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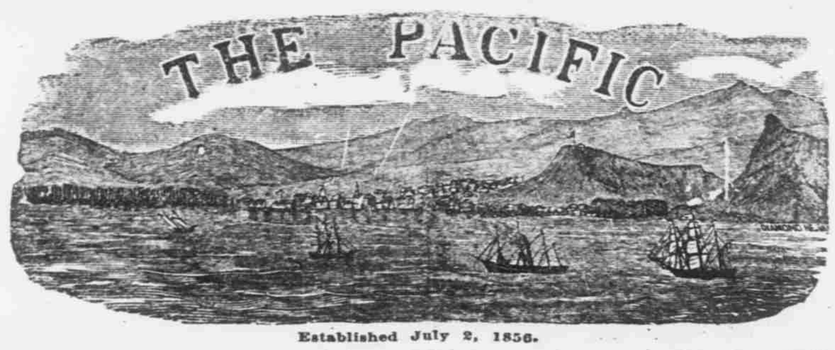

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FORM IS BETTER THAN SOUND.

Dr. Northrop Tells How to Cultivate a Retentive Mind.

EFFICIENCY TESTS PROGRESS.

Valuable Hints by Eminent Educator—Memory Strengthened by the Will—Pride of Wisdom the Proof of Folly—Knowledge by Association.

There was a large crowd present at the Y. M. C. A. hall last night to hear Dr. B. G. Northrop lecture on "Memory and How to Train It."

Promptly at 7:30 President F. A. Hosmer of the Honolulu Teachers' Association, under whose auspices the lecture was given, delivered a few introductory remarks touching the occasion before introducing the lecturer.

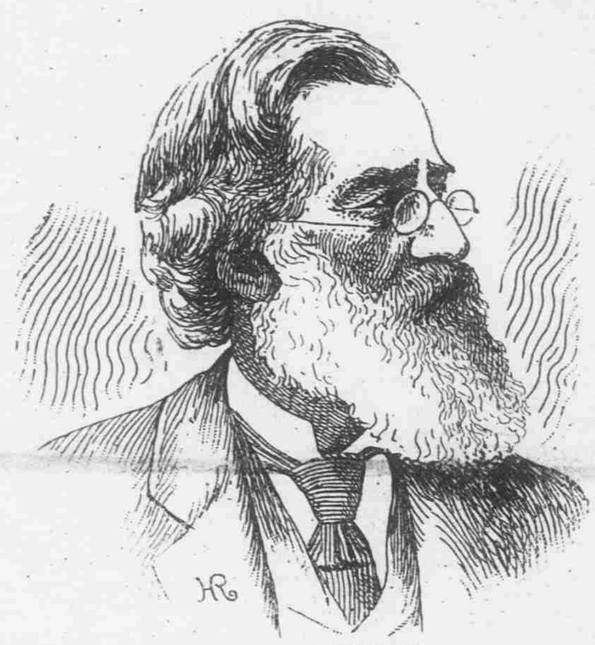
Before taking up the subject of his discourse Dr. Northrop made reference to this, his first visit to Honolulu, spoke of the people whom he had met since his arrival, and praised the beauties of the country.

The learned lecturer spoke something over an hour and a quarter, and the following is a complete report of the subject:

The general outcry of the press against cramming has not been without reason. The surfeit following a plethoric indigestible diet illustrates a common mental dyspepsia. With exacting examinations at hand, there is a strong temptation to smattering. Where the mind is treated as a mere receptacle, the quantity rather than the quality of attainments is the meter of progress. It is a cardinal principle that the discipline of the mind is more important than its furniture. Knowledge, though essential to education, does not constitute it. Facts, however valuable, are to be learned, not *primarily* for their own sake, but as instruments of culture. The school studies are each and all more thoroughly mastered when they are pursued, not as ends, but as means of mental discipline. As all truth is harmony, so the surest processes of acquiring truth accord with the laws of mental growth. The best way to develop each faculty is identical with the best methods of gaining and retaining knowledge. If right habits of study are formed, and if the child thus gains a consciousness of power and a delight in *doing*—in achievement, knowledge will come in due time as a matter of course It is the teachers' duty, not so much to impart knowledge as to show his pupils how to get it, inspiring them with love of study and of mastering difficulties. This joy of conscious progress quickens the memory and all the other faculties. The culture of the mind is to be measured, not primarily by what it contains, but by what it can do. Efficiency—the power of using the faculties and resources of the mind, is the test of progress. The teacher's success is to be measured, not by what he tells his pupils, but by what, through his instruction and impulse they are enabled to tell him. Such methods, if less productive of immediate and showy results, secure a better training of the mind and heart. The process of cram retains little genuine knowledge, while the true method renders it acquisitions ever at command. Worst of all, cram has a moral taint, fostering ostentation and conceit. Superficial attainments are always chaotic. Promising the substance, they give only the shell and semblance of knowledge. There may be a rapid repetition of lessons and text books, with no real grasp of the subject. But it is doing violence to the soul—to its innate love of truth, and growth by the nutriment of truth, to feed it thus with the mere husks of knowledge rather than with knowledge itself. Such cramming is quite as likely to make pupils flippant as fluent. Those who learn everything and know nothing are apt to confound flippancy with smartness, and to be more wordy than wise. Cram is multiplying Shakespeare's "knave very voluble," but better methods would train our youth as Isaac Taylor said, "to put flippant scorn to the blush." Any method which inflates pupils with an overestimate of their attainments is harmful. A prominent lesson of true teaching is the greatness of our ignorance and the littleness of our knowledge. The modesty of the true scholar is proverbial, while "the pride of wisdom is the proof of folly;" or, as another has happily said, "the greater the circle of our knowledge, the greater the horizon of ignorance that bounds it."

The proper revolt against parroting has led to the opposite extreme and put *memory* in the background. In the premature attempt to bring the reflective faculties to the front, some have banished text books and substituted object lessons, talks and lectures. In a wise course of study, there is a place for each of these, though neither may exclusively occupy the field. The misuse or abuse of memory does not justify its neglect. An exact memory is a priceless blessing. Said an ancient Greek philosopher, "On earth there is nothing great but man; in man there is nothing great but mind." It would not be true to extend this saying and affirm that in mind there is nothing great but memory, for all our faculties are God like and wonderful, but memory is one of the most marvellous powers of the human mind, and marvellous most of all in its susceptibility to culture. Too often its training has been incidental and without any careful study of its laws of growth and development

Astonishing feats of memory are sometimes performed by artificial and unnatural methods, which give no discipline or development to this faculty, and which can have no general application or utility. The dexterity thus acquired, like the feats of the acrobat, serves admirably for show. This boasted system of mnemonics is a species of cram. It discards the spacial and intellectual relations which nature and philosophy suggest, and substitutes arbitrary and artificial combinations. While these may aid in memorizing certain names, dates, or details, the same time and thought, if applied to the true, philosophical association of ideas, would secure better results both in acquisition and discipline. This machine method is unworthy the teacher whose primary aim in every exercise is to develop power and facilitate spontaneous self-exertion. He who aspires to implant germinating principles will measure his success, not so much by what he tells his pupils as by what they are stimulated to do, and be, and describe. Instead of simply rehearsing the results he has reached, he shows his pupils the road by which he reached them, and incites each to work his own way. The method which substitutes training for routine is not suggested by any system of mnemonics. These objections do not apply to historical or any other charts which are based on the proper laws of association.



DR. B G. NORTHROP.

A great memory for facts and dates is by no means a proof of intellectual power. There are many illustrations of the old motto, "Great memory with little common sense." By the process of cram, one may have the multitudinous facts of history and science on his tongue's end and become a walking encyclopedia, and yet be only a learned driveller. Take him off his beaten path and he is as helpless as a locomotive off the track.

But such abnormal and one-sided development does not warrant the conclusion that a great memory is inconsistent with sound judgment. On the other hand, such a memory is one of the conditions of the highest intelligence and power. As a rule, the men of greatest ability have excelled in grasp of memory. This view might easily be confirmed by facts which show that a strong memory has characterized the most eminent men in the world's history. Sir William Hamilton cites many historic illustrations of this principle. It is not, however, claimed that intelligence and memory hold a necessary proportion to each other,

Memory changes with years and attainments. This cardinal principle of didactics is most suggestive to the teacher. In early life the memory is circumstantial, and therefore easily grasps and holds items and details, like words and their forms. The reflective faculties are yet *comparatively* latent, but the perceptive powers and circumstantial memory are acute. Children can therefore learn spelling, and language in general, better than adults. It is a familiar saying, that those who neglect spelling in their childhood, seldom master it in after life. Then the memory becomes philosophical—able to grasp comprehensive truths and principles, groups and classes, genera and species. But years before the child can understand abstruse associations and perceive relations in their deepest significance, he can most profitably store up those details and perceptions which furnish material for the play of the reflective faculties.

Among these earliest appeals to perception and memory should be form. Ideas of extension are simpler and more attractive than those of number. The child recognizes hundreds of things by their shapes, before he begins to count. He can easily learn the few geometric forms, which, singly or combined, are the patterns of all visible objects. The experience of all kindergartens, and of the best primary schools in this country and in Europe, shows that learning the geometric forms *by making them* is one of their earliest and pleasantest occupations. Such experience amply proves that this exercise favors clear perception and conception and exact memory of visible objects. The circumstantial memory should be early exercised in discriminating them—an exercise which rightly presented fascinates the youngest pupils.

Next in order comes number. After this has been duly taught *with objects*, the lessons in the ground rules and tables are *drills of memory*. These lessons should be so thoroughly learned that all ordinary combinations in addition, subtraction, multiplication and division should be as rapid as intuitions. They should involve no conscious effort and occupy no perceptible interval of time, any more than does the combination of letters which make a name. The instant the eye sees them, the word is recognized. If the circumstantial memory were *properly drilled at the outset*, the figures in a column would be added as quickly. This, with some aid from "contractions," is the secret of the lightning calculator. Such acceleration in arithmetical processes is really simple, and both practical and valuable for all ordinary pupils.

But the broadest field for the circumstantial memory is language. Our faculties are specially fitted for the tasks naturally incumbent in each successive period of life. To learn to talk is one of the earliest efforts and necessities of the child. Nature so befriends him that his progress, even without a book or teacher, is marvelous. Though at 2 years of age he can speak but a few words, at 6 years he has a better command of his vernacular *in conversation* than a student of Latin ordinarily acquires after ten years of study of that language. The children of American families residing in Europe learn French or German more readily than their parents. The children of recent immigrants in this country learn our language sooner than the adults whom they accompany Many such facts have come under my observation, which show how early in the order of nature the linguistic faculty is developed.

This law of memory is full of *practical* suggestions to the teacher. It shows that language, especially in the form of reading, spelling and talking, should be made the most prominent exercise of young children. The ability to recognize words at sight, and thus read without conscious effort, gives to the juvenile mind the encouragement and impetus which it most needs. The question whether the child is to be fond of books or averse to them depends much on the previous question, whether he is a proficient in reading. The early mastery of one's native tongue invites and facilitates other attainments, while poverty of language is a constant hindrance and discouragement. In proportion as you enrich the child's vocabulary, you promote his interest and progress in all future studies. Tact and didactic skill are needed in nothing more than in the first steps in teaching, reading and spelling. Instead of the old monotonous and mechanical drill, each should be made, and by our best teachers are now made, an intellectual exercise, pursued from the outset, not primarily to learn the literal elements of words, but for the higher aim of cultivating perception and memory, acquiring the power to bring before the mind's eye the form of each word as a whole, just as one would carefully observe a house or horse in order to draw the same from memory. It is an important art in memory to learn to *see* so accurately that we can recall the exact image of the object, and form conceptions as clear and vivid as were the original perceptions. This process, if early