

## Special Papers.

## RELATIONS OF PSYCHOLOGY TO THE SCHOOL-ROOM.

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In the nineteenth century, a confession of ignorance as to the value of science or scientific instruction, or a lack of interest in the great discoveries and problems brought to light by the student of nature, is to be deplored, especially if made by a public school teacher in enlightened Ontario. When all the striking characteristics of our age are fully brought under notice, not one will be found more remarkable than the enormous strides that have been made in searching out the hidden wonders of the universe, by which man may, in the language of a beautiful writer, "see the developments of order and the evidences of design." All honor to the noble intellects whose keenness has brought to light the "exquisite machinery by which the harmonies of nature are preserved."

But as we recognize the existence of mind behind its revelations in the study of nature, we find ourselves in the presence of that which, while it has been studied to a certain extent in its depths and resources, has never been, if it ever can be, fully comprehended.

Enough to know that it is there, enough to know that it too has its own order of development; enough to know that if we go against nature here it is the same as going against her elsewhere. With this knowledge, surely if nature is worthy of study, that by which we study nature, that by which we are what we are, that by which we hold communication with others, is equally if not more worthy.

This fact is now beginning to be recognized more fully than formerly, and on our professional curriculum psychology takes a prominent part.

There are some, however, who, going on the backwoods principle that the boy is only to learn to "read, write, and cipher," claim that it is of no practical utility or benefit, merely because to their intelligences the results are not so apparent as an answer to a question in addition.

Is it possible for us to convince ourselves that in studying mind, in all its phenomena, we are receiving benefit, which we can apply in the practical work of the schoolroom?

In considering what the relations between psychology and the schoolroom are, we take up a subject so deep and complex that it can only have justice done it by one who has taken a finished course in its study; by "freshmen" and beginners it can only be presented in a freshman's style.

The whole question of school work is very broad. There are two potent factors in the work to be considered: 1st, the teacher; 2nd, the pupil. The teacher has a mind. That mind is to be used in conveying truth and imparting knowledge to others.

The scholar has a mind. That mind is to be used in the reception of knowledge.

These two are to be brought into connection by means of what are technically called "methods." These methods we would desire here to look at not simply in the technical sense of the training schools, but as applied to everything made use of in bringing about sympathy between the minds of the teacher and taught, and in causing that sympathy to take shape in a vital union of ideas, so that an outcome may be seen in the acquisition of knowledge and the growth of intellectual tone and power. All modern educators and educational papers agree that it is absolutely necessary that the teacher's mind should be trained and strengthened by a broad culture, and that his professional training should carry him deeply into all the most approved methods of applying educational principles. It is also generally admitted that while good has been accomplished in the past by the old systems, with no special attention to adaptation in methods, a vast improvement has resulted from the teachers of our day being versed in the best educational methods. All the great educationalists of the past groped their way in darkness, and had very partial success in their own day and generation, but now we recognize their genius, and give praise in proportion to the amount of care be-

stowed in studying the mind of the scholar, and adapting teaching thereto.

If so, surely it is of the first importance and advantage to a teacher to have a thorough acquaintance with the tools used in accomplishing his work, in order that he may have skill in using them.

But as another has well said, every mechanic or artificer must have a knowledge of the material on which he is working. In like manner the teacher must be acquainted with the material with which he has to do, viz., the minds of his pupils.

But mind study is the object of psychology, and no matter how we look at it, it is eminently a practical study for the teacher. The authors of all our teachers' text-books point out that all teaching methods to be right should be based on the principle of the order of development. Mind, to reach mind, must do so by using instruments that will connect with mind. It is clearly shown on all hands that minds differ, and that the teacher of cast-iron methods will be a failure, or but a partial success, for while he follows unvarying rules he is apt himself to violate one of the fundamental principles of teaching; that the best attention, the involuntary, is gained through interest: aroused by suiting the method to the mind. Spencer says that harm will follow if we do not conform ourselves to the laws of supply and demand disclosed by psychology. We take our stand before a class in an ungraded school in a country section, and there we realize to its fullest extent the duties and responsibilities of a teacher's position.

Forty or fifty or more young minds are before us, to be impressed and fashioned for weal or woe. Various ages and types are represented, from the plastic five-year-old up to the self-conscious and sometimes self-important lad or maiden, with mind half formed, and character developing.

In the midst of such diversities the teacher must proceed to present to those susceptible minds that which is designed to expand them. Can we regard as unpractical the study of that very mind which we are undertaking to mould, and of that very order of development we learned as students we must follow?

Can we "fashion the carriage and form the mind, and work in the pupil a love and imitation of what is excellent and praiseworthy, and in the execution of it give him vigor, activity and industry," if we are ignorant as to what is the lowest and what the highest manifestation of mental activity, what affects the sensibilities and what moves the will?

For, as a writer has said the teacher is to cultivate the emotional nature, chiefly through the imagination, and the will through the intellect and the emotions. If, as some say, the object of education is the harmonious development of faculty and the evolution of character, we must know what the development is, what gives it harmony, and how all combined are to be made manifest in character.

Thus, before we enter upon the general work of the schoolroom, the study of mind is seen to have a very practical bearing upon that work. Now at the outset we must have constructed courses of study, but our text-books say that these must be adapted to mental development, and that in order to construct them we must know the plan of the mind and understand the laws, means, and methods of culture. Again, "Educational symmetry requires that courses of study be arranged so as to harmoniously develop body, intellect, emotion, and will." The student learns that in old Baldwin at the beginning of his course. So we are again at the same point as to development.

It is very important not only to have an aim, but to have that aim properly directed. How many fail in all professions and callings, not because of lack of motive, but because of ignorance as to the best method of carrying out their designs. Now different teachers have different aims. There is the money-maker, whom we will pass over, because we believe that the great majority of teachers are now actuated by a higher motive. Well, I enter a school determined to exert myself to the utmost in fastening principles of industry, intelligence and integrity in the minds of my pupils. I desire to lead them to see that

"Life is real, life is earnest,  
And the grave is not its goal."

(To be Continued.)

## English.

All communications intended for this column should be sent to W. H. Euston, M. A., care of THE EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL, Toronto, not later than the 5th of each month.

## THE FORSAKEN MERMAN.

By N. S. McKechnie, English Master, Woodstock College.

SOMETHING of melancholy interest gathers around the study of this poem owing to the very recent death of its distinguished author, Matthew Arnold. A brief sketch of the author's life and works, such as appeared in a late issue of this JOURNAL, should be read to the class. It would also deepen the pupils' interest in the author to hear a few of his best short poems read.

The theme of this beautiful selection is suggested in the word *forsaken* of the title; it is the wail of the Merman (A. S. *mere* a lake, and man) and his children for the lost mother.

The poem should be read over and over for the class with all the expression that a thoughtful study of it commands. The turns of narrative should be explained and the class, either individually or simultaneously, should be required to read the poem aloud. After the poem has thus been carefully studied and thoroughly understood, both in its parts and as a whole, most of the class will probably be able to quote striking expressions, and even passages, beautiful in thought and form.

It will now be well to point out what the elements are upon which the interest of the poem chiefly depends. These are:—

1. The characters—half human, weird, strange creatures of fable and poetic fancy, now drawn by the "wild white horses," that "champ and chafe and toss in the spray," now dwelling in "sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep."

2. The pathos of their story. Margaret, the wife of the Merman and mother of his children, hearing "the sound of a far-off bell" in Easter-time, goes up to pray in the "little gray church" among her kinsfolk. Merman and his children left long alone seek to bring her back. They rise through the surf in the bay, go to the little church, stand without in the cold, climb on the graves, look through the windows, see the lost one and beseech her return; but she heeds not the voice of even the children. After vain solicitation both of look and voice they go

"Down, down, down!  
Down to the depths of the sea!"  
And "alone dwell for ever  
The kings of the sea."

3. The diction and metre. The language is simple, easily understood, and expressive. This is, in some measure, due to the fact that it is chiefly of Anglo-Saxon origin. The descriptions are made bright and picturesque by such phrases as, "Wild white horse play," "white-walled town," "little gray church," "sandy shore," "lights quiver and gleam," "great whales come sailing by," "the gleam of her golden hair," etc.

The stanzas are of varying length to suit the sense, possess rhyme, and the metre is generally trochaic. The following is a specimen of the metrical scheme:—

Co'me dear | chi'dren, | le't us a | wa'y  
Do'wn and a | wa'y be | lo'w!

There is a rhythmical swing in these lines and throughout that is perhaps intimitive of persons that have to do with the sea.

4. The play of Imagination.—The poem as a whole is a finely imagined conception, but there are passages of exceptional quality. See the description of ocean depths and their inhabitants, the suggestions of immeasurable distance and remoteness in "Down, down, down!" and other expressions, and the poetical conceptions of the music of bells heard at long distances.

There is much poetic imagery through the poem but this and other particulars such as the meaning of words, etc., I make no reference to. I have preferred to suggest a few broad lines along which it seems to me the selections may be profitably studied. Each teacher can easily adjust and adapt and develop as to him may seem best.

\* Read before the Teachers' Convention at Chatham.