

# The Educational Weekly.

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THE long vacation is almost ended; a few weeks more—in some cases even a few days—will bring back teachers and pupils to their accustomed places in the school-room and their old familiar duties. The long period of rest, change, and recreation will bring them all back to their work with recuperated energies, new aspirations, and fresh courage. It is well at such epochs in the history of a school as this, that its teachers should pause and consider calmly and thoughtfully what defects in their own manner or methods there are, in what subjects their teaching has been most successful, in what it has been weak, what steps may be taken to make their strong subjects stronger and the weak ones vigorous and healthy. The teacher will do well to consider what the chief hindrances are which stand in the way of his securing the best results from his own intelligent and well-directed efforts. Insufficient or defective furniture, apparatus, and other auxiliary appliances, should come in for a share of attention. Those who are accustomed to move along in a groove without thinking anything about improvements in their surroundings, or in the efficiency of their work, will be surprised at the results which can be reached by inducing their trustees to make a judicious outlay of even a small sum in needful furniture and apparatus. The best workman cannot do good work without proper tools. When the case is properly stated to them, and the end to be attained clearly indicated, there are few school trustees who will not take a favorable view of such a request, and when they see the benefits that have resulted from one investment of that kind, they will be more disposed to liberality again.

WE have frequently in these columns discussed the reading of teachers. We have approached the question from various standpoints, and looked at its different aspects. What should be read, when, why, and how it should be read, have all been noticed. Teachers are all interested in whatever relates to a topic so important and so extensive. All who have any share in the great work of education should give great attention to all questions relating to their reading. This cannot be neglected without serious loss to the teacher and through him to the community. But many teachers who are sufficiently alive to the importance of the systematic, thorough and critical reading of much that lies beyond the limits of mere professional needs, are prone to be forgetful of something which concerns the welfare of their schools, and their own success therein

quite as much as the topics which are included in their private study. We refer to wide general reading on the part of the pupils. That this is of great moment every one who has had experience in educational work will at once admit; but, while recognizing its importance from an educational point of view, as a means of developing power of expression, taste in the use of words, an appreciation of the beauties of good literature, a love for the refined and the beautiful, a habit of reading which will grow with time and be of inestimable value in after life, as well as for the varied and extensive information on general affairs which cannot be gained from text-books, few teachers make any systematic effort to discover what their pupils are in the habit of reading privately; or, indeed, whether they read anything beyond the works prescribed for some examination. It is easy for the teacher who is possessed of tact and judgment to exercise an influence here which will be of incalculable value to the pupil, apart from the great benefit received within the limits of the work which is supposed to more properly belong to the classroom.

How can the teacher influence his pupils in their choice of books and in the way in which those books are read? The answer is difficult only to the novice. Few teachers, perhaps, succeed in doing all that might be done in this direction; every true teacher, however, does much to accomplish so desirable an end. The ordinary work of the classroom should be such as to stimulate a love for all that is refined in thought and elegant in diction in our literature, by bringing out the force and lingering on the beauty of the finer passages in the authors read; instead of making the lesson a mechanical exercise in analysis and parsing, the taste of pupils may be awakened and developed. But something more is needed. Talks about books which the teacher should encourage his class in reading; discussions of plot, character, incident, and style; allusions to the strong points in the author's work, and its weaknesses, all in a way suited to the capacity of the child, will do more to arouse his interest and cause him to read intelligently and appreciatively than any amount of mere grammatical study. To be successful in this the teacher must himself be keenly alive to the beauties of our best literature, he must be one whose judgment and character inspire children with ready confidence; he must win their sympathy that he may excite their interest and guide their actions. The teacher's own habits of thought, tastes, and personal character, are of more importance here than ought else.

IN how many of our schools do the teachers give the requisite amount of attention to the physical conditions under which their own work and that of their pupils is carried on? Too many of those in charge do not give more than a passing thought to the influences which may be affecting the comfort and bodily well-being of those who have to spend six hours daily in the atmosphere of the schoolroom. The agencies at work here are often of an injurious character, and the consequences resulting from them are frequently serious before their presence receives more than a passing thought. The supplying of pure air and the proper regulation of the temperature are more frequently attended to than formerly, at any rate in the more modern schools. The absence of all noxious or unwholesome influences from without is something the importance of which trustees and teachers are slowly beginning to realize; but in these directions much still remains to be done. One of the most valuable gifts which it is in one's power to wish for is perfect vision. In the greater number of our schools little attention is given to seating and lighting with a view to protecting the eyes of the pupils from injury. Few teachers—and still fewer trustees—have ever given any special attention to the physiology of the eye or the conditions which best secure its perfection. By far the larger number of both classes have never given more than a passing thought to the way in which windows and seats can be best arranged in order to give the best light by which to read and study. The alarming increase of nearsightedness calls loudly for remedial and preventive measures. The actual extent of the trouble is unknown to many of those who spend their lives in the classroom. How many teachers ever test the vision of their pupils with the view of finding to what extent the evil is induced in their own schools? Few ever do anything of the kind. In some parts of the Old World more attention has been given to this than in Canada. Monoyer, of Paris, has arranged a card on which is printed a series of letters of different sizes. When this card is hung up in a good light, and the child is placed about five yards distant, he should be able to read with either eye the smallest letters on the card. Ability to do this would indicate normal vision. If he can read only half the lines, then his vision is half the normal standard. The scale is so arranged that each line represents a tenth. Some similar plan of testing the eyesight should be generally used in the schools of Ontario, and a record of the results of examinations at regular intervals carefully kept. From a comparison of these records at different places and the arrangements for lighting, etc., we might in time learn the causes and the means of prevention, and thereby reduce the evil to a minimum.