

"There was a man by the name of Cyrus who was a Persian Prince. He had a very nice father, and asked him one night what he had done at school that day? He said that he had done something unjustly. The boys when Cyrus was playing any games with them used to make him their King. One day there was a boy who had a new coat, with Cyrus, and Cyrus wanted to make a change. The one that the boy had bought was very much too large for him, while Cyrus's was small. They kept on for two or three days but would not agree upon it. While they making this agreement, Cyrus's father came along. Cyrus had a very humane temper and was very gentle. Because Cyrus would not change with the other in a few days he was punished."

"Cyrus, the Persian prince, had good many masters, his father asked him if he had done anything wrong to-day, and he said he had been punished, and his father asked him what he had been punished for, and he said he had quarreled with another boy. What about, said his father, and Cyrus said that, a boy he was with, had on a big coat, that just fitted him, and his coat was too small for himself, and this other boy wanted to exchange with him. But Cyrus would not, just then a man came up, and settled the dispute, saying, that the big boy did very wrong in taking the coat off the smaller boy. So Cyrus had to be punished for not giving up his coat to the other boy."

"It will be observed that in some of the examples the sense of the narrative is followed tolerably well, while in most of them it is burlesqued; that in some punctuation is wholly neglected, while in others it is liberally indulged to the destruction of the sense; that in some the narrative is divided into sentences in violation of the rules of grammar, and in others not, equally in violation of the rules of grammar. It is plain, from these examples, that the pupils of the Norfolk county schools had been trained in grammar at the cost of English composition, according to the methods of the old system of instruction. Comment is unnecessary. The comment of the conductors of the Quincy schools was an order of banishment issued against the old system."

WINTER'S WORK FOR THE RURAL TEACHER.

The great school-masters "have achieved worthy results by the moral and intellectual climate they were able to produce, rather than by methods of teaching." Thus says a writer in a recent magazine article. Rural teachers are often surrounded by a depressing intellectual atmosphere. The pupils are not interested in school, because their parents are not interested. Home thoughts are narrow and slow, school thoughts are dull.

In such cases the teacher should make an effort to change the intellectual climate. He should try to stimulate, to widen, and to utilize the thought-power of the district. He should do this in order to make the school-room work more effective. The teacher may say within himself. "I will do my best to secure profitable study for my pupils, I will try to have them study in the best manner, and in order to have them study much and well, I will try to arouse parents as well as pupils to a wider range of thought and to lead them to think more and to think to a better purpose. If more thinking and better thinking is to be done during the coming winter than was done during the past winter, some person must cause it to be done, and that person should be the teacher. As a rule teachers are laborious, are earnest, are anxious for the improvement of their pupils; they are pained when their labors seem fruitless, because of the children's apathy. Let each try to change the intellectual atmosphere. Let them remember that a change of climate has often given physical health to the invalid. Health depends upon the air we breathe as much as upon our food. Why may not intellectual vigor depend upon the intellectual atmosphere? If the great school-masters formed an intellectual climate for their pupils, why shall not other teachers attempt to do the same?"

Among measures for purifying the intellectual atmosphere and making it bracing and invigorating, the following are suggested questions, general information, readings, committing to memory choice selections, biographical sketches and anecdotes, literary exercises, and societies.

1. *Questions*—To awaken thought nothing is better than a good question. The great teachers have been noted for their method of questioning. The teacher desiring to stimulate thought among his

pupils and patrons, may give a question to his pupils at the close of school, saying, "I do not want an answer now; you may think about it to-night, and I will call for an answer to-morrow." The object being to excite thought, the question should be one that will interest the people, yet not be so easy as to require no reflection. A teacher once asked why the leaves fall, calling attention to some trees to which the dry leaves were still clinging. This led to much examination of the trees, and much talk about them at home. On another occasion he gave as a problem a recent transaction in the neighborhood: "A man sold a horse for \$65, bought it back for \$50, and sold it again for \$55: how much did he make?" This excited great discussion. Nearly every man and boy in the district solved it, and proved his answer right, though there were several answers found.

On the next day the first question will be brought up, the answer discussed, and a second question presented for future reply. This course can be continued from day to day as long as the interest in the questions justifies it. At first the teacher may find it difficult to select stimulating questions of general interest. Let him not hesitate on this account, for in this, as in most other undertakings, the beginning is the most difficult part. Questions will soon multiply upon the thoughtful teacher. By practice will come skill in selecting the most appropriate. The children, taking the questions home, plying their parents with them, and discussing them with each other, will lead the parents to think about the school.

Teachers at a loss for questions may begin with the breakfast table. Why should coffee be provided for breakfast and tea for supper? Why buckwheat cakes at breakfast, but biscuit at supper? Whence come, and how are raised or made, the various articles and dishes on the table? Knowledge gained in finding answers to such questions will be live knowledge, while the giving and answering the questions will change the climate to one of inquiry, activity, and investigation. The children will in time learn to ask questions of the teacher and of their parents. When such is the case, to instruct them is a pleasure.

2. *General Information*.—The teacher may call the attention of the school to some subject of general interest, as a public work, a discovery in science, a great crop, a great act, a great accident, and talk over the same with the pupils. He may say, "Items of public interest are often mentioned in conversation and in the newspapers. Please inform me when you next notice one, and we will talk about it." Tact and skill will be needed to lead boys and girls to select topics wisely, but pupils can be trained to find useful information, and to tell it in a way to be interesting to themselves and to others. This exercise may lead pupils to select their reading, and to discriminate between useful and useless information, between the higher and the lower in thought. The topics of general interest are unlimited in number, as the world's work and workers, commerce, shipping, currency, food supplies, manufactures, etc., etc. Teachers may often have some difficulty in finding accurate information, as works of reference are not to be found in every school. But as a compensation, this difficulty will drive children to ask their parents and to consult books at home.

Some teachers make an interesting topic of the rights and duties of citizens, how officers are chosen, how they are paid, whence comes the revenue of the State, how the taxes are expended. Such topics are interesting when presented about election time. A wise teacher will choose his topics in season.

3. *Readings*.—"When I am reading a good book," says Hamerton, "the only Croesus that I envy is he who is reading a better book." In some schools the attention of the pupil is confined to "doing sums," "parsing," and other routine work. The atmosphere of such schools is deficient in essential elements of intellec-

* Professor J. A. Cooper, Principal Edinboro' Normal School.