

Special Papers.

RELATION BETWEEN TEACHER AND PUPILS.*

BY MRS. WHITE, CENTRAL SCHOOL, GUELPH.

THE question of the "Relation between Teacher and Pupil" is a wide one—one that cannot be handled perfectly in a short paper, one that is not often touched practically, and yet, it is one that affects every man and woman engaged in teaching. Let us try, while met here in convention, to gather a few hints which may help us to realize more fully than we have been accustomed to do, our responsibility as teachers.

In the first place, our profession makes us responsible, not only for the pupil's mental training, but for the moral and mechanical training; in other words, we have to do with the work of heart, head and hand. Let not teachers imagine that their work is accomplished, if they merely see that a boy or girl learns so much geography, grammar, arithmetic, etc. In too many instances this, and this only, is the idea of teaching and, sad to state, teachers are too often judged—that is their ability as teachers is judged—by the number of pupils they pass at each examination. Now this kind of thing is all wrong.

When this matter is spoken of, sometimes one is told that "the school system promotion examinations" is to blame. Let us as teachers look this thing in the face, give it a full-faced, square, honest look—not be too thin-skinned to acknowledge that we are to blame, and not so conceited as to think that we are not open to being found fault with in this regard, viz., of being bound hand and foot to bookish teaching. Whether we acknowledge it or no, the fact is apparent that there is too much memory, rote, machine work, or whatever you choose to call it, in most of our departments. The mental powers are actually dwarfed instead of being developed. The process of rote teaching and too much preparation of the mental food; too much cutting and drying, and handing to pupils in form of notes, without seeing that the pupil is intelligent on the points, results in turning out a sort of human machine. Now, fellow-teachers, we know that no two minds are exactly alike, and no two persons will give exactly the same account of same scene, whether they have actually witnessed it or read about it, and it is certainly a most pernicious, I was about to say wicked, mode to follow in teaching: this of handing the food to the pupils for them to swallow, without knowing anything more about it than that they must know it word for word from notes. We not only make school work hard and irksome, but distasteful, instead of being delightful and attractive. No persons can be interested for any time in that about which they are not intelligent; and how can we expect our pupils to be different from ourselves. One says, "How is this to be changed?" The change should take place in the very first book. Each pupil should be taught to exercise thought from the first; draw out of the pupil as much as we give, else we destroy the very faculty we should cultivate, and we are fast turning pupils into machines, cast in the same mould, knocking out of them originality and individuality. Innumerable instances might be given of the ludicrousness of this process. A teacher on one occasion gave an exercise in literature, to paraphrase a certain lesson that had been gone over (the teacher was new), and when the exercises were examined, every word of each exercise was exactly the same—leading to the discovery that the previous teacher had given notes on lesson. Notes were suddenly destroyed and a new order of things introduced. So it happens in history. Notes are learned by pupils and given off, word for word, and if the subject-matter is touched upon in a slightly different style, the pupil is at a loss.

This delightfully inspiring habit of training to think might be commenced with the reading lesson; subject-matter thoroughly gone over, all sorts of questions asked in a very short time, by pupil as well as teacher, then a short account written by pupil there and then, read off by one after another, and in time it becomes a real pleasure. It is wonderful how the young mind will grasp the idea of expressing the thought, in fresh, original

words; whereas, if a pupil is allowed to go on without this developing till twelve, thirteen and fourteen, it is next to impossible to get out of the cast-iron rut he has got into. Let us then, as teachers, love the pupils sufficiently to have them intelligent on what they are to make use of farther on in life. Let us not be hemmed in between two fences, or limits. Let us not be satisfied without thorough understanding on the part of the pupil of the work gone over.

Then we have excellent opportunities for heart culture. We should inculcate the desire to govern—self. Place a pupil on his or her honor, and we have a power that no rules can give. We command respect instead of demanding it. One teacher puts it thus: "Teach me to trust you." The young heart is not hard and it can be easily impressed. I know a teacher who tells pupils when going over those lovely pieces for memorization (specially short extracts), that if they get hold of the truth contained in one or two of these pieces, and it becomes a moulding principle, they have their fortune in their hand. Yes, any boy or girl, who is honorable, straight-forward, and honest, can face the world without human friends. They will soon get them.

"Honor and shame from no condition rise.
Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

Let them understand the truth every time in such pieces in all our Readers. Dig out the gems of thought, and thus build up character, for this, dear fellow-teachers, is a very important part of our work in the school-room. It has been said that "Teachers should be born," that no man or woman should touch the work unless they love it, or love the child—love to see the mind developed, and the heart cultivated. There stands before us a process of uprooting and cultivating. Remember, "That acts oft repeated become habits, and habits become second nature"—that we are helping to build character, and that we cannot come in contact with anyone, even for a short time, without influencing him for good or evil. Much need for watchfulness! See that the foundation is strong—thorough and secure for mental and moral work afterwards. Take the matter of copying: I heard a teacher say, with reference to it, "I tell my boys when they copy, they are telling a lie to me." "Yes," a listener added, "and stealing." The teacher replied, "and working for the father of lies." There are endless ways of interweaving grand moral lessons. We certainly have marvellous power in our hands as teachers. May we build and mould aright, bearing in mind that we must give an account of our stewardship.

Lastly, we have the hand or mechanical work to think of. We should be as much concerned about the hand-work of our pupils as the head-work—that is as to how the work is done in school and for school—neatness, exactness and particularity in everything should be noticed by teacher; lop off slovenly habits; notice manner of speech; position, treatment of others. Quality of work done as well as quantity, is most important. We should cultivate precise habits in putting down home work—home exercises should be given very early, for the sake of inducing neat habits. Attention should be given to the very minutest details—indenting paragraphs, leaving margin, etc. If these little niceties are not noticed until a pupil enters Fourth book, or Third, it is next to impossible to cultivate and ingrain them in four or six months; but if steadily, uniformly, and definitely attended to from the very first, the development would be gradual, natural, and thorough. So that by the time our boys and girls entered the Collegiate Institute or Grammar School, they would be little ladies and gentlemen in the best sense, and reflect credit upon the staff of teachers in the building from whence they passed. There are some other points which might here be mentioned, viz.: That the habit must be permitted in some of the lower rooms, of counting on fingers, multiplying by separate figures when 12 is the multiplier; dividing by 2 (or any single figure), making use of long division—doing actual work in dividing by 100 or 1,000; and a principal of a college was heard to state that he noticed actual work in dividing by 1. All these things should be specially noticed under head work; work that belongs properly to the head should not be done by the hand. Any kind of dodge is taken advantage of to save the effort of

thinking. No doubt all teachers know of these habits, they should be stopped before allowed to be taken up.

Then is it not a fact, that teachers sometimes come short in example? We cannot expect our pupils to be better than ourselves. "Like teacher like pupil." Do teachers not sometimes require what might be called muscular obedience? Moral rule brings moral obedience. Teachers too often allow their feelings to run off with their judgment, and their hand to run off with both. The habit of cuffing or pulling ears cannot be too strongly denounced; by giving way to any such habit we lower ourselves and bring reproach upon our profession. Teachers sometimes forget themselves so far as to call children "youngsters" and "monkeys;" tell pupils to "go home and dig out their ears;" or "go home and soak their heads." All such giving way to rough jokes is vulgar in the extreme. Let us bear in mind that we live in the nineteenth century and not in the ninth. "If we want loyalty we must have royalty;" keep up the tone of our profession, get into love with our work, and so get pupils in love with theirs. Nothing so catching as enthusiasm. One of the first educationists in our Dominion—Principal of Theological College—says, "I tell students we are strong as public teachers in proportion to the force of personal conviction with which we hold and realize the truth delivered—first seize the truth with a firm and overmastering grasp; get it deep down into your own heart and soul, and then speak it, and everybody will listen and be moved thereby." So we will find in our teaching.

Let me sum up in a few maxims that will fasten on the mind and heart of pupils:—"Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well." "A place for everything and everything in its place." "Whatever is worth having is worth asking for." "An idle (or empty) brain is the devil's workshop." "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." Let us remember that the pupils we are now helping to train will soon take our places; they will be the future educationists, rulers, ministers, lawyers, doctors, and voters of our Dominion; nay, more, the future fathers and mothers. I would here just remind our male friends and teachers that, although men are the "lords of creation," women are the moulders of the nation. May we then inspire our boys and girls with a love of knowledge, love of country, love of liberty, love of the Bible, and love of the God of the Bible, and may they never permit the iron grip of oppression, ignorance and superstition to wrest from them these glorious and dearly bought inheritances.

O-U-G-H.

A FRESH HACK AT AN OLD KNOT.

(Enter M. Jean Crapaud, who speaks)

I'm taught p-l-o-u-g-h

Shall be pronounced "plov."

"Zat's easy wen you know," I s y,

"Mon Anglais I'll get through."

My teacher say zat in zat case

O-u-g-h is "oo."

And zen I laugh and say to him,

"Zees Anglais make me cough."

He say, "Not coo, but in zat word

O-u-g-h is 'off.'"

O, sacre bleu!, such varied sounds

Of words make me hiccough!

He say, "Again, mon friend ees wrong!

O-u-g-h is 'up,'"

In hiccough." Zen I cry, "No more,

You make my throat feel rough.

"Non! non!" he cry, "you are not right—

O-u-g-h is 'uff.'"

I say, "I try to speak your words,

I can't pronon zem though!"

"In time you'll learn, but now you're wrong.

O-u-g-h is 'owe.'"

"I'll try no more. I sall go mad,

I'll drown me in ze lough!"

"But ere you drown yourself," said he,

O-u-g-h is 'ock.'"

He taught no more! I held him fast!

And killed him wiz a rough!

—CHAS. BATTELL LOOMIS.

* Read before the South Wellington Teachers' Convention, at Elora, February, 1889.