is a virtue as well as generosity, and compelling the uncompensated teaching of morality would be rather inconsistent.