

Mrs. M. S. Doten contributed a paper upon "The Duties of a Public School Teacher," and in the absence of Mrs. Doten, the paper was read by Mr. Ring.

THE DUTIES OF A PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER.

SET FORTH AND REVIEWED BY ONE OF THEM.

I fear that some among us (perhaps I myself may not be wholly free from the charge) may, in the unceasing round of the daily treadmill duties of the school room, become weary and faint in spirit, and at times lose sight of the higher, nobler aims for which we are working; or we may not be sufficiently imbued with a proper understanding of our duties—of what they consist; or knowing and understanding them perfectly, perhaps we may lack in that zealous enthusiasm which should actuate us in our work. Therefore, partly to enlighten others, but more in order to strengthen my own weakness, I am impelled to set forth, to review these manifold duties, the number and variety of which increase till their name is Legion—with a capital L,—in the hope that having done so I, at least, shall be encouraged and better fitted to perform them, on the principle that our tasks are lightened when their nature is thoroughly understood.

First on the list is, I think, preparation—that is before one can hope to enter the ranks as a teacher, she must by a long course of study, be prepared to pass examinations, to get the seal and stamp of the examiners on her brow, as it were, then, having been fortunate enough to secure a position, she must be prepared daily, hourly, and *minutely* for the expected and the unexpected, the latter being often the most difficult of problems with which she may have to deal during the day. Good authorities assure us that no lesson, however simple it may be, should be presented to a class without previous study and preparation by the teacher. Which all will agree in pronouncing correct, for if a teacher does not know her lesson (I use the feminine pronoun advisedly) it naturally follows that she cannot teach it properly. So then, if she have a dozen different subjects to handle in the course of the day, she should prepare them all by a careful previous study. When shall this be done? Do not ask. A teacher having the proper appreciation of her duties will always find time for all she ought to do.

Dr. Watts, of blessed memory, said long ago that "instructors should not only be skillful in those sciences which they teach, but should have skill in the method of teaching and patience in the practice." And the word "patience" brings me to another and most important duty.

The patience with which the good teacher bears the thousand and one trials of her daily life compare not unfavorably with that of Job, the Biblical, under his uncommon sufferings. Indeed, I think the teacher's patience is of a higher order, for as a rule she does not murmur, but studies, as of course she ought, by day and by night too, how she may best overcome this or that annoying habit into which the Eddies or the Jimmies, the Marys and the Sarahs may have fallen. More than this, she not only studies over these points, but she tries in every possible way to aid these same troublesome young people in correcting themselves, and by tact, kindness, judicious praise and long continued patience often secures better results than she even dared to hope for, and establishes an influence that may last through life. It is the hope of this that buoys her up and leads her, though discouraged, to make renewed efforts so that, if she sometimes feels as if she had worked almost in vain, she is seldom for long weary in well doing.

Good nature is another important factor, duty, I should call it in the teacher's work. Washington Irving wrote: "Good temper, like a sunny day, sheds brightness over everything." A pleasant, cheerful smile, the "soft answer that turneth away wrath" will often work wonders with the obstinate, refractory pupil; and no teacher who cannot govern herself can hope to govern those under her charge. The Good Book says: "He that governeth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city." She should take all these good precepts to herself and act upon them. No matter how her scholars try her, she should always preserve a calm and even spirit, smile and speak pleasantly, let her rage and fume inwardly as she may.

These are the most important of the daily duties of setting a good, not to say a bright and shining example in her own life for the scholars to imitate, of habits of punctuality, order, neatness in dress; of attention to social duties, I do not need to speak. It goes without saying, as the French say, that we are all models in these respects, object lessons for our pupils, as it were.

And now I come to those duties which constitute so important a part of the teacher's work, and of which some thoughtless ones occasionally complain: the monthly examinations, dreaded by teachers and pupils. More, probably, by the former, for on her falls the task of preparing questions and looking over the papers. This must be done carefully, every question and its answer be considered before marking, and often a comparison between papers is necessary, for it too frequently happens that the answers in different papers will be couched in the same language,

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showing that in spite of close supervision, communication of ideas has been going on. When this is the case the teacher is apt to feel that she has obtained the combined knowledge of the class, which is not at all what she wants.

This shows us another duty, that of teaching in season and out of season that truth and honesty should be the guide, not only in the school room, but through life. Next comes the making up of percentages, averaging studies, making out the cards and reports for the Superintendent. Pleasant duties in themselves, even if they do take nights, Saturdays and possibly Sundays in the accomplishing. In this connection, a little poem called "School Statistics" seems particularly apropos, therefore I give it:

" 'Twas Saturday night, and a teacher sat
 Alone her task pursuing;
 She averaged this and she averaged that
 Of all that her class were doing;
 She reckoned percentage, so many boys,
 And so many girls she counted,
 And marked all the tardy and absentees,
 And to what all the absence amounted.

Names and residences wrote in full,
 Over many columns and pages;
 Yankee, Teutonic, African, Celt,
 And averaged all the ages;
 The date of admission of every one,
 And cases of flagellation.
 And prepared a list of the graduates
 For the coming examination.

And her weary head sank low on her book,
 And her weary heart still lower,
 For some of the pupils had little brain,
 And she could not furnish more.
 She slept, she dreamed, it seemed she died,
 And her spirit went to Hades,
 And they met her there with a question fair,
 'State what the per cent. of your grade is.'

Ages had slowly rolled away,
 Leaving but partial traces,
 And the teacher's spirit walked one day
 In the old familiar places.
 A mound of fossilized school reports
 Attracted her observation,
 As high as the State House dome and as wide
 As Boston since the annexation.

She came to the spot where they buried her bones,
 And the ground was well built over,
 And laborers digging threw out a skull
 Once planted beneath the clover.
 A disciple of Galen wandering by
 Paused to look at the diggers,
 And picking the skull up, looked through the eye,
 And saw it was lined with figures.

'Just as I thought,' said the young M. D.,
 'How easy it is to kill 'em.
 'Statistics ossified every fold
 'Of cerebrum and cerebellum.'
 'It's a great curiosity, sure,' said Pat,
 'By the bones, can you tell the creature?'
 'Oh, nothing strange,' the doctor said, 'that
 'Was a nineteenth century teacher.'"

Self improvement is another of the teacher's duties, and while improving herself she must also aid the others in doing the same, therefore the necessity for reading circles and Institutes. These she should not only be prepared to attend, but she should cheerfully prepare papers on whatever subject may be called for. Should one more daring than the others rebel, she will be met with the agreeable statement that there are plenty to fill her place at a moment's notice. This she knows to be true, for from the High Schools, Normal Schools and Universities all over the land are sent out every year numbers of new, glittering articles stamped as genuine, with the confidence of youth ready to fill the place of the older and more experienced teacher, reminding one in a slight degree of the saying, "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

I have thus imperfectly touched on some of the duties of teachers, not on all, for, as I have before stated, their name is legion. There is a pleasanter side to the picture, however, and the teacher who loves her work receives a compensation far above that included in her salary, and though she may sometimes feel that it is

" Teach, teach, teach,
 From morn to quiet even,
 Time and thought and brain and soul,
 For a pittance grudgingly given."

'The more cheerful thought will come in reply:

"No rest in a life of weary toil!
No hope! Hush! a cheery voice rings clear,
Faithfully work; hopefully work:
You are molding the country's future here."

Miss Mary Rex Barrett of Carson read the following essay:

ELOCUTION.

Man's earnest thought repeat in earnest tone,
Thou canst not idly take it as thine own;
Think o'er it well, and if 'tis grave or gay,
Give each the tone that would such thought obey.

Elocution we know to be the expression of thought and feeling by voice and action. As a science it analyzes expression and imparts to us a knowledge of the principles of elocution; as an art, it puts that knowledge into practice. It cultivates the voice and memory, trains the body to ease and grace of position and makes us familiar with our greatest writers, whose thoughts we must grasp and take as our own before we can give them true expression. The examination of its many advantages leads to a realization of the power of elocution. The cultivation of the voice is something which cannot come amiss in any field. It is not necessary that one should be an actor, or an orator, or a lecturer, that he may appreciate the advantages of a well modulated, flexible voice, trained to follow the impressions made upon the brain so quickly and so expressively that the thoughts, instead of taking the tone of borrowed ideas, seem to be really those of the speaker. An unpleasant voice will detract from the most beautiful language and thought, and, although the voice is a gift which, to a great extent, must be accepted as it is, we know how much has been and can be done by cultivation. Some one tells us that while we consider it positively necessary that musical instruments, which are for occasional use only, should be sweet toned and in perfect tune, we deem it of less importance that our own voices should be musical and kept in perfect tune for the pleasure of ourselves and others. Muscular exercise develops grace and ease in the body; the voice may be doing its part; the face, the seat of expression, may be in perfect harmony with the voice; but, if the body be awkward and uneasy, the whole current of thought is ruffled by the disturbing element. We desire the representation of ease, beauty and grace in our pictures and statues. We care little for beauty of face if beauty of form be not with it to lend grace. What would there be in that perfect little piece of statuary, "Youth as a Butterfly," if it were not for the marvelous grace of position which the sculptor has given to every line of the figure? Should what we think so desirable in picture and statue be less desirable in ourselves?

The committing to memory of selections to be recited must cultivate the memory; and the entering into the spirit of the writer, that we may truly express his thoughts and feelings, make real to us ideas which we might never have grasped from a careless reading of the words. In connection with our schools, the relation which elocution bears to reading is most important; that it is a part of reading and should be taught with it is not fully realized. Before the reading lesson should come the muscular exercises, and the boy or girl will stand with greater ease and comfort after the laziness of even half an hour's sitting has been thrown off by brisk exercise of the muscles. That the reader must grasp the meaning of what he is attempting to read, if any expression is given to the reading, is a fact thoroughly understood, and yet so often we hear a little fellow lining out word after word, sentence after sentence, without any idea of the meaning of all these words. If words too difficult for his comprehension come in his lesson, the *ideas* must be clothed in simpler language for him, and when he catches the *meaning* he will give expression to even the long words.

The wee learner almost invariably pitches his voice to a high key, jerks the words out, when he realizes what that group of letters means and then comes to a full stop until he spells out the next word. Phonetic spelling is the greatest aid to smooth reading. When the sounds are thoroughly understood by the little one, he is able to read smoothly and distinctly and to pronounce words which he has never known before. If he is asked to give the sounds of the letters slowly, then a little faster each time, he will run the sounds together and pronounce the word. Phonetic spelling is also a great aid to good articulation. If a pupil pronounces his words indistinctly, a short practice of the sound will show a decided improvement in distinct utterance. Parents frequently complain that their children who read quite well from the readers which they are using, when asked to read at home, from magazine or newspaper, without preparation, read in a manner which makes the reading prove a mere succession of words without smoothness or expression. This will be the case until we realize that the newspaper, magazine and bright, interesting story, read without preparation, must form a part of the material for the reading lesson.

Rhetorical exercise as generally taught, consists in giving the pupil his choice of