

* Special Papers. *

GROWTH.*

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WHATEVER pessimists may say to the contrary it is a recognized fact that the world is progressing, and he who would be successful in any calling must keep pace with the rapid onward march.

Education, particularly, has been making great strides of late, and so many and so important are the changes which have been and are being made in educational theories and methods, that the teacher who would be successful must keep abreast of the times, must keep moving on, or, in other words, must GROW, mentally and morally.

At a Sunday school convention, held in this town a few weeks ago, a speaker, illustrating the surest way to grow spiritually, used a short acrostic which seemed to me very appropriate for Public school, as well as for Sunday school teachers, so, with your kind permission, I shall use that acrostic as a sort of text.

The first word used was "go."

If I were not a teacher, and as such debarred from the use of "slang," I should be tempted to say that the successful man must have some "go" about him; as it is, I must content myself with saying that earnestness, energy and enthusiasm are indispensable to success.

An indolent teacher does untold harm, because, by his example, more powerful than precept, more contagious than the most contagious disease, he trains his pupils in habits which effectually prevent their taking an active interest in their work, thereby destroying all hope of progress and unfitting them for the duties which lie before them.

An energetic, earnest person must, on the contrary, by the very force of his nature, inspire ambition and determination to succeed in the mind of almost every pupil.

In the school-room, a cheerful, hopeful spirit is invaluable. It creates a wholesome atmosphere for the mind, prevents children from becoming discouraged over their errors, or their slowness, and makes the school-room and its duties bright and attractive, rather than dull and monotonous.

Then, in order to go forward, the teacher needs what Kingsley calls "Divine discontent—the parent first of upward aspiration and then of self-control, thought, effort to fulfil that aspiration even in part." A person, be he teacher or taught, who is quite content with his present standing, is not likely to make any advance; but, shutting his eyes to the defects or lack in his character or knowledge, will make no effort to progress, and by-and-by will find that while he was thus engaged in "napping" the slow and plodding ones, whom he had almost despised, have left him far behind.

But it is not enough to know that imperfections exist; what they really are must be known before improvement can be made. We are all ready to acknowledge that we are far from perfect, but we are

not quite so willing to settle ourselves down to the disagreeable task of finding out where, how and why we are wrong; and yet a *right* knowledge of ourselves, our methods, our motives and our aims is absolutely necessary if a higher plane is to be reached.

There are right and wrong ways of doing almost everything; at least, some ways are better than others, and, if it is possible to learn and make use of the best, it cannot be right to be content with the poorer.

In the school-room any method is wrong which lessens the child's power to think, destroys his independence, or fosters in him the belief that he must be good only when watched, and may be as bad as he likes when free from fear of detection. Children need, not so much to be controlled, as to be helped to control themselves, and to be as careful and trusty when unobserved as when under the eyes of the most vigilant guardian.

Again, no lasting good is to be hoped for unless the workman has a fair knowledge of the material which he handles. A carpenter who knew nothing about wood, a farmer who understood little about seed and soil, would prove a failure. How much more disastrous will be the failure of one who attempts to handle so delicate and impressionable a thing as the mind of a child, without any knowledge of that mind, of its capabilities and its needs. Children are not machines, but souls, and he who would wisely guide them in the quest for knowledge must have a right conception of, and sympathy with, child-nature. As Daniel Webster has so well said:—"If we work upon marble, it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal minds, if we imbue them with right principles, with the just fear of God and love of our fellow-men, we engrave upon those tablets something which will brighten to all eternity."

Right aims are also necessary; the teacher's aim should not be to cram the brain with facts in order that the pupil may make a brilliant showing at examinations, but to develop the mind naturally and carefully in order that the child, when grown, may be able to take his place in the world, and to perform wisely and well the duties which may devolve upon him.

But, not only must the teacher's aims after entering upon his work be right, the motives which lead him to follow his profession should be proper ones. If the drawing of the salary be the only incentive to faithful work, if there be no strong desire for the advancement of the pupils, no pleasure in watching the growth of the mental powers, no real joy in helping the wayward ones to conquer themselves, and in watching their efforts to correct their faults, such a teacher would be better employed in dealing with senseless things, or mingling with men as cold and hard as himself. He should not dare to handle so sensitive a thing as the soul of a child.

Little folks are very quick to detect the feelings with which their elders regard them; they find out very soon whether they are looked upon as human beings, or as so many troublesome things, to be kept as quiet, crammed as full, and got rid of as

quickly as possible. They detect, too, very accurately, the difference between right and wrong; no sophistry will mislead, no merely plausible reasoning will win the straightforward child. He may not be able to express his feelings, or put his thoughts into words, but they are in his mind, and the teacher who values the respect of his pupils will be open and candid before them. A sham will not long retain their confidence; therefore, if a teacher would be *RIGHT* in his pupils' eyes, he must be true and upright at all times and under all circumstances.

The next word we shall take is "on." You have all, doubtless, read the story of Alice's adventures in the land "Through the Looking-Glass," and you will remember the long, hard run she took with the Red Queen, her surprise on noticing that, altho' she was forced to run so rapidly that her feet seemed scarcely to touch the ground, she never got any farther on, and how, on giving expression to her astonishment she was coolly informed by her companion that in *that* country it would take all the running she could do to keep in the same place. It is just so with some people in this country. They weary themselves, sometimes others, by their ceaseless activity, and yet seem to make no progress; they work hard, but thoughtlessly, and consequently fail to obtain any good results. Noise is not energy, motion is not always progress. If we would press forward we must have some definite end in view; to work aimlessly is to work carelessly and unprofitably; but, if, having some desirable end to reach we keep our eyes ever towards the goal, and bend all the energies of our souls in that direction, some progress must be made. What if it be but slow?

Heaven is not reached by a single bound,
But we build the ladder by which we rise
From the lowly earth to the vaulted skies,
And we mount to its summit round by round.

We must not, however, be content with striving to reach a lofty height, but must occasionally measure our progress, not by gazing complacently down to see how far we have risen above others—moral dizziness would follow that—but by marking whether we are nearer the height to which we aspire.

Now-a-days, pupils are examined—examined until it is almost a wonder they are not mere machines; perhaps it would not be a bad plan to let the teachers have a few examinations occasionally. We know that merchants investigate, at regular intervals, the state of their business, and should not the teacher, too, frequently take stock, so to speak, of himself, that he may find out whether his capital is increasing or diminishing. If he will not do it for himself, others will do it for him, and, perhaps, will not always balance in his favor.

Another important characteristic of the successful man is his ability and his willingness to *WORK*.

'Tis true outsiders say, "What nice times teachers have; they earn their salaries easily." Well, perhaps, some do have light work, but they are not found at the top of the ladder. The work of a thorough, progressive teacher begins before nine o'clock in the morning, and does not end when the

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