

Special Papers.

*SCHOOL HELPS.

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By School Helps I do not mean the principles of teaching or the methods of applying those principles, but aids to those methods, which might be called auxiliaries to teaching, and devices for economising time in a large rural public school. So much is required to be done between nine and four that the ingenious teacher can more fully utilize his time by having the pupils as his assistants. This will detract little from their regular work, and add to their usefulness in the future. I shall mention only some of the most important helps I use in my school. Many of them may already be employed in your schools; but to some a few of them may be new.

The first help—a very important one which must be in every school where success is the goal—is that of cheerfulness. Without cheerfulness a teacher cannot deal with children as they should be dealt with. Children are naturally cheerful and lively. Watch them in their play. See how merry they are. It is quite natural for them to like a jovial, pleasant person. How much easier is it for them to do what that teacher asks than to obey one in whom they do not find that congenial spirit. How much easier is it in one of our common, not too well ventilated, overcrowded, schools to work as though our heart was in the work even in such a building. When the teacher is pleasant the pupils soon become filled with the same animation and the work goes on harmoniously. A cheerful person has a kind of magnetism in him for children which soon influences them and draws teacher and pupil closer together. Akin to cheerfulness in the teacher is an inviting and home-like school-room. A few of the pictures which can be obtained so cheaply now will wonderfully relieve the monotony of the bare walls and make the room attractive. Then to make the room more home-like I would introduce singing.

Nearly every person likes music. Shakespeare says:

"The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils."

Simple lively songs will be readily learned by the pupils, and nothing so enlivens them when they get low-spirited and dull as a bright little song. It varies the routine of work, gives vent to the child's pent up feelings, and drives away sorrow and care. It is worse than folly to be sad.

I think it is well for the teacher to be in the play-ground and to mingle with his pupils as much as possible.

Outside, the pupil is not restrained by the ordered and systematic movements of the school. There the boy is guided by his own will. His true character is there seen and a teacher may there learn how to deal with a boy better than anywhere else. The boy who is the best player is very often the best worker and *vice versa*. A boy that can watch the foot-ball most closely, or catch a flyball most deftly, is not generally the last to catch a new idea. Then, that the teacher may know how to work well with his pupils it is necessary that he should know how to play with them. The teacher who finds it irksome to play with his pupils has missed his calling and the sooner he steps down to some other profession the better for his pupils.

The Friday afternoon entertainment I find to be a help. It gives variety to the regular work of the school. It also takes the pupil into a different sphere. It lets him go by himself, as it were, without the guidance of his teacher. A committee is appointed monthly. This committee prepares the programme. A considerable part of this programme consists of what we call "speeches" by the pupils. To each of two or three of each class I give a lesson or allow them to choose a lesson for themselves. After a week's preparation the pupil tells the substance of the lesson assigned to him in his own words as though he were making a speech. Sometimes I give one a story to read and let him tell that. This is of more educative value than a simple recitation or reading, as he

must keep his mind on the story. I have tried it for the last two or three months and am well pleased with the results. Pupils who do not like to give a recitation very readily give a "speech."

We sometimes have spelling matches, arithmetic matches, and geography matches. In geography we choose sides. I give the captain of one side a name, suppose "London." He then has to name a place beginning with the last letter of London *n* and tell what, and where it is as, Naples, city, on west coast of Italy. Then the opposite captain has to name one beginning with *s*, the last letter of Naples, and tell what and where it is. I generally limit them to a continent. It makes a very good review.

Another help is to allow the pupils a little freedom for the exercise of their judgment of right and wrong. For instance in leaving their seats for some purpose, *e. g.*, going to the dictionary to find the meaning of a word, etc., and other small things which a pupil does because he thinks he is doing right. I like to treat the pupils as though they were reasonable beings and will do right because it is right. I do not want them to think they come to school because they are sent and have to come, probably to be out of the way at home, and to be made to learn whether they will or not, and that everything I say is right because I said it, and everything they say, or most of it, is wrong and useless; but rather, that I regard them as rational human beings of some importance, having opinions which are also of some importance. Infinitely better results can be obtained by taking the pupils into a partnership with yourself to work *with* you rather than *under* you, and when anything of importance is to be done asking the opinion of the pupils. In that way the co-operation of the pupils may be secured and they will take more interest in the welfare of the school. Most of the pupils think their opinion worth something, be it ever so little. The boy or girl who does not think something of himself is of very little use in this world. Equally useless is the boy who thinks too highly of himself. The golden mean is the ideal. I like to have the pupils give their honest opinion on points in the lesson. The other day in the lesson "Dora" I asked them if William did right in not marrying Dora. Some thought he did and some thought he did not. I gave them my opinion, but did not ask them to take that as right unless they thought it right. The more true thought pupils put into their unreserved answers the better will be the result. The fewer rules in a school the higher is the standard of right and wrong.

Marching is a very important help. In the morning and at the recesses and noon I have the pupils fall into line in order of size under a captain and lieutenant, and march in to the music of the mouth organ. In Summer I have both boys and girls march in but in Winter only the boys who are out playing, and that is all, or nearly all of them. At three minutes to nine and one, one stroke of the bell is given to stop play and fall in, in the yard where they have been playing, and then at the order "quick march" they march into school in an orderly manner, thus avoiding a general rush for the door when the bell rings. Marching is very important as it teaches them how to walk both alone and in company with others—an art not too well known by many of our country people.

The appointing of monitors is a fact not to be overlooked in school government. It gives the school a democratic air which is needed to keep pace with this age of democracy. The child is an active being that likes to have his activity used and noticed. He is quite ready to do anything a reasonable teacher will ask him to do. Why? Simply to gain the favor of that teacher, whose favor he esteems so highly. One of the strongest forces which a teacher possesses is the willingness of the pupil to please, though sometimes we find a pupil who seems more willing to displease than to please. But the average pupil is not slow in reciprocating any kindness or courtesy shown by his teacher. We have about a dozen monitors—one each for the bell, windows, maps, fire, drawing books and writing paper, etc. We have a yard monitor who has to look after the fence, wood pile, etc., who reports to me when anything is broken or out of order. We have two girls appointed as "house-keepers" to keep the schoolroom neat and things in their proper places. They sweep the crumbs up after the luncheons have been eaten,

keep the ashes off the damper, sweep the snow out that is brought in around the door, see that the window-blinds are properly rolled up, and attend to any other thing they notice wrong. These monitors are changed monthly. Sometimes they are elected, sometimes appointed, and in this way I show them the difference between the appointing and elective parts of our government. The appointment of monitors takes some of the responsibility off the teacher, as each monitor is responsible for his department.

Another help in a large school is to have signals. By the use of signals a great deal of valuable time can be saved. While the teacher is teaching a class he can allow or disallow a request by a motion of his head without disturbing the class or having any noise. We have holding up one finger, the signal asking permission to speak to a seat-mate; two fingers, to leave his seat; three, to leave the room; the whole hand, to ask any general question. In dismissing and calling up classes I make the same command do for both, thus minimising the intervals of time between the classes on the floor, and also the noise, as both classes are moving at once. I have the classes so seated that the retiring class does not go down the same aisle up which the other class is coming. By this method I can keep myself busy all the time with a class.

When the junior classes have finished their work before I get time to look at it I have one of the best in the class take half or all of his class to the other end of the room and drill them on the multiplication or addition table. They take great interest in it. For this drill I have the digits printed in a circle on a piece of cardboard with a movable digit in the centre.

This can be used for multiplication and by placing the remaining eight digits by the ones in the circle (the other one being in the centre) a circle of numbers of two figures is formed, and these connected with the centre figure form an excellent series of figures for addition drill. By changing the moveable digit in the circle, many new combinations can be made which can be easily used by the pupils themselves. I have only lately adopted this plan but find it successful so far.

Instead of this drill I have, sometimes, one of the pupils tell his class a story in one part of the room and then let them reproduce the story at their seats. I have no trouble in getting stories. I ask for volunteers and generally have plenty. They are simple stories which they have read at home. When I am looking at their reproductions I have one to tell the story while the remainder listen.

One of the best ways of economizing time is to fully use it, and to use it well we must make the work as interesting as possible. Keep the pupils busy at something. You know the old adage about Satan. As soon as their assigned work is done they look about for something to do to put in their time, and that something is not generally what is the most beneficial to them or to the order of the school. For junior classes I find drawing a valuable exercise. I have them write out part of their lesson and have them copy part of a picture out of their book. The other day in the second class we had the lesson about elephants. When they had part of their lesson written I asked them to draw an elephant. They went at this very eagerly, and soon had completed a number of elephants. Some would need a name to be known, but most of them looked like the animal, which, one of the boys said, had a tail on each end. I consider this time well spent, even by those pupils whose pictures needed names, if there was an honest effort put forth, and I discourage strongly work done carelessly. At other times I have them describe the picture in their book in their own words, make small words of so many letters or over, out of a large word, or make words ending in a certain syllable, practice making some capital letter, draw from memory a drawing out of their drawing-book, or make a drawing of some object, or a circle, or square of certain size free-hand. Many such things will employ their spare time at their seats. The plan has the double advantage of keeping them out of mischief and of bringing some of their faculties more under the control of their will, which is, Matthew Arnold says, the end of education.

In a large school some of the work can be done at home. History can be read, a reading lesson

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