

sufficient to make an effort—to redress the wrongs done to the boy, will in most cases be vain. That self-educated men are the best educated is a trite remark; so trite, indeed, that it frequently falls on the ear without arousing attention to the apparent paradox which it contains; and yet there must be some reason well worthy of attention for the fact, that so many who, in early life, have enjoyed advantages, have, on reaching manhood, found themselves surpassed by others who have been forced to struggle up unassisted, and in many cases surrounded by apparent obstacles to their rise. It is obvious, that the point in which the latter have the advantage, is the necessity which they find in exercising their own intellectual powers at every step; and, moreover, for taking each step firmly before they attempt the next; which necessity, while it may retard the rapid skimming over various subjects which is sometimes effected, gives new vigor continually to the mind, and also leads to the habit of that "industry and patient thought" to which the immortal Newton attributed all he had done; while at the same time a vivid pleasure is taken in the acquirement of knowledge so obtained beyond any that can be conferred by reward or encouragement from others.

From these considerations, it appears that the most judicious system of education is that in which the teacher rather directs the working of his pupil's mind than work for him; and it must be recollected that such a system, compared with some others, will be slow, though sure, in producing the desired result. Every one familiar with children must have observed with what apparently fresh interest they will listen to the same tale repeated again and again. Now, if time and repetition are necessary to impress on the young mind facts interesting in themselves, they are surely more necessary when the information to be imparted is in itself dry and uninteresting, as is the case with much which it is requisite for children to learn. The system here recommended is one which requires *patience* both on the part of parents and teachers; but *patience* so exercised would undoubtedly be rewarded by the results, one of which would be, that we should not so frequently see "clever children" wane into very commonplace, if not stupid men.

DUTY OF THE TEACHER IN REGARD TO THE MANNER OF THE STUDIES OF HIS PUPILS.

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1. *The order of study.* There is a natural order in the education of the child. The teacher should know this. If he presents the subjects out of this order, he is responsible for the injury. In general, the *elements* should be taught first. Those simple branches which the child first comprehends, should first be presented. *Reading*, of course, must be one of the first; though I think the day is not distant when an enlightened community will not condemn the teacher, if, while teaching reading, he should call the child's attention by oral instruction to such objects about him as he can comprehend, even though in doing this he should somewhat prolong the time of learning to read. It is indeed of little consequence that the child should learn to read *words* simply; and that teacher may be viewed as pursuing the order of nature, who so endeavours to develop the powers of observation and comparison, that words when learned shall be the vehicles of ideas.

Next to Reading and its inseparable companions—*Spelling* and *Defining*, I am inclined to recommend the study of *Mental Arithmetic*. The idea of Number is one of the earliest in the mind of the child. He can be early taught to count, and quite early to perform those operations which we call adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. This study at first *needs no book*. The teacher should be thoroughly versed in "Colburn's Intellectual Arithmetic," or its equivalent, and he can find enough to interest the child. When the scholar has learned to read, and has attained the age of six or seven, he may be allowed a book in *preparing his lesson*, but never during the recitation. Those who have not tried this kind of mental discipline, will be astonished at the facility which the child acquires, for performing operations that often puzzle the adult. Nor is it an unimportant acquisition. None can tell its value but those who have experienced the advantage it gives them in future school exercises and in business, over those who have never had such training.

Geography may come next to *Mental Arithmetic*. The child should have an idea of the relations of size, form, and space, as well

as number, before commencing *Geography*. These, however, he acquires naturally at a very early age; and very thoroughly, if the teacher has taken a little pains to aid him on these points in the earliest stages of his progress. A map is a picture, and hence a child welcomes it. If it can be a map of some familiar object, as of his school-room, of the school district, of his father's orchard or farm, it becomes an object of great interest. A map of his town is also very desirable, as also of his own county. Further detail will be deferred here, as it is only intended in this place to hint at the order of taking up the subjects.

History should go hand in hand with *Geography*. Perhaps no greater mistake is made than that of deferring history till one of the last things in the child's course.

Writing may be early commenced with the pencil upon the slate, because it is a very useful exercise to the child in prosecuting many of his other studies. But writing with a pen may well be deferred till the child is *ten years of age*, when the muscles shall have acquired sufficient strength to grasp and guide it.

Written Arithmetic may succeed the mental; indeed, it may be practised along with it.

Composition—perhaps by another name, as *Description*—should be early commenced and very frequently practised. The child can be early interested in this, and he probably in this way acquires a better knowledge of practical grammar than in any other.

Grammar, in my opinion, as a study, should be one of the last of the common school branches to be taken up. It requires more maturity of mind to understand its relations and dependencies than any other; and that which is taught of grammar without such an understanding, is a mere smattering of *technical terms*, by which the pupil is injured rather than improved. It may be said, that unless scholars commence this branch early, they never will have the opportunity to learn it. Then let it go unlearned; for as far as I have seen the world, I am satisfied that this early and superficial teaching of a difficult subject is not only useless but positively injurious. How many there are who study grammar for years, and then are obliged to confess in after life, because "their speech bewrayeth them", that they never understood it! How many, by the too early study of an intricate branch, make themselves *think* they understand it, and thus prevent the hope of any further advancement at the proper age! *Grammar, then, should not be studied too early.*

Of the manner of teaching all these branches, I shall have more to say in due time. At present I have only noticed the order in which they should be taken up. This is a question of much consequence to the child, and the teacher is generally responsible for it. He should therefore carefully consider this matter, that he may be able to decide aright.

2. *The manner of study.* It is of quite as much importance how we study, as what we study. Indeed I have thought that much of the difference among men could be traced to their different habits of study formed in youth. A large portion of our scholars study for the sake of preparing to recite the lesson. They seem to have no idea of any object beyond *recitation*. The consequence is, they study mechanically. They endeavour to remember phraseology, rather than principles; they study the *book*, not the subject. Let any one enter our schools and see the scholars engaged in preparing their lessons. Scarcely one will be seen, who is not repeating over and over again the words of the text, as if there was a saving charm in repetition. Observe the same scholars at recitation, and it is a struggle of the memory to recall the form of *words*. The vacant countenance too often indicates that they are words without meaning. This difficulty is very much increased, if the teacher is confined to the text-book during recitation; and particularly if he relies mainly upon the *printed questions* so often found at the bottom of the page.

The scholar should be encouraged to *study the subject*; and his book should be held merely as the instrument. "Books are but helps," is a good motto for every student. The teacher should often tell how the lesson should be learned. His precepts in this matter will often be of use. Some scholars will learn a lesson in one tenth the time required by others. Human life is too short to have any of it employed to disadvantage. The teacher, then, should inculcate such habits of study as are valuable; and he should be particularly careful to break up, in the recitations, those habits which are so grossly mechanical. A child may almost be said to be educated,