

*Special Papers.*HOW TO AWAKEN AND DEVELOP
THOUGHT IN PUPILS AND
PARENTS OF A RURAL
SECTION.*

BY G. NEWTON.

TEACHERS have often achieved worthy results by the moral and intellectual climate they were able to produce, rather than by methods of teaching. Rural teachers are often surrounded by a depressing intellectual atmosphere. The pupils are not interested in school work, 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. I will try to lead them to think more and to think to a better purpose." If more thinking and better thinking is to be done in future, some one must cause it to be done, and in a rural section 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. Why may not intellectual vigor depend upon the intellectual atmosphere.

Among measures for awakening thought, the following are suggested:—Questions, general information, readings, committing to memory choice selections, biographical sketches and anecdotes, literary exercises and societies. 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 the 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. I remember while attending school in the village of Bluevale, this problem being given: A man sold a horse for \$100, bought it back for \$90, and sold it again for \$95—how much did he gain by the transaction. This problem caused a general discussion; it was discussed on the street, in the stores, in the hotels and in the homes. Nearly every man solved it and proved his answer right, though there were several answers found.

Knowledge gained by 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. This course may be continued as long as interest in the questions justifies it.

II. *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 the newspapers, please inform me when you next notice one, and we will have a talk about it." Some skill will be needed to lead boys and girls to select topics wisely, but pupils can be trained to find useful information, and to impart 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. 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.

III. *Readings.*—In schools where the attention of the pupils is confined solely to "doing sums," "parsing," and other routine work, the atmosphere is deficient in essential elements of intellectual stimulus. To read well is to think well, and a thinker excites thought in others. One of the best services a teacher can do for a pupil is to lead him to think more, by inducing him to read more, and to read more judiciously. This all teachers can do. The teacher may inquire of the pupils what they have read, or are reading, and how they enjoy it; he may in turn tell what he is reading. He should encourage the reading of good books, magazines, and newspapers, and discourage the reading of dime novels and other trashy literature. It would be well if a couple of hours each week were set apart for reading papers, etc., in school. In this way pupils would be encouraged to read for themselves, and in after life it would be a source of comfort and information for them.

IV. *Memory Selections.*—It will do children good to commit to memory extracts from the best writers. The thoughts contained in the extracts will awaken thought in the mind of the pupil. To learn the words and not understand the writer's thoughts does very little good. The instructions should be felt rather than expressed in words, so that there would be no formal statement of a moral lesson. Short selections can be found giving in vivid language important information. These, committed to memory and recited before the school, will stimulate to more energetic study of the regular school lessons. It would be well for the teacher to make a practice of reciting occasionally before the school. All selections should be chosen for their influence on the learner, and on the school, and those should be preferred which are valuable both for the thought and the expression.

V. *Biographical Sketches and Anecdotes.*—Far too much of all instruction stops at the ear and never reaches the understanding. Too much of history and biography is confined to dates. To any youth, a short characteristic anecdote of a distinguished person, is of more value than the dates of every event in his life. It is much more interesting and more valuable to a boy to learn that Willie Brown, a shepherd lad, twelve years of age, taught himself Greek, and walked twenty-four miles to buy a Greek New Testament, than to learn that he was born in 1724, married in 1749, and died in 1801.

Sketches.—Character sketches of the wise and good are instructive and stimulating. It would be a valuable exercise for teachers and pupils to find, learn, and repeat anecdotes of good men and women. They should be such as illustrate the character and habits of the individuals, and exhibit conduct worthy of imitation and emulation.

V. Continued.—In the struggles and trials of others the pupil will see the path of his own self-development. "Example sheds a genial ray of light which men are apt to borrow," and also to follow. The example of the virtuous and self-denying is best shown in characteristic anecdote. It would be well if a teacher would make a note of valuable personal stories and keep them securely. A book of such sketches gathered from time to time would be a great treasure. These stories often repeated in the family, will help to create a bracing intellectual atmosphere in the home.

VI. *Literary Societies.*—During the winter months there might be a literary society formed in the district, of parents and young people, which, if properly conducted, would be very interesting and productive of much good. Their programmes might consist of debates, readings, recitations, etc. In order to have success, all connected with the society would have to do considerable studying and thinking; they would have to consult books and papers for information; hence a thirst for knowledge and a development of the thinking powers would be the result.

VII. *Hints.*—I. Every teacher who wants to make the most of his school must try to awaken thought in the district, and if he tries he will succeed.

Begin with the easy, proceed to the difficult. Attempt no more than you believe you can carry through.

Have a definite end in view, and plan and work for that end.

Remember the power to think, the habit of thinking, and the mode of thinking, are of greater value than the accumulation of facts.

Every honest effort for good by the teacher will exert a reflex influence upon himself, and while trying to help others, he himself will receive most benefit.

Educational Notes and News.

FOLLOWING are the Literature Selections announced for the Entrance Examinations of the coming school-year.

Examination papers will be set in Literature on passages from the following lessons in the authorized Fourth Reader:—

DECEMBER, 1888.

1. The Face against the Pane. pp. 74—76
2. From "The Deserted Village" " 80—83
3. The Battle of Bannockburn " 84—90
4. Lady Clare " 128—130
5. The Gulf Stream " 131—136
6. Scene from "Ivanhoe" " 164—168
7. She was a Phantom of Delight " 188
8. The Demon of the Deep " 266—271
9. The Forsaken Merman " 298—302

JULY, 1889.

1. Clouds, Rains and Rivers pp. 54—59
2. Death of the Flowers " 67—68
3. From "The Deserted Village" " 80—83
4. The Battle of Bannockburn " 84—90
5. Flow Gently, Swift Afton " 98
6. Resignation " 105—106
7. Lead, Kindly Light " 145
8. Dora " 137—142
9. Scene from "Ivanhoe" " 164—168
10. She was a Phantom of Delight " 188
11. The Heritage " 212—213
12. Song of the River " 221
13. Landing of the Pilgrims " 229—230
14. Edinburgh after Flodden " 277—281
15. National Morality " 295—297

At each examination candidates should be able to quote any part of the selections especially prescribed for memorization as well as passages of special beauty from the prescribed literature selections. At the December examination, 1888, they will be expected to have memorized 1-8 of the following, and at each examination thereafter all of the following selections:—

1. The Short Extracts . . . (List given on page 8.)
2. I'll Find a Way or Make It pp. 22
3. The Bells of Shandon " 51—52
4. To Mary in Heaven " 97—98
5. Ring Out Wild Bells " 121—122
6. Lady Clare " 128—130
7. Lead, Kindly Light " 145
8. Before Sedan " 199
9. The Three Fishers " 220
10. Riding Together " 231—232
11. Edinburgh after Flodden " 277—281
12. The Forsaken Merman " 298—302

THANKS duly felt and kindly expressed cost little and are of great worth.

WE can do more good by being good than in any other way.—*Rowland Hill.*

To tell a lie is like the cut of a sabre; the wound may heal, but the scar will remain.—*Saadi.*

THOSE who do not give till they die show that they would not then, if they could keep it longer.—*Bishop Hall.*

THERE is little pleasure in the world that is true and sincere, besides the pleasure of doing our duty and doing good.—*J. Tillotson.*

* Read before the East Huron Teachers' Association, at Seaforth, May 17, 1888.