

The following original Essay, by Miss Newcomb, of Cornwallis, is a Normal School Exercise, and given at the close of the last term. The Gold Medal from Lord Dufferin was awarded, by the Faculty of the Institution, to Miss Newcomb.

The Observing Powers.

It is a common mistake to suppose that education merely includes a knowledge of certain facts. Education and instruction are not synonymous. The former not only includes the latter, but also the cultivation and development of our whole nature. The knowledge given may be mere words, conveying no idea to the learner's mind. For example, a child learns: "English grammar is the art of speaking and writing the English language with propriety." A parrot could learn the same, and would likely feel as much interested as the child does.

A desire for knowledge should be awakened in the child's mind; not only this, but he should be trained to exercise his intellect to acquire the desired knowledge; by this exercise his powers will be developed.

It will be seen at once, that this training must begin at the first awakened power of the mind. The young child cannot reason, he may not remember, but he can see, hear, taste, touch, smell; the man's perceptive powers are not more vigorous than the child's; hence we perceive that if nature's order is followed, education will begin with these perceptive powers. If these powers are well trained, the foundation is firmly laid, and the mind is fitted to go on working out its own development.

The presentative powers are the only faculties of the mind, which act through a material organism. In recalling and reasoning, the mind can receive no aid from an external sense, it must act wholly within itself, and would perform its work just as faithfully, were all communications with the outer world cut off. But if new knowledge is to be acquired by observation, the object to be observed must be presented to one or more of the senses, and the perceptive powers acting through these senses, gain a greater or less amount of knowledge, according to the degree of attention, and the acuteness of the external organs. It is manifest that, if the acuteness of the senses is increased, the mind has greater facility for acquiring knowledge by the perceptive powers.

It cannot be doubted, that the senses are capable of almost unlimited improvement. Oftentimes great acuteness of some one sense is acquired by special occupation; for example, the sailor can tell the character of a distant ship, where the eye not trained to look at distant objects, would discern a mere speck on the ocean. Numerous instances are given of persons deprived of one sense, so training those in their possession, that they nearly fill the place of the missing one. The case of Laura Bridgman, who, without either sight or hearing, has been so trained as to be able to read, to write, to know the different colours by their smell, to distinguish even comparative strangers by a touch of the hand, is the most remarkable instance of extreme cultivation of the senses.

But whilst such cultivation of the senses is desirable, it is not practicable in school work to give each individual sense, as touch, taste, and smell, this special training. Sight and hearing having closer connection with the mind, are worthy of more careful attention. The eye should be trained to judge of heights and distances, to distinguish the different sounds, and to judge of the qualities of sound, as harmony, pitch, duration, tones.

But it is rather the powers of the mind than any external organ of sense that should be specially cultivated. Whilst it is certain, that if the external organ does not receive the impression, or if the nerves do not convey the sensation to the brain, the mind cannot observe; yet lack of observation usually arises, not from any fault in the material organism, but from the mind's inattention. An ignorant person examines a plant pretty attentively, as he thinks, and can give a general description of it; now let a botanist look at the same specimen; he will observe more at a glance than the other has seen in all his examination, he will notice all the particular points, all the minute details, which have escaped the others observation. But is the difference in their eyes? Is the one who does not observe partially blind? Or is it not rather in the degree of attention, that the mind has given to the object. An Arabian dervish once surprised some travellers by giving minute description of a camel, which he had not seen. All that he knew about the animal he had learned by observing its path. One footprint being less distinct than the others, he knew that the camel was lame; only one side of the pathway had been grazed, which showed that one eye was blind; wherever a bite had been taken a little tuft of grass was left to mark the place of a missing tooth; bees on one side and birds on the other, told that the load was partly honey, partly grain. But this close observation was not the result of any particular keenness in the external organ. No microscopic power was needed to see anything that the dervish had pointed out. Though of themselves the travellers would never have noticed all this,

yet when their attention was called to these different particulars, they wondered that they had not seen all before. There was no fault in their material organism, what they needed was to give undivided attention to the objects before them.

The original endowments of all minds are not the same. It is natural for some to observe more closely than others. We might find two persons, whose minds have received precisely the same training, and yet the one may know far more of the objects about him than the other. But in all, this power of observation, like the other faculties of the mind, can be improved. The power of the mind to act in any certain way is increased by exercise. The observing powers must therefore be strengthened by each individual act of observation.

While yet very young the child has a natural desire for knowledge. He wishes to learn all the qualities of the objects about him. For this reason he subjects them to the action of his different senses. He hears a sound, he looks to see what has produced it; if successful in finding the object of his search, he is not satisfied with seeing it, but must touch it, in some cases taste it as well, thus learning its different qualities. If however, this laudable desire instead of being encouraged is repressed, the mind loses its interest in objects before it, and thus becomes less observing. This shows the importance of beginning the education while the mind is yet active, and in a susceptible condition. Long before the child enters school, the training of his observing power should begin. Instead of slighting his curious questions, answer them in such a way as to excite still deeper interest. The lessons which Baron Cuvier received from his mother, invested with deep interest every little shell and insect coming under his observation, and thus laid the foundation of the naturalist's future greatness.

As we have seen, observation depends on the attention of the mind. The greater the degree of attention, the closer the observation. This shows the necessity of fixing the mind attentively on any object to be observed. Naturally the mind attends only to what interests it, hence the children's lessons should be made attractive so as to excite interest, and this interest will hold the attention. As far as possible, every obstacle that would hinder the attention should be removed.

Object lessons properly given develop the observing powers. Some familiar object that the children suppose they are thoroughly acquainted with, should be the subject of the lesson. If they are required to give a description of the object, before they receive the lesson, it will probably be found that their knowledge is quite superficial. Present the object to the pupils, and let them observe attentively until they can describe minutely. It will require time and skill to lead the children on to see all that they might have been told with no trouble. It might be asked, what good arises from the lesson; the children know very little more than they did before. We reply that the value of the lesson is to be estimated, not by the amount of knowledge given, but by the degree of mental training. These lessons interest the children in the every day objects, lead them to feel that a vast field of knowledge is spread out before them, and teach them to use their eyes in the acquisition of this knowledge. By telling them what they might see for themselves, the teacher weakens rather than strengthens their powers.

"Strength of mind is exercise, not rest."

A story is told of how Agassiz taught one of his pupils. Placing before the would-be naturalist a specimen of a certain kind of fish, he bade him observe it alone and learn all its peculiarities. In a short time the student, supposing that he knew all, that could be learned from one specimen, grew very impatient at his teacher's continued absence; and when after some hours Agassiz returned, was quite surprised after telling all that he had learned, to hear that the most important feature was still unobserved. It was some days, before he learned in this way, all that Agassiz could have helped him to see at once. But the lesson taught him to depend on his own powers; he was now prepared to observe for himself; thus the mental training was of far more value than the mere amount of knowledge gained. We ought to let them observe all for themselves, but we need to direct their attention aright, encourage them, and keep up their interest until they see all that we wish them to observe. Any branch of natural science affords fine subjects for object lessons. Take botany for example. Teach the children to examine plants for themselves, to observe their resemblances and differences and encourage them to preserve specimens of as many varieties as they can. In this way they are trained to observe attentively.

Geography is also a good means for cultivating the perceptive faculty. By beginning with some perfectly familiar place, it may be the schoolroom itself, and causing the children to give accurate description, and to draw a map, the teacher trains the children to observe more closely than they ever have before. Children should be required to describe places that they visit. When they take a walk or drive, knowing that they are to describe what they see, they will be apt to observe more than they otherwise

would. If the children are thus trained to habits of observation, they will be quick to notice the peculiarities of any place they visit; they will not, as it were, go through the world with their eyes shut; if there is anything to be seen, they will see it.

Drawing is not to be overlooked in connection with the cultivation of these powers. Before a picture of an object can be drawn, that object must be carefully studied, each detail of form and colour must be observed. This subject must therefore be very valuable in causing children to use their eyes. Even if the subject is not pursued very far the very first exercises are useful.

But we need not specify further the different subjects by which the power of observation may be developed. Knowledge presented in analytical form, appeals directly to the presentative powers, hence if the analytical method of teaching is followed, every lesson given will help to train those powers. Highly cultivated observing powers bring us much pleasure as well as Knowledge. The pleasure that the artist derives from the beauties of nature or of art, or that the musician experiences in listening to harmonious sounds, cannot be appreciated by the uneducated mind. No pains should be spared to develop those powers, so as to increase the means of enjoyment, as well as the ability to gain knowledge. The desire for knowledge should be increased and the observing powers trained to minister to this desire.

"For every want that stimulates the breast becomes a source of pleasure when redrest." M. F. Newcomb.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

For the Christian Messenger.

Home Missions outside of the Convention.

Organization is very important to Christian work, but it is not every thing, it is not the chief thing, it is not the great want of the times, it does not belong to the Acts of the Apostles; a constitution builder, and a Christian worker is not synonymous. Grand, general centralizing, seems to be the idea of many. O, for a scheme so comprehensive as not to have an outside, so perfect as to run without any friction, so cunning as to untie the purse strings. The general combination has its spheres, and is always subject to drawbacks—there is the difficulty in managing details, and the risk of cancelling the individual. Give me the sectional scheme, unless a decided advantage is shown for the combination.

Bro. Porter takes high ground for his proposed arrangement—the bringing of Home Missions into the Convention. It is with him "To be or not to be," "our continuance and growth, a question not to be put into a corner, to be acted upon by any body or nobody, in any way or no way." That is, if I understand him, outside of the Convention, Home Missions are to be acted upon by anybody or nobody, &c. Is there, indeed, such a great difference between the manner in which our Home Mission work, as it is now done, and the way that he proposes? There will be one government instead of two; the same workers, means, purposes and plans. What so tremendous is there to be done, that has not been done or may not be done, under the present arrangement? This, it appears to me, is a case of good people taking extreme views, as was also shown in the discussion of the Halifax University question at the Convention; some regarding the University as a roaring lion seeking to devour existing Colleges, others regarding it as a magnificent white elephant, all caparisoned, and ready to carry us right over the mountains of our ignorance into the broad fields of science. Bro. Porter is terribly in earnest; he means to agitate the matter, if not successful before, until death. This, I admit, is a reason why he should succeed; for the earnest worker might be allowed his plans, though everything else is not equal. For my part, if ever the question is carried, even by a majority of one, I hope it will be considered settled for a long season. And if it is to be kept alive and well, by knocking at every Convention, the sooner passed the better.

I come now to consider Bro. Porter's discussion. He first considers an objection—"The people are not ready for the question." The consideration of this belongs rather to the "finally," as the objector is supposed to have admitted the justice of the case, or, at least, to have waived a decision, having heard the argument. I do not make anything of this objection; I am ready for the question if it were ready for me. But I was not made ready by Bro. Porter's reasoning. He says: "Were people ever

ready for reform, especially in the estimation of those who opposed it—for the abolition of slavery, for the suppression of the liquor traffic." Now we have it upon the best authority that there is a time for everything under the sun. The advent of Christ to this world had its time; the Centennial has its time; and though Emancipation's time and Prohibition's time may always be ready or not, yet the time may be inopportune for the passing of this question. He does indeed say that the times, and the general condition of things in our denomination, &c., are demanding this change. Please give the particulars. If it is only a question of time then ye who dwell in the sunny hill-tops send your light forth into the shadowy vale.

There is an objection, akin to the above, which I consider of some force—the but recent arrangement of Home Mission matters in N. S. The Home Mission Union cost the denomination much, in time, toil, and Christian amity; it came near being a terrible disunion. It has been operated vigorously and successfully. It invited ministers from abroad when there was a dearth; it assumed charge, not only of weak churches and of sites where there were no churches but of strong churches; it took charge of the theological professorship, and circulated Baptist literature. Now what more might, could, would, or should be done that the H. M. U. has not done. The first year of the Union was signalized by a great revival of religion,—this was claimed as the seal of Heaven on the arrangement, although there had been great revivals before in N. S.; it evidently shows that there was not such an awful deficiency, that the Holy Spirit could not be poured out, and consequently our progress and "continuance" would close. Now it seems to me that it requires a large amount of—what shall I say—boldness, to raise the cry—"Into a corner, to be acted upon by anybody or nobody." "Our continuance and growth is the question, re-organize on a grander scale." Home Mission work in N. B. does not seem to be prosecuted very vigorously at present, but what there is wanting in organization to hinder work, I cannot see.

Positively, Bro. Porter pleads that Home and Foreign Missions are all one mission, not distinguished by clime, race, language, state of society, nationality. Admitted that the phases of the mission field from the Maritime Provinces to Telugu are gradual; there is no dividing line. But does that show that mission work in N. S. and Telugu land is very similar. We (Bro. Porter and I) can get world-wide apart, step by step. There is no precise limit between gorgeous summer and bleak winter, but who says they are all the same season, and sallies forth in summer garb to pluck a boquet from the brow of the frost-king. We may trace resemblances from the oyster, through the animal kingdom, to the ox; but we do not reason from the one to the other, and conclude that the deliciousness of the raw oyster also belongs to the raw flesh of the ox. All shades of complexion lie between the Caucasian and African, yet the fair and the sable scarcely meet at the hymeneal altar.—Telugu is diverse from these Provinces as a missionary field, in locality, climate, language, religion, society, as wide apart as possible in everything pertaining to missionary work, so different that I reluctantly associate them by allowing the name to the home field,—where the missionary does not get beyond Christian society, churches, Sabbaths, bibles, vernacular, genial climate—vastly different from Christ's mission, the Apostles', and that to Telugu. Outfits, travelling expenses, and explorations, intimate a difference. But I do not mean to say that this difference is a decisive reason why the fields should or could not be worked by the same organization.

But if the fields were alike in every respect this would not settle the question. Many shops are alike, but this is not a sufficient reason why they be under one management. Many farms are alike but this is no reason why one farmer should go to his neighbour and say—"You grow turnips and I grow turnips, you have spruce trees on your premises, so have I, &c.; therefore let us combine our farms and work together." The case is just this, we all know that the combined effort of the Provinces represented in the Convention is requisite to carry on one foreign mission, and to sustain

Acadia College; and we all ought to know that each Province is large enough to carry on Home Mission work, that neither expects aid from the other, that there might be misunderstandings and misgivings in union; and there would be difficulties in making the change.

I never would have disconnected Home Missions from the Associations at all; each Association might as well have its own Board and work. The difficulty here is that the mission field would not be distributed proportionally; this difficulty, applies only to N. S., and might be got rid of thus:—The Western Association take mission work in its own limits, including French Mission; Central, its own limits, and Cape Breton; Eastern, its own limits on the peninsula. What difficulty would there be in each giving aid to the other, or to P. E. Island?—Are not these six "corners" larger than the one centre—the Convention?—more people attend them. The last letter of Dr. Day may be referred to here. I have not the paper at hand, but it runs thus:—"We have made few appointments, we are in debt and must wait until liquidation takes place; hope the fields will do all they can to support the respective missions." Now I do not see why more limited Boards could not do just as well. The state of our Associations now appears to me to be anomalous. With great decorum the various committees are appointed, but there is not a single thing for a committee to report upon, except it be on Questions in Letters. They could and should receive reports from the Home Mission, or any mission, or denominational work; but the Home Mission Boards are acceded sittings, and do ordinary business, and even settle annual difficulties. The Associations remind me of a shipyard whence the ship has been launched but the scaffolding remains, and we meet year by year and prop up the various leaning towers. Even Foreign Missions and Education might be brought into the Associations, the combination being in some Central Board. However, I am satisfied, as they are, and shall try not to be dissatisfied if Bro. Porter's measure carries. But I think he has a vein in his constitution leading to sectional work. There is an institution called the York County Baptist Mission. I am of opinion that Bro. Porter has a hand in that. The N. B. Board is too large, is it? but the Convention will be just right! He (Bro. Porter) says our Associations are not for "business, they are for devotion." It is singular that he could see such a oneness and likeness in the two mission fields, and could find no connecting link between devotion and business, prayer and offerings; for the offerings would appear there if the Associations had charge of the work. I would like to see devotion and all kinds of Christian work meet, and embrace each other.

After all, what is the use of writing about boards and organizations? what is especially needed now is a missionary spirit, power from above, such a baptism that the missionary will go forth with or without boards; and he is most like the Master who goes without. There seems to be a greater dearth of Home Missionary spirit than of Foreign. If Cape Breton were in the Bay of Bengal perhaps it would be better supplied. This may be considered another reason why Home and Foreign Missions are not all the same. If Bro. Porter's plan would keep the outposts better sustained, and would hinder, for instance, the successful worker at North Sydney from removing to Fredericton, and him of Sydney to St. John, from Mira to Cornwallis, from Cavendish to Yarmouth, and from Miramichi to Sackville, then let it come J. M.

October 5th, 1876.

For the Christian Messenger.

Dear Editor,—

Will you allow me to intimate that the West Onslow Baptist Church, at its recent conference meeting, were presented with a handsome Silver Communion Service, the dying bequest of our late lamented sister, Lucinda S. McCurdy. This gift she had instructed her pastor to present in token of her interest in and affectionate regard for the individual members of the church, and of her desire for its present and future prosperity. Our sister also presented through the same channel the sum of twenty-five dollars, with a book-case, as