

Gleanings.

EDUCATION VERSUS KNOWLEDGE.

Plato has profoundly defined man "the hunter of truth;" for in this chase, as in others, the pursuit is all in all, the success comparatively nothing. "Did the Almighty," says Lessing, "holding in his right hand Truth and in his left Search after Truth, deign to proffer me the one I might prefer, in all humility, but without hesitation, I should request—Search after Truth." We exist only as we energise. Pleasure is the reflex of unimpeded energy; energy is the mean by which our faculties are developed; and a higher energy the end which their development proposes. In action is thus contained the existence, happiness, improvement, and perfection of our being; and knowledge is only precious as it may afford a stimulus to the exercise of our powers and the condition of their more complete activity. Speculative truth is, therefore, subordinate to speculation itself; and its value is directly measured by the quantity of energy which it occasions—immediately in its discovery, mediately through its consequences. Neither, in point of fact, is there found any proportion between the possession of truths and the development of the mind in which they are deposited. Every learner in science is now familiar with more truths than Aristotle or Plato dreamt of knowing; yet, compared with the Stagirite or the Athenian, how few among our masters of modern science rank higher than intellectual barbarians! Ancient Greece and modern Europe prove, indeed, that "the march of intellect" is no inseparable concomitant of "the march of science"—that the cultivation of the individual is not to be confounded with the progress of the species. * * The comparative utility of a study is not to be principally estimated by the complement of truths which it may communicate, but by the degree in which it determines our higher capacities to action.—*Sir Wm. Hamilton.*

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL CHILDREN.

Great risks and great exposure to the body are involved in sending a child to school. It may mean merely such mind work as is too much of a tax upon the brain and nervous system. It often means indigestion, from a hurried lunch at noon or a fast until 2 o'clock. It often involves sitting in constrained positions too long, too close confinement in ill-ventilated or ill-heated rooms, and other experiences inimical to vigorous growth. A recent book says the first right of a child at school is to feel happy. One element in this is left out if the conditions are not such as favor his good health. Indisposition is a word of double meaning. That of the mind and temper are affected by that of the body.

There are most cogent reasons why children at school should be so provided for as that all their surroundings tend to a comfortable physical condition. Simon, speaking of artisans, says that "it is their right that whatever work their employer assembles them to do should, as far as in his power, be divested of all unhealthy circumstances." It is a poor economy, too, for the State to present to all its children a free school system, if the perils of the school room are excessive.

No school should commence without a thorough knowledge on the part of its trustees as to the adequacy of the building, its desks, its heating apparatus, its general fitness for the conduct of the work proposed to be done in it. We wish the parents of the children would just now form themselves into a committee of the whole, and wait upon each board and find out just what they know as to sanitary inspection. All the more so because lately our New York boards have certified their competency to superintend all this matter. We happen to know something about school infections, school temperature, school air, school draughts, &c.

Let him find a faucet of water near a bowl where he may rinse his hands and wipe them on a paper towel, which he will use up himself, and which will cost the trustees about one dollar a bushel. The room and building must have had excellent janitorship, so that it has been well dusted, cleaned and aired in the hours of emptiness. How imperfectly is this work done in most schools. There is poor housekeeping, and that always makes trouble.

Have the boys and girls fitted to their respective desks, not only with a view to convenience, but size. Often the blackboards are so located that a child must face a glare of light. Often the desks are so close to them that they cannot adjust distance to capacity of vision. Virchow, Loring, Agnew, and others have well pointed out some of these defects.

Laws of posture, both in sitting and standing, are greatly overlooked in schools, and slight spinal deflections from the natural line give future aids to one-sidedness. Brown-Sequard has noted and explained how the use of one side too much and the other too little often disturbs bilateral sensibility and leads to nervous trouble.

Dr. Seguin read an interesting essay on "Nervous Diseases as fostered by School Life" before the last National Medical Association, and claims that physical considerations must enter far more largely into our system of instruction. Anemometers and thermometers can now tell us much as to air currents and the heat and degree of moisture of the air, while chemistry has ready aids to show us whether it is contaminated. Pale faces and puny forms, and the tired look of the homeward group, sometimes make us stand aghast when they tell us: "This is education." We ask all parents, all school boards, and all teachers to put on their thinking-caps at once, and keep them on all this term in the school health interests of the boys and girls.—*N. Y. Independent.*

READING ALOUD.

It is strange that, in a country whose language is stored full of the choicest works of the human mind, and whose population is, as a whole, so well educated, reading aloud as a source of amusement and means of enjoyment is so little resorted to. There are many families, we dare say, where a book, or a chapter of a book, is never read to the family circle from one end of the year to another. The individual members of the family read, but all reading done in the family is silent reading: Father has his paper; mother, her tract; Mary, her novel; Johnny, his story of wild adventure. Reading, there is enough of it; but each one reads for himself. There is no reading for the whole, and no grouping of the family into an audience for an evening's enjoyment, such as comes to people who hear a good thing well read.

Only those who have visited in families where the gift of reading was cultivated as a source of family enjoyment, and the custom of reading aloud to the family practised, can imagine what a help and a blessing to the family life such a habit is. Music is well enough in its way, but its range of expression is far narrower than that of reading, and for that matter far less practical in its adaptation to the family wants. Then, too, singing requires an instrumental accompaniment, and a piano costs money, and requires too much practice on the part of the performer to be available for the many. The art of reading well is easily acquired and cheaply taught, and the expressions of literature are abundant and varied. If sorrow has fallen on the family, the needed antidote can be found both in prose and in poetry. If fun is called for, then fun can be had at the asking; for the language is so full of humor, so quaint and subtle, that the bare recital of the author's words brings the point out and "sets the table in a roar." History, tragedy, comedy, wit, pathos, sublimity, every spring at which the human mind loves to drink can be opened, and the sweet waters be freely given to everyone.

How cozy these home readings may be made! Warmth, light, companionship, culture, happiness, are all included in them. How much you are missing, if reading is not cultivated as one of the means of happiness and pleasure in your family circle! For, in such an exercise, there is quickening for the imagination, appeal to judgment, elevation of feeling, opportunity for criticism, which shall teach the children more of literature in three hours than they can learn at school in three weeks. Next to the impulse of love as a means of drawing families together, is the influence of intellectual companionship. Cultivate this, and see how satisfactory will be the result.—*Golden Rule.*

HOME LESSONS.

It is the custom in many private and not a few public schools to assign long lessons to the pupils for home study in the evening, and for recitation at school next day. It is the custom of many conscientious mothers to sit down with their children and assist them in learning their lessons. In fact, it is only the children who have some help of this kind that make good recitations. The others fail, more or less, and are punished, more or less. It seems to us that this is a very unfair division of labor. The parent does the hardest part of the work, and the teacher gets all the credit—and the pay.