

had been forced by emulation into excess of exercise without due intervals of respite and with habitual deficiency of sleep. Of the importance of the latter point I have spoken in a preceding chapter.—*Sir H. Holland.*

The pupil whose intellect has been aroused cannot help striving to understand, partially at least, what he hears or learns, and cannot fasten his attention upon sounds that are unintelligible to him. The pupil whose intellect has slumbered while his senses have been active remembers sounds with facility and is content to attach no meaning to them. He substitutes the appearance of knowledge for the reality—the sign for the thing signified—words for ideas—answers for information. His verbal knowledge is often so accurate as to prevent the slightest suspicion of the utter mental darkness that it veils. At a school examination he is asked (say) to enumerate the properties of iron; and he has malleability, fusibility, ductility, and so forth at his fingers' ends. Some one possibly, doubtful of the depth of his attainments, may ask what he means by a "property," but the reply that it is a quality will seldom fail to satisfy the querist. Few would suspect what is certainly often the case, namely, that none of these words represent or have ever represented any glimmering of knowledge, any sort of intellectual idea. The children who repeat them often not only do not understand or wish to understand them, but positively do not know that they can be understood; remembering and imitating what they have heard just as a little savage would the cry of a wild animal or the call of a bird to its mate.

The effect produced upon the pupils by this sensational learning may be briefly regarded in a twofold manner. In the first place the period of school life is wasted partially or wholly according to the degree of the evil. In the second the mind is absolutely weakened. The sensorium which might be left to nature is called into activity; and the intellect which should be cultivated by art is left dormant. The child is trained towards the mental state suited to savagism, instead of that required by civilization; and in a greater or less degree the kind of mental weakness observed in the savage is the result. It would be difficult to devise a process which should predispose more powerfully than this to mental alienation under the trials of life; and I believe that the prevalence and the increase of insanity are due in great measure to the faultiness of common methods of instruction.

The cause chiefly concerned in the production of sensational learning is perhaps the absolute non-recognition by schoolmasters of the frequency or even the possibility, to say nothing of the undesirableness, of this distinct form of mental activity. Physiology has not long revealed the fact, and the fact has never been brought under their attention. In ignorance of it they take the children of the poor and stimulate their sense-perceptions, heedless of the faculties that lie dormant beneath. Or they take the children of the better classes in whom favorable domestic circumstances have produced some degree of intellectual life, and this they crush under an excess of tasks. The lessons are too long, or too difficult, or too numerous—the growing mind gives up in despair, and delegates its work to the sensorium. The pupil, in perpetual disgrace as long as his learning was retarded by efforts to comprehend, reaches the head of his class as soon as he surrenders himself to the guidance of sound. The master rejoices over a pattern boy produced from a dunce; the physiologist would mourn over a possible philosopher extinguished at school.

The remedy, theoretically speaking, must be sought in a distinct recognition of the fact that the purposive excitation of the higher faculties of the mind should be the first step in education, as it forms the only foundation upon which an enduring superstructure can be laid. When this first step has been made at home the duty of the schoolmaster is easy: it being chiefly necessary to arrange that the lessons should stimulate but not outstrip or baffle the comprehension. When the first step has been wholly neglected, as is too often the case with children attending elementary schools, the duty of the master is very difficult, requiring that he should exercise his pupils in the rudiments of thinking, comparing, judging,—that he should use lessons as instruments for piercing through their sense-perceptions so as to reach minds already rendered sluggish by neglect. Practically this result is obtained at present in some of the best elementary schools, (seldom or never, I fear, through a clear knowledge of what to strive for,) but by reason of the animation and liveliness of the master, or of his quick and ready sympathy with the children, intuitively prompting him to the use of words which appeal to their intelligence. Where this is the case we commonly see that the parents appreciate the improvement of their children, and are induced to make self-denying efforts to keep them longer at school. In inferior schools, where sensational teaching prevails, I suspect not only that the children do not receive the smallest benefit, but that their parents and themselves feel that they do not; and that this is at least one among the

causes of their early removal. Under a better system, even if the work of the master were prematurely stopped, the pupil would still carry away a capacity for self-education and a possibility of deriving pleasure from the attempt.—*R. B. Carter.*

The system of *cranning* is a scheme for making temporary acquisitions regardless of the endurance of them. Excitable brains that can command a very great concentration of force upon a subject, will be proportionably impressed for the time being. By drawing upon the strength of the future we are able to fix temporarily a great variety of impressions during the exaltation of cerebral power that the excitement gives. The occasion past, the brain must lie idle for a corresponding length of time while a large portion of the excited impressions will gradually perish away. This system is extremely unfavorable to permanent acquisitions; for these the force of the brain should be carefully husbanded and temperately drawn upon. Every period of undue excitement and feverish susceptibility is a time of great waste for the plastic energy of the mind on the whole.—*Bain.*—*Massachusetts Teacher.*

2. THE TEACHER'S PREPARATION FOR CONDUCTING RECITATIONS.

Why should the teacher make special preparation for conducting each recitation? What should such special preparation include? Why should it include the method of conducting the recitation? Why should the teacher's knowledge go beyond the text-book used by his class? To what extent should the teacher use a text-book in hearing a lesson? What directions can you give respecting the assigning of lessons?—*Questions on the Theory and Practice of Teaching.*

The recitation is largely the measure of the teacher's success. Skill here insures success in every direction, while a failure here is a failure throughout. Prompt, thorough and inspiring recitations create in the pupil a love for study, secure vigorous application, and promote good order. If, on the contrary, the test to which the pupil is subjected in the recitation, be haphazard, superficial, and lifeless, his preparation will be quite sure to have the same characteristics. In other words, the study of the pupil, both in extent and thoroughness, will not rise, as a general rule, above the requirements of the recitation. It is, therefore, of the highest importance that the teacher come before his classes prepared to do his work skilfully; and this preparation must extend to every recitation and to every exercise. The teacher's preparation must be as wide as his duties. He can not afford to fail anywhere, and without careful preparation he is almost sure to fail somewhere.

The teacher's preparation for the duties of the recitation should include:

1. A familiar acquaintance with the subject matter of the lesson. He should have the whole subject in his mind, not in dim and shadowy outline, but in bold relief, with every essential fact and principle clear and distinct. His knowledge of the subject he teaches must be systematic, fresh, ready—at hand. In the presence of his class, he has no opportunity to recall the half-forgotten results of past study, or to pursue some new idea or casual inquiry to see whether it be substance or shadow. Every power and energy of his mind are required to search through the minds of his pupils; to test the results of their study; to arouse a dormant faculty here and to energize a feeble power there; and so to order the entire work of the recitation that the pupil's knowledge may be clarified, his impressions deepened, and his view of the subject as a whole made more distinct and permanent. All this requires special previous preparation—a preparation wider than the particular text-books used by the class, a mastery, indeed, of the subject in its entirety.

2. But the teacher must also be familiar with the particular text-book studied by his pupils, otherwise he will not be able to test thorough their study—a matter of vital importance. Few of the text-books used in our schools are designed to be exhaustive. They present only an outline of the several subjects of which they treat, with such details as, in the judgment of the author, are most important. This outline and these details, few or many, constitute the basis of the pupil's preparation. Clearly, before the teacher can test efficiently the pupil's mastery of the subject as thus unfolded, he must himself be as familiar with the author's treatment of it as he desires the pupil to be. He must not only know what facts are presented, but the order in which they are presented. Such an acquaintance with the text-book will enable the teacher to select and arrange his questions or topics so as to cover completely the lesson assigned, and to detect any remissness in study or failure of comprehension on the part of the pupil. All this should be done without a slavish use of the text-book. In conducting recitations in reading and spelling, the teacher may be obliged to use the book. The use of the book may also be justifiable in assigning problems in mental and written arithmetic. There are, however, few practices common among teachers more pernicious than the use of printed questions in catechising classes. It reduces the teacher to a sort of machine, places an obstruction at every outlet of the soul, represses