

* Special Papers. *

* FORMATION OF GOOD HABITS.

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IN TWO PARTS.—II.
(Concluded.)

THE next habits to be noticed are Industry and Perseverance. A teacher will readily observe a marked difference in children with regard to these two qualities. The naturally quick perception, possessed by one, enables him, with scarcely an effort, at once to see through, and make his own what it will cost a plodder hours to accomplish, yet the latter not unfrequently attains more practical results than the brighter or quicker intellect, for his tenacity will often achieve his purpose, while the other in unexpected difficulty is apt to get discouraged, and give up the attempt in disgust. In fact, each child at certain stages, when first beginning to study, would require an individual teacher. I honestly believe that there would be many brighter and more clear-headed thinkers among pupils if it were practicable to have some one who could clear away their difficulties before they had time to build unstable structures on false foundations. Few children possess the power of concentrating thought for more than a few minutes at a time and taught as they must be in masses, it becomes a question of the "survival of the fittest."

Industry and Perseverance as I have said are natural to some children; but may be acquired by others. As to rewards and incentives, the question has many sides. Words of hearty approval should always cheer the painstaking pupil; but whether one child deserves a tangible reward for doing a duty which another accomplished without, will admit of difference of opinion. One point, I think will be conceded without discussion, which is, that if a child is to be taught perseverance, he must not be permitted to leave a problem or a task till he has mastered it. This may be difficult, for children love change, and I am aware that some teachers affirm the desirability of passing over a problem or a lesson that is distasteful or difficult, even if they should go back over it again. But I think that if once allowed to shirk a difficulty, it will be extremely difficult to persuade children to return to it, and I also think the feeling of intense satisfaction at the mastering of the subject more than repays for the close application. I would signify approval too, by granting to the successful boy or girl such little offices in the school-room as children highly appreciate, such as those of acting monitors, two appointed each week, whose duty it is to distribute copy-books and pens, usher out and down the stairs the classes of little ones, and examine the slates of the younger children, etc. Some feel amply rewarded by being permitted to run the lawn-mower in the school ground after their work is done. To aid in making a child industrious, I think it would be well to have the time-table so arranged that the work of each class will fully occupy every member of it up to the moment he is called upon to recite. This too will prevent

any opportunity for indulging in talking, as idleness is the fertile mother of mischief. The smaller classes can be kept quite busy with very simple little problems on small slips of white paper about four inches square, each holding *four* problems and having the little owner's name at the foot. As soon as all the class can readily give the result, the papers are passed on to a lower grade, and a new set given to them. I had tried drawing but the little artists would persist in coming up to the desk to exhibit their sketches, so I had unwillingly to give it up.

I will refer briefly to the last two items in the list, Obedience and Cleanliness. I have never had any difficulty with regard to the first except in the very extreme cases where the pupil was subject to unhappy influences at home, and where a malicious desire to refuse obedience and annoy the teacher was considered an evidence of independence and cleverness. But a quiet determination neither to provoke unnecessary hostility nor recede one iota from what was just and right has always conquered and secured obedience either willing or *unwilling, to all reasonable commands*. There is a great deal of truth in the old saying: "There's more in a *come* than in a *go*." To be plain, a request courteously put, generally accomplishes more than a command, except in such cases as I referred to awhile ago. To secure prompt obedience let your wishes or commands be well understood, be sure that they are reasonable, and then never recede from your word. When a lesson has been imperfectly committed, or a problem slurred over, a quiet seat apart from companions, with a gentle intimation that *recess* may be spent there, will generally result in a correct solution or perfect recitation within the allotted time.

Last in order, but by no means least in importance, is *cleanliness* of person, which is not merely desirable but an actual necessity where forty or fifty children are sitting together in one room for any length of time. No odor is so disagreeable as that which exhales from want of cleanliness, and many children of delicate constitutions are made really ill by it. (The teacher's sensations don't count). True the garments may be, and often are of the very poorest description, and many children possess little else, but these can be well tolerated if the face, neck, ears and hands are clean. In this respect, too, there is a marked difference in children. I have in one of my classes two little boys each six years old, belonging to the poorer classes, who come to school miserably clad. Both are good looking and one a very pretty child. The other has a rather heavy lower face, redeemed by a full forehead, fine dark eyes and most beautiful teeth. But the child's garments and person are at all times almost filthy! I have sent him home occasionally in charge of a brother a year or two older, but not any cleaner, with directions to have his face and hands washed, but found that the necessary ablutions had been performed at the nearest puddle. In fact these children, or their parents, or both, seem to have a most unaccountable antipathy to water.

The other little fellow, though in equally ragged costume, is nevertheless a pleasure to look at, so pure and fresh are the rosy face, ears, neck, and every part of his person, and though his outer clothing is, as I have said, ragged to a degree, yet his underwear, wherever visible, is scrupulously clean. The father of one is a clever mechanic who can earn from one to three dollars per day and the other a working man earning fair wages. But the first is shiftless and improvident and in the other case the mother is to blame. So true is it that a man is usually whatever his mother makes him. Until sanitary laws are better enforced than they are at present in the dwellings of the classes I have mentioned, it will be hopeless to expect any improvement in this respect. Indeed I think a small lavatory would be a very welcome addition to most schools.

There is another point on which I purpose making a few remarks, that is, the children's amusements. Years of observation have led me to the conclusion that more bad habits (I mean those of conduct) are acquired and developed in the play-ground, than are ever exhibited in the school-room; owing, of course, to the greater license and the removal of all restraint for the time being. It is a little world in which the strong and unscrupulous triumph over the weak and timid, and the cunning and dishonest get the better of the simple-minded. The instances are few indeed where nobility of character and pure unselfishness assert themselves. Not the least thing to be deplored is the language too often used.

I think many of these evils might be done away by better facilities for children of different ages enjoying their *recess* without being tyrannized over by older and stronger ones. No matter how extensive the play-ground, if a group of lads commence a game of cricket or baseball, which they do almost invariably, they monopolize it to such an extent that the smaller children and girls cannot indulge in any games except at the risk of being struck by bat or ball, or even knocked down if in the way of the eager runner for goal. I think every play-ground should be divided into two parts at least, in one of which the girls and little children who usually comprise by far the larger half of the school, can pursue their amusements without danger.

Here too the teacher (if so disposed) may greatly benefit himself, as well as the children, by putting them through a simple Calisthenic exercise with a light pole or rod about four feet long and slight enough to be swung over the head without fatigue. The children gladly bring their own on Friday afternoons.

Battledore is also a good open air amusement and safer than skipping as it involves less physical and rapid motion.

One other most desirable adjunct to the cultivation of *Good Habits* is a moderate sized shed, open towards the south if possible, where boys may indulge in their games of marbles during wet or wintry weather. I think there is no game so provocative of *squabbles*. The unlawful appropriation of *taw* and fobbing of *allies* are most fertile sources of discord. To permit boys to indulge it in the school-room