Yasnaya Polyana School

Leo Tolstoy

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Contents

Chapter 1 : General Sketch Of The School

We have no beginners. The children of the youngest class read, write, and solve problems in the first three rules of arithmetic, and repeat sacred history, so that our order of exercises is arranged according to the following roster:

1. Mechanical and Graded Reading.
2. Compositions.
3. Penmanship.
4. Grammar.
5. Sacred History.
6. Russian History.
7. Drawing.
8. Sketching.
9. Singing.
10. Mathematics.
11. Conversations about the Natural Sciences.
12. Religious Instruction.

Before I speak of the methods of instruction, I must give a short description of the Yasnaya Polyana school and its present condition.

Yasnaya Polyana, or Fairfield, is the name of the count's estate a few miles out from the city of Tula. It is also the name of a journal of education published at his own expense. A complete file of this journal is in the library of Cornell University, the gift of the late Mr. Eugene Schuyler, to whom Count Tolstoy presented it.

Like every living body the school not only changes every year, day, and hour, but also has been subjected to temporary crises, misfortunes, ailments, and ill chances.

The Yasno-Polyanskaya school passed through one such painful crisis this very summer. There were many reasons for this: in the first place, as is always the case in the summer, all the best scholars were away; only occasionally we would meet them in the fields at their work or tending the cattle. In the second place, there were some new teachers present, and new influences began to be brought upon it. In the third place, each day teachers from other places, taking advantage

of their summer vacation, came to visit the school. And nothing is more demoralizing to the regular conduct of a school than to have visitors, even though the visitor be a teacher himself.

We have four instructors. Two are veterans, having already taught two years in the school; they are accustomed to the pupils, to their work, and to the freedom and apparent lawlessness of the school.

Two of the teachers are new; both of them are recent graduates and lovers of outward propriety, of rules and bells and regulations and programs and the like, and are not wonted to the life of the school, as the first two are. What to the first seems reasonable, necessary, impossible to be otherwise, like the features on the face of a beloved though homely child, who has grown up under your very eyes, sometimes seems to the new teachers sheer disorder.

The school is established in a two-storied stone house. Two rooms are devoted to the school; the library has one, the teachers have two. On the porch, under the eaves, hangs the little bell with a cord tied to its tongue; in the entry down-stairs are bars and other gymnastic apparatus; in the upper entry is a workbench.

The stairs and entries are generally tracked over with snow or mud; there also hangs the roster.

The order of exercises is as follows:

At eight o'clock, the resident teacher, who is a lover of outward order, and is the director of the school, sends one of the lads who almost always spends the night with him to ring the bell.

In the village the people get up by lamplight. Already in the schoolhouse window lights have long been visible, and within half an hour after the bell-ringing, whether it be misty or rainy, or under the slanting rays of the autumn sun, there will be seen crossing the rolling country the village is separated from the school by a ravine dark little figures in twos or threes, or separately. The sense of gregariousness has long ago disappeared from among the pupils. There is now no longer need of any one waiting and crying:

"Hey, boys! to school!"

The boy has already learned that school uchilishcke is a neuter gender; he knows many other things besides; and curiously enough in consequence of this he does not need the support of a crowd any more. When it is time for him to go he goes.

Every day, it seems to me, they grow more and more independent and individual, and their characters more sharply defined. I have almost never seen them playing on the way, unless in the case of some of the smaller pupils, or of the newcomers who had begun in other schools.

They bring nothing with them no books and no copy-books. They are not required to study their lessons at home. Not only do they bring nothing in their hands, but nothing in their heads either. The scholar is not obliged to remember to-day anything he may have learned the evening before. The thought about his approaching lesson does not disturb him. He brings only himself, his receptive nature, and the conviction that school to-day will be just as jolly as it was the day before.

He does not think about his class until his class begins. No one is ever held to account for being tardy, and hence they are not tardy, unless indeed one of the older ones may be occasionally detained by his parents on account of some work. And then this big lad comes running to school at breakneck speed and all out of breath.

If it happens that the teacher has not yet come, they gather around the entrance, pounding their heels upon the steps, or sliding on the icy path, or some of them wait in the school-rooms.

If it be cold they spend their time while waiting for the teacher in reading, writing, or romping.

The girls do not mingle with the boys. When the boys have any scheme which they wish to propose to the girls, they never select any particular girl, but always address the whole crowd: -

"Hey, girls, why are n't you sliding?" or, "See, the girls are freezing," or "Now, girls, all of you chase me!"

Only one of the little girls, a ten-year-old domestic peasant[1] of great many-sided talents, perhaps ventures to leave the herd of damsels. And with her the boys comport themselves as with an equal as with a boy, only showing a delicate shade of politeness, modesty, and self-restraint.

[1] Dvorovaya dyevka, the daughter of a serf attached to the bar sky dvor, or mansion-house.

Chapter 2 : The Opening Of School

Let us suppose that, according to the roster, we begin with mechanical reading in the first or the youngest class; in the second, with graded reading; and in the third, with mathematics.

The teacher goes into the room, and finds the children rolling or scuffling on the floor, and crying at the top of their voices: ”You’re choking me!” ”You stop pulling my hair!” or ”Let up; that’ll do!”

”Piotr Mikhailovitch,” cries a voice from under the heap, as the teacher comes in, ”make them stop.”

”Good-morning, Piotr Mikhailovitch,” shout still others, adding their share to the tumult.

The teacher takes the books and distributes them to those who have come to the cupboard. First those on top of the heap on the floor, then those lying underneath, want a book.

The pile gradually diminishes. As soon as the majority have their books, all the rest run to the cupboard, and cry, ”Me one! me one!”

”Give me the one I had yesterday!”

”Give me the Koltsof[1] book!”

And so on.

If there happen to be any two scufflers left struggling on the floor, then those who have taken their places with their books shout:

”Why do you make so much noise? we can’t hear anything! Hush!”

The impulsive fellows come to order and, all out of breath, get their books, and only for the first moment or two after they sit down does the dying excitement betray itself in an occasional motion of a leg.

The spirit of war takes its flight, and the spirit of learning holds sway in the room. With the same zeal as the lad had shown in pulling Mitka’s hair, he now reads his Koltsof book, thus the works of Koltsof are called among us, with teeth almost shut together, with shining eyes, and total oblivion of all around him except his book. To tear him from his reading requires fully as much strength as it required before to get him away from his wrestling.

[1] Alekse’i Vasiiyevitch Koltsof (1809-1842), a distinguished poet, by some called the Burns of Russia.

Chapter 3 : The Appearance Of The Room

The pupils sit wherever they please, on benches, chairs, on the window-sill, on the floor, or in the armchair.

The girls always sit by themselves. Friends, those from the same village, and especially the little ones for there is more comradeship among them are always together.

As soon as one of them decides to sit in a certain corner, all his playmates, pushing and diving under the benches, manage to get to the same place, sit in a row, and as they glance around they show such an expression of perfect bliss and satisfaction in their faces, as if nothing in all the rest of their lives could ever give them so much happiness as to sit in those places.

The moment they come into the room, the big armchair presents itself as an object of envy for the more independent personalities for the little house-girl and others. As soon as one makes a motion to occupy the arm-chair, another recognizes by the expression of his face that such a plan is developing, and the two make for it, race for it.

One gets it away from the other, and, having ensconced himself in it, stretches himself out with his head much below the back of the chair; but he reads like all the rest, wholly carried away by his work.

During class time I have never seen any whispering, any pinching, any giggling, any uncouth sounds, any bearing of tales to the teacher. When a pupil educated by a church official,[1] or at the district school, goes with any such complaint, he will be asked:

”Are you sure that you did not pinch yourself?”

[1] The ponomar, or paramonar, a word derived from modern Greek, airl signifying doorkeeper, sacristan.

Chapter 4 : The Classes

The two smaller classes are put by themselves in one room; the older scholars are in another. When the teacher goes to the first class, all gather around him at the blackboard, or on the benches, or they climb on the table, or sit down around him or one of those that are reading.

If it happen to be for writing, they take more comfortable positions, but they keep getting up, so as to look at each other's copy-books and show their own to the teacher. It is calculated that the time till dinner will be occupied by four lessons; but often only three or two are introduced, and sometimes the roster is entirely changed. If the teacher begins with arithmetic, he may go over to geometry; or if he begins with sacred history, he may end with grammar.

Sometimes the teacher and the pupils get carried away, and instead of one hour the class lasts three hours. There have been cases where the pupils themselves cried, "More! more!" and they exclaim against those things which bore them: "That is stupid! Go to the little ones,"they cry contemptuously.

In the class for religious instruction, which is the only one that is held with any approach to regularity, because the teacher lives two versts away, and comes only twice a week, and in the drawing class, all the pupils are gathered together. Before these classes begin, liveliness, racket, and external disorder are the rule of the day; one drags benches from one room into the other, another scuffles, another goes home to the mansion

after bread, another heats that bread in the oven, another borrows something, another goes through gymnastic exercises; but just the same as in the tumult of the morning, it is far more easy to bring order out of chaos by leaving them to their natural impulses than by setting them down by main force.

In the present spirit of the school, to restrain them physically is impossible. The louder the teacher shouts,

this has been tried, the louder shout the scholars; his voice only excites them. If you succeed in calming them, or start them in another direction, this sea of youths will begin to rage less and less violently, then come to rest. But for the most part, it is not necessary to say anything.

The class in design, which is the most popular with all the school, takes place at noon, after lunch; and when they have been sitting three hours, and here again it is necessary to lug benches and tables from one room into another, and the racket is terrible! But still, as soon as the teacher is ready, the scholars are ready also, and any one who delays the beginning of the class is disciplined by the scholars themselves.

Chapter 5 : The Free Development Of The School

Here I must defend myself. In giving this description of the Y. P. school, I have no intention of presenting a model of what is requisite and necessary for a school, but simply a description of the actual state of the school. I take it such descriptions have their utility. If I succeed in the following pages in clearly presenting a history of the development of the school, then the reader will clearly comprehend why the character of the school was formed as it was, why I consider such an order of things advantageous, and why it would have been an utter impossibility for me to have changed it, even if I had wished to do so.

The school had a free development from principles established in it by teacher and pupils. Notwithstanding all the weight of the master's authority, the pupil always had the right not to attend the school and not to obey the teacher. The teacher had the prerogative not to admit a pupil, and the power of exerting all the force of his influence on the majority of the pupils, on the society which was always forming among the scholars.

The farther the students advanced, the wider grew the scope of the instruction, and the more imperative became the demand for order. In consequence of this, in the normal and unconstrained development of a school, the more cultivated the pupils are, the more capable of order they will become, the more strongly they themselves will feel the necessity of order, and the more powerfully the teacher's influence on them in this respect will be felt. In the Y. P. school from its very foundation this rule was found true. At first it was impossible to classify either recitations or the subjects or the recreations or their tasks; everything was in confusion, and all attempts at classification were in vain. At the present time there are students in the first class who themselves insist on following a regular order of exercises, and are indignant when you call them from their lessons, and these scholars are all the time driving away the little ones who disturb them.

In my opinion this external disorder is useful and indispensable, strange as it may seem and inconvenient to the teacher. I shall frequently have occasion to speak of the advantages of this condition of things; of the imaginary inconveniences I will say this: In the first place, this disorder or free order is trying to us, simply because we are accustomed to something entirely different, in which we were educated. In the second place, in this, as in many similar circumstances, the employment of force is due to haste and lack of reverence for human nature. It seems to us that disorder is increasing, becoming more and more violent each instant, that there are no limits to it; it seems to us that there is no other way of putting an end to it than by employing main force, but really all it requires is to wait a little, and the disorder, or flow of animal spirits, would naturally diminish of itself, and would grow into a far better and more stable order than that which we imagine.

The scholars though they are little folk are nevertheless human beings, having the same requirements as we ourselves, and their thoughts run in the same groove. They all want to learn,

and that is the only reason they go to school, and therefore it is perfectly easy for them to reach the conclusion that it is necessary to submit to certain conditions if they would learn anything.

Besides being human beings, they form a society of human beings united by one impulse. And where two or three are gathered together in My name there will I be also.

Chapter 6 : A School-Boy Fight

As they are subjected to laws that are simply derived from their own nature, the scholars do not rebel or grumble; if they were subjected to our old system of interference, they would have no faith in the legality of our ringing bells, regulations, and ordinances.

How many times when children were fighting, have I chanced to see the teacher hasten to separate them; and the disparted foes would glare at each other, and even in the presence of a stern teacher would not fail to look even more fiercely than before, or even fall to blows; how many times every day do I see some Kiriushka set his teeth together, and fly at Taraska, and pull his hair, and throw him to the ground, and apparently try to maim his enemy or to annihilate him; and then, in a moment's time, this same Taraska would be laughing at Kiriushka, for always one manages to turn the tables on the other, and then in the course of five minutes they would have made friends and gone off to sit down together.

Not long ago, between classes, two lads grappled in a corner. One was a remarkable mathematician nine years old, a member of the second class; the other a shingled dvorovui,[1] clever but quick-tempered, very small in stature, a black-eyed lad named Kuiska.

Kuiska had caught the mathematician's long hair, and was holding him with his head against the wall. The mathematician was vainly clutching at Kuiska's shorn bristles. Kuiska's black eyes were full of triumph. The mathematician could barely refrain from tears, and he cried, "Well! well! what! what!" but he was evidently having a hard time of it, and only his pride kept his courage up. This had been going on for some time, and I was undecided what to do.

"A fight! a fight!" cried the boys, and they crowded round the corner. The little ones laughed; but the big boys, though they did not attempt to separate the contestants, looked at them rather seriously, and their looks and silence did not fail to have an effect upon Kuiska. He was conscious that he was doing wrong, and a smile began gradually to creep over his face, and by degrees he let go of the mathematician's hair. The mathematician suddenly twitched himself away, and gave Kuiska such a push as to knock his head against the wall, and then, being entirely quit of him, he ran away.

Kuiska burst into tears, darted in pursuit of his enemy, and hit him with all his might and main on the shuba, but did not hurt him. The mathematician was going to pay him back, but at that instant various dissuasive voices were heard:

"See, he strikes a smaller boy!" cried the lookers-on; "off with you, Kuiska!"

And so the affair ended, as if it had not been at all, except, I may add, for the vague consciousness that each had of having fought disagreeably, because both had been hurt. And here I cannot refrain from calling attention to the sentiment of justice which prevailed in the crowd. How many times these affairs are settled in such a way that you cannot make out the principles on which the settlement is made, and yet satisfaction is given to both sides! How arbitrary and unjust in comparison with this are all "educational efforts" in such circumstances!

[1] One of the domestic servants, formerly serfs, like the little girl mentioned.

"You are both to blame! down on your knees!" says the disciplinarian; and the disciplinarian is wrong, because one is to blame, and this one is triumphant there on his knees chewing the cud of his not wholly evaporated passion, and the innocent is doubly punished.

Or, "You are to blame for doing such and such or such and such a thing, and you shall be punished," says the disciplinarian; and the one punished hates his enemy more than ever, because he has arrayed on his side despotic power, the fairness of which is beyond his comprehension.

Or, "Forgive him as God commands you, and be better than he," says the disciplinarian. You say to him, "Be better than he!" but all that he wants is to be stronger, and he does not comprehend, and cannot comprehend, the idea of being better.

Or, "You both are to blame; ask each other's pardon and kiss each other, children."

This is worse than anything, both on account of the insincerity of the kiss, and because the evil passion once calmed in this way is sure to burst forth again. But leave them alone, unless you are either father or mother, who would feel some pitiful sympathy with your children, and therefore have a certain right always, leave them alone, I say, and watch how everything explains itself and comes out all right as simply and naturally, and at the same time with just as much variety and complication as all the unconscious relations of life.

But perhaps the teachers who have not had experience of such disorder or free order, will think that without disciplinary interference this disorder may take on physically injurious consequences; that they will break each other's limbs or kill each other.

In the Yasnaya Polyana school last spring, there were only two cases of serious damage being done. One boy was pushed down from the steps, and cut his leg to the bone, the wound was healed in two weeks; the other had his cheek burned with blazing pitch, and he carried a scar for a fortnight.

Nothing ever happened, unless perhaps once a week some one cried, and that not from pain, but from vexation or shame. Of blows, bruises, bumps, except in the case of the two boys just mentioned, we cannot recall a single one during all the summer among thirty or forty pupils, though they were left entirely to their own guidance.

Chapter 7 : Discipline

I am convinced that a school ought not to interfere in affairs of discipline that belong only to the family: that a school ought not to have, and does not have, the right to grant rewards and punishments; that the best police and discipline of a school is gained by entrusting the pupils with full powers to learn and to behave as they please. I am convinced of this, notwithstanding the fact that the old customs of disciplinary schools are so strong that even in the Yasnaya Polyana school we occasionally departed from this principle. During the last term, in November, there were two instances of punishments.

During the drawing class, a teacher who had not been long with us noticed that a small boy was crying without heeding the teacher, and was angrily hitting his neighbors without any reason.

Not realizing the possibility of soothing him with words, the teacher dragged him from his seat, and took him to his table. That was a punishment for him. The little lad sobbed during all the time of the lesson.

This was the very lad whom, at the beginning of the school, I refused to take, because I considered him to be a hopeless idiot.

His principal characteristics were dullness and sweetness of disposition. His comrades would never let him join their games; they made sport of him, turned him into ridicule, and at the same time they would be surprised, and say:

”What a strange fellow Petka is! If you strike him,
and even the little fellows sometimes pick on him,
he shakes himself loose and runs away!”

”He has no courage at all,” one boy said to me, in regard to him. If this boy had been brought to such a state of passion that the teacher felt it necessary to punish him for it, it was evident that some one not punished was to blame.

Chapter 8 : The Thief

The other case. In the summer, while repairs were making in the building, a Leyden jar was taken from the physical laboratory, pencils several times were missing, and books also were missing at a time when no carpenter or painter was at work in the building.

We questioned the boys. The best scholars, the first scholars at that time, old friends of ours, reddened and grew so confused that any magistrate would have been convinced that their confusion was proof positive of their guilt. But I knew them, and could depend on them as on myself.

I comprehended that the mere thought of suspicion deeply and painfully wounded them. One lad, whom I will call Feodor, a gifted and opulent nature, turned quite white and burst into tears. They declared that they would tell if they knew, but they refused to search.

After a few days the thief was detected a lad[1] belonging to a distant village. He made an accomplice of a peasant lad who came with him from the same village) and they together had secreted the stolen articles in a box.

This discovery brought a strange feeling of relief and even pleasure among the scholars, and at the same time contempt and pity for the thieves. We imposed on the boys the task of naming the punishment. Some wanted to have the thieves whipped, but, of course, by themselves; others proposed that they should wear a placard ticketed THIEF.

This punishment, I am ashamed to say, had been proposed by ourselves once before, and the very lad who a year before had worn a placard inscribed LIAR, now of all others was the one to propose the placards for the thieves.

We decided on the placards, and when one of the girls had embroidered them, all the scholars looked on with angry pleasure, and ridiculed the offenders. They proposed a still more severe punishment: "To take them to the village, and make an exhibition of them with the placards on during the holiday," was their proposal.

The offenders wept.

The peasant lad who had been led away by the other was a talented story-teller and humorist, a fat, white-haired little snipper-snapper, and he cried as if his heart would break, as hard as a child could cry. The other, the principal criminal, a boy with a hawk nose, with dry features, and an intelligent face, grew pale, his lips trembled, his eyes glared wildly and angrily at his gay companions, and he occasionally hid his face on account of tears that were unnatural to him. His cap, with torn visor, was pulled down to the nape of his neck; his hair was in disorder; his clothes were soiled with chalk. His whole appearance struck me and all of us with the same surprise, as if we had seen it for the first time.

The contemptuous looks of all rested on him. And this stung him to the quick. When, without looking round, but hanging his head, and with that mien peculiar to criminals, as it seemed to me, he went off home, with the pack of boys chasing him, and nagging him in an unnatural and

[1] Dvorovui, or domestic servant.

strangely pitiless fashion, as if some evil spirit influenced them against their will, something told me that it was all wrong.

But things went on as before, and the thief came for several days with his placard. But it seemed to me that from that time he began to degenerate in his studies, and he was no longer seen to take part in the games and converse of his companions outside the class-room.

When, one day, I went into class, all the scholars told me with horror that he had been stealing again.

He had stolen twenty copper kopecks from the teacher's room, and they had caught him as he was hiding the money under the stairs.

Again we decorated him with the placard; again began the same ugly scene. I gave him a lecture, as all disciplinarians are accustomed to do. Now there happened to be present a grown-up boy, a chatterer, and he began to lecture him, repeating words such as he had unquestionably heard from his father, who was a farmer.[2]

"He has stolen once, he has stolen twice," he said in a clear and deliberate voice. "It has become a habit; it won't do any good."

I began to grow vexed. I felt almost angry against the thief.

But as I looked into the culprit's face, which was more pale, wretched, passionate, and hard than ever, I seemed to see the face of a convict, and it suddenly appeared to me so wrong and odious, that I took off the stupid placard; I told him to go wherever he pleased, and I suddenly felt the conviction felt it, not through my intellect, but in my whole being that I had no right to punish this unhappy lad, and that it was not in my power to make of him what I and the dvornik's son might like to make of him. I felt a conviction that there are soul-secrets hidden from us on which life, but not regulations and punishments, may act.

And what nonsense! A boy had stolen a book, by what a long, complicated process of feelings, thoughts, mistaken judgments he was induced to take a book that did not belong to him! and hid it in his box,. and I fasten to him a tag with the word "THIEF" on it, which means something entirely different.

Why?

To punish him by making him ashamed, some one will say.

Why? What is shame? And have I any proof that that shame will put an end to his inclination to steal?

Perhaps it will strengthen it. What was expressed in his face was very likely not shame at all. Indeed, I may be very certain that it was not shame, but something entirely different which might have been always latent in his face, and would better not have been brought out.

Here in this world which is called practical, in the world of Palmerstons and Cains, in the world where not that which is reasonable, but which is practical, is regarded as reasonable, here in this world, I say, we have men, themselves under sentence, arrogating to themselves the right and duty of punishing others! Our world of children simple, independent beings must remain free from self-deceptions and from the criminal belief in the legality of punishments, from the belief and delusion that the feeling of vengeance becomes just as soon as we call it punishment

Let us proceed with the daily order of our description of exercises.

[2] Dvornik, generally one who serves in a dvor; also house-porter. Here, one who occupies a dvor, including house and land.

Chapter 9 : Marks

At two o'clock the hungry children run home. But notwithstanding their hunger, they always wait a few moments to learn what their marks are. Marks, though at the present time they give no rank, are still regarded by them with the keenest interest.

"I have five, with the cross, and they have given Olgushka[1] such a healthy cipher!" "And I have four," they cry.

The child takes the marks as a gauge of his work, and discontent at marks is shown only when there is any unfairness in making the returns. Too bad if he has been trying, and the teacher, through an error, has given less than his deserts! He will give the teacher no peace, and will weep bitter tears unless he can have the record changed. Bad marks, if they have been deserved, go without protest.

Marks, however, remain only as a relic of a past system, and are beginning, of their own accord, to go out of use.

[1] Little Olga.

Chapter 10 : Afternoon Session

The scholars after dinner gather for the first lesson of the second session, just as they did for the morning, and wait for the teacher in the same way.

As a general rule this lesson is devoted to sacred or Russian history, and all the classes take part in it. By the time this lesson begins, generally the twilight is coming on. The teacher stands or sits in the middle of the room, and the scholars gather around him as in an amphitheater; some on benches, some on chairs, some on the window-seats.

All these evening lessons, and especially this first one, have an absolutely different character from those of the morning, a character of calm dreaminess and poetry.

Come into the school at dusk; no lights are visible at the windows, it is almost quiet; only the snow newly tracked in on the stairs, a subdued murmur, and a slight motion behind the door, and perhaps some little lad seizing the balustrade and running up-stairs two steps at a time, give proof that school is in session.

Come into the room.

It is almost dark behind the frosted windows; the older and better scholars pressing together, crowding close to the teacher, and lifting their pretty heads, look him straight in the face. The independent little housemaid, with preoccupied face, always sits in a high chair and seems to swallow every word. The more mischievous and younger the children are, the farther away they manage to get. But they all listen attentively, even seriously; they behave themselves as well as the older ones; but, notwithstanding their attention, we cannot help being conscious that they will not be able to repeat anything of what they hear, although they remember much of it. One leans on another's shoulder; another stands by the table. Occasionally one of them, stretching over to the very middle of the throng across the back of some one else, scratches some figure with his finger-nail on some boy's back. Rarely will any one look at you.

When a new story begins, all sit still as death and listen. If it happen to be one they have heard before then, here and there conceited voices are heard from those who cannot refrain from reminding the teacher. However, if the old story is one they like, they will urge the teacher to repeat it in full, and they will not let him be interrupted.

"Can't you be patient! hush!" they will cry to the mischievous urchin.

It hurts them to have the character and artistic quality of the teacher's tale interrupted. During the last weeks it has been the story of the life of Christ. Each time they have insisted on hearing the whole of it. If any part were omitted, then they themselves added their favorite ending the story of Peter's denial and the Savior's sufferings.

It would seem as if there were no one alive in the room, not a motion can it be that they are asleep?

If you should go round in the twilight and look into the face of any youngster whatever, you would find him sitting with his eyes fastened on his teacher's face, his brow drawn into a frown of attention, and ten times he will shake off his mate's hand thrown over his shoulder. If you should tickle him in the neck, he would not even smile, but would shake his head as if to drive

away a fly, and again give all his attention to the mysterious and poetic tale, how the veil of the temple was rent, and darkness covered the face of the earth, and it seems to him both painful and delightful.

Chapter 11 : The End of the Hour

The teacher brings his story to a close, and all arise from their places, and, gathering around the teacher, trying to outshout each other, they begin to tell all that they can remember.

The noise of their voices becomes terrible. The teacher does his best to bring them to quiet. Those who are forbidden to tell what they know so perfectly, are not to be restrained in that way; they hasten to another teacher, or if one is not present, to one of their mates, or to any stranger, even to the stove-tender; they go in twos and threes, rushing from one room to another, in search of some one to hear them. Sometimes one will tell it all by himself. Others form groups of various numbers, and rehearse it, prompting, making additions, and correcting one another.

"Now let me say it to you!" says one to another; but the one addressed knows that the other has not the ability, and sends him on to some one else. As soon as they have all said it, they gradually come to order; the candles are lighted, and by this time the boys have come into a different mood.

In the evening, as a general rule, and in the succeeding classes, there is less disturbance, less shouting, more amenity and obedience to the teacher.

There is noticeable a general distaste for mathematics and analysis, and a taste for singing and reading, and especially for stories. *What is the good of mathe matics and writing?* tell us about geography, or even history, and we will listen!" they say.

By eight o'clock eyes begin to grow weary; yawns become frequent; the lights burn more dimly; they snuff the candles less frequently than before; the older scholars hold out, but the younger ones, leaning their elbows on the table, fall asleep lulled by the pleasant sound of the teacher's voice.

Sometimes, when the classes have been interesting, and there have been many of them, for oftentimes the school lasts seven long hours, and the children have become tired, or it is just before a holiday, when at home the oven has been heated for the bath, suddenly, without saying a word, two or three boys, during the second or third class after dinner, will come running into the room, and hastily remove their hats.

"Where are you going?"

"Home."

"But how about lessons? there 's the singing."

"But the boys say it 's time to go home," says the lad, twisting his cap.

"But who says so?"

"The children have gone."

"How is that! how is that!" exclaims the teacher, dumbfounded, for he is always ready for his other lessons. "Hold on!"

But into the room rushes another lad, with eager, important face.

"What are you waiting for?" he asks angrily of the one who has been detained, and is irresolutely picking the wool from his sheepskin cap. "The bo-oys have all started on! they are as far as the blacksmith's."

”Gone?”

”Yes, gone!” and both start off on the run, shouting as they reach the door, ”Good-by, Ivan Ivanovitch.”

And who are those boys who have decided to go home as they have?

God only knows. You would never find out who advised the step. They held no consultation, made no harangue, but still these children decided to go home.

”The boys are going!” and they pound their heels on the steps; another leaps like a cat down the porch, and, sliding and tumbling through the snow, and chasing each other along the narrow path, the children run home with merry shouts. Such things happen once or twice a week.

This is mortifying and unpleasant for the teacher, who does not approve of this, but who also does nor take into consideration that in consequence of just this one incident how much greater significance attaches to the five, six, and even seven lessons a day, which are assigned to each class, and which the pupils freely and of their own accord attend.

Only by the repetition of such incidents can it be decided that the instruction, though it be insufficient and one-sided, is not absolutely bad and injurious. Suppose the question be thus propounded: Which is better, that in the course of a year there should be no such incident, or that these incidents should cover half of the lessons? We should choose the latter alternative.

I, at least, in the Y. P. school, have been delighted when these incidents have recurred several times a month. Notwithstanding the fact that the children were frequently assured that they might go wherever they pleased, the influence of the teacher is so powerful that I have feared, of late, lest the discipline of the classes, of the roster, and the marks might imperceptibly curb their freedom so that they would wholly subject themselves to the craftiness of our cunningly baited net of order, and thus lose the possibility of choice and protest.

If they continue to come willingly, in spite of the freedom allowed them, I should never think that this pointed to any peculiar qualities of the Y. P. school, for I think that the same results would be obtained in any school, and that the desire for learning is so strong in children generally, that in order to gratify this desire they will submit themselves to many trying conditions, and will pardon many faults.

The latitude granted them for such escapades is useful and indispensable as a means of assuring the teacher from very great and serious mistakes and abuses.

Chapter 12 : The Evening Session

In the evening we have singing, graded reading, dialogues, physical experiments, and the writing of compositions. The most popular of these subjects are reading and the experiments.

During the reading the older ones collect in a star around the great center-table, with their heads together, their legs at every angle; one reads, and the others all repeat what has been read. The younger ones have a book for each two; and, if they understand it, they read it just as we grown people do; holding the book to the light, and supporting themselves on their elbows so as to make it easier, and evidently they take great comfort in it. Some try to enjoy two comforts at once, and stand by the heated stove warming themselves and reading at the same time.

Not all the scholars are allowed to see the experiments in physics, only the oldest and best scholars, selected from the second class. This class, by the character which it has acquired among us, is in a disposition well suited for the evening, is very fanciful, and perfectly keyed up to the mood induced by the reading of tales.

Here all that has been said is transformed into reality; everything is personified for them: the juniper pith-balls, repelled by the sealing-wax, the varying magnetic needle, the iron filings which run about on a sheet of paper under which a magnet is moved, all these things are to them alive. Even the most intellectual of the lads who understand the meaning of these phenomena are fascinated, and begin to exclaim at the needle, or the pith-ball, or the filings:

”Just look! where is it going? Hold on! ukh! go ahead!” and the like.

Generally the classes are over by eight or nine o’clock, though often the carpenter’s bench will detain some of the older boys a little longer, and the whole crowd, with a shout, rush together out-of-doors, and then divide into groups, crying to each other as their paths diverge toward different parts of the village. Sometimes they arrange to slide on big sleds, from the very door down into the valley where the village lies; they fasten up the thills, have some one in the middle to steer, and then, raising a snowy dust, they disappear from sight with a rush, leaving here and there black specks on the road where children have tumbled off.

Outside the institution, in spite of all its freedom in the open air, new relations are formed between the teachers and pupils, there is greater freedom, greater simplicity, and greater confidence the very relations which present themselves to us as the ideal of what a school should strive to be!

Chapter 13 : A Walk Through the Woods

Not long ago the first class were reading Gogol's "Vii";[1] the last scene had a powerful effect on them, and excited their imaginations; some of them acted the witch, and kept reminding one another of the last night.

Out-of-doors it was not cold; a moonless winter's night, with clouds floating across the sky. We stopped at the cross-roads; the older scholars, who had been with me three years, stood near me, begging me to accompany them a little farther; the younger ones cast sheep's-eyes at me, and then started down the hill.

The younger ones had begun their studies with a new teacher, and between me and them there was not as yet that confidence which existed between the older ones and me.

"Well," said one of them, "then we will go into the zakas"

The zakas, or "prohibition," was a small grove about two hundred paces from the house.

More eager in his pleadings than all the rest was Fedka,[2] a lad of ten years old, an affectionate, impressible, poetic, and spirited nature. Danger constituted for him apparently the chief condition of pleasure. In summer it was always terrible to see how he and two other boys would swim out into the very middle of the pond, which was three hundred and fifty feet[3] wide, and occasionally disappear in the hot reflection of the summer sun, and then dove into the depths, and float on their backs, and squirt up streams of water, and shout in clear, shrill voices to their comrades on the shore to see how courageous they were.

Now he knew that there were wolves in the forest, and so he wanted to go into the zakas. All took up with the idea, and we went, four of us, into the woods.

Another lad, I will call him Semka, healthy both in body and soul, and another small lad of twelve, named Vavilo, went on ahead, and kept shouting and howling in their abundant voices.

Pronka, a sickly, sweet-tempered, and very gifted lad, the son of a poor family, sickly he was apparently more for want of food than any other cause, walked by my side. Fedka was between me and Semka, and kept talking all the time in his peculiarly soft voice, now telling how when summer came he should bring the horses here to watch them, then declaring that he was not afraid of anything, then asking, "Suppose some one should spring out at us," and all the time urging me to tell them some story.

We did not go quite to the middle of the forest, for that would have been too terrifying, but even at the edge of the woods it kept growing darker and darker the path was scarcely visible; the lights in the village were hidden from view.

Semka stopped, and began to listen.

"Hold on, boys! what is that?" he cried suddenly.

We held our breath, but there was nothing to be heard; nevertheless a sort of terror seized us.

[1] The fantastic story of a beautiful and wealthy maiden who is in reality a witch, and causes the destruction of the groom who falls in love with her.

[2] Diminutive of Feodor, Theodore; as Semka is of Semyon.

[3] Fifty sazhen.

”Now what shall we do,” asked Fedka, ”supposing he leaps out at us?”

We had been talking about brigands in the Caucasus. They remembered a story of the Caucasus which I had told them some time before, and I began to relate again about the Abreks, about the Cossacks, about the Hajji-Murat.

Semka still went in advance of us, taking long strides in his big boots, and rhythmically swinging his strong back. Pronka was trying to keep up with me, but Fedka pushed him from the path, and Pronka, who, probably owing to his weakness, was always giving in to every one else, managed only in the most interesting places to keep alongside of us, although he was wading through snow which reached to his knees.

Every one who knows peasant children at all must have observed that they are not accustomed to any sort of caresses, and cannot endure them affectionate words, kisses, touching of hands, and other such things. I happened once to see how a lady in a peasant school wanted to caress a lad, and saying, Now I am going to kiss you, darling,” I kissed him; and how the lad who received the kiss was covered with shame, felt insulted, and was perfectly at a loss to know why he was so treated. A lad of five years feels himself above such things as caresses; he is already grown up!

Therefore I was astonished beyond measure when Fedka, who was walking at my side, suddenly, in the most moving part of my story, touched me gently by the sleeve, and then grasped with his whole hand two of my fingers, and did not let go of them.

As soon as I stopped talking, Fedka began to urge me to tell some more, and in such a beseeching and excited voice that it was impossible not to yield to his request.

”Now keep out from under my feet, you,” said he, sternly, to Pronka, who was trying to run ahead. He was carried even to cruelty it was so unusual and so pleasant to hold my finger, and no one should presume to dare to disturb his content!

”Now, more, more!” he said; ”here is a good place!”

We had passed through the woods, and had entered the village at the other end.

”Let us go back,” said they all as soon as the lights began to appear. ”Let us go back once more!”

We walked without speaking, occasionally slumping through the soft, ill-trodden path; the white darkness was so dense as to seem to shake before the eyes; the clouds hung low as if something dragged them down upon us; there was no end to that peculiar whiteness in which we alone crunched over the snow; the wind soughed in the bare tops of the poplars, and silence reigned in the woods. I finished telling how the Abrek, when he had been surrounded, sang his songs, and then threw himself on his dagger.

All were silent.

”Why did he sing his song when he was surrounded?” asked Semka.

”Haven’t you just been told?” exclaimed Fedka, scornfully.” So as to get courage to die!”

”I should think that he would sing a prayer, then,” added Pronka.

The rest agreed with him.

Fedka suddenly stopped.

”But how did you say that your aunt was killed?” he asked, he still felt a little afraid. ”Tell us! tell us!”

And I told them again that terrible story of the murder of the Countess Tolstoy’; and they silently stood around me looking into my face.

”And so the galliard was captured,” exclaimed Fedka.

”It must have been terrible to go by night when she lay there murdered! I should have run away!”

And he took a firmer grip of my two fingers. We had halted in the thicket, back of the threshing-floors, at the very end of the village. Semka picked up a dry branch from out of the snow, and began to strike the frost-covered bole of a linden. The hoar-frost fell from the branches, on his cap, and the echo rang through the forest.

”Lyof Nikolayevitch,” said Fedka (I supposed that he was going to speak of the countess again), ”what is the good of learning to sing? I often wonder, I really do, why we sing.”

Chapter 14 : Utility And Beauty

Why he leaped from the terrible murder of the countess to that question, God only knows; but everything

the sound of his voice, the seriousness with which he asked the question, the silent interest of the other two

made it evident that there was a legitimate and vital connection between this question and the conversation that had preceded. Whether this connection lay in the fact that he responded to my explanation that the crime was rendered possible by lack of education, I had spoken to them of that, or because he verified it in himself, as he transported himself into the mind of the murderer, and remembered his favorite occupation (he had a wonderful voice, and a great talent for music), or whether the connection consisted in the fact that he felt that now was the time for perfect honesty of expression, and all the questions that demanded elucidation arose in his mind; at all events, his question did not surprise any of us.

"But why have drawing? why learn to write well?" I asked, for I really did not know how to explain to him the advantage of art.

"Yes, why have drawing?" he repeated thoughtfully.

He had actually brought up the question, "What is the good of art?"

I dared not, I could not answer.

"What is the good of drawing?" exclaimed Semka. "You learn to make sketches, you can do anything with it!"

"No, that is sketching; but why draw figures?"

Semka's healthy nature had no difficulty in replying.

"Why this stick? Why a linden?" he asked, still thrusting at the linden.

"Well, then, why the linden?" I asked.

"To make rafters of!" exclaimed Semka.

"Well, then, why don't we have it cut down next summer?"

"Yes; why not?"

"No: but in reality," continued Fedka, obstinately, "why do we let the linden grow?"

And we proceeded to talk about the fact that not everything is for use, but that there is such a thing as beauty, and that art is beauty, and we understood each other; and Fedka understood perfectly why the linden is allowed to grow, and why we sing.

Pronka agreed with us, but he understood better what moral beauty was, goodness, in other words. Semka understood by means of his quick intellect, but he could not see how there could be beauty without use; he doubted, as often is the case with people of large intellect, who feel that beauty is strength, but who do not feel in their soul the need of this strength; like them, he wanted to get at art by means of the intellect, and he was striving to kindle in himself this fire.

"To-morrow we shall sing the Cherubim Song," said he; *I remember my part."*

He has the correct ear, but no taste, no feeling for music.

Fedka, however, perfectly understood that the linden was beautiful for its foliage in summer, and good to look at, and that was all that was needed.

Pronka understood that it was a shame to cut it down, because it was also a live thing: ”You see it is just the same as blood when we drink the sap from a birch!”

Semka, though he did not say anything, was apparently thinking that there was not much use in it when it was rotten. It seems strange to me to be repeating what we said then, but I remember that we talked over everything, as it seems to me, that could be said about use and about beauty, both plastic and moral.

Chapter 15 : Proshchai And Proschaite

We returned to the village. Fedka had not once let go of my hand. It seemed to me that he held it now out of gratefulness. We were all brought so close together that night! as we had not been for a long time. Pronka walked abreast with us, along the wide village street.

"See, there 's a light at the Mazanofs' yet!" said he. "As I was going to school to-day, Gavriukha[1] was coming out of the tavern dr-u-u-unk!" he added, "blind drunk; his horse was all of a lather, and he was beating her like everything. I feel sorry even now! Indeed, I do! Why should he beat her? And lately, father,"[2] said Semka, "he drove his horse from Tula, and she ran him into a snowdrift, but he was asleep, he was so drunk!"

"But Gavriukha was beating his horse right across the eyes, and I was so sorry to see him," said Pronka, for the second time. "Why did he beat her? and even when he got down he beat her!"

Semka suddenly stopped.

"Our folks are all asleep," said he, looking at the windows of his crooked black cottage. "Won't you come in?"

"No."

"Goooo-d-by,[3] Lyof Nikolayevitch," he cried suddenly; and, as if using all the force of his will, he tore himself away from us, and trotted off to the house, lifted the latch, and disappeared.

"Will you take us all home this way; first one, and then the other?" suggested Fedka.

We went farther.

At Pronka's there was a light; we peered through the window; his mother, a tall, handsome, but careworn woman, with black brows and eyes, was sitting at the table peeling potatoes; in the middle a cradle was hung; the mathematician of the second class, Pronka's other brother, was standing by the table, eating potato and salt. The cottage was black, narrow, and dirty.

"There is n't much for you!" cried Pronka's mother. "Where have you been?"

Pronka smiled a sweet and sickly smile, as he glanced at the window. His mother discovered that he was not alone, and immediately her expression changed and became unbeautiful and hypocritical.

Fedka was now the only one left.

"The tailors are at our house, so we have a light," said he, in his gentle voice of the evening. "Good-by,[4] Lyof Nikolayevitch," he added gently and affectionately, as he began to rap with the knocker on the closed door. "Let me in!" rang his clear voice through the wintry quiet of the village street. It was long before there was any answer.

I looked through the window; the cottage was large; legs were seen hanging down from the oven and benches; the father was playing cards with the tailors; a few copper coins were lying on the table. A peasant woman, Fedka's stepmother, was sitting by the cresset and looking eagerly

[1] Contemptuous diminutive of Gavriil, Gabriel.

[2] Batya, shortened form of batenka, little father.

[3] Pra-a-a-shchalte.

[4] Proshchai, a more familiar form than proshchaite. 8 Prozhzhonnui yeruiga, a "burnt-out debauchee."

at the money. One tailor, a dissipated-looking young peasant, 3 was holding the cards on the table, and was looking triumphantly at his partner. Fedka's father, with his collar thrown open, his face screwed into a scowl of mental excitement and vexation, was shuffling his cards, and irresolutely waving his toil-hardened hand above them.

"Let me in!"

The woman got up and opened the door.

"Good-by!" said Fedka, once more; "let us always walk that way!"

Chapter 16 : Objections Answered

I see honorable, worthy, liberal men, members of charitable societies, who are ready to give and do give a part of their substance to the poor, who have founded and are founding schools, and who on reading this will shake their heads and say:

"It is not good! Why spend so much energy in developing them? Why cultivate in them sensibilities and capacities which will place them in a false and dangerous position toward their own class? Why educate them out of their sphere?"

I am not speaking now of those who betray themselves by saying:

"It will be a fine state of affairs when all want to be thinkers and artists, and no one will be willing to labor."

These men say up and down that they don't like to work, and therefore it is necessary that there be people unfitted for any form of employment, and that they work like slaves for others. Who knows whether it is good or bad or necessary to educate them out of their sphere? And who can take them out of their sphere? That is precisely like a mechanical action. Is it good or is it bad to add sugar to flour, or put pepper into beer?

Fedka is not constrained by his torn caftan, but he is tormented by moral questions and doubts, and you want to give him three rubles, the catechism, and a little story of how labor and humility, which you yourself cannot endure, are useful for a man. He does not need the three rubles, he will get them and have them as soon as he does need them, and he will learn to work without you just as he learned to breathe. He needs what you have been brought to by your life and that of ten generations of your ancestors, uncrushed by work. You have leisure to investigate, to think, to suffer give to him the results of your sufferings that is the only thing he needs.

And you, like the Egyptian priest, hide from him under a mantle of mystery, you bury in the earth, the talent given you by history. Do not be afraid! nothing human is injurious to man. Do you doubt it? Give way to your feeling, and it will not disappoint you. Trust your lad to nature, and you may be sure that he will take only what history commanded you to give him, what has grown in you through sufferings.

Chapter 17 : The Quality of the Scholars

The school is free, and at first the pupils came only from the village of Yasnaya Poly ana. Many of these scholars left school because their parents did not consider the teaching good; many after they had learned to read and write ceased coming, and took service at the post-station, for that was the chief industry of our village.

Some came at first from the poor villages of the neighborhood, but on account of the inconvenience of getting back and forth, or the expense of meals which cost at the very least not less than two silver rubles a month, they were soon withdrawn.

Well-to-do muzhiks from more distant villages were attracted by the gratuitous instruction afforded, and by the report spread abroad among the people that there was good teaching at the Y. P. school, and sent us their children; but this winter with the opening of the village schools they withdrew them again and placed them in the village schools, where a price was charged.

There remained in the Y. P. school the children of the Yasnopolyansky peasants, who go in the winter time, and in summer from April to the middle of October work in the fields, and the children of peasant farmers, overseers, soldiers, domestic servants, tavern-keepers, sacristans, and rich muzhiks, who come from a radius of thirty or fifty versts around.

The total number of pupils reaches forty, but rarely more than thirty are present together. Of girls there are three or five from six to ten per cent. The ages of the boys are generally between seven and thirteen when the school is of normal size.

Moreover, every year there are three or four adults who come for a month or even for all winter, and then leave entirely. For these adults who come to school individually the school method is very trying, for by reason of their age and their sense of dignity they are prevented from taking part in the life of the school, and they cannot help feeling scorn for the children, and so they remain perfectly isolated. The animation of the school only confuses them. They come for the most to finish their studies, having already had some little instruction, and persuaded in their own minds that study is merely the perusal of some book about which they have heard, or which they have in times past had some little experience of.

In order to come to school the adult must surmount his timidity and shyness, and endure the family storm and the ridicule of his comrades:

"Oh, would you see, the old nag has come to school!"

And then, besides, he has the constant feeling that every day wasted in school is a day lost for his work, which constitutes his only capital, and therefore all the time he is in school he finds himself in a state of nervous excitement and haste which is most injurious for his studies.

At the time which I am writing about there were three such adults in the school, and one of them still continues to come.

The adults act in school just as if they were at a fire; the instant one has finished writing he instantly lays the pen down, and while he is doing so, he grasps a book with his other hand, and begins to read standing; as soon as you take a book from him he grabs his slate; and when you take that from him he is entirely lost.

We had this autumn a laboring man who took care of the stoves and studied at the same time. In two weeks he learned to read and write, but this was not study: it was an illness, a fit of intoxication! As he would go carrying a load of wood through the class-room, he would stop, and with the wood in his arms would bend down over a lad's head, and, spelling s-k-a, ska, would go to his place.

When he failed to do that, then he would look at the children with envy, almost with anger. When he was at liberty, then there was no restraining him; he would devour his book, repeating b-a, ba, r-i, ri, and so on, and when he was in this condition he was deprived of all power of comprehending anything else.

When the adults had to sing or draw or hear a story from history or watch experiments, then it was evident that they yielded to a cruel necessity, and, like the famished when torn from their food, they only waited eagerly the moment when they could betake themselves to their a b c book. Remaining faithful to my principle, I never compelled the boy to learn the alphabet when he did not want to, or the adult to learn physics or drawing when he preferred the alphabet. Each selected what he wanted.

As a rule such adults as had studied before have not as yet found their place in the Y. P. school, and their learning goes hard; there is something unnatural and painful in their relations to the school. The Sundayschools which I have seen present the same phenomena as regards adults, and therefore all data about the successful voluntary instruction of adults would be for us most useful and valuable.

Chapter 18 : How Parents Regard the School

The views of the people have changed since the first in regard to the school. Of their former ideas of it we shall have occasion to speak in the history of the Y. P. school; even now it is said among the people "that everything all the sciences are taught there, and the teachers are so extraordinary there why! they even make thunder and lightning! In other respects the boys learn well, and know how to read and write!" Some rich householders[1] send their children, out of vanity, to go through the whole course, so that they may learn "division" division being for them the highest concept of scholastic wisdom. Other fathers consider that learning is very advantageous; but the majority send their children without reasoning about it, yielding merely to the spirit of the times. Of these children, who form the larger number, the most gratifying result to us is shown in the fact that these thus sent have come to be so fond of study that their fathers yield to their children's desires, and begin themselves unconsciously to feel that something good is doing for their children, and so cannot make up their minds to take them away.

One father was telling me how he once burned out a whole candle, holding it above his son's book, and he was loud in his praises both of his son and of the book. It was the Testament.

"My pa,[2] also," said one of the boys to me, "the other day listened as I was reading one of my stories; he laughed at first, but when he found that it was religious, he sat up till midnight to listen, and he himself held the light!"

I went with one of the new teachers to a pupil's house, and in order to have the boy make a good showing before the teacher, I made him do an algebra example. The mother climbed up on the oven, and we forgot all about her as her son carefully and boldly formed his equation, and said:

"2 ab minus c, equals d divided by three."

She all the time was covering her mouth with her hand, and trying to restrain herself, but at last she burst out laughing, and could not explain to us what she was laughing at.

Another father, a soldier, who came to fetch his son, found him in the drawing class; and when he saw his son's skill, he began to address him with the respectful you instead of thou, and could not make up his mind during the class to give him the present which he had brought him.

The general impression, it seems to me, is this: "It is superfluous and idle to teach everything, as in the case of the children of the nobility, but here reading and writing are taught with dispatch therefore we can send our children."

Injurious rumors about us circulate, but they are beginning to find less credence. Two fine boys lately left school on the ground that writing was not properly taught.

Another soldier was on the point of sending his son, but, after questioning the best of our boys, and finding that he stumbled in reading the Psalter, he made up his mind that learning was poor business, and only glory was good.

[1] Dvorniki.

[2] Batya, familiar for batenka, diminutive of atyets, father.

Some of the Yasnopolyansky peasants still have some apprehension lest the rumors that were once in circulation may have some foundation; they imagine we are teaching for some ulterior end, and that before they know it they will be bundled into carts and carried off to Moscow.

There is now scarcely any dissatisfaction because we do not punish by whipping, and because we have no rank-list; and I have often had occasion to notice the perplexity of some parent who came to school after his son, and found the running, confusion, and scuffling going on before his very eyes. He is persuaded that such indulgence is harmful, and he believes that education is a good thing, but how the two are united he cannot comprehend.

Gymnastic exercises even now occasionally give rise to comment, and the conviction that they tear the viscera is not to be overcome. At the end of their fasting, or in the autumn when vegetables are ripe, gymnastic exercises seem to do most harm; and old grandmothers,[3] as they put on the pots, will explain that over-indulgence and breaking is the cause of all the trouble.

For some of the parents, though the number is small, the spirit of equality that obtains serves as a cause for dissatisfaction. In November there were two girls, daughters of a rich householder, who came in cloaks and caps, who at first held themselves quite aloof from the others; but afterwards, becoming accustomed to things, began to study excellently, and did not mind the tea and the cleaning of their teeth with tobacco. Their father, who drove up in his Crimean tulup tightly buttoned, came into school, and surprised them in the midst of a throng of dirty, clog-wearing children, who, leaning their elbows on the girls' caps, were listening to the teacher. The father was affronted, and took his girls from school, though he did not confess the cause of his grievance.

Finally, there are pupils who have left the school because their parents, who have entered them there in order to please some one, have withdrawn them when this sense of obligation was past.

Thus we have twelve subjects, three classes, forty pupils all told, four teachers, and from five to seven recitations in the course of the day. The teachers keep a diary of their occupations, which they communicate to one another on Sundays, and in accordance with this they make their plans for the teaching during the next week. These plans are not always carried out, but are often modified in accordance with the demands of the pupils.

[3] Babushki.

Chapter 19 : Mechanical Reading

Reading constitutes a part of the instruction in language.

The problem of instruction in language consists, in our opinion, in directing the pupils in the comprehension of the contents of books written in the literary language. The knowledge of the literary language is indispensable because all good books are written in it.

Formerly, from the very foundation of the school, there was no division between mechanical and graded reading; the pupils read only what they could comprehend special works, words and phrases, written in chalk on the walls, then the tales of Khudyakof and Afanasief.

I supposed that for children to learn to read they had to have a love for reading, but that to acquire a love for reading it was necessary that what they read should be comprehensible and interesting. This seemed so rational and clear, but this notion is fallacious.

In the first place, in order to pass from the reading on the walls to the reading in books, each pupil had to have a special training in mechanical reading for every book. As the number of pupils happened to be small, and there was no classification of topics, this was possible, and I succeeded without great difficulty in getting the first pupils from reading on the walls, to reading in books; but when new pupils appeared this became impossible. The younger ones had not the ability to read and comprehend stories; the labor of spelling out words and gathering the meaning, taken together, was too great for them.

Another obstacle consisted in the fact that graded reading was interrupted by these stories, and whatever book we chose, popular, military, Pushkin, Gogol, Karamzin, it proved that the older scholars in reading Pushkin, just as the younger ones in the reading of stories, could not coordinate the labor of reading and that of comprehending what they read, though they understood perfectly well when we read it to them.

We thought at first that the difficulty consisted only in the faulty mechanism of the pupils' reading, and we invented mechanical reading reading for the process of reading where the teacher read in alternation with the pupils but this did not help matters; even in the reading of "Robinson" the same unreadiness manifested itself.

In summer, when the school is in a state of transition, we thought we had overcome this difficulty by the simplest and most practical method. Why not confess it, we submitted to the false shame of having visitors observe us. Our pupils read much worse than the pupils that had been taught the same length of time by the sacristan! A new teacher proposed to introduce reading aloud from the same books, and we consented. Having once adopted the false notion that pupils ought to learn to read fluently in the course of a year, we added mechanical and graded reading to the curriculum, and obliged them to read two hours a day, all using the same books, and this proved very convenient to us.

But one infraction of the law of freedom for the students brought falsehood, and a whole series of mistakes in its train.

The books were purchased the short stories of Pushkin and Yershof; the children were seated on benches, and one was called on to read aloud while the others followed his reading; in order to be sure that all were paying attention, the teacher would call on first one, then another.

At first this seemed to us a very good plan. Any one visiting the school would find the scholars sitting in good order on their benches; one would be reading, the rest following.

The reader would pronounce, "Sniiluisa, Gosuddruinya Rmbka, Have pity, Mistress Fish;" the others or the teacher would correct the accent, smiluisa, and all would follow suit.

"Ivanof read!"

Ivanof will hunt around for the place and begin to read. All are attention; watchful of the teacher, every word is accurately pronounced, and the reading goes with considerable smoothness. It seems admirable, but probe it a little; the one who is reading is reading the same thing for the thirtieth or the fortieth time.

A printed leaf suffices for at least a week, for to purchase new books every time would be terribly expensive, and books comprehensible to the children of peasants are not more than two: the tales of Khudyakof and Afanasief. Moreover, the books used once by one class become so familiar that some know them by heart, and all get tired of them, and they are a bore even to the families of the scholars.

The one that reads is bashful, hearing his own voice ringing through the silence of the room; all his energies are concentrated on the observation of signs and accents; and he contracts the habit of reading without trying to make out the sense, for he is burdened with other distractions. Those who listen do the same, and in their efforts to keep the place when they may be called on, they run their fingers regularly along the lines, and this bores them, and they are easily distracted by outside incidents. The sense of what is read, being an extraneous affair, sometimes against their will sticks in their minds, sometimes does not.

The chief harm lies in that eternal conflict of sharpness and trickery between teacher and pupils which always develops in such an order of things, and which we had hitherto escaped in our school; while the sole advantage of this method of reading namely, the correct pronunciation of words had no influence on our pupils.

Our pupils began to read phrases put on the walls, and pronounced by themselves; and all were aware that the word kogo whose is pronounced as if it were kavo. I opine that it is useless to teach them to keep their voices up, or to change their voices in accordance with arbitrary marks, since every five-year-old child correctly employs, in speaking, the punctuation marks when he understands what he says. Therefore it is easier to teach him to comprehend what he reads from a book for sooner or later he must attain this than it is to teach him by punctuation marks to sing as if by notes. But it seems so comfortable for the teacher!

The teacher is always involuntarily impelled to select for himself the most convenient method of teaching.

The more convenient this method is for the teacher, the more unsuitable it is for the scholar.

That method is the only good one which renders the pupils contented.

These three laws of instruction are reflected in the most palpable way in the Y. P. school in the mechanical reading.

Chapter 20 : Experiments

Thanks to the vitality in the spirit of the school, especially when its older pupils returned from their village occupations, this method of reading failed of itself, they began to grow listless, to play pranks, they cut the lessons. The main point, the reading of stories, which would go to prove the success of this mechanical method, showed that there was no success at all, that during five weeks not a step of progress had been made, many had fallen behind. The best mathematician of the first class, R, who could perform examples in square root in his head, got during this time so out of the practice of reading that he even had to spell out words.

We dropped reading in books and racked our brains in trying to invent a method of mechanical reading. The simple notion that the time had not yet come for good mechanical reading, and that there was no necessity for it as yet, that the pupils themselves would find the best method, did not occur to us for some time.

During these experiments the following scheme worked itself out: While the reading classes were in progress as yet only nominally divided into graded and mechanical, the poorest readers would each two have a book between them, sometimes tales, sometimes the Gospels, sometimes a collection of songs, or a journal of popular reading, and they would read this in duet merely for practice; but when this book is a story within their comprehension they read it understandingly, and insist on the teacher hearing them, even though the class is nominally one in mechanical reading.

Occasionally the students for the most part those that are dull take the same book several times, open it at the same page, read the same story, and remember it by heart, not only without, but even against, the teacher's recommendation; sometimes these dull ones come to the teacher or to the elder pupils and ask permission to read with them.

Those that had read best in the second class do not like so well to read before company, more rarely read for mere practice; and, if they learn anything by heart, it is poetry, and not prose tales.

The same phenomenon took place among the older ones with a particularity which especially surprised me last month. In their class in graded reading some book was given them, and they took turns in reading it, and then all of them in concert repeated its contents. This autumn they were joined by a pupil named Ch, of remarkably gifted nature, who had been to school two years to the sacristan, and was therefore ahead of them all in reading. He reads as well as we do, and consequently in the class in graded reading the pupils understand what little they understand only when Ch is reading, and nevertheless each of them is stirred with desire to read.

But as soon as a poor reader begins, all express their dissatisfaction, especially when the story is interesting; they turn it into ridicule, they grow angry, the poor reader becomes abashed, and endless disorder ensues.

Last month one of them declared that, at any cost, he would succeed in a week's time in reading as well as Ch did; others also made the same vow, and suddenly mechanical reading became a favorite occupation.

For an hour, or an hour and a half, they would sit still, clinging to the book which they could not understand, they would take it home with them, and actually in three weeks they made most unexpected progress.

With them precisely the opposite happened to what generally happens with those who know how to read.

It generally happens that a man learns how to read, but without understanding; in this case it resulted that the scholars became convinced that there was something to read and to understand, and that to attain this skill was required, and so they began to acquire fluency in reading.

Now we have entirely abandoned mechanical reading, but the matter is left as described above: each pupil is given the chance to employ all the methods he pleases, and it is noticeable that each employs all the methods known to me.

I. Reading with a teacher.

II. Reading for practice.

III. Reading and learning by heart.

IV. Reading together.

V. Reading with a comprehension of what is read. The first method, which is employed by mothers all over the world, is, as a rule, not a scholastic but a family method; according to this the pupil comes and asks some one to read with him; the teacher reads, showing the pronunciation of each syllable and word. This is the first and most rational expedient no other can take its place; and the pupil himself demands it before all others, and the teacher instinctively falls back upon it.

Notwithstanding all the means calculated to improve the education and to facilitate the teacher's work with the majority of students, this remains the best, and indeed the only, method of teaching children to read, and to read fluently.

The second meuiod of instruction in reading is likewise very popular, and every one who learns to read fluently makes use of it. In this case, the pupil is given a book and is left wholly to himself to make out and comprehend what he pleases. The pupil who has gained sufficient prowess not to feel the need of asking some one[1] to read with him, but trusts to himself, always acquires that passion for process reading which is too severely satirized in Gogol's "Petrushka," and in consequence of this passion makes great progress. God knows how such kind of reading gets into his head, but in some way he becomes accustomed to the shape of the letters, to the formation of syllables, to the pronunciation of words, and even to their meaning; and I have more than once by experiment satisfied myself how we have been put back by our strenuous insistence on the pupil understanding absolutely what he reads.

Many self-taught persons have learned to read well in this way, although its faults must be manifest to every one.

The third method of teaching reading consists in the learning by heart prayers, verses, or any printed page, and in pronouncing what has been learned, following it from the book.

The fourth method that which was found so injurious in the Y. P. school is reading from a single book. It corrected itself in our school. At first we had not books enough to go around, and so each two pupils had one book put before them; then this began to amuse them, and when the announcement was made, "Class in Reading," the students of equal strength would pair off

[1] Dyadenka, little uncle.

and sit down sometimes three with one book and one would read and the rest would follow and make corrections.

You would make a muddle of the whole thing if you tried to seat them yourselves; they know who are their mates, and Taraska will infallibly select Dunka.

"Now, come here and read, and you go to your place!"

Some do not like at all such reading in common, because it is not necessary.

The advantage of reading together in this way con sists in the greater clearness of pronunciation, in the greater chance for the one who does not read, but follows, to understand; but all the advantage produced by this method is rendered injurious as soon as this method or any other is applied to the whole school.

Finally, the fifth method, which is still in favor with us, is a graded reading that is, the reading of books with interest and comprehension growing ever more and more complicated.

All of these methods, as has been said above, have been employed experimentally in the school, and the advancement made in one month has been considerable.

The teacher's business is merely to propose a choice of all known and unknown methods of possibly helping the pupil in the business of learning. To be sure, in a certain way, that of reading by single book, instruction is made easy and convenient for the teacher, it has an appearance of regularity and progressiveness; but in our system it not only proves to be difficult, but to some it seems impossible.

People will ask: "How can one foretell what is necessary to every pupil, and decide whether the demand of each one is legitimate or not?" People will ask: "How can you help getting confused in this varied throng, if it is not subjected to some general principle?"

To these questions I will reply: The difficulty presents itself merely because we cannot divest ourselves of the ancient view of a school as of a disciplined corps of soldiers which one lieutenant commands one day, another the next. For the teacher accustomed to the freedom of the school, every pupil represents an individuality with his own needs, to satisfy which freedom of choice is the only possible condition.

Had it not been for this freedom and external disorder which to some people seems so strange and impossible, we should not only never have hit upon these five methods of learning to read, but moreover we should never have dared to employ and proportion them to the demands of the pupils, and consequently we should never have attained those brilliant results which we attained in reading during the last part of the time.

How many times has it happened to us to witness the perplexity of visitors to our school, who wished in the course of two hours to learn our method of instruction when we had none at all! and, moreover, in the course of those two hours insisted on telling us their method! How many times have we not heard these visitors advising us to introduce the very method which, unknown to them, was employed under their very eyes in the school, but only not in the form of a despotic law imposed on all!

Chapter 21 : Graded Reading

Although, as we have said, mechanical reading and graded reading in reality blend in one, for us these two methods are always distinguishable by their purposes: it seems to us that the purpose of the former is the art of fluently forming words out of certain signs; the object of the latter is the knowledge of the literary language. A method of learning the literary language naturally presented itself to us, seemingly very simple, but in reality most difficult. It seemed to us that after the reading of phrases written on their slates by the scholars themselves, it was the proper thing to give them the stories of Khudyakof and Afanasief, then something more difficult and in a more complicated style, then something still more difficult, and so on till they should reach Karamzin, Pushkin, and the Code. But this, like the most of our suppositions and like suppositions in general, was not realized.

From the language written by the scholars themselves on their slates or blackboards, I succeeded in bringing them to the language of tales; but to bring them from the language of tales to a higher standard, the "something" that should be the intermediate step was lacking in our literature. We tried "Robinson," but it did not work: some of the pupils wept with vexation, because they could not comprehend and relate the story; I tried to tell it to them in my own way and they began to believe in the possibility of comprehending the wisdom of it; they succeeded in getting at its meaning and in a month they were reading "Robinson," but it bored them and finally almost disgusted them. This labor was too great for them. They trusted more to their memories, and in repeating the story immediately after what had been read during a whole evening they retained snatches of it, but no one took it in as a whole. They remembered unfortunately certain words incomprehensible to them, and they began to use these words askew and amiss, as half-educated people are wont to do.

I saw that this was not good, but I did not know how to remedy the evil. To convince myself and clear my conscience, I began to give them to read various popular sophistications like "Dyadi Naumui" and "Tetushki Natali," though I knew in advance that they would not satisfy them; and my prognostication was verified. These books were more of a bore to the pupils than anything else, if they were required to recapitulate them.

After "Robinson" I tried Pushkin, notably his story "The Undertaker"; but unless they were helped they were even less able to tell about it afterwards than they had been in the case of "Robinson," and "The Undertaker" seemed to them still more of a bore. The addresses to the reader, the un-serious relation of the author to his personages, the humorous characterization, his conciseness, all this was so incompatible with what they wanted that I definitely abandoned Pushkin, whose stories had hitherto seemed to me by hypothesis most regularly constructed, simple, and therefore comprehensible to the people. Then I made the experiment with Gogol's "Night before Christmas."

As I read it to them, it pleased them at first very much, especially the older ones; but as soon as they were left to read it themselves, they could not understand it, and it bored them. Even

when I read it, they did not ask me to go on. The richness of the coloring, the fancifulness, and the capricious method of construction were opposed to their habit of thought.

Then I tried them with a Russian translation[1] of the "Iliad," and the reading of this caused a curious perplexity among them; they supposed that the original was written in French, and they could not at all understand even after I had told them its subject-matter in my own words; even then the fable of the poem did not make itself intelligible to their minds.

The skeptic Semka, a healthy, logical nature, was struck by the picture of Phoebus with the arrows rattling on his back, as he flew down from Olympus; but evidently he was at a loss what to make of this picture.

"How did he fly down from the mountain, and not dash himself to pieces?" he kept asking me.

"Why, you see, they supposed he was a god," I replied.

"How a god?"

"They had many of them."

"Then he must have been a false god, or else he flew down lightly from that mountain; otherwise he would have been dashed in pieces," he exclaimed, spreading his hands.

I tried George Sand's "Gribouille," some popular and military reading, and all in vain. We try everything we can find, and everything that is sent us, but we have very little hope in our experiments.

You sit down in school and open a so-called popular book just brought from the mail.

"Little uncle, let me read it, me! me!" cry various voices, and hands are eagerly thrust out. "Let us have it, we can understand it better!" You open the book, and read:

"The life of the great Saint Alexis presents us with a model of ardent faith, piety, indefatigable zeal, and fiery love to his native land, to which this holy man performed important services."

Or, "Long ago men noted the frequent apparition in Russia of self-taught men of talents, but the phenomenon is not explained by all in the same way."

Or, "Three hundred years have passed since the land of the Czechs became a dependency of the German Empire."

Or, "The village of Karacharevo, scattered along the mountain flank, is situated in one of the most fertile grain-producing governments of Russia."

Or, "The road wandered wide and lost itself;" or it is a popular exposition of something in natural science on a single printed sheet, filled half full of flatteries addressed by the author to the muzhik.

^ If you give such a book to any one of the children, his eyes begin to grow dull, he begins to yawn.

"No, it is too deep for us, Lyof Nikolayevitch," he will say, and he will give you back the book. For whom and by whom such "popular books" are written remains a mystery to us. Of all the volumes of this kind read by us not one was retained except the "Dyedushki" of the old story-teller Zolotof, which had a great success in school and at home. Some are simply wretched writings, composed in a miserable literary style, and as they find no readers in the ordinary public, are therefore consecrated to the common people. Others are still more wretched written in a style which is not Russian, a style lately invented, pretending to be "popular," like that of Kruilof's "Fables." Still others are sophistications of foreign books designed for the people but lacking the elements of popularity.

[1] Gneditch's.

The only books comprehensible for the people and adapted to the taste of the people are those not written for the people, but proceeding from the people folktales, proverbs, collections of songs, legends, poems, enigmas, like the recent collection of Vodovozofs.

Without having had experience of it, one cannot believe how much fresh zeal they put into the constant reading of all books of this kind, even the narratives of the Russian people, the heroic legends[2] and poems, the proverbs of Snegiref, the old chronicles, and all the memorials of our ancient literature without exception.

I have observed that children have a greater passion than their elders for reading books of this sort. They read them over and over, learn them by heart, carry them home with delight, and in their games and talk give one another nicknames taken from the old legends and songs.

Adults, either because they are not so natural, or because they have already acquired a taste for the elegance of the book-language, or because they unconsciously feel the need of acquiring a knowledge of literary style, are less attracted by books of this kind, and prefer those in which half of the words, figures, and ideas are incomprehensible to them.

But as books of this kind are not liked by the pupils, the object which we perhaps erroneously set before ourselves is not attained by them; between these books and the literary language the same gulf exists.

So far we see no means of escape from this vicious circle, though we have made, and are all the time making, experiments and new hypotheses, we strive to detect our mistakes and beg all those who feel interested in this matter to communicate to us their notions, experiments, and successes in resolving the problem.

The question so insoluble for us consists in this:

For the education of the people it is essential that they should have and like to read the best books; but the best books are written in a style which the people do not understand. In order to learn to read understandingly, they must read much; in order to like to read, they must understand.

In what lies the error and how escape from this situation? Maybe there is a transition literature which we do not know about, simply through lack of knowledge; maybe the study of the books which circulate among the people, and the opinion of the people regarding these books, will open to us ways by which men from among the people will attain an understanding of the literary language.

To such a study we shall consecrate a special department in our journal, and we beg all who realize the importance of this matter to send us articles on the subject.

[2] Builinas.

Chapter 22 : The Possible Cause And Possible Help

Possibly the cause of this is our severance from the people, the enforced culture of the upper classes; and time only may help this trouble by giving birth, not to a chrestomathy, but a complete transition literature consisting of all the books now extant, and organically taking its place in a course of graded reading.

Maybe it is a fact that the common people do not comprehend, and do not wish to comprehend, our literary language, because there is nothing in it for them to comprehend, because our whole literature does not suit them at all, and they will work out their own literature. Finally, the last supposition, which seems to us more plausible than the rest, consists in this: that the apparent fault lies not in the nature of the thing, but in our insistence on the notion that the object of teaching language is to raise pupils to the degree of knowing the literary language, and, above all, in making rapid progress in the attainment of this end. It may very possibly be that the graded reading of which we dream will come of itself, and that the knowledge of the literary language will, in its own good time, reach every pupil, as we are all the time seeing it do among people who read in turn, without comprehending, the psalter, novels, and lawpapers, and by this route manage somehow to attain to a knowledge of the language of books.

Yet by this hypothesis it is incomprehensible to us why all books seem to the people so bad and so contrary to their taste; and the question arises what ought schools to do in the meantime? For we cannot at all admit that, having decided in our minds that a knowledge of the literary language is useful, it would be possible by means of compulsory explanations, lessons, and repetitions to teach the people the literary language against their will as they are taught French. We must confess that more than once we have attempted this in the course of the last two months, and we have always encountered insuperable repugnance, which showed the falsity of the course adopted.

In these experiments I merely convinced myself that the explanations of the meaning of a word or of a paragraph are perfectly out of the question even for a talented teacher, to say nothing of the explanations which teachers of mediocre abilities like altogether too well, as that ”an assembly is a certain small synedrion,” and the like. In explaining any word whatever as, for example, the word vpechatleniye, ”impression” you substitute, in place of the word explained, another just as incomprehensible, or a whole list of words the connection of which is just as incomprehensible as the word itself. Almost always the word itself is not incomprehensible, but the pupil has no comprehension of what is expressed by the word. The word is always at his service when the idea is there. Moreover, the relation of the word to the thought and the formation of new ideas is such a complicated, mysterious, and delicate process of the mind, that all interference with it seems like a brutal incoherent force arresting the process of development.

It is easy to say understand. Why can’t all comprehend, and yet how many different things may be understood by different persons reading from the same book? The pupil, though he fail

to understand two or three words in a sentence, may comprehend the delicate shades of thought or its relation to what went before. You, the teacher, insist on one side of the concept, but the pupil does not require what you wish to explain to him. Sometimes he has understood, only he cannot make it plain to you that he has, while at the same time he vaguely surmises and absorbs something entirely different, and yet something quite useful and valuable for him. You insist on his explaining himself, but since he must use words to explain the impression which words produce on him, he is either silent, or else he begins to talk nonsense, or lies, or deceives himself, trying to find something to satisfy you, or he invents some non-existent difficulty and struggles under it; the general impression produced by a book, the poetic sense which helps him to obtain a notion of it, is driven in and hidden.

We were reading Gogol's "Vii," repeating each paragraph in our own words. Everything went well till we reached the third page, on which is the following paragraph:

"All these learned people, the seminary as well as the college, which cherished a sort of inherited feud, were absolutely devoid of means for satisfying their hunger, and moreover were unusually voracious, so that to reckon how many galuskas[1] each one of them would eat at a dinner would have been a perfectly impossible task, and therefore the generous offerings of opulent benefactors never sufficed."

TEACHER: Well, what have you read?

Almost all these pupils were very well developed children.

THE BEST PUPIL: In the college the people were all voracious eaters, were poor, and at dinner ate galushkas.

TEACHER: What else?

PUPIL (a mischievous boy with a good memory, speaking whatever comes into his head): An impossible theory they sacrificed their benefactors.

TEACHER (with vexation}'. Think what you are saying. That is not right. What was an impossibility?

Silence.

TEACHER: Read it again.

They read it. One pupil with a good memory added a few more words which he had retained. The seminaries fed by opulent benefactors could not suffice.

No one could make any sense out of it. They began to talk absolute nonsense. The teacher insisted:

TEACHER: What is an impossibility?

He wanted them to tell him that it was an impossibility to count the dumplings.

A PUPIL: A college is an impossibility.

ANOTHER PUPIL: Very poor is impossible.

They read it again. As if they were hunting for a needle they tried to find the word the teacher wanted, they hit on everything except the word count, and they at last fell into despair.

I the teacher did not give up, and after great labor got them to analyze the whole sentence; but they understood it much less clearly than when the first pupil read it.

However, there was really nothing to understand. The carelessly constructed and involved sentence conveyed no meaning to the reader, other than that at once perceived: "The poor and hungry people ate dumplings," and that was all the author really had to say.

[1] Dumplings, a Malo-Russian dish.

I was concerned only about the form, which was bad, and in bothering about this I spoiled the whole class during the entire after-dinner hour, beat down and destroyed a quantity of intellectual blossoms just beginning to put forth.

Another time I struggled in just the same wrong and disgusting way on the elucidation of the word arudiye, "instrument," and just as ineffectually.

On that same day, in the drawing-class, the pupil Ch - protested because the teacher insisted on his inscribing on his copy-book the title Romashka's Drawings. He declared:

"We ourselves draw in copy-books, but only Romashka designed the figures, and so we should write, not the drawings, but the work of Romashka."

How the distinction of these ideas came into his head remains for me a mystery which it is best not to try to solve, but in exactly the same way it is a mystery how participles and subordinate clauses sometimes though rarely are introduced into their compositions.

It is necessary to give a pupil the opportunity of acquiring new ideas and words from the general sense of the discourse. If he hears or reads an incomprehensible word in one sentence which he understands, another time finds the same in another sentence, he begins to get a vague notion of it, and finally the time comes when he feels the necessity of using this word; when once he has used it both the word and the concept become his property. And there are a thousand other ways. But consciously to give a pupil new ideas and new forms, I am convinced, is just as impossible, just as idle, as to teach a child to walk by the laws of equilibrium.

Every such attempt, instead of aiding, drives away the pupil from the proposed end, just as a man's rough hand, which, wishing to help a flower to unfold, should break it all around and then try to roll back its petals.

Chapter 23 : How The Pupils Learned To Write

Writing was conducted in the following method: — The pupils were taught simultaneously to recognize and form the letters, to spell and write words, to understand what was written, and to write. They would take their places round the wall, marking off divisions with chalk, and one of them would dictate whatever came into his head, and the others would copy it. If there were many of them, then they divided into several groups. Then they took turns in dictating, and all read it over to one another. They printed out the letters, and at first corrected the errors of spelling and syllabification, then those of misused letters.

This class formed itself. Every pupil who learns to write the letters is seized with a passion for writing, and at first the doors, the outside walls of the school and of the cottages where the pupils live, would be covered with letters and words. But they took .ven greater pleasure in writing a whole phrase, such, for instance, as this: "To-day Marfutka and Olgushka[1] had a fight."

In order to organize this class the teacher had only to teach the children how to act together, just as an adult teaches children to play any infantile game. And, in fact, this class went on without change for two years, and every time with as much gaiety and animation as in a good game. This included reading and conversation, and writing and grammar.

In this writing, the most difficult part of learning a language for a beginner is attained spontaneously: that is, faith in the unalterability of the form of a word whether printed or spoken their own word. I think that every teacher who tries to teach a language without depending on a grammar must meet with this first difficulty.

You wish to direct the pupil's attention to some word, menyd, "me," for example. You take his sentence: "Mikishka pushed me from the steps." That is what he said.

"Pushed whom?" you ask, wishing him to repeat the sentence, and hoping to hit on the word me.

"Nas us," he replies.

"No, but what did you say?" you ask.

"We fell off the steps, owing to Mikishka," or "Because he pushed us, Praskutka 2 flew down, and I after her," he will reply.

And here you try to get your accusative case and its ending. But the pupil cannot understand that there was any difference in the words he used.

But if you take a little book, or begin to repeat his sentence, he will distinguish with you, not the vital word, but something entirely different.

When he dictates, every word is caught on the fly by the other pupils, and written down.

"What do you say? what is that?" and they will not let him change a single letter.

In doing this disputes are all the time rising, from the fact that one writes one way and another another, and very soon the one who dictates begins to ponder how to say it, and begins to realize

[1] Diminutives of Marfa (Martha) and Olga. 2 Diminutive of Praskovya.

that there are two things in speech: form and content. He will utter some phrase, thinking only of its meaning. Swiftly, like one word, the phrase flies from his lips. The others begin to question him: "How?" "What?" and when he repeats it several times in succession he explains the form and the constituent parts of speech, and confirms them by a word.

Thus they write in the third, that is, the lowest, class one being able to use the cursive script, another printing his words.

We not only do not insist on the cursive script, but if we permitted ourselves to put any restrictions on the scholars, we should forbid them to write in the cursive script, which destroys the hand and is not legible.

Cursive letters spontaneously enter into their handwriting: a pupil learns a letter or two of one of the older boys; others imitate it, and frequently write whole words in this way: dyadenka, "little uncle," and before a week is over all are using the cursive script.

Chapter 24 : Self-Improvement In Writing

This summer we had exactly the same experience with calligraphy as we had with mechanical reading.

The scholars were very poor penmen, and one of the new teachers tried to have them write from a copy always a regular and easy method for the teacher. The scholars detested this; we were compelled to abandon calligraphy, and we could not devise any way of correcting bad writing.

But the oldest class themselves found a way out of it. After they had finished writing their sacred history, the older scholars wanted us to let them carry their copybooks home. The copybooks were soiled, torn, badly written. The careful mathematician, R, asked for a new book, and began to copy his exercise. This idea pleased them all. "I want a sheet of paper," and "I want a copy-book;" and calligraphy became the fashion, and has continued so in the upper class.

They would take their copy-books, lay before them the written alphabet-copy, practice on each letter, and try to excel one another; and in two weeks they had made great progress.

Almost all of us, when we were children, were obliged to eat bread at the table, and for this very reason, that we did not like it; but we came to like it at last. Almost all of us have learned to hold the pen with straight fingers, and we all began by holding the pen with crooked ringers, because they were short; but now we hold it with straight fingers. It may well be asked: Why are we so tortured when all of this comes of itself as soon as it is necessary? Will not the love and the demand for knowledge come to all in the same way?

The members of the second class write compositions on some story repeated from sacred history. They compose them on their slates, then copy them on paper. The members of the third or lowest class write what they please. Moreover, the younger ones in the evenings write sentences separately, which they compare together. One writes while the others whisper together, notyig his mistakes, and they wait till the end only to correct him of a misused vowel or a misplaced preposition, and sometimes of a misstatement.

To write correctly and correct the mistakes of others is for them a great pleasure. The older ones seize hold of any writing which comes under their notice, practice correcting the mistakes, strive with all their might to write well, but they cannot endure grammar and the analysis of language, and notwithstanding all our former passion for analysis they will permit it only in very small amounts, they go to sleep or drop out of the classes.

Chapter 25 : The Teaching Of Grammar

We made various experiments in teaching grammar, and must confess that no one of them succeeded in our aim of rendering this study attractive. In the summer, in the second and first classes, a new teacher made a beginning with explaining the parts of speech, and the children at least some of them at first were interested, as they would have been in charades and enigmas. Often, after the lesson was finished, they recurred to the idea of enigmas, and amused themselves in puzzling one another with such questions as, "Where is the predicate?" or

> "What sits in the spoon,
> Letting his legs hang down?"

But there was no application to correct writing, or if there was any it was rather to erroneous than to correct sentences.

Just exactly as it was with the wrong use of vowels when you say you pronounce a but write o, the pupil will write robota for rabota, "work," and mo Una for malina, "blackberry";[1] when you say that two predicates are separated by a comma he will write, "I wish, to say" and so on. To expect him to recognize in every sentence what is the subject and what is the predicate is impossible. But if he learns to do so, then in the process of searching for them he loses all instinct which he must have for writing the work correctly, not to speak of the fact that in syntactical analysis the teacher is all the time obliged to be subtle before his scholars and deceive them, and they are very well aware of this.

For instance, we hit on the proposition: On the earth there were no mountains.

One said the subject was earth, another that it was mountains, but we said that it was an impersonal proposition,[2] and we saw very clearly that the pupils kept silent simply from politeness, but that they understood perfectly well that our answer was far more stupid than theirs; and in this respect we were secretly in perfect agreement.

Having persuaded ourselves of the uselessness of syntactical analysis, we also tried etymological analysis the parts of speech, declensions, conjugations; and in the same way they proposed conundrums to one another about the dative case, the infinitive mood, and adverbs, and it resulted in the same ennui, the same abuse of the authority exerted by us, and the same lack of attention.

In the older class they always use the letter in the dative and prepositional cases, but when they correct the younger ones in this respect they can never give the reason why, and they are obliged to fall back on enigmas of cases in order to remember the rule: "The dative takes a #."

Even the little ones, who have as yet heard nothing about the parts of speech, very often cry out the right letter to indicate the dative, though they themselves do not know why, and evidently take delight in the fact that they have guessed it.

[1] In Russian an unaccented o is pronounced like a.

[2] In the Russian construction builo is impersonal.

In the last few weeks I experimented with the second class with an exercise of my own invention; and I like all inventors was charmed with it, and it seemed to me extraordinarily convenient and rational until I became convinced of its inefficacy in actual use. Not naming the parts of speech in a sentence, I made the scholars write something down, sometimes giving them a subject that is, a proposition; and by means of questions I tried to make them amplify the proposition by introducing adjectives, new subjects, qualifying clauses, relatives, and complementary attributes.

"Wolves run."

"When?" "Where?" "How?" "What wolves run?" "What are running?" "They run and what else do they do?" It seemed to me that in getting accustomed to questions requiring this, that, or the other part of speech, they would acquire the distinctions between the different parts of the proposition and the different parts of speech.

They did acquire them, but it became a bore to them, and they in their heart of hearts asked themselves "Why?" and I was obliged to ask myself the same question, and could find no answer.

Never, without a struggle, will man or child give up their living speech to mechanical analyzes and dissection. There is an instinct of self-protection in this living speech. If it is to develop, then it endeavors to develop spontaneously, and only in conformity with all vital conditions. As soon as you try to catch this word, to fasten it into a vise, to tear it limb from limb, to give it ornaments which seem to you necessary, how this word with its living idea and significance contracts and vanishes away, and all you have left in your hands is the mere shell on which you can work your own artifices, not harming and not helping the word which you want to form. Up till the present time the scholars of the second class continue syntactical and grammatical analysis and the practice of amplifying sentences, but it drags, and I suspect it will soon stop of itself. Moreover, as an exercise in language, though it is thoroughly ungrammatical, we do as follows:

(1) From given words we have the pupils compare sentences. For example we write Nikolai, wood, to learn, and one writes: "If Nikola? had not been cutting wood, he would have come to learn;" another: "Nikolai cuts the wood well; you must learn of him," and so on.

(2) We compose verses on a given model, and this exercise, more than all the rest, occupies the older pupils. The verses are made like the following:

By the window sits the old man In a tulup worn and torn, While the muzhik in the street Peels red eggs to eat.

(3) An exercise which has great success in the lowest class: Some word is given first a substantive, then an adjective, an adverb, and a preposition. One pupil goes behind the door, and each of the others must compose a sentence in which the given word is employed. The one who hides must guess it.

All these exercises the writing of sentences on given words, versification, and the guessing of words have one single aim: to persuade the pupil that a word is a word, having its unalterable laws, modifications, endings, and mutual relations; now this conviction is slow to enter their minds, and it must assuredly precede the study of grammar.

All these exercises please; all exercises in grammar produce ennui. Stranger and more significant than anything else is the fact that grammar is a bore, though nothing is easier. As soon as you cease to teach it by a book, a six-year-old child, beginning with definitions, will be able in half an hour to decline, to conjugate, to recognize genders, numbers, tenses, subjects, and predicates, and you feel that he knows all this just as well as you do.

In the dialect of our region there is no neuter gender: gun, hay, meat, window everything is she, and in this respect grammar is of no avail.

The older pupils for three years have known all the rules of declension and the case-endings, and yet, in writing a short sentence, they will make several mistakes, and in spite of your corrections and all the reading they do, they will use a wrong word over and over again.

But you ask yourself: Why teach them when they know all this as well as you do? If I ask what is the genitive plural feminine of bolsho'i, "great"; if I ask where the subject or the predicate is; if I ask from what stem comes the word raspakhnulsa[3] it is only the nomenclature that is difficult for him, but the adjective in whatever number and case you wish he will always use without mistake. Consequently, he knows the declension. Never in speaking will he neglect to employ the predicate, and he will not confuse the complement with it.

He is aware that raspakhnuf sa, "to open," is related to the word pakh, and he recognizes the laws of the formation of words better than you do because more new words are invented by children than by any one else. What then is the good of this nomenclature and demand for philosophic definition which are above their powers? Except the demand at examinations, the only explanation for the necessity of grammar may be discovered in its application to a regular evolution of thought.

In my personal experience I never found this application, I never find it in the example of men who, without knowing grammar, yet write correctly, and of candidates in philology who write incorrectly, and I can point to scarcely one illustration of the scholars at Yasnaya Polyana finding a knowledge of grammar of any practical use.

It seems to me that grammar goes of itself, like a mental gymnastic exercise, not without utility, while language the ability to write, read, and understand also goes of itself.

Geometry and mathematics in general present themselves at first also as merely a mental gymnastic exercise, but with this difference, that each geometrical proposition, each mathematical definition, leads to further, indeed to an infinite number, of deductions and propositions; while in grammar, even if you agree with those who see in it the application of logic to language, there is a very narrow domain of these deductions and propositions. As soon as the pupil, by one route or another, masters a language, all applications from grammar fall away and perish like something which has outlived its usefulness.

We personally cannot as yet divest ourselves of the tradition that grammar, in the sense of the laws of language, is indispensable for the regular development of thought; it even seems to us that there is a need of grammar for young students that they have in them, though unconsciously, the laws of grammar; but we are convinced that the grammar which we know is not at all that which is necessary for the student, and that in this custom of teaching grammar is a great historical misunderstanding.

The child knows that it is necessary to write in the pronoun sibye, not because it is the dative case, however many times you may have told him so, and not merely because he blindly imitates what he has seen written over and over again he gets possession of these examples, not in the form of the dative case, but in some other way.

We have a pupil from another institution and he knows grammar excellently, and yet he can never distinguish the third person from the infinitive of the reflexive, and another pupil, Fedka,

[3] "It opened," as of a door.

who, knowing nothing about infinitives, never makes a mistake, and who uses auxiliaries with remarkably logical consistency.[4]

We, in the Yasnaya Polyana school, recognize in the teaching of reading and writing all known methods as not without their advantages, and we employ them in proportion as they are willingly accepted by the pupils and in proportion to our attainments in knowledge. At the same time, we do not accept any one method to the exclusion of another, and we are all the time trying to discover new measures. We are in as little sympathy with Mr. Perevlyevsky's method, which did not receive more than a two days' trial at Yasnaya Polyana, as with the widely disseminated opinion that the only method of teaching a language is writing, notwithstanding the fact that writing constitutes in the Yasnaya Polyana school the principal method of teaching language. We are searching and still hope to find!

[4] The concrete examples given by Count Tolstoy would be meaningless in English.

Chapter 26 : The Writing Of Compositions

In the first and second classes the choice of compositions is granted the scholars. The favorite subject for these boys are the Old Testament stories, which they will write two months after they have been related by the teacher.

The first class not long ago began to write on New Testament history, but this was not nearly so successful as the Old; they even made more mistakes in spelling in it. They did not understand it so well. In the first class we tried compositions written on given themes. The early themes, which, by the most natural process, first came into our heads, were descriptions of simple objects, such as corn, a cottage, a tree, etc.; but to our extreme amazement their labors on these subjects almost brought the tears into the pupils' eyes, and in spite of the help of the teacher, who divided the description of corn into the description of its growth, or of its manufacture, or about its use, they strenuously refused to write on themes of such a nature; and if they wrote, they made incomprehensible and most ridiculous mistakes in spelling, in language, and in ideas.

We tried the experiment of giving up compositions on such subjects, and all were as delighted as if we had bestowed a gift on them. Compositions on socalled simple subjects, so much affected in schools, such as a pig, a kettle, a table, seemed immeasurably more difficult than the writing of whole stories based on their own experiences.

One and the same mistake is always repeated as in all other matters of instruction the simplest and most common seems to the teacher to be easiest, while to the pupil only the complicated and vivid seems easy.

All the text-books of natural sciences begin with general principles, text-books of language with definitions, history with divisions into periods, even geometry with definitions of such abstract concepts as space and the mathematical point.

Almost all teachers, guiding themselves along such a path of thought, give out for their first subjects of composition the definition of a table or a bench, and cannot persuade themselves that for the description of a table or a bench one needs to stand on the very highest plane of philosophical and dialectical development, and that the same lad who is shedding tears over his composition about tables or benches will describe admirably the sentiment of love or hate, the meeting of Joseph and his brethren, or a squabble among his companions.

The subjects which they best like to write about are the description of events which have taken place under their own eyes, or the repetition of stories which they have heard.

The writing of compositions has come to be their favorite exercise. Outside of school, as soon as the older scholars have got hold of paper and pencils, they write, not Milostivui, "Dear Sir," but a story of their own composition.

At first I was troubled by the irregularity and sense of disproportion in the form of the compositions. I gave them such directions as I thought were necessary, but they absolutely mistook my meaning, and the affair went badly; it seemed as if they were unwilling to recognize any other necessity upon them than that there should be no mistakes. Now, however, the time has come when they themselves often complain when a composition is stretched out, or when there are

frequent repetitions or jumps from one subject to another. It would be hard to decide wherein their demands are founded, but their demands are law.

”Nonsense!” some of them cry, when they hear the composition of some schoolmate; some are unwilling to read their own after hearing the reading of a composition which has struck them as good; some will tear their copybooks from the teacher’s hand, dissatisfied that they did not sound as they expected, and will read them themselves.

Different natures are so sharply expressed that we used to try the experiment of having the scholars guess who wrote such and such a composition, and in the first class they rarely made a mistake in their selection.

Chapter 27 : Specimens Of Compositions

For lack of space we must omit the description of the teaching of language and other subjects and the extracts from the teachers' diaries; but here we will cite specimens of the compositions of two of the pupils in the first class, making no change in spelling or punctuation.

B, a very poor scholar, but a lad of keen and original mind, wrote compositions about Tula, and about his studies. The one about his studies had a great success among the scholars. B - was eleven years old, and had been at school at Yasnaya Polyana three winters; but he had studied before.

"About Tula" —

"The other Sunday I went to Tula again. When we got there Vladimir Aleksandrovitch told me and Vaska Zhdanof to go to Sunday-school. We went and we went and we went,[1] and at last, after a great deal of trouble, we found it. We went in and found all the scholars sitting down; and I saw our teacher in botany. And so I said, ' How do you do sir? '[2] and he said, 'How do you do.' Then I went into the class, stood near the table, and I felt so confused that I took and went out into Tula. I went and I went and I saw a woman baking cakes.[3] I began to take my money out of my pocket, when I had got it out, I bought the cakes.

After I had bought them I went on. And I saw a man walking up and down on a tower, and looking to see if there was a fire anywhere. And I have finished about Tula."

"Composition about how I studied —

"When I was eight years old, I was sent to Gruma to the cattle woman. There I learned a good deal. But afterwards I got tired of it, and began to cry. And the woman took a stick and began to beat me. But I cried louder than ever. And after a few days I ran off home, and told them all about it. And they took me from there and sent me to Dunka's mother. And there I studied well, and I was never beaten there, and there I learned the whole alphabet. Then I was sent to Foka Demidovitch. He used to beat me very cruelly. Once I ran away from him, and he ordered them to find me. When they found me and carried me to him, he took me and laid me over the footstool, took a bundle of rods, and began to beat me. And I screamed with all my might; and when he lifted me up he made me read. And as he listened to me he would say, ' You son of a dog! how abominably you read! oh, what a pig you are! ' '

Here are two examples of Fedka's composition; the one on the subject "Corn" given to him, the other chosen by himself, about a visit to Tula. This was Fedka's third winter at school. He was ten years old.

"About Corn —

"Corn grows in the ground. At first it is generally green. But when it is full grown then the ears of corn grow out of it and the women reap it. There is another kind of corn just like grass, and the cattle eat it well."

[1] PosJili, shli, shli, nasihishka nashli.

[2] Zdravstvulte gospoda: literally, "gentlemen"; but a peasant always addresses or speaks of a superior as "they."

[3] Kalatchi, small loaves of white bread; kalatchi is one of the few Tartar words that have survived in Russian.

That was all there was of it. He was conscious that it was not good, and was sorry for it. About Tula he wrote as follows without correction:

"About Tula —

"When I was a very little boy I was five years old and sometimes I heard of people going to a place called Tula and I did not know what Tula was. And so I asked my papa:[4]

"' Pa! what sort of a place is this Tula where you go? Is it good?'

"Papa said, 'Yes.'

"Then I said: ' Pa! take me with you, I want to see Tula.'

"Papa said: 'All right when Sunday comes I will take you with me.'

"I was glad and began to run and jump on the bench.

"After these days came Sunday. I got up very early in the morning but papa was already harnessing the horses in the yard. I got on my shoes and stockings and dressed me as quick as I could.

"By the time I was dressed and ran down into the yard father had the horses all harnessed. I got into the sledge and started. We rode and we rode and we went about fourteen versts.[5] I saw a tall church and I shouted ' Father see what a tall church! '

"Father said: ' there is a church not so high and prettier,' and I began to ask him: ' Father let us go into it: I want to say my prayers.'

"Father took me in. Just as we were going in, they suddenly pounded on the bell; I was frightened and I asked father what that was: ' Is it a drum they are playing on? '

"Father said: ' No that is the beginning of mass.'

"Then we went into the church and said our prayers. When we had said our prayers we went to market. And here I am going along and going along and I keep stumbling all the time but I keep looking around on all sides.

"And then we came to the bazaar; and I saw some one selling cakes 1 and I wanted to take some without paying for them. And father says to me: 'don't take them, else they will take your cap! '

"I ask:[6] Why should they take my cap? ' and father says: ' don't take them without money,' and I say: ' Then give me a grivna[7] and I will buy myself some little cakes! '

"Papa gave me one and I bought three cakes and I ate them up and I said: 'father how good these cakes are! '

"When we had done our shopping, we went back to the horses and watered them and gave them their hay and when they were fed we harnessed them and went home and I went into the cottage and undressed and began to tell everybody how I had been to Tula and how father and I had been to church and said our prayers. And then I went to sleep and dreamed that I saw Father starting for Tula again. I immediately woke up and saw that everybody was asleep and so I took and went to sleep again myself."

[4] Batya, papa; bat\ pa. Below, when speaking about the church, he calls his father batyushka, which is also the respectful address to a priest.

[5] About nine and a quarter miles. He says: Yekhali, yekkali, proyekhali.

[6] Kalatchi.

[7] A ten-kopeck piece.

Chapter 28 : Recitations and Examinations

From the very foundation of the school, and even at the present time, our exercises in sacred and Russian history are conducted in this way: The children collect around the teacher, and he, using no other guide than the Bible and Pogodin's "Norman Period" and Vodovozof's "Collection for Russian History," tells the stories, and all begin to talk at once.

When the confusion of voices is too great the teacher calls a halt, and has one speak at a time. As soon as one begins to grow confused he calls on the others. When he perceives that some have failed to comprehend, he sets one of the better scholars to telling it over again for the benefit of those who don't understand.

This was not a preconceived plan, but came about of itself, and, whether the pupils are five or thirty in number, is repeated, always with the same success, if the teacher watches them all, if he does not allow them to shout, repeating words which have already been said, and if he does not permit the shouting to degenerate into frenzy but regulates this torrent of joyous animation and rivalry as much as he needs.

In summer, when we had frequent visitors and changes in the instructors, this order of exercises was modified, and the teaching of history was far less satisfactory. The universal shouting was incomprehensible to the new instructor; it seemed to him that those that were reciting at the top of their voices were not merely reciting; it seemed to him that they were shouting for the sake of shouting, and especially that it was hot and stifling in that pack of pupils, crawling up on his back, and thrusting themselves into his very face.

For if children want to understand well, they must infallibly get very close to the person who speaks, must watch every change in the expression of his face and every gesture he makes. I have more than once thought that they understand best of all those passages where the narrator happened to make a genuine gesture or a genuine intonation.

A new teacher made the pupils sit on benches and take turns in answering. The one called on would keep silent and was tortured with confusion, and the teacher, looking away from him, with a gracious expression of submission to his fate, or a sweet smile, would say:

"Well ... and then? Good ... very good," all in the pedagogical way only too well known to all of us.

Moreover, I have become convinced by experience that there is nothing more pernicious for the development of a child than this kind of single questioning which springs from the teacher's relation of superiority to the pupil; and for me there is nothing more disturbing than such a spectacle. A grown man tortures a child without the slightest authority. The teacher knows that the pupil is tortured as he stands blushing and perspiring before him. The teacher himself finds it wearisome and difficult, but he has a rule, in accordance with which he must accustom his pupil to speak alone.

But no one knows why he must teach the pupil to speak alone. Perhaps it is in order to set him to reading a fable before his or her excellency. I shall be told perhaps that otherwise it is impossible to determine the degree of his attainments. But I reply that it is really impossible for

a stranger to determine within an hour the knowledge of a pupil, while the teacher, even without any verbal or written examination, is always conscious of the measure of these acquirements. It seems to me that this plan of individual interrogation is a relic of ancient superstition. In the old times the teacher, compelling his pupils to learn everything by heart, could not judge of their attainments in any other way than by setting them to repeat the whole lesson word for word. Then it was found that a parrot-like repetition of words was not education, and they began to make pupils tell in their own language what they had learned; but they have not changed the custom of calling up individual pupils and making them recite whenever the teacher desires.

It was entirely lost from sight that you may require from the scholar who learns by heart the repetition of certain passages from the Psalter or fables at any time and under all conditions; but that in order to be in a condition to appreciate the sense of any passage, and to give it in his own words, the pupil must find himself in a condition fitted for this exercise.

Not only in the lower schools and gymnasiums, but also in the universities, I understand that examinations based on questions are nothing else than tests on the learning of passages or propositions, word for word. In my time I left the university in 1845 I did not prepare for the examinations by learning by heart word for word, but paragraph by paragraph, and I received the mark of five only from those professors whose notebooks I knew by heart.

Visitors, who have done so much injury to the instruction at the Yasno-Polyana school, have in one direction conferred a great service on me. They have definitely convinced me that written and verbal examinations are a relic of medieval scholastic superstition, and that in the present order of things they are decidedly impossible and only harmful.

Often, under the influence of a childish conceit, I have wished to show some esteemed visitor, in an hour's time, the attainments of our pupils, with the result either that the visitor would be persuaded that they knew what they did not know, I surprised him by a certain hocus-pocus, or else the visitor would suppose that they did not know what they really knew very well. And a regular confusion and misunderstanding arose at such a time between me and the visitor an intelligent, talented man, a specialist in these matters, and a believer in absolute freedom of relations. What then would result from the official visits of directors and supervisors, to say nothing of the interruption of the course of study, and the confusion of ideas caused by such examinations among the pupils?

At the present time I am convinced that to sum up all the knowledge of a pupil is as impossible for the teacher or the stranger as it would be to sum up my knowledge or yours in any subject you please. To bring a cultivated man of forty to an examination in geography would be no more strange and stupid than to bring a man of ten to the same. The one as well as the other cannot answer the questions in any other way than word for word, and in an hour's time it is actually impossible to test their knowledge. Really to learn what either one knows it is necessary to live with him for months.

Wherever examinations are introduced and by examinations I understand any demand for answers to questions there appears only a new and useless object, demanding special labor, special qualities, and this object is called preparation for examinations or lessons. The pupil in the gymnasium learns history or mathematics, and in addition something important the art of answering examination questions. I do not consider this art a useful branch of learning. I, a teacher, appreciate the degree of my pupil's attainment as accurately as I appreciate the degree of my own, although neither the pupil nor I have been subjected to lessons; but if a stranger wishes to get the

measure of your attainments, then let him live with us and learn the results, and the application of our attainments to life.

There is no other means, and all attempts at examinations are only deception, falsehood, and obstacles to learning. In the matter of learning there is one independent judge, the teacher, and only the pupils themselves can control him.

In the teaching of history the pupils replied all together, not for the sake of proving their knowledge, but because there is in them a necessity of putting into speech the impressions they have received. In the summer neither the new teacher nor I understood this; we saw in it only a way of testing their knowledge, and therefore we found it more convenient to examine them one at a time. I had not discovered as yet why this method was wearisome and bad, but my faith in the rule of freedom for scholars was my salvation. The majority began to grow listless, three of the boldest took upon themselves to answer all the questions, three of the most bashful never said anything, but wept and got zeros. During the summer I neglected the classes in sacred history, and the teacher, who was a lover of order, had full scope to keep them sitting on benches, to torture them one at a time, and to vent his indignation at the stubbornness of the children.

Several times I advised him to let the children get down from the benches during the class in history, but the teacher regarded my advice as a mild and pardonable originality as I know beforehand most of my readers will also regard it and this order of things remained unchanged until the former teacher returned, and in the instructors note-book appeared remarks like the following: "I could not get a single word from Savin;" "Grishin[1] had nothing to say;" "Petka's obstinacy amazed me, he would not say a single word;" "Savin was worse than before;" and so on.

Savin is the son of a householder or a merchant, a rosy, fat lad, with flashing eyes and long lashes, wearing a leather tulupchik, boots big enough for his father, a red Alexandrisky shirt and drawers. This lad's pleasant and attractive personality especially struck me, because he was at the head of the arithmetic class, by his readiness in calculation and his gay liveliness. He reads and writes also far from badly.

But as soon as he was asked a question he would hang his pretty curly head to one side, tears would trickle down his long lashes, and it would seem as if he were trying to hide out of sight; it was evident he was suffering unendurably. If you compel him to recite, he will speak, but either he cannot or will not form a sentence by himself. God only knows whether it is the terror inspired by his former teacher, he had been taught before by a person in the ecclesiastical profession, or whether it is lack of self-confidence or conceit, or the awkwardness of his position among boys whom he considers inferior to himself, or vexation because in this one respect he is behind the others, because once already he has been in the teacher's bad graces, or whether this little soul has been affronted by some inconsiderate word hastily spoken by the teacher, or whether it is a mixture of all; but this bashfulness, although it may be in itself a disagreeable trait, is nevertheless inseparably connected with all that is best in his young soul. To whip it out of him by a physical or moral discipline is possible, but at the risk of destroying at the same time the precious qualities without which the teacher would find it a hard task to take him farther.

The new teacher heeded my advice and let the pupils get down from the benches, and permitted them to climb round wherever they wanted, even though it was on his back; and from the moment

[1] From Grisha, diminutive of Grigori, Gregory.

he did so they all began to recite incomparably better, and it was noted in the teacher's diary that even "the obstinate Savin said a few words."

Chapter 29 : The Spirit Of The School

There is in the school something indefinite, something that is almost independent of the teacher's control, something entirely unrecognized by the science of pedagogy, and yet it constitutes the foundation of the success in our teaching; this is the spirit of the school.

This spirit is amenable to certain laws and to the teacher's negative influence; that is to say, the teacher must avoid certain things in order not to destroy this spirit.

The spirit of the school, for example, is always found in inverse proportion to the compulsion and order required; in inverse proportion to the teacher's interference with the pupil's mode of thought, and in proportion to the number of pupils; in inverse proportion to the duration of lessons, and the like. This school spirit is something which is quickly communicated from one pupil to another, communicated even to the teacher, is apparently expressed in the tones of the voice, in the eyes, in the motions, in the zeal of emulation, it is something perfectly palpable, indispensable, and invaluable, and should, therefore, be the aim of every teacher.

Just as saliva in the mouth is necessary for the digestion, but disagreeable and superfluous without food, so also this spirit of strenuous zeal, wearisome and disagreeable outside of the class, is an indispensable condition for the assimilation of intellectual nutriment. It is impossible to rouse and stimulate this spirit artificially, and, indeed, it is not necessary, since it always comes spontaneously.

At the beginning of the school I made mistakes. As soon as a pupil began to show dullness and unwillingness in learning, and seemed like what we altogether too commonly call tupik, a dunce, I would say:

"Jump! jump!"

The boy would begin to jump, the others and he himself would laugh, and after jumping awhile, he would become quite different; but, after repeating this exercise several times, it seemed that as soon as you said "Jump," still greater ennui would seize him, and he would burst into tears.

He sees that his mental condition is not what it should be and must be, but he cannot direct his spirit, and he does not want to entrust it to any one else.

The child and the man are receptive only in a condition of excitement; therefore to look on the joyous spirit of the school as something inimical is a brutal mistake which we too frequently make. But when this excitement in a large class becomes so violent as to prevent the teacher from managing his class, how then can you avoid shouting at the children and quenching this spirit?

If this excitement has study for its object, then nothing better could be desired. But if it be directed to some other object, then it is the teacher's fault, since he does not regulate this spirit. The teacher's problem, which is almost always solved unconsciously, consists in all the time providing food for this zeal and gradually getting it under control.

You ask a question of one; another wishes to recite he knows! Leaning over toward you, he looks at you with all his eyes; he can hardly keep back the torrent of his speech; he hungrily follows the narrator, and does not allow him to make a single mistake. If you ask him, he will

tell you his story eagerly, and what he narrates will be forever engraved on his memory. But if you keep him in such a state of excitement half an hour without permitting him to speak, he will begin to occupy himself by pinching his neighbor.

Another example:

If you leave a class in a district institute or a German school where everything is quiet, and if you tell them to keep on with their studies, and if at the end of half an hour you come and listen at the door, you will find the class lively enough; but the purpose of the animation is very different: it is now sheer mischief.

We have often made this experiment in our classes. Leaving in the middle of the recitation, when there is already a good deal of shouting; you come back to the door and you will hear the children continuing to recite, correcting and verifying one another, and often, instead of their playing tricks in your absence, they will become entirely quiet without you.

As in the system of having the pupils sit on benches and of individual questioning, so also in this system there are ways easy enough indeed, but requiring knowledge, so that if you don't practice them your first experiment may fail. You have to be on your guard lest there be noisy fellows who repeat the last words said merely for the sake of disorder. You have to be careful lest this fascination of noise become their chief object and care. You must test some and find out if they can recite the whole lesson by themselves, and if they have got the sense of it. If the pupils are too numerous, then they must be divided into several sections, and these sections must be set to reciting to one another. There is no reason for apprehension even if some newly entered pupil does not open his mouth for a month. All you need to do is to watch if he is interested in some story or in anything. Generally the newly entered pupil at first grasps only the material side of the affair, and is wholly absorbed in observing how the others are sitting and lying, and how the teacher moves his lips, and how all suddenly begin to shout at the top of their voices; and if he be a quiet child, then he will sit just exactly as the rest do; but if he be a bold child, then he will begin to shout as the others do, not understanding anything, and only repeating what the one next him says. The teacher and his comrades hush him, and he perceives that something else is required. Some time passes, and he himself begins to recite. It is hard to tell how or when the flower of intelligence begins to develop.

Not long ago, I had a chance to observe this unfolding of the flower of intelligence in a subdued little girl who had not said a word for a month. Mr. U - was conducting the recitation, and I was merely a spectator, looking on. When all began to recite, I observed that Marfutka slid down from the bench with the motion with which story-tellers change their attitude from that of a listener to that of a narrator, and that she came nearer. When all were shouting, I looked at her; she was slightly moving her lips, and her eyes were full of thought and animation. When her eyes met mine, she looked down. In a moment I looked again; she was whispering to herself as before. When I asked her to recite, she was all confusion, but in the course of two days she related a whole story beautifully.

Chapter 30 : Bible Stories

In our school the best test of how much the pupils remember of these recitations are the exercises which they themselves write out from memory, and merely with the correction of faults in 'spelling. Here is an extract from the copy-book of the ten-year-old M .

The Story of Isaac: God commanded Abraham to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham took two servants, Isaac carried the wood and the fire, and Abraham carried a knife. When they came to the mountain Horeb, Abraham left his servants there, and he went up on the mountain with Isaac. Isaac said, "Batyushka, we have everything, but where is the victim?"

Abraham said, "God commanded me to bring you."

Then Abraham set fire to the pile and put his son on it. Isaac said:

"Bind me, or else I shall jump down and kill you."

Abraham took him and bound him. Just . as he was raising his arm an angel flew down from heaven and held him back and said:

"Abraham, do not lay your hand on your own son: God sees your faith." Then the Angel said, "Go to that bush; there a ram is entangled, take him in place of your son."

And Abraham offered the sacrifice to God.

Then the time came for Abraham to marry his son. They had a man named Eliezer. Abraham called this man and said:

"Swear that you will not choose a bride from our city, but that you will go where I send you."

Abraham sent him to the land of Mesopotamia to Nachor. Eliezer took camels and departed. When he reached a well, he began to say:

"Lord, give me a maiden who shall come out and give me and my camels water to drink, and she shall be the bride of my master Isaac."

No sooner had Eliezer said these words, than a maiden appeared. Eliezer began to ask her for a drink. Eliezer said, "Please give me to drink."

She gave him to drink, and said:

"Would n't your camels like to drink?"

Eliezer said, "Yes, please give them some water." So she gave also the camels; and then Eliezer presented her with a necklace, and said:

"Could n't I spend the night at your house?"

She said: "Yes."

When they reached the house her folks were eating supper, and they urged Eliezer to sit down and have supper with them. Eliezer said: "I will not eat until I speak a word to you." Eliezer told them his errand.

They said: "We consent, but how about her?"

They asked her she was willing. Then the father and mother blessed Rebecca; Eliezer placed her on the camel, and they departed; but Isaac was walking in the field. Rebecca saw Isaac, and covered herself with a towel. Isaac came to her, took her by the hand and led, her to his home, and they were married.

The story of Jacob:[1] Rebecca had been barren nineteen years, then she brought forth twins, Esau and Jacob.[2] Esau devoted himself to hunting, but Jacob helped his mother. One time Esau went out to hunt wild beasts, but killed nothing, and he came home disgusted; now Jacob was making a soup of lentils. Esau came in and said:

"Give me those lentils."

Jacob said: "Give me your birthright."

Esau said: "Take it."

"Swear."

Esau swore. Then Jacob gave Esau the lentils.

When Isaac grew blind he said one day:

"Esau, go and kill me some kind of game."

Esau went. Rebecca heard it, and said to Jacob:

"Go out and kill two kids."

Jacob went and killed two kids and carried them to his mother. She roasted them, and clothed Jacob with the skins; and Jacob took the meat to his father and said:

"I have brought you your favorite dish."

Isaac said: "Come nearer to me." Jacob approached him. Isaac began to feel of his body, and he said:

"It is Jacob's voice, but Esau's body."

Then he gave Jacob his blessing. Jacob was just going out of the room as Esau came in, and said:

"Here, father,[3] is your favorite meat."

Isaac said: "Esau has just been to me."

"No, father; Jacob has deceived you in this."

And he went out of the house and wept, and said:

"Wait till father is dead, then I'll have my revenge on you."

Rebecca said to Jacob:

"Go and ask a blessing from your father, and hasten to your uncle Laban. Isaac blessed Jacob and he went to his uncle Laban. Then the night came upon him. He proceeded to sleep in the open air; he found a stone, put it under his head and went to sleep. Suddenly he saw in his dream that a ladder seemed to reach from the earth to the sky, and angels were going up and down on it, and at the top the Lord Himself was standing and saying:

"Jacob! the land where thou liest I give to thee, and to thy descendants."

Jacob got up and said:

"How terrible it is here! This must be the house of God: I will come back and build a church here."

Then he lighted a shrine lamp, and went on his way. And he saw herdsmen guarding cattle. Jacob went and asked them whereabouts his uncle Laban lived. The herdsmen answered:

"There is his daughter driving sheep to water."

Jacob went to her; she was finding it impossible to lift the stone from the well. Jacob lifted off the stone and gave the sheep water, and said:

[1] From the copy-book of I. F.

[2] In Russian, Revekka, Isaf, and Iakof.

[3] Na batyushka.

”Whose daughter are you?”

She replied: ”Laban’s.”

”I am your cousin.”

They exchanged kisses and went home together. His uncle Laban received him and said:

”Jacob, live with me and I will pay you money.”

Jacob said: ”I will not serve for money; but give me your youngest daughter Rachel.”

Laban said: ”Live with me seven years and I will give you my daughter Rachel.”

Jacob served seven years, and his uncle Laban gave Jacob Leah instead of Rachel. And Jacob said:

”Uncle Laban, why have you cheated me?”

Laban said:

”Live with me seven years longer, then I will give you my youngest daughter Rachel; but it is not our custom to give the youngest daughter first.”

Jacob lived with his uncle seven years longer, and then Laban gave him Rachel.

About Joseph.[4] - Jacob had twelve sons. He loved Joseph best of them all, and he made for him a coat of many colors. Then Joseph had two dreams, and told them to his brothers:

”Methought we were reaping rye in the field, and we bound up twelve sheaves. My sheaf stood up straight, but the eleven sheaves bowed before my sheaf.”

And his brothers said: ”Shall we ever bow down before you?”

And he had another dream:

”Methought eleven stars in the sky and the sun and the moon worshiped my star.”

His father and mother said: ”Shall we worship you?”

The brothers went away to pasture their cattle, and their father sent Joseph to carry food to them; his brothers saw him, and said:

”Here comes our dreamer. Let us throw him into a deep well.”

But Reuben l thought to himself:

”As soon as they have gone off, I will pull him out. But here come the merchants!”

Reuben said:

”Let us sell him to the Egyptian merchants.”

So they sold Joseph, and the merchants sold him to the courtier Pentifri.[5] Pentifri loved him and his wife loved him. Pentifri went away somewhere, and his wife said to Joseph:

”Joseph, come let us kill my husband, and then you shall be my husband.”

Joseph said: ”If you say that a second time, I will tell your husband.”

She seized him by his garment and cried out. The slaves heard her and came. Then Pentifri came. His wife told him that Joseph proposed to kill him and marry her. Pentifri ordered him taken off to prison. As Joseph was a good man he was made useful even there, and to him was entrusted the care of the prison. One day Joseph was walking along through the jail; he saw that two prisoners were sitting in deep sadness. Joseph went to them and asked:

”Why are you sad?”

And they said:

”We have had two dreams in one night, and no one can interpret them for us.”

Joseph asked:

[4] From the book of the eight-year-old boy F .

[5] Russian, Rubim. 2 Potiphar.

”What were they?”

The cupbearer began to tell his story:

”Methought I plucked three berries, squeezed the juice, and gave to the Czar.”

Joseph said:

”In three days you will be back in your place.”

Then the baker said:

”Methought I was carrying twelve loaves in a basket, and the birds came flying and pecked at the bread.”

Joseph said:

”In three days you will be hanged, and the birds will come flying and will peck at your body.”

This came true.

Once the Czar Pharaoh saw two dreams the same night, and he gathered all his wise men, and no one of them could interpret the dreams. The cupbearer remembered, and said: ”I have a man who can explain it.”

The Czar sent a carriage for him. When they brought him in the Czar began to tell his dream:

”Methought I was standing on the bank of the river, and there came seven fat cows and seven lean ones; and the lean ones threw themselves on the fat ones and ate them up, and did not become fat. And the other dream I saw was this: Methought seven full ears of corn and seven empty ears grew on one stalk: the empty ones threw themselves on the full ones and devoured them, and yet did not become full.”

Joseph said:

”This is what it means: There will be seven years of plenty and then there will be seven years of famine.”

The Czar put a golden chain around his neck and a ring on his right hand and ordered him to build granaries.

Chapter 31 : The Bible for Children

All that I have said relates to instruction in sacred as well as Russian history, to natural history, to geography, partly to physics, chemistry, zoology, especially to all subjects except singing, mathematics, and drawing. As to the instruction in sacred history especially, I must now speak as follows:

In the first place, Why is the Old Testament chosen at the very beginning? Not to speak of the fact that a knowledge of sacred history is demanded by the pupils themselves as well as by their parents, of all the oral accounts which I have experimented with in the course of three years, nothing has been found so suited to the comprehension and mental capacity of the children as the Bible. The same thing has been repeated in all other schools which I have had a chance to observe in the beginning. I tried the New Testament, tried Russian history and geography, tried what is so popular in our day, "Explanations of the Phenomena of Nature," but it was all speedily forgotten, and was listened to reluctantly. But the Old Testament was remembered and repeated passionately, enthusiastically, both in the class room and at home, and was remembered so well that two months after the stories had been told the children could, from their heads, with scarcely an omission, write out their sacred history copied into their note-books.

It seems to me that the book of the childhood of the human race will always be the best book for the childhood of every man. To alter this book seems to me impossible. To alter, to abridge the Bible, as is done in the manuals of Sontag and others, seems to me injurious. Everything, every word in it, is correct as revelation and correct as art. Read in the Bible about the creation of the world and then the same in some abridgment of sacred history, and the transformation of the Bible into "sacred history" will seem to 'you perfectly incomprehensible: your "sacred history" can be learned in no other way than by rote, while by the Bible it presents itself to a child as a living and majestic picture which he will never forget. Why, for example, is it always omitted from all "sacred histories" that when there was nothing, the Spirit of God moved over the void, that God at the Creation looked at His work and saw that it was good, and that the morning and the evening made up the day? Why is it omitted that God breathed the soul into Adam's nostrils, that having taken out a rib He replaced it with flesh, and so forth. All you have to do is to read the Bible to unspoiled children to realize how essential and true all these details are. Maybe one ought not to put the Bible into the hands of depraved young ladies, but in reading it to peasant children I have never altered or omitted a single word. And not a child ever giggled behind his neighbor's back, and all listened with awe and with genuine reverence. The story of Lot and his daughters, the story of Judah, arouse horror, not ridicule.

How clear and comprehensible, especially for a child, and at the same time how dignified and solemn! ... I cannot imagine how education could be carried on if it were not for this boon. But it seems when one has learned these stories only in childhood and afterwards partly forgotten them, what good are they to us? Would it not be just the same as if we did not know them at all?

So it seems to you until, beginning to teach, you detect in other children all the elements of your own education. Theoretically, it is possible to teach children to write, to read, to give them

an idea of history, geography, and the phenomena of nature without the Bible, and before the Bible: and yet this is never done. Everywhere, first of all, the child knows the Bible, its stories, and extracts from it. The first relation of the teacher and the taught is based on this book. A phenomenon so universal is not a mere matter of chance. My perfectly free relations to my pupils at the beginning of the Yasnopolyana school helped me to explain this phenomenon.

A child or a man entering the school I make no difference between a person of ten, of thirty, or of seventy gathers from his life and brings with him his own peculiar and favorite view of things. In order that a person of any age may study, he must love study. In order that he love study, he must recognize the falsity, the insufficiency of his view of things, and must have a presentiment of the new aspect which education is to open up for him. No man or child ever would have the power to study if the future of his teaching presented to him merely the art of writing, reading, or reckoning; no teacher could ever teach if he had not in his control views of the universe loftier than his pupils had. In order that the pupil may wholly surrender himself to the teacher, there must be opened before him one corner of that curtain which hides from him all the charm of that world of thought, knowledge, and poetry into which education is to lead him. Only when the pupil finds himself under the constant charm of this light gleaming before him will he be in a condition to work over himself as we require him to do.

What means have we for lifting before our pupils this corner of the curtain? ...

As I have said, I thought, as many think, that, finding myself in that world into which I wanted to lead my pupils, it would be easy for me to do this, and I taught reading and writing. I explained the phenomena of nature. I told them, as primers do, that the fruits of learning are sweet; but the pupils did not believe me, and avoided me.

I tried reading the Bible to them, and I completely conquered them. The corner of the curtain was lifted, and they gave themselves to me heart and soul. They began to love the book, and teaching, and me. All I had to do was to lead them on farther.

After the Old Testament I took up the New Testament; they loved learning and they loved me more and more. Then after the Bible I told them about general history, Russian history, natural history; they listened to everything, they believed everything, and they kept going farther and farther, and the horizon of thought, knowledge, and poesy kept opening up before them farther and farther.

Maybe this was an accident. Maybe, having begun with another method in another school, the same results would have been reached. Maybe; but this accident happens too universally in all schools, and in all families, and the explanation of this phenomenon is too clear for me to allow me to call it chance.

In order to open before the pupil the new world, and without knowledge to start him in the love of knowledge, no book is needed but the Bible. I say this even for those that do not look on the Bible as a revelation. No, at least I know of no production which unites in itself in such a concise poetic form all the sides of human thought as the Bible does. All questions arising from the phenomena of nature are explained in this book; all the primitive relations of men, of the family, of government, of religion, are recognized in this book. The generalization of thought, wisdom in its simple, childlike form, for the first time subjects the pupil's mind to its enchantment. The lyrical quality of the Psalms of David has its effect, not only on the mind of the adult pupils, but, moreover, every one from this book recognizes for the first time the full charm of epic poetry in its inimitable simplicity and force.

Who has not wept over the story of Joseph and his meeting with his brethren? Who has not felt an oppression of the heart in telling about Samson, bound and shorn, when, in order to avenge himself on his enemies, he perishes, overwhelming his enemies under the ruins of the fallen palace? And a hundred other impressions on which we are fed as on mother's milk

Let those that deny the educational significance of the Bible, that declare it has outlived its usefulness, invent such a book, such stories, such explanations of the phenomena of nature, either from general history or from imagination, which should have such a reception as the Bible ones have, and then we will agree that the Bible is superannuated.

Pedagogy serves as a verification of many, many vital phenomena, of social and abstract questions.

Materialism will have the right to proclaim itself as victorious only when the bible of materialism shall have been written, and childhood shall have been educated according to this bible. Owen's experiment cannot be regarded as a proof of such a possibility, any more than the growth of a lemon tree in a Moscow greenhouse is proof that it could grow without the open sky and the sun.

I repeat it, my conviction, drawn perhaps from a one-sided experiment, is that the development of a child and a man is as unthinkable without the Bible as it would have been in Greek society without Homer. The Bible is the only book for the elementary education of the young. The Bible, both in its form and in its content, ought to serve as the model for all children's manuals and reading books. A simple popular translation of the Bible would be the most popular of all books. The appearance of such a translation in our day would make an epoch in the history of the Russian people.

Now, in regard to the method of teaching sacred history, I consider all the short treatises on this subject in Russian doubly criminal against sanctity and against poesy. All these transcriptions, purporting to render easier the reading of sacred history, make it more difficult. The Bible is read as a delight at home, the reader sitting with his head resting on his hands; the history books are learned by heart as a task. Besides being stupid and incomprehensible, these history books spoil the child's capacity of enjoying the poetry of the Bible. More than once I have noticed how their bad, obscure style has prevented understanding the inner thought of the Bible. Obsolete and incomprehensible words take their place in the memory alongside with events, distract the pupils' attention by reason of their novelty, and serve them as way-marks whereby they guide themselves through the story.

Very often a pupil will speak merely for the sake of using some word which pleases him, and he is not yet simple enough to get a gleam of an idea of its meaning. More than once I have also noticed how pupils from other schools have always far less, and sometimes not at all, felt the charm of the Bibical stories, destroyed for them by the necessity of learning them, and by the teacher's brutal methods connected with it. These pupils have even spoiled the younger ones and their brothers by adopting in their stories the wretched tricks of the manuals of sacred history. Such wretched stories, by means of these harmful books, circulate among the people, and frequently children bring from their homes very odd legends about the creation of the world, Adam, and Joseph the handsome. Such pupils are past experiencing what the unsophisticated ones experience, as they hear the Bible with awe, taking in each word, and thinking that now at last all the wisdom of the world will be opened before them.

I have taught, and I still teach, sacred history in accordance with the Bible only, and I consider every other mode of instruction harmful.

The New Testament is related exactly in accordance with the Gospel, and is then written down in notebooks. The New Testament is found to be harder to remember, and therefore demands more frequent repetitions.

Here are some examples from the New Testament history:

About the Last Supper.[1] Once Jesus Christ sent His disciples into the city Jerusalem and said to them: "The first man you meet carrying water, you must follow and ask him: ' Master, show us a chamber where we may prepare the passover.' He will show it to you; and there you must prepare it."

They went and found it as He had said, and they made ready. In the evening Jesus Himself went there with His disciples. During the supper Jesus Christ tore off His garment and girded Himself with a towel. Then He took a wash-hand basin and filled it with water, and went to each of His disciples and washed their feet. When He came to Peter and was going to wash his feet, Peter said to Him:

"Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet!"

But Jesus Christ said to Him:

"If I do not wash thy feet, then thou shalt never be with Me in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Then Peter was alarmed and said:

"Lord, not merely my feet, but my head and my whole body."

But Jesus said to him:

"If a man is clean, his feet only need to be washed."

Then Jesus Christ put on His clothes and sat down at the table, took bread and blessed it and broke it, and began to distribute it among His disciples, saying:

"Take and eat this is My body."

They took and ate. Then Jesus took a cup with wine, blessed it, and began to pass it to His disciples, saying:

"Take and drink: this is My blood of the New Testament."

They took and drank. Then Jesus Christ said:

"One of you shall betray Me."

And His disciples began to ask "Lord! it is not I, is it?"

But Jesus Christ said:

"No!"

Then Judas said:

"Lord, it is not I, is it?"

And Jesus Christ said in a low voice:

"Thou!"

After this Jesus Christ said to His disciples:

"He shall betray Me to whom I give a piece of bread."

Then Jesus Christ gave bread to Judas. Then Satan entered into him, so that he was confused and left the room.

From the note-book of R. B. Then Jesus Christ went with His disciples into the Gefsimansky Garden and said to His disciples:

"Wait for Me, and do not sleep."

When Jesus came and found His disciples sleeping, He woke them up, and said: -

[1] From the note -book of the lad I. M.

”You could not watch for Me one hour.”

Then again He went off to pray to God. He prayed to God, and said:

”Lord, is it not possible for this cup to pass by Me?” And He kept praying until a bloody sweat came. An angel flew down from heaven and began to strengthen Jesus. Then Jesus returned to His disciples and said to them:

”Why are ye sleeping? The hour is at hand in which the Son of Man shall be given into the power of His enemies.”

Now Judas had said to the High Priest:

”The one whom I kiss is He, seize Him.”

Then the disciples followed Jesus out and they saw a throng of people. Judas came up to Jesus and was going to kiss Him. Jesus said to him:

”Dost thou betray Me by a kiss?”

And to the people He said:

”Whom seek ye?”

They said to Him:

”Jesus, the Nazarene.”

Jesus said:

”I am He.”

At this word all fell.

Chapter 32 : Russian History

Having finished with the Old Testament I naturally thought of teaching history and geography, both because this study has always been carried on in primary schools, and I myself had taught these subjects, and because the history of the Hebrews in the Old Testament naturally, it seemed to me, led the children to ask where, when, and under what conditions the events they knew took place what was Egypt; Pharaoh; the Assyrian king, and the like? I began history as it is always begun with antiquity. But neither Momsen nor Dunker, nor all my efforts, helped me to make it interesting. There was nothing in Sesostris, the Egyptian pyramids, or the Phoenicians, that appealed to them.

I hoped that they might be interested in questions such as these, for example: What peoples had relations with the Hebrews? and, Where did the Hebrews live and wander? But the pupils found no use whatever for such information. King Pharaoh, the Egyptians, the Palestines, when and where they existed, did not in the least satisfy them. The Hebrews were their Heroes; the rest were foreign, unnecessary characters.

I had no success in making the Egyptians and Phoenicians heroes for children for lack of materials. As long as we don't know in detail how the pyramids were built, what mutual position and relationship the castes had, what does it mean for us for us, I mean the children. In those histories there are no Abraham, no Isaac, no Jacob, no Joseph, no Samson. They found something in ancient history to remember and enjoy, about Semiramis, for instance, but it was remembered merely accidentally, not because it cleared up anything, but because it was artistically related. But such passages were rare; the rest was dull and aimless, and I was obliged to give up the teaching of general history.

I met with the same lack of success in geography as in history. Sometimes I would tell what has happened in Greek, English, or Swiss history without any connection, but only as an instructive and artistic story.

After general history I felt obliged to make experiment with Russian history, accepted everywhere and by all as national, and I began that melancholy history of Russia, which we all knew so well inartistic, useless as it appears in so many paraphrases from Ishimova's to Vodovozof 's. I began it twice; the first time before reading the whole Bible, and the second time after the Bible. Before reading the Bible the pupils resolutely refused to remember the existence of the Igors and Olegs. The same thing is repeated even now with the younger pupils. Those that have not been as yet taught by the Bible to enter into what is told to them and to pass it on, will hear these stories told half a dozen times and still remember nothing about the Ruriks and Yaroslafs.

The older pupils now remember Russian history, and write it, but incomparably worse than the Bible, and they require frequent repetitions of it. We told them stories f rom Vodovozof and Pogodin's "Norman Period." One of the teachers got somehow misled, and neglecting my advice, did not pass by the period of appanages, and entered into all the confusion and disorder of the Ustislafs, Bryatchislafs, and Boleslafs. I came into the class just as the pupils were to recite. It is hard to describe what was taking place. For a long time all were silent. Called up by the teacher

at last, the bolder ones who had the best memories began to recite. All their intellectual powers were directed toward remembering the marvelous names, but what any one of them did was for them a secondary consideration.

"Now here he what do you call him? Barikaf, Lyof Nikolaitch?" one would begin "marched against who was it?"

"Muslaf, Lyof Nikolaitch?" suggested a girl.

"Mstislaf," I replied.

"And cut him to pieces" cried one with pride.

"Simple you are! There was a river there!"

"But his son collected an army and cut him in pieces: what was his name?"

"You don't seem to understand anything!" exclaimed a girl who had the memory of a blind person.

"Well, it is wonderful, that is!" said Semka.

"Now what was it, Mislaf, Chislaf? Anyway, the devil take it!"

"Don't you interfere if you don't know!"

"Well, you, you 're so fearful clever!"

"What are you poking me for?"

Those endowed with the best memories still made some endeavors, and repeated the history with some accuracy with the aid of some prompting. But the whole scene was so ugly and pitiful to behold these children they were all like hens which have had grain given them followed suddenly by sand: they suddenly lost their wits, kept cackling, vainly flying about, and were ready to pull each other's feathers out. And we and the teacher decided not to make any more such mistakes. Letting the period of the appanages have the go-by, we continued our study of Russian history, and here are some extracts from the copy-books of the older pupils.

From the copy-book of the pupil V. R. Our ancestors were called Slavs. They had neither czars nor princes. They were divided into families, were always attacking one another, and went out to make war. Once upon a time the Normans fell upon the Slavs, conquered them, and imposed a tribute on them. Then they said:

"How can we live so? Let us choose ourselves a prince in order that he may rule over us."

Then they chose Rurik, with his two brothers Sineus and Truvor. Rurik settled in Ladoga, Sineus in Izborsk, among the Krivitchi, Truvor on the White Lake. Afterwards the two brothers died. Rurik seized their places.

Then two, Askold and Dir, went to Greece, and they approached Kief, and asked:

"Who rules here?"

The Kievlians replied:

"There were three Ki, Shchek, and Khorif. Now they are dead."

Askold and Dir said:

"Let us be your rulers."

The people consented, and began to pay tribute.

Then Rurik ordered cities and fortresses built, and sent his boyars to collect tribute and bring it to him. Then Rurik resolved to make an expedition against Constantinople with two hundred boats. When he reached that city the Emperor at that time was not there. The Greeks sent for him. The people all prayed to God. Then the bishop took the chasuble of the Mother of God and dipped it into the water, and a terrible storm arose, and Rurik's boats were all dashed to pieces, so that very few escaped. Then Rurik went home and died there.

One son, Igor, survived him. When he was little, Oleg took his place, and wanted to wage war against Kief. He took Igor with him and went straight down the Dniepr. On the way he captured the cities of Liubitch and Smolensk. When they came to Kief, Oleg sent his ambassadors to Askold and Dir to say that tradesmen had come to visit him; and he himself hid half his army in the boats, and the other half he stationed behind. When Askold and Dir came with a small band of followers,[1] Oleg's army leaped out from the boats and attacked them. Then Oleg lifted Igor up, and said:

"You are not princes, and not of princely race; but here is a real prince!"

Then Oleg commanded to kill them, and he conquered Kief. Oleg continued to live there, and made that city his capital, and called it the mother of all Russian cities. Then he built cities and fortresses, and sent out his boyars to collect tribute and bring it to him. Afterwards he wanted to wage war with the neighboring tribes, and he conquered many of them. He did not care to wage war with those that were peaceable, but only with the warlike. So he made his plans to go to Greece, and he sailed straight down the Dniepr. When he had reached the mouth of the Dniepr, he came to the Black Sea. When he had reached Greece, his army leaped on shore and began to burn and ravage everything. Oleg said to the Greeks:

"Pay us tribute a grivna for every boat."

They were glad, and began to pay them tribute. There Oleg collected three hundred puds[2] and went home.

From the note-book of the pupil V. M. When Oleg died, Rurik's Igor reigned in his place. Igor wanted to marry. Once he went out to walk with his band of followers, and he had to cross the Dniepr. Suddenly he saw a girl sailing in a boat. When she came to the shore, Igor said:

"Put me across."

She put him across. Then Igor married her. He wanted to distinguish himself. So he collected an army and went to war, straight down the Dniepr, and, entering the Black Sea, turned not to the right but to the left, and went from the Black Sea into the Caspian. Igor sent ambassadors to the kagan, asking him to let him pass through his land. When he should return from the expedition, he would give him the half of his booty. The kagan let him pass. When they came near a certain city, Igor commanded to collect the people on the bank, to burn and destroy everything, and to take the inhabitants prisoners. When they had carried out his orders, they rested. When they had rested, they joyfully started back home. They came to the kagan's city, and Igor sent the kagan what he had agreed to send. The people heard that Igor was going back with his army. They begged the kagan to let them take vengeance on Igor for having spilled the blood of their kinsmen. The kagan refused; but the people disobeyed, and began to wage war on Igor. A fierce battle ensued. They conquered the Russians, and took from them all they had won.

The interest is not at all vital, as the reader may see from the preceding extracts. Russian history goes better than general history simply because they are accustomed to accept and to write out what has been told them, and still more because the question, What good is it? does not occur to them so often. The Russian people is their hero, just as the Hebrew people was: the one because it was God's chosen people and because their history is artistic; the other, although it has no artistic unity, still because it has the national sentiment to plead for it. Yet this study is

[1] The historic druzhina, from drug, a friend.

[2] A pud is 36.11 pounds avoirdupois; a grivna is ten kopecks, the tenth of a ruble.

dry, cold, and discouraging. Unhappily, the history itself very rarely furnishes any occasion for the national feeling to grow enthusiastic.

One evening I went from my class into the history class to find out the cause of the excitement which had attracted my attention in the outer room. It was the battle of Kulikovo.[3] All were in excitement.

"Now this is history! This is clever! Listen, Lyof Nikolayevitch, how he stampeded the Tartars! Let me tell about it!" "No, let me!" cried the voices. "How the blood flowed in rivers!"

Almost all were in readiness to recite, and all were enthusiastic. But if you call upon the national feeling only, what is there left from our whole history? 1612, 1812,[4] and that is all. To satisfy the national feeling you will not read the whole history of Russia. I understand that you must take advantage of historical tradition in order to develop and satisfy the artistic interest everywhere existent in children, but this will not be history. To teach history, a preliminary development of historical interest in children is indispensable. How can this be done?

I have often heard it said that the study of history should begin, not with the beginning, but with the end in other words, not with ancient but with modern history. This idea is absolutely correct in principle. How can you interest a child by telling him about the beginning of the Russian Empire when he does not know what the Russian Empire or any empire is? Any one who has to do with children must know that every Russian child is firmly persuaded that the whole world is the same kind of Russia as that in which he lives; the French and German child has the same notion. That is why all children and even some adults with the naive ideas of childhood are always surprised that the German children speak German! ...

The historical interest generally appears after the interest in art has been awakened. It is interesting to us to know the history of the founding of Rome because we know what the Roman Empire was in its flowering time, just as the childhood of some great man whom we have known is interesting. The contrast of this power with the insignificance of the throng, of fugitives constitutes for us the basis of the interest. We follow the development of Rome, having in our imagination what it came to. We are interested in the foundation of the czardom of Moscow, because we know what the Russian Empire is. According to my observation and experience, the first germ of interest in history appears in consequence of a knowledge of contemporary history, sometimes through participating in it, in consequence of political interest, political opinions, discussions, the reading of newspapers, and that is why the idea of beginning history with the present must come naturally to every thoughtful teacher.

This very summer[5] I made these experiments so described, and here I cite one of them.

[3] 1378 A.D., when Dmitri, Grand Prince of Moscow, conquered the Tartars and expelled them from Northern Europe.

[4] 1612, the accession of Mikhail Romanof under the patriotic lead of the butcher Minin and the Prince Pozharsky after the terrible anarchy that followed the death of the Polish pretender; 1812, the conquest of Napoleon and the French by the Russian national hero Moroz, "Frost"

[5] 1862.

Chapter 33 : A First Lesson In History

I had the intention in this first lesson of explaining wherein Russia differs from other countries, her borders, the characteristic feature of its government; to tell who was the reigning monarch at this time, and how and when the Emperor mounted the throne.

TEACHER. Where do we live? in what land?

A PUPIL. At Yasnaya Polyana.

SECOND PUPIL. In the country.

TEACHER. No; in what land are both Yasnaya Polyana and the Government of Tula?

PUPIL. The Government of Tula is seventeen versts from us. Where is it? Why the Government is the government.

TEACHER. No; Tula is a government capital, but a government is another thing.[1] Now what land is it?

PUPIL (who had been in the geography class). The land[2] is round like a ball.

By means of such questions as "What is the land where a German, whom they knew, lived," and "Where would you come to if you should keep going in one direction," the pupils were at last brought to answer that they lived in Russia. Some, however, answered the question, "Where would you come out if you kept traveling straight ahead?" by saying, "We should not come out anywhere." Others said that "you would come to the end of the world."

TEACHER (repeating one pupil's reply). You said that you would reach other countries. Where does Russia end, and where do the other countries begin?

PUPIL. Where you find the Germans.

TEACHER. Now, then, if you should find Gustaf Ivanovitch and Karl Feodorovitch in Tula, would you say that this was the land of the Germans, and therefore it must be another country?

PUPIL. No; it 's where you find a whole lot of Germans.

TEACHER. Not necessarily; for in Russia there is a land where there are a whole lot of Germans. Johann Fomitch here comes from there, and yet this land is Russia. How is that?

Silence.

TEACHER. It is because they obey the same laws as the Russians.

PUPIL. How do they have the same law? The Germans do not attend our church, and they eat meat in Lent!

TEACHER. Not the same law, perhaps, but they obey the same Czar.

PUPIL (the skeptic Semka). Strange! Why do they have a different law and yet obey our Czar?

The teacher feels the necessity of explaining what a law is, and he asks what it means to obey a law, to be under one law.

A PUPIL (the self-confident little domestic, hastily and timidly). To obey a law means to get married!

[1] Russia is divided into guberniya (governments), which are subdivided into districts, somewhat like states and counties.

[2] In Russian the same word zemlya (as in Novaya Zemlya) means estate, land or country, and the earth.

The pupils look questioningly at the teacher: Is that right?

The teacher begins to explain that a law means that if any one steals or kills, then he is shut up in prison and is punished.

THE SKEPTIC SEMKA. But don't the Germans have this?

TEACHER. Law also means this, that we have nobles, peasants, merchants, clergy. (The word clergy dukhovienstvo gave rise to perplexity.)

THE SKEPTIC SEMKA. And don't they have them there?

TEACHER. They have them in some countries, in others they don't. We have the Russian Czar, and in German countries there is another the German Czar.

This answer satisfied all the pupils, even the skeptic Semka.

The teacher, seeing the necessity of explaining class distinctions, asks what classes they know.

The pupils try to enumerate them the nobility, the peasantry, popes or priests, soldiers.

"Any others?" asks the teacher.

"Domestics, koziuki,[3] samovar-makers."[4]

The teacher asks the distinctions between these different classes.

THE PUPILS. The peasants plow; domestic servants serve; merchants trade; samovarshchiki make samovars; popes perform masses; nobles do not do anything.

The teacher explains the actual differences between the classes, but finds it perfectly idle to make them see the necessity of soldiers when there is no war, that it is merely to serve as a security against the dissolution of the Empire, and the part taken by the nobles in the civil service. The teacher tries in the same way to explain the difference geographically between Russia and other countries; he says that the whole world is divided into various realms. The Russians, the French, the Germans, divided the whole earth, and said to themselves: "Up to these limits is ours, up to those is yours;" and thus Russia and all other nations have their boundaries.

TEACHER. Do you understand what a boundary is? Give me an example of one.

A PUPIL (an intelligent lad). Here, just beyond the Turkin Hill, is a boundary.

This boundary is a stone post standing on the road between Tula and Yasnaya Polyana, indicating the beginning of the Tula District.

All the pupils acquiesce in this definition.

The teacher sees the necessity of pointing out the boundaries on some well-known place. He draws the plan of the two rooms, and indicates the line that separates them; then he brings the plan of the village, and the scholars themselves point out several well-known boundaries. The teacher explains that is, he thinks that he explains that just as Yasnaya Polyana has its boundaries, so Russia has its boundaries. He flatters himself with the hope that they have all understood him; but when he asks, "How is it possible to know how far it is from our place to the Russian boundary?" then the pupils, in no little perplexity, reply that it is very easy; all it requires is to take a yardstick and measure to the Russian boundary.

TEACHER. In which direction?

PUPILS. Go straight from here to the boundary, and put down how far you have gone.

Again we made use of sketches, plans, and maps. Here came up the need of giving them an idea of the meaning of a "scale." The teacher proposed to draw the plan of the village, disposed in streets. We began the sketch on the blackboard, but we could not get the whole village in

[3] Koziuki means with us the class of the meshchanin, or burgess. AUTHOR'S NOTE.

[4] Tula is one of the centers of the samovar manufacture.

because the scale was too large. We rubbed it out, and began anew on a slate. The scale, the plan, the boundaries, gradually became clear. The teacher repeated all that he had said, and then asked what Russia was, and where it ended.

PUPIL. It's the land in which we live, and where the Germans and Tartars live.

ANOTHER PUPIL. The land that is under the Russian Czar.

TEACHER. Where is the end of it?

A GIRL. Where you find the heathen[5] Germans.

TEACHER. The Germans are not heathen. The Germans also believe in Christ. (Here he gives an explanation of religion and faiths.)

PUPIL (with alacrity, evidently taking delight in his good memory}. In Russia there are laws, Whoever kills gets put in prison; and there are all sorts of people, clergymen, soldiers, and nobles.

SEMKA. Who supports the soldiers?

TEACHER. The Czar. But then they collect the money from everybody, because everybody is benefited by their serving.

The teacher furthermore explains what the budget is, and finally, with only tolerable success, we get them to repeat what has been said about boundaries.

The lesson lasts two hours. The teacher is persuaded that the children have retained a good deal of what has been said, and the succeeding lessons are carried on in the same style, but in the sequel he is forced to the conclusion that these methods are unsatisfactory, and that all that he has done is perfect rubbish.

Involuntarily I fell into the usual error of the Socratic method carried on in the German Anschauungsunterricht to the last degree of monstrosity. In these lessons I gave no new ideas to the pupils, though I fancied that I was doing so. And only by my moral influence did I compel the children to answer as I wished them to do. Raseya, "Russia," Russkoi, "Russian," remained the same unconscious symbols of mine, ours, something vague and indeterminate. Zakon, "law," remains to them an incomprehensible word.

I made these experiments six months ago, and at first was thoroughly satisfied and proud of them. Those to whom I read them said that it was thoroughly good and interesting; but after three weeks, during which I could not myself look after the school, I proposed to carry out what I had begun, and I became convinced that all that had gone before was nonsense and self-deception. Not one pupil was able to describe a frontier, Russia, a law, or the boundaries of the Krapivensky District; all they had learned they had forgotten; but at the same time they knew it all in their own way. I was convinced of my mistake, but I could not make out whether my mistake consisted in a bad method of instruction, or in the very idea of it. Maybe there is no possibility before a certain period of general development, and without the* help of newspapers and travel, to awaken in a child an interest in history and geography. Maybe we shall find the method by means of which this can be done, and I keep trying and experimenting. One thing only I know, that this method will never be attained by so-called history and geography; that is, in the teaching by books, for this kills, and does not awaken, this interest.

[5] Nek/iris ti.

Chapter 34 : An Experiment In Russian History

I made still other experiments in teaching the history of our own time, and these experiments were thoroughly successful. I told the story of the Crimean campaign; I described the reign of the Emperor Nicholas, and I related the story of the year 1812. All this was in an almost narrative tone, for the larger part, with no attempt at historical accuracy, but grouping the events around some single individual. I obtained the greatest success, as I might have expected, from my story of the war with Napoleon.

This lesson made a memorable hour in our lives. I shall never forget it. For some time the children had been promised that I should tell them from the ending, and the other teacher from the beginning, and that thus we should meet. My evening scholars were beginning to disperse; I went to the class of Russian history; the account of Sevastopol was in progress: they were bored. On the high bench three peasant girls wrapped up in shawls were sitting together, as always. One was asleep. Mishka nudged me.

"Look-a-there! See those cuckoos sitting there, and one of them has gone to sleep."

And she was just like a cuckoo.

"Tell from the ending instead," said some one, and all started up.

I sat down and began my story. As was always the case, the confusion, groans, and hubbub lasted several minutes. One climbed on the table; another, on a chair; another, on a bench; another leaned on his mate's shoulder; another sat in her friend's lap; and at last all became quiet.

I began with Alexander I. I told them about the French Revolution, about Napoleon's triumphs, about his usurpation of power, and about the war which ended with the peace of Tilsit.

As soon as Russia began to come into the story, then from all sides were heard sounds and words expressive of lively sympathy.

"Why did he want to conquer us also?"

"Never mind; Alexander will give it to him!" said some one who knew about Alexander I.; but I was obliged to dash their hopes: the time of triumph had not yet come, and they were very much aggrieved because of the scheme that Napoleon should marry the Czar's sister, and because Alexander spoke with him as an equal at the interview on the raft.

"You just wait!" said Petka, with a threatening gesture.

"Well, well; tell on!"

When Alexander did not give in to Napoleon, that is, when he declared war, all expressed their assent. When Napoleon, with his "twelve languages," marched against us, and aroused the Germans and Poland against us, all were overwhelmed with grief.

A German friend of mine was present in the room. "Ah! and you, too, were against us!" cried Petka, our best story-teller, to him.

"Hush, now!" cried the others.

The retreat of our armies was a cruel disappointment to my listeners, and on all sides were heard exclamations and objurgations on Kutuzof and Barklay:

"Why! and what a coward Kutuzof was!"

"You wait!" said another.

"Well, did he surrender?" asked a third.

When we came to the battle of Borodino, and when at the end I was obliged to tell them that after all we did not conquer, I could not help pitying them: it was evident that I was giving them all such a terrible shock.

"Still, it was neither ours nor theirs that beat."

When Napoleon came to Moscow and demanded the keys and the salutations, there was a perfect storm expressing their disgust.

The burning of Moscow, of course, was hailed with satisfaction. Finally, there came the triumph the retreat.

"As soon as he left Moscow, then Kutuzof began to follow him, and began to attack him," said I.

"He got a-straddle of him," interrupted Fedka, who, all of a glow, was sitting in front of me, and in his excitement was twisting his little dirty fingers. That was a habit of his.

As soon as he said that, the whole room seemed to groan with proud enthusiasm. They crowded one little fellow in the rear, and no one noticed it.

"Ah! that's the way to do it! That's how he got the keys!" and so on.

Then I went on to tell how we drove out the Frenchmen. It was painful for the scholars to hear about the delay at the Berezina River, and that we let him escape.

Petka even shouted, "I would have shot him dead for stopping there!"

Then we began to feel a little compunction for the frozen Frenchmen. Then, when we had crossed the border, and the Germans who had been opposed to us before declared for us, some one remembered the German present in the room.

"Ah! and that is the way you did? First you were against us, and then when we got strong you took our side!" and suddenly all got up and began to oh! oh! and ah! ah! at the German, so that the noise could have been heard in the street.

When they came to order, I went on to tell them how we escorted Napoleon to Paris; how we set the rightful king on the throne; how we enjoyed our triumphs and feasted; but then the memory of the Crimean War spoiled for us all this glory.

"Just wait! "cried Petka again, shaking his curls. "Wait till I grow up, and I will pay 'em back!"

If now the allied armies had attacked the Shevardinsky redoubt or the Malakhof Tower, we should have driven them back!

It was already late when I brought my story to an end. As a general thing the children are asleep by this time. But no one was sleepy; even the eyes of the cuckoos were aglow. The moment I stood up, Taraska, to my great amazement, crept out from under my arm-chair, and looked at me with eager, but at the same time serious, face.

"How came you under there?"

"He has been there from the very first," said some one.

There was no need of asking if he had understood: it was evident by his face.

"What can you tell us about it?" I asked.

"I?" he repeated; "I can tell it all. I am going to tell about it when I get home."

"And I."

”And I too.”

”Won’t it be too long?”

”No, indeed!”

And all slipped down-stairs, one promising to give it to the Frenchman, another upbraiding the German, and another repeating how Kutuzof had ”straddled” him.

”You have given it to them wholly from the Russian standpoint,”[1] said my German friend, who had been almost mobbed by the boys that evening. ”You ought to hear how that story is told among us Germans. You have told them nothing about the German battle for liberty.”[2]

I entirely agreed with him that my narrative was not history, but a tale kindling the national sentiment.

Of course, as instruction in history this experiment also was even more unsuccessful than the first.

[1] Sie haben ganz Russisch erz’dhlt.

[2] Sie haben nichts gesagt -von den Deutschen Freiheitskampfen.

Chapter 35 : Geography

In the teaching of geography I did the same thing. First of all, I began with physical geography. I remember the first lesson. I began it, and immediately lost my way. The result obtained was what I did not at all anticipate; namely, that I did not know what I wanted ten-year-old peasant children to learn. I was able to explain ”day” and ”night,” but in my explanation of ”winter” and ”summer” I went astray. Ashamed of my ignorance, I tried it again, and then I asked many of my acquaintances, cultivated men, and no one except those that had recently left school, or teachers, was able to give me a very good explanation without a globe. I beg all who read this to test this observation. I affirm that out of a hundred men not more than one knows this, though all children are taught it.

Having rehearsed pretty carefully, I once more took up the explanation, and with the aid of a candle and a globe, I explained it, as it seemed to me, admirably. They listened to me with great attention and interest. Especially interested were they to know something which their fathers did not believe and to be able to boast of their wisdom.

At the end of my explanation of ”winter” and ”summer” the skeptic Semka, the keenest-witted of all, staggered me with the question:

”How does the earth move and yet our izba still stand in the same place? Why, it ought to have moved from its place.”

I perceived that in my explanation I had shot a thousand versts beyond the range of the most intelligent of the children; what must the dullest have understood of it? I went back I explained, I made sketches, I adduced all the proofs of the roundness of the earth; voyages around the globe, the masts of a ship showing before the deck and all the rest, and consoling myself with the thought that now they certainly understood, I set them to writing the lesson. All wrote: ”The earth is like a ball first proof … second proof …;” they forgot the third proof and asked me about it. It was evident that the principal thing for them was to remember the proofs. More than once, more than a dozen times, yes, a hundred times I returned to these explanations and always unsuccessfully. At any examination the pupils would all answer, and they do now, satisfactorily. But I feel that they do not understand, and when I remember that I did not understand the matter very well until after I was thirty, I have pardoned them for this dullness of comprehension. I in my childhood believed that the world was round, and the like, but did not understand it, and so it is with them now. It was always far easier for me to comprehend what my nurse told me: that at the end of the world the earth and the sky met, and there at the end of the world the women wash their linen in the sea and mangle it on the sky. Our pupils have long been confirmed, and even now still persist, in notions diametrically opposed to those I wanted to give them. For a long time still, before they began to understand, it was necessary to dispel the impressions which they had formed, and their idea of the universe which nothing seemed as yet to modify. The laws of physics and mechanics were what first began to shatter these old concepts. But like myself and like all the rest of us they began physical geography before they began physics.

In the teaching of geography, as in all other subjects, the commonest, coarsest, and hurtf ulest mistake is haste. We were so delighted to know that the earth is round and turns around the sun, that we hasten as speedily as possible to communicate this to the pupil. But it is not valuable to know that the earth is round; it is valuable to know how this conclusion was reached. Very often children are told that the earth is so many billions of versts distant from the sun; and the fact does not interest or surprise the child at all. It is interesting to him to know how this was discovered. Whoever wishes to speak about this, let him tell about parallaxes. This is quite possible.

I have dwelt long on the roundness of the earth because what I have said about it refers to all geography. Out of thousands of cultivated men, aside from teachers and pupils, one may know very well why we have winter and summer, and may know where Guadaloupe is, while out of a thousand children, not one in his childhood understands the explanations of the roundness of the earth, and not one believes in the actual existence of Guadaloupe, but every one is still taught both of these things from earliest childhood.

After physical geography I began the parts of the world with their characteristics and with no lasting results, so that when you ask a question they will shout confusedly, "Asia, Africa, Australia," but if you suddenly ask: "In what part of the world is France?" even though it has just been said that England and France are in Europe, some one will cry that France is in Africa! The question "Why?" appears in each dulled eye, in every tone of the voice, when geography is begun, and there is no answer to that pitiable question "Why?"

As in history it is a common idea to begin with the end, so, in geography, the idea arose and became general to begin with the schoolrooms, with the village. As I have seen these experiments in Germany, and as I was wholly hopeless, by reason of my failure in ordinary geography, I took up the description of a room, a house, a village. Like the drawing of plans, such exercises are not devoid of profit, but to know what region is back of our village is not interesting, because all know that Telyatinki is there. And to know what is back of Telyatinki is not interesting, because, undoubtedly, another village just like Telyatinki is there, and Telyatinki with its fields is perfectly uninteresting. I proposed to them to place geographical way-marks, such as Moscow, Kief, but all this was packed away in their heads so disconnectedly that they had to learn it by heart.

I proposed to them to draw maps, and this occupied them and really helped their memory; but again appeared the question: "Why aid the memory?" I proposed again to tell them about polar and equatorial countries; they listened with pleasure and recited, but in their narrations they remembered everything except what was geographical in them. The chief thing was that the drawing of plans of the village was the drawing of plans, and not geography; the drawing of maps was the drawing of maps, and not geography; the stories of wild beasts, forests, ice-fields, and cities were tales, and not geography. Geography was only something learned by heart. Of all the new books Grube, Biernadsky not one was interesting. One little book, forgotten by every one, and somewhat resembling a geography, was read with more interest than anything else, and in my opinion is the best model of what ought to be done to prepare children for the study of geography by awakening in them an interest in the subject. This book is the Russian translation of Peter Parley, published in 1837. This little book is read, but seems rather as a guiding thread for the teacher who follows it in his narration, telling what he knows about each land and city.

The children recite, but they rarely retain any name and place on the map relating to the event described; for the most part, only the events remain. This class, however, belongs to a section of colloquies of which we shall speak in another place. Of late, notwithstanding all the skill with which the teaching of unnecessary names is disguised, notwithstanding all the circumspection

with which we resorted to it, the children had a presentiment that they were only being tricked into reading history and they conceived a genuine disgust for this class.

I came at last to the conclusion that, as regards history, not only was there no necessity of knowing the stupid part of Russian history, but that Cyrus, Alexander of Macedon, Cesar, and Luther are likewise unnecessary for the development of any child. All these personages and events are interesting to the student, not in proportion to their significance in history, but in proportion to the artistic reason for their being at all, in proportion to the artistic skill shown by their historian, and generally not by their historian, but by popular tradition.

The history of Romulus and Remus is interesting, not because these brothers founded the mightiest empire in the world, but because it is entertaining, marvelous, and beautiful how the she-wolf suckled them, etc. The history of the Gracchi is interesting, because it is artistic, like the history of Gregory VII. and the humiliated emperor, and there is a possibility of getting interested in it; but the history of the migration of nations will be stupid and aimless, because its subject is not artistic, just exactly like the history of the invention of printing, however we strive to impress it on the pupil that this was a period in history, and that Gutenberg was a great man. If you relate cleverly how friction matches were invented, the pupil will never agree that the inventor of friction matches was not as great a man as Gutenberg: in a word, for the child, and in general for the learner, and for any one who has not yet learned to live, the interest in the historic, that is, apart from the universally human, does not exist. There is only the artistic interest.

It is said that with the working out of materials the artistic developments of all periods of history will be possible; but I do not see this. Macaulay and Thiers can just as little be put into the hands of the student as Tacitus or Xenophon.

In order to make history popular, an artistic form for it is not necessary; but the historic phenomena must be personified, as is often done by legend, sometimes by life, sometimes by great thinkers and artists. History pleases children only when the topic is artistic. Interest in the historic does not exist and cannot exist for them; consequently there is and can be no children's history. History serves only occasionally as material for artistic development, but as long as the interest in history is not developed there can be no history. Bert6, Kai'danof, still remain the only guides. The old anecdote begins: The history of the Medes is obscure and fabulous. It is impossible to make anything out of history for children who feel no interest in history.

The contrasting experiments in making history and geography artistic and interesting, the biographical sketches of Grube and Biernadsky, satisfy neither artistic nor historic demands, satisfy neither logic nor historical interest, and at the same time by their superfluity of particulars they spread out to impossible proportions.

It is the same with geography. When Mitrofanushka was persuaded to study geography, his mother said to him:

"Why study about all lands? The coachman will take you where you want to go."

Nothing stronger was ever said against geography, and all the teachers of the world are unable to furnish a reply to such an insurmountable argument.

I am speaking with perfect seriousness. What is the good of my knowing the position of the river and city of Barcelona when, after having lived thirty-three years, I have not once needed that knowledge? The most picturesque description of Barcelona and its inhabitants, as far as I can see, could not help toward the development of my spiritual powers. What good is it for Semka and Fedka to know about the Marinsky canal and aquatic communication, if they, as in all probability will be the case, will never go there? And even if Semka should happen to go there,

it is a matter of indifference whether he learns about it or not, since he will know about this kind of aquatic communication, and will know it thoroughly, by experience. For the development of spiritual powers, what help will come from knowing that hemp goes down and tar goes up the Volga, that there is a harbor Dubovka, and that a subterranean stratum extends to such and such a point, and that the Samoyeds travel by reindeer, and so on I cannot imagine!

I have in me a whole world of lore mathematical, natural, linguistic, and poetic which I have not time to transmit; there is an endless collection of questions regarding the phenomena of life around me; and the pupil demands an answer to them, and I must answer them before drawing maps of the polar floes, the tropical lands, the mountains of Australia, and the rivers of America.

In history and geography experience tells the same story and everywhere confirms our ideas. Everywhere the teaching of geography and history goes badly, in expectation of examinations, the names of mountains, cities and rivers, kings and czars; the only possible manuals are Arsenyef and Obodovsky, Kai'danof, Smaragdof, and Berte; and everywhere complaint is made of the teaching of these subjects; they are searching for something new, and never find it.

It is very amusing that all recognize the incongruity of the study of geography with the spirit of the pupils of the whole world, and consequently invent thousands of ingenious means like Sidof's method to compel the children to remember the names; the simplest of all notions, that this kind of geography is entirely unnecessary, that it is entirely unnecessary to know these names, has never once entered any one's head.

All attempts to combine geography with geology, botany, ethnography, and I know not what else, history with biography, remain empty dreams, giving birth to wretched books like Grube's, not useful to children or to young people, or to teachers, or to the public in general. In fact, if the authors of these so-called new guides in geography and history thought of what they wanted, and attempted to apply these books to instruction, they would become convinced of the impossibility of the enterprise.

In the first place, geography, in conjunction with the natural sciences and ethnography, would constitute a prodigious science, for the teaching of which a human lifetime would not suffice, and a science still less child-like and still dryer than geography alone.

In the second place, for the composition of such a manual, sufficient material would not be found in a thousand years. If I taught the geography of the Krapivensky District, I should be compelled to give the pupils detailed notions of the flora, the fauna, the geological formation of the country up to the North Pole, and details regarding the inhabitants and the trade of the kingdom of Bavaria, because I should have plenty of material for these details, and I should have almost nothing to say of the Byelevsky and Yefrimovski Districts, because I should have no materials for that.

But the children and sound common sense demand from me a certain harmony and regularity in teaching. The only thing remaining is either to make them learn Obodovsky's geography by heart, or not teach the subject at all. Just as for history the historical interest must be awakened, so for the teaching of geography the geographical interest must be awakened. And the geographical interest, according to my experience and observation, is awakened either by study of the natural sciences or by travels, especially in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred by travels.

As the love of history is stimulated by the reading of newspapers, and especially of biographies, and by the interest in the political life of one's country, so for geography the first step toward the study of science is taken in the way of travels. Both means have become perfectly accessible to every one in our day, and, therefore, the less ought we to fear cutting loose from the ancient

superstition regarding the teaching of history and geography. Life itself is now so instructive in this connection that if geographical and historical knowledge were so necessary for general development as we think, then it would always supply the lack.

And really, if we renounce the old superstition, it is not at all terrible to think of people growing up without once having learned in their childhood who Yaroslof was, who Otho was, or what Estramadura is, and the like. You see, people have ceased studying astrology, they have ceased studying rhetoric and poetics, they have ceased studying how to talk Latin, and the human race has not grown stupid. New sciences spring into birth; in our day the natural sciences have begun to grow popular; we must abjure and outgrow the old sciences, not the sciences but the phases of them, which with the birth of new sciences have become insufficient. To arouse an interest, to know how humanity lives and has lived and has acted and developed in various realms, an interest in learning those laws whereby humanity eternally moves; to arouse, on the other hand, an interest in understanding the laws of the phenomena of Nature over all this green globe, and of the distribution of the human race over it that is another thing. Maybe the awakening of such an interest is useful, but to the attainment of this end the Segurs, the Thiers, the Obodovskys, the Grubes, are of no use. I know only two elements that are the artistic feeling of poetry and patriotism. To develop either there are as yet no manuals, and as long as there are none we must keep searching, or waste our time and energies, and cripple a young generation by forcing it to learn history and geography merely because we were taught history and geography.

Up to the time of the university, I see not only no necessity, but even great injury, in the teaching of history and geography. Beyond that, I don't know.

Chapter 36 : The Arts

In the sketch of the Yasnaya Polyana School during the months of November and December, I have now to speak of two subjects which have an entirely distinct character from all the others: these are drawing and singing the arts.

If I had not my own views, based on the fact that I don't know why any one should study either, I should be obliged to ask myself: Is the study of art profitable for peasant children, put under the necessity of working all their lives long just for their daily bread, and what is the good of it?

Ninety-nine out of a hundred would answer this question in the negative. And it is impossible to answer otherwise. As soon as this question is put, sound common sense demands such an answer: he is not to be aft artist; he will have to plow. If he has artistic demands, he will not have the power to endure the steady unwearying labor which he must endure; which, if he does not endure, the very existence of the empire would be out of the question. I use the pronoun he, I mean the child of the people. In reality this is an absurdity, but I delight in this absurdity; I do not hesitate before it, and I am trying to find the causes of it. This is another and still greater absurdity!

This same child of the people, every child of the people, has precisely similar rights what am I saying? has greater rights to the enjoyment of art than we, the children of the fortunate class, who are not reduced to the necessity of this ceaseless work, and who are surrounded by all the amenities of life.

To deprive him of the right of enjoying art, to deprive me, his teacher, of the right of leading him into that domain of the best enjoyments for which his whole being yearns with all the powers of his soul, is a still greater absurdity.

How can these two absurdities be reconciled? This is no lyrical emotion[1] such as I was seduced into on the occasion of describing the walk in No. I, this is only logic. No reconciliation is possible, and to think of it is self-deception. They will say, and they do say: "If drawing is necessary in a popular school, then only drawing from Nature is permissible, only technical drawing, applicable to life; the drawing of a plow, of a machine, of a building; drawing only as an art subsidiary to lineal design."

This common idea of drawing was shared by the teacher in the Yasnaya Polyana School, an account of which we present. But the very experiment we made in this method of teaching drawing convinced us of the falsity and injustice of this technical program. The majority of the pupils, after four months of strict, exclusively technical drawing, from which all sketching of men, animals, landscapes was excluded, at last grew so disgusted with the drawing of technical objects, and the feeling and necessity for drawing as an art were developed in them to such a degree, that they kept their secret note-books, in which they drew pictures of men and horses with all four legs starting from one place.

[1] Lirizm.

It was the same in music. The ordinary program of schools for the people does not permit singing farther than choral or church music, and precisely in such a way that either this is the dullest, most tormenting study for children to produce certain sounds in other words, that children become and regard themselves as throats meant to take the place of organ pipes, or else the sense of the esthetic is developed and demands satisfaction on the balalaika or the harmonica, and frequently in some coarse song which the pedagogue would not recognize, and in which he would not think it necessary to guide his pupils. One of two things: either art in general is harmful and unnecessary and this is not nearly so strange as it may seem at first glance or else every one, without distinction of rank or occupation, has the right to it, and the right to abandon himself wholly to it on this ground, that art does not permit of mediocrity.

The absurdity is not in this; the absurdity is in the very asking of such a question as the question: "Have the children of the people a right to the arts?" This question is analogous to asking: "Have the children of the people the right to eat beef?" in other words, "Have they the right to satisfy their human needs?" This is not the question, but whether the beef is good which we offer and which we refuse to the people. Just exactly as in offering the people certain funds of knowledge which are in our power, and remarking the bad influence produced on it by them, I conclude, not that the people are bad because they do not accept these studies and profit by them as we do, but that the studies are bad, not normal, and that by the aid of the people we must work out new ones which shall be suitable to all of us, both to society and the people at large. I only conclude that these studies and arts live among us and do not seem to harm us, but cannot live among the people and seem injurious to them simply because these studies and arts are not those that are generally needed; but that we live among them only because we are spoiled, only because men who have been sitting five hours without harm in the tainted atmosphere of a factory or a tavern do not suffer from that atmosphere which would kill the man who had just come into it. They will ask: "Who has said that knowledge and the arts of our cultivated class are false? Because the people do not accept them, why do you postulate their falsity?" All these questions are resolved very simply: Because we arc thousands, and they are millions.

I continue my comparison with a certain physiological fact.

A man comes from the pure air into a low, close, smoky room; all his vital functions are as yet in perfect condition; his organism, by reason of his having breathed in the pure air, has been nourished largely on oxygen. With this habit of his organism he goes on breathing in the pestiferous room; great quantities of the poisonous gases mingle with his blood; his organism becomes enfeebled, often a swooning fit ensues, sometimes death, while hundreds of people continue to breathe and live in the same pestiferous atmosphere, simply because all their functions have become enfeebled; because, in other words, their lives are weaker, less vital. If they say to me: These men live as much as the others, and who shall decide whose lives are the better and nearest to the normal? since it as often happens that a man coming from the vitiated atmosphere into the pure air faints away as the contrary the answer is easy. Not a physiologist, but any simple man of sound common sense will say merely this: "Where the most of men live, in the pure air or in pestiferous dungeons," and will follow the majority; but the physiologist will make observations on the one and the other, and will say that the functions are stronger and the nutrition more complete in the one that lives in the pure air.

The same relationship exists between the arts of our so-called cultivated society, and the arts which the people demand: I mean painting and sculpture, and music, and poetry. A painting by Ivanof will excite in the people only amazement at its technical skill, but it will not excite any

poetic or religious feeling, while this same religious feeling will be excited by the woodcut of loann of Novgorod and the devil in the pitcher.[2]

The Venus of Melos will arouse only a legitimate detestation of a woman's nakedness and shamelessness. A quartet in Beethoven's last manner seems only a disagreeable noise, occasionally interesting only because one person plays on the cello and another on the violin. The best production of our poetry, Pushkin's lyric verse, seems a collection of words, but its meaning contemptible absurdities.

Introduce the child of the people into this world: you can do so and are all the time doing so by means of the hierarchies of educational institutions, academies, and a'rt classes: he will feel, and genuinely feel, Ivanof's picture and the Venus of Melos and the quartet of Beethoven and Pushkin's lyric verse. But on entering into this world he will no longer breathe with full lungs; and it will be painful and injurious to him to breathe the pure air, if by chance he happens to go into it.

As in the matter of breathing, sound common sense and physiology give the same answer, so in the matter of art the same sound common sense and pedagogy not the pedagogy which writes programs but that which strives to find general paths of education and laws will reply that that man lives the fullest and best life who does not live in the sphere of the arts of our cultivated class; that the demands of art and the satisfaction which it gives are fuller and more legitimate among the people than among us. Sound common sense will say this simply because it sees the majority living outside of this environment happy and powerful, not by numbers alone; the pedagogue makes his observations on the spiritual functions of the men who are found in our circle, and outside of it makes observations on the introduction of men into the pestiferous room, that is to say, on the transfer of our arts to the young generation and on the ground of those fainting fits, of that disgust which healthy natures experience on being introduced into the art atmosphere, on the ground of the diminution of spiritual functions, will conclude that the demands of the people, of art, are more legitimate than the demands of the depraved minority of the so-called cultivated class.

I have made these observations regarding music and poetry, the two branches of our arts which I know the best and which I once loved passionately, and it was a terrible thing to say: I have come to the conviction that all we have done in these two branches has been done in a false, exclusive method, having no meaning, and insignificant in comparison with those demands and even with the productions in the same arts, specimens of which we find among the people. > I am convinced that a lyric poem, as, for example,

recall the marvelous moment,

the productions of music, like Beethoven's last symphony, are not so absolutely and universally good as the popular pyesnya about "Vanka, the steward," or the song, "Down the ancient mother Volga"; that Pushkin and Beethoven please us, not because absolute beauty is in them, but because we are as corrupt as Pushkin and Beethoven, because Pushkin and Beethoven equally flatter our abnormal irritability and our weakness. As to the hackneyed paradox, heard till it has become insipid, that for the comprehension of the beautiful a certain preparation is needed who said it, and what proof is of it? It is only an expedient, a loophole from an untenable position, into

[2] We beg leave to call the reader's attention to this ugly picture, so remarkable by reason of its strength of religious and poetic feeling; it bears the same relation to contemporaneous Russian painting as the art of Fra Beato Angelico bears to the art of the successors of the school of Michelangelo. AUTHOR'S NOTE.

which we have been led by the falsity of our tendency and the exclusive adoption of our art by one class. Why is the beauty of the sun, the beauty of a human face, the beauty of the sounds of a popular melody, the beauty of an act of love and sacrifice, accessible to every one, and why do these things require no preparation?

I know that what I say will seem mere talk to the majority, the privilege of "a boneless tongue," but pedagogy-free pedagogy by way of experiment, settles many questions, and by an endless repetition of the same phenomena leads these questions from the domain of imagination and argument into the domain of propositions proved by facts. For years I struggled vainly to transfer to our pupils the poetic beauties of Pushkin and all our literature; a countless number of teachers are trying to do the same, and not in Russia alone; and if these teachers examine the results of their efforts, and if they will be frank, all will confess that the chief consequence of the development of the poetic feeling was its destruction, that the greatest repugnance to such interpretations was shown by the most poetic natures I had been struggling, I say, for years, and could obtain no results and once, by accident, I opened the collection of Ruibnikof, and the poetic demand of the pupils found full satisfaction, a satisfaction which, when I calmly, and without prejudice, compared the first song I came to with Pushkin's last production, I could not help finding legitimate. I had the same experience also in regard to music, concerning which I shall not have to speak.

I will try to sum up all that I have said. To the question, Are the arts les beaux arts necessary to the people? pedagogues generally hesitate and grow perplexed; only Plato decides this question boldly in the negative. They say: it is necessary, but with certain restrictions. To give all men the possibility of becoming artists would be harmful to the social organization. They say: certain arts and their degree can exist only in a certain class in society. They say: the arts must have their exclusive servants, devoted to one task. They say: great talents must have the possibility of coming forth from the midst of the people and devoting themselves exclusively to art. This is the greatest concession which pedagogy makes to the right of each person to be what he wishes. To the attainment of these ends all the efforts of the pedagogues are directed, as far as art is concerned. I consider this unjust. I suppose that the demand for the enjoyment of art and the service of art exists in every human being, to whatever class and environment he may belong, and that this demand is legitimate and must be satisfied.

Taking this position as an axiom, I say that if inconveniences and incongruities are presented by each person having an enjoyment of art and its reproduction, the cause of these inconveniences lies not in the method of its transference, nor in the diffusion or concentration of the arts among many or few, but in the character and tendency of the art, in which we must be dubious so as not to put what is false on the young generation, as well as to give this young generation the opportunity for working out something new both in form and in content.

I present an account of the teaching of drawing in November and December. The method of this instruction, it seems to me, may be regarded as convenient by the way whereby, imperceptibly and pleasantly, the pupils were guarded past the technical difficulties. The question of art itself is not touched upon, because the teacher who began the course took it for granted that it was inexpedient for peasant children to be artists.

Chapter 37 : Drawing

When, nine months ago, I entered upon the teaching of drawing, I had as yet no definite plan, either for laying out the course of instruction or for guiding the pupils. I had neither designs nor models, save for a few albums of illustrations, which, however, I did not make use of at the time of my most advanced lessons, confining myself to simple auxiliary means, such as can always be found in every country school. A painted wooden board, chalk, slates, and rectangular boards of various sizes, and sticks, which we had used in the visual teaching of mathematics these were all the material we had for our instruction, and yet we were not hindered from copying everything that came under our hands.

Not one of the pupils had ever before had any lessons in drawing; they brought to me only their faculty of judgment, which they were given perfect liberty to express when and as they pleased, and which I wanted as a guide to teach me their requirements so that I might afterwards lay down a definite scheme of work.

The first thing I did was to make a square out of four sticks and experimented to discover if the boys, without any preliminary teaching, would be able to copy that square. A few of the boys only drew some very irregular squares, indicating by straight lines the square sticks which made the square. I was perfectly satisfied with this. For the less able ones I drew a square with chalk on the board. Then we constructed a cross in the same way, and copied that.

An unconscious innate feeling impelled the children to find as a general thing a sufficiently accurate correlation of the lines, although they drew the lines badly enough. And I did not consider it necessary to insist on the accuracy of the straight lines in each figure, for I did not wish to torment them unnecessarily, and all I wanted was to have the figure copied. I preferred at first to give the children a comprehension of the relations of the lines according to their size and their direction, rather than to labor over their ability to draw these lines as regularly as possible.

The child will understand the relation between length and shortness of lines, the difference between a right angle and parallels, before he will learn by himself to draw a straight line tolerably well.

Little by little in the succeeding lessons we succeeded in copying the angles of these quadrangular sticks, and then we made the most varied figures with them.

The pupils entirely neglected the thickness of the sticks, the third dimension, and we drew all the time only the front side of the objects set before us.

The difficulty of clearly presenting the position and coordination of figures, owing to our deficiency of materials, compelled me sometimes to draw the figures on the board. I often combined a sketch from nature with a sketch from models, taking any object whatever: if the boys could not copy the given object, I would sketch it myself on the board.

The drawing of figures from the board proceeded as follows: I drew at first a horizontal or perpendicular line; I divided it by points into a certain number of parts; the pupils copied this line. Then I drew another or several perpendicular or slanting lines to the first, and divided into equal parts. Then we united the points of division of these lines with straight or curved lines,

and thus composed a kind of symmetrical figure, which, according as it developed, the boys copied. It seemed to me that this was advantageous, in the first place, in this relation: that the boy, by looking on, learns the whole process of drawing figures, and, in the second place, on the other hand there is developed in him a far better comprehension of the relations of lines through this sketching on the board than through copying of sketches and originals. By this system the possibility of out and out copying is entirely obviated, the figure itself, like an object from Nature, must be drawn on a smaller scale.

It is almost always useless to hang up a large picture or figure already perfectly drawn, because the beginner will really be at his wits' ends before it, just as before an object from Nature. But the development of a figure before his eyes has great significance. The pupil in this case sees the -bones of the sketch, the skeleton on which afterwards the body itself will be constructed.

The pupils were constantly called on to criticize the bones which I drew, and their relations. I often drew them incorrectly on purpose, so as to find out how far their judgment was formed concerning the relations and correctness of the lines. Then I would ask the boys, when I had drawn a figure, where, in their opinion, another line should be added, and I even made one or another of them think out a way of constructing a figure.

By this means I awakened in the boys not only a more lively but also a free cooperation in the construction and development of the figures; and this annihilated in the children the question "Why?" which the child always naturally asks himself when he is set to copying an original.

The course and method of instruction have been chiefly determined by the ease or difficulty of comprehension, the greater or less amount of interest manifested, and I have often thrown away something entirely prepared for the lesson, simply because it was wearisome or unfamiliar to the boys.

Hitherto I have given symmetrical figures to copy because their formation is the easiest and most obvious. Then by way of experiment I asked the best pupils to invent and design figures on the board. Although almost all drew in one given style, nevertheless it was interesting to observe their awakening rivalry, their criticism of others, and the originality of the figures they constructed. Many of these sketches were in perfect correspondence with the pupils' characters.

Each child has a tendency toward independence, which it would be injurious to destroy in any kind of instruction, and which is particularly manifested in the dissatisfaction at drawing from models. In the methods here described this independence is not only not vitiated, but is developed and strengthened.

If the pupil is not taught in school to create, then he will go on through life imitating and copying, since few of those that have been taught to copy would be able to make independent application of these acquirements.

By constantly holding to natural forms in our designing, and by frequently taking various objects, as, for example, leaves of a characteristic form, flowers, household ware, and objects used in common life, and instruments, I tried to prevent our drawing from degenerating into routine and mannerism.

With the greatest caution I entered into an explanation of shading, and chiaroscuro, because the beginner, by means of shading lines, easily destroys the clearness and regularity of the figure, and becomes accustomed to disorderly and vague daubing.

By this method I succeeded within a few months in initiating more than thirty pupils into a fair fundamental knowledge of the coordination of lines in various figures and objects, and into the art of reproducing these figures by even and accurate lines. The mechanical art of linear drawing

gradually developed of itself. More difficult than anything else was it for me to teach the pupils neatness in keeping their sketch-books and their designs. The facility of rubbing out what they had drawn on slates made my task in this respect very difficult. Giving sketch-books to the better and more talented pupils, I attained greater neatness in the sketch itself; for the great difficulty of rubbing out compels them to great neatness in regard to what they are designing. In a short time the best pupils attained to a very accurate and tidy use of the pencil, so that they could draw neatly and accurately, not only rectilinear figures, but also the most fantastic ones composed of curved lines.

I set some of the pupils to correcting the figures of the others when they had finished their own, and this exercise in teaching notably stimulated the pupils, for in this way they could immediately apply what they had learned.

Of late, I have occupied the older ones in drawing objects in the most varied positions in perspective, without holding exclusively to the well-known method of Dupuis.

Chapter 38 : Singing

Last summer we were coming home from bathing. All of us were feeling very gay. A peasant lad, the very one who had been enticed by the domestic peasant lad into stealing books, a wide-cheeked, thick-set lad, all covered with freckles, with crooked, knock-kneed legs, with all the ways of a grown-up muzhik of the steppe, but a clever, strong, and gifted nature, ran ahead and sat in the wagon, which was proceeding in front of us. He picked up the reins, cocked his hat, spat to one side, and burst out into a dragging muzhik song oh, how he sang! with feeling, with repose, with the full power of his lungs! The children laughed: -

”Semka, Semka lo! how cleverly he sings!”

Semka was perfectly serious.

”There, now, don’t you interrupt my song!” said he, in a pause, using a peculiar and purposely hoarse voice, and then he went on with his song sedately.

Two very musical lads took their places in the cart and began to take the tune and join in. One chimed in now with the octave, now the sixth, the other -in thirds, and it went admirably. Then the other boys joined in, and they began to sing

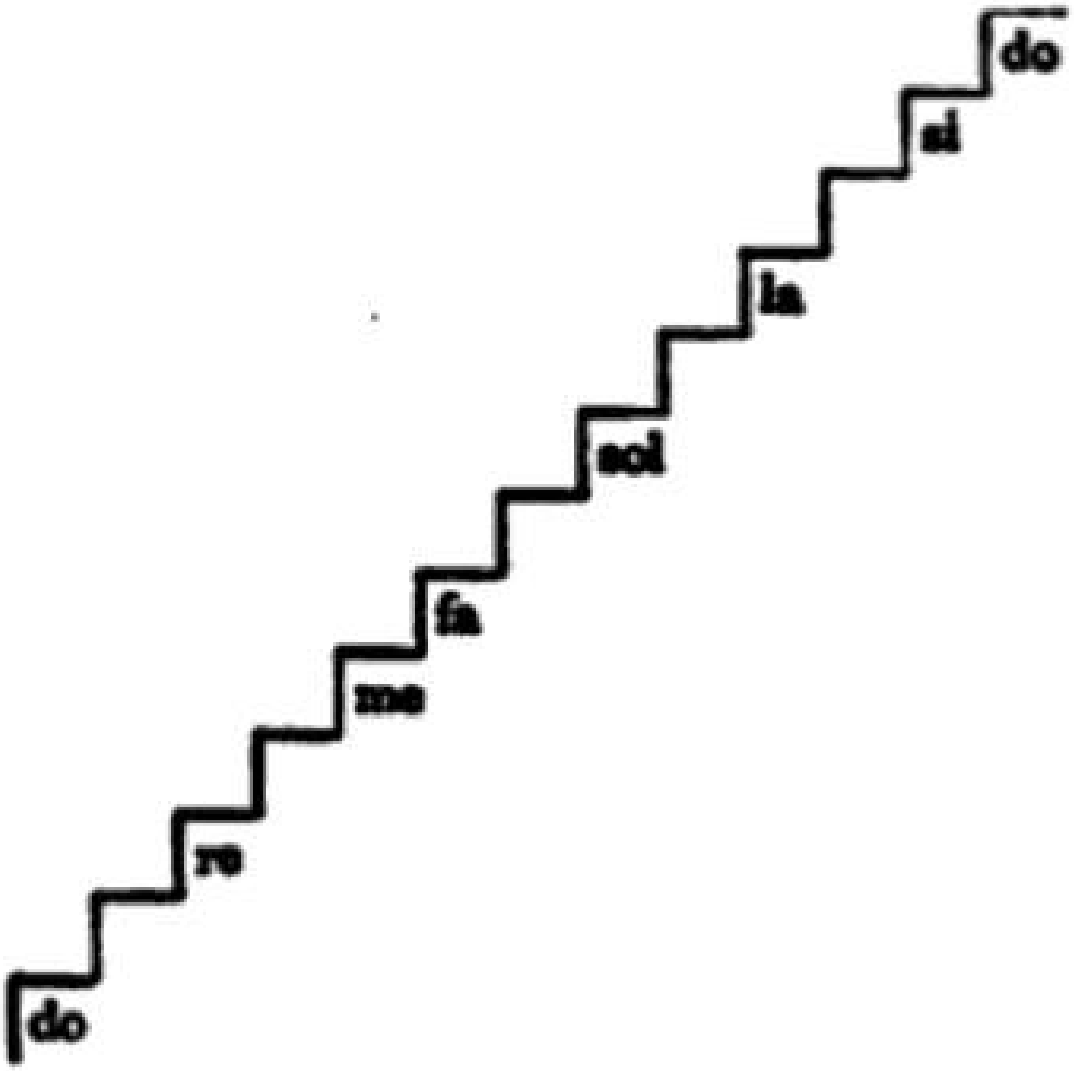
Kak podyablone’i takot?[1]

and to yell, and there was a great noise, but disagreeable.

From this evening the singing began; now after eight months we sing Angel Vopiyashe and two cherubim songs, Numbers Four and Seven, the whole of the ordinary mass, and little choral songs. The best pupils only two of them write down the melodies of the songs which they know, and almost read the notes. But, so far, whatever they sing is far from being so good as that song of theirs was which they sang returning from the bath. I say all this without any arrtire pensee, not to prove anything, but I simply state a fact.

Now I will tell about the process of instruction, with which I was comparatively well satisfied. At the first lesson I divided all the words into three parts, and we sang the following chords:

[1] As beneath an apple tree.


do
re
mi
fa
sol
la
si
do

We succeeded in this very rapidly. And each one sang what he wished, tried the discant and went to the tenor, and from the tenor to the alto, so that the best knew the whole chord do-mi-sol; some all the three parts. They pronounced the names of the notes in the French. One sang mi-fa-fa-mi; another do-do-re-do, and so on.

"See how sweet, Lyof Nikolayevitch! It already begins to hum in our ears; try it again, again."

We sang these chords both in school and out-of-doors, and in the park and on the road home, till late at night, and we could not stop or rejoice sufficiently at our success.

On the next day we attempted the scale, and the more talented ones went through it perfectly, the duller ones could scarcely reach to the third. I wrote the notes on the staff in the alto key, the most symmetrical, and I called them in French. The succeeding six lessons went just as merrily; we sang new chords minor ones and modulations into the major gospodi pomilui,[2] "Glory to the Father and the Son," and a little threepart song, with piano. One half of the lesson was occupied with this, the other with singing of the scale and exercises which the pupils themselves invented: do-mi-re-fa-mi-sol, or do-re-re-mi-mi-fa, or do-mi-re-do-re-fa-mi-re, and so on.

I very speedily remarked that the notes on the staffs were not learned by observation, and found it necessary to substitute figures for them. Moreover, for the explanation of intervals and the variability of the tonic, figures are more useful. After, six lessons some were able to strike whatever intervals I asked of them, attaining it by an imaginary scale. Especially pleasing was the exercise on the fourths do-fa-re-sol and the, like, up and down. Fa the sub-dominant especially struck them all by its force.

"How healthy that fa is!" exclaimed Semka. "How it cuts through."

Unmusical natures all fell behind; but with the musical ones our classes used to last three or four hours. I tried to give them an idea of beating time by the received method, but the thing seemed so hard to them that I was obliged to separate the tempo from the melody, and having written the notes without measure, to read them; and then, having written the measure that is, tempo without sounds by beating to read one measure, and then to unite the two processes. After a few lessons, having taken into account what I was doing, I became convinced that my method of instruction is almost the same as the method of Cheve,[3] which I had seen under trial in Paris a method which was not immediately adopted by me, simply because it was a method.

To all who are occupied with the teaching of singing one cannot too highly recommend this work, on the cover of which is printed in large letters Repousse a r unanimity though now it is distributed in tens of thousands of copies over all Europe. I saw in Paris striking proofs of the success of this method under the instruction of Cheve himself; audiences of five or six hundred men and women, some of them forty and fifty years old, singing in one voice a livre ouvert whatever the teacher indicated to them.

In Cheve's method there are many rules, exercises, and prescriptions which have no significance, and which every sensible teacher will invent by the hundred and by the thousand on the battlefield, in other words, in the class-room; there is a very comical, and perhaps also convenient, process of reading the time without the sounds; for example, in four-four time the teacher says ta-fa-te-fe; in three-four time the teacher says ta-te-ti; in eight-eight time, ta-fa-te-fe-te-re-li-rL All this is interesting as one of the means whereby music may be taught, interesting as the history of a certain musical school; but these roots are not absolute, and cannot constitute

[2] The Lord have mercy.

[3] Emile Joseph Maurice Cheve, 1804-1864.

a method. This is the very thing that forms the fountain-head of the errors of methods. But Cheve has ideas remarkable for their simplicity; and three of them constitute the essence of his method: the first, the ancient, having been enunciated by J. J. Rousseau in his Dictionnaire de musique, is the idea of expressing musical signs by figures. Whatever the opponents of this way of writing may say, every singing-teacher can make the experiment, and can always convince himself of the immense superiority of figures over the scale, both in reading and writing. I gave ten lessons on the scale, and one only with figures, saying that it was all the same thing, and the pupils always ask me to write in figures, and they themselves write in figures.

The second remarkable idea belonging exclusively to Cheve" consists in teaching sounds apart from tempo, and vice versa. Any one who once applies this method of instruction will see that what presented itself as an invincible difficulty will suddenly become so easy that the only wonder is that such a simple idea never occurred to any one before. How many torments would have been spared the unfortunate children taught in the Episcopal "chapels" and other choirs, reformed and the like, if the regents had tried this simple thing to compel the beginner, without singing, to beat the time with his finger or a stick according to the notes of the phrase; once for quarters, twice for eighths, and so on; then to sing the same phrase without the time; then again to sing one measure, and then again combining them. For example, this phrase is written:

The pupil first sings - without tempo do-re-mi-fa-sol-mi-re-do; then he does not sing, but, beating on the whole note of the first measure, says: one two three four; then he beats once on each of the notes of the second measure, saying one two three four; then on the first note of the third measure he beats twice and says, one two; and on the second half-note he also beats twice, saying three four, and so on; and then he sings the same thing in measure, and beats the time, and the other pupils count aloud.

This is my method, which, just like Cheve's, it is impossible to prescribe; it may be found convenient, but it is possible that many others still more convenient may be discovered. But the secret is simply to separate the teaching of tempo from that of notes, while there may be a countless number of methods of doing this.

Finally, Cheve's third and great idea consists in popularizing music and its instruction. His method of instruction completely attains this object. And this is not merely Cheve's desire, and it is not merely my hypothesis, but it is a fact. In Paris I saw hundreds of horny-handed laborers sitting on benches under which were laid the tools which they had brought with them from their work, and they were singing from notes, and they understood and were interested in the laws of music.

As I looked at these workmen, it was easy for me to imagine Russian muzhiks in their places, with Cheve speaking Russian: they would have sung just as well, they would have understood in the same way all that he said about the general laws and rules of music. We hope to speak in still greater detail about Cheve and particularly of the significance of popularized music, singing especially, in the revival of decadent art.

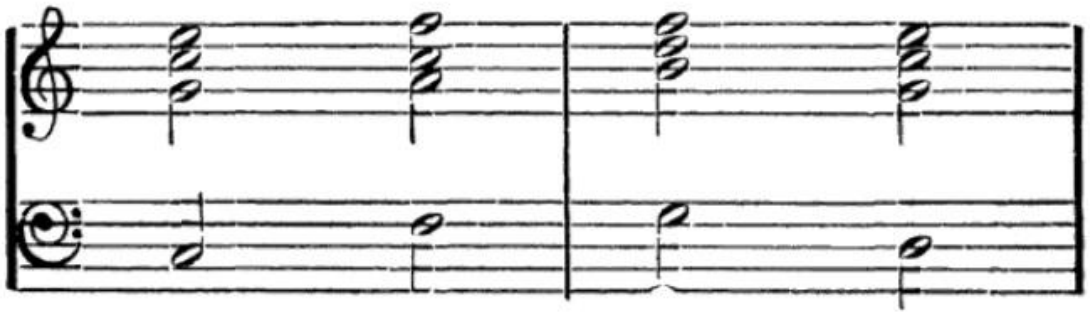
I pass on to a description of the course of instruction in our school. After six lessons the goats were separated from the sheep; only musical natures were left the amateurs and we went on to minor scales, and to the explanation of intervals. The only difficulty was to find and distinguish the diminished second from the second. Fa had already been called healthy; do seemed to them

likewise a noisy fellow[4] and so I had no need of teaching them they themselves felt the note into which the diminished second resolved^ therefore they felt the minor second itself.

Without difficulty we ourselves found that the major scale consists of a succession of two whole tones and one half tone, three whole tones and one half tone. Then we sang Slava Otsu[5] in the minor key, and by ear reached the scale which seemed minor; then in this scale we found one whole tone, one half tone, two whole tones, one half tone, one augmented whole tone, and one half tone. Then I showed that you can sing and write a scale starting from any note you please; that if a whole tone or a half tone does not occur when it is needed, it can be sharped or flatted. For convenience' sake I wrote for them a chromatic scale after this fashion:

[4] Krikun, from krik, a clamor.

[5] Glory to the Father.



On this scale I made them all the possible major and minor gamuts, beginning with any desired note. These exercises thoroughly absorbed them, and their success was so striking that two of the classes entertained themselves by noting down the melodies of the songs they knew. These pupils often hum the motives of songs, the names of which they cannot remember, and hum them delicately and prettily, and they repeat the principal part the best; and they do not like it at all when many join in, screaming the song together coarsely.

There were barely a dozen lessons in the course of the winter. Our study was spoiled by our vanity. The parents, we, the teachers, and the pupils themselves wanted to surprise" the whole village to sing in church. We started to prepare a mass and the Kherubimskaya songs of Bortnyansky. It seemed as if this would be jollier for the children, but it proved to be the contrary. In spite of the fact that the desire to go into the chancel supported them, and that they loved music, and that we teachers insisted on this object and made it paramount to others, I was often pained to look at them and see how some darling[6] of a Kiryushka, in ragged leg-wrappers, would practice on his part:

Tdino obrazu-u-u-u-u-u-yu-yu-shchej

and would be compelled to repeat it a dozen times, and how at last he would go wild, and, beating his fingers on the notes, would insist that he was singing it correctly.

We went to the church one time and our success was great; the enthusiasm was prodigious, but the singing suffered: they began to tire of the lessons, to shirk them, and when Easter came it was only with great difficulty that we collected a new chorus. Our singers became like those of the Episcopal "chapels," who often sing well, but in whom, in consequence of this act, all taste for singing is destroyed, and in reality they do not know their notes though they imagine they know them. I have often noticed how those that graduate from these schools themselves undertake to teach, not having any comprehension of the notes, and show themselves perfectly incompetent as soon as they begin to sing anything which has not been dinned into their ears.

From this trifling experience which I had in teaching the people music, I have drawn the following conclusions:

I. That the method of writing sounds by means of figures is the most convenient method.

II. That the teaching of tempo apart from the sounds is the most convenient method.

III. That in order that the teaching of music may leave its effects, and be willingly undertaken, it must be taught as an art from the very beginning, and not merely as a way of singing or playing. Young ladies may be taught to sing the exercises of Burgmiiller,[7] but it is better for the children of the people not to be taught at all than to learn mechanically.

IV. That nothing is so injurious in the teaching of music as what is like the knowledge of music the rendering of choruses at examinations, ceremonies, and in churches.

V. That the aim of teaching the people music ought to consist solely in giving them the knowledge of the general laws of music which we have, but by no means to fill them with that false taste which is shared among us.

[6] Kroshka, crumb; Kiryushka is the diminutive of Kirill.

[7] Johann Friedrich Franz Burgmuller, 1806-1874.

Notes

Leo Tolstoy
Yasnaya Polyana School
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