

RECITATIONS.

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A good deal has been said in educational periodicals, upon the best methods of teaching the various branches of public school instruction. This, I am happy to perceive, forms a very useful feature in the Ontario TEACHER, and I trust it may continue to engage the attention of the practical educators of the Province. But leaving this to more skillful pens, I shall offer a few reflections upon the general subject of conducting recitations.

I think as teachers, we adhere too closely to the text-book in *hearing* recitations. The book is absolutely indispensable to our teaching at all, and is final in its authority. It embodies all that can be communicated upon a subject. Had it been given by Divine inspiration, we could scarcely receive it with more unquestioning faith. I verily believe that much mischief arises from this practice. The errors, inaccuracies and loose statements of the books—and none are wholly free from such—glide into the pupil's mind, and take as tenacious a hold of his memory as what is true and accurate. The teacher, too, loses his individuality and with it most of his efficiency in teaching. He is a mere appendage to the book—of little more practical utility to the learner, than the questions which cumber the pages. Whatever may be the cause of this dependence upon the letter of the books, whether it be a lack of knowledge of what we attempt to teach, or of zeal and self-respect, which would impel us to devise original methods and note the statements of others tributary to our own—whatever be the cause, I repeat, the result is the same, the teaching is not vital.

Almost every teacher employed in the Prussian schools, is capable of preparing the text-books used in his school. In

fact, in the larger schools, very many of the teachers *do* thus prepare their own books. Their professional knowledge is thorough and exhaustive. How few of *our* teachers are competent, intelligently to compile from the abundant material around them, a primer or spelling-book for a primary school? How few are able to give a sound discriminating and critical opinion upon the merits and defects of the books used by their pupils? I fear, if we could get a truthful answer to these questions from book publishers and agents, there might be just grounds for self-reproach and humiliation.

To every recitation, the teacher must bring certain positive qualifications, and during it he must be in a certain state of mind, and perform certain important functions; otherwise he does not *conduct* the recitation, the recitation *conducts* or *does not conduct* itself.

I will briefly mention a few of the principal things which I deem essential to success in this particular.

1st. The teacher should possess a clear, accurate and comprehensive acquaintance with what he undertakes to teach. In his mind the subject should have the certainty of science. Confused notions are fatal to progress. He should know very much more than the mere specialty upon which he is called to teach. He should be able as occasion requires to draw from language, from mathematics, from natural science, from literature, from art, from nature,—facts, arguments, and illustrations to freshen what is stale, light up what is dark, and to bid the dry bones of the text-books be clothed upon with a beautiful garment, and infused with a living spirit.

2nd. His mind must be wholly given up to the matter in hand, while conducting the