

an unwillingness or incapacity in most minds to think. Such minds must be enlarged before patriotism can be anything to them but a barren name; but may not patriotic passages, under a wise teacher, promote the ordinary growth? For who, even among the educated, has not felt a tinge of shame at the dullness of his own patriotism on reading Grinké's beautiful lines, beginning—

"We cannot honor our country with too deep a reverence. We cannot love her with an affection too pure and fervent. We cannot serve her with an energy of purpose or a faithfulness of zeal too steadfast and ardent;" or Scott's—

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said:  
'This is my own, my native land!'"

What I have said of patriotism applies to all the elements of great-mindedness.

The practice, therefore, of memorizing the choice thoughts of our best writers, should be made a prominent feature of school work. Oliver Wendell Holmes says, "There is no place where an author's thoughts can nestle in so securely as the memory of a school-boy or a school-girl." It is also in accord with the advice of Arthur Helps, who says, "We should lay up in our minds a store of goodly thoughts in well-wrought words, which shall be a living treasure of knowledge always with us, and from which, at various times, and amidst all the shifting of circumstances, we might be sure of drawing some comfort, guidance and sympathy."

The idea of its introduction is not new in the history of education. In a similar manner the Germans have been long in the habit of training their children in the knowledge and admiration of the literature of their own land. The Arabs, the most civilized nation of the ancient world, taught their young to repeat the unending thoughts of their poets, under the beautiful name of unstrung pearls. For the greater part, the selections for the younger children should consist of entire pieces, and of such as are calculated to develop their emotional natures—the imagination, love of home and parents, kindness to dumb animals, etc.—and to give them correct rules of action. Those for the more advanced pupils should consist principally, of brief extracts containing grand and ennobling thoughts calculated to incite them to higher aspirations in life, to lead them into pure fields of English literature, and to teach them to love and reverence our great authors. In the selection of gems, poetry has the preference, for it inculcates a double beauty—beauty as thought, and beauty as composition. It delights the ear of the child as the colored pencil or illustrated book delights his eye. It is more easily committed, and, as a rule, longer retained.

All the selections should be recited in concert, and individually, from the platform.

You are aware that years ago it was almost the universal custom for teachers to set apart Friday afternoon for declamation. But the exercise in declamation differed widely from memorizing gems of thought, which I advocate. Then the pupils were permitted to commit to memory whatever they thought best. The result was, that in a majority of cases the selections contained no literary or other merit. They were made more from a desire on the part of the pupil to have something "new," or to create a laugh, than from any other cause. The time spent in committing such pieces was, in my opinion, worse than wasted, for there was nothing in them worth remembering. Their effect was to vitiate the tastes of the pupils for good literature, rather than to give them a love of it. It was not so much what the pupils memorized, as how they declaimed. In short, everything was sacrificed to declamation. In my opinion declamation, a subject almost entirely neglected in public schools of late years, is a very valuable exercise. Its tendency is to give pupils confidence in themselves; to make them

more self-possessed; and above all, to make them better readers. These worthy objects can be better accomplished by reciting "gems," than by declaiming long pieces, as was formerly the custom, for every member, even of an entire class, can recite a short extract within the time of an ordinary recitation, and each learn, from hearing the others declaim, the same selection. But important as declamation is in itself, it is secondary to the great object I desire to accomplish, viz.: storing the mind of our youth with grand and ennobling thoughts, clothed in beautiful language—thoughts that will incite them to noble aspirations in life—thoughts that inculcate virtue, patriotism, love of God, of father, of mother, kindness to dumb animals, and that give correct rules of action.

#### HOW TO TEACH.

At least one hour per week should be given to this literary work in all the district, grammar and high schools throughout the country.

In Cincinnati a part of this time is taken from that assigned to morning exercises, and a part from Friday afternoon. However, this is left to the discretion of the teacher.

I recommend eight lines as a fair amount for each week's work. At this rate the pupils, in passing through the district and grammar schools, would commit 2,560 lines, and in passing through the district, grammar, and high schools, 3,840 lines, which is equivalent in amount to 128 pages of one of our Fifth Readers.

It is not enough that the selections be simply memorized. Each one of them should be made the subject of a lesson, to be given by the teacher. The teacher should not only see that the pupils thoroughly understand the meaning of each word and sentence; that they give the substance of each passage in their own language, and make the proper application of the same before requiring them to commit it to memory, but she should also endeavor, by appropriate talks, to impress upon the minds of her pupils the ideas intended to be conveyed, and to inspire them, if possible, with the spirit of the extract.

What an opportunity is here given for our teachers to impart moral instruction; to cultivate the emotional nature of children; to inspire them with a love of the noble, the good and the true! Such instruction must bear beautiful fruits.

After the selection has been thoroughly memorized, the attention of the teacher should be given to the elocution—to the beautiful delivery of the same. This can be well done by concert drill. The concert should be supplemented by individual recitation. If, however, for want of time, any part of the work indicated above has to be neglected, it should be the individual recitation. As I said before, declamation is secondary to the commitment to memory of literary gems.

As the value of these extracts to one in after life will depend, in no small degree, upon the accuracy with which they are memorized in youth, therefore the teacher should see that they are committed to memory, word for word. In order to do this, time should be taken from the grammar or language lessons for the pupils to write the extracts from memory. This would also be an excellent practical exercise in capitalization, punctuation and spelling.

Let me say here that this literary work trains the memory; there is, perhaps, no weaker point in the school system of our country than the frequent neglect of this absolute necessity in child culture. The memory needs as much strengthening by exercise as the muscles of the arm; but it should be employed, as here, in storing the mind with what is worth remembering.

The teachers should give sketches of the lives and writings of the best and most worthy authors, at least to all the pupils above the fifth year of school, and encourage the pupils to find out for themselves interesting acts concerning authors and their writings, and