

THE SCHOOLS OF ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME.

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Delivered to the Students of Pickering College.

(CONCLUDED)

Roman children, like the Grecian, passed their early years under the mother's guardianship, carefully secluded from all associations that might render them in the least un-Roman. Only those of the slaves who were possessed of education were allowed to converse in their presence, lest the pure Roman dialect might become tainted: the untaught tongue of a Gallic slave would corrupt the Roman child, as constant contact with the brogue of a Milesian broadens the pure accent of an English boy. About the sixth year both boys and girls were sent to school. The Roman boy was not banished from his mother's side, and separated from the companionship of his sisters, but, by new ties, new friendships, he was gradually weaned from the tender attachments of the nursery. The separate education of the sexes began a year or two later. I am sorry not to be able to give as full an account of the Roman ladies' schools as the interest of the subject demands. That they were educated, and that they occupied a much higher position, socially, than their Grecian sisters, there is no doubt. The wifely devotion of Fulvia, the accomplishments and virtues of Cornelia, and the wide-reaching influence of Agrippina, prove the fact; but no ray of light is cast on the educational system under which the characters of these women were formed. The recognized equality of the sex alone would go far toward imparting an education, in allowing them to listen to, and take part in, the discussions of their fathers and brothers and husbands. Then, too, they could read; and, very probably, they had as pleasing anticipations of new publications of their favorite authors, as the average modern young lady has of the next number of a serial that will contain something fresh from the pen of her favorite. We miss female writers among the Romans. Greece had her sweet-voiced Sappho, and France her Madame de Staël; and the amount of English literature of all kinds contributed by women is enormous. Rome, however, here modestly retires. I do not know that an explanation of the fact has been attempted. It was not, at least, due to the modesty of the sex, nor to their want of spirit; neither can we say that it arose from the scarcity of women at Rome; for we find a law in force in the time of Augustus inflicting a fine on bachelors beyond a certain age, for the purpose of lessening the number of that useful but much-ridiculed class, which has a few representatives in our own time. Perhaps the explanation may be sought in this fact: a writer to produce anything that will resist the wear of centuries must have read and studied; and unremitting application and concentration of thought was not to be expected from women whose fickleness and love of pleasure and excitement have passed into a proverb. I must not pass from this subject without attempting to counteract a prejudice which may have arisen in favor of the Romans, on comparison of their treatment of the gentler sex with that of the Greeks; and I warn you to be chary of championing the system of the former without careful consideration.

To return to the education of the boys. The pedagogue system was not in vogue. Slaves carried the books of their young masters to and from school; but no authority was given them to correct the faults of their charges. Reading and arithmetic were taught in almost the same way as in Greece. For writing exercise, tablets of wood or ivory, or some such substance, coated with wax, were in use. They wrote on these with a pointed instrument called a *stylus*, whence our word *style*. Papyrus and parchment, with liquid ink and reed pens, were also common. Horace gives a description of his school days. He writes: "My father was loth to send me to the school of Flavius, where big boys, the sons of important

centurions, with their satchels hanging on their shoulders, used to go, taking their teacher's fee; but he bravely took his boy to Rome, to be taught those branches which the children of knights and senators are taught; and if any one had seen my clothes and slaves, he would have thought that my outfit was provided from the coffers of a long line of ancestors." To understand this, we must know something of the class distinctions that existed at Rome. A man was despised there, in the days of the Republic, unless he could boast of ancestors who had held some of the higher offices of State. Personal merit, in the case of other men, was required before they received any consideration. These prejudices, however, in the time of Horace, were growing weaker; Cicero could boast of no ancestry, and yet he was styled the "father of his country;" and Horace, the son of a provincial auctioneer or commission merchant, a freedman at that, stood high in the favor of Augustus. We can see then the strength of the paternal love that nerved the father's heart to give his son a liberal education at any cost. The school of Flavius was a poor provincial one; and in order to obtain the advantages of a better, Horace the younger must go to Rome, and run the risk of encountering the jeers and taunts of high-born Roman youths on account of his lower station; and the father's purse was drained to furnish the means of lessening, as far as possible, the social distance between the son and his school-mates. And Horace is not ungrateful for his father's watchful care: he speaks of him always with affection; and on his "*monumentum aere perennius*" he has inscribed a lesson, on which fathers and sons through all time may ponder with profit.

At this time the Greek language was studied and spoken by every well-educated Roman. It formed a part of the educational system at Rome, and a knowledge of it was indispensable to those who took a University course, i.e., spent a year or two at the philosophical schools of Athens, which was still an educational centre. Greek masters were easily obtained, for Greece was at this time a Roman province, in the conquest of which many slaves were made, among whom were some possessed of considerable education. Under these masters Roman boys were introduced to the wide fields of knowledge opened to them in the literature of Greece. Philosophy had at this time become popular at Rome; and the tenets of the old Athenian schools were resurrected from the mass of criticism that had almost overwhelmed them. The writings of the Roman poets, moreover, could not be understood without some acquaintance with their Greek exemplars. So that profit, added to pleasure, gave great importance to the study of this language.

According to Horace, flogging was practised as a punishment at Rome. He has handed down to fame, by a stroke of his dry humor, Orbilius, one of his masters, to whom he applies the epithet *plagosus*—"the switch bearing." The instruments of punishment were the *taw* and the *ferule*; and they were probably often resorted to; for boys were mischievous then as now. Juvenal tells of a schoolboy's trick of making the eyes appear sore by anointing them with some kind of oil, and thereby shirking his part of reciting "The Death of Cato" at an exhibition given in his school.

Private tutors were frequently employed by wealthy Romans, more especially for teaching special branches, as Oratory and Music. The position of these tutors was not a sinecure. They were regarded, by a family of boys who had no love for study, as a common enemy; and it is well known what a burden a teacher's life can be made to him by a few refractory pupils.

The public schools were most probably closed at Rome for a summer vacation, though the question is a disputed one. The great number of State festivals, both at Athens and Rome, would dispense with any such vacations as are allowed in our schools; and we can easily imagine that occasional holidays were granted to the boys, who appreciated them as boys do now—not because of any definite