

**TALKS WITH TEACHERS.**

What definite aim in training the character of your pupils have you set before you in this New Year? There is a regular plan for their mental training. Certain subjects are to be studied, and certain portions completed during the year. So many pages of the readers, so many chapters of Caesar or history are to be mastered, such and such a degree of skill is to be acquired in drawing or mathematics, within a fixed time. Is there any such plan for moral training?

Progress in reading and writing, in Latin or Algebra, is tested by examinations, and promotion depends upon it. Testing in moral virtues, in steadiness, honesty, truth, perseverance, courage, is going on all the time, and consciously or not, every boy and girl is "graded" into the class where they belong. And the final examination, so far as the school is concerned, has to be taken when the pupils go out into the world where teachers and parents can no longer relieve or shield them.

We have lately heard the accusation, made by a man who employs large numbers of young people, that no real effort is being made in our schools to teach the importance of responsibility. Boys and girls, he said, when it is time for them to go to work, accept positions without appearing to realize that what they have sold is their best efforts.

We all suffer from this lack of responsibility in others; broken promises, unfulfilled engagements, slipshod work, glib excuses, irritate and hamper us daily. Some of us may regret the lack of training that causes us ourselves to plead guilty to such failures; or we may look back gratefully to the high standards and exacting strictness of our elders that fixed us in better habits.

The sense of personal responsibility is a very hard thing to inculcate. The very breadth and complexity of the task may bring a feeling of hopelessness. But, for a beginning, insist upon the stern obligation of the given word. Make this the aim for this year. Set up the standard that every engagement must be met, every promise kept. Much may be done by example, but not all. Example must come first, and be unflinching, but precept too, is needed. Teach the duty of careful consideration before a promise or an agreement is made. The act promised may be trifling, the promise is always important. It is so easy to say "I will," without thinking or knowing how hard it may be to carry the word into action.

Be exacting in the matter. Expect the pupils to teach the standard. A surprised, "But you said you would," a complete setting aside of all mere excuses, will drive home the lesson, where other means have failed.

**WINTER PLANS FOR SUMMER GARDENS.**

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During the winter have the children draw plans of their future gardens. Let them decide what they want to grow. Then have them learn as much as they can about that crop — the kind of soil it needs, the length of season, the time to plant, the time to harvest, the kinds of fertilizer, cultivation, etc. Which needs more water, corn or strawberries? Find out older people's experiences and test their theories to see if they be true. Knowing the relative amounts of water needed would enable one to know which crop to put in a moist, deep soil; and also which one would stand the hot, dry, shallow soil of another part of the farm.

**What to Plant next Spring.**

Each child will have some special crop of his own choosing. Besides this, however, I should strongly urge potatoes and strawberries for the first year. The second year, the strawberry patch would supply enough new plants to cover the potato ground of this year. One hundred strawberry plants set out this spring will supply the family moderately well next year. The planting and first year growth will afford several interesting topics for Nature Study. There will be a variation in the blossoms of different varieties. Some will have no stamens. Others will. What does this signify? Will those that have no stamens produce berries? Watch them. Some pupils will discover that they do. Others will report in the negative. Why the disagreement in reports? Possibly one pupil had different varieties in the same field and another had only one variety. Did it seem to make any difference whether that single variety were one with stamens or not? Did all varieties have pistils? Let the teacher become thoroughly acquainted with this phase of the subject; and, then, direct the pupils' observations.

Watch the effect of late spring frosts on strawberry blossoms. What part was affected? What might have prevented it?

Watch the "runners" that form later in the season. When do they begin? Where do they start? How long a time do they grow? How many plants may come from one parent plant in a single year? Try picking the blossoms