# ABBOTT JACOB

# THE TEACHER

# Jacob Abbott
# The Teacher

*http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=36365406*
*The Teacher / Or, Moral Influences Employed in the Instruction and Government of the Young:*

# Содержание

# Jacob Abbott
# The Teacher / Or, Moral Influences Employed in the Instruction and Government of the Young

**POWER PRESS OF WILLIAM S. DAMRELL**

**TO THE**

**TRUSTEES AND PATRONS**

**OF THE**

**MT. VERNON FEMALE SCHOOL, BOSTON**

GENTLEMEN:

It is to efforts which you have made in the cause of education, with special regard to its moral and religious aspects, that I have been indebted for the opportunity to test by experiment, under the most pleasant and favorable circumstances, the principles which form the basis of this work. To you, therefore, it is respectfully inscribed, as one of the indirect results of your own exertions to promote the best interests of the Young.

*I am very sincerely and respectfully yours,*
*THE AUTHOR.*

# PREFACE

This book is intended to detail, in a familiar and practical manner, a system of arrangements for the organization and management of a school, based on the employment, so far as is practicable, of *Moral Influences*, as a means of effecting the objects in view. Its design is, not to bring forward new theories or new plans, but to develope and explain, and to carry out to their practical applications, such principles as, among all skilful and experienced teachers, are generally admitted and acted upon. Of course it is not designed for the skilful and the experienced themselves; but it is intended to embody what they already know, and to present it in a practical form, for the use of those who are beginning the work and who wish to avail themselves of the experience which others have acquired.

Although moral influences, are the chief foundations on which the power of the teacher over the minds and hearts of his pupils is, according to this treatise, to rest, still it must not be imagined that the system here recommended is one of persuasion. It is a system of authority,—supreme and unlimited authority, a point essential in all plans for the supervision of the young. But it is authority secured and maintained as far as possible by moral measures. There will be no dispute about the propriety of making the most of this class of means. Whatever difference of opinion there may be, on the question whether physical force, is necessary

at all, every one will agree that, if ever employed, it must be only as a last resort, and that no teacher ought to make war upon the body, unless it is proved that he cannot conquer through the medium of the mind.

In regard to the anecdotes and narratives which are very freely introduced to illustrate principles in this work, the writer ought to state, that though they are all substantially true, that is, all except those which are expressly introduced as mere suppositions, he has not hesitated to alter very freely, for obvious reasons, the unimportant circumstances connected with them. He has endeavored thus to destroy the personality of the narratives, without injuring or altering their moral effect.

From the very nature of our employment, and of the circumstances under which the preparation for it must be made, it is plain that, of the many thousands who are, in the United States, annually entering the work, a very large majority must depend for all their knowledge of the art except what they acquire from their own observation and experience, on what they can obtain from books. It is desirable that the class of works from which such knowledge can be obtained should be increased. Some excellent and highly useful specimens have already appeared, and very many more would be eagerly read by teachers, if properly prepared. It is essential however that they should be written by experienced teachers, who have for some years been actively engaged, and specially interested in the work;—that they should be written in a very practical and familiar style,—and that they

should exhibit principles which are unquestionably true, and generally admitted by good teachers, and not the new theories peculiar to the writer himself. In a word, utility, and practical effect, should be the only aim.

Boston, June 20, 1833.

# CHAPTER I.
# INTEREST IN TEACHING

There is a most singular contrariety of opinion prevailing in the community, in regard to the *pleasantness* of the business of teaching. Some teachers go to their daily task, merely upon compulsion: they regard it as intolerable drudgery. Others love the work: they hover around the school-room as long as they can, and never cease to think, and seldom to talk, of their delightful labors.

Unfortunately there are too many of the former class, and the first object, which, in this work, I shall attempt to accomplish, is to show my readers, especially those who have been accustomed to look upon the business of teaching as a weary and heartless toil, how it happens, that it is, in any case, so pleasant. The human mind is always, essentially, the same. That which is tedious and joyless to one, will be so to another, if pursued in the same way, and under the same circumstances. And teaching, if it is pleasant, animating, and exciting to one, may be so to all.

I am met, however, at the outset, in my effort to show why it is that teaching is ever a pleasant work, by the want of a name for a certain faculty or capacity of the human mind, through which most of the enjoyment of teaching finds its avenue. Every mind is so constituted as to take a positive pleasure in the exercise

of ingenuity in adapting means to an end, and in watching their operation;—in accomplishing by the intervention of instruments, what we could not accomplish without;—in devising, (when we see an object to be effected, which is too great for our *direct* and *immediate* power) and setting at work, some *instrumentality*, which may be sufficient to accomplish it.

It is said, that, when the steam engine was first put into operation, such was the imperfection of the machinery, that a boy was necessarily stationed at it, to open and shut alternately the cock, by which the steam was now admitted, and now shut out, from the cylinder. One such boy, after patiently doing his work for many days, contrived to connect this stop-cock with some of the moving parts of the engine, by a wire, in such a manner, that the engine itself did the work which had been entrusted to him; and after seeing that the whole business would go regularly forward, he left the wire in charge, and went away to play.

Such is the story. Now if it is true, how much pleasure the boy must have experienced, in devising and witnessing the successful operation of his scheme; I do not mean the pleasure of relieving himself from a dull and wearisome duty; I do not mean the pleasure of anticipated play; but I mean the strong interest he must have taken in *contriving* and *executing* his plan. When, wearied out with his dull, monotonous work, he first noticed those movements of the machinery which he thought adapted to his purpose, and the plan flashed into his mind, how must his eye have brightened, and how quick must the weary listlessness

of his employment have vanished. While he was maturing his plan, and carrying it into execution;—while adjusting his wires, fitting them to the exact length, and to the exact position,—and especially, when, at last, he watches the first successful operation of his contrivance,—he must have enjoyed a pleasure, which very few, even of the joyous sports of childhood, could have supplied.

It is not, however, exactly the pleasure of exercising *ingenuity in contrivance*, that I refer to here; for the teacher has not, after all, a great deal of absolute contriving to do,—or rather his *principal business* is not contriving. The greatest and most permanent source of pleasure to the boy, in such a case as I have described, is his feeling that he is accomplishing a great effect by a slight effort of his own; the feeling of power; acting through the *intervention of instrumentality*, so as to multiply his power. So great would be this satisfaction, that he would almost wish to have some other similar work assigned him, that he might have another opportunity to contrive some plan for its easy accomplishment.

Looking at an object to be accomplished, or an evil to be remedied, then studying its nature and extent, and devising and executing some means for effecting the purpose desired, is, in all cases, a source of pleasure; especially when, by the process, we bring to view or to operation, new powers, or powers heretofore hidden, whether they are our own powers, or those of objects upon which we act. Experimenting has a sort of magical fascination for all. Some do not like the trouble of making

preparations, but all are eager to see the results. Contrive a new machine, and every body will be interested to witness, or to hear of its operation;—develope any heretofore unknown properties of matter, or secure some new useful effect, from laws which men have not hitherto employed for their purposes, and the interest of all around you will be excited to observe your results;—and especially, you will yourself take a deep and permanent pleasure, in guiding and controlling the power you have thus obtained.

This is peculiarly the case with experiments upon mind, or experiments for producing effects through the medium of voluntary acts of the human mind, so that the contriver must take into consideration the laws of mind in forming his plans. To illustrate this by rather a childish case: I once knew a boy who was employed by his father to remove all the loose small stones, which, from the peculiar nature of the ground, had accumulated in the road before the house. He was to take them up, and throw them over into the pasture, across the way. He soon got tired of picking them up one by one, and sat down upon the bank, to try to devise some better means of accomplishing his work. He at length conceived and adopted the following plan. He set up, in the pasture, a narrow board, for a target, or as boys would call it, a mark,—and then, collecting all the boys of the neighborhood, he proposed to them an amusement, which boys are always ready for,—firing at a mark. I need not say that the stores of ammunition in the street were soon exhausted; the boys working for their leader, when they supposed they were only

finding amusement for themselves.

Here now, is experimenting upon the mind;—the production of useful effect with rapidity and ease, by the intervention of proper instrumentality;—the conversion, by means of a little knowledge of human nature, of that which would have otherwise been dull and fatiguing labor, into a most animating sport, giving pleasure to twenty, instead of tedious labor to one. Now the contrivance and execution of such plans is a source of positive pleasure; it is always pleasant to bring the properties and powers of matter into requisition to promote our designs,—but there is a far higher pleasure in controlling, and guiding, and moulding to our purpose the movements of mind.

It is this which gives interest to the plans and operation of human governments. They can do little by actual force. Nearly all the power that is held, even by the most despotic executive, must be based on an adroit management of the principles of human nature, so as to lead men voluntarily to cooperate with the ruler, in his plans. Even an army could not be got into battle, in many cases, without a most ingenious arrangement, by means of which half a dozen men can drive, literally drive, as many thousands, into the very face of danger and death. The difficulty of leading men to battle must have been for a long time a very perplexing one to generals. It was at last removed by the very simple expedient of creating a greater danger behind than there is before. Without ingenuity of contrivance like this,—turning one principle of human nature against another, and making it for the

momentary interest of men to act in a given way, no government could stand a year.

I know of nothing which illustrates more perfectly the way by which a knowledge of human nature is to be turned to account in managing human minds, than a plan which was adopted for clearing the galleries of the British House of Commons, as it was described to me by a gentleman who had visited London. It is well known that the gallery is appropriated to spectators, and that it sometimes becomes necessary to order them to retire, when a vote is to be taken, or private business is to be transacted. When the officer in attendance was ordered to clear the gallery, it was sometimes found to be a very troublesome and slow operation; for those who first went out, remained obstinately as close to the doors as possible, so as to secure the opportunity to come in again first, when the doors should be re-opened. The consequence was, there was so great an accumulation around the doors outside, that it was almost impossible for the crowd to get out. The whole difficulty arose from the eager desire of every one to remain as near as possible to the door, *through which they were to come back again*. I have been told, that, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of the officers, fifteen minutes were sometimes consumed in effecting the object, when the order was given that the spectators should retire.

The whole difficulty was removed by a very simple plan. One door only was opened when the crowd was to retire, and they were then admitted through the other. The consequence was, that

as soon as the order was given to clear the galleries, every one fled as fast as possible through the open door around to the one which was closed, so as to be ready to enter first, when that, in its turn, should be opened; this was usually in a few minutes, as the purpose for which the spectators were ordered to retire was usually simply to allow time for taking a vote. Here it will be seen that by the operation of a very simple plan, the very eagerness of the crowd to get back as soon as possible, which had been the *sole cause of the difficulty*, was turned to account most effectually to remove it. Before, they were so eager to return, that they crowded around the door so as to prevent others going out. But by this simple plan of ejecting them by one door, and admitting them by another, that very circumstance made them clear the passage at once, and hurried every one away into the lobby, the moment the command was given.

The planner of this scheme must have taken great pleasure in seeing its successful operation; though the officer who should go steadily on, endeavoring to remove the reluctant throng by dint of mere driving, might well have found his task unpleasant. But the exercise of ingenuity in studying the nature of the difficulty with which a man has to contend, and bringing in some antagonist principle of human nature to remove it, or if not an antagonist principle, a similar principle, operating, by a peculiar arrangement of circumstances, in an antagonist manner, is always pleasant. From this source a large share of the enjoyment which men find in the active pursuits of life, has its origin.

The teacher has the whole field, which this subject opens, fully before him. He has human nature to deal with, most directly. His whole work is experimenting upon mind; and the mind which is before him to be the subject of his operation, is exactly in the state to be most easily and pleasantly operated upon. The reason now why some teachers find their work delightful, and some find it wearisomeness and tedium itself, is that some do, and some do not take this view of their work. One instructer is like the engine-boy, turning without cessation or change, his everlasting stop-cock, in the same ceaseless, mechanical, and monotonous routine. Another is like the little workman in his brighter moments, fixing his invention and watching with delight its successful and easy accomplishment of his wishes. One is like the officer, driving by vociferations and threats, and demonstrations of violence, the spectators from the galleries. The other, like the shrewd contriver, who converts the very cause which was the whole ground of the difficulty, to a most successful and efficient means of its removal.

These principles show how teaching may, in some cases, be a delightful employment, while in others, its tasteless dulness is interrupted by nothing but its perplexities and cares. The school-room is in reality, a little empire of mind. If the one who presides in it, sees it in its true light; studies the nature and tendency of the minds which he has to control; adapts his plans and his measures to the laws of human nature, and endeavors to accomplish his purposes for them, not by mere labor and force, but by ingenuity

and enterprise; he will take pleasure in administering his little government. He will watch, with care and interest, the operation of the moral and intellectual causes which he sets in operation; and find, as he accomplishes his various objects with increasing facility and power, that he will derive a greater and greater pleasure from his work.

Now when a teacher thus looks upon his school as a field in which he is to exercise skill and ingenuity and enterprise; when he studies the laws of human nature, and the character of those minds upon which he has to act; when he explores deliberately the nature of the field which he has to cultivate, and of the objects which he wishes to accomplish; and applies means, judiciously and skilfully adapted to the object; he must necessarily take a strong interest in his work. But when, on the other hand, he goes to his employment, only to perform a certain regular round of daily work, undertaking nothing, and anticipating nothing but this dull and unchangeable routine; and when he looks upon his pupils merely as passive objects of his labors, whom he is to treat with simple indifference while they obey his commands, and to whom he is only to apply reproaches and punishment when they disobey; such a teacher never can take pleasure in the school. Weariness and dulness must reign in both master and scholars, when things, as he imagines, are going right; and mutual anger and crimination, when they go wrong.

Scholars never can be instructed by the power of any dull mechanical routine; nor can they be governed by the blind,

naked strength of the master; such means must fail of the accomplishment of the purposes designed, and consequently the teacher who tries such a course must have constantly upon his mind the discouraging, disheartening burden of unsuccessful and almost useless labor. He is continually uneasy, dissatisfied and filled with anxious cares; and sources of vexation and perplexity continually arise. He attempts to remove evils by waging against them a useless and most vexatious warfare of threatening and punishment; and he is trying continually *to drive*, when he might know that neither the intellect nor the heart are capable of being driven.

I will simply state one case, to illustrate what I mean by the difference between blind force, and active ingenuity and enterprise, in the management of school. I once knew the teacher of a school, who made it his custom to have writing attended to in the afternoon. The boys were accustomed to take their places, at the appointed hour, and each one would stick up his pen in the front of his desk for the teacher to pass around and mend them. The teacher would accordingly pass around, mending the pens from desk to desk, thus enabling the boys, in succession, to begin their task. Of course each boy before he came to his desk was necessarily idle, and, almost necessarily, in mischief. Day after day the teacher went through this regular routine. He sauntered slowly and listlessly through the aisles, and among the benches of the room, wherever he saw the signal of a pen. He paid of course very little attention to the writing, now and then reproving, with

an impatient tone, some extraordinary instance of carelessness, or leaving his work to suppress some rising disorder. Ordinarily, however, he seemed to be lost in vacancy of thought,—dreaming perhaps of other scenes, or inwardly repining at the eternal monotony and tedium of a teacher's life. His boys took no interest in their work, and of course made no progress. They were sometimes unnecessarily idle, and sometimes mischievous, but never usefully or pleasantly employed; for the whole hour was past before the pens could all be brought down. Wasted time, blotted books, and fretted tempers, were all the results which the system produced.

The same teacher afterwards acted on a very different principle. He looked over the field and said to himself, what are the objects I wish to accomplish in this writing exercise, and how can I best accomplish them? I wish to obtain the greatest possible amount of industrious and careful practice in writing. The first thing evidently is, to save the wasted time. He accordingly made preparation for mending the pens at a previous hour, so that all should be ready, at the appointed time, to commence the work together. This could be done quite as conveniently when the boys were engaged in studying, by requesting them to put out their pens at an appointed and *previous* time. He sat at his table, and the pens of a whole bench were brought to him, and, after being carefully mended, were returned, to be in readiness for the writing hour. Thus the first difficulty, the loss of time, was obviated.

"I must make them *industrious* while they write," was his next thought. After thinking of a variety of methods, he determined to try the following. He required all to begin together at the top of the page and write the same line, in a hand of the same size. They were all required to begin together, he himself beginning at the same time, and writing about as fast as he thought they ought to write, in order to secure the highest improvement. When he had finished his line, he ascertained how many had preceded him, and how many were behind. He requested the first to write slower, and the others faster, and by this means, after a few trials, he secured uniform, regular, systematic and industrious employment, throughout the school. Probably there were, at first, difficulties in the operation of the plan, which he had to devise ways and means to surmount: but what I mean to present particularly to the reader is, that he was *interested in his experiments*. While sitting in his desk, giving his command to *begin* line after line, and noticing the unbroken silence, and attention, and interest, which prevailed, (for each boy was interested to see how nearly with the master he could finish his work,) while presiding over such a scene, he must have been interested. He must have been pleased with the exercise of his almost military command, and to witness how effectually order and industry, and excited and pleased attention, had taken the place of listless idleness and mutual dissatisfaction.

After a few days, he appointed one of the older and more judicious scholars, to give the word for beginning and ending the

lines, and he sat surveying the scene, or walking from desk to desk, noticing faults, and considering what plans he could form for securing, more and more fully, the end he had in view. He found that the great object of interest and attention among the boys was, to come out right, and that less pains were taken with the formation of the letters, than there ought to be, to secure the most rapid improvement.

But how shall he secure greater pains? By stern commands and threats? By going from desk to desk, scolding one, rapping the knuckles of another, and holding up to ridicule a third, making examples of such individuals as may chance to attract his special attention? No; he has learned that he is operating upon a little empire of mind, and that he is not to endeavor to drive them as a man drives a herd, by mere peremptory command or half angry blows. He must study the nature of the effect he is to produce, and of the materials upon which he is to work, and adopt, after mature deliberation, a plan to accomplish his purpose, founded upon the principles which ought always to regulate the action of mind upon mind, and adapted to produce the *intellectual effect*, which he wishes to accomplish.

In the case supposed, the teacher concluded to appeal to emulation. While I describe the measure he adopted, let it be remembered that I am now only approving of the resort to ingenuity and invention, and the employment of moral and intellectual means, for the accomplishment of his purposes, and not of the measures themselves. I do not think the plan I am

going to describe a wise one; but I do think that the teacher, while trying it, must *have been interested in his intellectual experiment.* His business, while pursued in such a way, could not have been a mere dull and uninteresting routine.

He purchased, for three cents apiece, two long lead-pencils, an article of great value, in the opinion of the boys of country schools; and he offered them, as prizes, to the boy who would write most carefully; not to the one who should write *best*, but to the one whose book should exhibit most appearance of *effort* and *care* for a week. After announcing his plan, he watched, with strong interest its operation. He walked round the room while the writing was in progress, to observe the effect of his measure. He did not reprove those who were writing carelessly; he simply noticed who and how many they were. He did not commend those who were evidently making effort; he noticed who and how many they were, that he might understand how far, and upon what sort of minds, his experiment was successful, and where it failed. He was taking a lesson in human nature,—human nature as it exhibits itself in boys, and was preparing to operate more and more powerfully by future plans.

The lesson which he learned by the experiment was this, that one or two prizes will not influence the majority of a large school. A few seemed to think that the pencils were possibly within their reach, and *they* made vigorous efforts to secure them; but the rest wrote on as before. Thinking it certain that they should be surpassed by the others, they gave up the contest, at once, in

despair.

The obvious remedy was to multiply his prizes, so as to bring one within the reach of all. He reflected too that the real prize, in such a case, is not the value of the pencil, but the *honor of the victory*; and as the honor of the victory might as well be coupled with an object of less, as well as with one of greater value, the next week he divided his two pencils into quarters, and offered to his pupils eight prizes instead of two. He offered one to every five scholars, as they sat on their benches, and every boy then saw, that a reward would certainly come within five of him. His chance, accordingly, instead of being one in twenty, became one in five.

Now is it possible for a teacher, after having philosophized upon the nature of the minds upon which he is operating, and surveyed the field, and ingeniously formed a plan, which plan he hopes will, through his own intrinsic power, produce certain effects,—is it possible for him when he comes, for the first day, to witness its operations, to come without feeling a strong interest in the result? It is impossible. After having formed such a plan, and made such arrangements, he will look forward, almost with impatience, to the next writing hour. He wishes to see whether he has estimated the mental capacities and tendencies of his little community aright; and when the time comes, and he surveys the scene, and observes the operation of his measure, and sees many more are reached by it, than were influenced before, he feels a strong gratification; and it is a gratification which is founded

upon the noblest principles of our nature. He is tracing on a most interesting field, the operation of cause and effect. From being the mere drudge, who drives, without intellect or thought, a score or two of boys to their daily tasks, he rises to the rank of an intellectual philosopher, exploring the laws and successfully controlling the tendencies of mind.

It will be observed too, that all the time this teacher was performing these experiments, and watching, with intense interest, the results, his pupils were going on undisturbed in their pursuits. The exercises in writing were not interrupted or deranged. This is a point of fundamental importance; for, if what I should say on the subject of exercising ingenuity and contrivance in teaching, should be the means, in any case, of leading a teacher to break in upon the regular duties of his school, and destroy the steady uniformity with which the great objects of such an institution should be pursued, my remarks had better never have been written. There may be variety in methods and plan; but through all this variety, the school, and every individual pupil of it, must go steadily forward in the acquisition of that knowledge which is of greatest importance in the business of future life. In other words, the variations and changes, admitted by the teacher, ought to be mainly confined to the modes of accomplishing those permanent objects to which all the exercises and arrangements of the school ought steadily to aim. More on this subject however in another chapter.

I will mention one other circumstance, which will help

to explain the difference in interest and pleasure with which teachers engage in their work. I mean the different views they take *of the offences of their pupils*. One class of teachers seem never to make it a part of their calculation that their pupils will do wrong, and when any misconduct occurs, they are disconcerted and irritated, and look and act as if some unexpected occurrence had broken in upon their plans. Others understand and consider all this beforehand. They seem to think a little, before they go into their school, what sort of beings boys and girls are, and any ordinary case of youthful delinquency or dulness does not surprise them. I do not mean that they treat such cases with indifference or neglect, but that they *expect* them, and *are prepared for them*. Such a teacher knows that boys and girls, are the *materials* he has to work upon, and he takes care to make himself acquainted with these materials, *just as they are*. The other class however, do not seem to know at all, what sort of beings they have to deal with, or if they know, do not *consider*. They expect from them what is not to be obtained, and then are disappointed and vexed at the failure. It is as if a carpenter should attempt to support an entablature by pillars of wood too small and weak for the weight, and then go on, from week to week, suffering anxiety and irritation, as he sees them swelling and splitting under the burden, and finding fault *with the wood*, instead of taking it to himself.

It is, of course, one essential part of a man's duty in engaging in any undertaking, whether it will lead him to act upon

matter or upon mind, to become first well acquainted with the circumstances of the case,—the materials he is to act upon, and the means which he may reasonably expect to have at his command. If he underrates his difficulties, or overrates the power of his means of overcoming them, it is his mistake; a mistake for which *he* is fully responsible. Whatever may be the nature of the effect which he aims at accomplishing, he ought fully to understand it, and to appreciate justly the difficulties which lie in the way.

Teachers however very often overlook this. A man comes home from his school at night, perplexed and irritated by the petty misconduct which he has witnessed, and been trying to check. He does not however, look forward and try to prevent the occasions of it, adapting his measures to the nature of the material upon which he has to operate; but he stands like the carpenter at his columns, making himself miserable in looking at it, after it occurs, and wondering what to do.

"Sir," we might say to him, "what is the matter?"

"Why, I have such boys, I can do nothing with them. Were it not for *their misconduct*, I might have a very good school."

"Were it not for the boys? Why, is there any peculiar depravity in them which you could not have foreseen?"

"No; I suppose they are pretty much like all other boys," he replies despairingly; "they are all hair-brained and unmanageable. The plans I have formed for my school, would be excellent if my boys would only behave properly."

"Excellent plans," might we not reply, "and yet not adapted to the materials upon which they are to operate! No. It is your business to know what sort of beings boys are, and to make your calculations accordingly."

Two teachers may therefore manage their schools in totally different ways: so that one of them, may necessarily find the business a dull, mechanical routine, except as it is occasionally varied by perplexity and irritation; and the other, a prosperous and happy employment. The one goes on mechanically the same, and depends for his power on violence, or on threats and demonstrations of violence. The other brings all his ingenuity and enterprise into the field, to accomplish a steady purpose, by means ever varying, and depends for his power, on his knowledge of human nature, and on the adroit adaptation of plans to her fixed and uniform tendencies.

I am very sorry however to be obliged to say, that probably the latter class of teachers are decidedly in the minority. To practice the art in such a way as to make it an agreeable employment, is difficult, and it requires much knowledge of human nature, much attention and skill. And, after all, there are some circumstances necessarily attending the work which constitute a heavy drawback on the pleasures which it might otherwise afford. The almost universal impression that the business of teaching is attended with peculiar trials and difficulties, proves this.

There must be some cause for an impression so general. It is

not right to call it a prejudice, for, although a single individual may conceive a prejudice, whole communities very seldom do, unless in some case, which is presented at once to the whole, so that looking at it, through a common medium, all judge wrong together. But the general opinion in regard to teaching is composed of a vast number of *separate* and *independent* judgments, and there must be some good ground for the universal result.

It is best therefore, if there are any real and peculiar sources of trial and difficulty in this pursuit, that they should be distinctly known and acknowledged at the outset. Count the cost before going to war. It is even better policy to overrate, than to underrate it. Let us see then what the real difficulties of teaching are.

It is not however, as is generally supposed, *the confinement*. A teacher is confined, it is true, but not more than men of other professions and employments; not more than a merchant, and probably not as much. A physician is confined in a different way, but more closely than a teacher: he can never leave home: he knows generally no vacation, and nothing but accidental rest.

The lawyer is confined as much. It is true, there are not throughout the year, exact hours which he must keep, but considering the imperious demands of his business, his personal liberty is probably restrained as much by it, as that of the teacher. So with all the other professions. Although the nature of the confinement may vary, it amounts to about the same in all. On the other hand the teacher enjoys, in reference to this subject

of confinement, an advantage, which scarcely any other class of men does or can enjoy. I mean vacations. A man in any other business may *force* himself away from it, for a time, but the cares and anxieties of his business will follow him wherever he goes, and it seems to be reserved for the teacher, to enjoy alone the periodical luxury of a *real and entire release from business and care*. On the whole, as to confinement, it seems to me that the teacher has but little ground of complaint.

There are however some real and serious difficulties which always have, and it is to be feared, always will, cluster around this employment; and which must, for a long time, at least, lead most men to desire some other employment for the business of life. There may perhaps be some, who by their peculiar skill, can overcome, or avoid them, and perhaps the science may, at some future day, be so far improved, that all may avoid them. As I describe them however now, most of the teachers into whose hands this treatise may fall, will probably find that their own experience corresponds, in this respect, with mine.

1. The first great difficulty which the teacher feels, is a sort of *moral responsibility for the conduct of others*. If his pupils do wrong, he feels almost personal responsibility for it. As he walks out, some afternoon, weary with his labors, and endeavoring to forget, for a little time, all his cares, he comes upon a group of boys, in rude and noisy quarrels, or engaged in mischief of some sort, and his heart sinks within him. It is hard enough for any one to witness their bad conduct, with a spirit unruffled

and undisturbed, but for their teacher, it is perhaps impossible. He feels *responsible*; in fact he is responsible. If his scholars are disorderly, or negligent, or idle, or quarrelsome, he feels *condemned himself*, almost as if he were, himself, the actual transgressor.

This difficulty is in a great degree, peculiar to a teacher. A physician is called upon to prescribe for a patient; he examines the case, and writes his prescription. When this is done, his duty is ended, and whether the patient obeys the prescription and lives, or neglects it and dies, the physician feels exonerated from all responsibility. He may, and in some cases does feel *anxious concern*, and may regret the infatuation by which, in some unhappy case, a valuable life may be hazarded or destroyed. But he feels no *moral responsibility* for another's guilt.

It is so with all the other employments in life. They do indeed often bring men into collision with other men. But though sometimes vexed, and irritated by the conduct of a neighbor, a client, or a patient, they feel not half the bitterness of the solicitude and anxiety which come to the teacher through the criminality of his pupil. In ordinary cases he not only feels responsible for efforts, but for their results; and when, notwithstanding all his efforts, his pupils will do wrong, his spirit sinks, with an intensity of anxious despondency, which none but a teacher can understand.

This feeling of almost *moral accountability for the guilt of other persons*, is a continual burden. The teacher in the presence

of the pupil never is free from it. It links him to them by a bond, which, perhaps, he ought not to sunder, and which he cannot sunder if he would. And sometimes, when those committed to his charge are idle, or faithless, or unprincipled, it wears away his spirits and his health together. I think there is nothing analogous to this moral connexion between teacher and pupil, unless it be in the case of a parent and child. And here on account of the comparative smallness of the number under the parent's care, the evil is so much diminished that it is easily borne.

2. The second great difficulty of the teacher's employments, is *the immense multiplicity of the objects of his attention and care*, during the time he is employed in his business. His scholars are individuals, and notwithstanding all that the most systematic can do, in the way of classification, they must be attended to in a great measure, as individuals. A merchant keeps his commodities together, and looks upon a cargo composed of ten thousand articles, and worth 100,000 dollars as one: he speaks of it as one: and there is, in many cases, no more perplexity in planning its destination, than if it were a single box of raisins. A lawyer may have a great many important cases, but he has only one at a time; that is, he *attends* to but one at a time. That one may be intricate,—involving many facts and requiring to be examined in many aspects and relations. But he looks at but few of these facts and regards but few of these relations at a time. The points which demand his attention come, one after another, in regular succession. His mind may thus be kept calm. He avoids confusion

and perplexity. But no skill or classification will turn the poor teacher's hundred scholars into one, or enable him, except to a very limited extent, and for a very limited purpose, to regard them as one. He has a distinct, and, in many respects, a different work to do for every one of the crowd before him. Difficulties must be explained in detail; questions must be answered one by one; and each scholar's own conduct and character must be considered by itself. His work is thus made up of a thousand minute particulars, which are all crowding upon his attention at once, and which he cannot group together, or combine, or simplify. He must by some means or other attend to them in all their distracting individuality. And in a large and complicated school, the endless multiplicity and variety of objects of attention and care, impose a task under which few intellects can long stand.

I have said that this endless multiplicity and variety cannot be reduced and simplified by classification. I mean, of course, that this can be done only to a very limited extent, compared with what may be effected in the other pursuits of mankind. Were it not for the art of classification and system, no school could have more than ten scholars, as I intend hereafter to show. The great reliance of the teacher is upon this art, to reduce to some tolerable order, what would otherwise be the inextricable confusion of his business. He *must be systematic*. He must classify and arrange; but after he has done all that he can, he must still expect that his daily business will continue to consist of a vast multitude of minute particulars, from one to another of which

the mind must turn with a rapidity, which, few of the other employments of life ever demand.

These are the essential sources of difficulty with which the teacher has to contend; but, as I shall endeavor to show in succeeding chapters, though they cannot be entirely removed, they can be so far mitigated by the appropriate means, as to render the employment a happy one. I have thought it best however, as this work will doubtless be read by many, who, when they read it, are yet to begin their labors, to describe frankly and fully to them the difficulties which beset the path they are about to enter. "The wisdom of the prudent is, to understand his way. It is often wisdom to understand it beforehand."

# CHAPTER II.
# GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS

The distraction and perplexity of the teacher's life are, as was explained in the last chapter, almost proverbial. There are other pressing and exhausting pursuits, which wear away the spirit by the ceaseless care which they impose, or perplex and bewilder the intellect by the multiplicity and intricacy of their details. But the business of teaching, by a pre-eminence not very enviable, stands, almost by common consent, at the head of the catalogue.

I have already alluded to this subject in the preceding chapter; and probably the greater majority of actual teachers will admit the truth of the view there presented. Some will however, doubtless say, that they do not find the business of teaching so perplexing and exhausting an employment. They take things calmly. They do one thing at a time, and that without useless solicitude and anxiety. So that teaching, with them, though it has, indeed, its solicitudes and cares, as every other responsible employment must necessarily have, is, after all, a calm and quiet pursuit, which they follow from month to month, and from year to year, without any extraordinary agitations, or any unusual burdens of anxiety and care.

There are indeed such cases, but they are exceptions; and unquestionably an immense majority, especially of those who are

beginners in the work, find it such as I have described. I think it need not be so; or rather, I think the evil may be avoided to *a very great degree*. In this chapter I shall endeavor to show how order may be produced out of that almost inextricable mass of confusion, into which so many teachers, on commencing their labors, find themselves plunged.

The objects then, to be aimed at in the general arrangements of schools, are two-fold.

1. That the teacher may be left uninterrupted, to attend to one thing at a time.

2. That the individual scholars may have constant employment, and such an amount and such kinds of study, as shall be suited to the circumstances and capacities of each.

I shall examine each in their order.

1. The following are the principal things which, in a vast number of schools, are all the time pressing upon the teacher: or rather, they are the things which must, every where, press upon the teacher, except so far as, by the skill of his arrangements, he contrives to remove them.

1. Giving leave to whisper or to leave seats.
2. Mending pens.
3. Answering questions in regard to studies.
4. Hearing recitations.
5. Watching the behavior of the scholars.
6. Administering reproof and punishment for offences as they occur.

A pretty large number of objects of attention and care, one would say, to be pressing upon the mind of the teacher at one and the same time,—and *all the time*, too! Hundreds and hundreds of teachers in every part of our country, there is no doubt, have all these, crowding upon them from morning to night, with no cessation, except perhaps some accidental and momentary respite. During the winter months, while the principal common schools in our country are in operation, it is sad to reflect how many teachers come home, every evening, with bewildered and aching heads, having been vainly trying all the day, to do six things at a time, while He, who made the human mind, has determined that it shall do but one. How many become discouraged and disheartened by what they consider the unavoidable trials of a teacher's life, and give up in despair, just because their faculties will not sustain a six-fold task. There are multitudes who, in early life, attempted teaching, and, after having been worried, almost to distraction, by the simultaneous pressure of these multifarious cares, gave up the employment in disgust, and forever afterwards wonder how any body can like teaching. I know multitudes of persons to whom the above description will exactly apply.

I once heard a teacher who had been very successful, even in large schools, say that he could hear two classes recite, mend pens, and watch his school, all at the same time; and that, without any distraction of mind, or any unusual fatigue. Of course the recitations in such a case must be memoriter. There are very

few minds however, which can thus perform triple or quadruple work, and probably none which can safely be tasked so severely. For my part, I can do but one thing at a time; and I have no question that the true policy for all, is, to learn, not *to do every thing at once*, but so to classify and arrange their work, that *they shall have but one thing to do*. Instead of vainly attempting to attend simultaneously to a dozen things, they should so plan their work, that only one will demand attention.

Let us then examine the various particulars above mentioned in succession, and see how each can be disposed of, so as not to be a constant source of interruption and derangement.

1. *Whispering and leaving seats.* In regard to this subject, there are very different methods, now in practice in different schools. In some, especially in very small schools, the teacher allows the pupils to act according to their own discretion. They whisper and leave their seats whenever they think it necessary. This plan may possibly be admissible in a very small school; that is, in one of ten or twelve pupils. I am convinced, however, that it is very bad here. No vigilant watch, which it is possible for any teacher to exert, will prevent a vast amount of mere talk, entirely foreign to the business of the school. I tried this plan very thoroughly, with high ideas of the dependence which might be placed upon conscience and a sense of duty, if these principles are properly brought out to action in an effort to sustain the system. I was told by distinguished teachers, that it would not be found to answer. But predictions of failure in such cases

only prompt to greater exertions, and I persevered. But I was forced at last to give up the point, and adopt another plan. My pupils would make resolutions enough; they understood their duty well enough. They were allowed to leave their seats and whisper to their companions, whenever, in *their honest judgment, it was necessary for the prosecution of their studies*. I knew that it sometimes would be necessary, and I was desirous to adopt this plan to save myself the constant interruption of hearing and replying to requests. But it would not do. Whenever, from time to time, I called them to account, I found that a large majority, according to their own confession, were in the habit of holding daily and deliberate communication with each other, on subjects entirely foreign to the business of the school. A more experienced teacher would have predicted this result; but I had very high ideas of the power of cultivated conscience; and in fact, still have. But then, like most other persons who become possessed of a good idea, I could not be satisfied without carrying it to an extreme.

Still it is necessary to give pupils, sometimes, the opportunity to whisper and leave seats. Cases occur where this is unavoidable. It cannot therefore be forbidden altogether. How then, you will ask, can the teacher regulate this practice, so as to prevent the evils which will otherwise flow from it, without being continually interrupted by the request for permission?

By a very simple method. *Appropriate particular times at which all this business is to be done, and forbid it altogether* at every other time. It is well on other accounts to give the pupils

of a school a little respite, at least every hour; and if this is done, an intermission of study for two minutes each time, will be sufficient. During this time, *general* permission should be given to speak or to leave seats, provided they do nothing at such a time to disturb the studies of others. This has been my plan for two or three years, and no arrangement which I have ever made, has operated for so long a time, so uninterruptedly, and so entirely to my satisfaction as this. It of course will require some little time, and no little firmness, to establish the new order of things, where a school has been accustomed to another course; but where this is once done, I know no one plan so simple and so easily put into execution, which will do so much towards relieving the teacher of the distraction and perplexity of his pursuits.

In making the change, however, it is of fundamental importance that the pupils should themselves be interested in it. Their cooperation, or rather the cooperation of the majority, which it is very easy to obtain, is absolutely essential to success. I say this is very easily obtained. Let us suppose that some teacher, who has been accustomed to require his pupils to ask and obtain permission, every time they wish to speak to a companion, is induced by these remarks to introduce this plan. He says accordingly to his school:

"You know that you are now accustomed to ask me whenever you wish to obtain permission to whisper to a companion, or to leave your seats: now I have been thinking of a plan which will be better for both you and me. By our present plan, you are

sometimes obliged to wait before I can attend to your request. Sometimes I think it is unnecessary, and deny you, when perhaps I was mistaken, and it was really necessary. At other times, I think it very probable, that when it is quite desirable for you to leave your seat, you do not ask, because you think you may not obtain permission, and you do not wish to ask and be refused. Do you, or not, experience these inconveniences from our present plans?"

The boys would undoubtedly answer in the affirmative.

"I experience great inconvenience, too. I am very frequently interrupted when busily engaged, and it also occupies a great portion of my time and attention. It requires as much mental effort to consider and decide sometimes whether I ought to allow a pupil to leave his seat, as it would to decide a much more important question; therefore I do not like our plan, and I have another to propose."

The boys are all attention to know what the new plan is. It will always be of great advantage to the school, for the teacher to propose his new plans from time to time to his pupils in such a way as this. It interests them in the improvement of the school, exercises their judgment, establishes a common feeling between teacher and pupil, and in many other ways will assist very much in promoting the welfare of the school.

"My plan," continues the teacher, "is this:—to allow you all, besides the recess, a short time, two or three minutes perhaps, every hour;" (or every half hour, according to the character of the school, the age of the pupils, or other circumstances, to be

judged of by the teacher,) "during which you may all whisper or leave your seats, without asking permission."

Instead of deciding the question of the *frequency* of this general permission, the teacher may, if he pleases, leave it to the pupils to decide. It is often useful to leave the decision of such a question to them. On this subject, however, I shall speak in another place. It is only necessary, here, to say, that *this* point may be safely left to them, since the time is so small which is to be thus appropriated. Even if they vote to have the general permission to whisper every half hour, it will make but eight minutes in the forenoon. There being six half hours in the forenoon, and one of them ending at the close of school, and another at the recess, only *four* of these *rests*, as a military man would call them, would be necessary; and four, of two minutes each, would make eight minutes. If the teacher thinks that evil would result from the interruption of the studies so often, he may offer the pupils *three* minutes rest every *hour*, instead of *two* minutes every *half hour*, and let them take their choice; or he may decide the case altogether himself.

Such a change, from *particular permission on individual requests to general permission at stated times*, would unquestionably be popular in every school, if the teacher managed the business properly. And by presenting it as an object of common interest,—an arrangement proposed for the common convenience of teacher and pupils, the latter may be much interested in carrying the plan into effect. We must not

rely, however, entirely upon their *interest in it*. All that we can expect from such an effort to interest them, as I have described and recommended, is to get a *majority* on our side, so that we may have only a small minority, to deal with by other measures. Still *we must calculate on having this minority, and form our plans accordingly*, or we shall be sadly disappointed. I shall, however, in another place, speak of this principle of interesting the pupils in our plans, for the purpose of securing a majority in our favor, and explain the methods by which the minority is then to be governed. I only mean here to say, that, by such means, the teacher may easily interest a large proportion of the scholars, in carrying his plans into effect, and that he must expect to be prepared with other measures, for those, who will not be governed by these.

You cannot reasonably expect however, that immediately after having explained your plan, it will, at once, go into full and complete operation. Even those who are firmly determined to keep the rule, will, from inadvertence, for a day or two, make communication with each other. They must be *trained*, not by threatening and punishment, but by your good-humored assistance, to their new duties. When I first adopted this plan in my school, something like the following proceedings took place.

"Do you suppose that you will perfectly keep this rule, from this time?"

"No sir," was the answer.

"I suppose you will not. Some, I am afraid, may not really be

determined to keep it, and others will forget. Now I wish every one would keep an exact account to day, of all the instances of speaking and leaving seats, out of the regular times, and be prepared to report them at the close of the school. Of course, I shall have no punishment for it; but it will very much assist you to watch yourselves, if you expect to make a report at the end of the forenoon. Do you like this plan?"

"Yes sir," was the answer, and all seemed to enter into it with spirit.

In order to mark more definitely the times for communication I wrote, in large letters, on a piece of pasteboard, "Study Hours," and making a hole over the centre of it, I hung it upon a nail, over my desk. At the close of each half hour, a little bell was to be struck, and this card was to be taken down. When it was up, they were, on no occasion whatever, (except some such extraordinary occurrence as sickness, or my sending one of them on a message to another, or something clearly out of the common course,) to speak to each other; but were to wait, whatever they wanted, until the *Study Card*, as they called it, was taken down.

"Suppose now," said I, "that a young lady has come into school, and has accidentally left her book in the entry;—the book from which she is to study during the first half hour of the school: she sits near the door, and she might, in a moment, slip out and obtain it: if she does not, she must spend the half hour in idleness, and be unprepared in her lesson. What is it her duty to do?"

"To go;" "Not to go;" answered the scholars simultaneously.

"It would be her duty *not* to go; but I suppose it will be very difficult for me to convince you of it."

"The reason is this," I continued; "if the one case I have supposed, were the *only* one, which would be likely to occur, it would undoubtedly be better for her to go; but if it is understood that, in such cases, the rule may be dispensed with, there will be many others, where it will be equally necessary to lay it aside. Scholars will differ in regard to the degree of inconvenience, which they must submit to, rather than break the rule. They will gradually do it on slighter and slighter occasions, until at last the rule will be disregarded entirely. We must, therefore, draw a *precise line*, and individuals must submit to a little inconvenience, sometimes, to promote the general good."

At the close of the day, I requested all in the school to rise. While they were standing, I called them to account in the following manner.

"Now it is very probable that some have, from inadvertence, or from design, omitted to keep an account of the number of transgressions of the rule, which they have committed during the day; others, perhaps, do not wish to make a report of themselves. Now as this is a common and voluntary effort, I wish to have none render assistance, who do not, of their own accord, desire to do so; all those, therefore, who are not able to make a report, from not having been correct in keeping it, and all those who are unwilling to report themselves, may sit."

A very small number hesitatingly took their seats.

"I am afraid that all do not sit, who really wish not to report themselves. Now I am honest in saying I wish you to do just as you please. If a great majority of the school really wish to assist me in accomplishing the object, why, of course, I am glad; still, I shall not call upon any for such assistance, unless it is freely and voluntarily rendered."

One or two more took their seats while these things were saying. Among such, there would generally be some, who would refuse to have any thing to do with the measure, just from a desire to thwart and impede the plans of the teacher. If so, it is best to take no notice of them. If the teacher can contrive to obtain a great majority upon his side, so as to let them see that any opposition which they can raise, is of no consequence, and is not even noticed, they will soon be ashamed of it.

The reports then of those who remained standing, were called for; first, those who had whispered only once were requested to sit; then those who had whispered more than once, and less than five times, &c. &c., until at last all were down. In such a case, the pupils might, if thought expedient, again be requested to rise, for the purpose of asking some other questions, with reference to ascertaining whether they had spoken most in the former or latter part of the forenoon. The number who had spoken inadvertently, and the number who had done it by design, might be ascertained. These inquiries accustom the pupils to render honest and faithful accounts of themselves. They become, by such means, familiarized to the practice, and by means of it,

the teacher can, many times, receive most important assistance.

All however, should be done in a pleasant tone, and with a pleasant and cheerful air. It should be considered by the pupils, not a reluctant confession of guilt, for which they are to be rebuked or punished, but the voluntary and free report of the result of an *experiment*, in which all are interested.

Some will have been dishonest in their reports: to diminish the number of these, the teacher may say, after the report is concluded:

"We will drop the subject here to-day. To-morrow we will make another effort, when we shall be more successful. I have taken your reports as you have offered them, without any inquiry, because I had no doubt, that a great majority of this school would be honest, at all hazards. They would not, I am confident, make a false report, even if, by a true one, they were to bring upon themselves punishment; so that I think I may have confidence that nearly all these reports have been faithful. Still, it is very probable, that, among so large a number, some may have made a report, which, they are now aware, was not perfectly fair and honest. I do not wish to know who they are; if there are any such cases, I only wish to say to the rest, how much pleasanter it is for you that you have been honest and open. The business is now all ended; you have done your duty; and though you reported a little larger number than you would, if you had been disposed to conceal, yet you go away from school with a quiet conscience. On the other hand, how miserable must any boy feel, if he has

any nobleness of mind whatever, to go away from school, to-day, thinking that he has not been honest; that he has been trying to conceal his faults, and thus to obtain a credit which he did not justly deserve. Always be honest, let the consequence be what it may."

The reader will understand that the object of such measures is, simply *to secure as large a majority as possible*, to make *voluntary* efforts to observe the rule. I do not expect that by such measures, *universal* obedience can be exacted. The teacher must follow up the plan, after a few days, by other measures, for those who will not yield to such inducements as these. Upon this subject, however, I shall speak more particularly at a future time.

In my own school, it required two or three weeks to exclude whispering and communication by signs. The period necessary to effect the revolution will be longer or shorter, according to the circumstances of the school, and the dexterity of the teacher; and, after all, the teacher must not hope *entirely* to exclude it. Approximation to excellence is all that we can expect; for unprincipled and deceiving characters will perhaps always be found, and no system whatever can prevent their existence. Proper treatment may indeed be the means of their reformation, but before this process has arrived at a successful result, others similar in character will have entered, so that the teacher can never expect perfection in the operation of any of his plans.

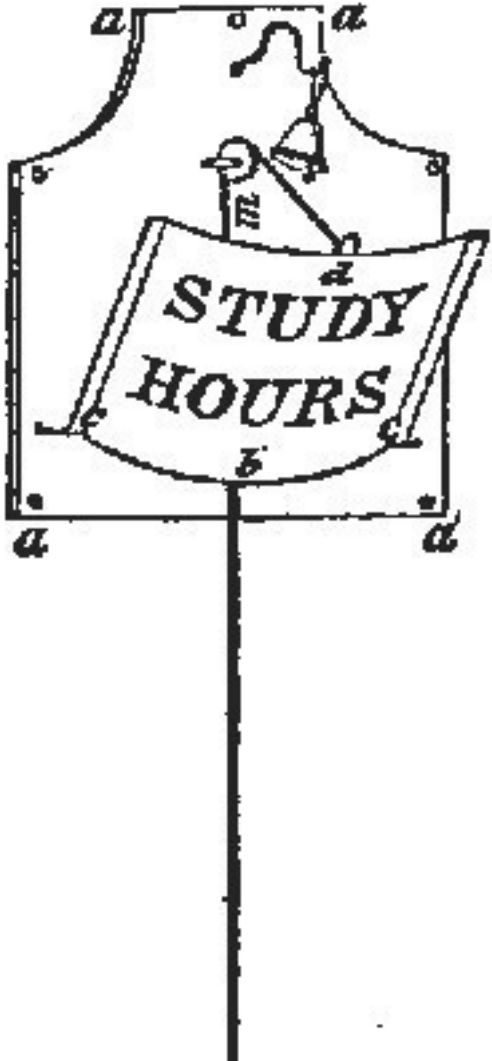
I found so much relief from the change which this plan introduced, that I soon took measures for rendering it permanent;

and though I am not much in favor of efforts to bring all teachers and all schools to the same plans, this principle of *whispering at limited and prescribed times alone*, seems to me well suited to universal adoption.

The following simple apparatus has been used in several schools where this principle has been adopted. A drawing and description of it is inserted here, as by this means, some teachers, who may like to try the course here recommended, may be saved the time and trouble of contriving something of the kind themselves.

The figure *a a a a* is a board, about 18 inches by 12, to which the parts are to be attached, and which is to be nailed against the wall, at the height of about 8 feet, *b c d c* is a plate of tin or brass, 8 inches by 12, of the form represented in the drawing. At *c c*, the lower extremities of the parts at the sides, the metal is bent round, so as to clasp a wire which runs from *c* to *c*, the ends of which wire are bent at right angles and run into the board. The plate will consequently turn on this axis, as on a hinge. At the top of the plate *d*, a small projection of the tin turns inwards, and to this, one end of the cord *m m* is attached. This cord passes back from *d* to *a* small pulley at the upper part of the board, and at the tower end of it a tassel, loaded so as to be an exact counterpoise to the card, is attached. By raising the tassel, the plate will of course fall over forward till it is stopped by the part *b* striking the board, when it will be in a horizontal position. On the other hand, by pulling down the tassel, the plate will be raised and drawn

upwards against the board, so as to present its convex surface, with the words Study Hours upon it, distinctly to the school. In the drawing it is represented in an inclined position, being not quite drawn up, that the parts might more easily be seen. At *d*, there is a small projection of the tin upwards, which touches the clapper of the bell suspended above, every time the plate passes up or down, and thus give notice of its motions.


a
a
m
d
STUDY
HOURS
c
c
b
a
a

Of course the construction may be varied very much, and it may be more or less expensive, according to the wishes of the teacher. In the first apparatus of this kind which I used, the plate was simply a card of pasteboard, from which the machine took its name. This was cut out with a penknife, and after being covered with marble paper, a strip of white paper was pasted along the middle, with the inscription upon it. The wire *c c* and a similar one at the top of the plate, were passed through a perforation in the pasteboard, and then passed into the board. Instead of a pulley, the cord, which was a piece of twine, was passed through a little staple made of wire and driven into the board. The whole was made in one or two recesses in school, with such tools and materials as I could then command. The bell was a common table bell, with a wire passing through the handle. The whole was attached to such a piece of pine board as I could get on the occasion. This coarse contrivance was, for more than a year, the grand regulator of all the movements of the school.

I afterwards had one made in a better manner. The plate is of tin, gilded, the border and the letters of the inscription being black. A parlor bell rope passes over a brass pulley, and then runs downward in a groove made in the mahogany board to which the card is attached.

A little reflection will, however, show the teacher that the form and construction of the apparatus for marking the times of study and of rest, may be greatly varied. The chief point is simply

to secure the *principle*, of whispering at definite and limited times, and at those alone. If such an arrangement is adopted, and carried faithfully into effect, it will be found to relieve the teacher of more than half of the confusion and perplexity, which would otherwise be his hourly lot. I have detailed thus particularly the method to be pursued in carrying this principle into effect, because I am convinced of its importance, and the incalculable assistance which such an arrangement will afford to the teacher in all his plans. Of course, I would not be understood to recommend its adoption, in those cases, where, teachers, from their own experience, have devised and adopted *other* plans, which accomplish as effectually the same purpose. All that I mean, is to insist upon the absolute necessity of *some* plan, to remove this very common source of interruption and confusion, and I recommend this mode where a better is not known.

2. The second of the sources of interruption, as I have enumerated them, is mending pens. This business ought, if possible, to have a specific time assigned to it. Scholars are in general far too particular in regard to their pens. The teacher ought to explain to them that, in the transaction of the ordinary business of life, they cannot, always, have exactly such a pen as they would like. They must learn to write with various kinds of pens, and when furnished with one that the teacher himself would consider suitable to write a letter to a friend with, he must be content. They should understand that the *form* of the letters is what is important in learning to write, not the smoothness and

clearness of the hair lines; and that though writing looks better, when executed with a perfect pen, a person may *learn* to write, nearly as well with one, which is not absolutely perfect. So certain is this, though often overlooked, that a person would perhaps learn faster with chalk upon a black board, than with the best goose-quill ever sharpened.

I do not make these remarks to show that it is of no consequence, whether scholars have good or bad pens, but only that this subject deserves very much less of the time and attention of the teacher, than it usually receives. When the scholars are allowed, as they very generally are, to come, when they please, to present their pens, some four, five or six times in a day —breaking in upon any business—interrupting any classes— perplexing and embarrassing the teacher, however he may be employed,—there is a very serious obstruction to the progress of the scholars, which is by no means repaid by the improvement in this branch.

There are several ways by which this evil may be remedied, or at least be very effectually curtailed. Some teachers take their pens with them, and mend them in the evening at home. For various reasons, this cannot always be practised. There may, however, be a time set apart in the school specially for this purpose. But the best plan is, for the teacher not to mend the pens himself.

Let him choose from among the older and more intelligent of his scholars, four or five, whom he will teach. They will be very

glad to learn, and to mend every day twenty-five or fifty pens each. Very little ingenuity will be necessary to devise some plan, by which the scholars may be apportioned among these, so that each shall supply a given number, and the teacher be relieved entirely.

3. Answering questions about studies. A teacher who does not adopt some system in regard to this subject, will be always at the mercy of his scholars. One boy will want to know how to parse a word, another where the lesson is, another to have a sum explained, and a fourth will wish to show his work, to see if it is right. The teacher does not like to discourage such inquiries. Each one, as it comes up, seems necessary: each one too is answered in a moment; but the endless number, and the continual repetition of them consume his time and exhaust his patience.

There is another view of the subject, which ought to be taken. Perhaps it would not be far from the truth, to estimate the average number of scholars in the schools in our country, at fifty. At any rate, this will be near enough for our present purpose. There are three hours in each session, making one hundred and eighty minutes, which, divided among fifty, give about three minutes and a half to each individual. If the reader has, in his own school, a greater or a less number, he can easily correct the above, so as to adapt it to his own case, and ascertain the portion, which may justly be appropriated to each pupil. It will probably vary from two to four minutes. Now a period of

four minutes slips away very fast while a man is looking over perplexing problems, and if he exceeds that time at all, he is doing injustice to his other pupils. I do not mean that a man is to confine himself, rigidly, to the principle suggested by this calculation, of cautiously appropriating no more time to any one of his pupils, than such a calculation would assign to each; but simply that this is a point which should be kept in view, and have a very strong influence in deciding how far it is right to devote attention, exclusively, to individuals. It seems to me that it shows very clearly, that one ought to teach his pupils, as much as possible, *in masses*, and as little as possible, by private attention to individual cases.

The following directions will help the teacher to carry these principles into effect. When you assign a lesson, glance over it yourself, and consider what difficulties are likely to arise. You know the progress which your pupils have made, and can easily anticipate their difficulties. Tell them all together, in the class, what their difficulties will be, and how they may surmount them. Give them directions how they are to act in the emergencies, which will be likely to occur. This simple step will remove a vast number of the questions, which would otherwise become occasions for interrupting you. With regard to other difficulties, which cannot be foreseen and guarded against, tell them to bring them to the class, the next recitation. Half a dozen might, and very probably would meet with the same difficulty. If they bring it to you one by one, you have to answer it over and over again,

whereas, when it is brought to the class, one explanation answers for all.

As to all questions about the lesson,—where it is, and what it is, and how long it is,—never answer them. Require each pupil to remember for himself, and if he was absent when the lesson was assigned, let him ask his class mate in a recess.

You may refuse to give particular individuals the private assistance they ask for, in such a way as to discourage and irritate them, but it is not necessary. It can be done in such a manner, that the pupil will see the propriety of it, and acquiesce pleasantly in it.

A child comes to you, for example, and says,

"Will you tell me, sir, where the next lesson is?"

"Were you not in the class at the time?"

"Yes sir, but I have forgotten."

"Well, I have forgotten too. I have a great many classes to hear, and of course a great many lessons to assign, and I never remember them; it is not necessary far me to remember."

"May I speak to one of the class, to ask about it?"

"You cannot speak, you know, till the Study Card is down; you may, then."

"But I want to get my lesson now."

"I don't know what you will do, then: I am sorry you don't remember."

"Besides," continues the teacher, looking pleasantly, however, while he says it, "if I knew, I think I ought not to tell you."

"Why, sir?"

"Because, you know, I have said I wish the scholars to remember where the lessons are, and not come to me. You know it would be very unwise for me, after assigning a lesson in the class, to spend my time in telling the individuals over again here. Now if I should tell *you*, I should have to tell others, and thus adopt a practice, which I have condemned."

Take another case. You assign to a class of little girls a subject of composition, requesting them to copy their writing upon a sheet of paper, leaving a margin an inch wide at the top, and one of half an inch at the sides and bottom. The class take their seats, and, after a short time, one of them comes to you, saying she does not know how long an inch is.

"Don't you know any thing about it?"

"No sir, not much."

"Should you think *that* is more or less than an inch?" (pointing to a space on a piece of paper much too large.)

"More."

"Then you know something about it. Now I did not tell you to make the margins *exactly* an inch, and half an inch, but only as near as you could tell."

"Would that be about right?" asks the girl, showing a distance.

"I must not tell you, because you know I never in such cases help individuals; if that is as near as you can get it, you may make it so."

It may be well, after assigning a lesson to a class, to say that

all those who do not distinctly understand what they have to do, may remain after the class have taken their seats, and ask: the task may then be distinctly assigned again, and the difficulties, so far as they can be foreseen, explained.

By such means, these sources of interruption and difficulty may, like the others, be almost entirely removed. Perhaps not altogether, for many cases may occur, where the teacher may choose to give a particular class permission to come to him for help. Such permission, however, ought never to be given, unless it is absolutely necessary, and should never be allowed to be taken, unless it is distinctly given.

4. Hearing recitations. I am aware that many attempt to do something else, at the same time that they are hearing a recitation, and there may perhaps be some individuals, who can succeed in this. If the exercise, to which the teacher is attending, consists merely in listening to the reciting, from memory, some passage committed, it can perhaps be done. I hope however to show, in a future chapter, that there are other and far higher objects, which every teacher ought to have in view, and he who understands these objects, and aims at accomplishing them,—who endeavors to *instruct* his class, to enlarge and elevate their ideas, to awaken a deep and paramount interest in the subject which they are examining, will find that his time must be his own, and his attention uninterrupted, while he is presiding at a class. All the other exercises and arrangements of the school are, in fact, preparatory and subsidiary to this. Here, that is, in the

classes, the real business of teaching is to be done. Here, the teacher comes in contact with his scholars, mind with mind, and here, consequently, he must be uninterrupted and undisturbed. I shall speak more particularly on this subject hereafter, under the head of instruction; all I wish to secure in this place, is that the teacher should make such arrangements, that he can devote his exclusive attention to his classes, while he is actually engaged with them.

Each recitation, too, should have its specified time, which should be adhered to, with rigid accuracy. If any thing like the plan I have suggested for allowing rests of a minute or two, every half hour, should be adopted, it will mark off the forenoon into parts, which ought to be precisely and carefully observed. I was formerly accustomed to think, that I could not limit the time for my recitations without great inconvenience, and occasionally allowed one exercise to encroach upon the succeeding, and this upon the next, and thus sometimes the last was excluded altogether. But such a lax and irregular method of procedure is ruinous to the discipline of a school. On perceiving it, at last, I put the bell into the hands of a pupil, commissioning her to ring regularly, having, myself, fixed the times, saying that I would show my pupils that I could be confined myself to system, as well as they. At first, I experienced a little inconvenience, but this soon disappeared, and at last the hours and half hours of our artificial division, entirely superseded, in the school-room, the divisions of the clock face.

But in order that I may be specific and definite, I will draw up a plan for the regular division of time, for a common school, not to be *adopted*, but to be *imitated*; i. e.sp;e. I do not recommend exactly this plan, but that some plan, precise and specific, should be determined upon, and exhibited to the school, by a diagram like the following.

**FORENOON.**

| IX | | X | | | XI | | XII |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Reading.* | | *Writing.* | *R.* | *G.* | *Arithmetic.* | | |
| | | | | | | | |

**AFTERNOON.**

| II | | III | | | IV | | V |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Grammar.* | | *Writing.* | *R.* | *G.* | *Geography.* | | |
| | | | | | | | |

A drawing on a large sheet, made by some of the older scholars, (for a teacher should never do any thing of this kind which his scholars can do for him,) should be made and pasted up to view, the names of the classes being inserted in the columns, under their respective heads. At the double lines at ten and three, there might be a rest of two minutes; an officer appointed for the purpose, ringing a bell at each of the parts marked on the plan, and making the signal for the *rest*, whatever signal might be determined upon. It is a good plan to have a bell rung five minutes before each half hour expires, and then exactly at its close. The first one would be to notify the teacher, or teachers, if there are more than one in the school, that the time for their

respective recitations is drawing to a close. At the second bell the new classes should take their places without waiting to be called for. The scholars will thus see that the arrangements of the school are based upon system, to which the teacher himself conforms, and not subjected to his own varying will. They will thus not only go on more regularly, but they will yield more easily and pleasantly to the necessary arrangements.

The fact is, children love system and regularity. Each one is sometimes a little uneasy under the restraint, which it imposes upon him individually, but they all love to see its operation upon others, and they are generally very willing to submit to its laws, if the rest of the community are required to submit too. They show this in their love of military parade; what allures them is chiefly the *order* of it: and even a little child creeping upon the floor will be pleased when he gets his playthings in a row. A teacher may turn this principle to most useful account, in forming his plans for his school.

It will be seen by reference to the foregoing plan, that I have marked the time for the recesses, by the letter R. at the top. Immediately after them, both in the forenoon and in the afternoon, twenty minutes are left, marked G., the initial standing for General exercise. They are intended to denote periods during which all the scholars are in their seats with their work laid aside, ready to attend to what the teacher has to bring before the whole. There are so many occasions, on which it is necessary to address the whole school, that it is very desirable to appropriate

a particular time for it. In most of the best schools, I believe this plan is adopted. I will mention some of the subjects, which would come up at such a time.

1. There are some studies, which can be advantageously attended to by the whole school together; such as Punctuation, and, to some extent, Spelling.

2. Cases of discipline, which it is necessary to bring before the whole school, ought to come up at a regularly appointed time. By attending to them here, there will be a greater importance attached to them. Whatever the teacher does, will seem to be more deliberate, and, in fact, *will be* more deliberate.

3. General remarks, bringing up classes of faults which prevail; also general directions, which may at any time be needed: and in fact any business relating to the general arrangements of the school.

4. Familiar lectures from the teacher, on various subjects, —very familiar in their form, and perhaps accompanied by questions addressed to the whole. The design of such lectures should be to extend the *general knowledge* of the pupils in regard to those subjects on which they will need information in their progress through life. In regard to each of these particulars I shall speak more particularly hereafter, in the chapters to which they respectively belong. My only object, here, is to show, in the general arrangements of the school, how a place is to be found for them. My practice has been, to have two periods, of short duration, each day, appropriated to these objects. The first to the

*business of the school*, and the second to such studies or lectures as could be most profitably attended to at such a time.

We come now to one of the most important subjects, which present themselves to the teacher's attention, in settling the principles upon which he shall govern his school. I mean the degree of influence which the boys themselves shall have in the management of its affairs. Shall the government of school be a *monarchy* or a *republic*? To this question, after much inquiry and many experiments, I answer, a monarchy; an absolute, unlimited monarchy; the teacher possessing exclusive power, as far as the pupils are concerned, though strictly responsible to the committee, or to the trustees, under whom he holds his office.

While, however, it is thus distinctly understood that the power of the teacher is supreme, that all the power rests in him, and that he alone is responsible for its exercise, there ought, to be a very free and continual *delegation* of power to the pupils. As much business as is possible, should be committed to them. They should be interested as much as possible in the affairs of the school, and led to take an active part in carrying them forward; though they should, all the time, distinctly understand, that it is only *delegated* power which they exercise, and that the teacher can, at any time, revoke what he has granted, and alter or annul at pleasure, any of their decisions. By this plan, we have the responsibility resting where it ought to rest, and yet the boys are trained to business, and led to take an active interest in the welfare of the school. Trust is reposed in them, which may be

greater or less, as they are able to bear. All the good effects of reposing trust and confidence, and committing the management of important business to the pupils will be secured, without the dangers which would result from the entire surrender of the management of the institution into their hands.

There have been, in several cases, experiments made with reference to ascertaining how far a government, strictly republican, would be admissible in a school. A very fair experiment of this kind was made at the Gardiner Lyceum, in Maine. At the time of its establishment, nothing was said of the mode of government which it was intended to adopt. For some time, the attention of the Instructers was occupied in arranging the course of study, and attending to the other concerns of the Institution, and in the infant state of the Lyceum, few cases of discipline occurred, and no regular system of government was necessary.

Before long, however, complaints were made that the students at the Lyceum were guilty of breaking windows in an old building used as a town-house. The Principal called the students together, mentioned the reports, and said that he did not know, and did not wish to know who were the guilty individuals. It was necessary, however, that the thing should be examined, and that restitution should be made; and relying on their faithfulness and ability, he should leave them to manage the business alone. For this purpose, he nominated one of the students as judge, some others as jurymen, and appointed the other officers necessary, in the same

manner. He told them, that, in order to give them time to make a thorough investigation, they were excused from farther exercises during the day.

The Principal then left them, and they entered on the trial. The result was, that they discovered the guilty individuals, ascertained the amount of mischief done by each, and sent to the selectmen a message, by which they agreed to pay a sum equal to three times the value of the injury sustained.

The students were soon after informed that this mode of bringing offenders to justice would, hereafter, be always pursued, and arrangements were made for organizing a *regular republican government*, among the young men. By this government, all laws which related to the internal police of the Institution, were to be made, all officers were appointed, and all criminal cases were to be tried. The students finding the part of a judge too difficult for them to sustain, one of the Professors was appointed to hold that office, and, for similar reasons, another of the Professors was made President of the Legislative assembly. The Principal was the Executive, with power to *pardon*, but not to *sentence*, or even *accuse*.

Some time after this, a student was indicted for profane swearing; he was tried, convicted, and punished. After this he evinced a strong hostility to the government. He made great exertions to bring it into contempt, and when the next trial came on, he endeavored to persuade the witnesses that giving evidence was dishonorable, and he so far succeeded, that the defendant

was acquitted for want of evidence, when it was generally understood that there was proof of his guilt, which would have been satisfactory, if it could have been brought forward. For some time after this, the prospect was rather unfavorable, though many of the students themselves opposed with great earnestness these efforts, and were much alarmed lest they should lose their free government, through the perverseness of one of their number. The attorney general, at this juncture, conceived the idea of indicting the individual alluded to, for an attempt to overturn the government. He obtained the approbation of the Principal, and the Grand Jury found a bill. The Court, as the case was so important, invited some of the Trustees of the Lyceum who were in town, to attend the trial. The parent of the defendant was also informed of the circumstances and requested to be present, and he accordingly attended. The prisoner was tried, found guilty, and sentenced, if I mistake not, to an expulsion. At his earnest request, however, to be permitted to remain in the Lyceum, and redeem his character, he was pardoned and restored, and became perfectly exemplary in his conduct and character. After this occurrence, the system went on in successful operation, for some time.

The legislative power was vested in the hands of a general committee, consisting of eight or ten, chosen by the students from their own number. They met about once a week to transact such business as appointing officers, making and repealing regulations, and inquiring into the state of the Lyceum. The

Instructers had a negative upon all their proceedings, but no direct and positive power. They could pardon, but they could assign no punishments, nor make laws inflicting any.

Now such a plan as this may succeed for a short time, and under very favorable circumstances; and the circumstance, which it is chiefly important should be favorable, is, that the man who is called to preside over such an association, should possess such a share of *generalship*, that he can really manage the institution *himself*, while the power is *nominally* and *apparently* in the hands of the boys. Should this not be the case, or should the teacher, from any cause, lose his personal influence in the school, so that the institution should really be surrendered into the hands of the pupils, things must be on a very unstable footing. And accordingly where such a plan has been adopted, it has, I believe, in every instance, been ultimately abandoned.

*Real self-government* is an experiment sufficiently hazardous among men; though Providence, in making a daily supply of food necessary for every human being, has imposed a most-powerful check upon the tendency to anarchy and confusion. Let the populace of London materially interrupt the order, and break in upon the arrangements of the community, and, in eight and forty hours, nearly the whole of the mighty mass will be in the hands of the devourer, hunger; and they will be soon brought to submission. On the other hand, a month's anarchy and confusion in a college or an academy, would be delight to half the students, or else times have greatly changed, since I was within college

walls.

Although it is thus evident that the important concerns of a literary institution cannot be safely committed into the hands of the students, very great benefits will result from calling upon them to act upon, and to decide questions relative to the school, within such limits, and under such restrictions, as may appear best. Such a practice will assist the teacher very much, if he manages it with any degree of dexterity: for it will interest his pupils in the success of the school, and secure, to a very considerable extent, their cooperation. It will teach them self-control and self-government, and will accustom them to submit to the majority,—that lesson, which, of all others, it is important for a republican to learn.

In endeavoring to interest the pupils of a school in the work of cooperating with the teacher in its administration, no little dexterity will be necessary, at the outset. In all probability, the formal announcement of this principle, and the endeavor to introduce it, by a sudden revolution, would totally fail. Boys, like men, must be gradually prepared for power, and they must exercise it only so far as they are prepared. This however can, very easily, be done. The teacher should say nothing of his general design, but when some suitable opportunity presents, he should endeavor to lead his pupils to cooperate with him, in some particular instance.

For example, let us suppose that he has been accustomed to distribute the writing-books with his own hand, when the

writing hour arrives, and that he concludes to delegate this simple business, first, to his scholars. He accordingly states to them, just before the writing exercise of the day on which he proposes the experiment, as follows.

"I have thought that time will be saved, if you will help me distribute the books, and I will accordingly appoint four distributors, one for each division of the seats, who may come to me, and receive the books and distribute them, each to his own division. Are you willing to adopt this plan?"

The boys answer, "Yes sir," and the teacher then looks carefully around the room, and selects four pleasant and popular boys,—boys who, he knows, would gladly assist him, and who would, at the same time, be agreeable to their school mates. This latter point is necessary, in order to secure the popularity and success of the plan.

Unless the boys are very different from any I have ever met with, they will be pleased with the duty thus assigned them. They will learn system and regularity by being taught to perform this simple duty in a proper manner. After a week, the teacher may consider their term of service as having expired, and thanking them, in public for the assistance they have rendered him, he may ask the scholars, if they are willing to continue the plan, and if the vote is in favor of it, as it unquestionably would be, each boy probably hoping that he should be appointed to the office, the teacher may nominate four others, including perhaps upon the list, some boy popular among his companions, but whom he

has suspected to be not very friendly to himself or the school. I think the most scrupulous politician would not object to securing influence, by conferring office in such a case. If any difficulties arise from the operation of such a measure, it can easily be dropped, or modified. If it is successful, it may be continued, and the principle extended, till it very considerably modifies all the arrangements, and the whole management of the school.

Or let us imagine the following scene to have been the commencement of the introduction of the principle of limited self-government, into a school.

The preceptor of an academy was sitting at his desk, at the close of school, while the pupils were putting up their books and leaving the room; a boy came in with angry looks, and, with his hat in his hands bruised and dusty, advanced to the master's desk, and complained that one of his companions had thrown down his hat upon the floor, and had almost spoilt it.

The teacher looked calmly at the mischief, and then asked how it happened.

"I don't know sir; I hung it up on my nail, and he pulled it down."

"I wish you would ask him to come here," said the teacher. "Ask him pleasantly."

The accused soon came in, and the two boys stood together before the master.

"There seems to be some difficulty between you boys, about a nail to hang your hats upon. I suppose each of you think it is

your own nail."

"Yes sir," said both the boys.

"It will be more convenient for me to talk with you about this to-morrow, than to-night, if you are willing to wait. Besides, we can examine it more calmly, then. But if we put it off till then, you must not talk about it in the meantime, blaming one another, and keeping up the irritation that you feel. Are you both willing to leave it just where it is, till to-morrow, and try to forget all about it till then? I expect I shall find you both a little to blame."

The boys rather reluctantly consented. The next day the master heard the case and settled it, so far as it related to the two boys. It was easily settled in the morning, for they had had time to get calm, and were, after sleeping away their anger, rather ashamed of the whole affair, and very desirous to have it forgotten.

That day, when the hour for the transaction of business came, the teacher stated to the school, that it was necessary to take some measures to provide each boy with a nail for his hat. In order to show that it was necessary, he related the circumstances of the quarrel which had occurred the day before. He did this, not with such an air and manner as to convey the impression that his object was to find fault with the boys, or to expose their misconduct, but to show the necessity of doing something to remedy the evil, which had been the cause of so unpleasant an occurrence. Still, though he said nothing in the way of reproach or reprehension, and did not name the boys, but merely gave a cool and impartial

narrative of the facts,—the effect, very evidently, was to bring such quarrels into discredit. A calm review of misconduct, after the excitement has gone by, will do more to bring it into disgrace, than the most violent invectives and reproaches, directed against the individuals guilty of it.

"Now boys," continued the master, "will you assist me in making arrangements to prevent the recurrence of all temptations of this kind hereafter? It is plain that every boy ought to have a nail appropriated expressly to his use. The first thing to be done is, to ascertain whether there are enough for all. I should like, therefore, to have two committees appointed; one, to count and report the number of nails in the entry, and also how much room there is for more; the other, to ascertain the number of scholars in school. They can count all who are here, and by observing the vacant desks, they can ascertain the number absent. When this investigation is made, I will tell you what to do next."

The boys seemed pleased with the plan, and the committees were appointed, two members on each. The master took care to give the quarrellers some share in the work, apparently forgetting, from this time, the unpleasant occurrence which had brought up the subject.

When the boys came to tell him their results, he asked them to make a little memorandum, in writing, as he might forget, before the time came for reading them. They brought him presently a rough scrap of paper, with the figures marked upon it. He told them he should forget which was the number of nails, and which

the number of scholars, unless they wrote it down.

"It is the custom among men," said he, "to make out their report, in such a case, fully, so that it would explain itself; and I should like to have you, if you are willing, to make out yours a little more distinctly."

Accordingly, after a little additional explanation, the boys made another attempt, and presently returned, with something like the following:

The Committee for counting the nails report as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of nails | 35 |
| Room for | 15." |

The other report was very similar, though somewhat rudely written and expressed, and both were perfectly satisfactory to the preceptor, as he plainly showed by the manner in which he received them.

I need not finish the description of this case, by narrating, particularly, the reading of the reports, the appointment of a committee to assign the nails, and to paste up the names of the scholars, one to each. The work, in such a case, might be done in recesses, and out of school hours, and though, at first, the teacher will find, that it is as much trouble to accomplish business

in this way, as it would be to attend to it directly himself,—yet after a very little experience, he will find that his pupils will acquire dexterity and readiness, and will be able to render him very material assistance in the accomplishment of his plans.

This, however, *the assistance rendered to the teacher*, is not the object. The main design is to *interest the pupils*, in the management and the welfare of the school,—to identify them, as it were, with it. It will accomplish this object; and every teacher, who will try the experiment, and carry it into effect, with any tolerable degree of skill, will find that it will, in a short time, change the whole aspect of the school, in regard to the feelings subsisting between himself and his pupils.

Each teacher, who tries such an experiment, will find himself insensibly repeating it, and after a time he may have quite a number of officers and committees, who are entrusted with various departments of business. He will have a secretary, chosen by ballot, by the scholars, to keep a record of all the important transactions in the school, for each day. At first, he will dictate to the secretary, telling him precisely what to say, or even writing it for him, and merely requiring him to copy it into the book provided for the purpose. Afterwards he will give him less and less assistance, till he can keep the record properly himself. The record of each day will be read on the succeeding, at the hour for business. He will have a committee of one or two to take care of the fire, and another to see that the room is constantly in good order. He will have distributors for each division of seats,

to distribute books, and compositions, and pens, and to collect votes. And thus, in a short time, his school will become *regularly organized, as a society*, or *legislative assembly*. The boys will learn submission to the majority, in such unimportant things as may be committed to them: they will learn system and regularity; and every thing else that belongs to the science of political self government.

There are dangers, however. What useful practice has not its dangers? One of these is, that the teacher will allow these arrangements to take up too much time. He must guard against this. I have found from experience that fifteen minutes each day, with a school of 135, is enough. This ought never to be exceeded.

Another danger is, that the boys will be so engaged in the duties of their *offices*, as to neglect their *studies*. This would be, and ought to be, fatal to the whole plan. Avoid it in this manner. State publicly that you will not appoint any to office, who are not good scholars, always punctual, and always prepared; and when any boy, who holds an office, is going behind hand in his studies, say to him kindly, "You have not time to get your lessons, and I am afraid it is owing to the time you spend in helping me. Now if you wish to resign your office, so as to have a little more time for your lessons, you can. In fact, I think you ought to do it. You may try it for a day or two, and I will notice how you recite, and then we can decide."

Such a communication will generally be found to have a powerful effect. If it does not remedy the evil, the resignation

must be insisted on. A few decided cases of this kind, will effectually remove the evil I am considering.

Another difficulty, which is likely to attend the plan of allowing the pupils of the school to decide some of the cases which occur, is, that it may tend to make them insubordinate; so that they will, in many instances, submit, with less good humor, to such decisions as you may consider necessary. I do not mean that this will be the case with all, but that there will be a few, who will be ungenerous enough, if you allow them to decide, sometimes, to endeavor to make trouble, or at least to show symptoms of impatience and vexation, because you do not allow them to decide always.

Sometimes this feeling may show itself by the discontented looks, or gestures, or even words, with which some unwelcome decision will be received. Such a spirit should be immediately and decidedly checked. It will not be difficult to check, and even entirely to remove it. On one occasion, when, after learning the wishes of the scholars on some subject which had been brought before them, I decided contrary to it, there arose a murmur of discontent, all over the room. This was the more distinct, because I have always accustomed my pupils to answer questions asked, and to express their wishes and feelings on any subject I may present to them, with great freedom.

I asked all those, who had expressed their dissatisfaction, to rise.

About one third of the scholars arose.

"Perhaps you understood, that when I put the question to vote, I meant to abide by your decision, and that, consequently, I ought not to have reversed it, as I did, afterwards?"

"Yes sir;" "yes sir;" they replied.

"Do you suppose it would be safe to leave the decision of important questions to the scholars in this school?"

"Yes sir;" "No sir." The majority were, however, in the affirmative.

Thus far, only those who were standing, had answered. I told them, that as they were divided in opinion, they might sit, and I would put the question to the whole school.

"You know," I continued, addressing the whole, "what sort of persons the girls, who compose this school are. You know about how many are governed, habitually, by steady principle, and how many by impulse and feeling. You know too, what proportion have judgment and foresight necessary to consider and decide independently, such questions as continually arise in the management of a school. Now suppose I should resign the school into your own hands, as to its management, and only come in to give instruction to the classes, leaving all general control of its arrangements with you; would it go on safely or not?"

As might have been foreseen, there was, when the question was fairly proposed, scarcely a solitary vote in favor of government by scholars. They seemed to see clearly the absurdity of such a scheme.

"Besides," I continued, "the Trustees of this school have

committed it to my charge; they hold me responsible; the public hold me responsible, not you. Now if I should surrender it into your hands, and you, from any cause, should manage the trust unfaithfully, or unskilfully, I should necessarily be held accountable. I could never shift the responsibility upon you. Now it plainly is not just or right, that one party should hold the power, and another be held accountable for its exercise. It is clear, therefore, in every view of the subject, that I should retain the management of this school in my own hands. Are you not satisfied that it is?"

The scholars universally answered, "Yes sir." They seemed satisfied; and doubtless were.

It was then stated to them, that the object in asking them to vote, was, in some cases, to obtain an expression of their opinion or their wishes, in order to help *me* decide; and only in those cases where it was expressly stated, did I mean to give the final decision to them.

Still, however, if cases are often referred to them, the feeling will gradually creep in, that the school is managed on republican principles, as they call it; and they will, unless this point is specially guarded, gradually lose that spirit of entire and cordial subordination, so necessary for the success of any school. It should often be distinctly explained to them, that a republican government is one, where the power essentially resides in the community, and is exercised by a ruler, only so far as the community delegates it to him; whereas in the school, the

government is based on the principle, that the power, primarily and essentially, resides in the teacher, the scholars exercising only such as he may delegate to them.

With these limitations and restrictions, and with this express understanding, in regard to what is, in all cases, the ultimate authority, I think there will be no danger in throwing a very large share of the business which will, from time to time, come up in the school, upon the scholars, for decision. In my own experience, this plan has been adopted with the happiest results. A small red morocco wrapper lies constantly on a little shelf, accessible to all. By its side, is a little pile of papers, about one inch by six, on which any one may write her motion, or her *proposition*, as they call it, whatever it may be, and when written, it is enclosed in the wrapper, to be brought to me at the appointed time for attending to the general business of the school. Through this wrapper, all questions are asked, all complaints entered, all proposals made. Is there discontent in the school? It shows itself by "*propositions*" in the wrapper. Is any body aggrieved or injured? I learn it through the wrapper. In fact it is a little safety valve, which lets off, what, if confined, might threaten explosion, —an index,—a thermometer, which reveals to me, from day to day, more of the state of public opinion in the little community, than any thing beside.

These propositions are generally read aloud; some cases are referred to the scholars for decision; some I decide myself; others are laid aside without notice of any kind; others still, merely

suggest remarks on the subjects to which they allude.

The principles, then, which this chapter has been intended to establish, are simply these: in making your general arrangements, look carefully over your ground, consider all the objects which you have to accomplish, and the proper degree of time and attention, which each deserves. Then act upon system. Let the mass of particulars which would otherwise crowd upon you in promiscuous confusion, be arranged and classified. Let each be assigned to its proper time and place; that your time may be your own,—under your own command,—and not, as is too often the case, at the mercy of the thousand accidental circumstances, which may occur.

In government, be yourself supreme, and let your supremacy be that of *authority*. But delegate power, as freely as possible, to those under your care. Show them that you are desirous of reposing trust in them, just so far as they show themselves capable of exercising it. Thus interest them in your plans, and make them feel, that they participate in the honor or the disgrace of success or failure.

I have gone much into detail in this chapter, proposing definite measures by which the principles I have recommended, may be carried into effect. I wish, however, that it may be distinctly understood, that all I contend for, is the *principles* themselves; no matter what the particular measures are, by which they are secured. Every good school must be systematic; but they need not all be on precisely the same system. As this work is intended

almost exclusively for beginners, much detail has been admitted, and many of the specific measures here proposed, may perhaps be safely adopted, where no others are established. There may also perhaps be cases, where teachers, whose schools are already in successful operation, may engraft, upon their own plans, some things which are here proposed. If they should attempt it, it must be done cautiously and gradually. There is no other way by which they can be safely introduced or even introduced at all. This is a point of so much importance, that I must devote a paragraph to it, before closing the chapter.

Let a teacher propose to his pupils, formally, from his desk, the plan of writing propositions, for example, and procure his wrapper, and put it in its place;—and what would be the result? Why, not a single paper, probably, could he get, from one end of the week to the other. But let him, on the other hand, when a boy comes to him to ask some question, the answer to which many in the school would equally wish to hear, say to the inquirer:

"Will you be so good as to write that question, and put it on my desk, and then, at the regular time, I will answer it to all the school."

When he reads it, let him state, that it was written at his request, and give the other boys permission to leave their proposals or questions on his desk, in the same way. In a few days, he will have another, and thus the plan may be gently and gradually introduced.

So with officers. They should be appointed among the

scholars, only *as fast as they are actually needed*, and the plan should thus be cautiously carried only so far as it proves good on trial. Be always cautious about innovations and changes. Make no rash experiments on a large scale, but always test your principle in the small way, and then, if it proves good, gradually extend its operation, as circumstances seem to require.

By thus cautiously and slowly introducing plans, founded on the systematic principles here brought to view, a very considerable degree of quiet, and order, and regularity may be introduced into the largest and most miscellaneous schools. And this order and quiet are absolutely necessary, to enable the teacher to find that interest and enjoyment in his work, which were exhibited in the last chapter; the pleasure of *directing and controlling mind*, and doing it, not by useless and anxious complaints, or stern threats and painful punishments; but by regarding the scene of labor in its true light, as a community of intellectual and moral beings, and governing it by moral and intellectual power. It is, in fact, the pleasure of exercising power. I do not mean arbitrary, personal authority, but the power to produce, by successful but quiet contrivance, extensive and happy results;—the pleasure of calmly considering every difficulty, and without irritation or anger, devising the proper moral means to remedy the moral evil: and then the interest and pleasure of witnessing its effects.

# CHAPTER III.
# INSTRUCTION

There are three kinds of human knowledge which stand strikingly distinct from all the rest. They lie at the foundation. They constitute the roots of the tree. In other words, they are the *means*, by which all other knowledge is acquired. I need not say, that I mean, Reading, Writing, and Calculation.

Teachers do not perhaps always consider, how entirely and essentially distinct these three are from all the rest. They are arts; the acquisition of them is not to be considered as knowledge, so much as the means, by which knowledge may be obtained. A child, who is studying Geography, or History, or Natural Science, is learning *facts*,—gaining information; on the other hand, the one who is learning to write, or to read, or to calculate, may be adding little or nothing to his stock of knowledge. He is acquiring *skill*, which, at some future time, he may make the means of increasing his knowledge, to any extent.

This distinction ought to be kept constantly in view, and the teacher should feel that these three fundamental branches stand by themselves, and stand first in importance. I do not mean to undervalue the others, but only to insist upon the superior value and importance of these. Teaching a pupil to read, before he enters upon the active business of life, is like giving a new settler

an axe, as he goes to seek his new home in the forest. Teaching him a lesson in history, is, on the other hand, only cutting down a tree or two for him. A knowledge of natural history, is like a few bushels of grain, gratuitously placed in his barn; but the art of ready reckoning, is the plough, which will remain by him for years, and help him to draw out from the soil an annual treasure.

The great object, then, of the common schools in our country, is to teach the whole population to read, to write, and to calculate. In fact, so essential is it, that the accomplishment of these objects should be secured, that it is even a question whether common schools should not be confined to them. I say it is a *question*, for it is sometimes made so, though public opinion has decided, that some portion of attention, at least, should be paid to the acquisition of additional knowledge. But after all, the amount of *knowledge*, which is actually acquired at schools, is very small. It must be very small. The true policy is, to aim at making all, good readers, writers, and calculators, and to consider the other studies of the school important, chiefly as practice, in turning these arts to useful account. In other words, the scholars should be taught these arts, thoroughly, first of all, and in the other studies, the main design should be to show them how to use, and interest them in using, the arts they have thus acquired.

A great many teachers feel a much stronger interest in the one or two scholars they may have, in Surveying, or in Latin, than they do in the large classes, in the elementary branches, which fill the school. But a moment's reflection will show, that

such a preference is founded on a very mistaken view. Leading forward one or two minds, from step to step, in an advanced study, is certainly far inferior, in real dignity and importance, to opening all the stores of written knowledge, to fifty or a hundred. The man who neglects the interests of his school, in these great branches, to devote his time to two or three, or half a dozen older scholars, is unjust both to his employers and to himself.

It is the duty, therefore, of every teacher, who commences a common district school, for a single season, to make, when he commences, an estimate, of the state of his pupils, in reference to these three branches. How do they all write? How do they all read? How do they calculate? It would be well if he would make a careful examination of the school, in this respect. Let them all write a specimen. Let all read; and let him make a memorandum of the manner, noticing how many read fluently, how many with difficulty, how many know only their letters, and how many are to be taught these. Let him ascertain also, what progress they have made in Arithmetic,—how many can readily perform the elementary processes, and what number need instruction in these. After thus surveying the ground, let him form his plan, and lay out his whole strength in carrying forward, as rapidly as possible, the *whole school*, in these studies. By this means he is acting, most directly and powerfully, on the intelligence of the whole future community in that place. He is opening to fifty or a hundred minds, stores of knowledge, which they will go on exploring, for years to come. What a descent now from such a

work as this, to the mere hearing of the recitation of half a dozen boys in Surveying!

I repeat it, that a thorough and enlightened survey of the whole school should be taken, and plans formed for elevating the whole mass, in those great branches of knowledge, which are to be of immediate practical use to them in future life.

If the school is of higher order, the teacher should, in the same manner, before he forms his plans, consider well what are the great objects which he has to accomplish. He should ascertain what is the existing state of his school, both as to knowledge and character;—how long, generally, his pupils are to remain under his care,—what are to be their future stations and conditions in life, and what objects he can reasonably hope to effect for them, while they remain under his influence. By means of this forethought, and consideration, he will be enabled to work understandingly.

It is desirable, too, that what I have recommended, in reference to the whole school, should be done with each individual. Ascertain, (by other means however than formal examination,) to what stage his education has advanced, and deliberately consider what objects you can reasonably expect to effect for him, while he remains under your care. You cannot indeed always form your plans to suit, so exactly, your general views in regard to the school and to individuals, as you could wish. But these general views will, in a thousand cases, modify your plans, or affect in a greater or less degree, all your

arrangements. They will keep you to a steady purpose, and your work will go on far more systematically and regularly, than it would, if, as in fact many teachers do, you were to come headlong into your school, take things just as you find them, and carry them forward at random, without end or aim.

This survey of your field being made, you are prepared to commence definite operations, and the great difficulty, in carrying your plans into effect, is, how to act more efficiently on *the greatest numbers at a time*. The whole business of public instruction, if it goes on at all, must go on by the teacher's skill in multiplying his power, by acting on *numbers at once*. In most books on education, we are taught, almost exclusively, how to operate on the *individual*. It is the error into which theoretic writers almost always fall. We meet, in every periodical, and in every treatise, and in fact, in almost every conversation on the subject, with remarks, which sound very well by the fire-side, but they are totally inefficient and useless in school, from their being apparently based upon the supposition, that the teacher has but *one* pupil to attend to at a time. The great question in the management of schools, is not, how you can take *one* scholar, and lead him forward, most rapidly, in a prescribed course, but how you can classify and arrange *numbers*, comprising every possible variety, both as to knowledge and capacity, so as to carry them all forward effectually together.

The extent to which a teacher may multiply his power, by acting on numbers at a time, is very great. In order to estimate it,

we must consider carefully what it is, when carried to the greatest extent, to which it is capable of being carried, under the most favorable circumstances. Now it is possible for a teacher to speak so as to be easily heard by three hundred persons, and three hundred pupils can be easily so seated, as to see his illustrations or diagrams. Now suppose that three hundred pupils, all ignorant of the method of reducing fractions to a common denominator, and yet all old enough to learn, are collected in one room. Suppose they are all attentive and desirous of learning, it is very plain that the process may be explained to the whole at once, so that half an hour spent in that exercise, would enable a very large proportion of them to understand the subject. So, if a teacher is explaining to a class in Grammar, the difference between a noun and verb, the explanation would do as well for several hundred, as for the dozen who constitute the class, if arrangements could only be made to have the hundreds hear it. But there are, perhaps, only a hundred in the school, and of these a large part understand already the point to be explained, and another large part are too young to attend to it. I wish the object of these remarks not to be misunderstood. I do not recommend the attempt to teach on so extensive a scale; I admit that it is impracticable; I only mean to show in what the impracticability consists, namely, in the difficulty of making such arrangements as to derive the full benefit from the instructions rendered. They are, in the nature of things, available to the extent I have represented, but, in actual practice, the full benefit cannot be derived. Now, so far as we

thus fall short of this full benefit, so far there is, of course, waste; and it is difficult or impossible to make such arrangements as will avoid the waste, in this manner, of a large portion of every effort, which the teacher makes.

A very small class instructed by an able teacher, is like a factory of a hundred spindles, with a water-wheel of power sufficient for a thousand. In such a case, even if the owner, from want of capital, or any other cause, cannot add the other nine hundred, he ought to know how much of his power is in fact unemployed, and make arrangements to bring it into useful exercise, as soon as he can. The teacher in the same manner, should understand what is the full beneficial effect, which it is possible, *in theory*, to derive from his instructions. He should understand, too, that just so far as he falls short of this full effect, there is waste. It may be unavoidable; part of it unquestionably is, like the friction of machinery, unavoidable. Still, it is waste; and it ought to be so understood, that by the gradual perfection of the machinery, it may be more and more fully prevented.

Always bear in mind then, when you are devoting your time to two or three individuals in a class, that you are losing a very large part of your labor. Your instructions are conducive to good effect, only to the one tenth or one twentieth of the extent, to which, under more favorable circumstances, they might be made available. And though you cannot always avoid this loss, you ought always to be aware of it, and so to shape your measures, as to diminish it as much as possible.

We come now to consider the particular measures to be adopted, in giving instruction.

The objects which are to be secured, in the management of classes, are twofold,

1. Recitation.

2. Instruction.

These two objects are, it is plain, entirely distinct. Under the latter, is included all the explanation, and assistance, and additional information, which the teacher may give his pupils, and, under the former, such an *examination* of individuals, as is necessary to secure their careful attention to their lessons. It is unsafe to neglect either of these points. If the class meetings are mere *recitations*, they soon become dull and mechanical: the pupils generally take little interest in their studies, and imbibe no literary spirit. Their intellectual progress will, accordingly, suddenly cease, the moment they leave school, and cease to be called upon to recite lessons. On the other hand, if *instruction* is all that is aimed at, and *recitation*, (by which I mean, as above explained, such an examination of individuals as is necessary to ascertain that they have faithfully performed the tasks assigned,) is neglected, the exercise soon becomes not much more than a lecture, to which those, and those only, will attend, who please.

The business, therefore, of a thorough examination of the class must not be omitted. I do not mean, that each individual scholar must, every day, be examined; but simply that the teacher must, in some way or other, satisfy himself, by reasonable evidence,

that the whole class are really prepared. A great deal of ingenuity may be exercised, in contriving means for effecting this object, in the shortest possible time. I know of no part of the field of a teacher's labors, which may be more facilitated, by a little ingenuity, than this.

One teacher, for instance, has a spelling lesson to hear. He begins at the head of the line, and putting one word to each boy, goes regularly down, each successive pupil calculating the chances whether a word, which he can accidentally spell, will or will not come to him. If he spells it, the teacher cannot tell whether he is prepared or not. That word is only one among fifty, constituting the lesson. If he misses it, the teacher cannot decide that he was unprepared. It might have been a single accidental error.

Another teacher, hearing the same lesson, requests the boys to bring their slates, and as he dictates the words, one after another, requires all to write them. After they are all written, he calls upon the pupils to spell them aloud as they have written them, simultaneously, pausing a moment after each, to give those who are wrong, an opportunity to indicate it, by some mark opposite the word misspelled. They all count the number of errors and report them. He passes down the class, glancing his eye at the work of each one, to see that all is right, noticing particularly those slates, which, from the character of the boys, need a more careful inspection. A teacher, who had never tried this experiment, would be surprised at the rapidity with which

such work will be done by a class, after a little practice.

Now how different are these two methods, in their actual results! In the latter case, the whole class are thoroughly examined. In the former, not a single member of it, is. Let me not be understood to recommend exactly this method of teaching spelling, as the best one to be adopted, in all cases. I only bring it forward as an illustration of the idea, that a little machinery, a little ingenuity, in contriving ways of acting on the *whole*, rather than on individuals, will very much promote the teacher's designs.

In order to facilitate such plans, it is highly desirable that the classes should be trained to military precision and exactness in these manipulations. What I mean by this, may perhaps be best illustrated, by describing a case: it will show, in another branch, how much will be gained by acting upon numbers at once, instead of upon each individual in succession.

Imagine, then, that a teacher requested all the pupils of his school, who could write, to take out their slates, at the hour for a general exercise. As soon as the first bustle of opening and shutting the desks was over, he looked around the room, and saw some ruling lines across their slates, others wiping them all over on both sides, with sponges, others scribbling, or writing, or making figures.

"All those," says he, with a pleasant tone and look, "who have taken out any thing besides slates, may rise."

Several, in various parts of the room, stood up.

"All those, who have written any thing since they took out their slates, may rise too, and those who have wiped their slates."

When all were up, he said to them, though not with a frown or a scowl, as if they had committed some very great offence;

"Suppose a company of soldiers should be ordered to *form a line*, and instead of simply obeying that order, they should all set at work, each in his own way, doing something else. One man, at one end of the line, begins to load and fire his gun; another takes out his knapsack, and begins to eat his luncheon; a third amuses himself by going as fast as possible through the exercise; and another still, begins to march about, hither and thither, facing to the right and left, and performing all the evolutions he can think of. What should you say to such a company as that?"

The boys laughed.

"It is better," said the teacher, "when numbers are acting under the direction of one, that they should all act *exactly together*. In this way, we advance much faster, than we otherwise should. Be careful therefore to do exactly what I command, and nothing more."

"*Provide a place, on your slates, large enough to write a single line*," added the teacher, in a distinct voice. I print his orders in italics, and his remarks and explanations in Roman letter.

"*Prepare to write.*"

"I mean by this," he continued, "that you place your slates before you, with your pencils at the place where you are to begin, so that all may commence precisely at the same instant."

The teacher who tries such an experiment as this, will find, at such a juncture, an expression of fixed and pleased attention upon every countenance in school. All will be intent; all will be interested. Boys love order and system, and acting in concert; and they will obey, with great alacrity, such commands as these, if they are good-humoredly, though decidedly expressed.

The teacher observed in one part of the room, a hand raised, indicating that the boy wished to speak to him. He gave him liberty by pronouncing his name.

"I have no pencil;" said the boy.

A dozen hands, all around him, were immediately seen fumbling in pockets and desks, and, in a few minutes, several pencils were reached out for his acceptance.

The boy looked at the pencils, and then at the teacher; he did not exactly know, whether he was to take one or not.

"All those boys," said the teacher, pleasantly, "who have taken out pencils, may rise."

"Have these boys done right, or wrong?"

"Right;" "Wrong;" "Right;" answered their companions, variously.

"Their motive was to help their classmate out of his difficulties; that is a good feeling, certainly."

"Yes sir; right;" "Right."

"But I thought you promised me a moment ago," replied the teacher, "not to do any thing, unless I commanded it. Did I ask for pencils?"

A pause.

"I do not blame these boys at all, in this case, still it is better to adhere rigidly to the principle, of *exact obedience*, when numbers are acting together. I thank them, therefore, for being so ready to assist a companion, but they must put their pencils away, as they were taken out without orders."

Now such a dialogue as this, if the teacher speaks in a good-humored, though decided manner, would be universally well received, in any school. Whenever strictness of discipline is unpopular, it is rendered so, simply by the ill-humored and ill-judged means, by which it is attempted to be introduced. But all children will love strict discipline, if it is pleasantly, though firmly maintained. It is a great, though very prevalent mistake, to imagine, that boys and girls like a lax and inefficient government, and dislike the pressure of steady control. What they dislike is, sour looks and irritating language, and they therefore very naturally dislike every thing introduced or sustained by their means. If, however, exactness and precision in all the operations of a class and of the school, are introduced and enforced, in the proper manner, i. e., by a firm, but mild and good-humored authority, scholars will universally be pleased with them. They like to see the uniform appearance,—the straight line,—the simultaneous movement. They like to feel the operation of system, and to realize, while they are at the school room, that they form a community, governed by fixed and steady laws, firmly but pleasantly administered. On the other hand, laxity of discipline,

and the disorder which will result from it, will only lead the pupils to contemn their teacher, and to hate their school.

By introducing and maintaining such a discipline as I have described, great facilities will be secured for examining the classes. For example, to take a case different from the one before described; let us suppose that a class have been performing a number of examples in Addition. They come together to the recitation, and under one mode of managing classes, the teacher is immediately beset, by a number of the pupils, with excuses. One had no slate; another was absent when the lesson was assigned; a third performed the work, but it got rubbed out; and a fourth did not know what was to be done. The teacher stops to hear all these, and to talk about them; fretted himself, and fretting the delinquents by his impatient remarks. The rest of the class are waiting, and having nothing good to do, the temptation is almost irresistible to do something bad. One boy is drawing pictures on his slate, to make his neighbors laugh; another is whispering, and two more are at play. The disorder continues, while the teacher goes round examining slate after slate, his whole attention being engrossed by each individual, as the pupils come to him successively, while the rest are left to themselves, interrupted only by an occasional harsh or even angry, but utterly useless rebuke from him.

But under *another* mode of managing classes and schools, a very different result would be produced.

A boy approaches the teacher to render an excuse, the teacher

replies, addressing himself, however, to the whole class, "I shall give all an opportunity to offer their excuses presently. No one must come till he is called."

The class then regularly take their places in the recitation seats; the prepared and unprepared together. The following commands are given and obeyed, promptly. They are spoken pleasantly, but still in the tone of command.

"The class may rise."

"All those, that are not fully prepared with this lesson, may sit."

A number sit, and others, doubtful whether they are prepared or not, or thinking that there is something peculiar in their cases, which they wish to state, raise their hands, or make any other signal which is customary to indicate a wish to speak. Such a signal ought always to be agreed upon, and understood in school.

The teacher shakes his head; saying "I will hear you presently. If there is, on any account whatever, any doubt whether you are prepared, you must sit."

"Those that are standing may read their answers, to No. 1. Unit figure?"

*Boys.* "Five."

*Teacher.* "Tens?"

*B.* "Six."

*T.* "Hundreds?"

*B.* "Seven."

While these numbers are thus reading, the teacher looks at the

boys, and can easily see whether any are not reading their own answers, but only following the rest. If they have been trained to speak exactly together, his ear will also at once detect any erroneous answer, which any one may give. He takes down the figures given by the majority, on his own slate, and reads them aloud.

"This is the answer obtained by the majority: it is, undoubtedly right. Those, who have different answers may sit."

These directions, if understood and obeyed, would divide the class evidently into two portions. Those standing, have their work done, and done correctly, and those sitting, have some excuse or error to be examined. A new lesson may now be assigned, and the first portion may be dismissed; which, in a well regulated school, will be two-thirds of the class. Their slates may be slightly examined, as they pass by the teacher, on their way to their seats, to see that all is fair; but it will be safe to take it for granted, that a result, in which a majority agree, will be right. Truth is consistent with itself, but error, in such a case, never is. This, the teacher can, at any time, show, by comparing the answers that are wrong; they will always be found, not only to differ from the correct result, but to contradict each other.

The teacher may now, if be pleases, after the majority of the class have gone, hear the reasons of those who were unprepared, and look for the errors of those whose work was incorrect; but it is better to spend as little time as possible, in such a way. If a scholar is not prepared, it is not of much consequence, whether

it is because he forgot his book, or mistook the lesson; or if it is ascertained that his answer is incorrect, it is, ordinarily, a mere waste of time, to search for the particular error.

"I have looked over my work, sir," says the boy, perhaps, "and I cannot find where it is wrong." He means by it, that he does not believe that it is wrong.

"It is no matter if you cannot," would be the proper reply, "since it certainly is wrong; you have made a mistake in adding, somewhere, but it is not worth while for me to spend two or three minutes apiece with all of you, to ascertain where. Try to be careful next time."

The cases of those who are unprepared at a recitation, ought, by no means, to be passed by, unnoticed, although it would be unwise to spend much time in examining each, in detail.

"It is not of much consequence," the teacher might say, "whether you have good excuses, or bad, so long as you are not prepared. In future life, you will certainly be unsuccessful, if you fail, no matter for what reason, to discharge the duties which devolve upon you. A carpenter, for instance, would certainly lose his work, if he should not perform it faithfully, and in season. Excuses, no matter how reasonable, will do him little good. So in this school. I want good recitations, not good excuses. I hope every one will be prepared to-morrow."

It is not probable, however, that every one would be prepared the next day, in such a case; but, by acting steadily on these principles, the number of delinquencies would be so much

diminished, that the very few which should be left, could easily be examined in detail, and the remedies applied.

Simultaneous recitation, by which I mean the practice of addressing a question to all the class, to be answered by all together, is a practice, which has been for some years rapidly extending in our schools, and, if adopted with proper limits and restrictions, is attended with great advantage. The teacher must guard against some dangers, however, which will be likely to attend it.

1. Some will answer very eagerly, instantly after the question is completed. They wish to show their superior readiness. Let the teacher mention this, expose, kindly, the motive which leads to it, and tell them it is as irregular to answer before the rest, as after them.

2. Some will defer their answers, until they can catch those of their comrades, for a guide. Let the teacher mention this fault, expose the motive which leads to it, and tell them that, if they do not answer independently, and at once, they had better not answer at all.

3. Some will not answer at all. The teacher can tell by looking around the class who do not, for they cannot counterfeit the proper motion of the lips, with promptness and decision, unless they know what the answer is to be. He ought occasionally to say to such an one, "I perceive you do not answer;" and ask him questions individually.

4. In some cases, there is danger of confusion in the answers,

from the fact that the question may be of such a nature, that the answer is long, and may, by different individuals, be differently expressed. This evil must be guarded against, by so shaping the question, as to admit of a reply in a single word. In reading large numbers, for example, each figure may be called for by itself, or they may be given one after another, the pupils keeping exact time. When it is desirable to ask a question to which the answer is necessarily long, it may be addressed to an individual, or the whole class may write their replies, which may then be read in succession.

In a great many cases where simultaneous answering is practised, after a short time, the evils above specified are allowed to grow, until at last some half dozen bright members of a class answer for all, the rest dragging after them, echoing their replies, or ceasing to take any interest in an exercise, which brings no personal and individual responsibility upon them. To prevent this the teacher should exercise double vigilance, at such a time. He should often address questions to individuals alone, especially to those most likely to be inattentive and careless, and guard against the ingress of every abuse, which might, without close vigilance, appear.

With these cautions, the method here alluded to will be found to be of very great advantage in many studies; for example, all the arithmetical tables may be recited in this way; words may be spelled, answers to sums given; columns of figures added, or numbers multiplied; and many questions in History, Geography,

and other miscellaneous studies, answered, especially the general questions asked for the purpose of a review.

But besides being useful as a mode of examination, this plan of answering questions simultaneously, is a very important means of fixing in the mind, any facts, which the teacher may communicate to his pupils. If, for instance, he says some day to a class, that Vasco de Gama was the discoverer of the passage round the Cape of Good Hope, and leaves it here, in a few days, not one in twenty, will recollect the name. But let him call upon them all to spell it, simultaneously, and then to pronounce it distinctly, three or four times in concert, and the word will be very strongly impressed upon the mind. The reflecting teacher will find a thousand cases, in the instruction of his classes, and in his general exercises, in the school, in which this principle will be of great utility. It is universal in its application. What we *say*, we fix by the very act of saying it, in the mind. Hence reading aloud, though a slower, is a far more thorough method, than reading silently; and it is better, in almost all cases, whether in the family, or in sabbath, or common schools, when general instructions are given, to have the leading points fixed in the mind, by questions, answered simultaneously.

But we are wandering a little from our subject; which is, in this part of our chapter, the methods of *examining* a class, not of giving or fixing instructions.

Another mode of examining classes, which it is important to describe, consists in requiring *written answers* to the questions

asked. The form and manner, in which this plan may be adopted, is various. The class may bring their slates to the recitation, and the teacher may propose questions successively, the answers to which all the class may write, numbering them carefully. After a dozen answers are written, the teacher may call, at random, for them; or he may repeat a question, and ask each pupil to read the answer he had written; or he may examine the slates. Perhaps this method may be very successfully employed in reviews, by dictating to the class, a list of questions, relating to the ground they have gone over, for a week, and to which they are to prepare answers, written out at length, and to be brought in at the next exercise. This method may be made more formal still, by requiring a class to write a full and regular abstract of all they have learned, during a specified time. The practice of thus reducing to writing what has been learned, will be attended with many advantages, so obvious that they need not be described.

It will be perceived that three methods of examining classes have now been named, and these will afford the teacher the means of introducing a very great variety, in his mode of conducting his recitations, while he still carries his class forward steadily in their prescribed course. Each is attended with its peculiar advantages. The *single replies*, coming from individuals specially addressed, are more rigid, and more to be relied upon; —but they consume a great deal of time, and while one is questioned, it requires much skill, to keep up interest in the rest. The *simultaneous answers* of a class awaken more general

interest, but it is difficult, without special care, to secure, by this means, a thorough examination of all. The *written replies*, are more thorough, but they require more time, and attention, and while they habituate the pupil to express his thoughts in writing, they would, if exclusively adopted, fail to accustom him to an equally important practice, that of the oral communication of his thoughts. A constant variety, of which these three methods should be the elements, is unquestionably the best mode. We not only, by this means, secure in a great degree the advantages which each is fitted to produce, but we gain, also, the additional advantage and interest of variety.

By these, and perhaps by other means, it is the duty of the teacher to satisfy himself that his pupils are really attentive to their duties. It is not perhaps necessary, that every individual should be, every day, minutely examined; this is, in many cases, impossible. But the system of examination should be so framed, and so administered, as to be daily felt by all, and to bring upon every one, a daily responsibility.

We come now to consider the second general head, which was to be discussed in this chapter.

The study of books alone, is insufficient to give knowledge to the young. In the first stage, learning to read, a book is of no use whatever, without the voice of the living teacher. The child cannot take a step alone. As the pupil, however, advances in his course, his dependence upon his teacher for guidance and help, continually diminishes, until, at last, the scholar sits in his

solitary study, with no companion but his books, and desiring, for a solution of every difficulty, nothing but a larger library. In schools, however, the pupils have made so little progress in this course, that they all need more or less of this oral assistance. Difficulties must be explained; questions must be answered; the path must be smoothed, and the way pointed out, by a guide, who has travelled it before, or it will be impossible for the pupil to go on. This is the part of our subject, which we now approach.

The great principle which is to guide the teacher, in this part of his duty, is this; *Assist your pupils, in such a way, as to lead them, as soon as possible, to do without assistance*. This is fundamental. In a short time they will be away from your reach; they will have no teacher to consult; and unless you teach them how to understand books themselves, they must necessarily stop suddenly in their course, the moment you cease to help them forward. I shall proceed, therefore, to consider the subject, in the following plan:—

1. Means of exciting interest in study.
2. The kind and degree of assistance to be rendered.
3. Miscellaneous suggestions.

1. Interesting the pupils in their studies. There are various principles of human nature, which may be of great avail, in accomplishing this object. Making intellectual effort, and acquiring knowledge, are always pleasant to the human mind, unless some peculiar circumstances render them otherwise. The teacher has, therefore, only to remove obstructions, and sources

of pain, and the employment of his pupils will be, of itself, a pleasure.

"I am going to give you a new exercise to-day," said a teacher to a class of boys, in Latin. "I am going to have you parse your whole lesson, in writing. It will be difficult, but I think you may be able to accomplish it."

The class looked surprised. They did not know what *parsing in writing* could be.

"You may first, when you take your seats, and are ready to prepare the lesson, write upon your slates, a list of the ten first nouns, arranging them in a column. Do you understand so far?"

"Yes sir."

"Then rule lines for another column, just beyond this. In parsing nouns, what is the first particular to be named?"

"What the noun is from."

"Yes; that is, its nominative. Now you may write, at the head of the first column, the word *Nouns*, and at the head of the second, *Nom.*, for nominative. Then rule a line for the third column. What shall this contain?" "The declension." "Yes; and the fourth?" "Gender." "The fifth?" "Number."

In the same manner the other columns were designated; the sixth, was to contain case; the seventh, the word, with which the noun was connected, in construction; and the eighth, a reference to the rule.

"Now I wish you," continued the teacher, "to fill up such a table as this, with *ten* nouns. Do you understand how I mean?"

"Yes sir;" "No sir;" they answered, variously.

"All who do understand may take their seats; as I wish to give as little explanation, as possible. The more you can depend upon yourselves, the better."

Those who saw clearly what was to be done, left the class, and the teacher continued his explanation to those who were left behind. He made the plan perfectly clear to them, by taking a particular noun, and running it through the table, showing what should be written opposite to the word, in all the columns; and then dismissed them.

The class separated, as every class would, in such a case, with strong interest in the work before them. It was not so difficult as to perplex them, and yet it required attention and care. They were interested and pleased;—pleased with the effort which it required them to make, and they anticipated, with interest and pleasure, the time of coming again to the class, to report and compare their work.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.