

* Special Papers. *

"HOW TO KEEP THE FIRST CLASS BUSY FOR THE DAY IN AN UNGRADED SCHOOL."*

BY MISS LIZZIE BARRY.

DURING the past few weeks many little "tots" have been wending their ways (cheerfully, I hope), to enter upon the great event of their lives—the first day in school. Beforehand, it was their chief subject for thought, and the great topic of conversation. In order that their childish anticipations may not be blighted, it is quite necessary that the teachers have been thinking, and preparing also, how best to greet the little ones, and earnestly seeking opportunities for making their childhood more happy and useful.

It is of vital importance that we impress on their childish minds that we are their friends; we should be filled with the sentiment of Pestalozzi: "I would have my children able at each moment from morning to evening to read on my face, and to divine upon my lips, that my heart is devoted to them; that their happiness and their joys are my happiness and my joys."

Education consists in the formation of good habits: good habits of body and mind. The first act, mental or moral, is the starting point of habit. It leaves a tendency to recur, each successive step becoming easier than the preceding, till the performance of the act becomes a second nature. This law of habit works with special power during the impressionable period of childhood. Childhood demands activity and contact with the objective world; the business of children is to grow; to become familiar with their surroundings; to form right habits, and to master the objective phase of subjects; hence, let us keep the little ones interested and busy, making even their amusements educational, and in the absence of Kindergarten gifts inventing other apparatus.

What shall I teach? And how shall I teach it? Few problems are so important to the teacher. Adaption is the golden law of culture and the perfection of system. The order of culture must be the order of natural development. Childhood is the golden period, the flood-season of perception and memory.

The cultivation of the æsthetic is of no small importance. The soul expresses itself in song and poetry. Therefore let us make free use of elegant extracts, embodying strong thoughts couched in graceful language by teaching a short one every morning. We need to be particularly cautious in making suitable selections, for instance, at this particular season, selecting such as tend to implant in youthful minds a love of nature. If some should, as undoubtedly they will, embody language difficult for children to comprehend, let us not worry about that; now is the springtime, sow the seed and the harvest will come by and by. The man seeks to know why it is and whence it is; the youth to know how it is, but the child is content to know what it is. Five or six

minutes after prayer each morning will be sufficient for this department of school work, and grand results will flow therefrom.

I have my junior reading classes first in the morning while the senior classes are working arithmetic at seats. Great variety should be aimed at in this as in all other departments of school work. The same work done morning and afternoon, day after day, must become sadly monotonous and lose all freshness and interest, while a systematic variation of work gives pleasant variety.

Before a child can read intelligently, up to its limit of power, that is, in silent reading, it must be able to recognize the words without conscious effort. In order to bring our pupils up to this stage we must give plenty of word-recognition by the Phonic System. The enthusiastic and spirited phonic reading lesson is always attractive, and many devices may be planned to heighten the effect, as pointing, erasing, replacing, allowing the little ones to frequently use the chalk, underlining and encircling with colored crayons.

Gaining knowledge of the subject must always be preparatory to expressive reading. In teaching new words we should keep a few lessons in advance of where the class is reading, so that when children arrive at a certain lesson, by frequent use and application they are quite familiar with the words and their meaning. Since acuteness in the extraction of thought is a necessary step to the expression of that thought: while the teacher is engaged with the First Class, the Part Second Class may be obtaining all the thought they can from their lesson; and, to give variety, the teacher may ask for a reproduction of these thoughts, sometimes orally, but oftener in writing. When the allotted time for the Phonic lesson has elapsed, the children must have work to do at their seats. The work should pertain, as often as possible, to the preceding lesson. If, in the Phonic reading, some new sound has been taught, work should be assigned that will tend to impress it. In the Number, Language and Drawing lessons, the same rule should be observed, and thus the knowledge gained is fixed firmly in the mind of the pupil.

While the teacher is engaged with one class, it is necessary that the others should be kept busy. The work should be interesting and developing and such as the children, putting forth their best efforts, can do well. It is absolutely necessary to examine the slates every time work is done. It is better to shorten the lesson one is giving at the board than neglect to examine the work done by the scholars at their seats. What child can be expected to take interest or pride in work that is never to meet his teacher's eyes? And how much better the children will work after an encouraging nod or word of approbation.

In an ungraded school we have not the time to take the branches of our primary department so frequently as they are taken in a graded school, still, by skilful management, no branch need be overlooked. Occasionally, instead of our usual Reading or Number lesson, we may introduce an object or primary geography lesson. The little

ones quickly brighten up at the appearance of the moulding board.

An ungraded school has many disadvantages, but, as a cloud has a silver lining, it also has its advantages; for the children learn much incidentally, and there are the advanced pupils who, with a little guidance, can assist the teacher materially in teaching many of the junior classes. Since this is quite necessary in a large, ungraded school, the teacher must be judicious in her selection of pupils to take junior classes, arranging her programme so that those best adapted to the work may be free to do it.

On Arbor Day, 1890, I had the larger boys make seats under the shade trees and, on warm days, I send classes out to be taught in the free, open air, which is both pleasant and beneficial for the children. I have a transferable blackboard which may be taken out when required. By way of parenthesis I may add that the seats are so arranged that I may see at a glance through the window that the children are orderly, although I do not consider this absolutely necessary, nor would I have my children feel that I was watching them. But they will notice themselves that their actions may be conveniently observed; and we must always act on the principle: "Lead not into temptation." Moreover, I never fail to appreciate work done outside, having the class and pupil in charge invariably form in a line on entering, and if it were slate work they were doing, I examine their slates, and if preparatory or oral work, I inquire about their success, approving every effort.

After the Part Second have had their Reading or Language lesson, and have been given work to do at seats, I then take a Number Lesson with the First Class, after which I give a short arm exercise to junior pupils and occasionally to the whole school; then, giving the juniors a little extra intermission, seeing that they go to the far end of the yard, so as not to disturb the school while the Senior Arithmetic classes are taken up.

Marching, as well as all kinds of drill properly conducted, promotes definiteness of action, and thereby definiteness of character; and such exercises are very helpful in obtaining and preserving order. But the plea: "there is no time for marching or drill in an ungraded school," is frequently offered as a reason for neglecting it. Such need not be the case. At the sound of the bell in the morning, at each intermission and at noon, have children form in lines for marching—the boys in one line and the girls in another—the taller ones leading. Let them march systematically around the yard a few times, then into the school-room, having it arranged to have the girls take one passage, the boys another, and thus march through the passages in school, which has a very pretty effect when well done.

With all definite, energetic, muscular effort there must be a correspondingly energetic will power; and, whatever incites definite action, will train and strengthen the character. The desirability of having good marching, and also the necessity for making it attractive, cause us to consider how best it can be varied. Music, of course, is a delightful inspiration, and this we can

* Read Before the North Essex Teachers' Convention at Windsor, June 4th and 5th.