

The Educational Weekly.

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MASTER and pupil are both by this time probably looking forward with anticipations of delight to the approaching summer holidays, and both are already mapping out various schemes of pleasure and recreation. Pleasure and recreation; these are the keynote of holiday-time. They are not synonymous, they are brother and sister. By the one we brush away the cobwebs gathered by long hours in hot and dreary school-rooms; by the other we prepare ourselves to renew the battle of teaching and governing. A vacation of pleasure only, undertaken with no aim, and unlimited by reason, would soon defeat its own object; a vacation of recreation only, occupied wholly by attempting to prepare for more work, would cease to be a vacation. Only by combining pure pleasure, forgetful of all cares, with true recreation, gaining fresh strength, shall we enjoy an ideal holiday.

Holidays are not to the master what they are to the pupil. The latter flings lesson-books for the time wholly aside; he is out of doors the live-long day, or at most for a few short moments is captured by a father or a mother to help in domestic duties. Unless he is a boy of exceptionally studious habits, everything connected with "school" is studiously avoided. Books he shuns. He is free for weeks, and means to be free. To the former holidays are very different things. Then is the time he promises himself he will revel in books—not text-books, he shares for the time being his pupils' hatred of these perhaps—but books he has long kept in view which he has not had the time quietly to read and ponder on; he will revel in magazines—those tempting things at which he was able only now and again to glance; he will pursue some delightful course of study in his peculiar line—this scientific problem, or that literary project; he will seek the companionship of some well-known friends, friends with whom he has much in common, from intercourse with whom he will learn much; he will travel and see places from old interesting to him; he will widen his view, enlarge his grasp, increase his ideas. All these a holiday is to a master, and all these are highly commendable occupations.

Teachers perhaps more than most men are accustomed to learn something new daily. Their minds are actively employed, they are obliged to think more or less, and observation and reflection become, in course of time, a matter of habit with them. It becomes, as it were, a matter of course;

requires no exertion; is done unconsciously. The vacation is an excellent opportunity for giving this habit full play; and if we recognize it as such we shall find pleasure in mapping out systematically plans by which we may combine pleasure with recreation and at the same time widen our view and grasp of things by indulging to the full this habit of observation and reflection.

The school-room with its wearying sameness and its pupils with their tiring unaltered daily presence, are too often apt to make many of us fall unconsciously into a groove, a groove the sides of which, if we do not by effort break down, become often so high that we find it difficult to see over them. The holidays present a splendid opportunity for this breaking down process, and for giving us glimpses of other grooves divergent from our own. The holidays are thus a real teaching time for the teacher, it is then he learns, in the larger school-room of the world. Let us note a few different ways by which he can best make use of this teaching time.

Books a few he must have, and it would be well if a small sum were regularly set aside towards the close of the term for their purchase. The circulating library is a poor substitute for books during the vacation. The volumes from these institutions cannot be marked; cannot be read leisurely; cannot be looked upon as things that can be taken up when and where one likes; and so on. The books for the holidays too should be books of breadth; such as will discuss subjects broadly, from many points of view. We have been teaching in one way all the term; let us see some other ways of teaching. We should try too to get those books that will tell us of what is going on around us. There is a great deal that is absorbingly interesting now being done in the political world, in the literary world, in the scientific world, in the artistic world. One must keep up with the times; and keeping up with the times means more than glancing at the daily paper at the dinner hour.

Then there are the various means of gatherings together of teachers, a most instructive way of spending a portion of the vacation and well worth the expense of travelling to the place of meeting. Conferences, it seems the world has now come to think, are the best possible means of settling difficulties. They bring together the best thought and the most experienced judgment on matters of importance, and not less (perhaps chiefly) tend to eliminate personal peculiarities.

Above all there are the possibilities of quiet, undisturbed thought. To the older among us this will be regarded as a much-prized boon. Quiet thought during the term seems out of the question. It is not a small element of recuperation. A great author has somewhere said that no man can produce anything great unless he sometimes gives himself up to undisturbed reflection. Is it not true whatever be our line of life?

Another and excellent use of which to make of leisure hours, especially by those who remain in the scene of their labors, would be to improve their acquaintance with the parents of their pupils. Masters are so much discussed at home, that it is well to know and be known out of the school-room. This is not easy, when one is obliged daily to spend some five or six hours in teaching. Besides which, during the holidays the master is not looked upon as the much-to-be-feared autocrat which he is from January to July. And this is not altogether an insignificant point.

To these occupations we may add the more arduous ones of attending classes at various resorts, such as business colleges, drawing schools, etc. These we may safely leave to individual tastes.

To come back to the school-room brightened and with fresh ideas and plans—to attain this should be our aim during the vacation. And this will not be accomplished by pursuing a course of hard study on the one hand, or of total pleasure-seeking on the other. They must to a certain extent be combined, and, fortunately for us their combination is the surest road to the highest enjoyment of that period of cessation from labor which is granted us during the summer months.

Looked at from this point of view, as a holiday should be looked at, one will be able to enter thoroughly into the enjoyment of a period of leisure with a clear conscience and an appetite for innocent and recreating pleasures whetted by healthy mental hunger for a change of intellectual diet. It is the change upon which we would lay especial stress. It has a widening influence. The system becomes clogged and sluggish if fed only with one kind of food. And too many of us pursue this unvarying method all through the term.

To sum up:—a holiday, then, to the teacher means combining pleasure with recuperation and making these the means of widening our views by habits of observation and reflection.