

THESIS.

*Subject:* The Place of Imagination in Training.

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It is a difficult problem for the teacher to decide what amount of training he shall give his pupils in the way of imagination, and as to the place it should occupy as a factor in education; and, as it is difficult to increase this faculty, the best he can do is to train it in the right direction by the increase of knowledge.

Imagination is a faculty existing in the mind of each individual, but more in some than in others, and is one of the mental faculties which

needs the most patient care and  
and proper cultivation; and  
it is, in some cases, that unwish-  
ed for results follow, either from  
neglect or excessive stimulation;  
but the neglect may result as  
disastrously as the stimulation.

Then, since the amount  
of imagination varies in dif-  
ferent individuals, and differ-  
ent results may follow from  
its training, we see that the  
teacher should study the im-  
agination of each one of his  
pupils; and also make it his  
object to go somewhere between

the two extremes of neglect and over-stimulation, and train the imaginative faculty of the pupils in a manner most profitable to them, and not leave them in such a condition as would make them a base to the rest of mankind through the remainder of their life.

The development of the imagination begins at a very early period in life; and, as the child grows older, the influence of its early training in the matter of imagination is felt almost equally in so-

cial, moral, and intellectual action; but, for its early instruction, the parents are chiefly responsible.

The imagination is practically the same in all minds, but its nature differs inasmuch as it is determined by the character of the food upon which it feeds, and the manner in which it is exercised. If it has been carefully trained, and led in the direction of the true and generous, it tends to happiness and usefulness. But if allowed to

take its own course, or is im-  
properly trained, unhappiness  
and misery will surely follow.

The imagination is  
practically distinct and inval-  
uable in the understanding of  
abstract mental truths; for, by  
means of an appeal to the  
mind through the narration of  
a fable, allegory, or some other  
form of a simile or metaphor,  
the truth is impressed upon our  
minds, and is more easily un-  
derstood and applied. There-  
fore, the imagination if  
properly trained, may be

employed as a means of delivering a moral or spiritual truth; and as an end, that the soul may be gradually brought to the perception of truths which will bring about a perfect growth of the entire being.

In another way, the imagination may be used as a means of forming conceptions of things and places which the child has not seen, by means of applying, in a modified form, the conceptions of those which he has seen,

and thus he is led to have a good idea of foreign places. On account of this, the pursuance of the studies of history, geography, and reading serve as excellent helps in the cultivation of imagination, and especially in the reproduction of images, and the elaboration of new ones.

One of the most effective means of arousing the imagination is by means of romance or fiction; but this is not so properly a cultivation of this faculty, as it is a narrow



ner of revelling in it; and in general, this is not aiding in instruction, but drinking in emotion. The teacher, in this case, ought to attempt to break down the emotional feelings, and see that the power of conceiving is favored in a greater degree; that is, should aim at the Historical rather than the Poetical.

The imagination can best be led by means of works of a classical character which tend to creative forces, and help in ethical

tastes and love for the beauty of form, the commonest kind of which is that of fairy tales which exercise the childish imagination; but care should be taken that they are the proper kind of productions, and not of the morbid character which tend to lower the mind into abject silliness.

As far as teaching in our common schools is concerned, it is a mistake to train the reasoning faculties at an early age, while the imagination, the basis of all

good thinking, is left for the higher grammar grades.

Attention should be given as to whether the child has correct mental images of objects and thoughts, and that there are no defects; for, in describing these things minutely to others, he is apt to make mistakes unconsciously; and after a time to make them purposely for the sake of effect, and in this way acquire an unenviable reputation. This, then, shows the importance of the teacher's work; for, while all the senses

may be restricted to time and space, the imagination knows no restrictions; and whatever improper training or neglect it may have had, will surely crop out at some future period in life, to the probable chagrin of all concerned.