

How Much, vs. How Well.

In nearly all public schools, especially in rural districts, and in most communities, there exists one leading idea which is most palpably false. The more enlightened teachers and citizens are aware of its fallacy; but the mass are slow to comprehend. It is this: Parents and scholars believe that so many arithmetics, so many grammars, and so many geographies *gone through*, finish one's education, or at least make him a great scholar. They are wont to measure progress by distance alone. *How much* is regarded to the exclusion of *how well*. The most efficient instructors meet with scarcely another obstacle so formidable as this false notion. And what aggravates the evil is that there are many teachers, even, who cherish the delusion that the boy who goes through his arithmetic *quickest* is the smartest and best scholar, and he who gets him through, the best teacher. As properly is he who plows his stint in the shortest time inevitably the best plowman. The test is a true one, only so long as regard is had to the manner in which the work is done.

How much is deceptive. It flatters and deludes. It checks thorough application and restrains rigid thought by fostering self-conceit and encouraging superficialness. It ignores patient research substitutes rapidity for thoroughness, and prepares the way for a loose and blundering character.

How well is true. It measures capacity, increase, self-reliance, requires close application and independent thought, and lays the foundation of an exact scholar—a true man.

No intelligent observer in matters of education has failed to note how wrong the public mind is upon this point. Too often the school is a mere race course, in which little attention is given to *gait*, and of which the teacher is an eager driver, anxious to please the public judges who look on at a distance, and applaud him who comes out ahead "by hook or crook." Far better this than the absence of all interest and zeal. But the race should be subject to certain conditions, and the prize awarded or praise bestowed in accordance with them. Otherwise, the true objects and ends of education are lost sight of. For instance, a scholar during the last two winters he attends the district school, rushes through two or three arithmetics, (the largest he can get, of course) by constant reference to rules, examples, and keys, and graduates with the reputation of a smart scholar. He rubs against the world, and it takes the starch out of him. His rules forsake him, or he can't apply them, and the ghosts of his murdered arithmetics, mocking, stare him in the face. The same is true of other studies to a greater or less degree.

How long, fellow teacher, must this be? Just so long as we sacrifice our own convictions to public applause, or the whims of others. The duty of reform in these matters is ours. We must assert the right, and maintain it by all honorable means, until public sentiment follow us, not we it. Let every scholar be well grounded in first principles and their application, and then he is prepared to make practical use of his school lessons in real life, and to build on this firm foundation whatever structure of human knowledge he may wish. He should therefore, be made to feel that his success depends upon *how well*, first; afterward, *how much*. To make him feel thus should be the teacher's aim. He should teach it and act it.

To stem the powerful current of public opinion requires a strong mind and a bold heart. But this should not cause the teacher to falter, for his mission is great, and can only be accomplished by the most untiring exertion, patience, perseverance, and true devotion to his calling.

"Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait."

(Maine Teacher.)

Object Teaching.

Our knowledge of the external world comes to us through the senses.

Dr. Reid, speaking of the improvements of the senses, says: "All that we know or can know of the material world must be grounded upon their information; and the philosopher as well as the day laborer, must be indebted to them for the greater part of his knowledge."

There is a period of life when all the knowledge we gain is acquired through the senses directly from material objects.

The perceptive faculties are developed before the reflective. The reflective faculties follow and depend upon the perceptive. By the action of the perceptive faculties they are developed and strength-

ened. Hence, the study of material things precedes and furnishes the foundation for all other studies. Therefore, object teaching must form a necessary part of every complete system of education.

To accomplish its legitimate end, object teaching must be something more than mere onomatology. The fixing of names is one process; gaining clear ideas and complete knowledge of the object named is quite another.

The object should be thoroughly considered, when presented, so that ever afterwards its name may call up, not merely a conception of the object, but a complete halo of associated truth, circling the thing round with the effulgence of active thought. Some analysis of the object named, some knowledge of its relations to other things, and some appreciation of its office in the work of human improvement is necessary in order to secure such a result.

If the object presented to the child is taken fresh from the hand of Nature, as the first object considered should be, acquaintance with some one of the natural sciences will be required on the part of the teacher; otherwise, the accurate analysis will be wanting. If the relation of this object to others is to be shown, an acquaintance with more than one of the natural sciences will be requisite. If its allotted sphere in promoting the happiness and well-being of man is to be delineated, the teacher must have a heart as well as a head; a soul in active sympathy with the Great Architect, and ready to trace his plans, as well as an intellect to understand his works. The teacher who would really succeed in object teaching must be one of no meagre attainments.

This view of object teaching adds weight to the remarks of the Secretary of the Board of Education, upon the importance of employing thoroughly educated teachers in our primary schools. We will not quote, but refer our readers to the convincing logic of Mr. Boutwell, as found in his late official reports.

The primary teacher who is skillful in object teaching, thus cultivating the perceptive faculties, upon whose proper action and growth all the other mental powers depend for their strength and development, should be honored, paid, and beloved as one of the most useful members of society. Such a teacher must possess both tact and talent. No amount of learning, hoarded from books, will fully suffice. In order to succeed, there must be joined a patient zeal and a real love for the work. If the schools of Germany are more successful than our own, I apprehend that it is in no small degree owing to the energy, ability, and skill shown in their object teaching.

Again, object teaching should be systematic. The system pursued, should be so simple and clear, that every scholar, after listening to a series of exercises upon a class of objects, could affirm with certainty in what order the teacher would proceed in the study of any similar object. To furnish the pupil with no method of investigating natural objects, is to confuse in the direct ratio of accumulation; is to render the pupil weak and almost helpless, when left to his own investigation.

Many teachers, disregarding any systematic arrangement in this mode of instruction, utterly fail to discipline the mental power of their pupils. The study of one object by noticing the form, the study of another by considering the composition, and the study of a third by explaining its uses, is to mix the facts acquired and to confuse the mind of the scholar. Or to take, as the germ of the exercise, one object to-day, another to-morrow, and a third at a following exercise, each having no natural connection with the other, is "cramming," not education.

The object lesson of one day should have such a relation to that of the following days, that both may form parts of one whole. For instance, the teacher can commence a series of exercises by noticing the form and structure of different seeds, the embryo, delicately fashioned, and the nutritive substance snugly stored within or around it. A second exercise, introduced by a review given by some one of the school or division, might embrace the germination of the seed. This might be followed, on another day, by an exercise on the form, structure and functions of the several parts of the leaf. Similar exercises, with thorough reviews, might complete an outline of the science of Botany.

The question may be asked, Would you have object teaching, in systematic, oral exercises, take the place of careful study of text-books? Certainly not; but there are many pupils in our schools too young to labor in text-books. These may gain much valuable truth in this way. They can be trained, by object lessons, to observe accurately and closely. Thus the perceptive faculties will be developed, and the materials for thought in after life carefully garnered.

And in our common schools, of older scholars, where the course of study or time allotted is too limited to allow of more extended knowledge, outlines of different sciences may thus be acquired.