

Special Papers.

*THE VALUE OF GRAMMAR AS A PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDY.

BY EDWARD TROUGHT.

PERHAPS there is nothing that we as teachers are reminded of so often as that "This is a practical age," that the time of an ordinary individual who has to make his living in the world is too limited to admit of theory, that the work of the school-room is to fit the young for the actual business of life. Now, so far there is little room for difference of opinion. But when it is further contended that the school-room is the place to fit the individual for making a living in the world, the place for turning out teachers, bookkeepers, clerks, designers, and mechanics, then it is time to pause. If this were the work of the school-room what would be its value? What is the value of a mere teacher, a mere bookkeeper, a mere clerk, or a mere mechanic? You can estimate his value exactly if you know how skilled he is in his work, and the market value of his labor. He's a very honest fellow, no doubt, but is the world any the better through him? Is he fitted to do his duty as a citizen? Has his mind an elevating influence upon the minds of those who associate with him? After all he is a very selfish individual. His whole life including his school life has been spent in preparation for getting, and in getting, a living for himself.

We find then that the direct object of the school is not to fit the individual for making his living in the world if what is meant by that is that all his studies should be in the line of what he intends to be in after life. It is rather the place for development, for education.

Now I presume it is to meet the various requirements of this education that the numerous studies on our school programme are intended. And here is where the difficulty arises. There are so many, many subjects that seem so very, very important, that the difficulty is in choosing.

A few years ago the three R's were nearly all that was taught in the Public Schools. Of late the cry has been that our school programme is overcrowded. This cry always begins with the public, is echoed by the teachers, is considered by our educational legislators, and is duly followed by the adding of another subject to the programme. Two or three years ago the cry was so strong that the programme was threatened with a systematic weeding-out process, when just then a most alarming state of affairs was discovered. The very training necessary to all in after life—from the boy destined to hold the plough to the one destined to execute the finest design—the training of the hand and eye, and of the hand to work with the eye, was being altogether neglected. It is needless to say that this defect was remedied. Drawing was placed upon the public school curriculum. Still more recently another new subject has been added, and has been made compulsory, the study of text-book temperance.

Just now there is peace, but our unfortunate programme is threatened with more assaults. A few days ago I read an account of a meeting of agriculturalists. At this meeting it was contended by a college professor that agriculture is the most important industry of this country, that therefore no subject is so worthy of study as the study of agriculture, that it ought to be made compulsory in all the schools, and that formal grammar, and geography names might be crowded out to make room for it. Then at a meeting of the Ministerial Association, in Toronto, a day or two ago, a resolution was passed requesting the Minister of Education to place "Religious Instruction, to be given by the teacher," upon the programme, one speaker remarking that it might be taken up instead of some of the subjects which are being over-taught.

It is impossible to tell how many more subjects will be crowded into the programme, but the time must come before long when it will be subjected to keen scrutiny, and the value of every subject will be estimated. Whether the proper test will be put or not we cannot say, but upon that test some subjects will be rejected and some retained.

* Read before the Peel County Teachers' Association.

Perhaps there is no subject that has been so often assailed of late as the subject of grammar—"Formal Grammar," as it is called, and in this paper I purpose to consider its value as a public school study.

It has been often said that those who associate with educated people speak correctly even if they have never studied grammar, and are totally ignorant of its principles. Therefore the study of grammar is of no use. All that is required is that a few of the principles of good usage should be taken up for the benefit of those who have not the privilege of moving in educated circles. Well, if the whole aim and scope of this subject is to teach us to speak without making mistakes in grammar, the study has not been assailed one moment too soon.

It is a pedagogical truism that every good lesson should have two aims, one the imparting of information, the other the development of the mind, and these two aims point to the two tests which should be applied in estimating the value of a subject. First.—Does the study of the subject furnish knowledge that will be practically useful to the pupil in after life? Secondly.—Has the study an educative value? Now let us apply these tests to the study of grammar.

In the first place, in examining the structure of language the pupil may deduce rules for correct speaking and writing. Associating with educated people may enable one to speak correctly, but not to write correctly. Many instances are recorded of people who have been ready, brilliant, and correct in conversation, but who could not pen even an ordinary letter without displaying gross ignorance. The spelling of inflected forms, the closing of each sentence, the use of capitals, are treated upon in this subject. Another instructive value that grammar has is, it often enables the pupil to find the meaning of a difficult passage whether in poetry or in prose. He is taught to arrange sentences after a certain method, to strip them of their rhetorical or poetic dress, to test the words, phrases, and clauses, by placing those related, as closely together as possible, so that he may find their proper position in his arrangement. By these means he arrives at the bare meaning. It is true he may have lost some of the electrical power of the rhetoric or poetry, but he is surely in a better position for feeling these when he turns to the original than he was before. To sum up then, the study of grammar has an instructive value in assisting the pupil to speak and to write correctly, and in assisting him to understand what he reads.

In considering the educative value of grammar we notice that this study, though by no means abstract, is farther removed from the concrete than any study with which the pupil will be yet acquainted. He has to turn in upon himself, as it were, to observe the effects of language upon his own mind. The study of grammar thus leads up to intellectual independence.

In the second place it leads the mind up to classification according to reason. Perhaps it may not have struck some of us how much of our intellectual activity is made up of classifying. Yet we may almost say that classification is synonymous with intellectual activity. Now grammar leads the pupil to reason and to classify. For instance he gets the idea of name-word and he has to find out by reasoning whether a word used is a name or not before he can put it into his class. He gets no assistance from his senses. The word may be the same in form in two different sentences, but not the same for purposes of classification. If he finds that a word is a name-word in a peculiar instance, he places it in the noun class no matter what it was in any previous instance. If the word is used to make a statement about something he places it in the verb class no matter what it was in any previous instance. His powers of classification are further developed in considering phrases and clauses where he sees combinations of words used as a single word, and consequently coming under one of his word classes. To sum up the educative value of grammar as a study then—It develops the more subtle intellectual powers of reasoning, and secondly, it develops the powers of detecting similarities by reasoning, for the purpose of classification.

Politeness promotes beauty in him who possesses it and happiness in those about him.—H. W. Beecher.

Question Drawer.

1. WHAT are the statutory holidays for Ontario?
2. What fee do candidates, who write on Latin only, have to pay? (In second-class certificates.)—D. A.

[1. New Year's Day, Christmas day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Queen's Birthday, Dominion Day.]

[2. Two dollars.]

What is the reason that in rural schools the midsummer vacation does not exceed six weeks, and the noon recess one hour; while in villages, towns and cities these terms are eight weeks, and one and a half hours, respectively? There is also a like difference at Christmas time. Now, this looks to me unfair; because, as a rule, the boy or girl in the country works as hard or harder than the boy or girl in the village, town, or city, and they are, also, just as fond of holidays. Likewise with respect to the teacher; his work is, since the rural school is generally "ungraded," harder than that of his more favored friends in the village, town or city.—A SUBSCRIBER WHO WOULD LIKE TO KNOW THE REASON.

[Probably the chief reason is that the high schools are generally situated in the towns and villages, and the policy in regard to holidays is regulated by their requirements. Another reason is, no doubt, that the farmers and other country people are the strongest sticklers for short holidays.]

1. Would you please say how often it is best for the holder of a bank deposit receipt to send it to the bank for the calculation and endorsement of accrued interest thereon?
2. In doing so (returning it to bank) must the holder endorse it on the back?—G. H. B.

[1. That is a matter for the bank to determine. The banks have their own regulations, which would, we should suppose, be generally specified on the deposit receipt itself. They do not ordinarily, we think, add interest oftener than once a year.

2. It must be endorsed if the holder wants to draw it, not otherwise.]

Please inform me as to the law regarding the payment of teacher's salary, when the school has been closed a short time on account of sickness in the section, the teacher herself not being sick.—J. C.

[See answer to first question in Question Drawer, March 15th.]

Kindly let me know, through your valuable paper, if there is any agency in Toronto or any other Canadian city for procuring teachers and supplying information of places vacant to public school music, drawing teachers, etc.—A SUBSCRIBER.

[We know of none.]

1. What else besides Precise-Writing has been added this year to the curriculum for third-class candidates?
2. Will third-class, as well as second-class candidates, be examined in *Industrial Design Drawing* this coming summer?
3. Will it be necessary, or even advisable, for third-class candidates to study "High School Physics" (authorized edition), or will Huxley and Balfour Stewart's Science Primers suffice to cover the course for third-class certificates?—C. B.

[1. Nothing, we think. Send to Education Department for a copy of Regulations respecting the course for teachers' certificates, which will give you full information.

2. Only third class candidates take drawing.
3. Physics has to be taken along with Botany, unless Latin, French or German is substituted. You can best answer your own question by comparing the requirements (Sec. 13, page 2, Regula-

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