

rather from want of proper training, for that there is not so much reason for excuse now as formerly. We have facilities for improvement that teachers ten, fifteen or twenty years ago had not. I hope and believe the time is not far distant, when every school will be *teacher-training* in its essential character, for the essential character of a good teacher is that he understands how to teach his pupils *how* to teach themselves; then every Common School will, in a certain sense, be a Normal School; for I maintain that no person is able to teach others profitably, unless he knows how to teach himself, and it is only when we are able to impart intelligibly to others what we have learned that we can be able to say that we *know* what we have learned. Give a child the privilege of imparting frequently to others what it knows, and it becomes a test to itself of its own progress. But I am digressing. I may say that there were some teachers in those times to which I have referred who labored just as hard and sacrificed just as much as teachers do now; but there were much greater opportunities for imposition than there are now. Some of them were in the profession in those days who knew comparatively nothing of English Grammar, who could not explain simple proportion, who could not even work the questions of the book, except with the assistance of a key, and woe to the boy who dares to steal or even hide it. They seemed to think that their principal mission was to flog and torment children, and to keep them in servile submission. Such school-keepers were too common then, and from what I hear I fear there may yet be found an occasional specimen. They are known generally by their migratory habits, brazen faces, and short terms of service. We had some noble fellows, though, in the profession in those days; and there were ladies too, who labored as best they could for the good of the children, who felt the responsibility of their charge, and ever ready to give a helping hand, but there was a defect in their adaptability; they could instruct by the help of books, but they did not know how to educate, they did not understand the art of teaching how to learn or how to study.

A pupil had no business to ask for help except through the book, the book was the principal means of access to the teacher. If the pupil had no book he had no means of mental contact with his teacher, he had no right even to class membership. We learned everything principally by the aid of books; we learned grammar from the books, arithmetic from the books, and geography only from the books.

About sixteen years ago there was a school examination in a neighboring section. The teacher was an American lady, evidently conscious of the superiority of the Yankee system. There was a crowded house to witness the doings.

Her method was to sing almost everything except the reading, and that was performed in concert, the teacher taking the lead; the letters of the alphabet were sung, the multiplication table was sung, and the geography was chanted.

There was much pleasure and gratification expressed by several visitors at the marked progress, but, mind you, I had an opportunity of knowing that that multiplication table had to be learned over again; indeed it had not been learned thoroughly at all before.

It was a very marked example of not encouraging children to help themselves. The teacher was capable of amusing her pupils, and they seemed

much attached to her. She was evidently sincere and desirous of accomplishing something, but she did not comprehend the nature of the material she was dealing with. She thought she was about perfect in her calling, but the result proved that she was ignorant and deficient, especially in those qualities that constitute the making of a first-class teacher. She was not so much to be blamed as pitied, and would have made a good teacher if she had only been trained—if she had only known how. She was somewhat like a blacksmith I once employed to set a buggy tire. He was conceited to the brim, and boasted of superior skill, but showed by the result of his work that he was ignorant of the contracting and dilating quality of iron, as well as of the comparative non-resisting power of wood, for he spoiled that wheel; he did not understand the nature of the material he was dealing with; he was a cheap workman, but I paid dear for the whistle.

A very practical lesson might be learned from the robin in the treatment of her young. You will notice that as soon as they are fledged sufficiently to fly only a few feet, no matter how high the nest, she hustles them out to practice with their wings before they can take care of themselves or keep out of danger; but while she is defending them from harm, she constantly teaches them by her example how to fly and how to seek their food; but notice, she thrusts them upon their own resources as soon and as fast as possible.

A child can never learn to walk well that is always led by the hand; the boy never learns to swim who constantly takes a support with him as he goes into the water. Your boy will never be a boatman, though he sails a hundred years, so long as he leaves to others' skill the management of the oars. It is well enough to see how others row; it is well enough to learn the comparative specific gravity of water and air, and wood and iron, and human flesh, theoretically, but he must learn to paddle his own canoe if he desires to become a captain.

Nearly all of you have probably lived on a farm, or at least you know something of farm life. You have no doubt heard some farmer boast of how much wheat, or corn, or barley, or whatever it may be of grain, he grows yearly. Did you never feel like saying to him—"Did you, indeed?" I would like you to tell me how you make corn grow." "Well," he says, "I will. In the first place, I choose a field whose soil I think naturally best fitted for corn; I plow it, manure it, roll it, plant it, plaster it, and hoe or cultivate it. There is no trouble about growing corn," he says. All very well, but if I say to him, "Why don't your neighbor grow as good corn as you?" he says, "I will tell you; my neighbor has just as good soil as I have, and puts on as much manure and plaster, and works just as hard as I do, but he does not understand farming. He chooses a field with soil not adapted to corn. He plows it when it is too wet, hence it does not become mellow, and the manure cannot be thoroughly and intimately mixed with the soil, and is not therefore rendered fit food for the young and tender plants. Some were overfed, and became sickly; others did not get enough, and did not grow at all. Corn, in order to do well, must have the food necessary to its growth properly prepared for it where you intend to plant it. It must be within its reach in order to assimilate it or appropriate it as food. That is what I mean," he says, "by growing corn."