

and just in proportion to the energy and completeness of its action will be the vividness and accuracy of the knowledge he gains. If the mental action is feeble and imperfect, the conceptions formed will be faint and fragmentary, and the knowledge gained will prove incorrect, useless, and easily forgotten.

Aroused *attention* is something more than a state of waiting and expectancy. The notion that the mind can be made simply recipient, a mere bag, or a piece of blank paper, or a cake of wax under the seal, is neither safe nor philosophical. Its very nature, as far as we can understand it, is that of power or force, and force can only exhibit itself in action. To awaken attention is to put the mind in motion, and teaching is nothing more than directing this motion. The mind sees not by looking into the teacher's mind, but by steadily regarding the same object the teacher has regarded.

But further. The vigor of mental action, like that of muscular action, is proportioned to the strength of the feelings which inspire it. The powers of the intellect do not come forth in their full strength at the mere command of a teacher, nor even some cold and oppressive sense of duty. It is only when we "work with a will," that is with a keen and hearty interest in our work, that we bring our faculties either of body or mind out in their fullest energy. It follows that the true attitude of the learner's mind is that of active, interested attention. Where this is wholly lacking, nothing is learned; just in proportion as this is attained will the learning be rapid, easy, and thorough. The law is as certain, invariable, and all controlling as the law of gravitation.—That is a law of matter; this is the law of mind.

REMARKS.—It is a most important remark that the elements of interest vary with the ages of the pupils, and with advancing stages of growth and culture; and with these will vary also the scope and power of attention. The child of six years can neither feel interest in nor give any genuine attention to, the thoughts which interest the youth of sixteen.

Another truth, equally important to be remarked, is that the power of attention varies with the mental development, and is proportioned nearly to the years of a child; that of young children being weak and exhausted. This power is itself a product of education, and marks accurately the strength of the intellect. Said a man of great mental power: "The difference between me and the man of weak intellect lies in my power to maintain my attention—to keep it plodding." Thus, power of attention is both strength and skill.

Children and adults are often interested in the same scenes, histories, or lessons, but it does not follow that they are interested in the same ideas, or aspects of the subject. The child's attention is fixed only upon the sensible fact or some picturesque view of it; the adult mind attends to the profounder relations, and the remoter connections and consequences of the fact.

Attention follows interest. Hence the folly of attempting to gain attention to any subject in which you can not awaken the learner's interest. The assertion that children ought to be compelled to pay attention because it is their duty, denies the fundamental law of attention.

The two chief hindrances to attention are apathy and distraction. The former may arise from constitutional inertness, or from weariness or other bodily condition of the hour. Distraction is the division of the attention between several different objects. This is peculiarly the fault of immature and undisciplined minds. The quick senses of children are caught so easily by a great variety of objects, and they can find so little in them to interest them that their thoughts flit with the tireless wing of the butterfly.

Interest has several sources. It may come from (1) the lesson itself as truth, or from some picturesque or practical aspect, as a thing of beauty, or a power for good; (2) the connections of the truth with the learner's experiences in the past or present time, or his hopes in the future; (3) the sympathetic interest inspired by the teacher's manifested interest in the lesson; or (4) finally, from the companionship and emulation of fellow learners of the same lesson. These sources of interest all point to some object of attention belonging to the lesson or its connections.

PRACTICAL RULES.—From our law itself and the foregoing remarks upon it, spring many and important rules of teaching. The following are some of the most obvious and practical:

1. Never begin a recitation or class exercise till the attention of the whole class is secured.
2. Pause whenever the attention is lost or interrupted, and do not go on till it is completely regained.
3. Never exhaust completely the pupils' power of attention, and hence never continue an exercise after signs of weariness appear. Either change the subject or pause to kindle fresh attention.
4. Let the length of time of the recitation correspond to the ages of the classes, making the lessons of young pupils very brief.
5. Illustrations, and especially if presented to the eye, help to rouse and fix the attention, but care must be taken that the illustrations shall not too much withdraw the attention from the real subject.
6. Seek to rest and encourage the attention by a pleasing variety, but avoid distraction.
7. Attempt very difficult subjects only when the mind is fresh, and arouse the attention to its highest pitch.
8. Select carefully those aspects of the lesson, and use such illustrations as shall be adapted to the age and attainments of your class.
9. Kindle and maintain the highest possible interest in the subject itself.

Violations.—The violations of these rules are many and frequent, and they constitute the most fatal class of errors committed by ordinary teachers. Lessons are often begun before the attention of the class is gained, and continued long after it has ceased to be given. In other cases, pupils are urged to listen and learn after their limited power of attention is exhausted, and when weariness has sealed their minds against any further impression. Illustrations are sometimes wholly neglected, and often so badly chosen and so extravagantly used as entirely to distract the mind, and withdraw the attention from the lesson itself. Little or no heed is given to the varying ages and talents of the pupils; and those wholly unequal in years and attainments are often united in the same classes and taught the same lessons in the same way. Only very careless and casual efforts are made to select such lessons and aspects of lessons as are adapted to the peculiar condition of the class; and almost no attempt is made to excite a genuine and lively interest in the subject. And finally, and worst of all, whatever interest the pupil may chance to feel is sometimes repressed by a dry and unsympathizing manner of the teacher; and a painful disgust, instead of a winsome and strengthening delight, is created by the unskillful and unnecessary harshness which robs the pupil's mind at once of its desire and its power to learn.

What wonder that through these and other violations of this most obvious law of teaching, our schools are made unattractive, and their success is so limited and poor!

*"The medium must be language understood by both teacher and pupil in the same sense."*

The meaning of this law is simple and obvious. It