

EDUCATION IS THE SCIENCE OF RELATIONS.

BY M. OWEN.

CHILDREN are human beings; from the first they have not a separate child nature; they have the same nature as adults—they are persons—and as such have bodies through which and by which the persons act. The body responds to spiritual impulses, receives and communicates impressions and is the means by which the spiritual being establishes relations with the material world. Everyone comes into the world capable of forming relations; some have greater affinities in one direction than others, and while one child will receive one class of ideas, and assimilate it quickly, another will choose another class altogether.

Ideas entering and being actively received into the mind make impressions on the brain substance which thus becomes the recorder of ideas. On this basis also rests the power of forming those habits, in obedience to which we pass nine-tenths of our lives.

The functions of the human being under education are:—

(a) To form good habits.

(b) To assimilate ideas.

The first habits of the child—cleanliness, order, etc., should be formed for him in infancy, but later he must form his own. This he will do according to the ideas he has assimilated. Ideas cannot be *given* to a child unless he actively receives them, and makes them his own.

The duties of the educator are:—

(a) To put the child into the way of receiving ideas which may help him to establish the necessary relations.

(b) To see that the child forms good habits.

The test that should be applied to everything concerning the child is the question, Is it the best for him? Will it present

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an idea to him so that he will be most likely to receive it? Can it help in the formation of good habits? and if by its means a child can establish some relation, will that relation be one that should be established?

To establish relations it is absolutely necessary that interest be felt, both by the giver and receiver of the idea. No subject should be taught that has not this object. If a subject is taught in such a way that it stimulates interest, is a source of pleasure, is studied for the love of it, then the student acquires true knowledge and has established an intimate relation for life. Such interest is felt when the child studies from things, from Nature, and from living books. All children love stories; and if their lessons were put before them in good books, full of life and interest, they would love them as much as their stories.

The five relations which it is necessary for children to establish are:—Their relations with God, of prayer, praise, love and duty; their moral relations with their fellow-creatures, including history, literature, duties of a citizen, etc.; their relations with Nature and the world around them; their relations with the earth, including all sorts of bodily exercises; their relations with materials, in handicrafts, etc.

Dynamic relations, or those to do with bodily movement, are the most elementary, and we can see whether they have been established by a child's walk, speech, and general carriage

and movements. To put the children in the way of establishing these relations we should let them play good romping games, and also those with singing accompaniments; they should climb trees, swim, row, skip, ride, dance, etc.; they should also be drilled, sometimes to music, sometimes not. Swedish drill is of the most value for children. These drills help also to train in promptitude and accuracy. Games with rules should also be played, as cricket, hockey, rounders, etc.

In order to establish relations with material, children should learn to be useful in household work, helping in every way, in the garden, in the workroom, kitchen, etc., they should also learn handicrafts, needlework, sloyd cardboard work; for younger children, cutting out pictures accurately with scissors, various easy handicrafts, and general handiness.

That with Nature comes next. In order to establish this,

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three things must be felt by the children—*joy* in their work, *interest* in it, and the desire of accurate knowledge. The teacher must above all be interested herself and she must be eager to learn. A system must be followed, but the teacher must remember that what the children want to learn, and not what she wants to teach, is of the greater importance. There are many branches in Nature work which should be connected as far as possible. The physical geography of their own district, its flora—not only the names of the flowers but all about them, where they grow, when they flower, how they are fertilised; classify them, the daisy tribe, the butterfly tribe, not burdening the child with too many Latin names. Insects too, birds, noticing the migrants; pond-life; wild creatures and their habits. Domestic animals come in useful if it is difficult to reach wild ones. Children should be left with many “whys,” that they may find out answers when possible for themselves. Why have some flowers such bright colours, and others have not? Why do some flowers open at night? It is a great help if children can keep pets in gardens which they can watch and care for, and for which they are held responsible.

Human relations should be established with kindred, friends, neighbours, by which is meant all persons with whom we come in contact; our fellow-countrymen, past as well as present; Societies, missionary, social, temperance. We should, so far as we can, establish relations with all people in all countries, as they have lived in the past and are living in the present.

There are certain kinds of duties which everybody owes to his neighbours, certain feelings which everyone ought to have; love and service; authority in a family from a parent, and obedience from the children; respect and reverence for all; sympathy and pity for all suffering; and responsibility, from which none can escape.

It is very important that these human relations should be established, because true education aims at the complete development of the human being; and development cannot be complete unless these relations are established.

If relations are not carefully established the evil consequences are manifold:—(1) The interests, and therefore the intelligence,

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are limited. (2) The two affections, love and justice, which are springs of action in human nature have no scope and therefore are dwarfed and stunted. (3) Children lose opportunities to receive some guiding ideas which may bring them to be great workers in the work of the world. (4) Inspiration and stimulus from others are in a great measure lost.

These relations can be established in three ways: by *Theoretical Instruction*, i.e., definite moral teaching based on the Ten Commandments, and knowledge of self as a human being. *Schoolroom Knowledge*: The teaching of history, as it deals with people and events, not with facts and dates; the teaching of literature in connection with history, languages, and geography; all these subjects must be taught with life and interest. *Practical Effort*: Children should remember that they owe courtesy to everybody around them, respect to domestics, and to all those in a lower as well as to those in a higher station of life. They will be interested in the poor and weak if an example is set them; their interest can be encouraged by working for children's hospitals, sending flowers, etc.

The Relations with God. A child's idea of God should be: (1) That He is his Father, always near and ready to help. (2) That Christ is our king and we must always be loyal and loving to Him. (3) That He is our Saviour and the Saviour of the world. Children must recognise the fact that they owe *duty* to God. They should read and learn to love the Bible.