

In these progressive times we old fogies, who have left our school days a score or two of years behind us, are often humiliated by learning from some juvenile mentor that a fact or principle in grammar, or mathematics, or science, which was most carefully impressed upon our minds, possibly by means of well-remembered physical experiences, is not a fact or a principle at all, but has long since been discovered to be a stupid mistake or a grievous fallacy. Discoveries of this kind, though painful, are sometimes salutary, and we shall therefore leave such of our readers as care to recall so much of their boyhood or girlhood arithmetic as may be necessary to enable them to appreciate the foregoing, face to face with the new theory, without giving them the consolation of Dr. McLellan's refutation of it and defence of the old-fashioned notions.

We refer to the matter, not to take part in the discussion between the professor of methods and his redoubtable adversary, but to call attention in a tentative way to the general subject of educational methods—a subject which, in contrast with the intense interest which it might naturally be expected to possess for every citizen, and especially for every parent, receives an astonishingly small share of public attention. We think it is Herbert Spencer who somewhere notes the strange fact that, while one cannot be long in the company of almost any man, from the squire at his country seat to the amateur dog-fancier at his desk, or Hobbs in his Sunday clothes, without hearing some opinions in regard to the training of animals, you may wait long enough before you will hear any of them ventilating their ideas touching the training of children. A singular fact, is it not, when we remember that the training of children during the years of school-life is the pivot upon which the future history and destiny of the world will turn.

The few who do pay some attention to educational matters hear a great deal in these days about the New Education. We are not sure that we quite understand what is meant by the term. We are not very sure that any two persons of those who most frequently use it, mean the same thing by it. We infer from some incidental allusions to Col. Parker, who is regarded by many as the apostle of the new educational gospel, that Dr. McLellan does not believe in the New Education, and that he holds it primarily responsible for such absurdities as those which he handles so severely in the article before us. Now we confess that, as we understand it, we do believe in the New Education. It may yet fall far short in its principles and methods of an ideal standard, but it certainly is better than the old. We understand, for instance, that it aims to substitute intellectual for mechanical processes in the school; to appeal to the natural love of discovery and delight in mental activity, rather than to the fear of the rod, or even the hope of

reward, as incentives to effort; to replace dogmatism with induction. For instance, in the old school house which fills so large a place in the memories of most of us, the text-book in arithmetic was put into our hands and we were told to first learn the rules, and then follow them in the solution of the examples. If any principles were enunciated we were expected to accept them on authority. In no case, so far as we can remember, were we permitted to taste the delight of discovery. The New Education, as we understand it, requires the teacher to throw aside the text-book at the outset upon a new voyage of discovery; to state the problem in a form suited to the capacity of the learner; and to leave him to reason out the solution with just the minimum of help necessary to save him from failure. His stimulus is his innate love of discovery and his natural delight in the exercise of mental power. His reward is the consciousness of power successfully applied. A further educational gain is the certainty that what he has once done he can do again, that he has acquired a knowledge as well as developed a strength which he cannot lose through any failure of memory. Then he is led on step by step from the particular to the general. The essential element in the variety of individual cases is discovered and a broad principle established. By a similar method applied to the analysis of a few familiar sentences, the general laws of grammar—that *bête noir* of the old-time school boy—are deduced, and the pupil is delighted to find that the structure of language is not only intelligible and comparatively simple, but that give him time enough he could by the same analytic process construct a grammar for himself. No one who knows the joy which the youthful mind feels in independent discovery and in the sense of power successfully applied, can doubt which is the natural and true method in education. The New Education, thus understood, has shared the common fate of successful innovations. It has been, to use a current expression, "run into the ground." It has been made the pack-horse for a thousand trivialities, the sponsor for all kinds of absurdities. Even now it is daily associated in educational papers and school-room exercises with needless simplifications, and endless repetitions, and wearisome mannerisms, until it is no wonder that educators become disgusted with the whole business, and are tempted to commit the injustice of fathoming the whole brood of absurdities upon the grand educational method in whose name these absurdities flourish. We could easily fill a page with amusing illustrations, but the length to which we have already run compels us to spare the reader.

It is better to be of no church than to be bitter for any.—Penn.

The shortest way to do many things is to do only one thing at once.—Cecil.

A great thing is a great book, but greater than all is the talk of a great man.—Disraeli.

NOTES ON DANTE.—IV.

INFERNO.

We left Virgil and Dante at the gate of Hell. This is what they found written upon it:

"Through me you pass into the city of woe;
Through me you pass into eternal pain;
Through me among the people lost for aye.
Justice the founder of my fabric moved;
To rear me was the task of power Divine.
Supremest wisdom and primeval love,
Before me things create were none save things
Eternal, and eternal I endure.

All hope abandon ye who enter here.
Such characters in colour dim I mark,
Over a portal's lofty arch inscribed."

These lines tell us that we are at the entrance of hell, the abode of the lost, the dwelling place of the impenitent, where men finally reap what they have sown. The *Inferno* is the first of the three great poems not only because Dante would have us contemplate the various conditions of men from the lowest depths of misery to the heights of bliss; but also because he writes for the spiritual education of mankind. The effectual work of Grace must begin in all men with the conviction of sin, it must go on to the purification of the heart and so onwards to spiritual illumination and union and communion with God. Dante says that hell was the work of Justice and the creation of the Holy Trinity, not only of the Father "who is power divine," but also of the Son who is "supremest wisdom," and of the Holy Ghost who is primeval love. It is coeval with the existence of moral creatures and it exists forever. Another thing should be noted, that the *Inferno* is not only a picture of future woe, but also a representation of sinful human life as it is now lived in the world. So much for the meaning of hell; let us now examine its structure. According to the schoolmen hell and purgatory lay beneath the earth and consists of four departments: 1. Hell, the abode of devils and lost. 2. Purgatory, the place of penance and purification, adjacent to hell, but different, being also the place of hope. 3. *Limbus Infantum*, the abode of unbaptized children. 4. *Limbus Patrum*, or Abraham's bosom, the dwelling place of the righteous who lived before Christ. The heavens were divided into three parts: 1. The visible heavens or firmament. 2. The spiritual heaven, the abode of angels and saints. 3. The intellectual heaven, where the blessed enjoy the vision of God.

Dante considerably modified this theory. According to him hell was a conical gulf made by Lucifer when he was precipitated from heaven. Within the gate, but on this side of Acheron, was a vestibule inhabited by the cowards and undecided. Beside this there were nine circles in all. Dante divided all sins into two great classes, sins of infirmity and sins of malice, the latter the more heinous as being perversions of the higher power.

The distinction is true and profound. It was clearly indicated by our Lord and has been adopted by all deeper theologians. In all ages it has been ignored and sometimes reversed by superficial thought and even by popular religion, which has substituted for it the division of sins into respectable and not respectable. Dante does not excuse sins of weakness. But he laments over them and punishes them. He distinguishes and rightly. It is a bad thing that men should be beasts; it is worse that they should be devils.