

In connection with over-work there is a matter which must not be unnoticed. There obtains in some schools a system of well-named "imposition work," that is not merely an imposition but an outrage upon children who, it is admitted, are already over-burdened with study. If a duty has been wilfully neglected at its proper time, its performance in the scholar's spare time ought of course to be insisted upon as a point of honesty. If, say, a dictation lesson has not been prepared, there is a manifest advantage in requiring the writing out of the misspelled words a number of times. Such extra work is only right. But it is not right, because of some trifling act of misconduct, to require a child to write out several pages of a reading book, or perform some long, wearisome arithmetic calculation, in addition to his regular lessons. To compel a boy who has other school work in the evenings to sit writing at such an unmeaning task, with restless nerves, and tired hand, and aching head, when he ought to be at play or asleep, is as essentially and literally corporal punishment as is the much-condemned whipping, that would be far less injurious to either body or mind. Apart from this, it is bad to develop in a child any feeling of a relationship between hard study and punishment. This is one direction in which over-work may often be profitably curtailed.

Study hours might be somewhat shortened by lengthening the mid-day intermission. In cities and towns this would also permit the abolition of the reprehensible practice of lunching in school-rooms, and so would promote the health and comfort of both pupils and teachers. At noon, a boy is a very convenient article about a house, to fill stoves and run messages, and a girl is often exceedingly useful in preparing dinner, washing dishes, and so on. This is the particular time of the day that absence from school would be safest for scholars, and if the noon recess were lengthened, we might compel them to go home without hardship to any, and probably with benefit to all. There would be little loafing done then, and a longer rest from study at mid-day would be a good plan of easing off some of the pressure.

In conclusion, to sum up what has been advanced:—

I. We want, as soon as possible, a graduated system of study, gymnastics and play, all directed by the teacher, and severally proportioned to the age and proficiency of the pupils.

II. As measures of immediately practical relief the following might be adopted: 1. Let the forenoon recess be abolished and its place supplied by half-an-hour of gymnastic drill. 2. Let the afternoon recess be made half-an-hour, and in it let all teachers mix with and oversee their scholars. 3. Let the schools be closed for two hours at noon.

These changes would be advantageous to all concerned, a gain to the teachers, a convenience to the parents, and a benefit to the scholars. We would still have five hours of study, four in the class-room and one at home, quite enough for most of our pupils; and our school curriculum would more fully and rightly recognise the existence of muscles and morals as well as minds.

THE ADVANTAGES OF IGNORANCE.

BY PROFESSOR F. W. CLARKE.

The occasional blissfulness of ignorance has long been the subject of one of our most popular proverbs. Coupled with a positive statement as to the folly of wisdom, it passes from mouth to mouth with the authority of an oracle. But the support given to the dogma is usually of a passive kind. The doctrine is stated, but not defended; while, on the other hand, our journals teem with arguments in favor of education, upon the importance of schools, and about the best methods of electing school trustees. The fact that the latter represent, in their own persons, the advantages of ignorance—that educated men can rarely attain to such superior positions—is never urged with anything like proper vigor. Education in one's self imbues one with prejudices concerning the education of others; and such prejudices, with their attendant partialities, ought to be rigidly excluded from the management of public institutions. Accordingly, in actual practice, uneducated men are placed as supervisors above thousands of cultivated teachers; and thus, in spite of the schools, the superiority of ignorance is clearly demonstrated.

In every walk of life, in all professions, a similar superiority is manifest. At the polls, the trained and intelligent statesman is defeated by the loud-mouthed stump-speaker, who knows nothing of jurisprudence, less of political economy, and only enough of finance to draw and spend his salary with commendable regularity. The broadly educated, highly cultivated theologian is surpassed in popular esteem by the swaggering revivalist, who tears up human feelings by the roots as a child pulls up sprouting beans for growing the wrong way. In medicine, the quack has five times the patronage of the well-informed physician, and makes a fat living where the latter would only starve. Sick people are fond of liberal treatment, and like to be thought worse off than they really are. You have a slight cold, and a good doctor charges five dollars for curing you. But the brilliant empiric calls it congestion of the lungs, diphtheria, or pneumonia, visits you twice as often, and charges three times as much, and you feel that you have got a great deal more for your money. Your own ignorance chimes in with his, and both are better satisfied. Your stomach-ache is magnified into gastric fever; your boil becomes an incipient cancer; a slight chill indicates approaching typhoid. The quack flatters your self-love, exalts your own importance in exaggerating that of your disease, comforts you with a good, sympathetic scare, and depletes your veins and your pockets with admirable equanimity.

The old saying that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread" affords another argument in behalf of the fools. To be sure, the natural history of the angel species has been but imperfectly studied; yet here again our very ignorance helps us. Theoretically, we should all like to be angels; but practically, we prefer to stay where we are. Besides, familiarity with angels might be exceedingly uncomfortable; especially if they should take it into the ghosts of their late head to visit us in spook-fashion, with the accompaniments of blue-fire and winding sheets. But to the point again. Education makes men cautious and calculating, careful of precedents, afraid of mistakes. Many a time the brilliant audacity of a daring ignoramus has achieved successes which would have been unattainable to orderly skill and training. Lord Timothy Dexter, that most inspired of idiots, sent a cargo of warming pans to the West Indies. The natives took the bottoms for sugar scoops and the perforated lids for strainers, and Dexter gained a fortune out of his ridiculous venture. Zachary Taylor, whipped by a Mexican army, was too bad a soldier to be conscious of his defeat, and kept on fighting. His adversaries, astonished at his perseverance, thought he must have hidden reserves, and incontinently ran away. Thus Taylor won the battle, as contemporaries say, "by sheer pluck and awkwardness." "Against stupidity the gods themselves fight powerlessly." Stupidity, therefore, by all rules of logic, must be superior to sense, and truly deserves, over all competitors, the crown of laurel.

The advantages of ignorance may be further illustrated by a reference to the disadvantages of omniscience. Suppose one of us could know everything, past, present and future—how uncomfortable he would be! Looking backward into remote antiquity, he would behold his ancestral ape engaged in the undignified performance of catching fleas. Turning with disgust from the past, he would find in the present many things as humiliating. Misunderstandings, bickerings, hatred, and slanders, unknown to ordinary men, would stand revealed before him. And from the coming time he would anticipate trouble and misfortune; he would see approaching evils far off in the dim distance; and not even the knowledge of attendant pleasures could quite unsadden him. To know everything would be to learn nothing—to have no hopes and no desires, since both would become equally futile. After the first excitement, one would harden into a mere automaton—an omniscient machine, with consciousness worthless, and volition a farce. Had Shakespeare