

## THE ART OF CONVERSATION.

There is one defect in American education, or rather in American character, and that is, our young people do not learn to converse well. They think—they act—when roused they are eloquent—but they seldom converse well. The boy is taught to declaim—to store his mind with those ideas that will instruct and even move the multitude—but very rarely to converse with ease and elegance. The girl is disciplined to sing, and play, and dance, and sit gracefully. She is even prepared for those womanly duties she must perform in after life—duties of the nursery and the household. Her moral powers are cultivated likewise in this country, so that she becomes a useful, benevolent, amiable being. But she is not taught to converse.

"She can talk enough," says the crusty old bachelor, "pray do not teach her, to any greater degree, the use of her tongue." Talking is not conversing. There is no deficiency in the former with our girls. To talk, and to talk well, are very different. The latter requires ease, tact, self-confidence, good sense, a well conducted education, a desire to please, and an amiable temper.

In neither sex should conversation be high flown, declamatory, or above the condition of the hearers. The voice should be modulated to the subject, and never raised to an oratorical pitch. The style should be easy, natural, playful if the occasion required it, with no strained and far-fetched attempts at wit or glitter.

There are occasions when the very essence of entertaining and successful conversation consists in being a good listener, and in drawing out others upon these topics about which you know they can furnish information. We have said before that the great secret of pleasing consists in making others pleased with themselves. It is so in conversation. To be a good listener, is one of the secrets of a conversational power. It is said that Daniel Webster remarked that he never was in any sensible man's company a quarter of an hour, but what he learned something. He had the tact of drawing them out on subjects with which they were familiar, and in this way, gained information himself, and made others pleased with him.

When girls think too much of their beauty, they are very apt to forget that the powers of conversation are needed to please. Beauty may strike a severe blow on the heart, but it requires conversational powers to follow up the blow and render it effective. A plain woman who converses well will soon cause the want of beauty to be forgotten by her powers of entertainment. Madam De Stael Holstein was an exceedingly plain woman, but such were her conversational talents, that Byron declared she could talk down her face in a quarter of an hour, and be felt to be positively beautiful.

But the question occurs, how can this be acquired? It needs some native confidence and much good judgment to lay the foundation for it. Instructors can create it, by always requiring their pupils to give the ideas of their lessons in their own language, and not in the words of the

text book. Parents, too, can early begin to encourage their children to converse on sensible topics, by calling out their opinions. All should learn to converse. —*Hartford Courant.*

## MONOTONY OF SCHOOL EXERCISES.

All teachers have felt the creeping shade of depression and enervation, which naturally results from a regular order of exercises in the school-room. The teacher is not alone the sharer of this incubus of monotony; the same is both felt and acted in the person and spirit of the pupil. This is the rock upon which so many of the craft are ruined. This with that other, and not less dispiriting cause, the departure of a class of mind that held the front rank in the school-room, upon whose characters the teacher has given the last stroke of his skill, are crossing the threshold to struggle in life's battle. With them too often goes the life, the energy and the courage of the teacher. Having smoothed the rough boards of their minds, and fitted them for their position in the social fabric, he feels disheartened as a new supply of the rough material rolls itself up before him for the same care, handiwork, and burnishing process as before.

The mind, upon which any one of those causes so operates as to discourage and unfit it for labor, needs to look well to the nature of things, and see if there is not a remedy for this evil, which loses to the profession many of the noblest and most successful of workmen. We think that the cause lies in the fact, of keeping within the narrow limits of instruction, and not enriching and amassing intellectual wealth—current truths connected with every branch we teach—to be imparted as freely as obtained. In so doing, we invigorate our own thoughts, keep in constant expectancy the minds of those we instruct, and dispel wholly that appalling cloud of monotony, so begrimed with gloom and despair. Every task should be made a living embodiment, a real life, created anew, stripped of formality, and dull verbiage. To effect this, the teacher must be an eclectic, a gleaner, a kaleidoscope, turning up new shapes and beauties at all hours in the day. Let us do this, and the flickering shadows of monotony will be lifted, and an intellectual sunlight will be felt reciprocally by both teacher and pupil. —*New York Teacher.*

There is a wisdom that looks grave, and sneers at merriment, and again a deeper wisdom, that stoops to be gay as often as occasion serves, and oftentimes avails itself of shallow and trifling grounds of mirth, because if we wait for more substantial ones, we seldom can begay at all.

Men have worshiped some fantastic being for living alone in a wilderness; but social martyrdoms place no saints upon the calendar. —*Friends in Council.*

## ALGEBRAICAL PROBLEM.

A Gentleman has a tract of land, containing 648 acres, which he wishes to divide among 3 sons and two daughters, in proportion to their ages; each daughter receiving four-fifths as much (in proportion to her age,) as each son. The eldest son is 14 years older than the youngest daughter, who is two-thirds as old as the youngest son. The eldest daughter's age, divided by 5, is equal to two-ninths of the age of the second son, who is three years older than the youngest son; and the sum of their ages is 87 years. How many acres of land does each one receive.

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