

the nearest parallel to his case is that of Charles Dickens, some of whose sketches have been called lineal descendants of those of Irving. Thackeray, too, has passages that recall Irving, whose sad love story he heard with deep sympathy. But while it has a marked individuality the style of Irving was, after all, modelled in the main on the older English essayists, and great as was his influence on his contemporaries, it has almost died out in our day. At times I think I feel it in the columns of *Harper's Easy Chair*, the greatest collection of short essays of our century, but G. W. Curtis owes far more to Thackeray than he does to Irving. However,

the very fact that Irving's school is a thing of the past enables us to judge him more dispassionately and adds to the freshness and interest of his style.

Seldom has it been given to any writer to win such success in so many varieties of literature. In the short essay he ranks with Addison and Goldsmith; in the biographies of Washington and Columbus, with Prescott and Parkman; in his "Alhambra" he is superior to Thackeray in the "Paris Sketchbook"; in his "Knickerbocker" he rises almost to the level of Rabelais. To cultivate our appreciation of good literary style no American writer has more claims to be read than Washington Irving.

HOW THE CHILD BECOMES A LEARNER.

DR. JAMES SULLY, M.A.

(Continued from page 22.)

(2) **T**HIS brings us to the second and practical division of our subject. What is the teacher's part in the development of the learner?

And, here, I would pray you, note that I am conceiving of the teacher's function in a somewhat unconventional way. People are apt to think of the instructor as finding the learner ready-made to his hand, and as having nothing to do but the agreeable task—if task it be—of ministering to the learner's needs. I venture* to think that this optimistic view of the relation of teacher and learner is false, and fatal in its consequences. It seems to me to lead to an inadequate and unworthy view of the real function and scope of teaching.

Let us pause for a moment to see what are the logical implications of this "learner-before-teacher" theory. If that theory is true, one cannot help asking why the teacher is required at

all. A Cambridge Professor not long since suggested that a good portion of University lectures are a mistake, it being much better for the student to get his knowledge out of books. And if the theory of ready-formed learners is correct, we might extend Professor Sidgwick's plea, and urge that the eager little searcher for truth of six or thereabouts had better be taught to read as soon as possible, and then sent to satisfy his intellectual hunger on the spacious pasturage of books. Such an amiable view of the childish mind leads, as Rousseau's *Emile* clearly shows us, to the practical conclusion that the teacher has nothing to do but to stand by like some good-natured custodian in a museum, ready to answer, as well as he can, any question the curious student may wish to put to him.

No! Providence has not done us teachers this doubtful service of