

them. Then the pupils do more studying, a thing which ought not to be changed, but which, undoubtedly, gives them an advantage in regard to the cultivation of this faculty. All the writers upon mental philosophy tell us that there is a natural order of development of mind and agree in stating that the memory should receive early attention. Now I claim that we should exercise it not only in the ordinary exercises of the school-room but that the committing to memory in the exact words of the author passages either in prose or poetry, should be commenced at a very early date. Here I must speak earnestly. I believe there is a serious danger of teachers misusing what might be a most effective means for good in their schools. I mean the requiring or even permitting their pupils to learn, for the mere purpose of raising a laugh among their schoolmates, or entertaining the patrons of the school, selections, which, if it would be harsh to call low, contain nothing to improve the mind or elevate the heart. An injustice is done to the patrons of the schools when we say that we have to do this in order to interest them. More than three-fourths of the parents take a real pleasure in anything that is well done. They enjoy an exercise in any of the common school branches if only teacher and pupils are alive. Then there are poems from our best authors which touch the common heart of humanity if only uttered with distinctness of voice and beauty of expression. You say that you must find selections that your pupils can understand completely. As distinguished a teacher as Dr. Arnold has said with regard to younger pupils, "It is a great mistake to think that they should understand all they learn, for God has ordered that in youth the memory should act vigorously, independent of the understanding—whereas, a man cannot usually recollect a thing unless he understand it."

Yet if you cannot agree with him, you will surely find, if you try, much in our classic English authors within their comprehension if you will take the trouble to select and a little pains in explanation. My own opinion is that we are apt to underrate the ability of our pupils; and it is better to demand a little more from them than they can do readily than not to task them to their uttermost. John Stuart Mill says,—“A pupil from whom nothing is ever demanded which he cannot do, never does all he can.”

This work cannot begin too early in life. A friend of mine who has a most excellent memory says that he thinks one reason for it is that he lived in the country when a little child and his mother devoted a great deal of time to teaching him hymns, Bibles verses, and poems.

A short time ago a minister in our city in speaking of the beauty of the Bible in a literary point of view, remarked that Daniel Webster had said that all that was good or beautiful in his style came from the influence of the Bible verses taught him at his mother's knee in childhood. Will not all good literature thus memorized in early life not only purify the style of the writer, but elevate and grace conversation? But more important and better than all else will be the influence upon character. Artists go and study the works of the old masters and carry away a mental picture to be ever with them in their work; let us study the word-paintings of gentle actions or heroic deeds that we may ever be influenced towards like nobility. When tempted to lose faith in humanity how like clarion notes come those lines from Lowell:

*“Be noble! and the nobleness that lies
In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own.”*

A few words now in regard to this work in the various grades. In visiting some of our primary schools I have noticed how many of the children know very accurately the words of their little songs. For several years of their school life I think they might be taught little poems for concert recitation in the same way that they are taught these songs. After some familiarity with the selection has been acquired in this manner, call upon individual pupils to recite, but never prompt a pupil so reciting. If he fails one day, try him the next. From the lowest to the highest grade this rule should be regarded. The effort to recall is an important exercise in the cultivation of the intentional memory, and the teacher who assists in it causes her pupil to lose a valuable exercise whenever she render the assistance.

When the pupils are sufficiently advanced to do this work of committing without assistance, the teachers will do well to have some books to lend to their scholars for this purpose.

Money invested in good books for our pupils pays a better dividend than any thing else of which I have any knowledge. Allow your pupils to make their selections but always require them to submit them for your approval before beginning to learn them. Teach them never to select anything merely because it is new, nor reject it because it is old. Is not this an old world with a wrinkled face upon which we are living? Do we love it any the less for its age? Have not the sun and moon been shining for ages, yet is their radiance any the less welcome on that account? Are not truth, justice, and love as old as God himself who is eternal?

And now leaving this branch of my subject, I shall beg your pardon for the length of time I have dwelt upon it, but it has been because I feel so thoroughly convinced of its importance.

In all the common branches of education, between what should be memorized and what should not, the teacher must exercise a careful discrimination. Of course there are studies which are mainly for the purpose of strengthening the reason, and we do not suppose that any teacher will permit the memorizing of these. Besides there are certain things which should be used as language lessons, and the pupil should be encouraged at times to give the author's thought in his own words, but definitions and rules ought to be given in the words of the author. The definition must first be understood; we must never have our pupils learn words merely; but the ability to define accurately demands a high order of intellect, such as we cannot expect to find in children; in addition to this the author is supposed to have given his subject such consideration as has enabled him to condense his thought—another very important reason why his words are best.

Learn processes before rules; but when the rules are given they should be exact. Accuracy is something which cannot be too highly valued. Clear methodical habits of thought and expression are of priceless worth. Intellectual looseness will be the result of our accepting a mere jumble of words for definitions and rules. Moral laxity may be the result of intellectual looseness. Let us consider next the study of language as connected with the discipline of memory. It is with the learning of our native tongue that the training of the intentional memory begins; which seems a good reason why other languages should aid in its discipline. We have heard so long that the study of language strengthens the memory that we have accepted it as other trite truths without investigation; but recently I have been making some experiments and I find that my pupils who are studying Latin remember more accurately and recall more readily things what I tell them on various subjects.