

The Recital.

This is an exercise which, for want of a better name, we have designated as above. After a thorough and most satisfactory trial of two years, we confidently commend it to the attention of teachers. Three leading objects are obtained from it.

First. The pupil on whom the exercise devolves acquires valuable information, which is so effectually fastened in the mind that it can scarcely fail of being retained permanently.

Second. The facts presented, having been collected and condensed with great care, are communicated to many other minds, under circumstances calculated to attract attention and impart interest.

Third. But the most important object is, to cultivate the power of clothing thought in appropriate language, and presenting it in an easy, colloquial style, to a company of listeners.

It may be rendered so simple and easy, that the little child in the Primary School may engage in it as readily and profitably as the member of a High School. Indeed, it ought to be commenced by the children in the lower grades, that, as they advance into the higher, they may gain the full benefit which continued practice will impart.

The preparation of a "recital" is simply this. Suppose the pupil has recently returned from a trip to the White Mountains, the sea side, or a long journey. He has seen many new objects of interest, and has many beautiful mental pictures of them treasured up, to which he can recur, at will. Let him sit down with a small piece of paper and pencil, and recall to mind the events of the tour, making an imaginary journey precisely as the real one was made, so far as imagination can be made reality. With the pencil a few notes may be made, brief as possible, to be used merely as a word of suggestion where the memory would be likely to fail of gathering up all the interesting incidents. Let the pupil then, in private, practise relating the events in preparation for a presentation of the same before the school. It will be well to make the "recital" once before the teacher, or a friend, in private, before relating the account publicly. The length of time occupied should not usually exceed ten minutes.

The following cautions are worthy of attention.

1. Select the most interesting and important objects and events for description.
2. Endeavor to use good language, and speak distinctly and deliberately, in a conversational style, as if relating the same thing in a circle of familiar friends, at home.
3. Avoid all approach to a declamatory style of utterance.
4. Let the position in standing before the school be easy and graceful.
5. Avoid referring to the notes, if possible, and when necessary, let it be done by a simple glance of the eye. Look at the audience addressed.

But it will not always be found practical to present *original* subjects. Let us see how substitutes can be supplied. When the pupil has read some interesting narrative, let him close the book and think of the main features of the story, without attempting to remember the language. With as little reference to the book as possible, after the idea of the story is fixed in mind, the language of the pupil may now be used, and the recital may be made in the same manner as if it had been a description of actual observation.

In this way a brief story, the synopsis of a small or even a large volume, may be presented. Nor need the subject be merely a *story*. Topics of infinite variety may be found relating to persons, places, historical events, scientific statements, current events, all of which may be both interesting and instructive. The first recital made in our introduction of this exercise, as an experiment, was "*Sir John Franklin*." The outlines were, a brief sketch of his early life,—his expeditions and explorations,—government expeditions in search of him,—and an account of the discovery of his remains. Other subjects used were as follows: "*The Sack of Rome*;" "*Account of Lady Esther Stanhope*;" "*History and manufacture of Cannon*;" "*Needles*;" "*Somnambulism*;" "*Description of Moscow*;" "*Sketch of Louis Napoleon III*;" "*Grace Darling*;" "*Bells*;" "*The Japanese*;" "*Gunpowder*;" "*Rome in the time of Nero*," etc., etc.

These are selected as specimens of the character of topics pre-

sented. This exercise intermingled with the weekly rhetorical exercises, imparts a pleasant variety to the occasion.

We would suggest that great care should be taken to utter very distinctly and deliberately whatever may be uttered. Never commit to memory the language of the book; let the pupil possess the *thought*, then express it in his *own language*. The excellence of the performance depends chiefly on this.

When pupils become accustomed to this exercise, it may be varied by introducing "*Object Teaching*." Let the subject be proposed to show "*The Structure of Plants*." An older pupil, with a few plants in hand, may make an interesting exercise by describing and illustrating the forms of roots in various kinds of vegetables or plants; also forms of leaves, flowers, and modes of production of fruits, etc. Very common objects may be made to assume an entirely new aspect and greatly increased interest, by a suitable preparation on the part of the pupil. With a little assistance, at first, from the teacher, the effort can be rendered quite successful.

In the primary and intermediate grades, the children may interest their schoolmates with profit to themselves. Story telling has been a source of endless amusement from grandfather to grandchild, from time immemorial. Now, for an experiment, let the teacher select some promising child, and in private repeat a well chosen story, and then request the child to repeat the same. It would doubtless be imperfectly done at first; but by repetition and suitable instruction in the manner, use of language, and order of statement, after judicious preparation, very satisfactory results would attend the effort. No exercise would be listened to with greater interest by the children of the school. The subject should be adapted to the age and capacity of the performer, and varied so as to please and instruct. Beginning with a very simple effort, practice and careful preparation will, in due time, exhibit as much progress in this as in any department of study.

The recital is equally adapted to both sexes. It combines most of the advantages derived from the practice of extemporaneous speaking and declamation, and is an excellent preparation for both. It accustoms the pupil to comprehend, with facility, the essential parts of a volume or subject, and so to group them in the mind as easily to secure and retain a connected outline of the whole. It induces concentration of thought and fixedness of attention; it cultivates the memory; encourages the habit of investigation; affords practice in the use of language; stores the mind with useful knowledge; forms the habit of noticing important facts and events, and imparts the power of presenting information to others with facility and in an agreeable manner.

Information obtained by the labor of one individual and thus presented comes in the possession of many other minds with little cost of time or effort on their part. The exercise greatly increases the interest of the general exercises of the school, stimulates the minds of pupils to more mature and elevated modes of thought and conversation, and induces a higher and more profitable course of reading.—(*Massachusetts Teacher*.)

Teachers should visit Schools.

In all the departments of human exertion decided progress has been made, and two elementary operations have always been present: Comparison and Emulation. It seems to be a natural law that elevation and advancement can be made only by these two means. In most of the departments, this can be easily understood; but in *teaching*, its correctness is yet doubted by many, very many, who do not know or try practically. If the artist desires to elevate himself into the higher sphere of knowledge of painting or of sculpture, he unhesitatingly sets off for France, Greece, Italy, or some other country that abounds with the fine arts. He there visits such places as contain the productions of the most eminent masters of ancient and modern times. He there looks upon the paintings of a Raphael, and sees the excellence that challenges his exertions; or he beholds the almost breathing marble of Powers, and feels something beckoning to him from the height of human genius. He observes many things superior to his own productions, and there springs up in his breast a desire to equal or excel them. Without this comparison, all progress would stop. The mind ceases to toil when it can find nothing more excellent or superior than its own work. The necessary stimulus is wanting. This is equally applicable to all the branches of industry. That mechanic is he who endeavors to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the works of the best men of his profession: and that one is worst who knows nothing about what others have done. These remarks are no less true of the *School Teacher*. As long as he remains shut up in the school room, comparing himself to no one but him-

Herber Hill, at that time a chaplain to the British Factory at Lisbon, to whom he so gratefully addresses his dedication to his *Colloquies*:

"O friend! O more than father! whom I found
Forbearing always, always kind: to whom
No gratitude can speak the debt I owe."