

Believing these faults—I am almost inclined to term them radical defects,—to be more common among inexperienced instructors than we are willing to admit in these days of Centennial glorification, I venture to reproduce my criticisms, with a few comments thereon, for more general comparison.

1st. "*Tha teacher talks too much.*" This is an especial temptation to an instructor who is well versed in the subject under consideration. Saturated with knowledge, he is like a wet sponge, needing only a touch to cause his information to drip out upon the class. In the recitation criticised as above, the teacher was intelligent, almost learned. His remarks were excellent and the pupils were interested, and perhaps instructed: but the time was so occupied that there was no opportunity for regular recitation work. No test was made of the pupils' preparation of the lesson, no searching questions were asked, no analysis of the subject was given. It was merely a delightful talk to a number of girls by a scholarly gentleman. It was not teaching. In a neighboring school I witnessed a similar recitation and while conversing with one of the pupils after class, he slyly remarked, "We always get Miss—, to talk about something when we haven't got our lesson." Now, the lecture system is beneficial only to advanced pupils, young men and women thirsting for knowledge, who have absorbed all their text-books contain, are eager to know what their professor can impart, and whose minds are trained to receive and retain information. (*)

With young pupils, mere beginners in study, ignorant of the methods of mental acquirement and assimilation, with no especial taste for work and no power of concentration, there must be class-drill and proofs of previous labor demanded. The recitation is for the benefit of the pupil, not the teacher. In general, it is mentally more profitable to tell a thought than to receive it. Under the talking system pursued in some schools, the teacher grows much faster than his pupils. He is actively employed all the time; while they are mere recipients, delighted sometimes, indeed, but not held to labor for what they wish to know. He acquires a choice of words, and learns to talk fluently and to tell what he knows; while they get neither experience in expression nor criticism on their use of language and their grammatical mistakes.

A little information may often be imparted to great advantage, it is true, but only to enliven the monotony of hard work and to act as a stimulant to fresh exertion. *The maximum of talking on the part of the pupil, and the minimum of talking on the part of the teacher is the perfection of a recitation.* In my own classes when topical recitation are fully established, I have always required the class to conduct the entire recitation from the black-board diagrams, with only an occasional suggestion or remark during the progress of the work, and a general commentary at the close.

2d. "*The teacher makes no point.*" In the recitation I witnessed, there seemed no special goal to be reached, but the pupils were wandering aimlessly about, toiling to get over a certain number of pages of the book. When they finished, it was with an air of relief that another task was performed. On no cheek was there the glow of victory. No one seemed to feel that he had

taken a steep, a definite, measured step in the path of knowledge, and had gone up a little higher to a better outlook. Neither teacher nor pupil appeared to grasp the relations of that lesson to the one of the day before, and the one assigned for the succeeding day, whereby it became a link in the chain of the term's work, which, if dropped out by inattention or absence, would break the whole asunder.

Now every lesson should have an object, else the children had better be out on the play-ground breathing fresh air, and developing their muscles. The class should assemble for a specified purpose: to master some difficulty clearly perceived beforehand, upon which they have worked during the time of preparation and are to report their success; to give clearer intelligence about what they have done; to get fresh facts; and to prepare for a new struggle and advance. They should know where they stand when they come to class, and whether they have conquered the point of the lesson; and when they have, it should be with a distinct idea of something they have gained or failed to gain. At the close of each lesson, the teacher should tell the class the object of the next day's work, give directions about doing it, and remove any insurmountable obstacles, thus preparing the way for intelligent, profitable and economical labor on the part of the class, and preventing the necessity of individual help, which is so annoying to the teacher and often so injurious to the pupil. If the teacher unfortunately uses a text-book which does not give an analysis of the lesson in bold paragraph headings, he should prepare such an outline and let the students classify the lesson. Many studies admit of a uniform analysis. Thus, in Chemistry I have used the following topical outline—Source, Preparation Properties, Use, Compounds; and in the Periods of Geology—Location, Kinds of Rocks, Fossils, Remarks. These titles answer as labeled pigeon-holes in which the pupil can sort off all the facts of the lesson, and, to stretch the figure, are like elastic bands, which will expand to receive all the knowledge one may gather in future life. They aid alike in learning, reciting and retaining a lesson, and are invaluable in all teaching and studying worth the name.

When a scholar thus looks over the advance lesson, finds the thick underbrush parted by a strong hand, so as to give him an unobstructed view to the end, detects its point, has its analysis clearly in his mind, and is warned of the dangerous places—he feels as if he half knew the lesson already, and sets about it with a light heart and an assurance of success. Such a course begets in him confidence, both in himself and in his teacher. With each lesson there is a consciousness of something done under the direction of a skillful guide. School work is reduced to a system; the pupil knows where he is, and how fast he is advancing; he is constantly reaching a result, and with the satisfaction of progress, the delight of acquisition, and the pleasure in employing his powers usefully, he finds a daily interest in his work.

3d. "*Pupils are kept in at recess and after school to study.*" This is literally a crying evil. It is a custom handed down to us from the past, and sanctioned by age; but teachers are perceiving its enormity, and are fast discarding the practice. It is both unnecessary and injurious. Scholars may be profitably directed to remain after school for the purpose of receiving suggestions, counsel, etc., from the teacher, but not to study, and at recess, never! The object of an intermission is to preserve the health of the pupil. Nature demands this, and it is her right. No teacher should rob a child of legitimate exercise. It is a physical wrong. Moreover,

(*) It is a curious fact that while we are turning to the lecture-system from the over-exact text-book recitations of our fathers, the Germans, of whom we learned the new art, are beginning to perceive their mistake and considering the propriety of introducing recitation-drill even in their Universities. Strangely too, the privilege of attending the so-called "Discipline Exercises," the nearest approach to a regular recitation, is eagerly sought after and granted only to the best scholars.