

sons system, fully carried out, and as generally practised, encourage independent exertion and self-reliance? The general tendency of the method might of itself indicate the reply; but I am bound to state the result of my observations on this point. Not only have I been unable to ascertain that the invaluable habit of free independent effort, and the high social virtue of self-reliance, find their appropriate encouragement in simultaneity of utterance; but, on the contrary, so far as my experience of the general abuse of the system qualifies me to pronounce an opinion, I must hold that it checks their growth. In collective shouting the "sympathy of numbers" holds undisputed sway. Boldness of expression is in exact proportion to numerical strength, while it waxes feebler with diminished numbers, until, when a single unaided effort is challenged, it cringes into low hesitating indistinctness. This is true always of the large majority, and the "leaders" of a class can alone be excepted. As the simultaneous system professedly discourages, and indeed in a great measure precludes, emulation, one of the principal stimulants to voluntary exertion and courageous self-assertion is necessarily absent.

I have now to say a very few words on the simultaneous system with especial reference to its effect upon the teacher. As the success of the method has not been proved, this phase of the question assumes an importance proportionate to the amount of energy now being comparatively wasted in our public schools.

In the ordinary way of applying the simultaneous method, partly by teachers and monitors, no skill is demanded, and consequently none is exercised; in the process of its *perfect* application, the leading qualifications needed are, constant vigilance of eye and discriminating acuteness of ear. Without these the machinery of the system cannot be efficiently worked. It would be well if they were generally present, but I rarely find that the eye is much used for the purpose of maintaining correct discipline, and certainly the ear is never used as the sole test of reading. However, granting that the employment of the simultaneous method does produce in the teachers who use it a more than ordinary degree of acuteness in the faculties alluded to, what after all is the special value of the heightening of these faculties? That value consists solely in the greater power conferred of maintaining the *police* of the school. But if the faculties which the simultaneous system mainly develops in a teacher are not so much of an intellectual or moral as of a physical cast, and have reference principally to the detection and checking of abuses, does this add to the dignity of the method? No doubt it would be mere cavilling to find fault with a special cultivation of the eye and ear, provided the general tendency of the system were to give a broad and equal encouragement to *all* those qualifications which go to constitute professional ability in the schoolmaster. But if it demands and fosters professional ability in general, how, I would ask, does it occur that the extension of that system has taken place not only in quarters where it is consistently employed as a means of cultivation, but in a marked degree also over fields acknowledged to be barren? My answer to this is, that the effect of the system as ordinarily practised is, to call into play and maintain in exercise only a small amount of professional ability. So far has the mere empire deviated from the true spirit of the "training system," that all the arguments adduced by teachers in favour of simultaneity resolve themselves into these two,—facility of technical acquirement on the part of the school, and ease on the part of the master. I have already drawn attention to the fact, that the appearance of technical proficiency on the part of the class is most frequently deceptive, and we are therefore quite prepared to find that the communication of this appearance of proficiency is *easy*. Were ever any great and good results brought about by *easy* methods?

There is, indeed, one point of view in which the use of the simultaneous system cannot be said to confer ease either on teacher or scholar; for it frequently interferes to a serious extent with the physical comfort of the school. In some schools where the teachers are distinguished by superior energy and the most self-denying toil, I have occasion to admire their patient endurance under tests so severe that I can only compare it to the fortitude inspired by military discipline. Of these, a surprising number have succumbed from over-exertion, and the evil effects flowing from the same source are telling upon the constitutions of others so palpably, that the subject has been represented to me by various parents and school managers. I have not dwelt on any of the really advantageous features which the method, when judiciously applied, certainly possesses. I consider, for example, that it may be profitably employed in purely mnemonic exercises, such as learning the alphabet and spelling, and, of course, in all the departments of physical discipline. But in teaching these or any other branches, nothing can be done without *skilled application*.

I now proceed to consider the individual method in collective teaching, and its applicability to the necessary purposes of the common school. In several schools this system of teaching is alternated more or less frequently with the simultaneous system. But to whatever extent they are "mixed," their peculiarities and comparative advantages or disadvantages must be weighed in separate scales.

The individual method consists in the performance of the reading by single pupils at a time, and in the master's either addressing a question to this or that member of the class individually, or to the class collectively, with a view to an individual voluntary reply. Its primary recommendations are, that it is natural; that it does not mentally or physically overstrain either pupil or teacher; and that it is capable of calling forth the "whole nature," the entire capacity of both. I readily concede that, were a comparison instituted between the results of the two systems under review, the schools whose leading characteristic is a *skillfully applied* simultaneous procedure would assert their superiority over those taught in the ordinary individual style. That the best "simultaneous" schools, however, cannot compete with the best "individual" ones is adequately proved by my experience.

The object of the teacher who practises individual method "is to present food for every variety of mind, suited to every capacity, without overstraining any; and to cultivate by exercise every varied power of human nature." He must therefore bring every available faculty into play, so as to impart, confirm, aid, and encourage wherever there is need. He will show tact in distributing the effect produced on one over the whole group with which he is dealing, but especially in communicating it to those who may happen to be defective on the particular point which is being treated. The extension of the hand on the part of the pupil is a frequent and, as I think, an important accompaniment of individualization. It is indicative of a desire to reply, and a larger or smaller show of hands is of course secured, according to the ease or difficulty of the question. After carefully scanning the class, and encouraging the less sharp or the less adventurous youths to co-operate, the teacher, if dissatisfied with the number of hands as compared with his estimate of the facility of the answer, repeats the question in simpler and inverted forms. He is supposed to take the answer from among the dullest lads, and if it happens that he receive a wrong answer, then the opportunity is seized of kindly showing its absurdity. The acuteness of the teacher must, however, be instantaneously exercised in seizing upon the process by which the error was arrived at; the result will furnish a guide to accurate thinking for the whole class. Should the answer be correct, on the other hand, further matters are proceeded with, the teacher having gained an accurate measure of the lowest capacity of his class, and being thus enabled to guard against too simple questions in future; or before proceeding to a fresh question, he may, if he choose, select another of those who made the sign of readiness to answer, and rapidly subject him to a process similar to that through which his neighbour has just passed. To keep alive the interest of the class is the teacher's constant effort, and experience convinces him how little the possibility of doing this depends on the nature of the subject upon which he is questioning. It is enough that his interrogatories be of a stimulating character, not too easy, nor yet calculated to depress by being too difficult, but of such a sort that they present obstacles which the pupil, by the voluntary exertion of his own unaided mental strength, may hope to overcome. Assuming an accurate organization which provides him with classes in which the two extremes are not far apart, it is abundantly possible for him to adopt the style of questioning indicated, and to preserve as a general rule, that medium amount of difficulty which will neither suffer the interests of the more advanced to cloy, nor the spirit of the less able to sink. Under these circumstances, provided the teacher's own manner evidences a genuine interest in the solution of the question, and that he has already that sympathetic relation to his pupils which can alone justify his position, the utmost eagerness to reply will be manifested,—an eagerness which should augment by seeming to restrain. Tact is required to do this delicately. While restraining, he wards off the chances of an accurate answer, and the eagerness becomes impetuosity. This is his precious moment. It is precisely that tension of mind, and that concentration of thought and interest which to him, as an educator, are invaluable. For this, then, he has laboured, and to this the answer is but the crisis; in comparison with the activity of this suspense, the *fact* to be elicited is, after all, of trifling importance. But as there is a point at which tension ceases, at which the interest must slacken or snap, judiciously he must guard against over-doing his part, trusting to the suggestion of a well-trained instinct as to the measure of suspense. Finally, when he has secured the answer, he may find it, though in substance correct, faulty as regards enunciation, adequateness, or grammatical expression. This affords the youth, successful so far, an opportunity for self-correction; failing which, the correction is made for him by a repetition of the same plan. Thus the power of expression—an almost unknown branch of elementary instruction—is developed; and this will form a valuable preliminary to future and higher grammatical cultivation. The teacher must, however, be careful to accept gratefully the most simple forms of expression which have sprung from individual conception. Habit will accomplish him in the art of doing all this with comparative rapidity; and every successive lesson brings with it, on the part of the class, fewer and fewer inaccuracies. Were the method thus described generally