

* Special Papers. *

THE NECESSITY
OF IMPROVEMENT.

BY J. J. Y.

THE influence of the teacher is probably the strongest influence that impresses the child's mind, and the teacher who has not a full absorbing realization of the weighty responsibility of this fact should think and think again until he has. Modern educationists may theorize and dogmatize as they please, but the fact remains that the boys and girls learn mainly by imitation. Just as the young birds when first they quit the parent nest and try their unskilled flight in the track of their parents, guided by their example, so the youth who is learning to become a MAN—for that is the chief end of education—follows his teacher with confidence while imitating him, and while at first he clings timidly to his guide, daring to go only where he is led, yet every day ventures to proceed a little farther and eventually, as he acquires self-reliance, strikes out his own path. It is an inestimable blessing to have an able man for a teacher. More precious it is than all books, for it is a living book. It is one torch kindling another.

The rising generation in the North-West is apt to be too presumptuous and self-confident, a fact which makes it doubly important that the teacher should, by reading, thinking, and continually striving, improve himself or herself in intellect, speech, demeanor and all knowledge. The scholar gladly receives advice and instruction from the teacher whose superiority he recognizes. This superiority is needed to quell the pride of youth and keep within reasonable bounds its presumption and self-confidence. With pleasure the boy listens to the teacher he admires, but unwillingly and without good effect to the one he distrusts or holds in contempt.

I speak feelingly on this subject and in the light of my own experience. Mine was the happy privilege of being under the educational guidance of two men who were, each in his way, ideal school-masters. The first was the proprietor of a private school for boys, and he managed that school as a great captain would a man-of-war in action. In fact so scrupulously did he devote himself to his duties and so persistent was he in training the minds over which he had charge, that he died in harness at a comparatively early age; but it was a noble death and the martyr left to his pupils the invaluable example of a character that was true as steel, thorough in details, unselfish in all things, courageous, virtuous, self-controlled, tender and sensitive as a child, yet stern as the Iron Duke when occasion demanded, and withal cheerful. Unhappily the powers of his intellect were fettered by an enfeebled body which at last succumbed to the great strain which the training of thirty boys put upon it. The second teacher, who was at the head of a public school of 300 boys—the girls having a separate building, was the envied possessor of all the above-mentioned estimable qualities and had besides a healthy, vigorous body which was

aflame with energy; in fact, as near as may be in this degenerate world, he was a perfect man. If I know anything at all of the great branches of education and have any of the qualities of character that are to be valued, to these two men, after God, I owe it. But human nature is weak and I fear that like many another scholar I have not profited as I ought.

Milton in the early part of his life was employed in what Samuel Smiles is pleased to call the "humble vocation of a teacher." In his school, as in everything else he undertook, the great poet labored with great diligence, and he strove to improve not only his pupils but himself. It is surprising how much may be accomplished in the intervals between the necessary tasks of a teacher's life. A well-known work of literature was written while its author was waiting each day for his wife to finish dressing preparatory to the daily walk. The Duke of Wellington, whose boundless capacity for work every student knows, drew up the Dublin Police Bill when tossing off the mouth of the Mondego, with Junot and the French army waiting for him on the shore. Cæsar is said to have written an essay on Latin rhetoric while crossing the Alps with his army. Washington, even when a boy of thirteen, displayed this faculty by voluntarily copying out with great care, between his school exercises, such things as forms of receipts, promissory notes, bills of exchange, bonds, leases, indentures and other dry documents, but which proved of great value to him afterwards, when his admirable business qualities were brought to bear in the government of his country.

Industry is the chief requisite to the teacher in his continual pursuit of improvement. In all spheres, and conspicuously so in the school-room, power belongs only to the workers. I cannot recall a single great statesman who was not an industrious man. "It is by toil," said Louis XIV., "that kings govern." "My lyfe," wrote Hampden on one occasion to his mother, "my lyfe is nothing but toyle, and hath been for many yeares, nowe to the Commonwealth, nowe to the Kinge, not so much tyme left as to doe my dutye to my deare parents, nor to sende to them." Cobden described himself as "Working like a horse, with not a moment to spare." The same thing is true of literary men. Lillo, whose dramatic works were of acknowledged power and merit, spent most of his life as a working jeweler. Izaak Walton acquired the vast fund of information which fitted him for the office of biographer, while he was a linen-draper in Fleet Street. Benjamin Franklin, as all who have read his inspiring autobiography know, educated himself while fulfilling his labors as printer, editor and bookseller, and became, by dint of his persevering struggle after improvement, an author, a philosopher and a statesman. John Stuart Mill wrote most of his early works in the intervals of office duties, and Macaulay his Lays of Ancient Rome while performing the arduous labors of secretary of war.

The examples of these lights of the past should be an inspiration to the toiler in the school-room to unceasingly struggle for that improvement which alone can maintain by

reason of the superiority it gives, the admiration and confidence of the youthful tyrants at the desks.

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HOW TO DEAL WITH HABITUALLY
BAD SPELLERS.*

MOST teachers find their patience tried by spellers who are generally defective in this most important branch of school work. To such I respectfully submit a few hints, which I have used with advantage.

(a). Try, if possible, to lead the bad speller to realize that he or she is a bad speller—not at times a very easy thing to do.

(b). Lead him to see the value of correct orthography by probable and actual errors in any business transaction, in short, to see its general and practical value.

(c). Test carefully, to see if the errors arise from carelessness, or a general weakness in the "spelling faculty."

(d). Having satisfied yourself that the *culprit* puts some value upon correct spelling, and is aware of his defect arising from his carelessness, or general weakness in that respect, then proceed to the cure.

(e). If the cause be want of care, then naturally, to urge upon him greater carefulness in his work is the teacher's duty.

(f). To carry this out, he must be led to observe each word as a whole, and as made up of elements, and to write the words repeatedly from copy and from memory, till he knows them. As an aid to such pupils I find ordinary spelling quite effective, in impressing correct pictures. It is often easier for them to say the letters of a word in their proper order than to write the picture, but by first saying the letters they can then produce the written form. Of course, when carelessness has become a habit, a bad speller is the result, and to the teacher it does not make much difference in such a case whether the defect has arisen from one cause or the other. In general class work, all such will receive about the same treatment. With particularly bad spellers, the following means might be employed:

(1). Have pupils keep a record of their own errors; have them write some of these correctly every day, once or oftener, as time permits; ask them to spell orally some of these words when they least expect to be called upon; correct if necessary, orally, then write the correct form in a sentence containing the word or words.

(2). Write, or rather, place for a time some of these words on the blackboard in front of such pupils; occasionally have them spell or write out the words, and submit the written exercise to a teacher or a monitor for the purpose; detect and correct, *i.e.*, the pupil corrects several times. Take reviews on these words and failures in dictation exercises.

(3). Append to every dictation exercise some of the words previously misspelled by pupils. Watch the *culprits* closely to see that they correct thoroughly. It may be necessary to keep words on every exercise say three times a week, for three months, before you can be satisfied that every pupil

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