

# The Educational Weekly.

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To those of us occupied in the higher spheres of life many men seem to be employed in low and unworthy fields. We are apt, too, to regard them with pity if not contempt. Some of us cultivate nothing but vegetables. Others of us devote our whole attention to flower gardens. And the latter not seldom look down on the former. We forget that, perhaps, of the products created by these two classes the vegetables are the more important to the community. We forget, too, that although the market-gardener's roses are sometimes sorry things, they are not so sorry as the florist's cabbages.

MANY men imagine that it is possible to absorb knowledge, no matter what the plan of absorption may be. They pay little or no attention to the means employed to gain information, and are content to believe that as long as they are learning something and remembering it they are doing all that is required of them. We may say at once that, as far as teachers are concerned, this is not all that is required of them. We have before this spoken on the advisability, the necessity, of systematic study. Few recognize all that is included in this term. We have met men who were religiously bent on reading through daily so many pages of an encyclopædia. This, it seems to us, is gathering a heap of pebbles. No structure could be raised with these. What we want is stones and mortar—stones hewed out with care and patience, first those for the foundation, then those for the superstructure.

THE majority of our schools and colleges have been indulging in those proceedings so fraught with every description of emotion from fear and trembling to vanity and conceit called "closing exercises."

We suppose they do good to the ambitious student by stimulating his ambition, and perhaps they do little or no harm to the unambitious student since they do not much affect him. It would be interesting to make a thorough analysis of the reasons for which the "closing exercises" are performed, and of the influences they are supposed to exert. Both are no doubt complicated. But still we cannot but think that such analyses should be made. We are too apt to follow the customs of our ancestors without taking into consideration the whys or wherefores. As "closing exercises" exist at the present day they seem to be chiefly an opportunity for the masters to show how extremely affable they can be, for the

pupils to show how extremely clever they can be, and for the parents and spectators generally to show how extremely gratified they can be with both masters and pupils. Each school always has "the most successful affair ever known in its history," and the mutual congratulations of masters, pupils, and spectators, are abundant and apparently sincere. Apparently. This word raises thoughts. Is there not in all "closing exercises" more or less insincerity—and generally more? And is not this evident? And if evident is it not pernicious? We remember a pupil who, in after life, was never tired of referring to a sentence always uttered in the farewell speech of his headmaster—a master very much addicted to inflicting corporal punishment of a very severe character. The sentence was: "If I have hurt any of your feelings I apologize." The manner in which the pupil referred to repeated this sentence spoke volumes. Doubtless "closing exercises" can be performed sincerely. But are they?

How few there are, of those whose good fortune it is to have a holiday at this season of the year, who enter upon it with any definite idea or intention as to the mode of its enjoyment! There must be some reason for this. And does it not lie in the fact that most men simply look forward to a vacation as a "rest"—however vague a notion may be entertained as to the particular character of that desideratum, and trust to time to bring forth amusement and entertainment as circumstances demand? And is not this the reason, too, why, to so many, the end of a holiday season comes with disappointment and regret, instead of with pleasant retrospect?

Of course there are some of whom the above cannot be said. There are those whose holiday allows them but time to rush off to some favorite haunt and rush back again to work;—these need take but little thought or trouble for the morrow, as to how it shall be spent. There are those, again, to whom each recurring season brings the same prospect of holiday enjoyment, the same camping-ground, or trout-stream, or farm, without the necessity of the hesitancy, perplexity, and doubt, so often involved in that great task of making up one's mind. And there can, probably, be also included among our exceptions the class whose habit is to resort to those places which men (and women) frequent in crowds, to see and to be seen;—for this is easily accomplished, that being the object of almost all large concourses of people, in hot weather. But all these together make up a small minority; there remain the great majority before re-

ferred to, and the small number—the "remnant," who do enter upon a holiday with fixed plan for its enjoyment in a true sense.

No two men can get the greatest good out of a holiday in exactly the same way. Individual inclination must rule; and that will be the surest and most reliable indicator of physical and mental needs. He who is worn out with excess of mental toil will desire mental rest, and exercise of body. To him over whom has come weariness with intellectual effort in one narrow groove, will come likewise a longing for exercise in other congenial lines of study, the freedom to renew acquaintance with favorite authors, hitherto prohibited, adding pleasure to the zest of change. This is a pleasure akin to that derived from foreign travel, which is, or ought to be, but a change of thought and study, and that by no means the least valuable. But travel is a relaxation within the reach of so few that its advantages need not be dwelt upon; we are speaking of the possible holiday of the many, not of the more fortunate few.

And to all but that fortunate few, are not books a holiday necessity? Indeed, are they not essential to the true enjoyment of a holiday, at home or away? Surely there can scarcely be a greater pleasure, in the anticipation of a vacation, than that to be derived from the cumulation of books against a quiet week or month of freedom from the toil and slavery of daily routine. What a delight to revel in the field of authors as inclination leads! One can understand the enthusiasm with which the journalist in "Mr. Isaacs" could relieve his newspaper-drudgery by an evening spent in "sharpening his faculties" with Kant's "Critique," or the eagerness with which Carlyle would rush off from work upon his "French Revolution," to read novels for a fortnight in the country. With both, freedom from daily toil was but the occasion for work, equally valuable, in other directions;—perhaps more valuable, because undertaken with freer choice and deeper interest.

For is not every true holiday but a change of work? If this be so, how great the importance of preparation of work for such a season! And how easily-intelligible the disappointment of those who but vaguely look forward to a holiday season as a time of rest, which is no rest—as an occasion to use one's time and means in giving pleasure to one's self and to others, which, having no object, ends in discontentment with both one's self and others, and with one's self most of all.