

tual stimulus. To read well is to think well. A thinker excites thought in others, and purifies the educational atmosphere about him. One of the best services a teacher can do for a pupil is to lead him to think more, by inducing him to read more and to read more judiciously. This all teachers can do. The teacher may inquire of pupils what they have read or are reading, how they enjoy it. He may in turn tell what he himself is reading, and propose to bring his book and read a little to them, asking them to bring theirs and read to each other. Books, magazines, and newspapers will thus be brought to schools, and interesting selections be read from them. The children will experience the delight of reading good stories, and of hearing good stories read by others. The teacher can mention some good books which contain delightful reading, naming such as are known to be in the district or can be easily secured.

Several of the pupils might be led to read the same book, and compare views upon it. Such an exercise is most valuable in cultivating the taste and judgment. To be useful in this work, the teacher must look over the family libraries in the district, and learn something of their contents. This will make him acquainted with the people, will make him know the home-life of the children better, and will thus prepare him to reach the hearts and minds of the pupils. By associating with the parents, and talking over the contents of their libraries, the teacher will become an instructor and adviser of the parents, and will be consulted about papers, magazines, and books for the family. If he is competent to advise, he may do great good by his suggestions. In many families, new books are a rarity. In most cases, book purchases are accidental. A teacher acquainted with books, and familiar with the cheap editions, can do much to increase the reading facilities and reading habits of the young. Some of the best works in science, biography, history, and travel can now be had for ten or twenty cents. Five dollars would buy forty instructive and readable works in cheap form, and furnish a winter's reading for the whole district. Nearly every teacher, if he knew the books well, could induce the parents to spend the five dollars.

4. *Memory Selections.*—It will do children good to commit to memory extracts from the best writers. The thoughts contained in the extracts will awaken thought in the mind of the pupil. To learn the words and not understand the writer's thoughts does positive injury. Easy narrative, showing the exercise of the sterling virtues, is best for the younger pupils. The instructions should be felt rather than expressed in words, so that there would be no formal statement of a moral lesson. Short selections can be found, giving in vivid language, important historical, scientific, and geographical information. These committed to memory, and recited before the school, will stimulate to more energetic study of the regular school lessons.

A short and pointed maxim can be given and learned daily. Illustrations of its truth may be occasionally pointed out. It will be well to follow Jacotot's rule, "Learn something and repeat it daily." "Knowledge is easy to him that understandeth." All selections should be understood; they should be learned for their influence on the learner and on the school. This influence should reach the emotions through the understanding.

Every teacher should aim to make his pupils acquainted with a few extracts from one or two of our best American writers. Choose those that are valuable both for the thought and the expression.

5. *Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes.*—A bright young man attended the county institute for the first time, and listened to a lecture on one of the great teachers. The young man admired the lecture, and was enthusiastic in praise of the speaker. When asked by a prosy pedagogue about the great teacher and his work, the

young man could remember but two events of his life, and nothing of the teacher himself—not even his name. "Well," said he, "it was about a man born in 1796, who died in 1842." The young man had been captivated with sonorous sentences. "Words of learned length and thundering sound" had amazed him, and like Goldsmith's village rustics, he wondered at the speaker and failed to understand the speech.

Much—far too much of all instruction—stops at the ear, and never reaches the understanding. Too much of history and biography is confined to dates. To any youth, a short and characteristic anecdote of a distinguished person is of more value than the dates of every event in his life. A date is of value only when a man's life is specially formed by the particular opportunities of his age. Washington and Grant enjoyed opportunities which developed their powers. Had the Revolution and the Rebellion each been delayed a quarter of a century, both might have remained in private life, and been unknown to history.

It is much more interesting, and much more valuable to a boy, to learn that William Brown, a shepherd lad twelve years of age, taught himself Greek, and walked twenty-four miles to buy a Greek New Testament, than to learn that he was born in 1724, married in 1749, and died in 1801.

Sketches—character sketches of the wise and good—are instructive, pleasing, and stimulating. It would be a valuable exercise for teachers and pupils to find, learn, and repeat anecdotes of good men and women. They should be such as illustrate the character and habits of the individuals, and exhibit conduct worthy of imitation and emulation. In the struggles and trials of others, the pupil will see the path of his own self-development. "Example sheds a genial ray of light which men are apt to borrow," and also to follow. The example of the virtuous and the self-denying is best shown in characteristic anecdote. A teacher should make a note of valuable personal stories, and keep the same securely. A book of such sketches, gathered from time to time, would be a great treasure. These stories, often repeated in the family, will help to create a bracing intellectual atmosphere in the home.

6. *Literary Societies.*—Some teachers have organized literary societies among their pupils, or among their patrons, and with excellent results. Perhaps it could not be done in every school. Perhaps some teachers could not do it in any school. But the average teacher in the average district can make it a success. If successful, it unites the thinking forces of the district, and concentrates thought upon educational affairs. It sends the children to school with improved intellectual appetites. A teacher competent to organize a literary society, can soon determine whether it will be expedient to make the attempt. He can invite his patrons to visit the school some afternoon and witness a review of his school work. He can have some topics of general interest discussed by the pupils, and from its effect upon the parents he can judge of the propriety of trying to establish a society for reading, discussion, and other literary work.

#### HINTS AND CAUTIONS.

1. Every teacher who wants to make the most of his school, must try to awaken thought in the district, and if he tries he will succeed.

2. "The beginning is the whole." Therefore, begin. Every teacher can do something to improve the educational climate about him.

3. Say little about your plans and aims. Do something, and waste no time in announcing purposes and plans.

4. Begin with the easy; proceed to the difficult. Attempt no more than you believe you can carry through.