

# The Educational Weekly.

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PHYSICIANS tell us that the highest degree of physical health and strength is obtained where there is present the greatest activity alternated with the completest rest. Is not this equally true of all mental health?

WE spoke in an issue of some weeks ago of a method of reading which would be highly beneficial, viz., that of reading a book with a note-book at hand in which to jot down all that we were unacquainted with. This would be an excellent task for the vacation. Some books, indeed, would require more than a single vacation. Some of the older authors, for instance, contain an enormous mass of information derived from all manner of sources. Many works may be cited as striking examples of this; some of the most striking, in our opinion, are Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

A GOOD habit to acquire in learning any new subject is, after having mastered its details, to sit down quietly and see how far we are able, without the aid of text books, to explain to others in as simple language as possible, what we have learned. There is a vast difference between learning and teaching. This seems self-evident. But all that follows from this difference we do not sufficiently realize. Merely to learn is of little value to the teacher; he must also learn how to teach what he himself has learned. And this is by far the harder lesson of the two. The teacher, perhaps, like the poet, is born, not made. But the gift of teaching is capable of infinite improvement, and not least by the method we have here mentioned.

WE have often in the columns of the EDUCATIONAL WEEKLY strongly supported the position that reading—good, heavy, continued, and systematic reading is one of the first duties of a teacher. It is a point that cannot be too strongly enforced. The arguments on its behalf are too numerous to mention at a sitting. Its benefits are undoubted. We are not here attempting a reiteration of our utterances, but there is a simple plan which we recommend to teachers by which to stimulate them to greater zeal in this direction. It is to keep always by them a list of LEGENDA—books to be read, and also a note-book in which to jot down daily the amount of reading they have accomplished. It is a help in this way: A good book and its author, together with a definite conception of its aim and scope are thus better remembered. And at the close of the year it is possible to gain a clearer idea of the ground over which we have travelled, and also, to a certain

extent, to learn what advantages have accrued to us from having travelled such ground.

HOW to read is as important as when to read or what to read. Many of us devote too little attention to the way in which our reading is done. Method in all intellectual operations is one of the factors of success. One of the great advantages which the highly educated man possesses over his less cultured competitor in life's battle is that, owing to his long training, he knows how to use all his mental faculties in such a way as to get the greatest possible amount of effective work from them with the smallest possible expenditure of vital energy. At least we may safely say that that is the ideal towards which all true education tends, and that in so far as this result has been attained the man may be properly considered as educated. This result in the great majority of instances is perhaps attained only in part. In no direction, probably, are the majority of fairly well educated people more deficient than in regard to system in reading.

Even the reading of a work of fiction may be done in such a way as to be beneficial, provided the work be a good one; also it may be so done as to be a mere mental dissipation. When the reader pauses to study the characters who appear on the scene, the plot which underlies the story, the sentiments and principles of action which it is meant to illustrate and enforce, when he lingers under the mystic spell of the finer feelings and nobler emotions which spring from the pages of the best novelists, like flowers from a tropical soil, when he studies the peculiarities of style and the artistic devices which indicate the individuality of the author and constitute to a great extent the merit or the defect of his literary work, then he reads novels wisely and well. How few of us do this! How can it be done? The interest in the story, the absorbing anxiety to know how it will end, the burning desire to witness the triumph of the hero or heroine as the embodiment of a virtue or a principle, the longing to have condign punishment meted out to the villain of the narrative, all hurry the reader onward, and make profitable reading in the ordinary way difficult, if not impossible. But this may all be avoided. Read enough of the story to become interested, then skim it over to get the plot and learn how it ends. Afterwards it is easy to read it again slowly, revelling in all the delights of style and sentiment which it contains.

AMONG the many ways of spending the holidays so as to combine out-door life, rest and recreation with the acquisition of useful knowledge, there is none more suitable than botanizing. We do not mean that each

teacher should spend his holidays in solitary attempts to collect specimens and study them; or in a mere reading and memorizing of books on the subject. It may be undertaken in such a way as to make the entire time spent as sociable and enjoyable as a picnic. Let a number of teachers and others join together and on stated days, under the guidance of the most expert members of the party, traverse woods and fields in search of flowers; then for two or three days in succession these flowers may be studied, named, classified and discussed. The mental labor necessitated would be small, the physical exercise would be enhanced in value by the interest which always belongs to a definite aim followed with enthusiasm, the social intercourse and contact of mind with mind would give a charm and zest to the whole which should make this one of the most popular ways of spending the holidays that could be adopted by our teachers. We do not indicate any special plan for the organization of these botanizing clubs. Circumstances must largely govern the number in each party and the course of study to be followed. There is sufficient organizing skill and experience in the ranks of the profession to manage all trifling matters of detail such as these. The practice gained in organizing and managing such an enterprise is in itself valuable. No one qualification of a teacher is more important than the faculty of planning and arranging well anything in which a number of people are to take part. Apart from the certainty that in no way can the holidays be more pleasantly spent than in that which we have mentioned, there is the additional satisfaction of knowing that when the vacation is over, each teacher will reflect with pleasure on substantial progress made in the study of one of the most fascinating of the natural sciences. All that is required to begin is a little energy and skill in getting a few others interested; on such a subject there can be no difficulty in maintaining the interest.

While botany has peculiar merits as a holiday study, there are other subjects which have strong claims on our attention. Few things are of more importance to those taking an intelligent interest in the agricultural and horticultural industries of our country than the habits of insects, especially of those which are destructive. The study of entomology furnishes an inviting field for the enterprise of those who prefer to investigate animal life. This can be made the source of health, pleasure, and knowledge to an extent wholly unsuspected by those who have not tried nature as a teacher, the fields and forests as a school, and the myriads of living things around them as a book.