

study and to know them. Self-restraint, self-control, and a thorough knowledge of the material on which we work, are founda-

tion stones of the teacher's personal influence.—SUPT. L. S. PACKARD, Saratoga Springs, N. Y.

## THE SEVEN LAWS OF TEACHING.

### —II.—

*"A learner must attend with interest to what he would learn."*

EXPLANATION.—This law, at first sight, seems double, since to gain attention and to excite interest are usually counted as distinct and quite different acts. Reflection shows them to be but co-ordinate elements of the same act, each one being necessary to the existence of the other. The necessary and characteristic mental attitude of one who learns is that of attention, and this attention, if free and not forced, always implies interest in the subject studied.

Attention, loosely considered, is of two sorts—*compelled* and *attracted*. The former is exercised by an effort of the will, and usually in obedience to a command; the latter springs from desire, and is given from choice, and generally without consciousness of effort. The one is merely mechanical—the turning the mind towards the subject; the other is vital—the mind grasping and devouring it. Compelled attention, especially that of little children, is always weak and wavering, and usually merely external. In any proper sense it is not attention at all. The little face assumes the look of attention, but the mind works only practically and under restraint, and speedily wanders to other and more attractive thoughts. True, or attracted attention is simply excited interest seeking its food. Unconscious of effort, it scarcely knows fatigue.

There are several grades of attention. The first is that in which the physical senses, eye and ear, are lent to the teacher, and the mind passively receives only what the teacher forcibly impresses upon it. From this lowest grade there are successive steps in which the intellect rouses itself to higher efforts, impelled by duty, by emulation, or by hope of reward. But the highest and most productive grade is that in which the feelings become deeply enlisted, the subject interests, and the whole nature

attends. Eye and ear, the intellect and heart, concentrate their powers in a combined effort, and the soul sends to the task all its faculties roused to their utmost activity. Such is the attention demanded by this law, and such is the attitude of the true learner.

*Philosophy of the Law.*—The first intent and reason of this law are too obvious to need discussion. However teachers may neglect it in practice, all admit in theory, that without attention the pupil can learn nothing. One may as well talk to the deaf or the dead, as to the wholly inattentive. A little attention to the psychological facts which underlie the law will bring out into clear and more impressive light its vital and inevitable force and authority.

Knowledge can not be passed like some substance from one mind to another. Thoughts are not things which may be held and handled. They are simply the silent acts of the invisible mind. Ideas, which are but the intangible products of thought, can only be communicated by inducing, in the receiving mind, action correspondent to that by which these ideas were first conceived. In other words, ideas can only be transmitted by being rethought. Knowledge can not be separated from the act of knowing.

It is obvious, therefore, that the attention required is something more than a passive presentation of the pupil's mind to the teacher's mind, as he turns his eye to the teacher's face. Attention is an act, not merely a position. The learner's mind must work as well as his senses; or rather the mind must work in and through the senses; and just in proportion to the energy and completeness of its action will be the vividness and accuracy of the knowledge he gains. If the mutual action is feeble and imperfect, the conceptions formed will be faint and fragmentary, and the knowledge gained will prove incorrect, useless, and easily forgotten.