

## Special Papers.

### PROFESSIONAL READING.\*

BY HORACE FAUL.

"WHAT is *Professional Reading*?" "What bearing has it on the responsibilities, and the requital of him who trains the human soul?" As for the latter inquiry let it be said that as the medical student requires an intimate knowledge of the body, and how to treat it, so must the teacher understand fully a more important part of man, namely, the mind. In both cases this knowledge might possibly be gained by experience, but no one man in his lifetime, by mere experience, could become thoroughly acquainted with even one of the many phases of his study. Hence to become proficient both must have the experiences of hundreds of others. In this way only can the doctor become informed in respect to the body, or the teacher in respect to the mind—its intellect, will-power, and emotions. Therefore reading necessarily becomes the first spring of their success. But to revert to the first question: "What is Professional Reading?" As we advance in civilization, more and more are aids to the different occupations and professions being used, in the shape of books and papers. Those aids to the instructor, obtained from any source whatever, constitute professional reading for him. It is the experience, research, and thought of men put down in black and white.

Books are especially published for help in his work; these should be carefully studied. Sometimes in reading books irrelevant to the teacher's work something is met with pertaining thereto; these extracts should be marked, and their character, page, and name of book in which found put in an index book kept for that purpose, so that ready reference may be made at any time. Then in reading newspapers, journals, and magazines, often scraps meet the eye that are gems; these should be cut out and pasted in a scrap book, to which is attached an index. By these means one may make the most of his reading.

Let us inquire further into the importance of such a course to the teacher. First, *it is of direct value to him personally*. While reading for others he receives profit to himself, in his mental, moral, and physical culture. As well might we expect an engine to continue its work without replenishing its fuel, as a teacher to do his work successfully without professional reading. Both teacher and engine must have daily fresh supplies of material. Two kinds are needed for the mind of the teacher.

First, *that which directly increases his knowledge of men and things*. Increase of knowledge brings increase of power, for knowledge is power, and there is need of it. Is it reasonable to suppose that the teacher, beginning his work at the age of twenty has, previous to this, laid in sufficient stores of information to enable him to deal intelligently with the many-sided minds of children? Or to suppose that without constant reading this information will not become dim? It is essential then to success, that

improvement be made in the subjects taught. What living mind can be satisfied with a school-boy knowledge of history, of our mother tongue, of mathematics, of literature? If the teacher has no love of knowledge for its own sake himself, how can he expect to impart, to stimulate and satisfy the hunger and thirst of the child-mind? In order to do this he must read more history, and more literature, must investigate the truths of nature, and, generally speaking, endeavor to widen and deepen his information. As has been well said: "He must know more than he expects to teach, or the lessons will be stiff formal affairs, lacking elasticity, variety, and marred frequently by want of interest or illustration. He will feel unable to answer many questions on side issues, always asked by children, and knowing that he is not doing his work as skilfully or as satisfactorily as he might, will become dissatisfied with teaching and lose confidence in himself. On this account the teacher's private study should never be given up; since it will not only give knowledge, but keep alive his sympathy with the pupils' difficulties. And above all men, he should learn to go through the world with his eyes open."

The second kind of supply needed for the teacher's mind is: *that which adds to his knowledge of teaching*. On this, we should, perhaps, dwell longer than on the other, for it is more essential. That relates to his knowledge of men and things, this to his method of imparting it, his methods of intellectual, physical, and moral training. Certainly it is important for a child to *know* something, but to *know how to acquire* knowledge, to possess a well-developed body, and good habits and morals are of far greater importance. Could a higher encomium be paid to a teacher's memory, than that uttered of one, well-known to many here, "She knew how to make a man out of a boy and a woman out of a girl?"

But how few recognize the importance of this qualification in a teacher. To many a teacher the power of memorizing words is the only faculty possessed by children. Such an one does not educate, because his processes are purely mechanical, as if he considered his school a factory, from which the boys and girls, as so much raw material, are to be turned out the desired manufactured article. For him there are no educational authorities. He teaches just as if Pestalozzi, Fröbel, Spencer, Arnold, Mann and Russell had never thought, observed, discovered and written. "There is no class so hopelessly unprogressive as these, who have neither profited by the experience of others and who are ignorant of their own ignorance of skilled methods." It may not be out of place to quote, just here, Carlyle's words regarding those, whom he has so graphically made immortal.

"My teachers were hide-bound pedants, without knowledge of men's nature or of boy's; or of aught save lexicons and quarterly account books. Innumerable dead vocables they crammed into us and called it fostering the growth of the mind. How can an inanimate verb-grinder foster the growth of anything—much more of mind, which grows, not like a vegetable (by having its roots littered with etymological com-

posts,) but like a spirit by mysterious contact with spirit—thought kindling itself at the fire of living thought? How shall he give kindling in whose inner man, there is no live coal, but is burnt out to a dead grammatical cinder? My professors knew syntax enough and of the human soul this much: that it had a faculty called memory, and could be acted upon through the muscular integument by appliance of birch rods."

Of course we all wish our names to be immortal, but we have no desire to be among Carlyle's immortal 'verb-grinders.' But, how are we to avoid becoming of their number, unless we pursue a course of *professional reading*, for there seems to be a defect in our training system. There is too much left to self-education. Three months in a Model School and we have a full-fledged pedagogue. No matter how hard the Principal may work, (and there are few of us who will not ever look back with gratitude to our Model School days, and our Model teachers and Principal,) or the teacher in training may study, the latter can obtain in that time but a very limited knowledge of teaching. While from two to three years are spent in accumulating information enough to teach elementary work to a Fourth Class, (and a good deal thus learned is of practical value,) yet but three months are spent in acquiring practice in teaching, a knowledge of school government and of methods, a knowledge of physical culture and how to train children therein, a knowledge of the child's mind and how to deal with it, a knowledge of moral culture and how to cultivate that part of the child which must forever exist.

All in three months? Why it is a burlesque on teaching, unless the teacher-pupil there forms the habit of reading for himself. What a work is left for the earnest teacher!

Under these circumstances is it not matter for surprise that the profession stands as high as it does? Is it not matter for wonder that the results are as magnificent as they are? Truly this position and these good results are due to those few veterans, who have for the love of the cause, not for the petty stipend, sacrificed their opportunities, their interests, their chances of competing in the race for worldly honors, to labor in a sphere deemed so humble.

At all events little praise for the success of the profession can be given to those of us, who, with but three months' training, and very little professional study afterwards, pass out of the teacher's ranks after dealing for a couple of years with what we little understand.

Let us get out of the old ruts. If we have had but a short training let us make up deficiencies by private studies. Secure books and find out what there is in teaching. It is not only a duty but a requirement.

But to revert to the question of training. Is it not time for a reform? Must there not be a reform? It would seem that more time ought to be spent in special training, or else part of the Non-Professional studies now pursued in High Schools should be abandoned, and Professional work, such as Music, Hygiene, Psychology, Sociology and kindred subjects, put in their place. Are not these of more importance to the elementary teacher than Surds and Binomial Theorems, Ancient History, and Dead Languages?

\* Read before the Prince Edward County Teachers' Convention, Nov. 10th 1890, and published by request of the Convention.