

vigorous, decided, with a definite purpose, calculated to beget in pupils a habit of independent thought adapted to their age, condition, and development, and so elastic as to serve the varying needs of the place and the time. We want backbone in our methods of teaching, in our discipline, in our courses of study, and in our whole educational system. These four points will be especially referred to in this paper.

First, as to methods of teaching. These are sometimes too rigid, cast in an iron mould, the same for all, young or old, mature or immature. Some teachers present every subject, even in a primary school, in a hard, dry, logical way, that has in it no variableness, neither shadow of turning. The recitation is simply an examination. No helping hand is offered, and if the pupil gets into deep water, he must help himself out. At a certain age and development of pupils, more or less of this work is needful to cultivate self-reliance; but this is quite an advanced stage. The young and immature become discouraged and faint under it. The child, in its first feeble, tottering steps, must have an arm on which he can rely for aid.

But this method is becoming old-fashioned, and others, more modern, are more popular. There is the co-operative style, as it has been called, at the other extreme, in which the pupil is not trained to depend upon himself at all. He is called, arises, hesitates, and the teacher immediately goes through the work, the pupil looks on admiringly, nods approval, and is marked 10. Or else, when he hesitates, a dozen hands go up in class, and one gives a few words, another a few more, and so on; and if he approves he is marked 10, as before. It is really astonishing to look at the class reports of such teachers, and to see how many of their pupils have stood 10 throughout the year; and it is quite as astonishing to see how many of these fail in their examinations. The failure is explained as being the result of bashfulness or nervousness when examined; but it really is because there has been no backbone in their instruction. They have been nursed and propped up with pillows until their strength is gone; and so, when left to themselves, they show how flabby and nerveless and characterless their teaching has been.

Then there are teachers who have adopted what they dignify by the name of *topical* method. What they mean by the topical method is too frequently the mere repeating verbatim by the pupil of the words of the text book, without questions on the part of the teacher. Truly, this is an improved method. It enables the teacher to get on without preparation on his own account; for all he has to do is to look at his book, touch a spring and set some child a going, and then let him run down. A baser slander was never uttered than when such work is called the topical method.

Then there are those who wish to train the reasoning faculties of the child. The pupil, no matter how young, must never learn a new process or a new fact until he can give the philosophy of what he has already learned. He must not learn that  $2 \times 3 = 6$  until he can tell the reason why  $2 \times 2 = 4$ . If these teachers could help it, they would not allow a babe to learn to talk any faster than it could give the rules of syntax. These teachers are usually very fond of "mental arithmetic" for the primary pupils, because they can require a logical analysis for each step. I say nothing against mental arithmetic, if its work is given to the grade of children fitted for it; but in the way it is frequently taught I do decidedly object to it. A certain form of analysis is usually given in the text book for each kind of example. The child, no matter what his age or development, must learn the formula. Of course, with

young pupils it unavoidably becomes nothing more than a formula—mere mechanical routine. No powers of reasoning are developed by such a process. It is a purely memoriter operation. Permit me to give a specimen out of hundreds of similar cases that I have observed:

Teacher: "Seven times eight is one half of how many times four?" Pupil (after repeating the question): "Seven times eight is fifty-six, and is one half of one hundred and twelve, and one hundred and twelve is twenty-eight times four. Therefore," etc. Teacher: "No; next." I ask the teacher if that was not right. She says that the answer was right, but that the pupil did not give the correct analysis. "But," I ask, "was not the analysis he gave a logical one?" "Well," she says, "I mark it a failure if it is not as the book gives it." She shows me the book, which gives this form viz: "Seven times eight in one-half of as many times four as four is contained times in two times the product of seven times eight," etc.

Can there be any surer way to blunt and deaden all that is keen and bright about a boy than that?—any more certain method of crushing out every attempt at original and independent thought? It "out-Herods Herod." It is a veritable slaughter of the innocents.

Any of these methods destroy self-reliance, and substitute a servile dependence on the teacher or the text-book. Not that either teacher or text-book should be abandoned, by any means. We have heard men crying out, of late years, "Away with your text-books! No true teacher will use a text-book." But there is a proper use of text-books. They should be studied diligently, and the teacher should show his pupils how to study them. There is great mental discipline in such study. And after leaving school, the greater part of acquired knowledge must come through the medium of books; and if one has not been trained to their use, he can not tread the avenues of thought beaten by other and greater minds before him. But all should be so done as to cultivate to the utmost the child's independence of thought and investigation.

Secondly, as to discipline. Here, too, we find the same extremes. One teacher rules by a law as inflexible as those of the Medes and Persians. He makes no allowance for difference of age or sex or temperament or home training. The single article of his creed is that discipline must be maintained. He has no smiles, no relaxation, no cordial greetings for his pupils, lest his authority may suffer. In his eyes a mistake is criminal, a laugh is flat treason. No sound disturbs the solemnity of that awful place. His school is orderly; but so is a penitentiary. Everything is silent, but it is the silence of the grave. It is all, as Mr. Mantalini would say, "one demd horrid grind." His pupils may fear him, but they hate him. He has no art nor device by which to catch their sympathy, arouse their enthusiasm, inspire them with grand and noble purposes. He fails entirely of the highest prerogative of the true teacher—that of stamping his own impress and seal upon his pupils for all time. He sends them forth at last abject, spiritless creatures, or, if they have any rebound, disposed to transgress and defy any law, human or divine, except when restrained by fear.

This kind of school discipline, too, like the rigid method of teaching, is passing away. With the more modern teacher all is love. He loves all his pupils, from the frowzy six-year-old boy to the big girls on the back seats. He gushes, he runs over with love. He sets up no absolute standard of right, in any case, to which the ill-disposed and unruly must come. He desires to succeed, and his effort is to govern his school,