

OUR YOUNG FOLKS.

LIFE A SCHOOL.

AN ESSAY READ AT THE CLOSING EXERCISES OF THE BRANTFORD
VOL. NO. LADIES COLLEGE BY MISS AGNES JANE ORR, BORDABEEN.

We speak of school-days as if they only included the period which we spend within the walls of some building known as the school-room; no matter whether it be built of logs, stone or brick; no matter whether it be a common or high school, academy or college, or known by any other name. It may indeed be quite proper to call the time spent within these institutions of learning our school-days. We must not, however, think our education completed when we bid farewell to the classroom. We often hear the expression that the time spent at school is the happiest of our lives. This in some sense may be true, but it has many exceptions. School-days have a variety of phases. There are the bright sunshiny days when study is a pleasure, lessons being no trouble or worry, when teachers are thought to be reasonable and patient, when recreation is entered into with glowing spirits and when everything looks delightful. But there are also gloomy days, when the dark side of everything turns to view, and one is inclined to say that there is nothing right in this world. We are apt then to complain that everything is wrong and out of joint. These times are not happy; we become discontented with ourselves and nurse our own sorrows. It is, however, happily said that "misery sweetens comfort," and it is pleasant to know that there is the light as well as the shade even from our first entrance into the school of life.

Our first school is that of home and our mothers are our first teachers. They strive to lay the superstructure of after life so that our characters may be reliable and upright. It is certainly important that our first impressions should be just and good, as our tuition commences at the earliest period of our lives.

Some years ago there were found on the banks of the Mississippi the tracks of a human being deeply imprinted in the solid rock. These tracks were made when the rock was soft as clay. In time it became hard and was formed into stone. Children resemble the soft clay. Everything they come in contact with makes an impression either for good or evil. But as they grow older their characters acquire more solidity, and are less impressible, till at mature age they become fixed like the stone. How important, therefore, it is that our early impressions should be such as we should wish to be permanent in our after years.

The time allotted to some for attending school is very short. If they had to depend on that short period for their knowledge and culture they would have much reason to repine at the little they knew or at their limited power of thought. But the school of the world teaches more and better than the academy—it puts all our talents and acquirements to the test. The theoretical part of education having had its time, there follows the practical part which has to be learned and used in the busy and often laborious work of life. It is a truth that life is what we make it. When young persons, therefore, are entering upon the sea of life, then is the time they

must acquire the pilot's art of steering their course so as to avoid the dangers that surround and beset them. When we know we are forming a character for eternity, it is our business to keep out of the way of evil influences and subject ourselves to the moulding of those that are good. Our character is constantly forming, whether we think it or not, under the influence of the circumstances that surround us. If we are determined to be educated everything will be a school to us. We shall then be constantly making contributions to our stock of knowledge from every object we see, and by seeking to act discreetly, wisely, and correctly in every place, we shall be led to form good and useful habits. It has been well observed that the difference between a wise man and a fool is that one goes through the world with his eyes wide open, while the other keeps them shut.

When we remember that our whole life, both for time and for eternity, will be affected by the character which we form now in our youths, it should stimulate us to lay its foundation in knowledge, wisdom, and the fear of God. If we do this, it will rise higher in excellence and loveliness as we advance in life. But if no good foundation be laid, or if it be laid in selfishness and sin and built up accordingly, it will certainly sink us lower in degradation and deeper in wretchedness in the course of our existence.

THE LAW OF CONTENTION.

"O, Frank, come and see how hot my saw gets when I rub it. When I draw it through the board awhile it's hot enough to set fire to it."

"That's the friction," said Frank, with all the superior wisdom of two years more than Eddie boasted.

"Yes," said sister Mary, who was passing, "it's the friction; but do you know what it makes me think of?"

"No: what?" asked both the boys at once.

"Of two little boys who were quarrelling over a trifle this morning, and the more they talked the hotter their temper grew, until there was no knowing what might have happened if their mother had not thrown cold water on the fire by sending them into different rooms."

ONE FORM OF RUDENESS.

A breach of politeness, and one which is most annoying to refined and sensitive people is the very general practice of interrupting one's conversation. The impunity with which this is done has degraded rational conversation, which ought to be the greatest charm of social intercourse, into a farce. A man or woman who has anything to say that is worth saying, desires to say it in his or her own way; and those who have brains to appreciate it, will be equally desirous of hearing it without interruption. Yet it is a common thing for a parlor conversation to partake more of the babble of Babel than a conversation among rational beings, who are supposed to know and appreciate what each other says. One begins to relate an incident, and before he has finished two sentences some parrot in fine clothes chimes in with her senseless gabble, breaking the thread of discourse and compelling the narrator to begin again or abandon the attempt to instruct or entertain.

This is the grossest impoliteness, but it is as common an occurrence as conversation itself. It is hardly too much to say, that nine out of every ten people who indulge in this habit are incapable of carrying on a rational conversation on any useful topic, and they indulge in these breaches of etiquette by way of covering their retreat and hiding their ignorance.

We suggest to young people—and old ones, too, for that matter—that here is a promising field for social reform. Never interrupt a conversation by interjecting remarks, however appropriate and witty they may seem. All sensible people will respect you, and conclude that you have good sense and know how to use it to the best advantage.

WHAT THE MOON SAW.

"Yesterday," said the moon to me, "I looked down upon a small court-yard, surrounded on all sides by houses. In the court-yard sat a clucking hen with eleven chickens; and a pretty little girl was running and jumping around them. The hen was frightened, and screamed, and spread out her wings over the little brood. Then the girl's father came out and scolded her; as I glided away and thought no more over the matter."

"But this evening, only a few minutes ago, I looked down into the same court-yard. Everything was quiet. But presently the little girl came forth again, crept quietly to the hen-house, pushed back the bolt, and slipped into the apartment of the hen and chickens. They cried out loudly, and came fluttering down from their perches, and ran about in dismay, and the little girl ran after them. I saw it quite plainly, for I looked through a hole in the hen-house wall. I was angry with the wilful child, and felt glad when her father came out and scolded her more violently than yesterday, holding her roughly by the arm; she held down her head, and her blue eyes were full of tears. 'What are you about here?' he asked. She wept and said, 'I wanted to kiss the hen, and beg her pardon for frightening her yesterday, but I was afraid to tell you.'

"And the father kissed the innocent child's forehead, and I kissed her on the mouth and eyes."—*Hans Christian Andersen.*

CHILDREN'S PRAYERS.

Little Nellie, who was only four years old, no sooner saw work laid aside, than she ran to her mother's knee. Mrs. Lee lifted her to her lap, and went on busily thinking of her duties and cares.

For a time Nellie amused herself very quietly by winding a string in and out through her fingers; but presently she began talking. "When I say my prayers God says, 'Hark, angels, while I hear a little noise.'"

Her mother asked her what noise she meant.

"A little girl's noise. Then the angels will do just so" (shutting her mouth very tight, and keeping very still for a moment) "till I say Amen."

I wonder if the children who read this story of little Nellie have ever thought how wonderful it is that God always hears their prayers. He is surrounded by thousands of angels praising him with their golden harps, and yet through all the music and all the praises He hears the child's prayer.