

A WEEK AT OSWEGO NORMAL SCHOOL.

S. B. SINCLAIR, B.A., HEAD-MASTER HAMILTON MODEL SCHOOL.

JUDGE DRAPER, Superintendent of Schools for New York State recently said that in his opinion Oswego Normal School had no superior in the State and some readers of the JOURNAL may be interested in knowing what solutions this pioneer school of Pestalozzian principles and carefully elaborated methods of development is giving to certain problems which are at the present time engaging the attention of Ontario teachers.

There are eleven Normal Schools in New York State, outside of New York city. In all of these tuition and text-books are free and students are paid one-half of their travelling expenses. The length of the course varies from one to three years, according to grade of diploma.

In comparing the present work of the Oswego School with that of five years ago the observer finds the same spirit of enthusiasm and if possible a firmer belief in the original foundation principles. At the same time he cannot help being struck with the great progress which is being made in the Art of teaching. Here, as in our Ontario schools, educators are devoting more time than formerly to the study of children, and in the light of facts gained from this study, and from the History of Education, they are working out a system based upon sound physiological, psychological and ethical principles.

The kindergarten department of the school has been considerably strengthened until it now forms an important element in the organic whole.

Probably the greatest advance in the Model School (there called Practice School) has been along the line of Natural Science study, which receives special attention. In the Primary grades particularly, Natural Science Language, Drawing and Reading are carefully related. The pupil observes the growth of the plant from the time when he plants the tiny seed in a window garden in the school-room until the day when the fruit appears. In a half hour's talk with his teacher he discovers and learns many interesting facts in addition to those which he has already observed. After a brief recess he returns to the class room for a Reading lesson. He finds the sentences expressing the thoughts gained from his observation and composed during his language lesson now written on the board for reading. He has been trained in Sentence and Word recognition upon a sequence of Natural Science words and this morning's lesson contains but few unfamiliar forms. He has also had training in phonics and a few minutes of preliminary drill by the Teacher prepares him to grapple with his reading lesson. It is not strange that with such a method carefully wrought out and vigorously applied from day to day pupils read with excellent expression. After the reading lesson the pupil draws a picture of the plant with pencil or paints with water colors. Children of seven years do good work in painting.

In Number Work perceptions and combinations are emphasized in the first year and it is agreed that the first ten numbers

are all that an average child, who has not had previous training, can thoroughly master in one year. The moulding board seems to be less used than formerly in the teaching of advanced Geography and more in Primary Grades the object being rather to represent concepts than to teach new facts. Pupils in advanced forms do considerable work in crayon map drawing.

An effort is being made to give the pupil an all sided culture every step of the way, from the Kindergarten to the High School, and as a result less time is devoted to Reading and Number Work, *as such*, than in some schools. Manual training forms a definite part of the school exercises and has evidently come to stay, moral training also receives considerable attention, the formation of character being *prominently* held out to the pupil as the highest object of all education. One cannot fail to be impressed with the high moral tone of the school and yet one is at a loss to say whether it should be attributed more to this Ethical training or to the unconscious influence of such spirits as the venerable Principal and other members of the teaching staff.

DR. FELIX ADLER ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT.

FROM an excellent article, one of a series, by Felix Adler, Ph.D., New York, which is being published in *The Teacher*, on the general subject of "The Punishment of Children," we extract the following admirable remarks on corporal punishment:

There was a schoolmaster whose name is recorded in the history of education, who boasted that during his long and interesting career he had inflicted corporal punishment more than a million times. In modern days the tide of public opinion has set strongly against corporal punishment. It is being abolished in many of our public institutions, and the majority of cultivated parents have a decided feeling against availing themselves of this method of discipline. But mere sentiment against it is not sufficient. Is the opposition to it the result merely of that increased sensitiveness to pain which we observe in the modern heart, of the indisposition to inflict or to witness suffering? Then some stern teacher will tell us that to inflict suffering is sometimes necessary, that it is a sign of weakness to shrink from it, that as the surgeon must sometimes apply the knife in order to effect a radical cure, so the conscientious parent must sometimes inflict physical pain in order to eradicate grievous faults. The stern teacher might warn us against "sparing the rod and spoiling the child." We must not, therefore, base our opposition to corporal punishment merely on sentimental grounds. And there is no need for doing so, for there are sound principles on which the argument may be made to rest. Corporal punishment does not merely conflict with our tenderer sympathies; it thwarts and defeats the purpose of moral reformation. In the first place it brutalizes the child; secondly, in many cases it breaks the spirit of the child, making it a moral coward, and thirdly it tends to weaken the sense of shame, on which the hope of moral improvement depends.

Corporal punishment brutalizes the child. A brute we are justified in beating, though of course, never in a cruel, merciless way. A lazy beast of burden may be stirred up to work; an obstinate mule must feel the touch of the whip. Corporal punishment implies that a rational human being is on the level of an animal.* Its motive thought is: you can be controlled only through your animal instincts; you can be moved only by an appeal to your bodily feelings. It is a practical denial of that higher nature which is in every human being. And this is not only a degraded but a degrading view of human character. A child that is accustomed to be treated like an animal is apt to behave like an animal. Thus corporal punishment, instead of moralizing, serves to demoralize the character.

In the next place corporal punishment often breaks the spirit of a child. Have you never observed how some children that have been often whipped will whine and beg off when the angry parent is about to take out the rattan; "O, I will never do it again; O, let me off this time." What an abject sight it is—a child fawning and entreating in this way, grovelling like a dog. And must not the parent, too, feel humiliated in such a situation? Courage is one of the noblest of the manly virtues. We should train our children to bear unavoidable pain without flinching, but sensitive natures can only be accustomed slowly to endure suffering, and chastisement when it is frequent and severe results in making the child more and more afraid of the blows. In such cases it is the parents themselves, by their barbarous discipline, who have stamped the ugly vice of cowardice upon their children.

Even more disastrous is the third effect of corporal punishment, that of blunting the sense of shame. Some children quail before a blow, but there are others of a more obstinate disposition, and these assume an attitude of dogged indifference. They hold out the hand, they take the stinging blows, they utter no cry, they never wince; they will not let the teacher or father triumph over them to that extent; they walk off in stolid indifference. Now to receive a blow is an invasion of personal liberty. Every one who receives a blow feels a natural impulse to resent it. But boys who are compelled by those in authority over them to submit often to such humiliation are liable to lose the finer feeling for what is humiliating. They become, as the popular phrase puts it, "hardened." Their sense of shame is deadened. Now sensitiveness to shame is that quality of our nature on which, above all others, moral progress depends. The stigma of public disgrace is one of the most potent safeguards of virtue. The world cries "shame" upon the thief, and the dread of the disgrace which is implied in being considered a thief is one of the strongest preventives with those whom hunger and poverty might tempt to steal. The world cries "shame" upon the law-breaker in general, but those who in their youth are accustomed to be put to shame by corporal punishment will

* It is an open question whether light corporal punishment should not occasionally be permitted in the case of very young children who have not yet arrived at the age of reason. In this case, at all events, there is no danger that the permission will be abused. No one will think of seriously hurting a very young child.