

But there are certain defects in the present system of management in schools which should be remedied to render it more strictly in accordance with known physiological laws, and the removal of these defects lies in great part with those to whom the general direction of the schools is intrusted by the people.

It is too much the practice in many places for the directors to fix the number of books to be studied, and the amount of instruction, or more strictly, the number of pages of the book to be gone over in a specified time, and this without any adequate conception of the capacity of the children to acquire clearly and definitely the instructions thus marked out for them.

Every one knows that there is a vast variety in the mental capacity of children, and in the development of those powers of mind which are required for their progress in learning. Some develop certain powers early and rapidly, while others attain their growth and power by very slow degrees; some have a fondness and aptness for one study, and some for another; what is hard and repulsive to one, is easy and pleasant to another, and to expect all these children of different capacities to attain the same proficiency in the same studies, is looking for what can never in the present constitution of the human mind be attained. Take a class in arithmetic: part of the class will learn the lesson with the greatest ease, part will acquire it by dint of hard work and assistance from others, and another part will scarcely be able to understand the lesson with the best instructions of the teacher.

Now what is obviously needed in this case, is that the teacher should give special care to those who most need that care, to enable them to learn the lesson so as fully to understand the reasons for the different processes or steps taken to reach the end. It is useless to say that the teacher has not time to give to the drilling of that dull part of the class, for that is just the part which requires the teacher's special efforts and attention, to place the subject in a clear and correct light before the pupil, so that he will understand clearly what is done, and why it is done; the others will acquire the lesson without any extra labor on the part of the teacher, and if education is to be what its name implies, careful, diligent and continued efforts must be made to draw out the powers of the duller child, and give them that direction and support which they so much need. It will not do to have the work done in a careless, listless way, as if it were no matter whether the child understood or not, but the whole process should be carefully explained, and each step, understood fully before another step is taken.

But again, it is said this will take up too much time, and the teacher will not be able to carry the class through the prescribed amount. That is just the folly which should be corrected at the commencement. It is infinitely better for the future education of the mental powers, that the child should thoroughly and clearly understand the principles which lie at the foundation of any branch of knowledge, than that he should go over the whole book without being able to give a reason for what is done. It is this pushing children forward over so many books, without giving them time or opportunity to understand as they should what they are hurried over, which is the fundamental error in the present system of teaching.

The directors and parents too often judge the efficiency and ability of a teacher by the amount of space which he may be able to carry the child over, totally ignoring the great fact that it is the quality and clear understanding of what is learned which is education, not the amount of books gone over, without the ability of the child, when the book is finished, to give any clear statement of what has been studied.

The practice is far too common of making memory the great feature in education, requiring a child to commit to memory a variety of matter, too often without any explanation of the meaning, and without insisting or requiring that the other powers of mind, reason, reflection and imagination should also be equally and simultaneously trained.

Correct education consists essentially in the careful and equable training of all the powers and faculties of the mind, not giving undue prominence to one but striving to exercise each in such a way that it may be brought into active, cautious and legitimate use, and then the child may be said to be passing through a course of education. Any other course is the merest misnomer for education, and is only misleading and leaving the impression on the mind of the child that he is fitted for the duties of life when he has scarcely attained to a definite understanding of the first principles on which all true knowledge is based, and when his thinking powers have not been trained so as to enable him to grasp in a satisfactory manner any of the problems he may at any moment be called upon to attempt to solve.

Let it be distinctly understood by all directors, teachers and parents that what is needed is that the child should have a clear idea of one point before he is allowed to go on to another; that it is infinitely preferable that only a page of a book should be thoroughly understood, than that the whole book should be gone through in a superficial manner, with very little explanation, and no correct understanding and impression on the mind of what is intended to be taught. The knowledge to be of any benefit must be so acquired that it can be applied whenever occasion may call for its use, and it is just this kind of practical knowledge of which so little is brought out and rendered practicable by so much of the teaching of the present day.

The bearing of all this on the causation of mental disorders is plain and unmistakable. In the conflict of life and amid the trials, temptations and struggles which men and women have to meet, it is very essential that their minds should be so balanced that they can take sound and sensible views of their surroundings, and be able to draw correct conclusions from given premises. If the memory be educated at the expense of the reason and reflexion, what can a man do who has never been taught to reason or reflect and form a correct judgment. He is too likely to be swayed by passion and prejudice, and yield to their direction, rather than take a course which calm judgment would indicate to be the best.

But there is still an element wanting in this mental training, without which all these other aids will be of little avail. Man is a moral as well as an intellectual being, and unless the moral powers are trained equally with the intellectual, the man will in all probability be a one-sided character. It is not intended to insist, that by a moral should be understood a religious education, as this latter belongs more directly, and particularly to parents and religious teachers, but it is insisted upon that a sound moral education can be given without any denominational bias.

It has been said by an eminent Scotchman that the wit and wisdom of the Scot was in great part obtained by his being obliged in early youth to read as part of his regular reading lesson, the Proverbs of Solomon, but since that had been changed, the wit was declining.

A teacher may give occasional lessons in moral training by holding up before the pupil the wrong of certain actions, and the sin of committing certain crimes, but it is infinitely wiser and better that the mind of the scholar should be thoroughly imbued with principles which will be of incalculable benefit in every circumstance in