

THE USE OF THE TEXT-BOOK IN THE RECITATION.

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The text-book holds an important place in school affairs, for there could be no school were it not for text-book privileges. However, the text-book has been abused to a great extent and one of its chief abuses has been and continues to be the misuse during the recitation. There was a time when the text-book was thought to be the only thing worthy of consideration in school affairs, and the teacher who followed literally the outlines and suggestions as given in the text-book was considered as fulfilling all necessary obligations. Many teachers at the present time do no more, but demands and expectations have changed. No longer is the teacher expected to follow a text-book by hewing exactly to the line as shown by the book.

Text-books have been prepared to meet the requirements of pupils with whom the author is familiar. The author cannot be familiar with all classes of pupils in all parts of the country, therefore, what is satisfactory with pupils in one place will in all probability be unsatisfactory in another instance. Schools vary, pupils vary, and to make the text-book fill its great mission the teacher must vary the instruction to meet the needs of the specific school.

Then, again, text-books become out of date. What teacher could follow any printed text in geography and give the pupils instruction covering actual facts? New text-books are being constantly written, but it would be impossible to have text-books prepared rapidly enough to keep up to date with all the progress of the world, and neither would it be advisable to change books every time a new edition came from the press. It is even difficult to have sufficient books to supply the pupils under the present plan of keeping old texts for many years.

The text-books should be an outline guide in the hands of the teacher. It should not be followed literally. The teacher should not assign a certain portion for a certain recitation and then expect the pupils to learn that and nothing more. Many text-books have lists of suggestive questions, and there are teachers—pity them

and their pupils—who follow those lists of questions and when the pupils can answer the questions to the satisfaction of the teacher the next lesson is assigned and the recitation closes. Pupils under such instruction, by closely applying themselves to their work, become what has been termed mere walking encyclopedias, and the great trouble is that they are soon out of date.

The recitation is the most important part of school work. By giving close attention during the recitation period many students in college find that under a good instructor they can manage to secure passing marks without other study. While this is not advisable it shows the importance of the recitation and the use that a real teacher can make of it.

The teacher must know what is to follow in the next day's work before being able to properly use the text-books during the recitation. The text-book for the pupils is the foundation of knowledge for whatever subject may be considered, and that same text-book is for the teacher a working outline. If those two things will be kept in mind there will be little difficulty experienced and vastly fewer mistakes made while using the text during the recitation.

A teacher is not a teacher to whom the text-book doesn't suggest other material or information to be brought out and emphasized during the recitation. The great value of the text-book is the possibilities of creating interest in the subject, and material outside of the book is very often more interesting than any within. As an example, when studying a specific political campaign, the history recitation can be made more interesting as well as more valuable by considering a late campaign—one within the memory of the pupils. Thus the past becomes a living reality.

The recitation so frequently becomes a daily oral examination. This is particularly true where the text-book is literally followed with all the sacredness of a religious creed. Pupils are glad when the recitation is over unless they have an unusual interest aroused, and where the text-book is used exclusively there can be no intense interest, for the greatest interest comes with surprise. Where the pupils are eager for the recitation you can rest assured that the teacher has touched a vibrating chord which