

"And, in order to do this, the lessons must not be so long and hard as to encroach upon the afternoon. An hour or so after supper ought to be sufficient to devote to study, leaving the rest of the evening for some pleasant game or conversation; and, in the case of young or weak children, for sleep. Sensible as these views are, it is almost impossible to make teachers conform to them.

"One word more. If German children should thus not be overworked, much more is it true of American children. The stimulation of the brain and nervous energy in this country is something terrible, and we must encourage the physical in order to counteract this result of our social and political education by every rational means in our power."—*Iowa School Journal*.

2. VALUE OF MEMORITER RECITATIONS.

It is no unusual thing to hear teachers disparage or even ridicule *memoriter* recitations. Stopping at a first good thought without taking a needed second, and dwelling rightfully enough upon necessity for the pupils thoroughly understanding the text-book, some inexperienced educators, with noses turned askew, too inconsiderately condemn or depreciate the verbal committing and reciting of lessons. Memory falls into disrepute with them, as being unworthy of careful cultivation. When before their classes, such instructors, with a good deal of self-complacency, seek to lessen the estimate placed upon the mere language of a rule of definition, and to magnify the value of the thought, exhorting the scholars to ignore the one, but fathom the other. A good deal is said about diving and reaching the bottom. And to inspire the pupil to depth of diving, the impression is sought to be conveyed that the author of the book has no special claim as authority; but that the eighteen-years-old bubby on the bench can bring up a bigger and better shaped and more finally polished gem from the ocean of truth, than the beshadowed LL.D. "Never mind the language of the book, James,—only understand it—and you may frame your own definitions in the class." And when on the morrow, said James attempts to recite, his failure to define brings a request from his teacher that he illustrates; but possibly he will have proceeded but a step at his attempted illustration, before down comes the Faber, with "Oh! I see you *understand* the subject—that's sufficient." Now, the boy might have gained his shadowy apprehension of the truth at home with once reading; but faithful tutelage at school includes the advantages of reciting, (1) the definition, (2) the illustration, and (3) whatever original thought or (4) illustration he can offer. Thus with the understanding, memory would be cultivated, and its ready and exact use required. Originality of thought would be prompted, while exactness of expression would be encouraged.

It is true that any recitations are to be unqualifiedly condemned that can be justly compared to the gibberish of a parrot. A thorough knowledge of the subject first; the memory of it afterwards; this is the general rule. The teacher may even find it expedient to himself to see to it personally that obviously needed explanations be made of obscure language in the coming lesson, before the class is set upon the learning of it. And if a scholar be suspected of superficial work in the committal of his lesson, his balloon should be pierced, and he brought from his serial flight with as uncomfortable a shock as possible.

On the other hand, it is one obvious duty of the teacher to require his pupils to thoroughly memorize and recite *verbatim* (not the mass of the lesson, perhaps, but) such *definitions*, *propositions*, and *rules* as are the embodiment of the instruction afforded by the book. Truth is cased in words. Thoughts are shaped by words as much as words by thoughts. The shell of the walnut moulds the meat, and not the meat the shell. Or if both first pliantly shape themselves to each other, the hardening crust of words outside protects the truth within, and preserves its figure, and beauty, and sweetness. Or you may say that the truth is solid—that words are merest sand. Call truth iron if you choose, but it is molten in flowing from mind to mind, and it speedily cools into hardened forms of ugliness or beauty—of uselessness or usefulness. Better be wise, take a hint from the foundry, and cut a mould in the sand! Truth is a straight edge that must not be nicked. The serature of a word dropped out may make ragged ruling. A defective definition, of a part of speech, for instance, if rigidly applied as a test of words in parsing, may make "confusion worse confounded." A defective definition in the outset of geometry, might string every proposition on a single doubt, dried-apple fashion.

But we go farther than perhaps all our readers, in the belief that although the terse statement of truth given by the text-book, chance to be quite beyond the capacity of the scholar, yet he should be required to commit it to memory. "What!—to swallow the juiceless words, unmastered, unsalivated and indigestible, to warp the unfortunate with the direst colic, and murder him with dyspepsia?"

Yes—with important qualifications. Choose a book exactly adapted to the child's capacity if possible. But rather a little above than any below. Then let him struggle up to it. Let your illustrations be copious and transparent. Set his understanding vigorously to work. But do not allow him to reject or pass over any little kernel he cannot crack. The memory has a place for storing such. And by and by, as he gains intellectual power, with the greatest satisfaction he will break open the little casements of truths one by one, and greedily digest and grow upon what otherwise might to him have been wholly lost. It is a matter of common experience with many grown persons of to-day, that what may have seemed to them in childhood the merest verbiage, without interest, and which it was considered the most unrecompensed drudgery to memorize, now breaks upon the consciousness with the most exquisite delight, as containing truths of the most novel, impressive, pleasurable and important character.

The Irish boy who committed to memory his New Testament, understood but the smallest portion of the divine word, but he hoarded in his intellectual upper story precious grains of truth that would thereafter, little by little as they found room, gravitate downward to the mind and heart, entering into the very essence of the young Christian's nature and life.

Even men grown, men educated, doctors of divinity who themselves pen our catechisms, do not comprehend those eternal truths of God which they have embodied in "the form of sound words," and would have us and our children memorize. Humanity is too small a measure to take in divinity. Creeds can not hold all of God; nor can men comprehend their creeds. Language can reveal God to us only as through a glass darkly.

In the world of science men chatter glibly about things—or rather about words which stand for things—the things themselves being more enigmatical than a puzzle-book. We are obliged to follow formulas whether we will or not—to take words on trust. You may put into John's hands the multiplication table; he learns it; he perhaps demonstrates to his youthful satisfaction that two times three are six. But that twelve times twelve are one hundred and forty-four he takes on faith, until in after years he shall have ability and opportunity for proof in counting out his gross of eggs for market. And so, in a thousand ways must children, do children, old and young, put confidence in teachers, in books—in words.

An earnest, world-compassing disciple of Hugh Miller, in his tours of observation, coming upon a strange unclassified fossil on the beach, because unable on the instant to unfold all the divinely-deep mysteries of its formation, or understand the story of creation it could tell, would not therefore hurl it, unquestioned to the sea, but would, because of its incomprehensible character, the more carefully label it and preserve it for the severe study of the ripe scholarship of later years. Oh! prudent educator, teach not a child to hurl into the sea of oblivion, or pass by neglected, every precious truth which he cannot now completely comprehend. His after years of mental maturity and ripened experience may unfold to him as itself full of meaning, and possibly furnishing the key and the lamp to unlock and to light a hundred other darkened labyrinths of thought to which otherwise he must always be a stranger.—*Joseph Jones, A. M., in Iowa School Journal*.

3. WORD-PICTURES TO DULL PUPILS.

A general exercise that will, at any time and among any pupils, arouse much interest, is the sketching of *word-pictures*. Whenever it is tried, the dull eye brightens, the listless mind becomes attentive, and an interest is at once awakened. At first, the teacher should present the *pictures* until the students are familiar with the exercise, and then allow them to contribute their share. To prepare for it, histories will be attentively read, parents will be asked to suggest topics, and the striking occurrences of the past will be studied carefully, in order to be forcibly and correctly presented before the school. The benefits to be derived from this exercise are many. Among them are a love for reading, a knowledge of history and biography, a correct and ready expression of ideas, etc. The latter point is one of very great importance. In no way can *grammar* be more profitably taught than by bringing the attention of the pupil to the actual use of words and expressions; and by insisting on the presentation of a subject without stammering and hesitancy, fluency and ease of expression will be acquired. It may often be well for certain classes to write out an abstract of one or more of these word-pictures in place of the regular composition. To express better the nature of the proposed exercise, a sample one follows.

"I see a young person of humble birth on one of the islands of a sea that separates two of the grand divisions. There is nothing about him to attract special attention but this: *he is always engaged*